

## UZ vice-chairman candidate killed in pre-polls clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

An upazila vice-chairman candidate was killed and seven people were injured as supporters of two vice-chairman aspirants clashed in Narsingdi's Raipura upazila yesterday afternoon.

The deceased is Suman Miah, 40, son of Charsubuddi Union Parishad Chairman Nasir Uddin.

Suman was facing tough competition from his rival contender Abid Hasan Rubel in the Raipura upazila parishad polls, slated for May 29.

Witnesses said Rubel along with his supporters was campaigning in Paratali area around 2:00pm.

"All of a sudden, a group of people in a microbus came and opened fire on us," said Sajib Miah, 22, a supporter of Rubel.

"Several posters of Suman Miah were pasted to the window of the microbus. So, it is clear that the attackers were supporters of Suman Miah," said Sajib, claiming that he and three others suffered bullet injuries.

The Daily Star could not independently verify the claim.

Around half an hour later, supporters of Rubel attacked Suman and his supporters at Mirer Bazar.

"They [attackers] beat up my son to death. Three of his supporters were also injured in the attack," said Suman's father Nasir Uddin.

Contacted, Rubel said, "Suman and his supporters first attacked us with firearms. In retaliation, we chased them away."

About the allegation of beating up Suman to death, Rubel did not make any comment.

Khan Noor Uddin Md Jahangir, Raipura upazila health and family planning officer, said Suman was brought dead to the hospital. "He died from profuse bleeding from his nose."

Farid Uddin Khan, inspector (investigation) of Raipura Police Station, said, "We have heard about the clash and death of Suman. No one has filed any complaint in this connection."

Police were investigating the incident, he said, adding that additional police personnel were deployed to avert any untoward incidents.



A Palestinian girl carries cans to collect water as she walks by houses which were destroyed in an Israeli strike in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

## Ukraine strikes Russia, occupied east

### Moscow forces capture village Kyiv took back in 2023

AFP, Moscow

Ukraine attacked a number of villages in Russia's Belgorod border region and the occupied eastern city of Lysychansk yesterday, killing two people, authorities and Russian media said.

Belgorod sits directly across the border from Ukraine's northeast Kharkiv region, an area that has seen intense fighting since Russia launched a major ground assault on May 10.

"Several air targets were shot down as they approached the village of Belenkoye. To our great sorrow, one civilian was killed," Belgorod region governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said.

One civilian in the Russian village of Belenkoye was injured, while a Ukrainian aerial attack near the town of Shebekino, close to the border, wounded another, he said.

Meanwhile, Russia said yesterday its forces had retaken Klishchiivka, one of

only a handful of villages on the eastern front that Ukraine claimed back in its 2023 counteroffensive.

The Ukrainian army has come under intense pressure in the past two weeks, fighting off a fresh Russian offensive in the northeastern Kharkiv region while facing critical shortages of ammunition across the front lines.

"Units of the Southern grouping of troops liberated the village of Klishchiivka" in the eastern Donetsk region, the Russian defence ministry said.

Separately, Ukraine shelled Lysychansk in the eastern Lugansk region, leaving "one dead and two wounded", Russia's TASS news agency reported, citing Russian-installed authorities.

Lysychansk was captured by Russian forces in mid 2022 and lies close to the eastern front.

On Monday, Russia said it had captured the coveted Ukrainian stronghold of Bilgorivka, paving the way for it to fully

control the eastern Lugansk region.

A Russian drone attack killed a Ukrainian police officer who was evacuating civilians from the frontline village of Vovchansk, Ukraine's Interior Minister Igor Klymenko said yesterday.

In Kyiv, the former deputy head of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's office has been charged with making illicit gains worth almost \$400,000, Ukraine's anti-graft watchdog said yesterday.

The suspect, whom Ukrainian media identified as Andriy Smyrnov, is accused of purchasing property, land and luxury vehicles with the funds, the origin of which was not clear.

Smyrnov faces five to 10 years in prison if found guilty.

Ukraine, which had severe corruption problems even before Russia's 2022 invasion, has pledged to bolster efforts to combat graft as it seeks EU membership and to reassure its Western military backers.

Smyrnov was sacked in March.

## AL MP Azim murdered in Kolkata

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locally known as Shaheen, who Indian police say is a key suspect, were probably running an illegal gold business in Kolkata.

The two recently fell out over business matters, and there was evidence that Akhtaruzzaman hired a man named Amanullah, who was arrested in Dhaka on Tuesday night, to kill Azim, the sources added.

Amanullah then recruited two others named Mustafizur and Faisal for the job. They too were arrested yesterday, said an officer on the condition of anonymity.

Akhtaruzzaman also hired two others named Jihad and Siam, who went to India without any passports, for the same purpose.

Police said Amanullah was once a leader of Purbo Banglar Communist Party. He was in prison for 20 years in two murder cases.

Requesting anonymity, an officer said, "Akhtaruzzaman rented a flat in Kolkata for Jihad and Siam. Akhtaruzzaman and Amanullah went to Kolkata on April 30."

Amanullah, Mustafizur and Faisal told investigators that they murdered the MP in a rented flat. The body was then cut into pieces, piled into two suitcases and handed to an Indian man for disposal.

Amanullah told the investigators that the suitcases changed hands, and he did not know where they were dumped.

After the murder, Akhtaruzzaman's friend Celesty Rahman, who is on the run, and Amanullah flew back to Dhaka on May 15 while Mustafizur came to Bangladesh on May 17 and Faisal on May 18, said the officer.

Amanullah, who was arrested from Mohammadpur in Dhaka, narrated the entire story during interrogation. He also told officers that he and the other suspects agreed to do the job for Tk 5 crore.

According to intelligence sources, Akhtaruzzaman left Delhi for Kathmandu on Tuesday.

Azim's friend Gopal Biswas, at whose home he was staying, told The Daily Star that an investigation officer of Borah Nagar Police Station said the suspect who planned the murder was named Mohammad Akhtaruzzaman.

The officer, Suvendu Goswami, also told Gopal that Akhtaruzzaman is from Kotchandpur upazila of Jhenaidah.

"Akhtaruzzaman rented a flat in the New Town area a year ago at a monthly rent of Rs 1 lakh. He came to Kolkata with a US passport and committed the crime with the help of seven Bangladeshis," Gopal said, quoting the officer.

According to security camera footage seen by the Indian police, Azim, two other men and a woman entered the flat. Only the two men and the woman were seen leaving the flat later, Gopal added.

Indian police say they have detected the probable place where Azim's body might have been disposed of with the help of a taxi driver, now in their custody.

An intelligence officer, requesting anonymity, said, "The record shows Akhtaruzzaman went to Nepal from Mumbai. There is no information whether he entered Bangladesh. Investigators will seek Interpol's assistance if needed."

A source at a law enforcement agency in Bangladesh said, "Akhtaruzzaman had close ties with Azim. We suspect he may have killed the lawmaker over business conflicts."

Akhtaruzzaman's brother Shahiduzzaman is the mayor of Kotchandpur Municipality.

Contacted, he said, "My brother had visited Bangladesh during Ramadan."

He claimed the lawmaker and his brother had a good relationship.

**THE ARRESTS IN DHAKA**

On Tuesday night, police arrested Amanullah, said a DB official, adding that following up on his information, Faisal and Mostafizur were arrested.

Harun Or Rashid, additional commissioner (DB), said, "We are closely working with the Indian police. We are receiving a lot of information we cannot divulge now for the sake of investigation."

**BLOOD STAINS IN FLAT**  
West Bengal CID is investigating the case, reports our Delhi correspondent.

Inspector General Akhilesh Chaturvedi said, "We had no prior intimation of the Bangladeshi MP's arrival in the city. We came to know about him after Gopal Biswas filed a diary. A special investigation team was formed by the Barrackpore Police Commissionerate to trace the missing politician."

There were blood stains in the flat, where the MP was last seen, and "our forensic team is examining the suspected crime scene", West Bengal police sources said.

Barrackpore Police Commissioner Alok Rajoria said, "West Bengal police spoke to their counterparts in Bihar and Chhattisgarh because the last tower location of one of the mobiles of Azim was in Muzaffarpur in Bihar."

**DAUGHTER FILES CASE**

Azim's daughter Mumtaz Ferdous Doreen filed an abduction case with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station, accusing unnamed people.

"I demand a fair investigation into the murder. I want to see the end of this. Why did they kill my father?" she told reporters at the DB office in the capital yesterday.

Muhammad Ahad, officer-in-charge of the police station, said it was not a murder case because "his body has not been found and we have not been officially informed about his death".

## 'Narrow escape from crossfire'

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The NHRC asked the senior secretary to the home ministry's Public Security Division to send a report upon investigation.

The ministry in a letter to the NHRC on June 3, 2021, attached a Police Headquarters report dated May 18 that year. The report said the allegations against OC Abdun Naser and SI Mizanur were primarily proved. Later, the ministry informed that allegation against another SI Samraj Mia was also primarily proved.

It said proceedings of departmental cases against the accused cops were underway, according to a letter that the commission wrote to the ASK.

**PROBE YET TO BE COMPLETED**

Over two and a half years went by, but the PHQ is yet to complete investigations in the departmental cases, let alone punishing any of the officers.

In the meantime, the commission wrote at least six letters to the home ministry, asking it to complete the proceedings against the accused cops and inform it about the actions taken.

The NHRC gave deadlines thrice – in April, May and August – last year and April 1 this year, but to no avail.

In reply to the NHRC letters, the senior secretary's office time and again stated that allegations against the cops were primarily proved and proceedings of departmental cases were underway.

According to one of the letters written to the NHRC on March 20, 2022, fifty witnesses were detected in the departmental cases filed against SI Mizan and SI Samraj and statements of 15 of the witnesses were recorded.

The process to file a departmental case against former Zakiganj OC Abdun Naser is under process, according to the letters.

This correspondent contacted NHRC on May 8, the officials said they sent another letter to the home ministry, requesting it to complete the probe by May 20.

Asked, NHRC Chairman Kamal Uddin Ahmed said there has been dilly-dallying over the matter, but punishment to the persons responsible has to be meted out.

"Sometimes we get frustrated. In some cases, they are taking action as per NHRC's request. The culture of punishing those responsible and providing compensation to victims has not yet been established in our country," he told The Daily Star.

Amirul Islam, additional superintendent of police at the PHQ, who is tasked with NHRC issues, said the departmental cases were under investigation against the three officers.

## Gas supply to remain shut in parts of Dhaka for 10hrs today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gas supply will remain suspended in different parts of the capital from 10:00am to 8:00pm today due to pipeline replacement work.

According to a public notice of the Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Limited, the areas where gas supply will remain suspended are Moghbazar, Noyatola, Madhubagh, Tejgaon, Hatirjheel, Meer-er-bagh, Gabtola, Greenway, Peyarabagh, and Eskaton (Dilu Road).

All kinds of gas supply to household and commercial consumers will remain halted during the period, said Titas.

Consumers in adjoining areas may experience low pressure in gas supply, it added.

Titas has expressed regret for the inconvenience.

## Two children drown in Banshkhali

UNB, Ctg

Two children drowned in Banshkhali upazila of Chattogram yesterday.

The victims were Romaisa Jannat, one and a half-year-old daughter of Abdullah Al Mamun Faisal of Chhnua union, and Abir, 2, son of Abu Hamid of ward 4 under Banshkhali.

Locals said Romaisa fell into a pond in Madhukhali area around 8:30am.

After rescuing the girl, family members took her to the local upazila health complex where doctors declared her dead.

In another incident, Abir drowned in a water body in Neyazar para around 1:00pm, said his family.

He was declared dead at the local upazila health complex.

The health complex's doctor Jannatul Ferdous confirmed the deaths of the children.

## Half of mangrove ecosystems at risk

Say conservationists

AFP, Geneva

Half of the world's mangrove ecosystems are at risk of collapse due to climate change, deforestation and pollution, according to a study published yesterday.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), known for its red list of threatened species, has for the first time taken stock of the world's mangroves, evaluating 36 different regions.

## Govt to buy 261 SUVs for DCs, UNOs

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in the face of criticism from different quarters.

Though the total expenditure was initially estimated at Tk 381 crore, the figure will increase now as the taka depreciated recently.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs gave the go-ahead to the proposal on October 11 last year, but the Prime Minister's Office then asked the public administration ministry about the rationale for buying the SUVs.

The PMO wanted to know the present

conditions of the vehicles bought under the government's development projects, under what criteria the price of a SUV was fixed, how many cars the field level administration had and what were their conditions.

The PMO later approved the proposal after having an explanation from the ministry, sources at the ministry said.

However, the public administration ministry is yet to receive formal directives from the PMO in this regard.

"We have been informed verbally that the prime minister has approved

the proposal. Pragati Industries Ltd will be allowed to purchase the SUVs once we receive a formal order," a ministry official told The Daily Star, wishing anonymity.

Speaking to this correspondent, another official said the authorities usually follows the Direct Purchase Method (DPM) for prioritised purchases of the government.

"Since these SUVs will be bought by a government organisation, Pragati, there will be no need for floating a tender," the official added.

## Voter turnout second lowest in 16 years

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percent, 36.54 percent, and 38.62 percent. The average turnout in that elections was 40 percent.

This year, 38.47 percent voters exercised their franchise in 129 upazilas where elections were held using paper ballots. The figure was 32.17 percent in 23 upazilas where electronic voting machines (EVMs) were used.

Panchari upazila of Khagrachhari logged the highest turnout at 74.95 percent, while Bagmara of Rajshahi recorded the lowest 17.98 percent. Voting in both the upazilas was conducted using paper ballots.

**AL MEN WIN BIG AGAIN**

Like the first phase of the upazila polls, Awami League men won chairman elections in almost all 156 upazilas that

went to polls in the second phase on Tuesday.

Though the ruling party did not field candidates this year, grassroots AL leaders ran for chairman as independents.

Party sources said at least 136 AL leaders have been elected upazila chairman and at least six expelled BNP leaders have won chairman polls.

BNP boycotted the elections saying that polls cannot be held in a free and fair manner under the incumbent Election Commission. The party has expelled many grassroots leaders for running in the elections.

This year, a total of 24 women candidates contested the upazila polls in the first phase. In the second phase, the number went up by only one.

Only six women chairman candidates

became victorious in the two phases of the upazila elections. Of them, four won the polls in the second phase, shows EC data.

On Tuesday, Selina Mirza won the chairman polls to Ullapara Upazila Parishad in Sirajganj, Sabekunnahar was elected chairman of Panchbibi upazila in Joypurhat, Nargis Begum of Bhuaupur upazila in Tangail and Wana Marzia Nitu of Galachipa upazila in Patuakhali.

Chairman elections were not held in seven out of the 156 upazilas that went to the polls on Tuesday as the candidates there were elected uncontested.

In the first phase of the polls, Sarkar Farhana Akter was elected chairman of Domar upazila in Nilphamari and Roma Akter of Nasiragar upazila in Brahmanbaria.

A total of 139 upazilas went to polls on May 8 and eight of them saw the chairman aspirants becoming elected uncontested.

In the previous upazila polls held in 495 upazilas in 2019, seven women were elected upazila chairman.

EC Additional Secretary Ashok Kumar Debnath said a fewer number of women candidates are winning the upazila polls and the number of women participating in the direct election is less.

The number of women in politics is less which is another reason for a few women candidates coming out victorious, he said.

The sixth upazila parishad elections are being held in four phases this year.

A total of 112 upazilas will vote in the third phase on May 29, and 56 in the fourth phase on June 5.