

Highway Bandits?

A gang of bandits stopped a group of busses on the Dhaka-Barisal highway into a ditch at Nowpara in Bhanga upazila at 2:30 in the morning on January 15th. The hold-up resulted in one of the busses falling into a gorge, killing eleven people and hospitalising eighteen, eight of whom are critically injured. The passengers of the bus were members of the Kushtia Bar Association and their families. They were returning to Kushtia from a picnic party in Kuakata beach of the Bay in Patuakhali district, when the group of bandits stopped the bus and began breaking windows, attempting to rob the passengers. According to a witness, the driver of one of the picnic busses tried to move in reverse gear in order to save his passengers but the bus fell into a ditch, killing eleven people instantly. Deputy commissioner and police superintendent of Faridpur and firefighters received a tip on the robbery and rushed to the scene, recovered the bodies and rescued the remaining passengers with the help of locals within the area. After the accident, the Police superintendent in Faridpur put the officer-in-charge of the Bhanga Police Station, Shahidullah and Pakuria police outpost ASI Faruque under suspension for "neglect of duty." Colleagues were in tears as the bodies were brought to the Kushtia Bar Bhavan around 1:00 as the lawyers hoisted a black flag and wore black badges to mourn the deaths. Textiles and Jute Minister Shajahan Siraj, who is the minister-in-charge of Kushtia, and four MPs from the district expressed their deep shock at the deaths of the lawyers and their family members.

No end to the blasts

Bomb blasts have become a more or less common phenomenon in Bangladesh in the last few years with few investigations, if any, making any headway at all. Late last Friday and early Saturday morning, two people were killed -- yet again -- and at least 60 injured in blasts at jatra shows in Bogra and Natore. The annual winter event in Bogra was attended by at least five thousand people. Two powerful bombs hurled at the audience left a rickshaw-van driver dead and 40 others injured. A number of villagers told reporters that an influential quarter had warned the youth organisers of the show against holding it, regarding it as "immoral and irreligious". Some villagers have also linked the attack to Bangla Bhai, whose home is in a neighbouring village. Yet others see it as a sequel to previous rivalry between locals. In Natore, one of the two bombs thrown apparently exploded when a woman performer was dancing "indecently". Apart from the 42-year-old man who died in the blast, 20 people were injured in the stampede that ensued. Will we hear anything more of the crime, or will the files gather dust above those of Ramna, Udichi, Sylhet and many others?



Four years after the blast at Ramna no headway was made.

**Bombing
away,
safe
and
sound**

JANUARY 20, 2005 is a day when the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) will be mourning the deaths of its members, caused by a bomb blast four years ago at Paltan Maydan. However, justice still seems to be silent. In fact, in the past six years a total of 14 bombs were blown in many different parts of the country, but with no one to pay any heed to any of these horrific events. The most recent blast had taken place last Friday at fairs in Bagura and Natore, where two people died and 70 were badly hurt.

Reports say that out of the many blasts that have been occurring in the country, only three have had a chance to actually go through investigations, but were eventually stopped. Seven of these blasts cannot be investigated, due to lack of so-called witnesses. Only the blast involving the British High Commissioner, Anwar Chowdhury, had some real investigation and is probably being worked on actively. Some of the huge blasts which rocked the country and disrupted the normal lives of people, including the one which occurred last August, attempting to kill the opposition leader Sheikh Hasina, are not going under any kind of investigation what so ever. Due to these bombs going off anytime and anywhere, the citizens of the country find it difficult to trust the government and also to carry trust in simple humanity.