

Kansat Tales

FOUR people died on the 6th of this month in Kansat of Chapainawabganj district when Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) members and general villagers called meeting at the same venue. Villagers, under the banner of the Palli Bidyut Unnayan Sangram Parishad (PBUSP), were demanding uninterrupted supply of electricity in the area. Machete wielding local BNP men, for their turn, stood near the Upazila headquarters premises to bar the villagers from entering the area. A clash between two warring groups soon followed; three died on the spot when around 50 bombs exploded in and around the area.

Last Monday the High Court in an ad-interim rule prohibited detention or harassment of any Palli Bidyut Unnayan Sangram Parishad (PBUSP) member outside legal provisions.

The incident of ruling party hoodlums attacking general people's peaceful procession is very deplorable, but not at all new. In January this year ten died in the same area when police fired on local farmers who mobbed the local power station to demand regular supply of electricity.

Though the government doggedly denies it, the current power crisis has reached a dangerously bad level. The BNP-led ruling Four-Party Alliance, instead of trying to improve the situation, has been feeding several theories; of them one puts the blame for Kansat incident on the opposition. Mizanur Rahman Minu MP, mayor of Rajshahi City Corporation and minister in charge of Chapainawabganj district, has told the newspersons, "Their movement is not against power crisis but the corruption of a few power officials. We withdrew the Palli Bidyut Samity officials and fulfilled many of their demands. Then why are they running the movement?" He has said that he thinks the Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh is fomenting violence in the area; Shahjahan Mia, another BNP lawmaker, has summarily blamed the Awami League for making trouble.

Locals beg to differ. "We have been cheated by the local BNP stalwarts. They promised and then left those unrealised. We want the prime minister to intervene," said Aref Ali Tisu PBUSP joint convenor.

The Prime Minister has, meanwhile, remained silent; this silence and her government's sheer ineptitude are giving birth to crisis that is going to haunt the BNP in the general elections that is merely six months away.

DMCH's never ending dilemma

THE Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) is still using primitive tools for performing their autopsies, though it plays a key role in numerous lawsuits that demand the cause of death. The area for the dissection room is 20 feet by 25 feet and it's less than one-fourth the standard size of a dissection room. In the absence of a storage area, let alone an air-conditioned one, hundreds of plastic pots containing viscera are kept on the floor beside the freezer. Many of the bodies come here in a terrible condition, distorted and decomposed. They are somehow dumped into one of the two 100 sft storerooms. The drainage too is poor and during rainy seasons, the bodies literally get flooded and the Doms (those who handle dead bodies) cannot explain what was the cause of the patient's death, which is precisely the objective of an autopsy. DMCH requires to perform only two autopsies a day to teach its students. Instead, it has to shoulder the burden of more than ten autopsies a day at the order of the home ministry for the last 60 years since 1946. This ministry is careless about taking accident casualties or victims of violence to hospitals, but the police feel professionally and morally compelled to take the wounded to hospitals for treatment or the dead to the morgue for autopsy. There are times when friends or family members of the injured or dead are unavailable and the police, out of sympathy, bear cost for immediate medicine needed by the victim. They know well that there is no guarantee that they will get their money back.