

Extortion: BNP men set cotton godown afire at N'ganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

A group of BNP men set ablaze a cotton godown in Isdair area of the town yesterday morning as the owner of the godown refused to give them toll.

The owner claimed that cotton worth about Tk 1 lakh was gutted in the fire.

According to sources, a group of local BNP men led by Nazim, Mizan and Shahinur demanded toll from Motiur Rahman few days ago.

They threatened to set ablaze the godown if he failed to meet their demand for Tk 50 thousand.

No case was filed till filing of this report at 7 pm yesterday.

Shazneen case

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Mojibur Rahman, who is the first prosecution witness and complainant in the Shazneen Rape Case, was cross-examined in the same court yesterday.

After cross-examination by the lawyer for accused Hasan, judge adjourned the hearing till April 20.

During the cross-examination, Mojibur Rahman told the court that he submitted the charge sheet in the rape case to the CMM's Court, Dhaka, on December 12, 1998.

The witness also told the court that the two accused - Minu and Parvin gave judicial statements to the court on April 26, 1998 as witnesses.

After taking over the charge of investigation into Shazneen murder case, he along with Hasan visited the place of occurrence, Mojibur Rahman said.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, Chairman of Transcom Group, was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

Latifur Rahman filed a murder case with Gulshan thana on April 24, 1998 accusing Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, a domestic help at his house.

Moudud

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strike although they knew that the Prime Minister would be present at the auditorium to distribute the Independence Day Awards, Moudud said.

He further said the government had no intention to stop the opposition from exercising its democratic right of holding meetings but they (the AL) would have to do so keeping the rules and regulations.

"When they (AL) were in the government, they also imposed such rules and regulations, but we do not want to refer to the previous incidents," Moudud was quoted as saying.

He also blamed the Awami League for not showing generosity while it was in power.

Regarding the repeal of the law for preservation and display of the portrait of father of the nation, the law minister said the law was against the constitution.

"A person can not be forcibly made to respect someone," he said, suggesting that the AL join the parliament and come to an understanding about the portrait issue.

Refuting newspaper reports regarding the government's intention to mention the name of Khandaker Mosthaq Ahmed in the constitution, Moudud said Mosthaq's name was only mentioned during a discussion as one of the founders of Bangladesh.

Moudud however observed that the name of Khandaker Mosthaq Ahmed could come alongside Tajuddin Ahmed, Syed Nazrul Islam, Kamruzzaman and M Monsur Ali as those who gave leadership during the Liberation War.

Kidnapped schoolboy

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men subdued the abductors, who disclosed that two other operatives waiting in front of the bamboo shop near Kalyanpur knew about the boy's whereabouts.

"We cautiously went to Kalyanpur along with the abductors and arrested two more, who confessed that the victim had been confined in a house at Shyamoli-2," the officer-in-charge said.

"During the raid on the house, I was worried because a woman there told me that the boy had just been taken away. We arrested her husband, Shahid Bepari, and picked up the cell phone number used by the abductors," Ahmed said.

Meantime, the abductors threatened the victim's family on the phone that they would kill the boy for involving police and having some of them arrested.

Shahid Bepari admitted to his involvement in the incident and told the police that the boy could be found in a slum near an under-construction high-rise at Kalyanpur.

At midnight when police surrounded the slum, the abductors fired off shots and exploded crackers, leaving three constables injured.

Police stormed into the slum and found the terrified boy sitting on the floor with his bike beside him.

The arrested abductors are Mainuddin, Nazrul Islam Nazu, Mizan, Shahadat, Shahid Bepari, Monir Hossain, Shukur Ali, Masud, Kamal, Parvez Anwar, Shamsul Haque Bulet and Mujahid Hossain

Army to be deployed at WASA pumps

BSS, Dhaka

Army will be deployed at different pumps of Dhaka WASA by the end of this month to ensure smooth supply of water to the city dwellers, considering the growing demand for water in the dry season.

"We have already taken all necessary measures to ensure smooth supply of water to meet the present crisis," LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said while briefing newsmen at WASA bhaban here yesterday.

The minister said we have already taken steps to set up more

10 to 12 deep tubewells in the capital to meet the water crisis in the city.

"The problem is likely to be overcome after commissioning of Sayedabad Water Treatment Plant in July next, which will produce 22.50 crore litre water everyday," he added.

Bhuiyan called upon the media men to extend all-out cooperation to implement government plans.

The minister also directed the WASA authorities to take necessary steps to provide water to the people on an urgent basis.

State Minister for LGRD Ziaul Huq Zia and Deputy Minister for LGRD Ruhul Quddus Talukder attended the briefing.

Cops baton strikers

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Riot police clubbed and teargassed the opposition workers and leaders in front of the press club. Several persons, including Tanjim Ahmed Soheli, MP, son of former finance minister Tajuddin Ahmed, and a female party worker, were injured in police clubbing in press club area, while some others including former home minister Mohammad Nasim were harassed.

Police also picked up former agriculture minister Motia Chowdhury, Political Secretary to the leader of the Opposition Saber Hossain Chowdhury and AL lawmaker and actor Asaduzzaman Noor in front of the secretariat. They were detained at the Ramna Police Station for over three hours.

The token hunger strike was called to protest the passage of a law to remove the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from public offices and 'misrule and repression' by the government and the price hike of essentials.

But the government clamped Section 144 in and around Osmany Udyan barely 12 hours before the scheduled programme to prohibit the AL from holding the programme.

Earlier, the AL shifted the venue, as it did not get permission to hold the strike at Paltan Maidan.

At around ten in the morning, as Motia Chowdhury, Asaduzzaman Noor and Saber Hossain Chowdhury tried to walk down the Abdul Gani Road towards the Osmany Udyan, they were intercepted by the police.

After an hour-long heated argument, the on-duty police officers still could not satisfy them for not going towards the strike venue as they reasoned out that they did not breach Section 144. Besides, Noor was an invitee to the prime minister's function at the Osmany Memorial Hall.

The police officers told them that they had instructions from the 'higher authorities' not to allow any opposition leaders to proceed towards the Udyan.

At around 11:00am, police-women backed up by some male counterparts bundled Motia into a police jeep and drove her away.

Minutes later, another police van arrived at the spot and the officer-in-charge of Ramna Police Station, Babul, caught Saber by the scruff and pushed him into the van. They also picked up Noor and drove the van away.

The three AL leaders were detained at the Ramna Police Station until their release at 3:30pm. Ramna police said they were detained for the sake of maintaining 'law and order' and later released on personal undertakings.

However, Saber told The Daily Star that none of them signed any such papers. Both Motia and Saber termed the police action 'completely unwarranted' since they did not violate Section 144.

"They've (police) physically

assaulted me," Motia told newsmen later. "You are witness to the government's infringement on our fundamental rights."

Meantime, senior leaders, including Sajeda Chowdhury, Prof. Abu Syed, Mirza Abdul Jalil, Tanzim Ahmed Taj, MP, and over 100 activists sat on the footpath in front of the press club at around 10:35am.

At around 10:50am, about a dozen policemen arrived at the spot where the AL leaders and activists were staging a peaceful sit-in and they forced the protesters to quit the spot. At one stage, the police chased them and clubbed some activists.

However, some 25 leaders and female activists held on to the footpath. Five minutes later, police asked them to quit the spot immediately, but the protesters defied the order.

Thereafter, AL leader Mirza Abdul Jalil stood up and asked the policemen not to assault the party workers as they were holding a peaceful protest.

But the police forced some Chhatra League leaders and activists and also the female workers to leave the spot.

At around 11:07am, several policewomen arrived and requested the female leaders and workers to leave, which was ignored by the protesters. Former home minister Nasim came to the venue at 11:10am and joined the sit-in.

As soon as Nasim had arrived, police took position some ten to 15 feet off and suddenly, fired three teargas shells. This created panic and the protesters ran for cover.

Police beat up a number of activists sitting with the leaders. Police again lobbed several teargas shells from a close range, forcing Sajeda Chowdhury, Nasim, Abu Syed and others to leave the spot and took shelter inside the press club.

However, Tanzim Ahmed and a few female workers still held the ground. The police then assaulted the lawmaker, tearing off his clothes, but they still could not make him retreat.

After a few minutes, as Nasim, Abu Syed and some others again joined the sit-in, the police fired more teargas shells that left a woman activist of the city AL, Jahanara, injured. Hit in the leg by a teargas canister, she was taken to the hospital.

During the incidents, over 100 AL leaders and activists took shelter on the press club lawn, shouting anti-government slogans.

Police again fired several teargas shells near the AL office when party chief Sheikh Hasina reached there at around 5:00pm. AL workers shouted anti-government slogans amidst a tense situation.

Earlier, Dhaka Mayor Mohammad Hanif, AL presidium member Abdur Razzak and city AL leaders Qamrul Islam, and Omar Ali could enter the Udyan in the morning, while others were intercepted.

Later, Shahjahan Khan, MP, jumped over the fence inside the park, dodging a police interception.

Hasina drove to the Udyan to join the five hunger strikers at 4:45pm and stayed there for an hour.

Police arrested Mohammad Ali, vice-president of Jamalpur AL unit, and another city AL member near the city corporation gate when they also tried to join Hasina.

The AL central office premises turned into another alternative venue for the strikers. Senior AL leaders, including Abdus Samad Azad, Zillur Rahman, Abdul Jalil, Tofail Ahmed, Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid and others sat on the pavement in front of the party office to observe hunger strike.

Police, however, tried to interrupt the strikers and clubbed them several times.

During the programme, a BRTC bus was torched at Motijheel at around 1:30pm.

RMP Commissioner, 3 other police officials transferred

UNB, Dhaka

Rajshahi Metropolitan Police Commissioner and three other senior police officials were transferred yesterday.

According to an official release, RMP commissioner Mohammad Ali Imam was posted to Dhaka Railway range while DIG of Dhaka Railway range Muklesur Rahman given the charge of RMP commissioner.

DIG of Barisal range Khandaker Shaheb Ali was posted to APBN Dhaka while Additional DIG Golam Mostafa of Rajshahi range given the charge of Barisal range.



PHOTO: STAR

Clockwise: Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina along with top ranking party leaders stages hunger strike at Osmany Udyan in the city yesterday; AL MP Tanjim Ahmed, injured in police action, being taken to hospital and police trying to prevent AL lawmaker Shahjahan Khan from scaling fence to join the hunger strike at the Udyan.

Hasina calls hartal on Apr 6

FROM PAGE 1
nearby Osmani Udyan for an hour from 4 pm to 5 pm. After the token hunger strike, she drove to the party office where central AL leaders were on hunger strike from 11 am.

As Hasina's presence in front of the party office drew crowds, police dispersed them by lobbing tear gas shells.

Earlier, Sheikh Hasina reached the Osmani Udyan at about four in the afternoon. Police in riot gear had been restricting entry of people into the sprawling park but allowed Hasina to enter. She joined party leaders Motia Chowdhury, Abdur Razzak, city AL president and Mayor Mohammad Hanif and some others who were on hunger strike sitting on a pathway adjacent to the pond inside the Udyan.

She was then joined by four other party lawmakers -- Faruk Khan, Panchanan Biswas, Ahsanullah Master and Hamida Banu -- who were earlier barred by police and were sitting outside the Udyan.

Talking to newsmen at the Udyan, the AL president blasted the government for foiling her party's peaceful mass hunger strike programme.

"We called a peaceful programme. It is our constitutional right. Why should they foil it?"

The government failed to deliver anything good to the people. On the other hand, extortion by ruling party activists, and repression and political persecution by the government have become all pervasive. The government has also disgraced the Father of the Nation, she said.

Asked about her party's next move, Hasina said, "We will do whatever needed to protect people's rights."

She told a questioner that her party has decided in principle to resign from the parliament but avoided a reply when asked when that will take place.

She sharply reacted when asked

about at a reported government move to display Khandakar Mushtaque's portrait as part of a plan to 'honour architects of Bangladesh'.

She said, "Do they (government) want to honour him for his role in 1975? Those who want to make him (Mushtaque) a hero must have links with the killers (of Bangabandhu) and they are encouraging politics of killing."

"What can one expect from those who even did not go for the trial of Zia (late President) murder?"

Khandaker Mushtaque was an Awami League leader and a long-time associate of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He took power after the killing of Bangabandhu. Awami League blames him for Bangabandhu's killing.

Bangladesh turns 31 tomorrow

FROM PAGE 1
will be preceded by the holy Ashura. All offices including those of newspapers will remain closed today for the Ashura tomorrow for the Independence Day.

The National Flag will be hoisted atop all government and private buildings at dawn tomorrow while important public buildings will be illuminated in the evening.

National dailies will bring out special supplements. The Bangladesh Betar and all TV channels will broadcast special programmes.

President A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages on occasion of the Independence Day.

The government and political parties and socio-cultural bodies have chalked out separate programmes to celebrate the Independence Day. The

programmes include discussion meetings, cultural functions, rallies and processions.

The Islamic Foundation held a discussion meeting yesterday at its auditorium on the occasion of Independence Day.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in her message sought cooperation of all quarters, irrespective of party affiliations, to work unitedly for development of the country.

"Let us take oath anew for forging greater national unity to make the nation strong and self-reliant, and present the next generation with a sound and peaceful society," she said.

The prime minister said, "The goal of our Liberation War was to establish an exploitation-free democratic society and achieve socio-economic development of the people in the light of our own tradition and culture."

Late president Ziaur Rahman showed the path of development

by restoring multiparty democracy and forging strong national unity.

"With people's mandate, we are trying to restore discipline in economy shattered by the previous Awami League government," Khaleda Zia said. Her government was working uncompromisingly to uproot terrorism, she said.

Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina in her message urged the people to build a strong unity to establish rule of law, protect fundamental rights of the people and "resist crimes against humanity".

"I also urge all the progressive and democratic forces of the country to join the people's unity," she said.

As per the Constitution, the people are source of all powers, she reminded, saying that there is no alternative for the people but to go for staging vigorous movement for protecting themselves from all types of injustice and repression.

Late president Ziaur Rahman showed the path of development

Crime silences architect

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in the face of indiscriminate shooting by the killers.

Hasan's family believes that his murder has been planned by the people who resisted his move to open a few shops on the ground floor of the four-storey building that belongs to his widowed sister.

People of the neighbourhood had fiercely objected to Hasan's plan, saying that the shops would attract hoodlums. However, the 34-year-old architect went ahead, defying even a Rajuk order.

Hasan returned from Singapore nearly two and a half years ago and had a plan to open his own consulting firm, said family sources. He lived in his sister's house and took over as the caretaker, replacing a relative of her deceased husband.

Sources said Hasan had antagonised her in-laws by replacing the caretaker and opening shops and his own consultancy in the building.

Hasan got married only last year, to Khandaker Fakhrunnessa Runa, an Islamic Studies graduate from Dhaka University, and had their first baby three months back.

Runa complained to the police that some neighbours had planned the killing. Police arrested the auto-

rickshaw driver and later Dulu and Bhulu, two brothers, from the neighbourhood.

"It is too early to say anything about the murder but we are taking into consideration all aspects of the crime," said Nur Ahmed, officer-in-charge of the Mohammadpur police station.

However, neighbours, other shopkeepers in the vicinity had a different story to tell.

Mohammad Abul Khayer, a neighbour, said that mugging had alarmingly increased in the area over the last three months.

Not a week went by without an incident of mugging in the area, he said adding that several shops had been robbed in a similar way within the last few weeks.

"I personally knew Hasan bhai and he was a nice person. I also knew that some neighbours had tried to stop Hasan bhai from converting the ground floor into a shopping centre, but I do not think that incident led to his killing," Khaer said.

Sagar, owner of a grocery on the road, said that law and order situation had drastically deteriorated in the area over the last three months.

He informed that the Aftab Sales Centre in the neighbourhood was robbed only three weeks back by people coming in a microbus.

He also complained of extortion.

"We have lodged complaints with the police but there is no police patrol in the area and there are reports of mugging, robbery and theft every week," the young grocer said.

Meanwhile, the Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB) has strongly condemned the killing of its member.

The members of the IAB brought out a silent procession on Saturday and held a rally at the Central Shaheed Minar demanding exemplary punishment for Hasan's killers.

Leaders of the architect community urged the government to take necessary steps to protect professionals like architects, engineers, doctors and journalists.

"We shall hold a press conference at the Press Club on March 28 and urge all to protect the professionals and provide everybody the guarantee to live," said ASM Ismail, the IAB general secretary.

3 gunned down

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microbus parked in front of the shop. "Tipu was in my shop," said Tipu's brother Selim Reza, who has a business in the same locality. "But he went out following a phone call."

"The miscreants killed my brother and locked the door of the shop," Reza said.

Police recovered ten empty cartridges from the shop.

The body of the victim was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for autopsy.

In another incident, Mohammad Ramjan Mollah, 25, a garment cut piece trader, was shot dead at Battala in the city's Pallabi area last evening.

Family sources said a gang of five led by an alleged criminal, Waliullah, called him out from his house and shot him in the head, throat and chest at about 3:00pm.

Fatally injured Ramjan was rushed to the DMCH and was dead on arrival. The reason behind his killing is still unknown, but sources said he might have been killed over control on garment trade in the area.

A case was filed with the Pallabi Police Station, but none was arrested.

A young man, Mohammad Selim alias Swapn, 19, was gunned down by unidentified miscreants at Avoydas Lane in the city's Sutrapur area last night.

Swapn, son of Nuru Mia, hailing from Meghna in Comilla, was engaged in hotel business but no other details or the reason behind the killing of the young man could not be known immediately.

Armed miscreants shot Selim in front of Brothers Union club at around 6:30pm yesterday. He was rushed to the Dhaka Medical

College Hospital (DMCH) and declared dead on arrival. The body was sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

The duty officer of Sutrapur Police Station said no case was filed in this regard till last night.

In yet another incident, Saddam Hossain, 8, died after being beaten by his father on Saturday evening.

Abdul Awal, father of the boy, was enraged as his mother complained of their son's misconduct with his friends. The angry father then beat up the son, which caused his death.

Mar 25 night

FROM PAGE 1
continued till the morning of March 27 when curfew was relaxed for some hours. As the curfew was relaxed, there were streams of people leaving the city for life.

In Dhaka city alone, they killed thousands of people including students, teachers and Bangalee members of the then East Pakistan Rifles (EPR) and police.

In the wake of the military crackdown, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, leader of the majority party in the then Pakistan National Assembly, declared independence of Bangladesh and called upon the people to launch an armed struggle. He was arrested and taken to the then West Pakistan.

The foreign media reported the genocide, which created uproar and mobilised world opinion in favour of the War of Independence. Bangladesh was born on

December 16, 1971 after a nine-month bloody war.

Court order

on return of

Shahriar's

passport Mar 27

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The hearing on the petition, seeking return of Shahriar Kabir's passport was held yesterday in the second additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's court, Dhaka.

Judge Hossain Shahid Ahmad will pass an order on the issue on March 27.

The defence lawyers Advocate Khondaker Abdul Mannan and Momtazuddin Ahmad Mehedi submitted a criminal revision seeking return of Shahriar's passport to the metropolitan sessions judge's court, Dhaka on March 21 following the rejection order of the CMM's Court.

The CMM's Court rejected the petition, seeking return of the passport on March 18.

Separation of judiciary

Cabinet body

for completing

process by

May 31

UNB, Dhaka

The cabinet committee on implementation of Supreme Court's verdict on separation of judiciary in a meeting yesterday stressed the urgency of completing the entire process in that regard by May 31 for implementation of the 12-point directive as set by the court.

It discussed three sets of codes and draft law for amending the relevant act placed by the Law Ministry. Relevant ministries given the draft codes and law would submit their views by April 6 for full dress discussion at the next meeting scheduled for April 7.

The meeting decided to send delegations to gather experience of India and Pakistan where the process of separation of judiciary had been completed long ago.

Suvastu's letter

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contrary to The Daily Star reply and the only requirement is to leave spaces of 1.5 meters at the front and back.

"For architectural reason, only the top floor has not been connected by the elevation system. Three lifts have been operating from the ground floor to the 14th floor of the 15-storey building, which is more than adequate for the building.

Alamgir

FROM PAGE 12
from a Janatar Mancha (people's dais) in 1996. Alamgir was a secretary to the government at that time.

Magistrate Kazi Meraj Hassain passed the order.

Alamgir was produced before the court at 12.45 pm yesterday. He was given a chair as he was not in a position to keep standing during the hearing.

The defence lawyers submitted three petitions before the court-- a bail petition, a contempt petition and a petition for a medical board for Alamgir's treatment in jail custody.

The defence lawyers argued in the court that Alamgir was implicated in the case as part of a conspiracy to harass him politically and police failed to bring any specific charge against him.

They said the IO violated the court order by not producing Alamgir before the court after expiry of his remand. This was violation of fundamental rights and human rights, they pleaded.

They claimed that Alamgir was physically tortured in remand and so he should be given proper treatment in jail custody.

Alamgir said in the court that airport police took him on two days' remand but kept him in cantonment illegally.

He said he was kept in custody for more than 4 days after expiry of remand and was not given any bed sheet or pillow. He was not given diabetic medicine kept in his brief case. He alleged that he was tortured by mask-wearing persons. The IO had told him that these were done as per directives from higher authorities, Alamgir said in the court.

After hearing the prosecution and the defence sides, the court rejected the bail petition and the contempt petition but granted the prayer for his treatment.

PM calls for unity

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Poverty has shackled us and division and chaos have interrupted social progress and barred us from attaining the desired progress during the long period since independence, she said.

"This failure is of us all," Khaleda Zia said and felt that there is no alternative to national unity for achieving national growth and prosperity.

"Not division, it is the unity that can usher in a positive