

Central Hospital fire brought under control

A fire that broke out at the basement of Central



ers working to douse a fire that broke out at the basement of Central Hospital on Green Road in the capital. Photo: Star

Hospital on Dhaka's Green Road this afternoon was brought under control within an hour.

No injury was reported as all the patients were evacuated, said an official of the hospital.

The fire originated inside the basement around 1:30pm, Polash Chandra Morol, duty officer of Fire Service and Civil Defence, told The Daily Star.

On information, seven firefighting units reached the spot and brought the fire under control around 2:30pm, he said. The reason for the fire could not be ascertained immediately.

Maharashtra Governor's nod to CBI to prosecute ex-CM Ashok Chavan

In a major embarrassment to the opposition Congress, Maharashtra Governor CV Rao here on Thursday accorded sanction to the CBI to prosecute former chief minister Ashok Chavan in the Adarsh Society scam.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), through its letter dated October 8, 2015, sought the governor's sanction to prosecute Chavan under Section 197 of the Criminal Procedure Code after

“fresh incriminating material” was allegedly found against Chavan.

Chavan is currently a Lok Sabha member from Maharashtra and chief of the state unit of the Congress party.

CBI included a report by a two-member Commission of Inquiry, comprising Justice J.A. Patil (retd) and former chief secretary P. Subramanian, besides Bombay High Court observations in a criminal revision application filed in 2014.

Accordingly, Rao granted the sanction to prosecute Chavan under Section 197 of CrPC and Sections 120-B and 420 of the Indian Penal Code in the Adarsh Cooperative Housing Society case.

The Maharashtra cabinet, at a meeting last week presided over by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, recommended to the governor to accord the sanction.

In its report, the commission of inquiry had indicted four former chief ministers – Chavan, late Vilasrao Deshmukh, Sushilkumar Shinde and Shivajirao Nilangekar-Patil, also revenue minister at the relevant time – besides several top bureaucrats and other officials for their role in the high-profile scam.

The commission was set up in January 2011. However, its report and recommendations were rejected by the then Congress-Nationalist Congress Party government in December 2013.

Modi should not join war against ISIS; SP govt ignoring Muslims in UP: Asaduddin Owaisi

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief Asaduddin Owaisi attacked the ruling Samajwadi Party and the BJP for ignoring ‘Muslims and the downtrodden’ in Uttar Pradesh during his first rally in the state.

Coming down heavily on the ruling party, the AIMIM chief said, “The poor are dying, farmers are in penury here, but neither the SP nor BJP cares about them.”

Owaisi also criticised SP for not fulfilling its promise of providing reservation to poor Muslims in UP.

Shifting his focus to dreaded terrorist outfit Islamic State, the AIMIM leader said that he and his party has nothing to do with ISIS.

“We condemn ISIS. We have no connection whatsoever with ISIS,” Owaisi said.

However, he also warned Prime Minister Narendra Modi not to join international community’s war against the ISIS.

“Modiji should not think of sending forces to fight ISIS. That is not our war,” Owaisi said while addressing his supporters in the Faizabad district of UP.

Condemning PM Modi’s recent Lahore visit, he said, “The way PM met his counterpart in Lahore it was as if two separated brothers are meeting.”

This was his first rally in Uttar Pradesh’s Faizabad ahead of the February 13 Bikaner bypoll.

The AIMIM, which is planning to stake a huge claim in the Uttar Pradesh assembly polls of 2017, is willing to create a "Dalit-Muslim vote bank".

"My focus will be on Samajwadi Party which has betrayed both Dalits and Muslims," the AIMIM chief had said earlier.

Owaisi's party had made its agenda clear when it declared Pradeep Kumar Kori, a Dalit, as its Bikapur candidate for the upcoming bypolls here.

Tanzanian student was not stripped, Bengaluru incident not a 'racial attack': Karnataka home minister

The Karnataka government on Thursday said that it was seriously probing the brutal assault on a Tanzanian student while assuring full safety of foreign students staying in the state capital.

Addressing a press conference, G Parmeshwara, Karnataka Home Minister said, "We are taking this case very seriously," adding, "There are 12,000 foreign students in Bengaluru, their protection is our foremost duty. These kind of incidents should not happen."

Explaining the sequence of events that led to the brutal assault on the African student, Parmeshwara said, "Had the Sudanese man not killed someone in the accident maybe this incident would not have happened."

A man called Sanullah and his wife were hit by a car driven by a Sudanese national identified as Mohd Ismail, who was under influence of liquor. The woman died on the spot after which an infuriated mob set the car on fire and went on rampage, he informed.

Rejecting allegations of laxity on part of local police, Parmeshwara said, "The cops registered the case at that time itself."

"We have formed special teams to trap the culprits and render justice to the victim who declined to file complaint against the accused fearing attack again," he stated.

Some more arrests are going to be made depending on enquiry. The case has been transferred to Central Crime Branch for investigation, he added.

However, he maintained that it was not a racist attack, saying "this is just a response to an accident. Bengaluru doesn't have such kind of attitude."

"The allegations that her clothes were torn off and they were paraded naked have not been verified as per the investigation so far," he added.

The DGP and Commissioner also went to spot today and spoke to affected students and assured all help to them, he informed. Parmeshwara further stressed that there are times when foreign students stay even after their passports get expired and, therefore, they are going to pursue such cases.

Five suspects have been arrested by police in this connection and they are being interrogated. We have duly apprised the MEA about the progress in the case, Parmeshwara said.

Meanwhile, Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi today asked the Karnataka government to explain the incident and send the report immediately.

The BJP today dubbed the reaction of Rahul Gandhi on Tanzanian student assault as a 'political stunt', saying that the former is seeking report from Karnataka Chief Minister only after seeing media reports on the issue.

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj had yesterday condemned the attack on the Tanzanian student and asked for stringent punishment for the guilty.

The Tanzanian student was beaten and then stripped by a group of locals in Bengaluru after they assumed she was part of an incident in which a Sudanese man had run over a local woman.

The incident took place on Hesaraghatta Road in Bengaluru on Saturday night after a Sudanese national ran his car over a 35-year-old woman resulting in on the spot death of the woman.

The Tanzanian student was travelling in another car, a Wagon-R, along with four others. The young woman, who arrived on the spot around 30 minutes later, was dragged out of the car and paraded naked after being stripped by the mob.

The victim told the police in her complaint that when she tried to get on a bus in order to escape the assault, people on the bus pushed her back towards the mob.

Earlier, the local residents set fire to two cars belonging to the African students, who studied in local colleges in Ganapathinagar on Hesaraghatta Road.

Bangabandhu's image 'distorted' on Chittagong Awami League MP MA Latif's billboards

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's image on billboards installed in Chittagong by ruling Awami League MP MA Latif set up during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent visit to the port city appear to be a gross distortion of reality.

Bangladesh Chhatra League activists took out a procession and organised a rally protesting against the distortion following criticism of the billboards on social media.

The billboards display a photo of the nation's founding father, but the posture, attire, and shoes do not match those which marked him out in his lifetime.

In response to the criticism, Latif has defended himself by saying that since he was busy with the prime minister's visit, he had assigned the job of preparing and putting up the billboards to others.

"If it's true, it has been wrongly done. I am in Dhaka now. I'll take steps after checking when I return," he told southnews24.com.

Poet Kamrul Hassan Badal posted photos of the billboards on Facebook and wrote, "I can't believe these are Bangabandhu's images. The dress and the posture are not his."

Chittagong City BCL General Secretary Nurul Azam Rony wrote, "MP Latif has not only distorted Bangabandhu's image by super-imposing the image of the Father of the Nation on his own body,

but has also dragged the nation down.”

Since getting the Awami League’s parliamentary nomination in 2008, Latif has waded repeatedly into controversies by his actions.

He is on record as having taken part in a programme attended by the alleged war criminal, Islami Samaj Kalyan Parishad chief Maulana Shamsuddin, and the then Jamaat-e-Islami Nayeb-e-Amir Afsar Uddin Chowdhury on Jan 31, 2009.

The three men were caught on camera sharing the same stage.

Latif, a former president of the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry, had also been at loggerheads with former mayor and Chittagong Awami League chief ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury.

Chowdhury’s followers allege Latif has links with the Jamaat-e-Islami.

Airstrikes in eastern Afghanistan destroy Islamic State radio station

American and Afghan officials say airstrikes on a remote eastern region of [Afghanistan](#) have destroyed a radio station operated by the Islamic State group.

An official with the US military said today the strike had destroyed “Voice of the Caliphate” radio operated by IS near the border with Pakistan. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to media on the subject.

In an official statement, US Army Col Mike Lawhorn, spokesman for the US-NATO mission in Afghanistan, said “two counter-terrorism airstrikes took place in Achin district” in Nangarhar province yesterday.

Lawhorn had no further details.

The Islamic State group emerged in Afghanistan in the past year. The radio station was broadcasting illegally across Nangarhar, in an attempt to boost recruitment.

Two more sentenced to death for Bangladesh war crimes

A Bangladeshi tribunal sentenced two former pro-Pakistan militia fighters to death Tuesday for war crimes during the country’s 1971 independence conflict.

Lawyers for 66-year-old Obaidul Haque and Ataur Rahman, 62, immediately announced that they would seek to overturn the ruling by the International Crimes Tribunal.

It has so far convicted two dozen people of atrocities in the brutal conflict, in which what

was then East Pakistan broke away from the rest of the country to become Bangladesh.

Both men were convicted of killing seven people and raping a woman in the northern district of Netrokona and of torturing six others to death after abducting them.

A total of 23 prosecution witnesses had testified against the pair since charges were laid against them last year.

Prosecutors had told the tribunal that Haque was not only one of the leaders of a pro-Pakistani political party in 1971 but also a head of a militia group behind a series of brutal attacks on civilians.

Rahman was accused by witnesses of being a member of the same militia.

“We will challenge the verdict with the Supreme Court and hope our clients will be proved not guilty and be acquitted,” defence lawyer Gazi Tamim told reporters after the sentence was handed down.

Twenty-four people have so far been convicted of war crimes by the tribunal, a domestic court which lacks international oversight.

Most of them were senior figures in Jamaat-e-Islami, the country’s largest Islamist party. Three of the Jamaat leaders have so far been executed, along with a senior leader of the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party.

Previous convictions and sentences from the tribunal have triggered deadly violence, with some 500 people killed, mainly in clashes between opposition activists and police over the last three years.

The government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina maintains the trials are needed to heal the wounds of the conflict. But the opposition say they are an attempt to eradicate its leadership.

Terror groups backed by Pakistan carried out Bacha Khan University massacre

Great-granddaughter of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan aka Bacha Khan has accused Pakistan’s homegrown terror groups of carrying out dastardly attacks on the university, killing 21 innocent people.

Yasmin Nigar Khan – head of All India Pakhtoon Jirga-e-Hind – opines that since Frontier Gandhi (as Bacha Khan was popularly known as) was a respectable figure in Afghanistan also, so terrorists from there would not assault anything named after him.

“It’s unbelievable that any Afghan would attack a university that is named after Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. So the popular notion that Tehrik-e-Taliban is responsible for the attack on the Bacha Khan University is a cooked up story,” Yasmin told Hindustan Times.

She further told HT that Taliban also did not carry out Peshawar school attack which claimed the lives of 150 people dead.

“The Pakistani government and terrorist outfits supported by Pakistan are responsible for both the attacks. They have a dual mission: first to vitiate the minds of the Pakhtoons from the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan against the Afghans because Afghanistan is supporting the cause of an independent Pakhtoonistan,” she said.

“Second, Pakistan wants public sentiments to be (once again) in its favour after the recent attack on the Pathankot airbase by terrorist outfits from Pakistan,” she added.

42-year-old Yasmin has never been to Pakistan as she fears she would be arrested for her open support to independent Pakhtoonistan.

Pakistan university attackers vow to target schools in new video

The [Taliban](#) faction behind a massacre at a university in northwest Pakistan this week issued a video message Friday vowing to target schools throughout the country, calling them “nurseries” for people who challenge Allah’s law.

The video, which spread rapidly on Facebook but was not released on official media accounts for the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistani (TTP), shows Khalifa Umar Mansoor, whose faction claimed responsibility for the attack on Bacha Khan university Wednesday.

Heavily armed gunmen stormed the campus in Charsadda in northwest Pakistan, killing 21 people in an attack that had chilling echoes of a 2014 assault on a school in nearby Peshawar, also claimed by Mansoor’s faction.

The rampage threatened to shatter the sense of security growing in the troubled region a year after the Peshawar attack, which left more than 150 people dead – mostly children.

In the video issued Friday, Mansoor said his faction had attacked the university “because this is the place where lawyers are made, this is the place that produces military officers, this is the place that produces members of the parliament, all of whom challenge Allah’s sovereignty”.

Instead of targeting armed soldiers, he said, “we will target the nurseries that produce these people”.

“We will continue to attack schools, colleges and universities across Pakistan as these are the foundations that produce apostates. We will target and demolish the foundations,” he said.

Mansoor issued a similar video in the wake of the Peshawar attack on December 16, 2014, Pakistan’s deadliest ever extremist assault.

He said schools like the one in Peshawar, which is some 50 kilometres (30 miles) from Charsadda, were “preparing those generals, brigadiers and majors who killed and arrested so many fighters”.

“If our women and children died as martyrs your children will not escape. If you attack us we will take revenge for the innocents,” he said in the video message, also posted online.

Analysts have said the Taliban sent a message of impunity with Wednesday’s attack, that a national crackdown on extremism has failed and they can hit targets at will.

The TTP, an umbrella group, has officially disavowed the Bacha Khan attack, branding it “un-Islamic” and vowing to hunt down those behind it.

Pakistan, Afghanistan need to work together to tackle Taliban: White House

Pakistan and Afghanistan need to work together to effectively overcome the Taliban challenge, the White House said, a day after the militant group massacred 21 people, mostly students, at a popular Pakistani university.

“The conclusion that we’ve drawn here is...that the Taliban poses a security threat to both countries, and that the nations of Afghanistan and Pakistan are going to be able to more effectively confront that threat if they’re able to more effectively cooperate,” White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest told reporters yesterday.

Earnest said the US has long been supportive of the reconciliation process between the Afghan government and the Taliban. He said the US is hoping to facilitate better co-operation between the two South Asian neighbours.

As part of that role, US Vice President Joe Biden held a tri-lateral meeting with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in Davos yesterday to discuss the recent reconciliation efforts.

During the meeting, Biden reaffirmed US support for reconciliation and improved bilateral ties between Afghanistan and Pakistan. “Any sort of decisions about how the continuation of those talks and any sort of agreement that could be produced by those talks about whether or not that’s in the interest of those countries to pursue – those are decisions that will be made by the leaders in those two countries, as it should be,” he said.

But the US will continue to play the role that it has played for some time now in supporting reconciliation talks that are led by those individual countries, he added.

Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and the US have called on all Afghan Taliban groups to start talks with Kabul to find a political solution to the long-running conflict in the war-torn country.

On Wednesday, heavily-armed Taliban militants stormed the Bacha Khan University, named after the iconic Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, in Pakistan’s Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province and opened fire on students and teachers, killing 21 people.
