

2 killed as train hits bike in Nilphamari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Two bikers were killed as an intercity train hit their motorbike near a Nilphamari level crossing area yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Bhubesh Chandra Roy, 30, and Sontosh Chandra Roy, 45.

Both were from Chawra Borobasa Patowari Para village in Sadar upazila and worked as day labourers, said Officer-in-Charge of Saidpur Railway Police Mahamudunnabi.

According to railway police and eyewitnesses, the Chilahati-bound train, Chilahati Express, coming from Dhaka, was approaching Nilphamari Railway Station around 6:30am. When the train neared the Arazi Polashbari Kanaikata rail crossing, it struck a motorbike carrying the two victims.

Both died on the spot.

Locals said the rail crossing had no gate.

Nilphamari Station Master Mithun Roy confirmed the incident and said it occurred just minutes before the train was scheduled to arrive at the station.

The OC said process is underway to hand over the bodies to their families.



A photojournalist takes a picture of a residential building that was hit in an Israeli strike during the 12-day Iran-Israel war in Tehran yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

‘Release them, they’re innocent’

Family of Lalmonirhat father-son urge cops

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

“My husband and son are innocent,” pleaded 65-year-old Gita Rani Shil, wife of Paresch Chandra Shil, to Rangpur Range’s Additional DIG Mohammad Sharif Uddin during his visit to Lalmonirhat yesterday.

Gita Rani and her family broke down in tears, pleading for justice and release of Paresch Chandra Shil, 69, and his son Bishnu Chandra Shil, 35 – both barbers by profession – who were arrested on June 22 over allegations of hurting religious sentiment.

The two, from Saptana Nabintari in Lalmonirhat municipality, were beaten by a mob before being detained. Paresch has run a barbershop at Goshala Bazar for over five decades.

“They never insulted any religion. A group spread false rumours and instigated a mob to beat them before handing them over to police. My husband is ill and suffering in jail. Please help secure their release,” she said to the police official, who met the family members at the Shri Shri Gourishankar Goshala Society premises in the town.

Her daughter-in-law Dipti Rani Shil, addressing the DIG, added, “Sir, my husband and father-in-law have done nothing wrong. Since the incident, I live in fear with my aged mother-in-law and two daughters. A proper investigation will reveal the truth.”

DIG Sharif Uddin assured the family of a neutral investigation and said, “If anyone attempts to incite unrest in the name of religion, we’ll take strict action.”

“Police are investigating the case impartially and will submit the findings to court,” he said.

Mob justice a threat to humanity

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torture and oppression worldwide.

“A violent madness called ‘mob justice’ has become an enemy of humanity. This will endanger the environment for building a democratic culture. To prevent the return of a one-dimensional state, democracy must be kept dynamic and its continuity must be ensured.”

Bangladesh had been turned into a totalitarian state during the Awami League rule, with all forms of civil liberties, including freedom of expression, suppressed, he said.

The press was “chained by old laws” and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was unjustly imprisoned in false cases and denied proper medical treatment.

During the past 16 years, “democracy has been imprisoned”, with people of opposing views facing years of imprisonment, disappearances and even murders under the tyranny of the government.

He accused the authorities of fostering a culture of impunity, endangering the safety of ordinary citizens, including women and children.

He further said that “bloodthirstiness” continues to fuel violence and bloodshed around the world, with countless people killed, injured or left maimed due to repression by autocratic regimes.

Despite independence gained by many countries after World War II, violence and conflict persist, he said.

Tarique went on to call for the establishment of a society based on humanity, justice, the rule of law and free and fair elections.

He urged democratic forces to maintain unity in the fight against all forms of oppression, expressing sympathy for victims of torture worldwide.

Ex-CEC

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The others accused in the case include ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, 11 former election commissioners, and top government and police officials. During the 2014 national election, Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad was the CEC.

According to the complaint, the accused violated the constitution, breached the electoral code of conduct, and falsely pronounced individuals as winners even though they did not receive the people’s votes.

The Awal-led Election Commission held last year’s national polls boycotted by the major opposition parties, including the BNP. In multiple places, the ruling Awami League leaders ran as independents against their party colleagues to make the election appear competitive.

The Huda-led commission held the December 2018 general election. Several political parties alleged that ballot boxes were stuffed the night before election day. The Jatiya Oikya Front in a complaint to the EC mentioned at the time that between 30 and 60 percent of the votes were cast the night before.

In January 2019, Transparency International Bangladesh in a study found that stamping of ballots took place the night before election day in more than one centre in 33 of the 50 surveyed constituencies.

Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad led the EC which held the “one-sided” 2014 national election, in which 153 lawmakers out of 300 were “elected” without needing any vote whatsoever because they were the only ones running for office in their constituencies.

The AL-led alliance won more than two thirds majorities in the three national elections.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus on June 16 ordered an investigation into the roles played by former ECs.

The Electoral Reform Commission in its report in February recommended introducing a mechanism to hold election commissioners accountable for failing to carry out their constitutional duties.

It also called for an investigation into the irregularities by former ECs.

Commission recasts the NCC proposal

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The Constitution Reform Commission had earlier proposed equality, human dignity, social justice, democracy, and pluralism as the basic principles of the constitution.

The revised version has now replaced pluralism with religious freedom and communal harmony.

The reform commission originally proposed that the NCC would oversee appointments to the positions of chief adviser, attorney general, chiefs of the three armed forces, and other constitutional posts.

Parties that supported that proposal maintained that the NCC would help curb the excessive concentration of executive power in the hands of the prime minister.

Under the current constitution, the president is required to act on the prime minister’s advice in most appointments, except in the cases of appointing the prime minister and the chief justice. This gives the executive branch significant control over such matters.

The Committee for Appointments to Constitutional and Statutory Bodies will not oversee appointments of the chief adviser, the attorney general and the chiefs of the three armed forces.

After the consensus commission meeting yesterday, its Vice-President Prof Ali Riaz told reporters that the process to appoint the chief adviser

would be discussed later.

The commission moved away from its earlier NCC framework due to the political parties’ concerns.

The meeting was scheduled to discuss several matters but only the fundamental principles of the constitution and the NCC were discussed, he said.

“While some parties supported retaining the existing principles, others expressed differing views. As a result, no consensus has yet been reached,” he said.

However, he noted that most parties expressed support for five principles: equality and human dignity, social justice, democracy, religious freedom and harmony, and impartiality.

BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed told reporters after the meeting that his party agreed in principle that an individual cannot be the prime minister for more than 10 years. “But if a body like the NCC interferes with executive functions, we will not support it. We will reject the [10-year] limit,” he said.

The current laws that dictate the appointments to constitutional bodies need to be reformed, he said, proposing the formation of search committees through executive orders to ensure transparency and accountability.

“Checks and balances must come from institutional reforms, not simply

by limiting the executive power.”

Regarding the principles, Salahuddin said the proposals should be left for the government which would be formed after the national election to implement.

He also called for the reinstatement of certain elements from the 5th Amendment to the constitution. However, he acknowledged that consensus on these matters has not yet been achieved.

Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Maulana Rafiqul Islam Khan said most political parties agreed to the proposal that no person should serve as prime minister for more than 10 years in their lifetime.

“Except for the BNP, most parties support this proposal. Now it’s up to the commission to implement it,” he said.

Rafiqul further said that parties had reached a consensus on including “complete faith and trust in Almighty Allah” in the fundamental principles.

The left-leaning parties objected to it.

He welcomed the proposal bringing changes to the NCC.

“This proposal aims to safeguard the country and its people from despotic or fascist rules,” he added.

Gonosamhati Andolon Chief Coordinator Zonayed Saki said no consensus had been reached regarding the fundamental principles of the state.

Success of US strikes on Iran faces scrutiny

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deadliest-ever confrontation.

The United States joined the fray in support of its ally, hitting two nuclear facilities with massive bunker-buster bombs over the weekend, while a guided missile from a submarine struck a third.

But leaked US intelligence cast doubt on the damage caused by American strikes.

According to CNN, the early US intelligence assessment was produced by the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Pentagon’s intelligence arm.

The analysis of the damage to the sites and the impact of the strikes on Iran’s nuclear ambitions is ongoing, and could change as more intelligence becomes available, according to the assessment.

But the early findings are at odds with Trump’s repeated claims that the strikes “completely and totally obliterated” Iran’s nuclear enrichment facilities. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth also said on Sunday that Iran’s nuclear ambitions “have been obliterated.”

Two of the people familiar with the assessment said Iran’s stockpile of enriched uranium was not destroyed. One of the people said the centrifuges are largely “intact.” Another source said that the intelligence assessed enriched uranium was moved out of the sites prior to the US strikes.

It also said the strikes sealed off entrances to some facilities without

destroying underground buildings.

“So the (DIA) assessment is that the US set them back maybe a few months, tops,” an official told CNN on condition of anonymity.

The White House acknowledged the existence of the assessment but said it disagreed with it.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told CNN in a statement: “This alleged assessment is flat-out wrong... The leaking of this alleged assessment is a clear attempt to demean President Trump and discredit the brave fighter pilots who conducted a perfectly executed mission to obliterate Iran’s nuclear program. Everyone knows what happens when you drop fourteen 30,000-pound bombs perfectly on their targets: total obliteration.”

Trump yesterday refuted the preliminary assessment and said Tehran’s nuclear sites were “obliterated.” “They’re not going to be building bombs for a long time,” said Trump, adding that the strikes had set back the programme by “decades” and that the Iran-Israel ceasefire that he declared was going “very well.”

Asked if the United States would strike again if Iran rebuilt its nuclear enrichment programme, Trump said: “Sure.”

He later told reporters that Israel and Iran were “both tired, exhausted”, going on to say that talks were planned with Iran “next week”.

Hold local body polls before nat’l election

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Nirbachan Bhaban in the capital.

The meeting was held a day after the party got back its electoral symbol – Daripalla (balance scale) – following a court directive.

Jamaat leader Hamidur said if the local body polls were held under an interim government, those would be much more neutral and credible.

Responding to a query whether Jamaat has confidence in the current EC, he said they were observing the government and the EC.

“We’re observing. And when any work is done properly, we will acknowledge it. We must describe black as black and white as white. If

any deviation occurs, we will have to raise our voice ... We are hopeful that they [EC] will act responsibly, keeping the public interest in mind.”

In the meeting, the Jamaat delegation also discussed introducing the proportional representation system in the general election.

“This system is a good method for fair elections. We have also raised this demand before the EC through a formal meeting,” Azad said.

Jamaat expressed its support for postal and online voting systems for expatriates. “We’ve suggested that the Election Commission can consider postal and online systems as viable options for expatriates’ voting.”

Regarding the registration of Jamaat, Azad said they regained their rights that were taken away unjustly.

“During the previous government’s tenure, Jamaat’s registration was unjustly cancelled, and the party symbol was taken away for political reasons,” said the Jamaat leader.

Two other Jamaat delegation members were its assistant secretaries general Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair and Jashim Uddin Sarker.

Proportional representation is an electoral system in which the distribution of seats corresponds with the proportion of the total votes cast for each party.

BNP agrees to 10yr PM cap, objects to NCC

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chairman Tarique Rahman joining virtually from London.

Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed presented a report on the party’s ongoing reform talks with the National Consensus Commission. All members present supported the change in stance, meeting sources said.

“It is our national duty to stop the path to creating fascists, both constitutionally and in parliamentary practice. From that responsibility, we embrace this expectation of the nation. That is why we have accepted the proposal that no one can remain Prime Minister for more than 10 years,” Salahuddin said.

Explaining his proposal, he said there is confusion about what constitutes a term as someone might serve a partial term that even don’t add up to a year.

“That’s why I proposed that we focus on the maximum number of years a person can serve as prime minister. Only then will it become a proper limit,” Salahuddin added.

Party insiders said the BNP believes that its objection to limiting the PM’s term was hurting its image and giving its political rivals an upper hand for further criticism.

They said the party feared that clinging to its earlier stance could erode public support at the ballot box.

A standing committee member who preferred anonymity told The Daily Star, “Public perception is very important. By disagreeing with this proposal, we were creating doubts in voters’ minds. Even the Jamaat was using it against us.”

Still, the party remains cautious about the proposal to establish a constitutional council. Leaders said if the PM’s authority comes under threat, the BNP would revert to its 31-point reform outline, which

includes limiting the premiership to two consecutive terms.

One senior leader reportedly called the proposed council “dangerous” during internal discussions. Instead, the party is pushing for reforms to existing appointment laws or the enactment of new ones that ensure transparency without stripping executive authority.

Three months ago, the BNP had rejected a proposal to bar anyone from becoming prime minister more than twice, consecutive or not.

On March 23, in its reply to the consensus commission’s call for the parties’ opinions, the BNP suggested, “It would be better if no person can be prime minister for three consecutive terms.”

At that point, the BNP maintained that a former prime minister could return to office after a break, even after serving two terms.

Now, the party says it is willing to accept the 10-year cap, even if it contradicts its “31-Point Outline for Structural Reforms in Bangladesh,” announced on July 13, 2023.

Still, BNP leaders said they think the proposal to limit how long someone can be prime minister is like “tying the hands of politicians and stopping them from doing their work.”

At Tuesday’s meeting, the party also agreed to proposals to appoint the chief justice from among the two senior-most judges, reserve 100 parliamentary seats for women, and create a 100-member upper house.

The BNP said that any major changes to the constitution should be made by an elected parliament thorough debate.

Party leaders said they aim to conclude reform talks quickly so the consensus commission can publish its final “Charter of Reform” by July, paving the way for early elections.

Result of ‘long-term conspiracy’

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targeted killings of officers, their family members were subjected to inhumane torture.

“Women and children were beaten, threatened at gunpoint and their homes ransacked. Many were confined for hours in the quarter guard without food or water in appalling conditions. Both state and personal properties were destroyed, evidence was tampered with and acts of arson were carried out.”

Evidence indicates some political leaders were involved in various capacities; their actions or inaction contributed to the escalation of the crisis, he said.

Both the armed forces command and law enforcement agencies failed to act decisively as the killings unfolded, he said, adding that no effective steps were taken to prevent the mutiny or the massacre.

“The information we have so far points to gross negligence and failure on the part of intelligence agencies.”

Two earlier commissions had attempted to misdirect the investigation, according to Rahman. “There was a deliberate effort to link the incident to militancy to divert its course.”

The commission has received several victim and eyewitness accounts suggesting possible foreign involvement, which are now being verified.

“Based on evidence gathered so far,

we believe timely military intervention could have prevented the killings and other crimes,” Rahman said.

CCTV footage from the time is being analysed. Travel bans have been imposed on 33 individuals in connection with the case.

The commission has so far interviewed 158 individuals, including 55 military and 20 civilian officials, six family members of slain officers, 15 survivors, 25 convicted BDR members, and 29 others who were later released. Testimonies from around 50 more individuals are still pending.

Eight political leaders also gave statements, some from jail or abroad. Awami League leaders Mirza Azam and Jahangir Kabir Nanak submitted testimonies via email.

Depositions were also taken from former armed forces and police officials as well as several journalists. Testimonies from key witnesses are still being recorded.

The commission is in communication with six foreign embassies and the UN Resident Coordinator’s office in Dhaka to collect further information, which will take additional time.

A draft of the investigation report has been prepared and is now under review. Citing the case’s complexity, the commission has requested an extension of its deadline to September 30.