Fate of nurses

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and hundreds of injured are arriving there every hour," mentioned Salauddin adding "The authorities have confined the Bangladeshi medical staff to the hospitals."

Many other fleeing Bangladeshis told stories of how female nurses were detained while on their way to the Tunisia border.

"We were heading for Tunisia on a microbus with four Bangladeshi women in the back seats," said Taher, from Sylhet.

"At one of the check posts an armed man asked the women out of the vehicle and started interrogating them…As the women tried to plea, several armed men asked the driver to drive on," he added.

Since they were nurses, they were not permitted to leave, the driver told Taher.

Salauddin said when nurses submitted their resignations to their authorities recently, they were summoned to a hall room where an armed army man asked who wanted to go.

The women were so terrified of the army that they kept quiet.

According to medical aid workers in Choucha camp, Libya has been largely dependent on migrant workers almost in every sector. With thousands of this workforce leaving, the country has come to a standstill. The turmoil is causing deaths and injuries throughout the country every day. If Bangladeshi nurses and doctors are allowed to go home, their hospitals would face severe shortage of manpower.

An official of Bangladesh mission in Tripoli, who is now in Djerba, said they had heard from scores of Bangladeshi nurses, medical assistants and doctors of being barred from leaving the hospital compounds.

Many of them kept telephoning the embassy, Ahsan Kibria, first secretary (Labour) of Bangladesh embassy, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"They told me there was a ban on their movement and therefore, they were passing days in extreme anxiety," he added.

"I obtained cell phone numbers of several nurses and doctors but was unable to find network. The fleeing migrant workers told me that loyalists of Gaddafi were controlling the mobile phone network."

The Libyan ministry of health recruited hundreds of these staff for its medical workforce over the last two years.

"There are about 500 Bangladeshi female nurses and hundreds of medical staff working in hospitals across Libya," noted Kibria.

Stranded workers in Choucha told this correspondent that Libyan forces shot dead a number of female Bangladeshis when they were trying to flee the country. The Daily Star, however, could not independently confirm the news of deaths.

Sad old 'debate'

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be conducive to constructive deliberations and discussions.

It was very unfortunate that both the sides -- the treasury and the opposition benches -- encouraged those lawmakers by thumping desks, who speak foul of the opponents. Even the chief whips of both sides requested the Speaker to allocate additional time for those lawmakers.

Talking to this correspondent, a number of lawmakers -- both from ruling and opposition benches -- have alleged that they were asked by their respective senior leaders to launch aggressive attacks on the opponents, even by calling names of some senior rival leaders.

The Speaker on March 20 also accused both the benches of encouraging lawmakers who spoke foul in parliament. None of the sides showed their courage or intention to disagree with the Speaker's allegation against them.

However, the atmosphere of the House was more or less calm and dull until the BNP-led opposition lawmakers returned to parliament on March 15. After their return, the House had only seven out of total 33 sittings of the session concluded on Thursday. However, the seven sitting days was full of climaxes.

In absence of the opposition deputies, the ruling alliance lawmakers were unilaterally launching attacks on their rivals and blindly appreciating the government's performances. But the scene took a dramatic turn with the return of the opposition lawmakers. Frequent verbal attacks and counterattacks created a tense situation in parliament.

Under such a circumstance, the House spent over 41 hours of discussion, in which 227 MPs took part since February 1. After holding the long discussion on a motion, the House passed the motion giving thanks to President Zillur Rahman for his "address" delivered on January 25 in parliament. [In fact, it was not the president's own address as the cabinet had approved it earlier.]

The president addressed the House under article 73 of the Constitution and according to this constitutional provision, his speech was supposed to be discussed in parliament.

But the way parliament held the discussion on the motion to give thanks to the president triggered questions over spending such long time for it as the languages used in the discussion drew huge criticism.

On the other side, the Speaker could not allocate time for holding discussion on some specific issues in the House in line with the opposition's demand. He himself on Wednesday observed that some important issues raised by the opposition lawmakers could have been discussed. "But due to time constraint, it is not possible for me to accept any of the notices at this stage," he said rejecting all 144 notices submitted by the opposition lawmakers for holding discussions on various important issues.

The Constitution does not specify any timeframe for the discussion. But the House traditionally spends in between 30 to 40 hours for it. The question now arises if the president is honoured with thanks by the House following such a discussion.

The unhealthy situation almost prevailed last year too during the discussion on the thanks giving motion on the president's address. At that time, the House spent 42 hours for the discussion which was also marked by a series of unfortunate events.

Upset by the situation prevailed in the House last year, Speaker Abdul Hamid decried some MPs' unruly behaviour and said the nation expected a lot from them. "Millions of people elected you and they cannot accept the behaviour you displayed and the language you used in parliament [on March 4, 2010]," Hamid said.

AL senior lawmaker Fazle Rabbi on March 5 last year said, "I feel ashamed of giving my identity as a lawmaker."

The just concluded session strongly demonstrated that the situation did not improve; rather it has been deteriorated to some extent. Upset by the use of indecent and vulgar words in the House, the speaker on last Sunday said senior lawmakers should feel embarrassed about fellow parliamentarians, who use indecent words in their speeches.

If the culture does not improve, it will continue to prevent many MPs who possess the qualities from debating well with their parliamentary knowledge. If it is so, how the parliamentary practice will be healthy, contributing to strengthening parliamentary democracy?

To end this unhealthy culture, leaders of both the benches must take steps to rein in their MPs who use abusive and vulgar languages. The Speaker will have to exercise his ample authority to stop it. He will have to take punitive measures, if needed, for unruly behaviour of an MP as only expunging those vulgar and indecent words from the House proceedings did not contribute much to maintaining order in parliament.

Thousands crowd central London in budget protest

Ap, London

Tens of thousands of mostly peaceful demonstrators streamed into central London on Saturday to march against government budget cuts, with a small breakaway group smashing its way into a bank, breaking windows and spray painting logos on the walls.

Another group of black-clad protesters hurled paint bombs and ammonia-filled light bulbs at police.

Organizers of the march estimated that at least 250,000 people from across the country were peacefully joining in the demonstration, the biggest protest in London since a series of rallies against the Iraq war in 2003. Police said they were not giving out crowd estimates.

They said one group of a few hundred people broke away from the main march, scuffling with police officers and attempting to smash shop windows on two of London's main shopping streets. Others threw objects at the posh Ritz Hotel in nearby Piccadilly. At least one person was arrested for carrying equipment that could cause criminal damage, police said.

Another group pulled a giant model of a Trojan horse and said they planned to burn it.

But, the protests otherwise had a carnival feel. School teachers, nurses and students all marched through central London toward Hyde Park, one of London's biggest public gardens, with banners, balloons and whistles.

Britain is facing 80 billion pounds ($130 billion) of public spending cuts from Prime Minister David Cameron's coalition government as it struggles to get the country's large budget deficit under control. The government has already raised sales tax, but Britons are bracing for deep cuts on services.

The TUC union says it believes the cuts will threaten the country's economic recovery, and has urged the government to create new taxes for banks and to close loopholes that allow some companies to pay less tax.

Mother

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second wife of Abdul Barek, 26, a CNG-run auto rickshaw driver, who hails from Laxmipur and resides at Boira Pukur Par of Saraipara under Pahartoli Police Station with his two wives and children.

Sub Inspector (SI) Liton said Barek and his first wife Lucky Begum went to the police station at around 3:00pm and informed that his second wife committed suicide after killing her baby boy at his residence.

On suspicion, police went to Barek's tin-shed house and discovered Rahima lying dead on the floor with a towel around her neck. Hridoy was also found dead right beside his mother.

Police recovered the dead bodies and arrested Barek and his first wife on charge of the killing.

The auto rickshaw driver claimed that his first wife Lucky informed him over the cell phone around 12:00 noon that Rahima committed suicide.

Then he and Lucky went to the police after cutting loose Rahima and Hridoy who were hanging, SI Sattayranjan said quoting Barek.

SM Tanvir Arafat, assistant commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police of Double-Mooring zone, said inquest report showed no sign of suicide in Rahima's body.

There were marks of serious injury behind Hirdoy's skull and backside, said Tanvir, who suspected that the baby might have been killed by throwing him on the ground.

He also said that family feud could be the reason for the killing as Barek informed police that the two wives quarrelled the previous night that forced him (Barek) to go without dinner.

Police detained Abdul Barek and Lucky Begum around 5:30pm and were interrogating them till filing of the report in the evening.

PHOTO: MORSHED ALI KHAN

In shivering cold, Bangladeshi workers queue up for food at Choucha camp in Tunisia yesterday.

Shah Alam

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Sarkar murder case.

In the order, the magistrate said complainant of the case Ratan Chandra Sarkar was served several notices to appear before the court to testify whether the CID report was true.

The plaintiff, however, did not appear. So the final report was accepted and all the accused in the case were cleared of the charge, the magistrate said.

According to the prosecutor, hired goons led by employees of Bashundhara Housing Project swooped on the residents of Amdiartek on November 16, 2006 in a bid to grab their lands. Several people were injured in the incident. Manik succumbed to his injuries that day.

CID Inspector ABM Zakir Hossain, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, on November 3 last year submitted the final report finding no evidence to press charges against the accused.

In the probe report the IO said he and nine of his colleagues had investigated the case and tried to find out the facts. They did not find any evidence against Shah Alam and the others and further investigation would not be much fruitful. So he submitted the final report clearing all the accused of the murder charge, the IO added.

Victim's brother Ratan Chandra filed the murder case against Shah Alam and several others with Badda Police Station. Police arrested 15 people in this connection.

On August 23 last year, Shah Alam, a fugitive for long, surrendered before a Dhaka court and obtained bail in this case.

On March 20, he was sent to jail after his surrender and bail prayers in two cases in which he was earlier sentenced ten years' imprisonment in absentia. The cases were filed during the caretaker government rule for tax evasion and keeping foreign currency at his Gulshan residence illegally.

He was granted bails in other graft cases filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission in connection with allegedly giving Tk 21 crore in bribe to save his son Shafial Sobhan Sanvir from Humayun Kabir Sabbir murder case and to take possession of a government house at a price lower than the market value. Shah Alam was also sued for amassing illegal wealth and land grabbing.

Govt to build

FROM PAGE 1

at Bangabhaban yesterday evening.

Seven heroes of the Independence War who laid down their lives for the country were awarded the title of Birshreshtha.

Tajul Islam enquired about their well-being and said the government would continue its efforts to ensure welfare for Birshreshtha families.

On behalf of the president, he distributed gifts among close relatives of the Birshreshthas, who made supreme sacrifices with the highest bravery during the War of Liberation in 1971.

The family members of the Birshreshthas expressed their gratitude to the government for taking measures to solve their housing problem.

Secretary of President's Office Md Shafiul Alam, Liberation War Affairs Secretary Mizanur Rahman, Military Secretary to the President Major General Abul Kalam M Humayun Kabir and Press Secretary to the President AKM Nesar Uddin Bhuiyan were present at the reception.

Independence Day

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National Stadium. Bhutanese King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, who is on a Bangladesh visit, was also present.

People from all walks of life including families and relatives of the martyrs, victims of war crimes, freedom fighters, socio-political and cultural organisations, human rights bodies and students crowded different memorials across the country with floral wreaths to pay homage to the martyrs.

On March 25, 1971, the Pakistani occupation forces in the middle of the night unleashed one of the worst genocides in the history in then East Pakistan to suppress the uprising of Bangalees.

On that night before his arrest, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman issued a proclamation of independence. Awami League leader MA Hannan the following day read out Bangabandhu's message on air from Chittagong.

On March 27, Maj Gen Ziaur Rahman read out the message again. Hearing the declaration of independence from an army officer, the people regained their courage.

After a nine-month-long bloody war and sacrifices of three million lives, Bangladesh achieved its independence.

Yesterday was a public holiday. The national flag was hoisted on all government, semi-government and other important establishments.

Many buildings, vehicles, thoroughfares and road islands in Dhaka were decorated with national flags of different sizes along with banners inscribed with patriotic slogans.

The National Memorial reverberated with chanting of slogans and patriotic songs.

People from different organisations also placed floral wreaths at Shikha Chirantan at Suhrawardy Udyan in the city. Processions were held in different parts of the city all day.

People reiterated their demand for trial of war criminals. They pledged to realise martyrs' dream of a democratic, prosperous and corruption-free nation.

Cultural programmes were held across the country while the historic 7th March speech by Bangabandhu and patriotic songs of the time of liberation war were played through loudspeakers on many streets.

To mark the day, newspapers published special supplements and television channels and radio stations broadcast special discussion and cultural programmes.

Special prayers were offered at all religious centres across the country, seeking eternal peace of the martyrs and blessings for the country's prosperity.

Major political, social and cultural organisations also observed the day through elaborate programmes.

20 hurt

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without any permission Shibir men around 10:00am were holding the rally blocking the road.

When Ramna police tried to stop the Shibir men, they ransacked roadside business establishments, vandalised vehicles and pelted the law enforcers with brickbats. The police charged batons to disperse the crowd. They also fired two rubber bullets and lobbed six teargas canisters.

Before the rally, several hundred Shibir leaders and activists paraded through Kakrail and Shantinagar areas.

Police said at least three law enforcers sustained injuries during the clash while Shibir men claimed that around 100 of their activists and pedestrians received wounds by the police action.

According to witnesses, the number of injured was around 20.

MA Kuddus, officer-in-charge of Ramna Police Station, told The Daily Star that they resorted to firing rubber bullets and hurling teargas canisters to take the situation under control.

The police filed two cases-- one for assaulting policemen and another for damaging public properties, he said.

In a written statement, Shibir publicity secretary Abu Saleh Mohammad Yiahyia protested the arrests of the Shibir men and condemned the police action.

'Earth Hour'

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turn the lights off for 60 minutes to reduce energy consumption.

"It's an hour in one day of the year," Earth Hour co-founder and executive director Andy Ridley told AFP.

Meanwhile, Australia's Opera House was the first of many global landmarks to go dark yesterday.

"The amount of power that's saved during that time is not really what it's about. What it is meant to be about is showing what can happen when people come together."

Ridley said 134 countries or territories were on board for the event, with many groups expected to use the hour to also pay tribute to Japan which this month suffered a 9.0 magnitude quake and tsunami.

Ridley said hundreds of millions of people took part in 2010 and he was hopeful of the same response this year when landmarks such as the world's tallest building Burj Khalifa in Dubai, Times Square New York, the London Eye and Brazil's Christ the Redeemer statue go dark to mark the hour.

Designed as a symbolic act to make people aware of everyday energy use, Earth Hour has evolved into a global movement, and this year will take place from 8:30pm local time around the world.

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon urged people to celebrate the shared quest to "protect the planet and ensure human well-being."

"Let us use 60 minutes of darkness to help the world see the light," he said of the event, which kicks off in the Pacific, takes in Fiji, New Zealand and Australia, before rolling to Asia, Europe, Africa and the Americas.

SL openers

FROM PAGE 20

in the first semifinal on March 29 while India and Pakistan will face off in the second semis in Mohali the following day.

The opening partnership took the home side to 231 runs in 39.3 overs in reply to England's 229-6 in 50 overs on the occasion of the 100th ODI at the venue. The win meant Sri Lanka's fourth time in the last four, their first being at the 1996 World Cup which they lifted. For England, it would be fifth time unlucky as they have remained outside the semi-finals since the 1992 tournament.

Both Dilshan and Tharanga (though suffering from severe cramps) reached centuries in the end, stamping their authority over a powerless England attack that finally succumbed to fatigue and looked short of ideas.

It was Dilshan's 10th ODI hundred while Tharanga reached his eleventh with a cracking cover drive off Tim Bresnan. It was England's third ten-wicket defeat to Sri Lanka but their first in World Cups as they bowed out having entertained everyone in the first round.

The no-nonsense Dilshan was at his marauding best, hammering eight boundaries and two brilliantly hit sixes off James Tredwell and Swann in his 115-ball 108. He mostly banked on his trusted stand-and-deliver method, cutting and driving on the up and hitting some very well-timed boundaries. The left-handed Tharanga accumulated a half-century too, hitting twelve boundaries and a six in his 112-ball 102, a huge straight one off Swann.

The pair had earlier done this same job in their 282-run opening wicket stand against Zimbabwe in Pallekelle during the first round, hitting centuries and sharing a 200-run opening stand.

Dilshan earlier took 1-25 from his six overs, opening the bowling and batting for the first time in his ODI career. He is, interestingly, now the seventh spinner to open the bowling and then open with the bat in one-day cricket after Wasim Raja, Mark Waugh, Virender Sehwag, Chris Gayle, John Davison and Mohammad Hafeez.

England looked flat with the white ball in hand with none of their key bowlers being given a whiff of a wicket. Off-spinner Graeme Swann, their main bowler, was kept at bay with some wily strokeplay, while Bresnan and the rest remained toothless, slowly drawing close to England's thrilling World Cup campaign.

"We were thoroughly outplayed. We didn't get a good start with the bat, not a fine finish as well and then our bowling fell flat," said England skipper Andrew Strauss after the game.

England's innings, after they decided to bat first on a slow surface, was built around Jonathan Trott's steady 86 off 115 balls, the right-hander playing the anchor role properly once again after early wickets jolted their progress.

Trott added 64 for the third wicket with the confident Ravi Bopara, though the duo's running left a few hearts to flutter in the England dressing room. Bopara made 31 before he fell to a straight one from Muttiah Muralidaran, the leg-before decision staying in favour of Sri Lanka despite the review. Trott then found an even abler ally in Eoin Morgan. The duo who did a similar job against Bangladesh in Chittagong only two weeks ago, added 91 for the fourth wicket in quick time as England gained advantage going into the final ten overs.

Morgan, who made 50 off 55 balls with four boundaries, was dropped thrice by the home side. After Thilan Samareera put him down at the deep cover boundary in the 32nd over, Morgan got two lives in three balls when first, he was dropped at deep cover once again and then Angelo Matthews spilled a low chance much to the great spinner's chagrin.

Morgan also survived a close leg-before shout to Lasith Malinga but at the other end, Trott hardly offered a chance. Only two boundaries in his essay, Trott was the master accumulator once again as he notched up his fifth half-century matching Yuvraj Singh and moving on top of the top scorers' list in the tournament with 422 runs.

Sri Lanka's bowling was a steady effort as they began well with Malinga, Dilshan and Matthews before the spin trio of Muralidaran, Ajantha Mendis and Rangana Herath got into the act, though with varied levels of success. Muralidaran picked up two wickets (Bopara and Trott) but Mendis was only economical, giving away just 34 runs from his ten overs, picking up the wicket of Graeme Swann (sent at No 6 during the futile batting Powerplay).

In fact England lost out on a better score by taking the last Powerplay a few overs early as they immediately lost Morgan and Swann, picking up just 23 runs in the five-over spell.

SCOREBOARD

Final scoreboard of the World Cup quarterfinal between Sri Lanka and England at R Premadasa Stadium on Saturday:

ENGLAND

Strauss b Dilshan	5
Bell c Samaraweera b Mathews	25
Trott c Jayawardene b Muralitharan	86
Bopara lbw b Muralitharan	31
Morgan c Mathews b Malinga	50
Swann lbw b Mendis	0
Prior not out	22
Wright not out	1
Extras: (lb-3, w-6)	9
Total: (for 6 wkts in 50 overs)	229

Fall of wickets: 1-29, 2-31, 3-95, 4-186, 5-186, 6-212

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Malinga	10	0	46	1
Dilshan	6	1	25	1
Mathews	5	0	20	1
Herath	10	1	47	0
Mendis	10	0	34	1
Muralitharan	9	0	54	2

SRI LANKA

Tharanga not out	102
Dilshan not out	108
Extras: (b-9, lb-6, w-6)	21
Total: (For no loss in 39.3 overs)	231

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Bresnen	8	1	40	0
Swann	9	0	61	0
Tremlett	7.3	0	38	0
Bopara	5	1	22	0
Tredwell	6	0	38	0
Wright	4	0	17	0

Result: Sri Lanka won by 10 wickets

Man-of-the-match: Tillakaratne Dilshan

Cleaning not

FROM PAGE 20

the city and disconnecting electricity at the grave compound.

Briefing reporters at the BNP central office, he said that on the eve of the national days every year Zia's grave is cleaned up for paying respect to him by BNP leaders, workers and supporters. But the authorities did not allow the cleaners on Friday to clean the grave compound.

Fakhrul also alleged that the Awami terrorists in presence of law the enforcement agencies on Friday night damaged 60 welcome arches, banners, festoons and portraits of Ziaur Rahman, Khaleda Zia and Tarique Rahman on roads from Dhaka to National Mausoleum at Savar.

Many leaders and workers of BNP and its associate organisations were beaten up by hammer and wounded during the attack by "Awami terrorists", he said.

The BNP leader strongly condemned the terrorist activities of the ruling party and urged them to practice democracy. "In future, we will respond to such excesses by the ruling party through democratic means," he added.

Fakhrul said the government has behaved with BNP in "extremely undemocratic manner" in the last two years.

Asked whether BNP would resort to such undemocratic behaviour if it returns to power, he said BNP introduced the multi-party democracy in the country and believes in the politics of tolerance.