

Their world

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neighbourhood and reporters, many with TV cameras, crowded around the place, covered by ashes with smoke apparently making a way out. Slum dwellers were every now and then making frantic searches through the debris, dirt and wreckage in the hope of finding bits of their belongings.

Amid this chaotic situation, Hauladar sat there in silence, a sharp contrast to the noise of crying, shouting and howling.

"I knew at that point, I would never see them again," he muttered, staring intently at the ashes that once used to be his home.

Another dweller, Mohammad Shumon, suffered 25 percent burns in the face, neck, hands and legs. He has been taking treatment in the Burn Unit of Dhaka Medical College and Hospital and has yet to learn that his seven-year-old son, Abdullah, died in the fire.

There was madness everywhere when the fire broke out around 2:45am. People struggled to get out through the congested place of the poorly-planned shanties. The houses did not have electricity and so the darkness further confused the already-panicked residents. In the commotion, people fled wherever they could, however they could, often-times losing track of their loved ones.

During the fire, Shaheenur, 22, hurried out with her son and husband. It was only after she came out in the open that she realised her mother Helena, sister Akhlina and three-year-old son Sakib were in an adjoining house where the fire had originated. She had asked her mother to look after Sakib that night.

Shaheenur ran around all night, desperately searching for the three amid the sea of people gathered on the streets waiting for the fire to die down.

"There were fear and confusion everywhere, as no one could be sure what had happened, who had died," said a desolate Shaheenur. In the morning once the fire brigade found the corpses, she learnt she had lost her mother, sister and son.

All inhabitants of the

slum live from hand to mouth after paying rents of Tk 1,500-1,800 a month. And now all they have left are the clothes they had on that night.

Aleba Khatun seemed to be in too much of a shock to believe that fate had done so much injustice to her. She had lost all her belongings and Tk 20,000 that she had saved for her daughter's marriage.

"What am I going to do now?" she cried, but her neighbour comforted her saying she should be glad that she and her family were at least alive.

"Where was the fire brigade when everything was being burnt to ashes?" said Onjona, a domestic worker, anger written all over her face. It took the fire brigade more than an hour to reach the spot even though the roads were empty in the middle of the night, she shouted out of frustration.

By the time they reached there, the damage had all been done, said the inhabitants.

"Why can't the government give us any protection? Don't we vote them into power? Government officials receive their pensions and have a sound sleep at night, while we burn to death," Onjona said.

"Would the same tragedy have happened if this had been a residence in Gulshan or Dhanmondi? The fire brigade would have reached there in 10 minutes," she added.

Musharraf calls for Indo-Pak peace

AFP, New Delhi

Former Pakistan president Pervez Musharraf said on Saturday that nuclear-armed India and Pakistan need to "bury the hatchet" and settle their differences to reduce poverty and ease tensions in the region.

He added that the Pakistan army, widely seen as anti-India, was in favour of peace with New Delhi and stressed that the Kashmir issue, "the root cause of dispute", must be resolved as it provides fuel to extremism in his country.

PADMA BRIDGE GRAFT ACC quizzes SNC Lavalin agents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday quizzed two local agents of the Canadian consultancy firm SNC Lavalin over graft allegations in the Padma bridge project.

One of the agents, MA Aziz, who is also a director of BGL Associates Ltd, denied having any knowledge of graft in the project, saying that there was corruption in many countries and, similarly, there was corruption in the World Bank also.

Aziz made the remarks while leaving the ACC grilling room in the afternoon.

The four-member ACC team led by its Senior Deputy Director Mir Md Zainul Abedin Shibly interrogated MA Aziz and Gholam Mostofa, managing director of ACE Consultants Ltd.

Mostofa, while leaving the ACC compound after being quizzed, told reporters that the ACC team had tried to glean information from him about graft allegations in the Padma bridge project.

He, however, had no information about the corruption, Mostofa said.

Earlier on November 11, the ACC served notice on Aziz and Mostofa, requesting them to appear before the commission yesterday.

The ACC launched its enquiry into the graft allegations in early September 2011 following media reports while the World Bank sent letters to the ACC raising the same allegations in late September.

The WB cancelled its \$1.2 billion credit for the project on June 29, saying it had proof of a corruption conspiracy involving Bangladeshi officials, executives of a Canadian firm and some individuals.

The global lender, however, decided to revive its loan on September 21 after the Bangladesh government agreed to its terms and conditions.

AL sinks

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Shahidul Islam Lebu got 44,531 votes and Jatiya Party-backed candidate Syed Abu Yusuf Abdullah Tuhin 11,684 votes.

Of the 2,71,329 voters in the constituency, 1,54,023 cast their ballots at the by-election. The main opposition BNP boycotted the by-polls.

In his reaction after the polls, Rana said the election was free and fair. He said he was still with the Awami League and had confidence in party President Sheikh Hasina.

AL-backed candidate Shahidul Islam Lebu alleged that Rana's men had prevented his voters from going to polling centres in two unions.

However, JP-nominated candidate Tuhin said the polls were held in a free and fair manner.

Returning Officer Syed Khurshid Anwar said he had not received any complaints from the candidates. The by-election, he noted, had been held freely and fairly.

Voting began at 8:00am and continued till 4:00pm without break. A large number of female voters cast their ballots while the presence of male voters was thin at polling stations.

Shahidul Lebu, whose election symbol was the boat, cast his vote at Ratanpur Government Primary School polling centre.

Rana, with the pineapple as his election symbol, cast his ballot at the Mukul Academy centre in Ghatail municipality.

Tuhin's election symbol was the plough. He cast his vote at Gourangi Akashia Government Primary School centre in Anehola union.

The parliamentary seat for the constituency fell vacant following the death of ruling Awami League lawmaker Mat i u r R a h m a n on September 13.

Rana, who was religious affairs secretary of AL Tangail district unit, decided to contest the by-polls as an independent candidate after failing to get the party ticket.

This decision on his part led to his expulsion from the party on Friday.

Mollah admits

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of Islami Chhatra Sangha of the then Dhaka Hall now Shahidullah Hall [of Dhaka University] unit in 1970," Quader Mollah told International Crimes Tribunal-2.

Mollah said he was also involved with Jamaat's student front Islami Chhatra Shibir in 1977 when it was formed.

The Jamaat-e-Islami assistant secretary general said this while giving testimony and facing cross-examination by the prosecution as the first defence witness in the war crimes case against him.

According to prosecution documents, Islami Chhatra Sangha turned into Al-Badr during the Liberation War and the anti-liberation force in collaboration with the Pakistani army committed crimes against humanity, especially killing Bangalee intellectuals at the flag end of the war.

As per charge-framing order issued on May 28, Mollah, then president of Shahidullah Hall unit Islami Chhatra Sangha, organised the formation of Al-Badr with the members of the student body in 1971.

During his testimony on Thursday, Mollah claimed he left Dhaka on March 11 or 12 in 1971 for his village home and received training for the Liberation War along with some youths at Amirabad village in Faridpur.

Resuming his unfinished testimony yesterday, Mollah said after the Liberation War he tried to return to Dhaka, but three local Awami League leaders restrained him from going there on security grounds. In November or December 1972, Shahjahan Talukder, the then president of Sadarpur thana unit Awami League, took him to Dhaka, he added.

During his over-two-hour-long testimony, Mollah said he had got a telegram as well as a letter from the physics department of Dhaka University in the last part of July 1971 regarding taking part in his practical examinations.

"Following that message, I went to Dhaka in the last part of July and stayed in the hall [Shahidullah Hall]," said Mollah, adding that after weeklong practical classes, he took part in a two-day practical examination and returned home.

However, in his testimony on Thursday, Mollah claimed after leaving Dhaka, he had spent the rest of 1971 and almost the entire 1972 in his village home running a business there.

Giving a description of his political life, Mollah said he had joined East Pakistan Chhatra Union when he was in class eight.

"When I was a first year degree student [of Faridpur Rajendral College], I joined Islami Chhatra Sangha after realising the superiority of Islam comparing it with communism," said Mollah, adding, "It happened in September 1966 and after that I started working for Islami Chhatra Sangha."

When Jamaat-e-Islami emerged as Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh in 1977, Mollah joined the political party, he said.

According to records of history, the government of independent Bangladesh in its first decision banned five communal outfits including Jamaat-e-Islami, which actively opposed the nation's independence.

He said before joining Daily Sangram, also known as the mouthpiece of the Jamaat-e-Islami, as executive editor in 1981, he worked at Udayan School, BDR Central Public School and College and founded Manarat College.

Mollah said as the ameer of Dhaka city Jamaat, he was a member of its central liaison committee. During the movement against the Ershad regime, he developed a "good rapport" with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia and other senior leaders of both the parties.

He said along with the Awami League and the Jatiya Party, the Jamaat took part in the movement for a caretaker government in 1996 and held several meetings with senior AL leaders.

Mollah said he believed the people, with whom he had

"good rapport" and had jointly taken part in movements, filed the "false case against him after 40 years of independence only for political vengeance."

"I had no involvement with the allegations brought against me," said Mollah.

Earlier on May 28, the tribunal framed six charges against Mollah for his alleged involvement in murders and mass killings during the war.

After his testimony, Prosecutor Mohammad Ali cross-examined the Jamaat leader before the three-member tribunal headed by Justice ATM Fazle Kabir with members Justice Obaidul Hassan and Judge M Shahinur Islam adjourned the case proceedings until today.

Replying to a question, Mollah said he had become the president of Islami Chhatra Sangha of Rajendra College unit when he was a BSc student.

He was elected as its Shahidullah Hall unit president in 1970, said Mollah, adding, "But there were 13 activists in Chhatra Sangha hall unit."

"Sun Set at Midday" written by Mohiuddin Choudhury is a prosecution document in which the writer says, "The workers purely belonging to Islami Chhatra Sangha were Al-Badr."

Mollah said Jamaat appointed him as the personal secretary of former Jamaat ameer Ghulam Azam in the last part of 1977.

"When did Islami Chhatra Sangha turn into Islami Chhatra Shibir?" asked Mohammad Ali.

"Islami Chhatra Sangha didn't turn into Shibir; rather Shibir is a new organisation," replied Mollah.

"Islami Chhatra Shibir was formed in February 1977. I joined Shibir in May [1977] and my studentship ended in the same month," said Mollah.

"Genocide 71", a book containing the account of the killers and collaborators, says, "There was, however, no difference between the Islami Chhatra Shibir and the Islami Chhatra Sangha except in the name."

"Discarding the 'Sangha' portion of their name, the organisation substituted the word Shibir. But apart from this change in nomenclature everything else, including the flag and the monogram, remained the same," says the book.

M o l l a h ' s c r o s s - examination will resume today.

Meanwhile, following a prosecution petition, the tribunal allowed an additional prosecution witness in the case against Jamaat leader M u h a m m a d K a m a r u z z a m a n and adjourned the case proceeding until November 26.

ICT-1
Meanwhile, defence counsel for war crimes accused Delawar Hossain Sayedee yesterday began placing argument against witnesses' testimony and documents submitted at the International Crimes Tribunal-1.

Before the beginning of the argument, Sayedee made a speech quoting some lines from the Quran and Hadith. He reiterated that the prosecution had brought false charges against him.

Though the tribunal several times asked Sayedee to be quiet he did not follow. Sayedee stopped his speech reminding the judges about reward of heaven and punishment of hell in the afterlife.

Defence counsel Mizanul Islam then began placing his arguments.

War crimes accused Ghulam Azam's son Brig Gen (dismissed) Abdullahil Amaan Azmi also gave deposition for his father yesterday.

Azmi has been giving deposition for three sessions though the prosecution have yet to find relevancy of his testimony to the case and drew attention of the tribunal several times.

Azmi yesterday gave deposition on different matters including relationship between army and civilians during the martial law regimes and relationship between army and other forces.

The proceedings of both cases were adjourned until today.

Govt okays

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March 14, the government approved eight private universities and another one, the university of Exim Bank, last month.

"Giving approval to new universities is more or less a regular process. Before giving the approval, we've considered the expansion of higher education outside Dhaka," Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid told The Daily Star last night.

After the passage of the Private University Act in parliament in July 2010, the government decided to approve some new universities.

Soon after, some political leaders, businessmen and former bureaucrats submitted applications to the education ministry and lobbied hard high-ups in the prime minister's office, said a competent source of the education ministry.

Of total 104 applications the ministry received, there were proposals from ruling party leaders HT Imam, Jahangir Kabir Nanak, Mirza Azam and Bahauddin Nasim, the source said.

AK Azad Khan, secretary general of Bangladesh Diabetic Society, is the main initiator of the university in Mirpur.

Rashed Khan Menon, chief of the parliamentary standing committee on education ministry, and Nazrul Islam Babu, a lawmaker from Narayanganj, are the main initiators of Sonargaon University.

Khulna City Corporation Mayor Talukder Abdul Khaleque is one of the initiators of the university in Khulna.

Former Chhatra League leaders, including Enamul Haque Shamim, put immense pressure on the ministry to get the approval for the university in Chittagong, said the official.

Asked whether the approval was given under political consideration, Nahid said there were some political leaders who got the approval, but "we considered those places that don't have any university."

24 killed

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Sheikh Radwan neighbourhood in an apparent strike against the home of a senior Hamas militant. The Palestinian Ma'an News Agency said that four women and four children from the same family were among the dead.

The Israel Foreign Press Association, meanwhile, lodged an official complaint with the Israeli army after six journalists were injured, one seriously, when Israeli missiles destroyed the offices and studio of two television stations linked to Hamas in Gaza City high-rises that also house Sky News Arabic and other international media bureaus.

Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said Israel had bombed the Al-Quds bureau "because it had enraged the Zionists by its coverage" of Israel's "crimes in Gaza." Both pro-Hamas networks continued broadcasting from other locations, but their programmes were interrupted by messages from the Israeli army warning Gaza residents to stay away from Hamas installations and personnel.

At least four Israelis were injured as Palestinian groups unleashed repeated barrages of rockets at Beersheba, Sderot, Ashkelon and Ashdod throughout the day. There were several direct hits on homes and cars. One Grad rocket hit the roof of a four-storey apartment block in Ashkelon and drilled through to the second floor.

"The apartment was torn to pieces. It's a miracle I am still alive," 71-year-old father of nine Malai Molalem told The Independent, huddling in a bomb shelter as the hollow boom of falling rockets sounded again and again.

Hamas fired two long-range Fajr-5 missiles at Tel Aviv, 40 miles away, making four attempts in three days. They were both destroyed by the Iron Dome missile defence system.

Addressing the Israeli cabinet in Jerusalem, Netanyahu said Israel had attacked more than 1,000 targets since Wednesday and was "achieving significant hits on weapons aimed at Israeli citizens, as well as on those who use these weapons and those who dispatch them."

MONEY LAUNDERING

Arrest order for 18 Destiny men

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Arrest warrants against 18 senior officials of Destiny Group and Destiny-2000 Ltd were issued yesterday in two money laundering cases.

Metropolitan Magistrates Md Atiqur Rahman and Mohammad Mizanur Rahman of the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka issued the warrants as the officials did not comply with a court order.

The court also directed officers-in-charge of different police stations across the country to submit by January 24, 2013 reports on the execution of the arrest warrants.

On September 27, Judge Mohammad Zahirul Haque of the Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka cancelled bail to 22 Destiny officials, including the 18, and ordered them to surrender before it.

The 18 officials, who went into hiding following

their bail cancellation, had been granted bail by three Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate's Courts at different times, even though the courts had no jurisdiction over money laundering cases.

The Anti-Corruption Commission in September filed four separate appeals against the court orders that had granted the bail, "violating provisions of Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2009".

Of the 22 officials, Destiny Group President Harun-Ar-Rashid is on High Court bail while Managing Director Md Rafiqul Amin, Director Lt Col (ret'd) Didarul Alam and Destiny-2000 Ltd Chairman Mohammad Hossain are in custody.

Meanwhile, Rafiqul, Hossain and Didarul admitted, before magistrates on different dates, their involvement in the embezzlement of Tk 2600 crore collected from the group's investors.

Jamaat attacks

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plan. Law enforcers arrested six Jamaat-Shibir activists at Jatrabari, four at Motijheel and another six at Bangshal in Dhaka as also 42 Shibir men in Chittagong as of 8:00pm yesterday.

In the port city, at least five policemen personnel, an ansar and three auto-rickshaw drivers were hurt as the activists rampaged through different places from 10:00am to 11:00am.

Of the injured, Sub-Inspector Bashir Ahmed was admitted to Police Hospital while Assistant SI Manir Hossain, constables Moslem Uddin, Tafazzal Hossain and Md Ilias and ansar Nurul Islam were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

Ruhul Amin, one of the auto-rickshaw drivers, was also admitted to CMCH, said Sub-Inspector Jahirul Islam, in-charge of CMCH Police Outpost.

Commuters and shopkeepers in areas such as Sholoshahar, CDA Avenue, GEC Intersection, Golpahar Intersection, Probartak Intersection, CMCH and Chawk Bazar Intersection were seen running for shelter as the Jamaat-Shibir members went wild.

Traffic from Sholoshahar Gate No 2 to Chawk Bazar Intersection came to a halt.

Around a hundred Jamaat-Shibir men brought out a procession at Sholoshahar Gate No 2 around 10:00am and marched towards GEC Intersection wielding cricket stumps and carrying brick chips, witnesses said.

Without any provocation, they started hurling brick chips at a police van that was going to Dampara for refueling.

Three policemen, including Bashir Ahmed and ansar Nurul Islam sustained injuries, said Sairul Islam, officer-in-charge of the police station. The rioters snatched 20 bullets from Nurul.

The Jamaat-Shibir men then split into two groups. One group vandalised a BRTC bus at GEC Intersection while the other damaged at least three auto-rickshaws at Probartak.

Another police team of five to six also came under attack and were chased up to Premier University. The activists smashed a microbus of the university and three private cars parked in front of the building. They also wrecked two eateries and a showroom of ashoe company in the area.

Later, joined by another group, they started marching towards Chawk Bazar. They vandalised another auto-rickshaw at Chawk Bazar and then dispersed in the main male dormitory of Chittagong Medical College (CMC).

On information, pro-government Bangladesh Chhatra League activists of CMC rushed to the dormitory and got locked into running battle with Shibir

members, said witnesses.

Police reached the spot and detained 37 Shibir activists from the hotel around 2:00pm, said Tareq Ahmed, additional deputy commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police.

A total of 42 Shibir men were detained in different areas of the port city yesterday, said Prodig Kumar Das, officer-in-charge of Panchlaish Police Station.

Protesting the vandalism, around 300 students of Premier University put up barricades on the road at Probartak Intersection around 11:00am, burning tyres and chanting slogans against Jamaat-Shibir.

Later, they removed the barricades after police assured them of arresting the attackers.

Contacted, Md Ismail, president of Chittagong city unit Shibir, said the organisation had brought out a procession in Sholoshahar area but police obstructed them. The BCL activists and police together attacked them, he added.

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami Chittagong city unit at a press release denied any involvement of any Jamaat-Shibir activists in the vandalism, saying they had staged a procession to protest the "mockery of a trial" of their central leaders.

The top brass of the Jamaat-e-Islami are now behind bars on charges of crimes against humanity committed during the Liberation War in 1971. Many condemn the Islamist party for its opposition to the independence of Bangladesh.

In the capital yesterday, at least 10 people, including three policemen, were seriously injured in attacks by Jamaat-Shibir on Dhaka Chittagong highway at Jatrabari yesterday afternoon.

The rioters also torched a bus and damaged several vehicles, halting traffic on the highway for around an hour.

Witnesses said around two hundred Jamaat-Shibir men showed up with a sudden procession around 5:00pm protesting the arrest of their top leaders on charges of war crimes.

Police stopped them near Fatema Naz Filling Station on the highway, sparking off the violence.

Police fired gunshots, lobbed teargas shells and charged batons on the Jamaat-Shibir men, who retaliated with brick chips, said Abul Kashem, Officer-in-Charge of Jatrabari Police Station.

UNB adds police arrested at least five Jamaat-Shibir activists who clashed with them in the town yesterday afternoon.

The district unit Jamaat-Shibir took out a procession from Noor Masjid as part of its central programme around 4:00pm. Intercepted by law enforcers, its activists pelted the cops with brick chips, locals said.

Fire kills 11

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kept for sale. Thirty shops, two bakeries, five rickshaw garages and a mosque were also burned while five adjacent buildings were partly damaged, added the witnesses.

Seventeen fire fighting units from seven stations doused the fire after two and a half hours of hectic efforts.

The dead are Munni Begum, 25, her two-year-old daughter Meem; Surya Begum, 26, her six-year-old daughter Julia Akhter; Helena Begum, 40, her eight-year-old daughter Aklima and three-year-old grandson Sakib; Sokhina Begum, 55, her 12-year-old granddaughter Moyna Akter; Anwara Khatun, 60; and Abdullah, 7.

The injured were taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

President Zillur Rahman, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia expressed their shock at the loss of lives.

The rights body Ain O Salish Kendra in a press release also offered "deep condolences" to the victims' families.

The Dhaka district administration handed out Tk 20,000 to the family members of each deceased for funeral.

THE DEATH TRAP

Abdur Razzak, a 30-year-old imam at a nearby mosque, usually gets up around 4:00am to administer the morning prayers. But yesterday he woke up abruptly an hour before on hearing a "huge hue and cry."

As he came out of his room adjacent to the mosque, he saw flames rising about 40 feet high and gushing towards the mosque from the other side of the road, which is about 20 feet wide.

"I immediately entered my room, held my wife by her hand and dragged her out of the room," he said. "Within