

## Storm of protests

FROM PAGE 1  
and people were seen busy in panic buying at kitchen markets.

Sporadic violence between police and angry opposition men also erupted on the Dhaka University campus in the afternoon.

Leaders of opposition political parties including the AL, 11-party combine, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), Gono Forum and National Awami Party (NAP), university teachers, and family members, friends and colleagues of the late leader attended the janazas.

No leader of the ruling alliance partners was seen at the burial services.

Meanwhile, a four-member AL delegation led by Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid met Speaker Zamiruddin Sirar at his office in the afternoon and discussed about holding a namaj-e-janaza of Kibria at the south plaza of Jatiya Sangsad as per a convention.

Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, who was on the team, told reporters they demanded of the speaker to withhold the scheduled speech of the president on the opening day of the first session of the House this year and to pass an obituary reference on Kibria.

**CLASH HAND FIRE**  
Demonstrators yesterday clashed with police and set ablaze seven vehicles in the Central Shaheed Minar precincts.

Witnesses said about 20 people, mostly policemen including a deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, were injured in the clash.

The burned vehicles in this area include three buses, a microbus and a CNG-run three-wheeler.

Movement of traffic on the nearby roads remained suspended for nearly one-and-a-half hours.

At least five vehicles were burned and several others damaged in other parts of the city, while a mob set fire to a CNG-run autorickshaw near the Abahani playground in Dhanmondi.

Two passenger buses were also torched at Mungitola in Sumarun and near Rites Square last night. Besides, several buses were vandalised at Palashi, Kotwali, Shyampur and Juran areas.

**AUTOPSY**  
Police and AL leaders took Kibria's body to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital morgue for autopsy at 9:15am from Birdem. Body of Abdul Hossain was also kept at the morgue.

A three-member committee headed by Dr Fazlul Karim, an assistant professor at the DMC forensic medicine department, conducted post-mortems on them.

Bones of both the legs of Kibria were fractured and splinters perforated his lungs, heart, liver and intestines. "He died of excessive bleeding from internal and external injuries," said a source.

Abul Hossain died of splinters injuries in the legs and the hands.

**PLEDGED TO CONTINUE MOVEMENT**  
Leaders of the AL and the left-leaning 11-party combine yesterday

pledged and urged all to build an all-out movement to overthrow the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition, whom they blame for the 'heinous killings of opposition leaders one after another'.

The top leaders of the AL and the combine at a meeting last evening with Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina in the chair discussed in detail the three-day countrywide hartal.

Other programmes will be announced after the stoppage, said acting AL general secretary Obaidul Quader after the meeting.

## Envoys call

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led to a climate of impunity which encourages a continuation of such incidents."

He was emerging from the residence of late SAMS Kibria yesterday evening. The ambassadors and high commissioners of UK, the Netherlands, Sweden, France, Germany, Denmark, Norway and European Commission yesterday visited Kibria's Dhanmondi residence to offer sympathy to his family.

On behalf of the EU ambassadors, Anwar Chowdhury termed the attack on the opposition rally tragic and called upon the government to ensure the due process of law through a proper investigation.

The EU ambassadors also expressed their deep dismay at the attack on the opposition rally that left former finance minister and four others dead and at least 70 injured.

"Under these circumstances, the EU ambassadors cannot emphasise enough the need for swift action by the government of Bangladesh," Anwar Chowdhury told the journalists.

The EU ambassadors offered condolences also for the families of the slain and prayed for the early recovery of the injured.

UNB adds: The United States Embassy in Dhaka yesterday urged the government to pursue vigorously the investigation into the Habiganj grenade blast.

"We're deeply saddened at the death of Mr Kibria and we urge the government to pursue the investigation vigorously," a spokesman for the embassy told UNB.

In another statement, the external affairs ministry of the Indian government condemned the grenade blasts in Habiganj and called upon the government to bring the perpetrators to justice.

"All right-thinking people must join condemning such acts of terrorism and the perpetrators must be identified and held justly to meet their end," said Navtej Sarna, spokesman of the external affairs ministry.

Japanese government has expressed strong indignation at Thursday's grenade attack.

In a statement issued by the Press Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan urged the Bangladesh government to immediately probe the recent series of acts of violence, including Thursday's grenade blast in Habiganj.

"The Government of Japan hopes that the people of Bangladesh will be united to overcome political violence and restore law and order," it said.

The statement added that the Japanese government firmly condemns acts of terrorism and upholds its position that terrorism in any form can never be justified.

The Japanese government extended its condolences to the bereaved families as well as its heartfelt sympathies for those injured in the Habiganj incident of terrorism.

## Clashes mark Habiganj

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Rab-III Director Col Gulzar yesterday visited the place of occurrence -- Boilder Bazar Government Primary School playground yesterday.

Police collected some splinters and grenade levers, an official informed. Marks of splinter hits were found on two trees, in the walls of a tin-made house and on the gate of the school.

Until yesterday, police quizzed some 15 to 20 people including the injured and the neighbours of the rally ground. But they are still clueless about the terrorist act, said the officer in-charge of Habiganj Sadar Police Station, adding, "We are trying our level best."

**HARTAL SNIPPETS**  
Activists of AL and its front organisations started gathering in hundreds in front of the district AL office on Town Hall Road from the early morning. They then took position at different points in the northeastern town and demonstrated against the government blaming it for the killing.

At about 1:00pm pickets attacked a cement shop in Baby Stand area owned by a brother of Habiganj municipal chairman and district BNP General Secretary G K Gous. They dragged the furniture of the shop out on the street and set fire to them.

The agitated mob also ransacked three restaurants including one belonging to the acting president of district Jubo Dal, G M Mousa, and some business establishments at Rajnagar in the town.

A Habiganj-Chittagong passenger coach also came under attack this time while a pickup and

They also stopped some vehicles of journalists coming from the capital to cover the event and quizzed them.

A microbus with a crew of Channel I coming from the capital came under a sudden attack by pickets at Shyestanganj. They threw bricks at the microbus and damaged it in part. They manhandled

## The same group used Arges

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seized in Amin Bazar in Dhaka late last year. We're quite sure operatives of a same chain made the Habiganj attack with the same motive."

Captain Rahman, however, said anything about the operatives and their motives could only be known after investigation.

Deputy Inspector General of Police, Sylhet, Mahfuzur Rahman yesterday also told newsmen here that "According to our initial findings the miscreants used Arges grenades."

The Rab bomb squad reached the Boilder Bazar Government Primary School ground from Dhaka yesterday morning and examined the hole in the ground created from the explosions. They checked marks of blood at the scene and also the trees, corrugated iron roofs of adjoining houses and the school's entry gate where splinters hit.

The Rab members collected splinters from a tree's branch and tried to identify the place from where the grenades might have been thrown. They suspect the grenades were charged from behind, the western side of the school ground.

Police have already collected a grenade lever and deposited it with Habiganj Police Station.

AKM Mahfuz, deputy inspector general of police (DIG), is now heading a high-powered investigation team comprising the NSI, Rab, policemen and the Special Branch.

Senior officials of various intelligence agencies including CID chief Farruk Ahmed Chowdhury along with high officials of Rab, DGF, NSI and SB also visited the spot and the injured at Habiganj General Hospital yesterday.

They later told reporters that it appeared to them that SAMS Kibria was the prime target of the attack.

Two Cases Lodged: Doubt over the Fate of Probe  
Organising Secretary of Habiganj district unit AL Abdul Mojib Khan filed two separate cases with Habiganj Police Station Thursday midnight. One is a murder case, while the other was filed under the Explosives Act.

Investigating officer (IO) of both the cases, OC of Habiganj Police Station Inam Ahmed Chowdhury said they could not arrest anyone until yesterday. But they questioned

**'My son won't**  
FROM PAGE 1  
Rahim led behind his father, mother, wife, a daughter and three sons. Walls of grief were breaking the silence of the village. The only daughter fainted again and again. They do not know how the family will run after losing its sole earning member.

Similar was the scene at the place of another victim, Saheb Ali alias Siddique Ali near Rahim's house. A day labourer, Ali also used to sell eggs for living.

Ali's wailing wife and children were also found fainting due to the tremendous shock.

His wife Surota Banu said she does not know what she alone can do for her children. "How can I save my little boy? Who knows what fate awaits them now?"

Her daughter asked in a choked voice: "What crime did my father commit?"

**INJURED AT BIRDEM**  
Five injured AL leaders and locals are receiving treatment at the Birdem in the capital.

They are Abu Jahir, general secretary of AL district unit, Rajon Chowdhury, 37, organising secretary of the same unit, Abdullah Sardar, 30, organising secretary of AL Habiganj sadar thana unit, Siddique Ali, 50, a supporter of AL, and Mohammad Abdul, 25, Kibria's employee.

Jahir was rushed to Dhaka along with Kibria Thursday night and is now in the intensive care unit (ICU) after undergoing surgery. He received a large number of splinters in his legs and body. The rest were shifted to ward No. 93 on the hospital's eighth floor.

Jahir is now out of danger but will be under observation at the ICU for a few more days, Syed Kamrul Hassan, district AL member and Jahir's nephew, said quoting doctors.

Rajon was shifted to the Birdem yesterday from Habiganj General Hospital. He received numerous splinters in his legs, head, ears and all over his body.

"I'm facing acute hearing difficulty in my left ear as I was close to where the blasts occurred," said Rajon. "Birdem doctors said I'm now out of danger but it will take almost a year for my ear to cure."

Sardar was also rushed to the Birdem with Kibria. Splinters hit him on the face, hands, neck and other parts of the body, leaving his left leg broken. He was too weak to speak, as his face swelled and legs and hands were bandaged.

The splinters broke Siddique's left leg and also hit his left hand and right leg. Abdul received splinters in his hands, legs and back and was brought to the Birdem at 2:30am yesterday.

Siddique Ali, a cane-stool seller in Habiganj, went to greet Kibria at Baidyer Bazar AL rally when the grenades blasted.

"I admired him (Kibria) a lot and went to convey my salam after my day's sale," said injured Siddique, now undergoing treatment at the Birdem.

"As I entered the venue, I heard a loud bang out of the blue and I can't remember anything," he said.

Siddique, the only earning member of his nine-member family, further said, "When I regained my senses, I found myself at the hospital."

Abdul, Kibria's employee, said he was just three feet ahead of Kibria when the grenades went off.

"He (Kibria) handed me a bouquet of flowers and asked to make ready his vehicle to set off for Dhaka," said Abdul, adding, "I was making way for him when the grenades exploded and I collapsed to the ground."

about 20 injured people and others living in Boilder Bazar.

Sources said investigators hope to get any witness who has seen the grenade throwers. But if such a witness is not available, it would be difficult for them to hunt down the perpetrators.

The OC said during primary inquiries one man had said prior the grenade explosion a man was activating his motorcycle near Boilder Bazar and after the explosion another was seen rushing to the bike and they whisked away.

Two four-member teams, each headed by an additional SP from Sunamganj and Habiganj, were formed to assist the IO.

No Police Security at the Meeting  
The AL leaders here have questioned why security measures by police were not taken prior to the public rally Thursday.

On the security issue, OC Inam told The Daily Star, "I had no information about the public rally. In fact, they (AL) did not officially inform us about the scheduled event. They did not also ask for police protection."

On the other hand, locals said since last Tuesday, announcements on loudspeakers were made about the rally. There is no reason for police to have missed the announcement. So the proposition of police not knowing about the scheduled event is absurd.

Dr Musfique Hussain Chowdhury, president of AL Habiganj unit, claimed police were informed about the public gathering. He said, "Prior to the event local newspapers published news about it with Kibria's picture. Yet police were not seen at the meeting venue."

Choudhury alleged despite being aware of the event police stayed away to help the killers carry out their mission.

Choudhury also pointed to power failure. The ambulance that carried injured Kibria came to a halt after one and a half kilometres as it had run out of fuel. What is even more shocking is that the ambulance did not have life saving oxygen cylinder.

All these caused a loss of precious

## Opposition leaders

FROM PAGE 1  
criticisms of the ruling BNP and its alliance partners. His regular column, that this paper carried for several years before he became the finance minister and the pieces he wrote occasionally after losing power in the last election, though written from a partisan perspective, were always logical, well developed and constructive. He tried to argue his case, as it should be, instead of bulldozing a particular point of view through that has become our political practice.

With all his education, experience, professionalism and rationality, he fell victim to a political culture of violence and irrationality that is dragging our country towards an abyss of intolerance and blindness which cannot lead to anything positive for our beloved country. Kibria's murder must be seen as a serious attack at the very core of the body politic.

Unlike the opposition, we will not be quick to blame the ruling coalition for this political murder. But we feel forced to question the government's sincerity in unearthing the crimes and identifying the criminals in the murders that took place before. This paper chronicled yesterday the large number of incidents of bomb attacks, grenade attacks and violent killings that have gone on since 1999. There is of course the fact that bomb attacks occurred even under the Awami League (AL) regime and nothing was done then. But that cannot be a justification for the type of inaction and farcical investigation that we have seen so far.

The attack on an AL rally in the capital killing Ivy Rahman and 22 others and nearly killing the leader of the opposition last year was by far the biggest and most brutal on politicians that Bangladesh had seen since the restoration of democracy in 1991. The world was shocked and leaders from far and wide joined our people in expressing anxiety about our democracy.

The government seemed to share that shock initially. Our people felt somewhat assured that finally some serious government action will be taken and the culprits will be caught.

To our utter disappointment and shock, we saw a farce of an investigation which practically amounted to a clear signal to the perpetrators that they were safe and could go on with their brutality. And they did. To our sheer disbelief, we saw a story being woven that the AL itself did it to destabilise the government. Repeatedly did we hear the question from the ruling coalition leaders that 'how come none of the nearly a dozen grenades fell to the truck on which Sheikh Hasina stood, and all of them fell on the ground'. This was proof enough that the AL was the culprit!

Some even said that it was staged by Sheikh Hasina herself to garner sympathy for her anti-government movement. The ruling alliance appeared quite satisfied with this 'explanation'. As a consequence, the whole government machinery, instead of digging deep into the crime, was used to further maligning the opposition. The result, inevitably, was a deepening of the political chasm between the AL and the BNP and creation of greater opportunity for those who wanted to continue with the terrorist activities.

This paper and this writer have repeatedly urged the government to see the attack on the opposition as, what it truly is, an attack on democracy. The bombs thrown at the opposition rally today could easily be thrown at the BNP rally tomorrow. The choice of Kibria as the target should not be lost on anybody. His was one of the staunchest voices for secularism and against extremism, terrorism and the increasing use of

time until another ambulance had to be called to send Kibria to Dhaka. Kibria bled heavily during the 'unnecessary' delay that might have led to his death, said those who were with Kibria in the ambulance.

Attack spot remains unprotected  
The place of the grenade attack has been abandoned without any police protection. Usually, for further investigations such spots are marked and encircled to prohibit public access so that evidence can be collected later.

A Rab bomb squad led by Major Moinul Hossain yesterday inspected the spot. They said many pieces of evidence have been destroyed, as the place remained unprotected.

"Gathering vital evidence could have been much easier had the spot been kept protected," said Captain Mamtaz.

He, however, said, "We've gathered enough forensic evidence that would help us in further investigations."

**THREAT ON KIBRIA**  
Anonymous callers had threatened Kibria with death several times, Kibria's cousin Iqbal Hossain told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said, "Kibria discussed with me the threats by the anonymous callers about a year back. The callers had asked him to quit politics or get prepared to face severe consequences."

Recalling the discussions, Iqbal also said, "Kibria often received such threats on phone but he did not inform anyone. His view was that since he was engaged in politics, it's quite natural some people would admire him and a few won't."

"I now feel that we should have taken the threats seriously," Iqbal added.

**ARE THE ATTACKERS OUTSIDERS?**  
Locals believe outsiders had carried out the grenade attack. A number of people of Bongaon village in Boilder Bazar said no-one of the village is capable of handling grenades.

A student of Bongaon said, "I strongly believe the attack was carried out by outsiders."

## 4th ODI today

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ensure that the day-night encounter goes ahead without any trouble.

"Security personnel will be doubled and the Rapid Action Battalion will escort the teams to and from the Bangladesh National Stadium," said Adnan Rahman Dipon, vice-president of the BCB's security committee yesterday.

The match, which will be telecast live on Bangladesh Television and ESPN from 1 pm, is crucial for the hosts as they trail the five-game series 2-1.

Habibul Bashar's men lost the first two games in Dhaka and Chittagong. However, they bounced back with a 40-run victory in the third match in the port city.

The Tigers are expected to make one change from the squad that won at the MA Aziz Stadium with Test match hero Enamul Haque likely to make way for fellow left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique, who missed the first three games due to injury.

On the other hand, Zimbabwe were yet to announce their team but captain Tatenda Taibu hinted at possibly one change also on the cards.

**Culprits**  
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"Investigation into all bomb and grenade attacks are on," Bhuiyan said, adding, "It is only a matter of time that the criminals will be arrested."

He said the government will take international help in finding out the criminals.

He sought cooperation of all including the opposition parties to bring the culprits into book.

He also urged the opposition parties to shun hartals.

Expressing deep shock at the killings of top AL leader and former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria and others, Bhuiyan said people involved in the brutal attacks are enemies of democracy, humanity and the country.

The government has already formed a committee headed by a deputy inspector general of police to probe the incident, the minister said, adding that members from different intelligence agencies including Rapid Action Battalion and Directorate General of Forces Intelligence are also on the committee.

The government is trying to ensure security in public rallies, which are targets of repeated bomb and grenade attacks, he said.

He said punitive actions will be taken against the police personnel found negligent during the AL rally in Habiganj. He, however, said that government has till now had no report of negligence by police during the rally.

Brushing aside the role of the BNP and its alliance partners in the bomb attacks, Mannan Bhuiyan said, "We have formed the government through public mandate. Why should we destabilise the country?"

## 2 associates of Bangla Bhai arrested

UNB, Rajshahi

Four people, including two associates of Bangla Bhai, were arrested in Hamir Kuchha area of Baghmara upazila yesterday.

Of the arrestees, Mushtaque and Moinuddin are the associates of Bangla Bhai.

The two others, Afzal Hossain and Hekmat Ali, are the activists of Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP), police said.

## Kibria killed

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night of December 11 at the Mahabub Bhaban to plan killing a number of senior leaders of the party."

Besides, she mentioned that yet another meeting was held at an apartment at Agargaon in the city recently with the same motive."

"Shah AMS Kibria is the latest to fall prey to the BNP-Jamaat government's cleansing blueprint," she said.

She urged the people to stand united against the 'killer government'.

"Only the resignation of the alliance government making way for a democratically elected government can ensure trial of the killers," she told the newsmen.

She said the prime minister instead of taking proper actions had made some remarks and statements that encouraged the killers even more. The opposition was not even allowed to discuss in parliament the August 21 grenade blasts. Moreover, the demand for international probe was deliberately ignored to the advantage of the perpetrators.

Castigating the government for raiding the AL and its front organisations' central office by the dog squad of a Rapid Action Battalion team, Hasina said she wonders what led the government to search the main opposition party's office by the anti-crime force that found nothing.

Citing from a national daily she said, "During a conference of BNP in Gopalganj on Thursday a BNP leader demanded that prime minister's son bring Bahauddin Nasim, president of Awami League's volunteer wing, under the Rab crossfire."

"Is it why the Rab went to the AL office?" she asked.

She also refuted the state minister's (for home affairs) claim that the government had contacted the AL leaders to fly SAMS Kibria in the capital by a helicopter. She termed the claim false and said, "Name the leader whom the state minister had contacted."

The opposition leader said her party would protest the killing of its lawmaker in the coming session of parliament.

**Beaten out**  
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Leyla speaks coherently, but with a monotone voice, her body motionless, as if she were relating mundane details and not a harrowing tale.

"Roaming around in the streets, I was offered a job by an unknown man. He took me to his house, where he lived with his elder brother. Both of them tried to abuse me, but I protested, refused. Together with the other domestic worker, I again, headed for the street."

We were hanging around in the park when the police picked us up. They locked us up together with a woman and her child. As the police suspected us of commercial sex work, they filed a case against us.

The next day, the social workers of Aparajevo-Bangladesh interfered. They pointed out we were still minors and the police finally released us. I stayed in their shelter during the time the NGO needed to find my father.

My picture appeared in the papers, to shorten the search's duration. My father contacted the NGO, but also the man who used to beat me. He demanded me back."

Luckily, Leyla could stay at the shelter houses of Aparajevo-Bangladesh. With its legal assistance, the NGO convinced the police to dismiss the case against the teenager.

**Indian PM**  
FROM PAGE 12  
He noted that Shah AMS Kibria was a well-known figure in India. His work as Bangladesh finance minister and the executive secretary of Escap had won him many friends and admirers all over the world.

British Minister of State for Trade, Investment and Foreign Affairs Douglas Alexander MP last night telephoned opposition leader Sheikh Hasina and offered his government's condolences on the killing of Shah AMS Kibria and others in a grenade attack.

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Hasina's political secretary, told the UNB that Alexander made the phone call at around 8:00pm on behalf of British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw.

Condemning the incident, the British minister said that an appropriate investigation should be carried out to find out the perpetrators behind the latest grenade attack to "stop recurrence of such tragic incidents."

He also assured Hasina that the British government would make contact with the Bangladesh government to convey their concern over the repeated incidents.

## Living dangerously

FROM PAGE 1  
much clearer. It is reported that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had investigated the incident and pointed fingers at Harkatul Jihad. A bomb factory was unearthed at the house of Harkatul Bangladesh chief, Mufti Hannan, who has since been on the run. Then again, during the Awami League election, when US president Bill Clinton visited Bangladesh, his trip to Manikganj was cancelled because of threats from Islamist militants. The signal was very clear. And as usual, the Awami League was then on a denial model like the BNP is now. So, nothing happened. Slogans were chanted on the capital's streets by religious bigots proclaiming that they would all become 'Taliban and turn Bangladesh into Afghanistan' and the Awami League government limited its actions to blaming the BNP for instigating fundamentalists into taking to the streets. Then everything was pushed under the carpet, believing this would clear the air.

The picture later became even grimmer, more brutal and clearer. Soon after the 2001 general elections and the formation of a coalition government with two fundamentalist parties as partners, the militants gained more power and courage.

Minorities, specially the Hindus, and Awami League supporters were attacked and their property looted. The Daily Star ran detailed reports on the incidents, which were not accepted by the new government led by BNP, flushed with new confidence of a two-thirds majority.

The Ahmadiyas were the bigots' next target. They wanted Ahmadiyas to be pronounced non-Muslims in the fashion of Pakistan. They wanted their books to be banned. And the government half-entertained their wishes by banning Ahmadiya books and thus acknowledging them as a cognizable force in the society, no matter how perverse their demands are.

In even more sinister developments, arms flowed freely into the country, not in ones or twos, but in bulks, trucks-full and in dangerous counts. Other than the media, no body seemed to care. Probes were dragged into nothing, while the gunrunners remained happily shielded. And then different Islamist groups popped up sporadically across the country -- al Baiyatan, Harkatul Jihad, Jamiatul Mujahideen, Shahadat-e-al-Hikma, Hijbut Tahwid and so on. But their existence, except for Shahadat-e-al-Hikma, which was later banned, was routinely denied. In Joypurhat, one of these groups, Jamiatul Mujahideen, vowing to carry out an Islamic revolution, even fought with police and their den was busted. But then nothing else was done. Even before this group surfaced, a number of groups had been arrested in Rajshahi division. In Borguna, 36 militants were arrested at a mosque with documents showing they want to capture power by gun muzzle. As international focus fell on these groups, more denials came to counter them. Progressive intellectuals were targeted. The country's eminent poet Shamsur Rahman came under attack by Harkatul militants.

The attack on Professor Humayun Azad, who was always vocal against the fundamentalists, became an eye-opener for all, but not for the government.

The pattern of such attacks became clear when cinemas were bombed in Mymensingh and Satkhira, New Year celebration of Chhayanaut was bombed in Dhaka and Jatras were bombed in Natore, Sherpur and Jamalpur. Instead of going for the real culprits, a number of intellectuals