Blogger Hacked to Death in Bangladesh, Third This Year

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By Ruma Paul

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http://news.yahoo.com/third-blogger-hacked-death-bangladesh-police-055453643.html?utm\_content=buffer92114&utm\_medium=social&utm\_source=twitter.com&utm\_campaign=buffer

DHAKA (Reuters) - A blogger was hacked to death by machete-wielding attackers in Bangladesh on Tuesday, the third killing of an online critic of religious extremism in the Muslim-majority nation in less than three months.

Ananta Bijoy Das, a blogger who advocated secularism, was attacked by four masked assailants in the northeastern district of Sylhet on Tuesday morning, senior police official Mohammad Rahamatullah told Reuters.

He said Das was a 33-year-old banker.

Das was also editor of science magazine "Jukti," which means "logic," and on the advisory board of "Mukto Mona" (Free Mind), a website propagating rationalism and opposing fundamentalism that was founded by U.S.-based blogger Avijit Roy.

Roy himself was hacked to death in February while returning home with his wife from a Dhaka book fair.

Roy's widow, Rafida Bonya Ahmed, who was maimed in the attack and is in hiding in the United States, told Reuters Das' case was similar to that of her husband.

"We told him so many times you need to be careful, but he just thought that this was his passion, what he was supposed to do, and he had been doing it for a long time," she said.

She said Das had been a regional leader of an effort to bring alleged Muslim war criminals from the 1971 revolution to justice, a politically divisive issue.

Ahmed said she would not be surprised if more bloggers were targeted. "Because the killers know they can get away with this, it will continue to happen," she said. "This is serial killing.”

According to monitoring service SITE Intelligence Group, Islamist militant group Ansar al-Islam Bangladesh said al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) had claimed responsibility for the attack.

Imran Sarker, head of a network of activists and bloggers in Bangladesh, said if the government did not end "this culture of impunity ... the fundamentalists will turn our secular country into another Pakistan or Afghanistan."

More than 120 people have died in violent anti-government protests this year and thousands of opposition activists have been arrested.

Militants have targeted secularist writers in Bangladesh in recent years, while the government has tried to crack down on hardline Islamist groups seeking to make the South Asian nation of 160 million a sharia-based state.

On March 30, Washiqur Rahman, another secular blogger who aired his outrage over Roy's death on social media, was killed in similar fashion in the capital, Dhaka.