

Ctg family burnt

FROM PAGE 1
short circuit and spread fast as lots of candles were stockpiled inside the house.

They were burnt alive while asleep.

Bashar's other son Biplu, 10, is the only member of the family to survive as he stayed the night at nearby Hafiza Madrasa for study.

The family moved to Sitakunda from Musapur union at Sandwip one and a half years ago, said sources.

The fire also engulfed three other adjoining houses including one of Altaf Hossain.

On information, two fire-fighting units rushed to the spot immediately and extinguished the flame at around 2:40am.

They recovered the bodies that were buried later.

The loss in the fire was estimated at Tk 3 lakh, Fire Service sources said.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Abdur Rouf and Assistant Superintendent of Police Abdul Mamun visited the spot in the morning.

DHAKA FIRE

A fire broke out on the ground floor at 'Madina Traders', a chemical shop, at Yakub Super Market opposite the city's Gausia Market at around 12:00 noon, said witnesses.

Traders claimed that the extent of loss was at least worth Tk 10 crore as the fire turned 15 shops into ashes while 10 other shops were damaged partially.

On information, 21 units of fire service rushed to the spot and doused the fire at about 3:00pm. Fire brigade personnel, with the help of locals, rescued around one hundred people trapped on the rooftop of the building.

A fire brigade official quoting traders told The Daily Star,

workers of a chemical shop were pouring chemical into a pot under candlelight. The fire originated as the inflammable chemical came in touch with burning candle.

Witnesses said around one thousand garment workers working on the first to fifth floors got trapped inside the building as the blazing fire continued to spread with all its fury.

Garment workers had to struggle to come out of the market especially down the stairs as the billowing smoke engulfed the entire market, the local traders said.

Around 15 garment workers and some shop employees suffered injuries when the stampede broke out. Five others were also injured while jumping off the rooftop of the market, fire brigade source said.

Of the injured, 10 people were treated at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, on-duty doctors said.

Firemen Abul Khayer and Abdul Hal received injuries while dousing the fire.

Moniruzzaman, owner of the Rekha Paint of the Yakub Market told the Daily Star that the fire originated at the Madina Traders. "I heard a small bang and then saw a fireball and within three minutes, I think, it fanned out to other parts of the building," he added.

Lucky Begum, a garment worker whose legs got broken as she jumped off the rooftop of the affected building, said, "Panic seized me and I jumped as I saw smoke engulfing the entire area."

The panic soon spread out to Nilkhet, Newmarket and Elephant Road areas causing huge traffic gridlock.

JMB man

FROM PAGE 1
Faruq and Alam Chand of Tongi Police Station, Special Branch SI Mamun, SI Delwar Hossain, constables Sajib, Neyamat and Latif and news-men are Nasir Uddin of ntv, Fazlul Huq Moral of channel i and local journalist Dablu Rahman.

They were first rushed to Gazipur Sadar Hospital. Later, six of them were taken to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) and two to Pongu (orthopaedics) Hospital in the capital.

The Gazipur SP said they believe the JMB cadres were preparing for subversive acts at programmes of International Mother Language Day in the capital today.

Meanwhile, a Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) team arrested chief coordinator and two other members of the banned militant outfit in raids at Konabari and Uttarkhan of Tongi in the afternoon. They also seized two grenades and CDs and books on jihad.

Police sources said Tongi police arrested JMB ehsar (lifetime) member Mamun Rashid alias Zahid, 40, and female members Mina, 45, Marzia, 25, and Noor Jahan, 32, at a rented house at Gharotil village at around 10:30am.

From the same place, they recovered the ammunition and books on jihad.

Police took the arrestees and explosives to the SP office for the press briefing at around 4:00pm.

Eyewitnesses said the grenade exploded with a huge bang, throwing policemen, journalists and others at the SP office in to the air.

Police said the at least 500 grenades could be made of the materials recovered.

Sources said a Rab team had been trying to nab the JMB men for over last 15 days. It even conducted a raid in the village on December 18.

The Rab personnel had given their phone numbers to the villagers and requested them to inform them if they see Mamun alias Zahid around.

Spotting Zahid in the village, a local called the Rab numbers yesterday morning. But as the elite crime busters did not respond, he informed the Tongi police.

Soon, a team led by SI Sirajul Islam went to the village. As they approached, Mamun, who was in front of a house then, tried to run off but in vain.

Later, police surrounded the house and arrested the three others and recovered the explosives.

SP Baten told The Daily Star that Mamun stands accused in at least five cases filed in Gaibandha for his connection to militancy.

Sources said he is originally from Raikona village of Gaibandha district. He, along with six others, had been living together. The JMB members rented the house owned by Yusuf Ali, a Bangladesh expatriate in Saudi Arabia, from February 1.

Earlier, they lived in another house in the same village.

During primary interrogation, Marzia said his husband Al-Amin, Noor Jahan's husband Asif Suman and her parents had also been living with them. But they managed to flee the house sensing the police presence.

RAB DRIVE
A team from Rab headquarters arrested JMB's chief coordinator Motasim alias Basir alias Nasir at Konabari of Tongi and ehsar Moyej and associate coordinator Mizan at Uttarkhan at around 4:45pm.

Lt Col Majid, director of Rab intelligence wing, told The Daily Star, "Motasim's father Zillur is now in jail. He too was arrested for JMB connection."

Sources said Motasim, who is also commander of JMB Dhaka zone, hails from Mollarhat of Bagerhat, Moyej from Bhola and Mizan from Noakhali.

Motasim, also a Majlish-e-Sura member of the militant group, deals with the outfit's finances and leads the legal efforts to free their members behind bars.

Language martyrs

FROM PAGE 16
Khatun, who died in 1989, waited till death to see their son's grave.

Ohiullah was killed on February 22, 1952 by the Pakistan police on Nawabpur Road when he was watching a procession. His grave was not found as the police hid his body, but records suggest a boy was buried in Azimpur during the Language Movement.

According to different books and writings including "Bhasha Andolaner Shaheedera" [martyrs of the Language Movement] published by Bangla Academy, and Bangla Ki Kore Rashtia Bhasha Holo [Bangla becoming the state language] written by MR Mahbub and published by Bhasha Andolan Museum, Ohiullah is known as the son of a mason, Habibur Rahman, but none of the family has ever been identified.

Preservation of the graves of Barkat, who was a student of political science at Dhaka University, Safiur Rahman, who was an employee of Dhaka High Court, and Jabbar, who ran a shop in his village market, was possible thanks to the initiatives by their families and relatives.

Shafiqur Rahman, son of Safiur Rahman, said they could reserve the grave as his uncle late Dr Ashzadur Rahman hid the bodies of his father and Barkat in the operating theatre of Dhaka Medical College Hospital with the help of his friends. Ashzadur was a medical student during the movement.

"My grandfather Mahbubur Rahman received the body after giving a bond to the government that they would not do any procession with the body," said Shafiqur quoting his mother Akila Khatun.

"My uncle buried the body in the night and reserved the grave by giving the authorities Tk 101," he added.

Ayenuddin Barkat Totu, nephew of Barkat, said their family took the body after signing a bond to the government and reserved the grave with the help of Barkat's maternal uncle late Abdul Malek, sister late Nurjahan and sister-in-law late ASM Mahmudul Hossain.

During an investigation by The Daily Star, names of five martyrs -- Salam, Rafiq, Jabbar, Barkat and Safiur Rahman -- were found in the burial records of Azimpur Graveyard.

Ohiullah's name is absent, but burial of an unidentified boy aged between five and 10 was found in the record book. The record, registered on February 24, 1952, says the boy died on February 22, 1952 at DMCH. It matches with reports of different newspapers published that time.

Record Keeper of Dhaka City Corporation Abu Zafar Md Elias said names of five

Language Movement martyrs including the unknown boy were recorded in the book-2 of 1952. The name of Salam who succumbed to his injury on April 7, 1952 and was buried the next day was recorded in the book-3 of 1952, he added.

On the other hand, all the three identified graves were found on the list of reserved graves of Azimpur Graveyard. Among those, the grave of Jabbar was identified in 2002.

According to the list, the serial numbers of Barkat's grave is 3917, Jabbar's 3918 and Safiur's is 3941.

Barkat and Safiur's graves were reserved by their families but reservation of Jabbar's grave is a mystery, as his family did not do it and no official records are available about it.

AHM Asad Nayan, Jabbar's cousin, who identified the grave, said he took help from Dr Sirazul Islam, who was a surgeon of Rajbargh Police Hospital and took part in the namaz-e-janaza of Jabbar.

Nayan and Md Nurul Islam Badal, son of Jabbar, said they did not know whether the grave was reserved or not as their family could not do it.

The families of Salam and Rafiq, on the other hand, blame the previous governments for not identifying the graves and demand proper steps in this regard.

They say the government should take initiatives either to find out the graves or keep all the graves in a particular place like the seven war heroes [Bir Shresthas].

"It's almost impossible for me to identify the grave now as the graveyard has entirely changed in course of time. But I heard from my brother that it was located under a mango tree," said Abdul Karim, Salam's brother.

Sculptor Rasha who drew the picture of Salam based on his family members' narratives in 2000 said he met Sobahan in 1998. Sobahan told him that they received a letter from the municipality in 1954 to reserve the grave giving Tk 101 but they could not afford that, Rasha added.

Echoing the demand of Karim, Rafiq's younger brother Khurshid Alam said they had applied to the municipality many times to identify the grave in vain.

Dhaka City Corporation Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka told The Daily Star on February 17 it is very tough to identify the graves now as it should have done this long ago.

Bangla Academy can take an initiative in this regard and they would help the Academy, added Khoka.

Director General of Bangla Academy Syed Mohammad Shahed said he doesn't know if there were any initiatives to identify the graves by the Academy and till now they do not have any plan in this regard.

Ekushey martyrs

FROM PAGE 1
University will also place wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar.

Besides, thousands of barefoot people from all walks of life will place wreaths at the Shaheed Minar to pay tribute to the Language Movement martyrs.

Strict security measures have been put in place in and around the Central Shaheed Minar to avert any untoward incident.

About 7,000 policemen and over 600 members of Rab have been deployed at the Shaheed Minar and Azimpur graveyard.

Bangladesh Awami League, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Jatiya Party, Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP), National Awami Party (NAP-Bhashani), Bangladesh National Awami Party, Shammilita Sangskritik Jote, Dhaka Reporters Unity, Bangladesh Udichi Shilpi Gosthi, Bangladesh Sangskritik Karmi Shangha, Bangladesh Abriti Samannay Parishad and Memorial Preservation of Language Movement Forum will hold various programmes on the occasion.

Thousands of people will throng the Shaheed Minars across the country to pay respect to the Language Movement martyrs.

On this day in 1952, students and people from all strata of society took to the streets in Dhaka to protest the then Pakistan government's refusal to recognise Bangla as one of the state languages and imposition of Urdu as the only

official language of Pakistan.

Salam, Barkat, Rafiq, Shafiur, Jabbar and a few other brave sons of the soil sacrificed their lives on this day to establish Bangla as one of the state languages of the then Pakistan.

The day has since been observed as the Language Martyrs Day, which the Unesco later declared as the International Mother Language Day.

The Pakistan government was ultimately compelled to include an article in the country's constitution on February 29, 1956 that declared, "The state languages of Pakistan shall be Urdu and Bengali."

The Language Movement is indeed the most important turning point in the history of Bangladesh as its spirit led to the independence of Bangladesh.

On November 17, 1999, the Unesco declared February 21 as the International Mother Language Day. Countries across the globe have been observing the day since then to promote linguistic diversity and multilingual education and raise awareness of cultural traditions based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue.

The Central Shaheed Minar and its adjacent areas have had a facelift on the occasion, and roads and medians have been festooned with Bangla alphabets and the national flag.

The day is a public holiday. The national flag will be hoisted at half-mast atop all government, autonomous and private buildings.

18th anniversary

FROM PAGE 16
ministers, former advisers to caretaker government, members of the diplomatic corps and incumbent and former bureaucrats, made the celebration a remarkable one.

The newspaper that began its journey back in 1991 with a firm commitment to uphold "people's right to know" also launched its e-paper 'eDailyStar.com', the digital edition of The Daily Star, at the function.

Speaking on the occasion, Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam said overall Bangladesh is moving forward despite odds since the country's independence.

"Though there are many failures and obstacles yet the country achieved many successes in fields like education, health, private sector and media and we believe the country will move forward," he said.

He also said the newspaper will do journalism giving the country, its people and democracy top priorities.

Speaker of the Parliament Abdul Hamid, Deputy Speaker Shawkat Ali, Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, Awami League (AL) lawmakers Toifal Ahmed and Amir Hossain Amu, Chief Whip Vice Principal Abdus Shahid, Food and Disaster Management Minister Dr Abdur Razzak, Industries Minister Dilip Barua, Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Golam Mohammad Quader, AL lawmaker advocate Rahmat Ali, opposition Chief Whip Joyal Abedin Faruk, BNP Standing Committee Member Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman and Jatiya Party leader Ziauddin Babilu were among the ministers and lawmakers present at the event.

Among other dignitaries, former Vice-Chancellor of Jahangirnagar University Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, Prof Rehman Sobhan, former advisers to the caretaker government Maj Gen (ret'd) Mainul Hossain Chowdhury, ABM Mirza Azizul Islam, advocate Sultana Kamal, Iftekar Ahmed Chowdhury, M Hafizuddin Khan, Geeti Ara Safia Chowdhury and Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) M Shakhawat Hossain, Public Service Commission Chairman Saadat Hussain, US Charge D'Affaires Geeta Pasi, former chief adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim, barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud, Prothom Alo Editor Matiar Rahman, Kazi Shahed Ahmed, Faridur Reza Sagor, Shykh Seraj, Aly Zaker and a good number of academics and glitterati of the art world showed up at the reception.

Besides, a large number of professionals, officials from development agencies and NGO leaders attended the function.

JMB militants

FROM PAGE 1
But experts say this is more the result of better research tools than of an increasingly dire situation for the world's many tongues.

Still there is disheartening news. There are 199 languages in the world spoken by fewer than a dozen people, including Karaim, which has six speakers in Ukraine and Wichita, spoken by 10 people in the US state of Oklahoma.

The last four speakers of Lengilu talk among themselves in Indonesia.

Prospects are a bit brighter for some 178 other languages, spoken by between 10 and 150 people.

More than 200 languages have become extinct over the last three generations such as Ubykh that fell silent in 1992 when Tefvic Esenc passed on, Aasax in Tanzania, which disappeared in 1976, and Manx in 1974.

India tops the list of countries with the greatest number of endangered languages, 196 in all, followed by the United States, which stands to lose 192 and Indonesia, where 147 are in peril.

Australian linguist Christopher Moseley, who headed the atlas' team of 25 experts, noted that countries with rich linguistic diversity like India and the United States are also facing the greatest threat of language extinction.

Even Sub-Saharan Africa's melting pot of some 2,000 languages is expected to shrink by at least 10 percent over the coming century, according to Unesco.

On Unesco's rating scale, 538 languages are critically endangered, 502 severely endangered, 632 definitely endangered and 607 unsafe.

On a brighter note, Papua New Guinea, the country of 800 languages, the most diverse in the world, has only 88 endangered dialects.

Certain languages are even showing signs of a revival, like Cornish, a Celtic language spoken in Cornwall, southern England, and Sishee in New Caledonia.

Zimbabwe may cost five billion dollars to fix: PM

AFP, Cape Town

Reconstructing Zimbabwe may cost as much as five billion US dollars (four billion euros), Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai said yesterday as he opened his hands to neighbouring countries.

Tsvangirai was speaking after meeting South African President Kgalema Motlanthe who has convened the region's finance ministers next week to devise a plan to assist their starving and desperate neighbours.

"What we are looking for is a short-term intervention to make sure we are jump-starting those institutions that affect people," Tsvangirai told reporters in Cape Town.

Tsvangirai, who joined a historic unity government last week with his bitter rival, President Robert Mugabe, warned that long-term reconstruction could "run into billions of dollars, maybe as high as five billion."

"Our situation is dire. The key priority areas are food, health and education."

Schools in Zimbabwe are shut, its economy lies shattered after 29 years of Mugabe rule, and its healthcare system is struggling to cope with a cholera epidemic that has claimed more than 3,750 lives.

Nearly seven million people need food aid. Up to three million have fled the country. Unemployment is at 94 percent and only 20 percent of children are going to school.

Public hospitals are closed, even though 1.3 million people have HIV. A cholera epidemic is ravaging the country, hitting more than 80,000 people across the country since August.

Motlanthe said South Africa, chair of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) bloc, had directed regional finance ministers to develop a plan to help Zimbabwe.

"They have presented to us their preliminary plan to respond to these challenges which we have agreed to deal with."

"There are no figures to speak of, these are going to be crunched by technical people and finance ministers to be meeting on these issues."

Tsvangirai, who was said his government would first concentrate on the short-term priorities.

Zimbabwe is buckling under economic meltdown, characterised by the world's highest inflation, which had

officially soared to 231 million percent by last July.

Most essential civil servants, including teachers, nurses and doctors, have been on strike since last year over poor pay.

Sheer neglect

FROM PAGE 1

"We have made a mistake," said a sub-inspector of Tongi Police Station, who was involved in the process of recovery of the grenades, a huge quantity of explosive substances and arrest of the JMB activist. He however preferred anonymity.

Meanwhile, sources said a four-member Rab bomb squad reached Ghorotil village 12:30 pm, where the explosives were seized.

On hearing that the explosives and the arrestee were taken to the SP office, they returned there at 1:30pm. It is astonishing that they visited the SP office but left it without defusing the grenades.

Rab sources claimed that they did not neutralise the grenades as police did not ask for it.

"Usually, if a seized explosive poses a threat it is neutralised instantly without taking permission from court. In case the risk is not that much evident, seized explosives are neutralised with permission from court," said a Rab source.

"Had police assessed the risk and asked for neutralising the grenades, the Rab experts would have done so," he added.

The Rab bomb squad again rushed to the SP office immediately after the grenade attack.

In reply to a question, the SP, Abdul Baten, said, "The explosives were supposed to be defused later."

Replying to another question, he said, "Actually our experts took some time to arrive."

The explosives were recovered around 10:30am and the press briefing was held at 4:00pm.

When his attention was drawn to this, Baten however said, "The explosives could not be neutralised as the Rab bomb squad members reached his office after the briefing was already held."

When asked why the grenades were not defused when the squad had visited his office earlier, Baten replied, "The squad members had an emergency work at another place, and they had to leave his office immediately."

2,500 languages

FROM PAGE 16
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Governments in Peru, New

Zealand, Canada, the United States and Mexico have been successful in their efforts to prevent indigenous languages from dying out.

Unesco deputy director Francoise Riviere applauded government efforts to support linguistic diversity but added that "people have to be proud to speak their language" to ensure it thrives.

Mumbai

FROM PAGE 16

Islamabad's decision to bring criminal charges against nine men accused of involvement in the Mumbai attack has partly placated Indian officials but officials in New Delhi have been warning that they want to see people brought to justice for terrorists acts.

"There has been some speculation that raids in Spain which netted 12 men - an Indian and 11 Pakistanis - were a result of the investigations into Lashkar's role in the Mumbai attacks," the report said.

"The dozen men were reportedly picked up for forging passports and other travel documents for terror organisations, including al-Qaeda. Pakistan's government has said the Mumbai attacks were partly planned from Spain."

The US has been trying behind the scenes to coordinate intelligence exchanges between the two nuclear-armed rivals. The CIA has worked hard to be seen to help New Delhi - including by recovering phone numbers deleted by the terrorists on their satellite phones.

The fallout from Mumbai has destabilised the government of Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari, which is attempting to face down Islamist groups his predecessors cultivated.

Intelligence agencies have warned that Mumbai raises the spectre of a new style of terrorist assault. The city of 19 million people was brought to a halt by 10 heavily armed gunmen rampaging through a railway station, a house, restaurants and hotels for three days, killing over 170 people.

26 passengers

FROM PAGE 16
and speedboats. They were even using nets of local fishermen to find the victims.

Their attempts, however, were unsuccessful.

Port Officer of Barisal, Rafikul Islam told The Daily Star that Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) has formed two enquiry committees that have three members each.

Barisal administration's three-member enquiry committee led by Additional District Magistrate Abdullah Al Baki started its investigation yesterday.

Baki said, "We visited the spot, talked to the injured, rescued victims, relatives of the dead and witnesses and surveyed the condition of the launch and the cargo vessel that hit the launch and caused it to capsiz." He said they also checked the documents of the two vessels.

BIWTA officials could not say exactly how many people were onboard the vessel as tickets were not sold to all passengers.

They said unskilled crew