

Swechchhasebak Dal man hacked to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Bogura*

An activist of Swechchhasebak Dal was hacked to death in Bogura early yesterday.

The deceased, identified as local sand trader Abu Sayeed, 33, came under attack at Paschim Para Nishindhara area of the town after 12:00am, according to the police.

Locals rescued and rushed him to Bogura Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital where he died during treatment, said police.

Sayeed's brother Md Ripon said unknown people called Sayeed over the phone after midnight and later hacked him with sharp weapons.

His father Yusuf Ali filed a case against unidentified people over the incident later in the day, said SM Mouin Uddin, officer-in-charge of Bogura Sadar Police Station.

"We have not found any motive behind the murder yet," said the police officer. "No one has been arrested, but police are working to identify those involved in the murder."

Hossain Ali, member secretary of Bogura Town Swechchhasebak Dal, confirmed that Sayeed was an activist of the BNP-affiliated organisation.



Touhid Hossain, adviser to the foreign ministry, addresses a session on the second day of the two-day National Dialogue 2024 titled "Unity, Reform, and Elections" organised by the Forum for Bangladesh Studies at the Krishibid Institution Auditorium in the capital's Khamarbari area yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Police extorting bribes from their own

FROM PAGE 1

The Daily Star has learnt seven such incidents where policemen and others were extorted allegedly by police and local leaders of BNP.

Along with 179 other people, including 36 other police officers, Anup is accused of attempted murder of Ahadul Islam, 25, who was shot and injured during the protests.

Prominent Supreme Court lawyer ZI Khan Panna was also accused in the case, but his name was later dropped in the face of intense criticism.

Complainant Mohammad Baker, 52, father of victim Ahadul, used to sell vegetables in Banasree. When the controversy over Panna's name in the case arose, Baker had told this newspaper over the phone that he did not know any of the accused.

"A lawyer named Jashim and some other people drafted the list. I just signed the first information report [FIR]. I wanted justice for my son. So, I sought their help to file the case," he had said.

Baker had added he had no details of lawyer Jashim. Several attempts by this newspaper to reach the lawyer failed at that time.

Several other police officers accused in the case alleged that a section of their colleagues, in collusion with local BNP men, were running rackets to extort vulnerable policemen.

Requesting anonymity, the officers said their colleagues involved in these rackets had been very active in subduing the student-led mass uprising. Now these rogue officers have ganged up with local BNP men only to cover up their misdeeds during the Awami League regime.

With the tables turned, explained police officers, a section of their colleagues have also seized the opportunity for retribution and personal gain.

They explained that these rackets are threatening them with more murder cases if they do not comply and pay.

Speaking to The Daily Star, the accused police officers alleged that these extortionists were demanding Tk 2 lakh from inspectors, Tk 1 lakh from sub-inspectors and Tk 50,000 from assistant sub-inspectors.

Some officers who had actually fired

weapons during the incident on July 19, as documented in a previous case, were not named in the attempted murder case, raising concerns about selective accusations. The Daily Star has copies of both the initial FIR and the revised one over the July 19 incident.

Along with Anup, Sub-Inspector Rashedur Rahman also stands accused in the case. According to the case document, Rashedur allegedly fired at protesters.

However, records of Bhashantek Police Station show he was transferred from Rampura to Bhasantek on July 8, 11 days before the incident.

Speaking to this newspaper, Rashedur also pointed out that Bhasantek is nearly 12 km away from Rampura and it was simply not possible that he could fire upon protesters in Rampura and be on duty in Bhashantek at the same time.

SI Rashedur had decided not to pay either. "Why would I pay for dropping my name from a case over a crime which I did not commit?"

Similarly, Inspector Partha Pratim Brahmachari, who served in the Ramna Division's Detective Branch until his transfer on July 23, is implicated in the same case. He refused to pay.

"They demanded Tk 2 lakh or else threatened to accuse me in murder cases in future," Partha alleged.

Another inspector accused in the case claimed that the group was asking for Tk 5 lakh or threatened to slap him with five murder cases.

Some officers alleged that the group demanded money from 16 officers named in the case, threatening to name them in more cases if they did not pay.

People close to many of these officers, who requested anonymity, have confirmed that they agreed to pay their colleagues.

They said extortionists mention "Tk 2" for inspectors and "Tk 1" for sub-inspectors. The officers later explained "Tk 1" in such extortion parlance means Tk 1 lakh. A former officer-in-charge of a police station in Dhaka told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity that he had personally mediated at least seven cases where his colleagues paid extortionists to avoid being named as accused in cases.

He pointed out that the transactions typically happened before the cases were filed since it is difficult to get the names off afterwards.

He also told this newspaper recently that such extortion rackets were running rampant within the police force.

Contacted for this report, a Dhaka Metropolitan Police spokesman said they did not receive any specific allegations of policemen extorting their colleagues.

"We'll take action if someone brings specific allegations," said Talebur Rahman, deputy commissioner (media) of DMP.

Contacted for comments on the alleged involvement of local BNP men in the extortionist gangs, a senior leader of the party said they had clarified their stance against extortion on many occasions in the past.

Wishing not to be named, he mentioned that the party had also taken action like expulsion against activists accused of extortion.

The Daily Star's attempts to reach several other BNP leaders failed.

Several key officials of the government and police have publicly acknowledged such extortions are taking place.

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul said that since August 5, many cases have been being filed against political rivals and victims, causing embarrassment for the government. "During the fascist regime, ghost cases were common, and the government itself filed such cases. Our government does not do this," he said.

Home Affairs Adviser Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said that action would be taken against those filing cases to harass others.

"Currently, many cases are being filed, and many innocent people are being dragged into these. I am instructing the heads of law enforcement agencies to take action against those who are filing such cases," he said.

DMP Commissioner SM Sazzat Ali recently vowed action against such complainants and police personnel, saying he had already ordered officers-in-charge to sue complainants for extortion.

"You are neither engaging with political parties nor cooperating with them."

Fakhrul called upon the interim government to complete essential reforms in key areas, including the judiciary, the EC, and law enforcement agencies, to ensure credible and acceptable elections.

Mentioning that the BNP has no objection to the formation of new political parties, he said the nation will assess whether this truly benefits the country.

"We have no objection to the formation of new parties, be it 100 or 200. But the people will think how much this will benefit the nation. Do you know what a current problem in Bangladesh is? It is that we all are politicians."

Fakhrul emphasised the urgent need for the government to focus more on governance issues to meet people's demands, including cooling the prices of essentials, and ensuring safer roads.

Criticising the interim government, Fakhrul expressed concerns over previous corruption and mismanagement in the financial sector.

"All the money from the banks has been looted, but not a single case has been filed yet against those responsible. Instead, we see the same old tactics – cases are being filed against 1,000 or 1,500 unnamed suspects. A business arrangement has been made again in the same manner."

"Unless these practices are stopped, you [chief adviser] won't be able to achieve your goals," he added.

The youth have right to form political party

FROM PAGE 12

"We are going through a big challenge. People who will take power after the interim government will also face a very big challenge. And the challenge is not only internal but also the biggest challenge is coming from external sources."

Referring to the activities of the Arakan Army in Rakhine of Myanmar, Sakhawat said he had repeatedly said that a new system is coming up in the East, so preparations must be taken.

"Now it is happening. You have a new neighbour and they are a different kind of neighbour. If we cannot establish the fastest communication with them, there might be trouble from them also."

Sakhawat proposed bicameral legislation, a partial proportional representation system, increasing women's seats in the parliament to 100, election through PR for the women's seats and enactment of political parties' act to oversee the activities of parties.

The upper house should oversee the national polls so that a caretaker government system will not be needed to oversee the parliamentary polls, Sakhawat said.

Earlier, Gonoforum leader Subrata Chowdhury said the unity that was seen immediately after the July uprising has weakened a lot now.

"Forming a political party under government blessing is never a blessing for countrymen," he added.

The words "Jano Ganotantrik Bangladesh" should be included in place of "Gano Prajantantrik Bangladesh", said New Age Editor Nurul Kabir.

Although both the terms translate as the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the word "Praja" has a different meaning in Bangla; it means subjects in a feudal system.

There should not be any national religion and the five basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, health, and education should be included in the fundamental rights part of the constitution.

"Democratisation of education is a must need... If we have three different streams of education which creates three separate groups and cultures, we will move to civil war."

He proposed for a uniform education system and the medium of instruction should be Bengali.

A framework of constitutional reform can be prepared, said Hasnat Quaiyum, chief coordinator Rastro Songskar Andolon.

A constituent assembly can be formed through the next general polls, said Sarwar Tusher, joint convener of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee.

After completion of the framing of the new constitution, that constituent assembly can turn into a regular legislature.

"It is not fair to put reform and election face to face. Some people are

talking about de-politicisation, that is just rhetoric. We need to have unity on Bangladesh and not just on election," he added.

Ganosamhati Andolon's Executive Coordinator Abul Hasan Rubel supported Sarwar's proposal for a constituent assembly. New political settlement following a mass upsurge makes reforms inevitable, he added.

"This government is for the people, of the people, but not by the people," said Habibur Rahman, Chhatra Dol research cell member.

The government should focus on limited reforms rather than highly ambitious ones, he said, adding that constitution-making is a majoritarian exercise.

The interim government should take exemplary steps in the economic sector, said Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, a professor of economics at the University of Dhaka.

Equality, human dignity and social justice inscribed in the proclamation of independence should be premises of the constitution, said Lyricist Shahidullah Farazi.

Islami Andolan Bangladesh Joint-Secretary General Maulana Gazi Aatur Rahman said they favour the freedom of religion of all and they are free to exercise their religion.

He proposed having a proportionate representation system.

Trial of top brass to be completed within a year

FROM PAGE 1

is politically motivated," the adviser told the National Dialogue 2024, organised by the Forum for Bangladesh Studies at the Krishibid Institute Bangladesh.

Speaking at the same session, ICT Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam said, "The tribunal cannot bring to justice every single officer or individual involved in crimes against humanity [within the time frame of the interim government]. But we'll bring the 'top commanders' to justice."

He added that this will include Sheikh Hasina and those who acted as deputies in the chain of command. "Let the criminal courts deal with the rest."

The chief prosecutor further said the tribunal, with 17 investigation officers and 10 prosecutors, are being realistic with their ambitions.

Attorney General Asaduzzaman said, "One of our challenges is making sure this tribunal can never be called a 'kangaroo court' and verdicts be questioned."

"We're faced with the reality that many criminal cases are being filed under questionable circumstances and people are being victimised. But we want to assure you that those cases will not impact the processes of the ICT, which will not focus on one or two incidents, but rather attempt to prove that crimes against humanity were committed in the whole."

General Secretary of Biplobi Workers Party Kazi Saiful Haque cautioned against indulging in vengeful tactics and urged upholding the spirit of justice.

He said it has to be decided who had the command responsibility, and who were field officers carrying out the orders. "The kind of justice meted out to each of these two categories will be different."

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami Publicity Affairs Secretary Motiur Rahman Akand expressed frustrations at the speed of the judicial process. "It has been 141 days already and we're yet to see any trial successfully completed. We feel the government is not being swift enough."

Speakers also demanded the trial of officers of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) for their role in perpetrating enforced disappearances.

"The DGFI is not acknowledging that it was linked to enforced disappearances. There needs to be accountability," said Sanjida Islam Tulee, coordinator of Mayer Daak, the platform for victims of enforced disappearance.

Didarul Islam Bhuiyan, a member of the Digital Security Act Victims Network, said, "In this new Bangladesh, we don't want the presence of forces like DGFI or Rapid Action Battalion, that were used as tools of oppression by the past

of international relations at Dhaka University, said a National Security Council was necessary."

Ganosamhati Andolon leader Zonayed Saki said that Bangladesh's foreign policy over the past 15 years has been a policy focused on protecting the regime. National security was not a priority.

"What is needed is a policy that focuses on safeguarding security. Without building internal political unity, we will not be able to protect national interests and security."

Arif Sohel, member secretary of the Student Against Discrimination, said that staying under the shelter of great powers was Awami League's habit. "Our stance is clear: we will remain independent for as long as we live. We must curb religious extremism and protect our borders. These will become crucial in the days ahead."

Akhter Hossain, member secretary of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee, said that Bangladesh's interests used to be overlooked in favour of India's. "We demand that the agreements made with India in the past be disclosed. We want to see whether these agreements have protected Bangladesh's interests."