

## Time for govt to head off train of murders

THE murder of yet another teacher of the University of Rajshahi — with this being the fourth in 12 years — is gravely shocking. The teacher, AFM Rezaul Karim Siddiquee, of the university's English department was hacked to death, on Saturday morning, soon after he had left home for work; and he was hacked in the neck from behind, as has been reported to be typical of the murder of bloggers, writers and publishers that have taken place in a series in recent times. While the latest murder of the teacher, along with the murder of three other teachers of the university in 2014, 2006 and 2004, are enough to create panic and fear among other teachers at the university — many now living in a fearful situation especially after 40 of them received death threats in about a year and a half of them filed general diaries in connection with the threats — this sufficiently points to the government's failure in ensuring security for the citizens. This is more so in view of the growing number of people either being killed or coming to be wounded, grievously, at the hands of, as is reported, religious extremists.

Although the law enforcement agencies are yet to establish the motive behind the murder in question, the local police primarily suspect this to be an act carried out by religious extremists. The US-based SITE Intelligence, which claims to be monitoring terrorism, reported, in a tweet, the Middle East-based militant group Islamic State to be claiming the responsibility for the murder of the teacher for 'calling to atheism.' The government, but for mere rhetoric, appears to be lacking in approach that it needs to take — properly substantiated with well-meaning social awareness efforts against extremism of any kind and for tolerance and harmony — to head off such menace of religious extremism. Coupled with this, what seems to be instilling a sense of impunity in the killers is the absence of effective justice dispensation. While two of the cases of previous murders, which took place in 2006 and 2004, led to conviction through trial, even if, in imprisonment for life after the commutation of the death sentence in retrial, the investigation of the other case has only reached the submission of charge sheet by the law enforcers. Yet, a large number of cases of similar attacks, along with other cases with diverse nature and motive of the murder, not being properly investigated and not running to trial and conviction have only bolstered the impunity of the killers.

Under the circumstances, the government, without making further delay, must get down to stemming an all-out lawlessness that society has almost fallen into. The government, without sounding rhetoric, must step up efforts to try the cases at hand and others many of which are even pending investigation to break the culture of impunity that the killers have come to enjoy. The government, along with citizens, must also wage a social movement against extremism and intolerance of any kind, which have so far been the reason for many of the murders, before it becomes too late in ensuring safety and security of citizens.