

Bangladeshi expat shot dead in South Africa

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Tangail*

Criminals in South Africa's Limpopo town shot dead a Bangladeshi expatriate on Friday. The victim is Aminul Islam Siddique, 45, of Gorail village in Bhatgram union of Mirzapur upazila, said his family.



Aminul Islam

According to family sources, Aminul migrated to South Africa about 15 years ago in search of better livelihood.

He used to run a departmental store called, "Akash Supershop", in Limpupu town, bordering Zimbabwe. On Friday night, some local criminals entered his shop and shot him in the head six times from a close range and fled. He died on the spot, said his family members.

Aminul leaves behind a son and two daughters.

Milton Siddique, his cousin, said Aminul's body will be brought to Bangladesh within a week after necessary formalities are completed.

Contacted, Rashidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Mirzapur Police Station, told The Daily Star that police received no such information till now.



Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman addresses a joint rally organised by Jamaat and seven like-minded parties in Sylhet city's Alia Madrasha ground in the Chowhatta area yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Hasina's stay in India is her call

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committed during the mass uprising. Bangladesh government wrote to India seeking the extradition of Hasina, once in December last year and then after the verdict last month.

India said it would consider the request.

On the relationship between Bangladesh and India that remains strained since the ouster of Awami League government, Jaishankar emphasized on India's stance on the need for a credible democratic process in Bangladesh.

Referring to past political issues in Bangladesh, Jaishankar said, "What we heard was that people in Bangladesh, particularly those who are now in power, had an issue with how the elections were conducted earlier. Now, if the issue was the election, the first order of business would be to do a fair election."

"As far as we are concerned, we wish Bangladesh well. We think as a democratic country, any democratic country likes to see the will of the people ascertain through a democratic process," he said.

He expressed optimism for the future of the bilateral ties, stressing India's democratic preference for its neighbour.

"And I am quite confident that whatever comes out of the democratic process would have a balanced and mature view about the relationship and hopefully things would improve."

India is a well-wisher for Bangladesh, Jaishankar said.

Those who pressed for election now want to delay it

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in a different tune. This is not a good sign. They've realised that the people are prepared to show them the red card in the upcoming polls," Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman said yesterday

He made the remarks while speaking as the chief guest at a joint rally organised by Jamaat and seven like-minded parties in Sylhet city's Alia Madrasha field in the Chowhatta area in the afternoon.

Shafiqur said, "People had shed blood hoping that politicians might learn a lesson for their misdeeds and start afresh. However, a certain group is still following the old ways."

"They were not willing to accept reforms, were not interested in implementing the July charter, but later, forced the government to hold the referendum on the same day as elections."

The Jamaat ameer said, "Some face backlash for extortion, while others enforce it with more power."

Islami Shashantantra Andolan Ameer Charmonai Pir Syed Fazlul Karim said, "A party's stance against reforms is visible. They went crazy for the elections... Now they are trying to delay the elections."

Khelafat Majlis Ameer Mamunul Haque said, "The Islamist leaders of the country shed blood, were executed, but did not bow to misdeeds. A group of Bangladeshis, backed by Western powers, is trying to impose new fascism on us after we overthrew a fascist party. We will not accept any neo-fascists in the country."

Among others, Nizam-e-Islam Ameer Sarwar Kamal Azizi, Khelafat Andolan Ameer Habibullah Miaji, Jatiya Ganatantrik Party (Jagpa) Vice-President Rashed Pradhan, and Bangladesh Development Party President Anwarul Islam Chan also spoke at the rally.

Seat-sharing snub riles BNP allies

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the second round too, BNP has fielded candidates for seats that should have been set aside for the allies," he said, adding that a place of distrust, doubt and uncertainty had now emerged.

In Jhalakathi-1, BNP leader Rafiqul Islam Jamal was nominated, though Bangladesh Labour Party Chairman Mostafizur Rahman Iran has been campaigning there.

In response, Iran announced that the Labour Party would cut its ties with BNP, saying, "BNP is going back on its words and dreaming of returning to power alone by excluding its partners."

Fariduzzaman Farhad, coordinator of the Jatiyatabadi Samamona Jote, had been campaigning for the Narail-2 seat, where BNP has fielded its own candidate.

"This is the character of BNP. When they're in trouble, they need everyone. And when they think they'll come to power, they forget their allies," said Farhad, who contested with BNP's symbol in the 2018 polls.

BNP insiders said Pirojpur-1 might be kept for the 12-party alliance, where Jatiya Party (Kazi Zafar) Chairman Mustafa Jamal Haider is an aspirant.

BNP Standing Committee member Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain said, "Discussions are underway with partners regarding the seats that have been left vacant. Whether these seats will be given to the allies will be decided and announced later. I still don't know who is expressing anger over the seat-sharing issue."

Earlier on November 3, BNP released a preliminary list of candidates for 237 constituencies. A day later, the ticket for Madaripur-1 was suspended. Then on December 4, it announced candidates for 36 constituencies.

In total, the party has now

announced candidates for 272 constituencies. The remaining 28 constituencies will be announced "in due course," said party secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

15 SEATS OPEN

BNP has yet to finalise its picks in 28 constituencies, and senior leaders say at least 15 of them are being kept aside for alliance partners.

Nilphamari-1 is among the vacant ones, where BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's nephew Shahrin Islam Tuhin and Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam Secretary General Monzurul Islam Afendi are both seeking nominations.

Party sources said the final decision will be made after discussions with allies.

In Bogura-2, Nagorik Oikya Chairman Mahmudur Rahman Manna will run as an alliance candidate. Similarly, BNP withheld nominating its own candidate in Patuakhali-3, where Gono Odhikar Parishad President Nurul Haque Nur intends to contest.

BNP also kept Jhenaidah-2 and -4 vacant.

In Jhenaidah-2, both Gono Odhikar Parishad General Secretary Rashed Khan and the district BNP president are lobbying for the nomination. Party sources said the BNP nominee may eventually be moved to Jhenaidah-4.

Dhaka-13 has been kept for Nationalist Democratic Movement Chairman Bobby Hajjaj, while Dhaka-17 remains open for Bangladesh Jatiya Party Chairman Andaleev Rahman Partho.

No candidates were announced for Bagerhat-1, -2 and -3, and Gazipur-1, due to pending constituency boundary-related legal issues at the appellate division.

Other constituencies being considered for allies

include Narayanganj-4, Sylhet-5, Lakshimpur-1 and -4, Chattogram-14, Brahmanbaria-2 and Mymensingh-10.

Two strong contenders for Brahmanbaria-2 are BNP leader Rumeen Farhana and Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam leader Junayed Al Habib.

In Brahmanbaria-6, Ganosamhati Andolan nominated its Chief Coordinator Zonayed Saki, while the Liberal Democratic Party named its Secretary General Redwan Ahmed for Cumilla-7.

13 SEATS UNDECIDED

BNP withheld nominations in at least six seats due to fears that selecting one candidate could spark clashes among rival factions.

The strongest rivalries were reported in Lalmonirhat-2, Jhenaidah-1, Jhenaidah-4, Narsingdi-3 and Chattogram-11.

The party also held back nominations in Nilphamari-2, Pabna-1 and Mymensingh-10 due to a shortage of strong contenders.

BNP FIELDS CANDIDATES IN NCP ASPIRANTS' SEATS

Many insiders said that though there is discussion of forming an alliance with the National Citizen Party, BNP has already fielded candidates in seats where NCP has also announced aspirants.

BNP named MA Kaiyum for Dhaka-11, while NCP Convener Nahid Islam is campaigning for the same seat.

It also announced Emdadul Haque Bharasha for Rangpur-4, while NCP Member Secretary Akhter Hossen may run there.

The party announced the aspirants for Dhaka-9, Dhaka-18, Dhaka-14 and Cumilla-4, from where NCP leaders Tasnim Jara, Nasiruddin Patwari and Ariful Islam Adeb are expected to run respectively.

Don't use religion card in election campaign

Urge Hindu community leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The experiences of religious minorities regarding elections have been extremely painful, worrying and alarming, said the Bangladesh Puja Udiapon Parishad and the Mahanagar Sarbojanin Puja Committee.

"In past elections, religion has always been used in campaigns – communal hatred and incitement have triggered bloody chapters," said Joyonto Kumar Deb, president of the Mahanagar Sarbojanin Puja Committee, at a discussion titled "13th National Parliamentary Election and Our Expectations".

After elections, the defeated party carries out attacks – but the victorious party has also been seen doing the same.

"The primary victims of election-related violence are religious and ethnic minorities," he added.

In his written statement, he presented a nine-point list of demands.

Notable among them is: banning the use of religion in all elections; ensuring adequate minority representation in national and local elections; deploying the army and specialised forces for at least one month before and after elections to protect minorities; and taking strict action to stop attacks, looting and extortion against religious and ethnic minority communities.

"Those who drafted the Constitution of 1972 were not elected by the people of Bangladesh – they were elected to draft Pakistan's constitution,"

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Child deaths higher

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must take more initiatives targeting the poorer and less educated sections, he noted.

The survey released on November 16 shows that child stunting is 32 percent among the poorest population, compared to 16 percent in the richest group.

The rate of wasting – an indicator of severe short-term undernutrition – stands at 15 percent in the poorest households against 10 percent in the richest group.

The disparity is also evident in education, as only 21 percent of children from poor families complete upper secondary schooling, compared to 66 percent in well-off households. The picture is almost the same for primary education.

OTHER KEY INDICATORS

One of the major findings of the study is the rise in the total fertility rate (TFR) to 2.4 after decades of decline.

The TFR is 2.8 among the poorest population, compared to 2.2 among the richest group, the study shows.

The rate is 2.7 among women with only primary education, dropping to 2.1 among those with higher education.

Mymensingh has the highest TFR at 2.8. In 2022, the division also recorded the lowest literacy rate – 67.09 percent, according to the Population and Housing Census.

The adolescent birth rate is 120 per 1,000 women among the poorest households, compared to 61 per 1,000 in the richest group.

The rate is 155 per 1,000 among adolescents with lower secondary

education, falling to 20 per 1,000 among women with higher education.

"...it suggests that increased access to education could be a decisive factor in reducing adolescent fertility and thus ensuring the well-being of adolescents," reads the survey's preliminary report.

Poverty and education are key drivers of disparities in terms of child marriage, which has declined slightly but remains widespread, with 47 percent of women married before the age of 18.

The rate is as high as 69 percent among women with no schooling or only pre-primary education, compared to just 13 percent among those in the richest group.

Similarly, 65 percent of women in the poorest households were married before 18, against 42 percent in the richest ones.

2 DIFFERENT INDICATORS

According to the study, 68 percent of women in wealthier households give birth through caesarean section, compared to 34 percent among poorer women.

Similarly, the C-section rate is 75 percent among women with higher education, falling to 20 percent among those with no schooling.

The rate of early initiation of breastfeeding is 38 percent among the poorest women against 24 percent among those in the richest households.

Similarly, the rate is 35 percent among women with primary education, compared to 26 percent among those with higher education.

Country trapped

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towards decarbonisation gradually.

"We should have ensured that the current and upcoming governments wouldn't fall into that particular lobby's traps," he added.

The three-day conference will continue until December 8. Today, around eight technical sessions would be held between 9:30 and 5:00pm.

At the inaugural session, experts have urged urgent revision of the Integrated Energy and Power Master Plan (IEPMP) to increase the share of renewable energy in the country's energy mix.

Energy transition is a long-term process and the interim government has initiated multiple policies and programmes to expand renewable energy, said Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Advisor to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

The priority should not just be setting targets but achieving them.

In the past, ambitious targets were set, but renewable electricity generation remained minimal.

Therefore, a realistic and implementable roadmap is crucial, said Rizwana, who inaugurated the event.

Effective energy transition requires the integration of technical knowledge, sound policies and skilled human resources, said Khondaker Golam Moazzem, Research Director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

Reducing reliance on foreign consultants and building institutional capacity while ensuring domestic ownership of policy implementation is now an urgent priority, he added.

The government spends about Tk 40,000 crore a year on electricity subsidies, said Shahriar Ahmed Chowdhury, Chairman of the Centre for Renewable Energy Services at United International University.

"Allocating even half of this to renewable energy could transform the

sector, which would save the entire fuel cost in the next 10 years. Current electricity policies are not renewable-friendly, slowing progress."

He urged prioritising the issues in the revised IEPMP in collaboration with domestic experts.

The Bangladesh Working Group on Ecology and Development (BWGED) organised the event in collaboration with 16 partner organisations.

BWGED coordinator Kazi Maruful Islam chaired the session while Manusher Jonno Foundation's Director (Rights and Governance) Banasree Mitra Neogi, LEAD Bangladesh's research director Md Shimonuzzaman, ActionAid Bangladesh's manager (Just Energy Transition) Abul Kalam Azad also spoke among others.

S Africa hostel shooting leaves 11 dead: police

AFP, Johannesburg

Gunmen stormed a hostel in South Africa's capital Pretoria yesterday, killing 11 people including a three-year-old child at a site police said was illegally selling alcohol.

The attack is the latest in a string of mass shootings that have shocked the crime-weary country of 63 million people, which suffers one of the highest murder rates in the world.

"I can confirm that a total of 25 people were shot," police spokeswoman Athlenda Mathe said, adding that 14 had been taken to hospital.

Ten had died at the scene in Saulsville township, 18 kilometres (11 miles) west of Pretoria, while another died in hospital, she said.

Three gunmen entered what Mathe described as an "illegal shebeen" within the hostel at around 4:30 am (0230 GMT) and indiscriminately fired at a group of men who were drinking.