

A sin for 'em to live here?

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Bangladesh Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikya Parishad has demanded the government act immediately to resist communal attacks, arrest the culprits, rehabilitate the victims and rebuild the temples.

Moments after Jamaat leader Delawar Hossain Sayedee received death sentence for war crimes, his party, in some cases allegedly aided by BNP supporters, struck terror in the hearts of Hindus on Thursday.

Visiting some neighbourhoods ravaged by Jamaat and its student wing Shibir, these correspondents encountered blank looks of the community members.

Passing three days under the open sky, without sleep and proper food, the families in Rajganj under Begumganj upazila of Noakhali do not know what lies ahead.

"It is our sin to live in this country being Hindu; it is our sin not to flee away," Minoti Rani Das shouted. "We had a happy family. Now I have no shed, no food, no space to cook, no furniture. Now I have only some ashes."

This is not only Minoti's story. Around seventy six families have been living under inhumane conditions since Thursday afternoon as the bigots ran riot after the pronouncement of Sayedee verdict.

While millions of compatriots across the country were celebrating following the verdict, some families were losing everything in the village.

Almost all the victims and some other villagers alleged that Jamaat-Shibir-BNP men were directly involved in the attacks.

At least 40 houses, six temples and several dozen shops were burnt and vandalised; valuables and furniture were looted. Police came at least one and half hours later when it was all over.

While launching attacks, around 250 to 300 rioters were saying Sayedee was sentenced to death because of the deposition of Hindu witnesses, locals said. The number of attackers varied from spot to spot.

"Sayedee got death sentence because of you. You cannot stay in this country," Bablu Bhuiyan, whose two houses were damaged, quoted one attacker as saying.

Gathered since around 10:00am, the fanatics were chanting slogans including Sayedee saheber kichu hole, jolbe agun ghore ghore (fire will be set to each and every house, if something happens to Sayedee). Many were wearing masks.

Abdul Hashem, a tea-stall owner of Rajganj Bazaar, said almost all the attackers were young and he could identify at least three persons actively involved with Jamaat. Two of them run a pharmacy and a grocery at the bazaar.

Many Hindu families took shelter in nearby houses of Muslims during the attacks, said Benur Ranjan Chowdhury, whose house was burnt.

Some victims alleged that Harunur Rashid, chairman of Rajganj union parishad and general secretary of local BNP unit, played a murky role.

"Had the chairman taken immediate steps, the mayhem wouldn't have occurred in such massive scale," said Bimol Kanti Acharjee.

However, Rashid refuted the allegations, saying, "The attack was launched by some outsiders and street urchins."

Mohammad Alauddin, acting ameer of Noakhali district Jamaat, said, "The fans of Sayedee might have resorted to violence. Besides, a feud over land could have triggered the incidents. I've heard there was rivalry among some families."

He denied Jamaat's complicity.

Mahbubur Rashid, Noakhali superintendent of police, said, "It is clear to us that the anti-liberation force launched the attack. Maximum punishment for perpetrators will be ensured."

Like Rajganj, Chittagong's Banshkhalia also bears marks of vandalism and arson led by Jamaat and Shibir on Thursday.

The attackers hacked to death 60-year-old Dayal Hari, said locals.

Dayal had come to see his daughter at her in-law's. As the armed bigots started the rampage, he hid at the latrine.

But they broke the door, dragged him out and hacked him. The man somehow escaped and jumped in the adjacent pond but the attackers caught him and hacked him again.

Dayal was rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital where physicians declared him dead.

Sunil, another Banshkhalia resident, said some one thousand attackers stormed the houses. They carried machete, sticks and other sharp weapons and used gunpowder to burn eight houses.

At least 70 people are now homeless.

Nipu Sheel did not understand why her house and cowshed were burnt to ashes on Thursday.

"They beat us and set our houses ablaze," she said. "We didn't understand what was wrong. They looted our belongings. The cattle were burnt to death. We were lucky enough to have our kids saved."

Rani Dash is one of many injured in the assaults; she suffered right arm fractures.

Sheikh Fakhruddin Chowdhury, mayor of Banshkhalia Municipality, local BNP-Jamaat leaders instigated the mayhem.

In Bagerhat, some criminals set fire to Dumuria Sarbojanin Puja Mandir in Ramchandrapur union in Morelganj upazila around 1:00am yesterday.

The house of Narayan Chandra Basu Chowdhury, president of Banagram union AL, was set afire around the same time, police said. Another house of a Hindu family was torched in Baharbulu village.

Local administration imposed the section 144 banning all sorts of gathering and agitation at Failahat Bazar from 9:00am to 6:00pm yesterday as both local AL and Jamaat called programme at the spot around 2:00pm.

Unidentified people damaged eight idols of Sarbojanin

Durga Mandir at Gournadi upazila in Barisal and idol of Saraswati at a temple near Kashimpur Bazar in Gazipur yesterday.

In Gaibandha, police arrested three Shibir activists yesterday in connection with anarchy over the last two days at Sundarganj upazila.

The Jamaat-Shibir rioters in Thursday and Friday destroyed 19 shops, six houses and two temples at Belka, Dhupni and Bangsher bazaar of the district.

The administration has deployed two platoons of BGB and one platoon reserve force of police and imposed the section 144 to avert any untoward incident.

Pankaj Karmakar and Nurul Amin
from Noakhali and Arun Bikash Dey, from Banshkhalia

Hartals

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aubergine, green chilli and papaya at prices higher than the previous days.

Mohammad Shahidul, a vegetables retailer, said he had to sell beans at Tk 30 a kilogram. On Friday, it sold at Tk 25.

"It is because of inadequate supply. Prices are likely to increase further tomorrow [today] as supply from districts will remain suspended due to the shutdown," said Mostafa Kamal, a vegetables wholesaler at Karwan Bazar.

Supply of rice also faced disruption.

"There is no scope for supply. Pickets previously vandalised trucks, but now they torch the vehicles. Who will take the risk of operating the vehicles?" questioned Nirod Boron Saha, president of Dhan O Chal Aratdar O Babosayee Samity in Naogaon, a major rice selling hub in the north.

Md Abdul Matin, owner of Titas Enterprise at Mohammadpur Krishi Market, said previous strikes did not affect the supply of rice from the millers.

"But the three-day hartal is going to affect the supply. Many suppliers are reluctant to take the risk of renting vehicles. So a supply crunch is very likely and it may cause rice prices to increase further," he added.

AbdurRazzaque, president of Moulvibazar Wholesale Market Association in Dhaka, said cost of transportation has gone up as all businesses tried to get delivery of their goods from the suppliers ahead of the strike.

On the Chittagong-Dhaka route, truck operators now demand Tk 18,000, up from Tk 16,000.

"We will be unable to supply our clients' needs during the strike, which might see the prices of essentials soar at the retail level," mentioned Razzaque.

Rustom Ali Khan, general secretary of Bangladesh Truck Owners Association, attributed the rise in truck fares to high demand.

"There is a huge crisis of trucks as all businessmen including garment factory owners either want to get their products delivered or receive shipment ahead of the hartal," he noted.

Truck owners will sit, said Rustom, to discuss ways to address the issue.

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frustrated over the BNP sponsored hartal on Tuesday.

"Shahbagh youths are loyal to this government and they are now serving the interests of the present administration. You [media] are giving them [Shahbagh youths] much importance, but we are not."

The press meet was organised to protest "police's deliberate attack" on a BNP procession yesterday when it was marching through Malibagh in the capital.

Asked about his reaction on the killing of six policemen during Thursday's violence by the Jamaat-Shibir men, Fakhru said his party was glad to see the love of journalists for the law enforcers.

"But we don't know how those policemen died. It is natural that people who become victims of police attacks will retaliate," he added.

KHOKA WARNS SHAHBAGH YOUTHS AGAIN

BNP Vice-chairman Sadeque Hossain Khoka yesterday warned Shahbagh Projonmo Chattar youths of waging a movement against them if they fail to read people's mind.

"I am telling you [Shahbagh youths] to understand people's mind. Otherwise, we will wage a movement in every locality against you," he said.

The BNP leader was speaking at a protest rally before its central office in the capital's Nayapalton.

"The Shahbagh agitators have taken position against the country and its people. They are taking government-supplied halua-ruti [food items] and flatter the government," he complained.

The government, claimed Khoka, with the help of some youths was instigating the movement to cover up the corruption of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's administration.

BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said the government was trying a new tactic to hide its failures of the last four years.

BNP runs amok

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When police used teargas and fired rubber bullets, the opposition activists intensified their attack and charged with homemade bombs. They started vandalising vehicles then.

At one stage, chase and counter chase took place between police and the opposition party men. BNP Office Secretary Ruhul Kabir Rizvi and its youth front Juba Dal President Syed Moazzem Hossain Alal were among the injured.

Some policemen and pedestrians were also injured.

According to witnesses, the BNP men, who had taken cover in narrower roads and alleys, started vandalising and torching vehicles and attacking police again.

Hearing the news of the clash between police and opposition men at Kakrail, Mouchak, Moghbazar, Shanti Nagar and Bailey Road areas, BNP men went berserk and torched vehicles and exploded homemade bombs in Dhanmondi, Jatrabari, Paltan and FDC areas as well.

Witnesses said panicked city dwellers ran for cover abandoning their cars and motorbikes on the streets while almost all business establishments closed their doors.

Talking to The Daily Star, BNP leaders Ruhul Kabir Rizvi claimed that police attacked their peaceful procession without being provoked and that a good number of BNP leaders and activists were injured in police action.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Mehedi Hasan of Motijheel Division, however, said, "We were compelled to swing into action to save public life and property as they [BNP men] attacked passing vehicles and created anarchy..."

He also alleged that many activists of Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir had infiltrated into the BNP procession and took part in the attack.

"Mentioning our intelligence, we had made BNP leaders aware that Shibir men would create anarchy infiltrating into their procession, but the BNP leader did not listen," the ADC said.

"When she is in their Hyannis home she can plug the pump in to the wall and she has four back-up batteries in case it runs out."

"I can feel it inside, vibrating," she said. "It's very noisy. It's a little nerve-racking."

She says she remains positive about the possibilities of getting a transplant and in the meantime has plans to decorate the bag so it fits in with her fashion-hungry teenage life.

Police chased away the

He accused the government of hurting the religious sentiment of the majority people.

Later, a protest procession was brought out from the rally venue, which ended amid clashes between police and the BNP men in Malibagh.

The main opposition party organised the programme protesting "genocide" by the law enforcers and ruling party men.

At a press conference at her Gulshan office on Friday, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia termed "genocide" the deaths of 33 people across the country on Thursday.

The casualties followed violence after the International Crimes Tribunal-1 handed down death sentence to Jamaat leader Delawar Hossain Sayedee for committing crimes against humanity during the Liberation War.

Protesting the killings, Khaleda called a daylong hartal for March 5.

INJURED BNP LEADER 'DIED'
ABNP leader, injured during a clash with police in the city's Malibagh yesterday afternoon, died of a heart attack last night, said BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir at the press conference.

Abdul Latif, an assistant organising secretary of BNP Khilgaon thana unit, was suffocating after police shot teargas shells during the clash with BNP activists while they were marching in a procession, he mentioned.

Heart in purse!

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that matters more than the recent trends - it powers her artificial heart.

The teenager was rushed to hospital from a sleeper when she was just 10 years old. Doctors were shocked to realise she was suffering from heart failure as a result of dilated cardiomyopathy, a condition which slowly means the heart is too weak to pump.

She has since been forced to make the agonising wait for a heart transplant and, in the meantime, carries a purse with her at all times which includes a battery powering a chest pump or artificial heart which keeps her alive.

Doctors had to fight to win the energetic teen the titanium pump, which has been surgically implanted into her chest, and is powered by a small portable battery.

The small metal device wasn't yet approved for children but doctors asked for an emergency exemption saying they had no choice. Her frantic mother, Denise, a nurse, had little option but to watch and wait.

"I knew it was heart failure when I saw it," she told ABC News. "We didn't know if she would make it through the night," she said. "It was the worst thing to watch, ever."

Dr Christina VanderPluym, a pediatric cardiologist at Boston Children's Hospital, treated DeSimone and argued for the pump.

"In the past, we would just allow these kids to pass peacefully," she said. "But now we have ventricular assist devices small enough to put in children, and that's what we were able to use in Kyah."

"We had to ask for an emergency exemption. It took a lot of work by lot of different people to make this happen."

Within an hour the device turned the Massachusetts teen's chance of surviving around. With the pump, her heart can pump five litres compared to one.

She was kept in hospital for two months before being allowed to leave with her little black bag. It contains a battery pack and iPod sized monitor and connects to the pump through a wire in her abdomen.

"This battery pack is her life support," Dr VanderPluym added.

When she is in their Hyannis home she can plug the pump in to the wall and she has four back-up batteries in case it runs out.

Police chased away the

Clashes continue

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The injured in the clash had been admitted to clinics in Satkania and Chittagong city, said police and locals, adding that the four-hour-long clash that started around 10:00am in Hasmater Dokan area had created widespread panic among people.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) Md Shajahan of Satkania Police Station said the Jamaat-Shibir men had blocked the Chittagong-Cox's Bazar highway from Kerani Haat to Chhodaha areas [approximately a stretch of 1.5 kilometres] with trees and logs around 7:00am. This triggered a long tailback on the highway.

On information, police and members of Rapid Action Battalion rushed to the spot and charged batons to disperse the activists, who at that time had started to vandalise vehicles.

In the face of resistance the Jamaat-Shibir men at first hurled brick chips and then homemade bombs at law enforcers. At this, the law enforcers retaliated with bullets. The activists also returned gunshots.

In Napora Bazar area of Banshkhalia, clashes erupted when Jamaat-Shibir men, numbering about 1,000, attacked an anti-hartal Awami League rally.

The upazila nirbahi officer of Banshkhalia sustained injury in the leg during the clash. The Jamaat Shibir men then went on the rampage by vandalising shops and other public property.

Jamaat-Shibir men also set two city service buses on fire in the port city's Alankar intersection around 8:00pm.

Additional deputy commissioner Arefin Jewel of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (West) confirmed the incident and said police forces and firefighters had been sent to bring the situation under control.

NILPHAMARI
One person was killed and 25 others were injured as Jamaat-Shibir adherents brought out a procession and vandalised several shops defying Section 144 in Jaldhaka upazila yesterday afternoon.

Police and members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) opened fire to disperse the activists, leaving Atiqul Islam, 15, dead on the spot.

SYLHET
Miscreants fatally stabbed an activist of Jubo League, pro-Awami League youth wing, near Tapoban residential area in the city last night.

Victim Jogot Jyoti Talukder died at Osmani Medical College Hospital (OMCH) around 10:40pm, said Deputy Director of the hospital Ehtesham-ul-Haque Chowdhury.

Earlier in the afternoon, around 200 activists of Jamaat and Shibir vandalised at least 20 motorcycles and 50 shops in Dargah Gate, Dorshon Deuri, Ambarkhana and Shahi eidgah areas.

Eyewitnesses said a group of 10 activists of Chhatra League, pro-Awami League student body, wearing helmets had stormed into the showroom of Bashundhara Motors, owned by a Jamaat adherent, around 2:30pm. They set eight motorbikes inside the showroom and some five others in front of it afire.

Firefighters brought the fire under control.

On information, Jamaat-Shibir men, who were preparing for a procession nearby, rushed to the showroom and beat up two Chhatra League men before torching their motorbikes.

The injured Chhatra League activists had been sent to OMCH, said police.

The Jamaat-Shibir activists then vandalised 10 more motorcycles, two battery-run-three-wheelers and 30 shops on the street and locked in a clash with law enforcers in Ambarkhana area, said witnesses, adding that the activists at the time pelted the law enforcers with brick chips.

The activists also hurled brick chips at Scholarshome, an institution run on AL law-maker Hafiz Mazumder's education trust in Shahi eidgah area.

OC Aatur Rahman of Kotwali Police Station said the Jamaat-Shibir men had vandalised more than 20 motorcycles and other vehicles and property on the busy road from Dargah Gate to Ambarkhana area.

Police chased away the

activists, the OC said, adding that they were preparing to file a case in this connection.

Deputy Commissioner Rezaul Karim of Sylhet Metropolitan Police (SMP) told The Daily Star that the situation had been brought under control. Additional contingents of Police and BGB had been deployed there.

RANGPUR
A Shibir activist, who had been injured in a clash during Jamaat-enforced dawn-to-dusk hartal on Thursday, succumbed to his injury at Rangpur Medical College Hospital yesterday afternoon.

The deceased, identified as Akmal Hossain, 14, was son of Mosharruf Hossain of Gangini village under Pirgachha upazila in the district.

In the afternoon, Awami League and its associated bodies staged demonstration protesting countrywide mayhem by Jamaat and Shibir.

Later they brought out a procession and marched the city roads. During the time they attacked and vandalised the Pirgachha unit Jamaat office in Karbala area.

In retaliation, BNP and other organisations of the town brought out a procession and held a rally protesting the countrywide "killing" by the government.

A tense situation is prevailing in the upazila town.

OC Bazlur Rashid of Pirgachha Police Station said a good number of police have been deployed in the town to avert further untoward situation.

NOAKHALI
A pedestrian who sustained bullet injury on Friday, during a Jamaat-Shibir clash with police in Sonaimuri upazila of the district, succumbed to his injury on the way to Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday afternoon.

The deceased was identified as Korban Ali, 28.

Meanwhile, police have so far detained 16 people from different areas of the districts in connection with the violence.

BAGERHAT
At least 50 people including eight policemen were injured after Jamaat-Shibir activists clashed with law enforcers at Katakhalia intersection under Fakirhat upazila of the district yesterday evening.

The clash erupted around 5:00pm when police tried to disperse Jamaat-Shibir men, who ignoring Section 144 had put up barricades on Mongla-Bagerhat highway.

The activists also kept Upazila Nirbahi Officer Deb Prasad Paul confined to a petrol pump for three hours. He was rescued after additional police had been deployed from Bagerhat.

KHULNA
At least 40 people including two police personnel were injured as BNP and Jamaat-Shibir men clashed with police in the city yesterday afternoon.

The agitators also vandalised vehicles and business establishments, and blasted homemade bombs. Law enforcers used bullets and teargas canisters to disperse the activists. Chases and counter chases took place during the time.

The activists vandalised five establishments on Khulna-Jessore highway and torched two private cars and several auto-rickshaws in Dakbanglow area.

BNP men swooped on police when they brought out a procession from their KD Ghosh Road party office following a rally. Chased by law enforcers they escaped through narrow lanes and committed vandalism there.

Meanwhile, police charged truncheons and used 30 rubber bullets and 15 canisters of teargas, as Jamaat-Shibir men hurled homemade bombs and brick chips at police in front of Tabligue mosque in Nirala area around 5:30pm, said OC Quamruzzaman of Sonadanga Police Station.

During the clash, Jamaat-Shibir men stabbed two police constables -- Nuruzzaman and Shafiqul Islam. The injured had to undergo surgery at Khulna Medical College Hospital, said the OC.

Saidur Rahman, president of Khulna city unit Shibir, claimed that at least 20 Jamaat-Shibir activists had sustained injuries in police firing.

RAJSHAHI
A video cameraman of a private TV channel was bullet hit during a gunfight between law enforcers and Jamaat-Shibir men yesterday afternoon.

The clash began around 12:30pm, when around a hundred Jamaat-Shibir men brought out a brisk procession at Alok intersection and vandalised Rajshahi Chamber and Commerce and the main branch of Dutch Bangla Bank in the district.

As law enforcers fired several rubber bullets and teargas shells to disperse them, the activists hurled homemade bombs and brick chips at the law enforcers. At the time the Jamaat-Shibir men also retaliate with bullets.

Around 10:10pm, an unidentified group of people torched the last three coaches of Silkcity train at Rajshahi Railway Station. The train had just reached the station from Dhaka.

When journalists thronged the stations for news, the attackers charged bombs at them at the platform gate.

Firefighters soon reached the station and separated the three burning coaches from the main train and doused the fire.

Police brought the situation under control.

PIROJPUR
Jamaat-Shibir men vandalised the Awami League office at Jamaat leader Sayedee's birthplace in Zianagar upazila yesterday morning.

Witnesses said a procession of around 150 Jamaat-Shibir activists vandalised the AL office on its way at Jamadder Bazar to the Kalaron ferry terminal demanding release of Sayedee.

Infuriated with the act, around 50 activists of AL equipped with sticks and sharp weapons swooped on a club run by BNP adherents. During the time the AL agitators injured BNP activists Faisal.

The injured was rushed to Morelganj Hospital in Bagerhat district in assistance with police.

None has been arrested so far in this connection.

BARISAL
Police have lodged a case against 300 Jamaat-Shibir men in Uzirpur upazila Friday morning.

Sub-Inspector Lutfar Rahman of Uzirpur Police Station filed the case naming 13 Jamaat-Shibir leaders and activists.

DINAJPUR
Jamaat-Shibir activists yesterday blocked the Jyopurhat-Bogra highway for three hours with logs, electric pole and burning tyres halting traffic movement on the highway.

Police said the activists blocked the highway from Jyopurhat bus terminal to Hitchmi Bazar under Jyopurhat sadar upazila from 6:00am to 9:00am.

OC Abdur Rashid of Jyopurhat Sadar Police Station said it had taken two hours to free the highway and restore communication.

Protesters torch police station in Egypt

AFP, Cairo

Egyptian protesters torched a police station in Port Said yesterday as US Secretary of State John Kerry landed in Cairo to push for a way out of the country's political impasse.

The interior ministry said about 500 protesters threw stones and petrol bombs at the police station, setting it on fire, and then blocked fire engines from reaching the blaze.

The protesters had gathered outside the station after two men were injured when a police truck hit them during earlier clashes in the city, now entering its third week of a general strike, the ministry said.

Meanwhile, one person was killed and dozens injured in overnight clashes between police and protesters in the Nile delta city of Mansura, a security official told AFP.

Regular clashes have been taking place across Egypt amid a stalemate between Islamist President Mohamed Morsi and his secular-leaning opposition ahead of parliamentary elections next month.

United Nations

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del Buey, deputy spokesperson for the secretary general, told a daily press briefing in New