

Khatib slams

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Shahbagh.

Terming mosques as the most sacred places on earth, the Khatib, Maulana Mohammad Salauddin, said all must be respectful to the sanctity of mosques where Muslims bow down to Almighty Allah.

The Khatib and the director general (DG) of Islamic Foundation that manages and supervises the national mosque addressed a press conference against the back-drop of Friday's vandalism.

The Foundation yesterday decided to keep the North Gate of Baitul Mukarram closed every Friday till further notice to prevent using it as a platform for any political party's programmes, said the DG, Shamim Mohammad Afzal.

He said "followers of Moududi" (in Bangladesh, Jamaat men are known as followers of Moududi) were involved in Friday's incident, and they torched floor mat, pulled up tiles and resorted to other acts of vandalism inside the national mosque.

Shamim urged the authorities concerned to track down these people who, he pointed out, desecrated the mosque under the banner of Islamist parties.

The DG called upon all devotees to use the east, west and south gates of the mosque on Fridays to help maintain the sanctity of the mosque and to keep it free from any political activity.

"We have taken the decision [to keep the North Gate closed on Fridays] so that none can use the North Gate of the national mosque as a platform for political activities, which desecrate the mosque," Shamim said.

About the vandalism on Friday, he said those involved in it are enemies of Islam and the country. "They pose a serious threat to the sovereignty of our country."

Pessimists

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revealed that being overly optimistic in predicting a better future was associated with a greater risk of disability and death within the following decade.

"Pessimism about the future may encourage people to live more carefully, taking health and safety precautions."

The research, based on data collected between 1993 and 2003, asked participants in three different age groups to rate how satisfied they were with their lives and how satisfied they thought they would be in five years.

The age groups were divided into 18 to 39, 40 to 64 and 65 and above.

They were interviewed again five years later, and their satisfaction levels were compared with their own predictions.

A total of 43 percent of the oldest group -- 65 years old and above -- had underestimated their future life satisfaction.

While 25 per cent had predicted their future happiness accurately, 32 percent had overestimated it.

Surprisingly, those in the oldest group who overestimated how happy they would be were found to have a 9.5 percent increase in reporting disabilities.

They had a ten percent increased risk of death, the analysis showed.

Older people, who tended to have a 'darker outlook' on the future, were said to be more realistic with their predictions and therefore were more likely to be accurate.

In contrast, the optimistic youngsters had the sunniest outlook, overestimating their success.

People who were 'overly optimistic' about the days ahead had a greater risk of disability or death within ten years.

The research, published by the American Psychological Association, also found those with higher income were more likely to be at greater risk of disability.

Govt takes guard

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the country and asked all law enforcement agencies to be on high alert. Securities of all important establishments have been beefed up throughout the country after yesterday's nationwide mayhem.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has spoken to some of her cabinet colleagues and asked all the lawmakers to go to their constituencies to tackle any untoward situation, sources in the ruling Awami League told The Daily Star.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, Jute and Textiles Minister Abdul Latif Siddique and state ministers for home Shamsul Haque Tuku, for LGRD Jahangir Kabir Nanak and for housing Abdul Mannan are among those Hasina talked to about the situation.

"It's the last desperate attempt by them [Jamaat-Shibir] for their survival and the government will control any situation in line with the law," Matia Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

Top officials of all law enforcement agencies held a series of meetings last night to work out today's action plan, sources said, adding that law enforcers will patrol all districts, upazilas and important areas of the country today and tackle troublemakers with "an iron hand".

A senior police official said security measures in diplomatic areas would be re-ordered and beefed up from today.

Jamaat is set to organise special prayers after Juma prayers today for the "salvation of the departed souls of those killed in the violence yesterday and in the last few days in the hands of law enforcers" as well as for Sayedee's release. Seven other religion-based parties will also organise special prayers.

Jamaat and the seven parties, which earlier in the evening said they would not organise any programmes with Jamaat today, will also bring out processions across the country.

"We won't be able to control the emotions of our hundreds of workers who are devotees of Moulana Delawar Hossain Sayedee. So the government will have to shoulder all the responsibility if any untoward incident happens," Amiruzzaman, ameer of Chittagong Metropolitan

[north], told The Daily Star last night.

Contacted, Shaikh Md Wahid-uz-Zaman, principal secretary to the prime minister, told this paper: "The government will do everything to ensure safety and security of public lives and properties."

Mahbubul Alam Hanif, special assistant to the PM, said, "Jamaat-Shibir's violence will be contained with an iron hand. I urge the people and the law enforcers to resist them strictly."

Director of Rab's legal and media wing Commander Habibur Rahman said they had already strengthened vigilance and security measures outside the capital.

"Highest security measures will be taken for tomorrow [today] through the deployment of all the Rab forces across the country to thwart any destructive activities," he said.

Law enforcers apart, AL and its associated bodies have been asked to be active on the streets to assist the law enforcers in thwarting violence by Jamaat-Shibir men. Also, AL leaders and activists will attend today's Juma prayers in huge numbers in an apparent bid to thwart Jamaat's violence, said Jubo League Chairman Omar Faroque Chowdhury.

China restaurant ban sign removed

AFP, Beijing

A defiant Beijing restaurant manager refused to apologise yesterday despite removing a "racist" sign barring citizens of states in maritime disputes with China, along with dogs, following an international outcry.

The notice in the window of the Beijing Snacks restaurant read: "This shop does not receive the Japanese, the Philippines, the Vietnamese and dog(s)" in both Chinese and English.

But despite taking down the sign after accusations of racism, the manager said he had no regrets and would not apologise for any offence caused.

Terror unleashed

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unidentified man in Mirpur at 8:00pm. He later bled to death.

Jamaat-Shibir men created anarchy by launching serial attacks and blasting bombs and cocktails on the road between Mirpur-1 to Technical intersection. At one stage of the attacks, the elderly man of about 65 years fell on the ground when a bomb hit his head.

Sub-inspector Kamrul Islam of Mirpur police said many cocktails and bombs were thrown at different places.

SUTRAPUR

Police constable Mohammad Masud, 30, was injured when Jamaat-Shibir men swooped on him at Baniyanagar Mosque area around 4:00pm.

MOTIJHEEL
Jamaat-Shibir men clashed with police at Fakirerpool around 7:00pm.

KHILGAON
Activists of Jamaat-Shibir charged several cocktails surrounding the police station to create panic.

ABDULLAHPUR

Jamaat-Shibir men locked in clashes when police barred their procession at 8:00pm.

KAFRUL

The Jamaat-Shibir men damaged several vehicles at Kazipara around 9:00pm and ran away when police chased them.

DHAKA UNIVERSITY

Students of Jagannath Hall remained alert with sticks as rumours of a possible Shibir attack spread on the campus.

BNP TO ANNOUNCE PROGRAMMES

Meanwhile, Leader of the Opposition and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is set to announce her party's programmes in protest against "killing of general people" by law enforcers.

Khaleda held a meeting with her party's top leaders after her return from Singapore last night.

Earlier, BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir in a press statement termed yesterday's incidents the "cruellest mass killing in the history which is worse than the genocide by the Pakistani army during the Liberation War in 1971".

GAIBANDHA

Hundreds of Jamaat-Shibir men put barricades on the roads and attacked a police outpost at Banondanga railway station in Sunderganj.

They attacked policemen with lethal weapons, killing three constables -- Hazarat

Ali, Najimuddin and Bablu Mia -- on the spot.

Three injured policemen were admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

Three attackers were shot dead as the police retaliated with gunshots. Of them, one was identified as Anej, 35, a vegetable vendor.

Three men were bullet-hit and receiving treatment at Sundeganj Health Complex.

The attackers also set fire to Banondanga rail station, uprooted rail tracks and put barricades on roads besides vandalising several shops.

THAKURGAON

Four were killed in the rampage inflicted by Jamaat-Shibir men.

About 1,500 Jamaat-Shibir men marched in a procession at Goreya Bazar in Sadar upazila and attacked 10-15 shops and 10-12 houses of Awami League men and the Hindus.

Police and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) fired blank shots and tear shells to disperse the attackers, who then turned to the law enforcers.

The police and BGB opened fire to save themselves, leaving one Firoz, 24, dead and injuring about 10 others.

Rubel, a 13-year-old Shibir supporter, was found shot dead inside a shop later. Munir Uddin, 20, and Nironjon, 25, of Goreya village succumbed to their injuries at Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital, said police.

RANGPUR

Five were killed and 100 including 22 law enforcers hurt in clashes between Jamaat-Shibir men and police in Mithapukur and Pirgachha upazilas.

The dead were Shibir activists Moshir Rahman, 25, Shahed Mian, 45, an unidentified person, Mahmudul Hasan, 20, and Ashikur Rahman, 23.

Jamaat-Shibir activists barricaded a road and attacked police when the latter asked them to leave at Mithapukur Bazar around 2:45pm.

Besides charging baton, the police opened fire to disperse the protesters, leaving 65 others hurt.

In Peergachha, 41 people, including 21 policemen, were injured in a similar clash near the railway station.

Of them, a sub-inspector and five Jamaat-Shibir men were bullet-hit.

SATKHIRA

Police and BGB intercepted a Jamaat procession trying to enter Satkhira town and came under attack. The law

enforcers fired rubber bullets and charged baton.

Atonestage, Jamaat activists Tuhin and Saiful and Jubo League worker Shahin died receiving bullets and around 100, including two BGB personnel, were injured.

The Jamaat men also attacked Mamun, a newly appointed teacher of Satkhira City College, and set fire to his house. Mamun died at Satkhira Sadar Hospital.

CHITTAGONG

Unruly Jamaat-Shibir men brought out a procession in Lohagara upazila and the police tried to intercept it. Attacked, the law enforcers opened fire, leaving Shibir man Mesbah Uddin, 26, dead.

Reinforced, the Jamaat-Shibir men again attacked the police and hacked constable M Tareque Hossain to death.

NATORE

Around 200 Jamaat-Shibir men swooped on the house of a Jubo League leader in Kadamchilan under Lalpur upazila and chopped him to death.

Matiyar Rahman, OC of Lalpur police, identified the victim as Khairul Bashar, 27, joint secretary of Kadamchilan Union Parishad unit.

The Jamaat-Shibir men also torched a police-van, injuring five cops.

DINAJPUR

Nearly 5,000 Jamaat-Shibir activists set fire to four roadside shops at Ranirbandar under Chirirbandar upazila.

Police and BGB tried to disperse the attackers and came under attacks.

The BGB men opened fire, leaving fruit trader Foiz Uddin, 25, of Nasratpur village dead and injuring two.

In another clash at Doshmille in Sadar upazila, 30 were injured when Jamaat-Shibir men clashed with law enforcers.

CHAPAINAWABGANJ

The Jamaat-Shibir men vandalised vehicles at Shibtala in the town.

Police backed by anti-hartal activists tried to resist them, but the attackers swooped on them with sticks, brick chips and hand-made bombs.

The police opened fire on the attackers, leaving Nasir Uddin, 23, student of Nawabganj Alia Madrasa, dead and two others wounded.

MOULVIBAZAR

Jamaat-Shibir men went on the rampage at Borolekha Bazar and police tried to disperse them, triggering a clash around 5:30pm.

Hindus under attack

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Noakhali, Gaibandha, Chittagong, Rangpur, Sylhet, Chapainawabganj and elsewhere in the country.

In Rajganj of Noakhali, Jamaat-Shibir men set ablaze a temple and eight houses of the Hindu community.

They also traded bullets with law enforcers in Datterhat under Sadar Police Station and in Rajganj under Begumganj Police Station, leaving two people killed. The deceased were identified as Khokon, 17, a pickup van assistant, and Liton (28), a fish monger, reports our Noakhali correspondent.

The Jamaat-Shibir men also looted a jewellery shop owned by one Biplob Sarkar at Chandraganj Purbo Bazar in Begumganj.

Witnesses and police said hours after top Jamaat leaders Delawar Hossain Sayedee had been sentenced to death, the marauding activists equipped with firearms, iron rods and kerosene set fire to Harishiva temple in Rajganj market area at 3:30pm.

"They returned an hour later. This time we were left with no choice but to flee the area, as they started torching our houses with kerosene," schoolteacher Shankar Chandra, who lost his house in the attack, told The Daily Star over the phone.

Some 50 Hindu people used to live in the houses burnt down, he said, adding that all but a few people had managed to escape to safety. Those left behind had been beaten up and kicked out of their houses by the Jamaat-Shibir attackers.

"We ran for our lives leaving everything behind. I was only seven during the Liberation War in 1971, but it didn't feel this insecure even

then," said Shankar Chandra.

During the attack, the Jamaat-Shibir men also threatened newsmen to keep from covering the incident and took away cameras of photojournalists. They also forcefully picked up television crew Mohtasim Billah Sabuj. Locals later rescued Sabuj and took him to safety.

Assistant Police Superintendent (ASP) of Begumganj circle Mahbub Alam told The Daily Star that informed of the arson, police and firefighters had reached Rajganj around 5:00pm. Police had a hard time containing the violence in the area, as Jamaat-Shibir men had outnumbered the law enforcers.

When police tried to bring the situation under control, an exchange of gunshots between the attackers and law enforcers took place. Fish monger Liton died in the incident, said the ASP.

Almost at the same time, another group of Jamaat-Shibir men clashed and traded gunfire with police at Datterhat area leaving Khokon bullet-hit. He was declared dead when taken to Sadar hospital.

CHITTAGONG

Jamaat-Shibir men attacked two Hindu-majority localities at Jaldi union of Banskhali upazila and set ablaze a Buddhist temple at Satkania upazila of the district yesterday.

They set fire to houses at Dhopapara and Mohajonpara of the union and attacked people with sticks, iron rods and sharp weapons, said Inspector Md Shahjahan of Banskhali Police Station.

Two people had been critically wounded in the

One Lokman Hossain, 22, was shot dead during the clash.

COX'SBAZAR

A madrasa student was killed in a gunfight between Shibir and police in Pekua upazila.

The clash erupted around 3:00pm when Jamaat activists opened fire on the law enforcers to protest against the verdict.

SIRAJGANJ

Jamaat-Shibir men vandalised a van of Rab patrol team at Chandidaspur in Sadar upazila at 12:30pm.

Police lobbed teargas canisters to disperse the attackers, who retaliated with sticks and brick chips.

Mokhter Hossain, 19, a Shibir activist, was gunned down during the class. Eleven were also injured. Of them, Ruhul Amin, 18, of Chandidaspur died at Sirajganj Sadar Hospital.

Jamaat called a half-day shutdown in the district to protest against the death.

NOAKHALI

Jamaat-Shibir activists clashed with law enforcers when the latter tried to dissuade them from vandalism in different parts of the district.

Liton, 28, a fish trader, died on the spot and Md Khokon, 17, a tempo employee, died at Noakhali Medical College Hospital.

RAJSHAHI

A Shibir activist was killed in a clash between Jamaat-Shibir and law enforcers in Bagha upazila.

The deceased was identified as Amirul Islam.

Around 500 Jamaat-Shibir men attacked law enforcers at Binodpur Bazar, leaving two policemen including Assistant Commissioner of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police Abul Hasnat injured.

At least 50 cocktails were exploded during the attack.

The law enforcers fired hundreds of gunshots and teargas canisters to bring the situation under control.

At 8:30pm, a bomb blast in front of Rajshahi city AL office injured 11 party men.

BOGRA

A Shibir activist was killed in a clash between protesters and police at Sujabad under Shajahanpur upazila.

The dead was identified as Based Ali, 40, son of Monu Mia of Sujabad Dohopara village.

Strings of violence by Jamaat-Shibir men were reported from elsewhere in the country. But no-one was reported to have been killed in those incidents as of 2:00am today.

Yet, son happy

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Besides, he added, the charge of killing his father, Foyezur Rahman Ahmed, was less strong compared to other charges.

"I have talked to my mother, and my family has accepted it. We are happy with the verdict."

The verdict has ushered in a new chapter in Bangladesh and the country is heading towards a closure by bringing to justice the people who had aided the Pakistani occupation forces to commit genocide in 1971, mentioned Zafar.

"Now we can say to our new generation that we are heading towards closing permanently the black chapter of those people who had aided the Pakistani forces," he noted.

Although 42 years have passed since the country's independence, he considers the trial of Sayedee and other war crimes suspects to be very crucial.

"So many families in Pirojpur were completely destroyed; many people were tortured and killed in the atrocity. The families that went through great agony must have some peace of mind knowing the judgement today [yesterday]," said the famed educationalist.

He thanked the youths for rekindling the spirit of '71 through their movement at Gonojagoron Mancha in the capital's Shahbagh.

"An uncertainty loomed over the verdict of Sayedee when the Jamaat-Shibir unleashed anarchy after the verdict in Quader Mollah's case by calling hartals. But the young generation removed the uncertainty with their movement and gave us a platform to raise our voice," he maintained.

He observed that the verdict has paved way for building Bangladesh free from the stigma of crimes against humanity.

Zafar's father Foyezur Rahman Ahmed, sub-divisional police officer, was murdered during the Liberation War.

According to one of the charges, Sayedee publicly asked his men to capture Saif Mizanur Rahman, the then deputy magistrate of Pirojpur subdivision, as the magistrate organised a Sarbodolio Sangram Parishad to inspire people to join the independence war.

On May 5, 1971, Sayedee and his associate Monnaf (now deceased), a member of the local Peace Committee, accompanied by the Pakistan army picked up Saif from a hospital (where he was hiding) and took him to the bank of river Baleshwar.

On the same day, Foyezur and Abdur Razzak (SDO in charge of Pirojpur) were arrested from their workplaces and taken to the riverbank, reads the charge.

Sayedee as a member of the killing squad was present there and all three government officials were gunned down. Their bodies were thrown into the river Baleshwar. Sayedee directly participated and abetted the gang in the abduction and killing of the trio.

But the tribunal in its verdict declared that the charge was not proved.

Govt appeals

FROM PAGE 20

(Thursday) but we could not do that since we were busy with a tribunal verdict in the case against Jamaat leader Delawar Hossain Sayedee," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday sentenced Sayedee to death for crimes against humanity during the Liberation War in 1971.

About the appeal in the case against Quader Mollah, the AG said his office would move the appeal challenging the ICT-2 verdict on three grounds.

The verdict delivered on February 5 convicted the 65-year-old Mollah for five wartime criminal offences out of the six he was charged with, and sentenced him to life imprisonment.

In two of the five acts of crimes against humanity, at least 350 people were killed and a girl was raped.

Mollah was also sentenced to 15-year imprisonment for his complicity in three other criminal offences in which six people were killed.

And he was acquitted of the charge of killing hundreds of people at Keraniganj in Dhaka, as the charge was not proved in the tribunal.

Mahbubey Alam said the government in its appeal would pray to the apex court to award death penalty to Quader Mollah also on the charge of killing people at Keraniganj.

Meanwhile, the ICT-2 verdict prompted the Shahbagh protest.