

Upazila polls candidate in ICU after assault; 2 held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Two people were arrested early yesterday in connection with a case filed over the abduction and assault of an upazila chairman candidate in Natore.

Delwar Hossain, a chairman aspirant for the upcoming Singra upazila parishad election, is now undergoing treatment in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital in a comatose state, reports our Natore correspondent, quoting the ICU department in-charge Md AHM Mostafa.

After scrutinising CCTV footage collected from the district election office, the site of his brief abduction, police conducted raids in Singra upazila and arrested Nazmul and Babu around 2:00am, said Natore Superintendent of Police Md Tariqul Islam.

The arrests were made after the victim's elder brother, Mozibur Rahman, filed the case last night with Natore Sadar Police Station, accusing 20-25 unnamed people.

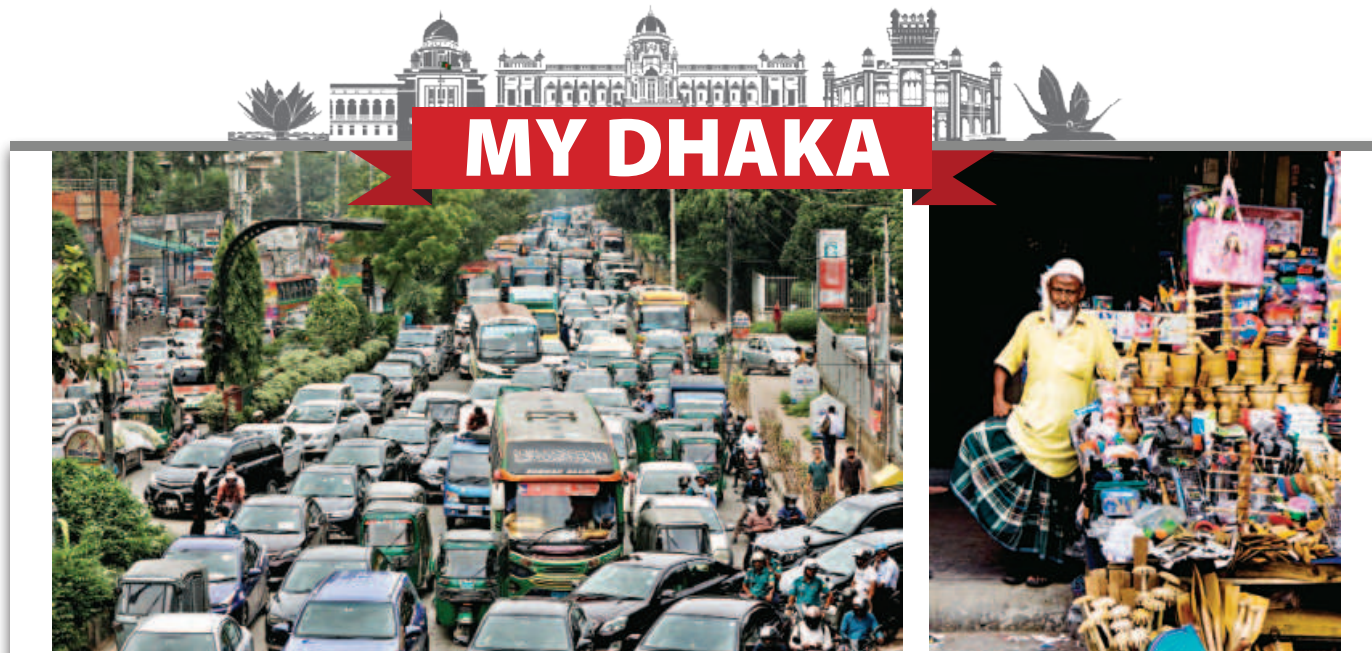
According to the case statement, Delwar was abducted by his political rivals in broad daylight on Monday afternoon and was beaten before being left in front of his home around an hour later. Delwar Hossain suffered injuries to his head and legs, according to the doctors.

From the CCTV footage, police identified Singra upazila Sechchasebak League general secretary Antar Parvez Mohan, Sherkol union Jubo League's former president Sanwar Hossain, Kolom union Jubo League secretary Nazmul Haque Kajal, Singra upazila Jubo League vice-president Rifad Mahmud Pias.

All those involved in the incident of abduction and beating are known as close associates of another chairman candidate, Lutful Habib Rubel. CCTV footage showed Rubel's private car parked near the scene at the time of the incident.

When asked, Rubel told our correspondent that he was not aware that his car was there at the crime scene.

Rubel is the joint general secretary of Singra Upazila Awami League unit and he recently resigned from the chairman post of Sherkol Union Parishad. He is also the brother-in-law of State Minister for Posts, Telecommunications, and Information Technology Zunaid Ahmed Palak.



PHOTOS: PRABIR DAS, SAZZAD IBNE SAYED

POST-EID REFLECTIONS

Missing the chaos of the city

RBR

It is as if Dhaka has been sleeping for the last few days.

Eerily quiet with a lull so palpable that I could almost hear the tree leaves rustle in the wind. I was missing the usual racket that goes on in any street, lane, or road of everyday Dhaka.

When I moved towards the main junctions, the ever-crazy city traffic -- which usually takes a toll on my nerves -- was in pin drop silence.

I am used to the sounds of motorbikes zooming past the narrow lanes of our residential areas; I am used to seeing a rowdy band of boys from my



balcony making merry under the tree on the side of the busy road.

The busy fuchka-walas and fruit vendors with their colourful vans of seasonal delights all were absent from their regular spots and what I missed the most was the voice of various peddlers

drawing attention to their offers.

These things are so mundane you hardly pay attention to the noise and rhythm of everyday city life until you begin to miss them in such long holidays.

During the prolonged Eid holiday, my everyday grocer shut down his shop and went to his ancestral home. So, easily getting hold of eggs, butter or other essentials came to a complete halt. The local bazaar was also shut down and even if a few stores were open, the guard and the driver were on holiday too, and I had no handyman available to do household tasks. And God forbid, I cannot expect my husband or my son to run errands for me!

I realised on Eid afternoon, I was in dire need of oral saline, Napa Extra, and fruit salts -- the magic cure for gas attacks but all pharmacies were closed at that time of need.

Every Eid holiday, I begin to see the worth of my service helps. Cooking

and scrubbing dishes are not exactly my idea of a break. I realised that on a regular day, we ignore these important people and while they take a deserved holiday, your rhythm of life falls apart. Your daily functionality breaks down and you are miserable.

So, do I want my Dhaka to take a long break or do I want my Dhaka to be always rushing? True, I did not miss the traffic gridlocks but I missed the people who make Dhaka beat; without them, a noiseless city gave me goosebumps.

I enjoyed listening to the chirping of birds but this peace at the cost of the smooth running of a house, was not appreciated by me.

Running a household is a bigger challenge than braving traffic jams. You do not want to mess with your daily routine or rhythm of household management.

Dhaka is dependent on its toiling masses -- this is what a Dhaka homemaker realised this holiday.

Protect civilians amid tension in the hills

CHT commission urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission (CHTC) has called for protecting the civilians amid the escalating tensions in the hill tracts region.

In a media statement, the commission yesterday said it was deeply concerned about the escalating tensions in Bandarban, which stemmed from the prolonged non-implementation of the CHT peace accord.

"The longer the government delays its implementation, the more complex the human rights and political situation in CHT will become," the CHTC said.

On April 2 and 3, 2024, the Kuki-Chin National Front [KNF] carried out a series of bank robberies in Ruma and Thanchi upazilas of Bandarban. They also attacked police, bank security guards, and Ansar members, while looting firearms.

"The CHTC strongly condemns these criminal acts by the KNF..." read the statement.

The commission said that a military operation has been launched against the KNF, but civilians are being harmed.

"Reports have emerged that many of the arrestees are innocent civilians, including pregnant women, students, teachers, and government employees from the Bawm community. There are also reports of restrictions being imposed on Jumma residents of Ruma, Thanchi, Rowangchhari, and Chimbuk, including limits on their rice purchases to a maximum of 5 kilograms, aimed at disrupting KNF's supplies," it added.

The commission blasted the indiscriminate arrests and "collective punishment of the entire Bawm community due to the actions of a few KNF members" and demanded immediate release and protection of innocent civilians.

It said the CHTC accord must be upheld.

"Security forces must cease collective punishment against Bawm civilians, halt human rights violations, and release innocent civilians immediately," the statement added.

The commission recommended security forces stop "collectively punishing Bawm civilians, halt human rights violations, and release innocent civilians immediately".

It also urged KNF to resume peace dialogue with the peace committee, and cease criminal activities to maintain peace in the CHT.

The statement was signed by CHTC co-chairs Sultana Kamal, Elsa Stamatopoulou, adjunct professor at the Institute for the Study of Human Rights of Columbia University, and Myrna Kay Cunningham Kain, a Nicaraguan indigenous rights activist.

Heatwave likely to continue; 3 divs may see rain

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka sweltered yesterday under the season's highest temperature, but moderate afternoon rain brought some relief from the ongoing heatwave.

The maximum temperature in Dhaka was recorded at 38.4 degrees Celsius while Chuadanga recorded the highest temperature of the season at 40.6 degrees Celsius.

Meteorologist Bazlur Rashid said the temperature is likely to remain almost unchanged for the next couple of days. "However, it may start to get hotter from the third week of April."

He also said there will be light rain in different parts of the country in the next few days, but the temperature will not drop drastically.

The heatwave has been sweeping across the country, with Rajshahi, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Khulna, Barisal, Chattogram, and Sylhet all experiencing mild to moderate heat waves.

Historic

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police have undertaken a comprehensive programme to maintain law and order on the occasion of the historic Mujibnagar Day. The main stage of Mujibnagar will be monitored through CCTV cameras at various points. A police control room has been set up to provide immediate security to the visitors. Traffic management has been tightened. We are working to ensure that everyone can celebrate the historic day."

Extensive preparations have also been made by the district Awami League. Meherpur District Awami League President and Minister for Public Administration Farhad Hossain MP said, "We are ready to celebrate the day with due dignity. For the last few years, we have celebrated the day on a small scale due to the coronavirus pandemic and Ramadan. But this time we have taken the initiative to celebrate the day in a grand manner."

Farhad will preside over the Mujibnagar Day programme.

The chief guest will be Liberation War Minister Mozammel Haque.

The day's programmes will begin with the hoisting of the national flag at 9:00am at the memorial, followed by a wreath-laying ceremony.

After the flag hoisting, Awami League central leaders, ministers, and local leaders will participate in a discussion on the significance of the day at Sheikh Hasina Mancha.

SCHOOLS TO ALSO OBSERVE THE DAY

The government yesterday directed all secondary and higher secondary educational institutions across the country to observe the Mujibnagar Day.

Prof Shahedul Khabir Chowdhury, a director of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Secondary, said a notification was sent to the educational institutions in this regard.

"In previous years, we did not make this decision to observe the historical day on such a big scale. This year we issued the instruction in line with a government decision," he added.

He said authorities of educational institutions will observe the day in the presence of available students.

The notification said, as per the proceedings of an inter-ministerial meeting held at the liberation war ministry, educational institutions must observe Mujibnagar Day on April 17.

Old, unfit vehicles running amok

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Owners tend not to properly maintain older vehicles as the cost of maintenance increases as the vehicles get older. This makes those vehicles potentially unsafe, he said.

Prof Shamsul, also the director of the Accident Research Centre at Buet, said the environment on roads and the quality of the drivers are more important.

He said lack of intensive monitoring and law enforcement were causing crashes.

"How can a bus operate without a route permit or fitness clearance for such a long time? How can a pickup carry people in broad daylight? What were the highway police and the BRTA doing?"

People got killed due to the failure of those responsible for preventing such illegal activities, he added.

Contacted, BRTA Chairman Nur Mohammad Mazumder said they sent the lists of commercial vehicles

beyond their economic life to the environment ministry, transport associations, and the Dhaka Metropolitan Police for taking action.

The BRTA banned buses older than 20 years and trucks older than 25 on Dhaka streets only in 2010.

Asked about the growing number of vehicles without fitness clearance, he said they were going to allow owners until June 30 to have their vehicles tested and certified without paying fines. "We hope this will improve the situation."

He refuted the allegation of poor monitoring and law enforcement leading to the rise in crashes.

"We have been working hard to prevent speeding on highways over the last few days as speeding is common after Eid when people rush towards Dhaka," he added.

OLD VEHICLES
After the government set the economic life of commercial vehicles last May, transport associations

opposed the decision, saying it would trigger a scarcity of vehicles and spark public unrest before the general elections.

After the poor air quality in the country came to the fore recently, the environment, forest and climate change ministry moved to get old buses off city streets.

During a meeting on March 31, the ministry asked the BRTA for lists of old vehicles and the BRTA sent a list of 73,057 vehicles.

The BRTA believes about 30 percent of all the vehicles registered with it are no longer on the roads.

Meanwhile, the number of registered vehicles without fitness clearance has been rising over the years.

At least 4.79 lakh vehicles did not get their fitness certificates as of July 2019, according to a BRTA report submitted to the High Court.

The number was 5.08 lakh in January 2022 and it rose to 6.17 lakh as of Monday, BRTA sources said.

'Why haven't my parents come to see me yet?'

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Liton, 48, breathed his last around 6:00am yesterday with 67 percent burns. His wife Surya Banu, 40, passed away around 7:30pm the day before with 82 percent burns, while Surya's mother Meherunnesa, 70, died on Saturday.

While relatives prepared for the couple's burial in Cumilla, Sujan was being treated at the HDU with 47 percent burns. Doctors said his condition was critical.

His sisters -- Liza, 18, and Lamia, 7, -- are also fighting for their lives at the hospital's Intensive Care Unit.

Like their brother, they were also calling out for their parents and siblings.

"To console them, we sometimes say the condition of their parents is much better," said Saiful.

Their uncle Sohag Mia told The

Daily Star, "Liza is old enough to assume that something bad happened to her mother and grandmother, based on our attitude and conversations with hospital staffers."

"Uncle, please take care of my father," Sohag quoted Liza as saying on Monday night.

Sohag said the bodies will be buried after Liton and Surya's eldest child, Aklima Akter, who is currently abroad, returns tomorrow.

"My brother's family was supposed to visit our home in Khagrachhari's Dighinala after Eid ... The fire destroyed everything."



Sujan, 9, happily posing with his father Liton, and 18-year-old Liza with her mother Surya and younger sister Lamia.

PHOTOS: COLLECTED

Archenemies trade

FROM PAGE 1

World leaders have urged restraint and de-escalation.

During a phone call with Iran's Raisi, Russian President Vladimir Putin called on both sides to "prevent a new round of confrontation fraught with catastrophic consequences for the entire region", the Kremlin said.

Israel was weighing its options after the Iranian drone and missile onslaught, which caused little damage as Israeli defences intercepted most projectiles, helped by US, British and French forces as well as regional allies.

It remained unclear when Israel might strike and whether it would target Iran directly or attack its interests or allies abroad, including in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

Lebanon's Hezbollah, which has been trading regular cross-border fire with Israel, claimed an attack with two explosive drones near a northern Israeli town yesterday, which the local council said wounded three people.

Also yesterday, an Israeli strike killed a local Hezbollah commander in southern Lebanon, a source close to the group and the Israeli military said.

The deadly strike was followed by fresh rocket fire at Israel which Hezbollah said was "in response to the Israeli enemy's attacks".

Israel made its first official comment Monday on the strike that levelled a five-storey Iranian consulate building on April 1, killing seven Iranian Revolutionary Guards including two generals.

"These were people who engaged in terrorism against the State of Israel," Hagari said.

Meanwhile, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen yesterday said Iran's attack on Israel last weekend and its financing

of militant groups in Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq threatened stability in the Middle East and could cause economic spillovers.

Yellen began remarks prepared for a news conference by addressing what she called an unprecedented attack on Israel by Iran and its proxies, saying the Treasury would use its sanctions authority and work with allies to "continue disrupting the Iranian regime's malign and destabilizing activity."

The United States is using financial sanctions to isolate Iran and disrupt its ability to fund proxy groups and support Russia's war in Ukraine, the Treasury Department said.

Treasury has targeted more than 500 individuals and entities connected to terrorism and terrorist financing by the Iranian regime and its proxies since the start of the Biden administration in January 2021, Yellen said.

That has included targeting Iran's drone and missile programs and its financing of the Palestinian militant group Hamas, the Houthis in Yemen, Hizballah in Lebanon, and Iraqi militia groups, she said.

"From this weekend's attack to the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, Iran's actions threaten the region's stability and could cause economic spillovers," Yellen said, without giving details.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz called on 32 countries to impose sanctions on Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and their missile programme, he said on social media.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, who was scheduled to head to Israel yesterday, urged the European Union to impose sanctions on Iranian drone technology.

Stay off upazila polls

FROM PAGE 1

BNP leaders think the number is not big as 150 upazilas will go to polls on May 8. They also believe many of the 45 party men would withdraw.

They said if needed the senior BNP leaders will talk to the chairman aspirants to persuade them to withdraw.

In the BNP standing committee meeting on Monday night, some committee members opined that the party should take a soft stance on

independents. However, the majority of the committee members favoured getting tough on such aspirants.

BNP has been staying away from all elections since 2019.

The opposition party earlier expelled those leaders who contested polls going against its decision.

The AL, however, did not nominate any candidate for the upazila polls as it wants to allow the party leaders and activists to run as independents.