

Post-hartal question

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country is reeling under a hitherto unknown level of terrorism, then the independent media is doing a far better job of reporting it than you can ever do yourself. If you wanted to prove that corruption has reached a level far beyond the tolerance of ordinary people, then what the shopkeepers of Old Dhaka have done in the last few weeks have been far more effective and credible than your claims could ever have been.

To prove all or any of the above you didn't need a hartal (leave alone two days in a row). As we said people know about them through their daily life's experience and by the highly laudable role of the print media.

Ironically, your hartals have proven something else. First, you don't care about what happens to the economy or to the business in general. The representatives of the garments industry, the country's highest foreign exchange earner, have literally begged you for allowing them to continue to function. The global competitiveness and especially the competition from China have greatly shrunk our garment market. You could not be bothered.

Second, you are so single-mindedly determined to harass this government and remove it from power that in the process if the people are hurt or the country's overall interest is harmed, you don't care.

As we can see, your position is that this government has to be removed at any cost even if it means causing harm to the country and its people. Please know that if the remedy is as harmful as the disease itself, then what is the incentive to take the cure? If your actions harm the economy and destroy our industry and exports -- which hartal does then what good is it for the public to follow you?

Finally, and this is most damaging to you personally, what your hartal call has done is prove before us all that you are a leader who does not KEEP HER WORD. It is the most damaging public image and it is something that you have brought upon yourself. As the prime minister you gave your word to your people and the international community that you will not call a hartal, EVEN WHEN IN OPPOSITION. That was the uniqueness, boldness and farsightedness of your declaration.

It needed guts to make such a declaration and the nation and the world praised you for that. It was a visionary statement and you did distinguish yourself from your opponent and proved yourself better than Khaleda Zia (she never made such a commitment while she was the PM).

No sooner had you returned to opposition than you started calling hartals. Your explanation is that the government is compelling you to

Al-Qaeda

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had yet to feel the "real fires of battle." In an apparent reference to a guerrilla uprising in Iraq, he said Washington faced another Vietnam.

"O mujahideen, fight the Americans everywhere and fight the Americans with all your might and capabilities. Terrorise them as they have terrorised your brothers," the man said.

There was no independent confirmation of the identity of the figure whose brown cloth mask obscured all but his eyes.

"O mujahideen this is your day, your jihad, and this is your enemy occupying your land, turning it into bases to fight Islam and Muslims, and controlling apostate agents. So fight them until...you only see blood and body parts as they have done to your brothers in Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq in their battles in the Muslim peninsula," the man said.

The Web site has in the past carried statements purporting to be from Saudi-born al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, widely believed to be behind September 11 attacks on the United States, and other officials of the militant network.

The video was posted on the Web Site as U.S.-led forces faced growing rebellion from both Sunni and Shia guerrillas in Iraq. The fighting that has killed some 35 soldiers and at least 200 Iraqis in three days has thrown into doubt plans for a handover of sovereignty to Iraqis on June 30.

U.S. and Pakistani forces are involved in a spring drive to capture al-Qaeda militants in Afghanistan.

Trader buys

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adding the abductors did not torture him.

"Police launched combing operations in Garajani to track the abductors down," Investigation Officer Golam Mawla said. "The abductors set Sanatan free fearing arrest, as police were closing in on the gang."

Sources close to Sanatan's family said the gang released him after it pocketed Tk 10 lakh in two installments from his in-laws who brokered the deal.

PM

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connection with the killings and the rest will be captured soon," she said.

Describing the killings as inhuman and barbaric, Khaleda stressed the importance of exercising high degree of social values to stop such killings.

Sufia Hug, wife of slain Shamsul Hug, Russell's wife Sonia and sons and daughters of Shamsul Hug were, among others, met the prime minister.

The prime minister asked State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar, present on the occasion, to take necessary measures for their security.

She also asked Dhaka City Mayor Sadek Hossain Khoka, who was also present there, to keep in touch with the family to extend cooperation to them, if they ask for.

Prime minister's two political secretaries -- Hossain Chowdhury and Mohammad Mosaddeq Ali -- some ward commissioners of old Dhaka were also present.

On its way to Chittagong airport the committee stopped at Kollar Depot at around 2pm and visited the two seized fishing vessels -- FV Khazar Dan and FV Amanat -- now held in Karnaphuli river under police custody.

Before boarding the Dhaka-bound flight at Chittagong airport, Farooq said the investigation was now at an intermediate stage and would take more time to complete.

During its three-day investigation, the probe body visited the CUFL jetties, adjoining areas and the arms cache at Chittagong Cantonment.

Since it started working on Monday last, the committee have interrogated and recorded statements of around 50 persons including CUFL officials and security personnel, officials of Ansar, Coastguard, Chittagong Port, Mercantile Marine Department, Bangladesh Road and Transport Authority, various security agencies and police.

Sources concerned said the committee might return to Chittagong after a week for further investigation.

No further development of police probe into the haul was reported excepting attachment of the property of another suspect yesterday -- seven days into the seizure.

They attached property of Din Mohammad, a local godfather suspected to be assigned with transporting the haul after its arrival at the CUFL jetties.

Police said Yakub was accused of a range of crimes in at least four dozen criminal cases lodged with the CUFL.

Police arrested 10 JSD activists from a party procession near the Zero Point.

Police prevented AL activists and hartal supporters from gathering on the AL office premises and on Bangabandhu Avenue throughout the day yesterday. They barricaded the road in front of the party office with barbed wire fences since early morning.

AL leaders Abdus Samad Azad, Mohammad Nasim, Obaidul Quader, Dr Abdul Razzak, Faruk Khan, Mirza Azam, Talukder Abdul Khaled and Shahjahan Khan addressed the gathering.

Police said, sensing the raid, Yakub and his gang-members took position behind the riverbank and opened fire on the policemen. Police launched counter attack and hundreds of gunshots rocked the area creating panic among the locals.

Police could nab seven of the gangsters identified as Abdul Hamid, Jahan Alam, Shahidullah, M Haris, Belal Hossain, M Pervez and M Belal Uddin.

Police said Yakub was accused of the five prime suspects --

- Din Mohammad, owner of FV Khazar Dan Abdus Sobhan alias Sobhan, Hafiz, Abdul Kashem and partner Sanowar, and Yakub Ali, a leader of a local truck owners' association. So far, police have nabbed 10 workers, employees and relatives of the suspects.

Indo-Pak series

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Wicketkeeper Parthiv Patel had saved India the blushes of an innings defeat with a fighting unbeaten 62, his second Test half-century.

Patel raised 75 for the eighth wicket with Ajit Agarkar (36) to hold off Pakistan's victory surge after Shoaib Akhtar dismissed Virender Sehwag (90) and Pathan (nought) after India resumed on their overnight 149 for five.

Leg-spinner Danish Kaneria grabbed the last three wickets for 12 runs in a 3.4 over spell.

India had won the first Test in Multan last week by an innings and 52 runs.

The visitors resumed on Thursday with Sehwag on a fiery 86.

But Pakistan's pace spearhead Shoaib paid to India's hopes by removing him in his fourth over, caught behind while trying to drive.

Shoaib then softened Pathan with three bouncers and dismissed him for a duck later in the same over, fending another rising ball to the leg-side field.

But just when it looked like curtains for India, Patel and Agarkar came up with a fighting stand to ensure the hosts would have to bat again.

Agarkar, who has a Test century to his name against England at Lord's, hit eight fours but leg-spinner Danish Kaneria had him caught by Taufeeq at slip.

Guerillas abduct

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Agency identified them as: Huh Min Young, Lim Young Seok, Hong Gwang Cheon, Cho Jeong Kyon, Lee Myung Sook, Kim Pil Ja and Byun Kyong Ja. It said they were believed to be evangelists from the Christian Council of Korea.

The one who escaped, identified as Kim Sang Mi, told Korean news media that her group had been traveling in two cars on a highway from Amman, Jordan, and was stopped 155 miles west from the Iraq capital. "Around one and half hours before our arrival in Baghdad, we were seized by strangers," she said.

She said armed men took them captive after checking their passports identifying the three as: Noriaki Imai, born 1985; Soichiro Koriyama, 32; Nahoko Takato, 34. They also show a press card for Koriyama from the weekly newspaper Asahi.

The gunmen make the Japanese lay one-by-one on the floor and point swords and knives at their chests and throats. The woman's lips can be seen moving as if speaking.

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Japan has about 530 ground troops based in Samawah, part of a total planned deployment of 1,100 soldiers for a mission in Iraq to purify water and carry out other reconstruction tasks. Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has been one of the strongest backers of the US-led invasion of Iraq.

About 460 South Korean medics and military engineers have been in Nasiriyah for almost a year. They are to come home after South Korea's planned deployment of up to 3,600 troops to Iraq.

The videotape, parts of which also were shown on Japan's NHK television, showed two Japanese men and a woman identified as two aid workers and a journalist.

She also asked Dhaka City Mayor Sadek Hossain Khoka, who was also present there, to keep in touch with the family to extend cooperation to them, if they ask for.

On Al-Jazeera, an announcer read a statement that he said came with the video in which the kidnappers issue a three-day ultimatum for Japan to announce it will withdraw its troops from southern Iraq.

"Three of your sons have fallen into our hands," the Al-Jazeera announcer read. "We offer you two choices: either pull out your forces, or we will burn them alive. We give you three days starting the day this tape is broadcast."

The full video shows the

AL's two-day hartal

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front organisations were injured when police swooped on AL processions in Sylhet and a JSD procession in Bogra.

In Dhaka, police arrested 16 AL and JSD pickets from Bangabandhu Avenue, Muktangan and Dhanmondi.

AL Relief and Social Welfare Secretary Prof Nazma Rahman was picked by police and released later.

Opposition Chief Whip and AL leader Abdus Shahid led a procession from the South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban to Russell Square. Party lawmakers then staged a three-hour sit-in at the square from noon.

AL leaders Abdus Samad Azad, Mohammad Nasim, Obaidul Quader, Dr Abdul Razzak, Faruk Khan, Mirza Azam, Talukder Abdul Khaled and Shahjahan Khan addressed the gathering.

Witnesses said police swooped on the JSD procession as it tried to march through a police barricade.

UNB reports from Sylhet: Some 20 leaders and workers of the AL and its front organisations were injured in police action on processions in the city during the hartal hours.

The injured include district Shechasebok League President Subroto Purkayastha.

Father kills

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On coming to her senses at around 3:30am, Nazma started crying for her daughters. Neighbours rushed to her and carried out a thorough search to discover them buried in Anwar's family graveyard.

The bodies were sent to Pirozpur General Hospital for autopsy, while traumatised Nazma is receiving treatment at Bhandaria Thana Health Complex.

Police suspect Anwar, who is absconding, having fathered two daughters already, was expecting a boy child and killed the twin daughters.

The press conference was also attended by Pankaj Bhattacharya, Saifuddin Ahmed Manik and Abdur Rob.

It is highly illegal to hold somebody responsible for the arms haul while an investigation is going on, he thought.

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A case was lodged with Godagari Police Station accusing three people.

Egg, baby food

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60, risen by Tk 8 to 12 from. In the last two day, price of sugar has also shot up at least Tk one per kilogram. The price of Pilau rice has increased by Tk 8, from Tk 28 to Tk 36.

The price of onion has gone down. In the last week the onion was selling at Tk 20 per kilo, while it was Tk 20 per kilo yesterday.

The prices of Soyanib, rice (both coarse and fine) garlic, and other spices, remain stable for the last few days since their latest hike, different sources said.

The price of fine rice was Tk 20 per kilogram, medium Tk 16 and coarse Tk 14 per kilogram yesterday. The price of rice has increased by at least 10 percent by comparison with that in the last year.

The prices of all vegetables have increased Tk 2-3 per kilo, said Islam Hossain, a vegetable trader in Karwanbazar, adding, "The price of vegetables has increased due to the hartal. But it won't remain so and hopefully will go down within the next few days."

The prices of different essentials shot up during the last Ramadan. Though the government asked the authority concerned to monitor the price situation and took some measures to stabilize, yet consumers said different goods still run beyond their ability to purchase, some shoppers told this correspondent.

The country's power generation target stood at 3,294mw yesterday against the demand of 3,425mw.

Although the estimated demand-supply gap was 131mw, sources said the real difference was higher.

Power authorities said they were trying to minimise power cuts in rural areas soon to enable farmers to water their rice paddies.

Rise of a terror

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so many attempts and raids till his death yesterday, that police could get hold of him.

A student of primary class at Nazirah Aliya Madrassah in Hathazari Yakub was expelled for his arrogance and undisciplined lifestyle and he dropped out of studies.

He committed his first big crime by killing three Awami League and Juba League activists Shyamal, Jafar and Didar in broad daylight at Farhadabad High School in Hathazari on December 7, 1991.

Yakub gradually strengthened his hold in Fatikchhari and other parts of the district and formed at least 10 sub-groups, including Shipon Bahini, Bhagina Ramzan Bahini, Amir Ali Bahini and Hamid Bahini. Of the ringleaders, Amir Ali was in prison, while Hamid was arrested with six others after the shootout.

The inhabitants of Hathazari and Fatikchhari are now apprehending the 'possible' rise of another terrorist terror, as happened in the past.

A businessperson of Hathazari said requesting anonymity, "We breathed a sigh of relief after the two brothers were killed. But we fear another gang-leader would appear to wreak vengeance on us."

"We'll not stop fighting the criminals at any cost. An operation like today's will inspire us to carry out our missions until the criminals are wiped out," said Additional Superintendent of Police Chowdhury Manzurul Kabir, who led the raid against Yakub.

Currently 22 cadre groups are in operation in Fatikchhari, of which 10 belong to the ICS and six each to the BCL and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, police sources said.

The kidnappers came amid escalating violence in Iraq. Earlier this week, two South Korean aid workers were briefly detained by Shiite Muslim forces during a gunbattle with Italian peacekeepers. They were released unharmed.

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