

AL leader hacked to death in Sylhet

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

An Awami League leader was hacked to death while he was returning home after praying at a local mosque in Sylhet's Bishwanath upazila on Wednesday night.

Md Maniruzzaman Lilo, 50, was the vice president of Awami League's Rampasha union unit in the upazila.

He was also a businessman and a resident of Nawdhar village.

Around 8:30pm, Maniruzzaman was returning home alone after offering Esha prayers in the village mosque when a group of assailants swopped on him with sharp weapons, police and locals said.

Hearing his screams, locals rushed to the spot and took him to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, where the duty doctor declared him dead.

His nephew, Abu Foyez, said, "We do not know whether he had previous enmities, so anyone could have killed him."

Rama Prasad, officer-in-charge of Bishwanath Police Station, said, "The body was handed over to family after an autopsy. We will take the necessary action after a case is filed."



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir addresses a programme in front of the party's Nayapalton office in the capital yesterday. At the event, he demanded that former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her aides be tried on mass killing charges.

More advisers to be sworn in today

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secretary, who was appointed as special assistant to this interim government's chief adviser on August 12, and Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan, former power secretary, also received the invitation.

Officials of the Cabinet Division and the Bangabhaban could not disclose the number and names of new advisers.

"I don't know the new advisers' names," Joyal Abedin, press secretary of President Mohammed Shahabuddin, told The Daily Star.

However, state-run news agency BSS reported that "four to five more advisers" are set to take oath.

The interim government is going to expand its advisory council a week after its advisers took the oath of office.

Besides Prof Yunus, 16 advisers are now in this government. Prof Yunus and 13 other advisers - Salehuddin Ahmed, Asif Nazrul, Adilur Rahman, Hassan Arif, Touhid Hossain, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Sharmeen Hossain, Brig Gen (ret'd) Sakhawat Hossain, AFM Khalid Hossain, Farida Akhter, Nurjahan Begum, Nahid Islam and Asif Mahmud - were sworn in on August 8, four days after the fall of Hasina-led government amid an uprising.

Supradeep Chakma and Bidhan Ranjan Roy Poddar took oath as advisers on August 11 and Farooq e-Azam the next day.

Chief Adviser Prof Yunus himself is overseeing 24 ministries and divisions, including Cabinet Division, and ministries of defence, education, and road transport and bridges.

HIGH TREASON

Russia jails US-Russian woman for 12 years

AFP, Moscow

A Russian court yesterday jailed US-Russian citizen Ksenia Karelina for 12 years after she was found guilty of "high treason" for giving about \$50 to a pro-Ukraine charity in a case slammed as "vindictive cruelty" by the US presidency.

The 32-year-old ballet dancer and spa worker from Los Angeles was detained in the Urals city of Yekaterinburg in January while visiting family.

Hasina faces another ICT case

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Chittagong highway in Narayanganj on July 20.

Eight others accused in the complaint are Obaidul Quader, Awami League general secretary and former road transport minister; Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, former home minister; Zunaid Ahmed Palak, former state minister for telecommunications and IT; Mohammad Ali Arafat, former state minister for information; Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun, former inspector general of police; Harun Or Rashid, former additional commissioner (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP); Habibur Rahman, former DMP commissioner; and Harun Ar Rashid, former director general of Rab.

Investigation of this complaint and the one filed on Wednesday will be held simultaneously, Aatur Rahman, deputy director (admin) of the investigation agency, told The Daily Star last night.

Once the probe is done, the agency will submit the report to the Chief

S Alam, Nassa

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and Gulshan branch in Dhaka in 2003.

The ailing National Bank waived Tk 2,283 crore as interest on the loans of eight companies of S Alam Group: S Alam Super Edible Oil got Tk 715 crore interest waiver, S Alam and Company got Tk 456 crore, S Alam Vegetable Oil got Tk 322.77 crore, NAF Trading Tk 249.96 crore, Adil Corporation Tk 185.23 crore, Pusti Vegetable Ghee Tk 158 crore; Fairy Trade international Tk 122.87 crore and S Alam Brothers Tk 73.14 crore.

As a result, S Alam Group ended up repaying the principal amount of Tk 4,928 crore and no interest, according to central bank documents.

Some companies of Sikder Group, which held controlling stakes in National Bank then, had loans in three Shariah-based banks controlled by the S Alam Group and National Bank provided the interest waiver facility to S Alam Group on the assurance that Sikder Group would be afforded the same facility in the Islamic banks, The Daily Star has learnt from people with knowledge of the tacit deal.

People beaten up, harassed at Dhanmondi-32

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The media were also being obstructed from doing their duty. Several journalists, including those of this newspaper, were harassed and made to delete photos they took. A man announced on a loudspeaker, "Do not take photos and videos. Those inside buildings looking down, do not take out your phones."

Kader Siddique Bir Uttam, the president of the Krishak Samik Janata League, was attacked when he attempted to pay his respects.

Kader Siddique told The Daily Star, "I went to pay respect [to Bangabandhu] at 7 in the morning, but I couldn't. It felt nice that a few people respectfully asked me to go back... I was inside the car. However, some people threw stones and vandalised the car. After that, I left. Today, I saw some people tied up with ropes [near the Dhanmondi 32 area], which is unacceptable."

The officer-in-charge of Dhanmondi Police Station, Emran Hossain, said that 16 people were handed over to policemen and some were injured and needed medical attention.

Sohel, 45, was beaten up by the people. He was left reeling with split knuckles and knees, and a swollen left arm he could not move. A rickshaw-puller rescued him.

"I am from Panchagarh. I came to Dhaka because my son just got admitted to Notre Dame College and I wanted to drop him off. I was on the back of a motorcycle with a

brother of mine, and I was not going to Dhanmondi-32. I was just passing by," he told this reporter.

Police and army personnel were present there but did not intervene.

Md Azim, a student, said they were holding the ground to prevent the Awami League from using this as an opportunity to organise. "We have been here since morning. If anyone tries to take away the freedom we earned with our blood, we will resist."

The students' platform against discrimination had announced "resistance week" centring the day. ICT Adviser of the interim government Nahid Islam in a Facebook post yesterday evening condemned the act of checking phones and swooping on unarmed innocent people.

"Our revolution is based on justice and principles. The aim of our student-citizen revolution was to abolish the fascist system, establish security of life and justice in society. We have to continue the resistance, on the other hand we have to uphold our spirit of the rebellion," read his post.

One of the central leaders of the students' platform, Hasnat Abdullah, on his social media page said, "Bangladesh Chhatra League members used to stop us and check our phones to find evidence of resistance. Today we heard that students, claiming to be from the Anti-discrimination Student Movement, had been checking phones and violating the privacy of the people. We protest against this and warn them

about repeating this in the future.

"We have also heard that the media have been obstructed from taking photos and filming. We believe in the independence of the press. We criticise those who had harassed journalists."

In past years, Awami League leaders and workers of every level thronged Dhanmondi 32, often with camerapersons in tow, to lay wreaths at the mural in front of the Bangabandhu museum. This visit of homage was mandatory to prove allegiance to the party.

The museum was torched after the fall of the Hasina-led government on August 5.

The interim government on August 13 withdrew the public holiday.

The national flag was at full-mast at Bangladesh Secretariat yesterday, unlike previous years when it was at half-mast.

Even though there were no government programmes to mark the day, there were small events organised by some organisations.

The Communist Party of Bangladesh held a discussion marking the National Day of Mourning at its party office in Palton.

CPB President Shah Alam presided over the meeting while General Secretary Rubin Hossain Prince and economist MM Akash took part in the discussion.

Udichi Shilpigoshthi too organised a discussion at their central office to mark the day.

accusing Hasina, 10 named, and several unnamed others of killing Shahabuddin, 35, in the capital's Agargaon on August 5.

The case was filed with the court of Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Faraha Diba Chanda.

The other accused are Quader, Asaduzzaman, Anisul, Hasan Mahmud, Arafat, Salman, Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun, Habibur Rahman, Harun Or Rashid (DB) and Biplob Kumar Sarker.

The magistrate recorded the complainant's statement and directed the officer-in-charge of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station to register the complaint.

The previous government fell after Hasina on August 5 fled to India amid a mass uprising that began as a student protest for reforming quotas in government jobs.

Over 550 people, including students and law enforcers, were killed in violence during the uprising.

Foreign ministry recalls seven envoys

Five other officials posted overseas also ordered to return

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has called back seven of Bangladesh's ambassadors who were on contractual postings overseas.

In addition, orders to return home have been issued for five other officials who were on contract or deputation abroad.

The development is part of the interim government's decision to make personnel changes in various ministries.

The foreign ministry yesterday issued separate orders in this regard.

The envoys who were asked to return to Dhaka are Mohammad Imran, ambassador to the US; Kamrul Hasan, ambassador to Russia; Rear Admiral SM Abul Kalam Azad, ambassador to the Maldives; Javed Patwary, ambassador to Saudi Arabia; Shahabuddin Ahmed, ambassador to Japan; Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, ambassador to Germany; and Abu Zafar, ambassador to the UAE.

The five other officials who were ordered to return are Wahiduzzaman Noor and Arifa Rahman Ruma, first secretary and counsellor at the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington; Aparna Rani Pal and Mobashira Farzana Mithila, counsellors at the Bangladesh Embassy in Ottawa; and Asib Uddin Ahmed, third secretary at the Bangladesh consulate in New York.

Metro service

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- Mirpur-10 and Kazipara - halting the metro rail operations.

The government directed DMTCCL on August 11 to complete necessary technical checks within seven days to resume the service.

However, the operation of the two stations will remain suspended until those are repaired.

On the same day, the advisory council of the interim government decided to resume metro rail service tomorrow.

"But due to unavoidable situation, it was not possible to start necessary technical checks," reads the press release signed by Mohammad Abdur Rouf, company secretary of DMTCCL.

"In this situation, it would not be possible to resume metro rail operation as per plan. DMTCCL regrets for it cordially," it added.

The Daily Star could not reach

Never-ending

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Taqsem was appointed Wasa MD on October 14, 2009. His tenure was extended for the seventh time on October 14, 2023.

There are allegations that Wasa supplied contaminated water and overspent funds on projects that did not bear fruit while Taqsem was at the helm.

Many say that the cost of Dhaka Wasa water increased 16 times because of him.

In May 2023, former Wasa chairman Gholam Mostafa wrote a letter to the LGD, highlighting the irregularities at Wasa.

The ministry then responded by promptly removing Mostafa from his post and keeping Taqsem, a US citizen, as the MD.

Mostafa told this newspaper at that time that Taqsem's monthly salary increased by 421 percent over the years and stood at Tk 6.25 lakh. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, his salary was bumped by Tk 1.75 lakh.

Talking to reporters at his office yesterday, LGD Adviser AF Hassan Arif said, "The stories of his corruption are known to people."

The corrupt individuals who used to surround Taqsem are still active, he said.

"We will take legal action against them," he added.

In 2019, Taqsem caused public outrage after saying that Wasa water was fully safe for drinking.

He made the claim at a press conference arranged to refute allegations made by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB).

TIB, after a year-long study titled "Dhaka Wasa: Challenges of Good Governance and Way Forward", revealed their findings in April 2019, mentioning how 91 percent of the 2,728 service recipients of Dhaka Wasa water had to boil the water to make it drinkable.

In the process, they burnt gas worth Tk 332 crore a year.

But many Dhaka dwellers are still

DMTCCL Managing Director MAN Siddique and Abdur Rouf for comments over phone.

However, sources said the employees of grade 10 to 20 have been on strike since August 6 to press home their six-point demand, including pay hike.

The top officials of DMTCCL and even the immediate past secretary of the Road Transport and Highways Division talked to the employees and assured them of meeting the demands, but they refused to call off the strike, the sources said.

"So, the operation is not going to resume from Saturday [tomorrow]," an official said, wishing to be unnamed.

Responding to a query, the official said once the employees withdraw their work abstention, it would take at least five days to complete necessary preparation, so it is not possible to say when the metro rail operation will restart.

buying dirty and smelly water, facing acute shortage of drinking water, being deprived of access to the sewerage network, and encountering the same old water logging.

Mizanur Rahman, a resident of Jurain's Mistir Dokan area, said many of around two lakh residents of Purba Jurain are still facing similar problems and some do not even have running water.

Mizanur is one of a few hundred residents from Jurain, Shyampur, Madhya Badda, Rampura and Teigaon who demonstrated in front of the Wasa's Karwan Bazar headquarters on April 23, 2019.

The image of him carrying a jug full of dirty water as a sarcastic gift of "sherbet" to Taqsem is still fresh in the minds of Dhaka residents.

Mizanur and several others held a human chain in front of Wasa yesterday demanding that Taqsem be arrested and punished.

The city dwellers did not get the benefit of Wasa's treatment plants due to absence of a supply network, experts say.

Widespread corruption and delays in project implementation also plagued Wasa, said a report of the Anti Corruption Commission in July 2019.

The ACC report said Wasa kept extending deadlines and increasing the costs of projects to create room for corruption.

Corruption and irregularities also took place during the selection of consultants and contractors during revenue collection and overtime bill disbursements, said the report.

Manual metre reading is also an area where cartels have been formed to misappropriate money and deny the government its revenue, said the report that identified eight projects and three areas in Dhaka where corruption took place, and made a 12-point recommendation to prevent graft.

Provide info on bank accounts

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S Alam Group was founded by Saiful Alam in 1985, and has since risen to become one of Bangladesh's largest conglomerates.

The group's business interests range from commodity trade to fishing, building materials to real estate, textiles to media, intercity buses to shipping, and power and energy to banking and insurance.

S Alam's wife Farzana and brother Hasan are directors of S Alam Luxury Chair Coach Service and S Alam Cold Rolled Steel Limited. S Alam's mother, Chemon Ara Begum, on the other hand, is a director of S Alam Luxury Chair Coach Service.

The NBR asked banks that the information be provided as soon as possible.

S Alam he did not pick up our calls yesterday. Subrata Kumar Bhowmick, an executive director of S Alam Group, could not be reached over the phone. He also did not respond to text messages.

The move by the NBR's field office comes in less than two weeks after a mass uprising forced former prime minister

Sheikh Hasina to step down, ending her 15-year rule.

There have been various allegations, including money laundering, against S Alam Group, which was one of the industrial groups to benefit during the tenure of the ousted Awami League government.

A year ago, an investigation by The Daily Star found, S Alam built a business empire in Singapore worth at least \$1 billion, although there is no record of him taking any permission from Bangladesh Bank to invest or transfer any funds abroad.

Two days later, on August 6, 2023, the High Court, on a suo motu (voluntary) move, directed the authorities concerned to conduct an inquiry into the allegations against S Alam and submit reports in two months.

However, on August 23, the Supreme Court chamber judge put on hold the inquiry against S Alam.

Later, on February 4, 2024, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court discharged the High Court Division's suo moto rule.