

Backlash against murder of Pabna BNP man: Houses torched, 30 hurt

UNB, Pabna

A BNP worker was killed in the town Saturday night that set off a violent backlash yesterday, leaving 30 people injured.

Witnesses said some 25 youths attacked the Ramchandrapur area at 11 am yesterday as the news of killing of Asam, 21, by another group became known.

The ruling party worker of the area was stabbed to death near the Vocational Institute at 9 pm on Saturday.

Witnesses said the protestors swooped on at least 15 houses, ransacking all and torching some. Valuables, including cash and gold ornaments, were allegedly looted from the houses during the orgy.

Local BNP alleged that "terrorists backed by Awami League" killed Asam as he protested snatching of money from a small trader by the gang recently.

Awami Leaguers denied the allegation. They said the killing and the attack on the same area were in a sequel to rivalry between two factions in local BNP.

AL 'against tarnishing country's image'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina has said her party strongly condemns any motivated effort to tarnish the country's image abroad.

"Regarding some articles published recently in some foreign media, we wish to state in unequivocal terms that as a matter of principle, we strongly condemn any motivated effort from any quarter to tarnish our national image through falsehood," Hasina said in a statement issued yesterday.

The Awami League (AL) chief's

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President assents to four bills

UNB, Dhaka

President Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury has assented to four bills passed in the second session of the eighth parliament.

The bills are -- Money Laundering Prevention Bill 2002, Jatiya Muktiyoddha Council Bill 2002, Bangladesh Environment Preservation (Amendment) Bill 2002 and Environment Court (Amendment) Bill 2002.

The President assented to the bills on Friday, said a Parliament Secretariat press release yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Life at a low ebb, friendship at a high tide... students of the Renaissance Pre-cadet and High School in Tongi form a human chain at Muktangan in the city as part of a fundraiser for the treatment of Rashedul Alam Riffat (in the chair), a cancer patient.

Rift in Rajshahi BNP over city polls

ABDUL WADOOD, Rajshahi

A bitter in-fighting in BNP has now surfaced centring the city corporation election, but the local leaders seem to be in no hurry to resolve the crisis.

Sources in BNP said three to six party men are contesting for each of the 30 posts of ward commissioner. Two to four party candidates are in the race for each of the 10 reserved seats for women commissioner.

To add fuel the fray, BNP's ally Jamaat-e-Islami, which has a strong base in the city, has also fielded one candidate each in 14 wards.

The local leaders of BNP and Jamaat are under bitter criticism from party activists and supporters

for not announcing 'unanimous' candidates of the four-party alliance (FPA) for posts of ward commissioner. The situation has made election prospects of BNP men bleak, other sources claimed.

Sources in the two parties said the local committee of the FPA has not yet met to resolve the problem.

"There is no move by the leaders to resolve such a critical problem," said Sekender Ali, a BNP activist and ward commissioner candidate from Ward No 11.

The party leaders sat three times so far after announcement of the election schedule but the meetings discussed matters and took decisions regarding mayoral candi-

dates. "The leaders are busy with their own problems. They have no time or interest for us," said another ward commissioner candidate seeking anonymity.

About a dozen leaders of BNP and its front organisations were vying for mayoral nomination. Finally, Mayor Mijaur Rahman Minu MP got the nomination.

BNP's Rajshahi city unit president Ekhlaq Hossain and its district unit general secretary Qamrul Munir were also candidates. Hossain withdrew his candidature in favour of Minu but has now become inactive. Munir is still in the

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Safe Blood Transfusion Bill tabled

UNB, Dhaka

A bill seeking to ensure collection of safe blood after screening and reducing health risk was introduced in parliament yesterday.

Health Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain tabled the Safe Blood Transfusion Bill, 2002 providing for collection, preservation and transfusion of safe blood.

In the statement, the minister said it is aimed to ensure safe blood transfusion at private hospitals. About 270,000 bags of blood are required in the country every year.

According to available statistics, 30 per cent blood is given by voluntary donors while 70 per cent by professional donors. The health minister said the blood given by professional donors carries a lot of risk because most of them are drug addict or affected by dangerous blood borne diseases like hepatitis virus and HIV.

World Health Day observed

UNB, Dhaka

World Health Day was observed yesterday in the country as elsewhere in the globe with a renewed call to ensure better health for all.

This year's theme of the day was "Move for Health".

President A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages on the occasion.

The government observed the day with elaborate programmes

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Proposed law to ban media coverage on JS 'unconstitutional'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Parliamentarians, constitution experts and members of the civil society have blasted the proposed law seeking special privilege and powers for the Jatiya Sangsad, the Speaker and lawmakers and restrictions on the press.

They termed it an unconstitutional move. Treasury Bench member Mohammad Abu Hena piloted the bill titled "The Jatiya Sangsad (Special Privileges and Powers) Act, 2002" on the last private members' day on Thursday.

The proposed provisions in the bill came under heavy criticism by the press.

Veteran parliamentarian Suranjit Sengupta of Awami League said privileges of MPs are inadequate and they need more privileges to serve the people. But he criticised the bill and said, "Most probably, a relatively new parliamentarian piloted the bill without knowing everything".

About the proposed clauses related to the press, Suranjit, also a constitution expert, said, "The press should not be repressed". Since the Constitution ensures freedom of speech and thought, it is unneces-

sary to introduce such law to "throttle the press".

He suggested that the bill he drafted earlier during the tenure of the last parliament could be passed by the present parliament to increase privilege of lawmakers.

Eminent lawyer M Zahir said the press is the "guardian of democracy" in a civilized nation and it should not be controlled or threatened to be controlled. The restrictions proposed in the new bill are nothing but obstacles to press freedom and democracy.

"None should muzzle the press," the lawyer said referring to the expressive role of the press during the War of Liberation in 1971. "Since then, the press has been playing its role as the guardian of people's right".

He termed extra- constitutional the proposed judicial powers for the parliament and the Speaker. The persons who make laws should not exercise judicial powers. Persons exercising judicial power must be independent, free from any government influence and political affiliation, he said.

Although the press has long been considered the

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PHOTO: STAR

Mayoral hopeful Sadeq Hossain Khoka waves at crowd to kickstart his election campaign at Mirpur in the city yesterday.

Simi's family threatened with dire consequence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The absconding hoodlums who harried Simi into committing suicide in December last year are now threatening her family members to withdraw the case filed against them or to face 'dire consequences'.

According sources in Bhuiyanpara in Khilgaon area in the city where the suicide incident took place, the alleged criminals -- Khalil, Ripon, Doel, Mofazzal -- and their accomplices are threatening Simi's father Mohammad Ali Emdad over telephone and also in person to withdraw the case filed against them with Khilgaon thana.

The gang members, now moving in the area openly, have also asked Emdad's family to sell their house and leave the area as soon as possible. They are often seen in the area with some local leaders of the ruling party, the sources claimed.

Simi Banu, a first year student at Bangladesh Fire Arts Institute, Narayanganj, committed suicide on December 23 after being teased and humiliated by the gang, allegedly supported by a sub-Inspector of Khilgaon thana, according to earlier press reports.

Six persons including the sub-Inspector, Abul Bashar, were accused of abetting the suicide. The Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Livestock and Fisheries Minister Sadek Hossain Khoka and some top government officials visited the victim's house and promised to

bring the alleged criminals to justice.

Although police submitted charge sheet against the six, none except the sub-inspector could be arrested so far.

The victim's family is passing days in extreme insecurity, the sources said.

When contacted last night, duty officer sub-inspector Shahjahan at Khilgaon thana told The Daily Star that they were not aware of the threats as there was no complaint from Emdad's family. He however said he would inform higher authorities about the threats.

Sub-inspector Razzak, investigative officer of the case, could not be contacted.

Police on hunt for criminals in DCC fray

Ruling BNP-backed thugs off the netting list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have launched manhunt for the alleged criminals contending for the post of ward commissioner in the upcoming Dhaka City Corporation elections.

Interestingly enough, the names of the criminals belonging to the ruling party have been dropped from the police's manhunt list, sources said.

The accused contestants have already gone into hiding following publication of a series of news reports on their participation in the elections and the Election Commission's expressive stance on excluding them from the electoral race.

A top police officer, however, assured that they would arrest the criminals irrespective of their political affiliation.

In the list of 23 most wanted criminals, two of the four alleged criminals -- Aga Shahim of the old part of the city and 'Killer Abbas' of Mohakhali -- have stepped down from the electoral race.

They have withdrawn from the race only to work on behalf of other candidates, the sources said.

Killer Abbas and Kala Jahangir, another alleged terrorist, are working on behalf of Imam Hossain, another most wanted criminal contesting the DCC polls from Mohakhali area with Jahangir as chief coordinator of his election campaign.

Alauddin of Tejaon, one of the four criminals, and Imam of Mohakhali -- are still in the fray. They stuck posters on the walls and went on electioneering in their localities.

The government ordered police to arrest the most wanted criminals. Published were their pictures to help police arrest them.

The locals of Tejaon area said Alauddin threw it in the air that he and his members were checking telephones and cell phones, firms and offices. If anybody tries to contact the police, his gang will be informed, they added.