

## Concern over blogger murders and hit list

Perhaps the most hotly debated topic in Bangladesh at the moment is the recent serial blogger murders. One by one blogger is being killed because of the rose above religious teachings and disagreed with its notions, something which has, in turn, plunged the country's current situation in terms of law and order, into further turmoil. The bloody and gory pattern began with the murder of one Rajib Haidar, aka 'Thaba Baba' on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2013, during the Shahbag Movement of course. Later on, extremists murdered an American citizen and writer Dr. Abhijit Rai by hacking him to death with machetes in the open vicinity, quite near to the then ongoing Ekushey February Bookfair. His wife, Rafida Ahmed Bonna, was grievously injured during the incident.

The death of Abhijit Rai was followed by that of blogger Washiqur Rahman Babu on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March, who was murdered in similar fashion at the front of his own house, even though a couple of the perpetrators were caught at the scene of the crime. Not even a month had passed since that incident and the death of blogger Ananta Bijoy Das followed. He was also murdered right inside his own house. Later on, Islamic fundamentalist terrorists infiltrated the home of blogger Niladri Chottopoddhay Nil and murdered him as well.

Even before these effects of these events had diluted, just this past 31<sup>st</sup> of October one Arefin Dipon, who was the publisher of Dr. Abhijit Rai's book, was brutally murdered in his office. On the very same day publisher Ahmedur Rashid Tutul, poet Tarek Rahim, and writer Ronodipom Basu were brutally hacked to death with machetes in their Dhaka based Lalmatia offices. It is worth mentioning that publisher and blogger Ahmedur Rashid Tutul, who survived the barbaric attack was the caretaker for Shuuddhoshor Publications. The rest of the victims were all active bloggers who regularly wrote and published content online.

Every single one of the individuals who was murdered, were all free-thinking spirits, bloggers or writers. These incidents are being treated as the biggest assault on the freedom of speech rights, freedom of expression and writing in Bangladesh, since after independence.

It is with quite concerning to report that these murders are being committed in the name of one Ansarullah Bangla Team, with the intent of committing these grisly acts being openly expressed online, or by sending letters to various national daily newspapers. According to Bdnews and the Daily Prothom Alo, this mysterious Ansarullah Bangla Team has now published a new 15 man hit



List which contains the names of Bangladeshi citizens residing at both at home and abroad. There are quite a few well-known and prominent bloggers on the list Ansarullah has compiled, with the group threatening that they will kill each and every one of

them wherever they may be.

The following names are on the aforementioned list, blogger Asif Mohiuddin, Arifur Rahman, Omi Rahman Pial, Md Shariful Islam, Suranjoy Sarker, Rasel Parvez, Subroto Shubho, Syed Sunvy Anick Hossain, Omar Faruk Lux, Md Abdur Rahman, Imran H Sarkar, Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury, Taslima Nasrin, Daud Haidar, Roosevelt Halder, Nurun Nabi, Abdul Ahad Shanto, Turin Afroz, Shammi Haque and others.

We spoke to blogger Omi Rahman Pial, who is currently in Bangladesh, regarding the incident. He informed us that he has received such death threats on various occasions and that it is nothing new. Bangladesh government has appointed a gunman for his security and that law enforcement agencies are always in touch with him.

When we contacted the chief administrator for Bangladesh police, Mr. Benazir Ahmed, he informed us that the police has already taken all appropriate measures to tackle the situation and will continue to do so. Religious fundamentalism has no space in Bangladesh. He declined to comment when we asked him whether IS has any influence here in Bangladesh.

In these desperately anxious times here in Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Bloggers Association BOAN feel that the Bangladeshi government has to be much more proactive and in order to reduce the volume of such crimes, the fast track tribunals must do their jobs and punish the criminals to ensure swift justice.

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### Pakistan seeks \$70 million from India for unplayed cricket series

**Karachi:** Pakistan has kicked off a legal battle against India for not honouring a bilateral cricket series agreement, the sport's governing body confirmed Thursday.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is seeking \$70 million in compensation from the Board of

Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) after the country failed to attend two series in 2014 and 2015 as part of a memorandum of understanding signed between the two boards.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) confirmed receiving the notice.

“The ICC has received a Notice of Dispute from the PCB’s lawyers, which will be forwarded to the chairman of the Dispute Resolutions Committee next week,” a spokesman of the ICC said.

The ICC Dispute Resolution Committee is headed by Michael Beloff QC who will appoint independent adjudicators to hear the case.

The PCB sent a legal notice to their counterparts earlier this year but Indian officials rejected the memorandum as “a piece of paper”.

The arch-rivals have not played a full bilateral series since 2007.

New Delhi halted all bilateral sports with Pakistan in the wake of 2008 Mumbai attacks, which India blamed on militants based in Pakistan.

Those attacks, which left eight people dead and seven Sri Lanka players and their staff injured, suspended international cricket in Pakistan and forced them to play at neutral venues of United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The two planned series between India and Pakistan were due to take place at a neutral venue.

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### Seven killed in adverse weather; depression moving away

At least seven persons were killed and five person has gone missing due to the adverse weather conditions prevailing in the country as the deep depression was moving away from Sri Lanka, authorities said today.

The Police said three fishermen from Ambalangoda and Dodanduwa were among the deceased and another fishermen from Dodanduwa was reportedly went missing.

The other two deceased were identified as residents of Kiribathgoda and Madolsima. Police said five more persons were injured due to the adverse weather condition.

Meanwhile, the Meteorology Department said that the deep depression in the Arabian Sea was now located at 300 km to the west of Colombo.

Issuing the weather report for the next 12 hours at 10.00 am, the department said that the deep depression would likely to develop in to a cyclonic storm within next few hours and move west-northwest ward direction.

“Showery and windy condition about 60-70 kmph are expected over the island particularly in the South-Western part. Heavy falls about 100-150mm can be expected at some places in the Southern, Sabaragamuwa, Central, Uva and Western provinces,” it added.

Meanwhile, the Irrigation Department said that the water levels of Pitabeddara, Panadugama and Sapugoda areas in Nilwala River and Thawalama area in the Gin river are reaching the spill level.

Issuing a statement, the Department said that Nilwala, Gin and Kalu Rivers had received high rainfalls during the past 24 hours and advised that people living downstream areas should to be vigilant in this regard.

“Minor flood situations could be occurred around the said reservoirs if the heavy rain continues,” it added.

Meanwhile, holding a press conference in Colombo, Disaster Management Minister Anura Priyadarshana Yapa said though the current deep depression was moving away from the country, another atmospheric depression likely to be developed at the Bay of Bengal.

However, he said according to the present data, the Meteorology Department cannot predict its behaviour this early.

“We advise the public to be vigilant even in the next couple of days,” he added. **(Thilanka Kanakarathna)**

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GDP growth rebounds to 6.3% in September quarter

**Recovers from 5.7% in last quarter; Infrastructure output grew 4.7% in October from a year ago, driven by higher refinery production.**

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Reversing five quarters of slowing GDP growth, the Indian economy expanded by 6.3% in July-September on the back of a pick-up in manufacturing.

The gross domestic product (GDP) growth had hit a three- year low of 5.7% in the first quarter of 2017-18. It was 7.5% in the September quarter of 2016-17.

According to the Central Statistics Office (CSO) data, the economic activities that registered growth of over 6% in the second quarter are manufacturing, electricity, gas, water supply, other utility services and trade, hotels, transport and communication, and services related to broadcasting.

The agriculture, forestry and fishing sector is estimated to have grown by 1.7%.

**Infrastructure output grows 4.7%**

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Eight core sectors grew at a slower pace of 4.7% in October, chiefly due to subdued performance of cement, steel and refinery segments.

The eight infrastructure sectors – coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement and electricity – had clocked a growth of 7.1% in October 2016.

Meanwhile, the Industry Ministry has revised downwards September growth print of these eight sectors to 4.7% from the earlier estimate of 5.2%.

Official data released this evening showed that cement production contracted by 2.7% as against an expansion of 6.2% in October 2016.

Output growth in the steel segment too slowed to 8.4% in the last month compared to 17.4% in the year- ago period.

Similarly, there was slowdown in refinery output, whose growth was 7.5% in October 2017. This compares with 12.6% expansion in the same month in 2016.

Electricity generation, too, was slower on an annual basis.

Meanwhile, the coal segment has shown significant improvement as it expanded by 3.90%. It witnessed a decline of 1.9% in the year-ago period.

The fertiliser sector grew by 3% as against 0.7% last year.

Crude oil production and natural gas output have shown improvement, too.

Cumulatively, the growth in the eight core sectors slowed down to 3.5% as against 5.6% in the comparable period of the last fiscal.

The eight core industries constitute 40.27% of weight of items in the index of industrial production (IIP).

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### Francis is the second pope to visit Bangladesh

Bangladesh rolled out the red carpet as Pope Francis, the leader of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics, arrived at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka on a three-day state visit.

A 21-gun salute heralded the arrival of the 80-year-old Pope Francis when he alighted from a VVIP flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines Thursday afternoon, wrapping up his three-day Myanmar visit, at around at 3:05pm.

President M Abdul Hamid received the Pope near the VVIP Tarmac of the airport, while two tiny tots presented him a bouquet.

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### **Also Read- [Pope to meet 15 Rohingyas during his Bangladesh trip](#)**

A smartly turned out contingent drawn from Bangladesh Army, Navy and Air Force gave a guard of honour and state salute to the highest catholic priest while accompanied by the president Pope Francis he took the salute from a makeshift "Saluting Dais" after inspecting the guard.

Francis is the second pope to visit Bangladesh. Pope John Paul II visited Bangladesh back in 1986.

Pope Francis arrived in Dhaka at the invitation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Catholic Bishop's Conference of Bangladesh.

Thereafter, Abdul Hamid introduced cabinet members and other dignitaries to Pope Francis at the presentation line.

Finance Minister Abul Maa! Abdul Muhith, Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed, Agriculture Minister Begum Matia Chowdhury, Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali, and Law Minister Anisul Haque, were also present at the airport to welcome the Pope.

Besides, Cabinet Secretary M Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, the chiefs of three services, PM's senior secretary Suriya Begum, Vatican City Ambassador to Bangladesh George Kocherry and Inspector General of Police (IGP) M Sohikul Haque were, among others, present.

From the airport, Pope is scheduled to visit National Martyr's Memorial at Savar to pay his rich tribute to the memories of the 1971 martyrs at 4pm and also Farther of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by placing wreaths at his portrait at the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at 32 Dhanmondi.

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**Also Read- [What would Jesus do?](#)**

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In the evening, Pope will meet with President Hamid at Bangabhaban where he will join a meeting with Speaker, Chief Justice, ministers, politicians, civil society members and diplomats at Darbar Hall.

He will also sign a visitor's Book at the Credential Hall in the President's palace. Meanwhile, an intensified security measures were taken centering the visit of the Catholic priest to Bangladesh.

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### Wife Of Rape Accused Arrested For Blackmailing Uzbek National

A woman, whose husband allegedly raped a 23-year-old lady from Uzbekistan, has been arrested for blackmailing and trying to force her into flesh trade in New Delhi.

The accused Anjali has been arrested but her husband Altaf is absconding, the police said.

According to the police, the woman alleged she was raped by Altaf, who introduced her to his wife Anjali and the couple blackmailed her and tried to force her into flesh trade.

It said Altaf had befriended the Uzbek woman on Facebook and she flew down to Delhi on May 6 after being lured by him on marriage promise.

Altaf then took her to a hotel where he allegedly raped her and filmed the act, the police said, adding that he then began to blackmail her with his wife.

The couple, she alleged, had snatched her passport, visa and money. They also confined her into a room and allegedly beat her up regularly. She was forced to attend to the guests, the woman claimed, it said.

The complainant confided into a friend living in Delhi and they approached at the Vasant Kunj (north) police station.

A case has been registered under IPC Sections 370 (buying or disposing of any person as a

slave) and 376 (rape). A case under the immoral trafficking act has also been registered and the police are probing the possibility of a bigger racket involving Uzbek women flourishing in the area.

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### Turkey to modernise Pakistan's F-16s

Turkey has agreed to modernise the Pakistan Air Force's fleet of F-16s at a cost of \$75 million amid the controversy surrounding the purchase of new jets from the United States.

A senior official of the Istanbul-based Foreign Economic Relations Board (DIEK) on Saturday told reporters both countries have struck a deal in an aviation project under which some Pakistani fighter planes have already been flown to Turkey.

Volkan Yuzer, Asia-Pacific regional coordinator at DIEK, said Pak-Turkish multi-faceted relations were growing in the defence sector. He added Turkey was already manufacturing engines for F-16 jets in addition to making some of their spare parts.

Talking about business opportunities in Pakistan, Yuzer said at least 100 Turkish companies were already operating successfully in the country and had invested \$2.7 billion in various projects by 2014.

More investment, he added, is expected in the energy, infrastructure and beverages projects. Replying to a question on signing the Free-Trade Agreement between the two countries expected by September this year, Yuzer said both sides were working out the details of the agreement.

According to the website of Turkish Aerospace industries (TAI), the Pakistan Air Force had awarded the tender of modernisation of its 41 F-16 aircraft to TAI in June 2009. The upgrade of jets started in the last quarter of 2010 when the first three aircraft were flown to Turkey.

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### Head Constable Posted At Uma Bharti's Residence Attempts Suicide

A Delhi Police Head constable deployed at Union Minister Uma Bharti's residence in New Delhi allegedly attempted suicide by shooting himself with his service gun last night.

The incident took place around 10.30 PM, following which police teams were rushed to the residence of Uma Bharti, the Union Minister for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation in New Delhi's Ashoka Road.

The official, identified as Head Constable Brijpal of Delhi Police's security unit, was still breathing while being rushed to the nearest hospital, a senior police official said adding that the reason why he took the extreme step could not be ascertained yet.

The head constable allegedly shot himself with his official gun which has been recovered from the spot.

"His condition is critical," DCP (New Delhi) Jatin Narwal said.

Prima facie the official shot himself sitting inside his personal car parked inside the

premises of Ms Bharti's bungalow.

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### JP Nadda To Hold Meeting With State Health Ministers On NEET

With several parliamentarians opposed to the common medical entrance test, the Centre has decided to hold consultations with state Health ministers today to formulate a strategy regarding the issue.

Union Health Minister JP Nadda said that he "looks forward" to the meeting tomorrow and hoped to find a solution to address the concerns of lakhs of medical aspirants.

"Looking forward to meeting with the State Health Ministers today morning on the issue of NEET.

"I am hopeful that together we shall be able to find some solution to address concerns of lakhs of aspiring medical students & their parents," Mr Nadda tweeted.

According to reports, the Supreme Court had ruled that starting this academic session, students would have to appear for National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) to seek admission to any medical or dental colleges in the country.

Earlier this week, the apex court also turned down a batch of appeals by states seeking to conduct their own medical admission tests and ruled that "only NEET would enable students to get admission to MBBS or BDS studies".

Following the apex court's ruling, opposition parties have raised concerns that students passing out from state boards in vernacular languages and living in remote areas may not be able to perform well in common entrance exam despite being competitive.

Several MPs have demanded the government to bring forth an ordinance to stall the NEET for the current academic session.

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### IS capital put on emergency

US military officials are monitoring reports that Islamic State have declared a state of emergency in Raqqa.

Social media and news reports that suggest IS may have come under siege in its self-declared capital in Syria are being closely watched by the US-led anti-IS coalition.

Col Steve Warren, spokesman for the coalition said: "We have seen this declaration of emergency in Raqqa, whatever that means."

"We know this enemy feels threatened, as they should," he told CNN on Friday,

Media reports have indicated that the terrorist group is moving personnel around the city and attempting to put up covers to shield potential targets from airstrikes and ground attacks.

Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), who are fighting to liberate IS-occupied land, Spokesman Tajir



Kobani announced earlier this week that commanders of the SDF-affiliated groups in Northern Syria had coordinated plans for a joint final operation for liberating Raqqa from the IS.

Meanwhile, Lebanese Shia militant group Hezbollah yesterday blamed Sunni extremists for killing its top military commander in Syria and vowed to keep fighting to defend President Bashar al-Assad's regime.

The IS jihadist group, meanwhile, overran a government-controlled hospital in the eastern city of Deir Ezzor, killing 20 members of pro-regime forces and taking medical staff hostage, a monitor said.

Badreddine, who was on a US terror sanctions blacklist and wanted by Israel, was killed in a blast on Thursday night near Damascus international airport.

In Deir Ezzor, IS attacked Al-Assad hospital yesterday as it pressed an advance aimed at controlling all of the oil-rich city and its vital airbase, the Observatory said.

The attack sparked clashes with regime forces providing security for the hospital in which six jihadists were also killed, the monitor said.

Meanwhile, Turkey state-run Anadolu Agency yesterday said the Turkish military and US-led coalition forces killed 45 Islamic State militants in shelling and an air strike north of the Syrian city of Aleppo.<sup>11</sup>

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