

CONTEMPT RULE HEARING 3 Jamaat leaders absent again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three top Jamaat-e-Islami leaders yesterday failed to show up before International Crimes Tribunal-2 for the third time in connection with a contempt of court rule issued against them.

Even though the prosecution had again sought arrest warrants against them, the tribunal gave the Jamaat leaders another chance to appear before the court on Wednesday.

Their defence lawyers had filed a time petition as well.

On February 7, the tribunal asked Jamaat acting secretary general Rafiqul Islam Khan, central executive council member Hamidur Rahman Azad, MP, and Dhaka city unit assistant secretary general Selim Uddin to explain as to why contempt of court proceeding should not be initiated against them for making provocative and derogatory remarks about the tribunal.

The tribunal issued the notice on the basis of reports published in The Daily Star and Bangla daily Prothom Alo on February 5 about a Jamaat rally held in the city the previous day.

Prothom Alo quoted Selim Uddin as saying: "There is no scope for the controversial tribunal to deliver any verdict, if the country is to be saved from a civil war."

The daily quoted Azad as saying at the same programme, "This tribunal cannot exist anymore."

The Daily Star in a report headlined "Jamaat warns of civil war" quoted Rafiqul Islam as saying, "Don't push the country into a civil war by delivering one-sided verdicts against our leaders. If anything happens to Quader Mollah, every house will be on fire."

Issuing the show-cause notice the tribunal asked them to appear before the court on February 20.

The tribunal extended time on February 20 and on February 26 after their coun-

Protect minorities

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Crimes Tribunal-1 passed a verdict against Jamaat-e-Islami Nayeb-e-Ameer Delawar Hossain Sayeedee for war crimes on Thursday, leaders and activists of Jamaat, its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir and local BNP men launched attacks on the Hindus in Noakhali, according to the March 2 report.

The opposition party men torched, vandalised and looted at least one temple and many houses at Begumganj of the district, sending the minorities into a panic, the report says. Jamaat-Shibir men also damaged six temples, torched 36 houses and vandalised 40 other houses after looting those at Alampur and Aladin Nagar villages in Rajganj.

Witnesses said Shibir activists Sardam and Alauddin and BNP activists Khalil and Ibrahim led the attacks.

An HC bench of Justice A H M Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik and Justice Mahmudul Hoque yesterday issued another rule upon the government to explain in 10 days why it should not be directed to arrest and prosecute the criminals.

Home secretary, inspector general of police, deputy commissioner (DC) and superintendent of police (SP) of Noakhali, and officer-in-charge (O C) of Begumganj have been made respondents to the rule.

Deputy Attorney General Amit Talukder told The Daily Star that he had already informed the DC of Noakhali of the HC order and asked him to take steps.

ATTACKS IN MUNSHIGANJ, BARISAL, DINAJPUR

In the latest development, a temple was set on fire at Louhajang upazila in Munshiganj around 10:00pm yesterday.

Seeing the fire, people in the neighbourhood rushed

to the spot and doused it. But by that time many idols of Goalimandra Monipara Kali Mandir were damaged, said Anil Chandra Das, president of the temple's committee.

Local people said they suspected that hartal supporters were behind the incident.

In Barisal, unidentified miscreants tried to torch a Hindu temple at Aliganj Bazaar of Hizla upazila, but were resisted. In another incident, police arrested three people in connection with damaging and torching of idols of Hindu goddesses at Sarbojoneen Durga Mandir in Gournadi upazila of the district.

The court, however, rejected a defence petition seeking cross-examination of the investigation officer of the case again.

The tribunals also allowed one more witness to defend Kamaruzzaman. Now, a total of five witnesses would testify for him.

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The protesters set fire to the house of Momtaz Uddin, president of district AL unit, in the town.

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19 more killed

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tricked hundreds of villagers into taking to the streets in the early morning, and launching attacks on law enforcers.

They clashed with law enforcers, attacked a police station and six outposts, vandalised and torched different offices. At least four people, including three women, died in Shahjahanpur upazila, three in Bogra Sadar and two in Shibganj upazila.

The violence that began around 4:00am came to a halt after four hours following news of troops deployment. However, army personnel were called back around 6:00pm.

People in different upazilas said they heard announcements over loudspeakers in the early hours on Sunday that Sayeedee's image was seen on the moon.

Moved by the announcements, hundreds of people, mostly from Shahjahanpur, Kahalu, Shibganj and Dupchanchia upazilas, came out of their houses and started marching towards Bogra Sadar upazila headquarters, protesting the death penalty to Sayeedee.

A few thousand people attacked Shahjahanpur Police Station near the Bogra Cantonment, around 6:00am.

"They beat up police men indiscriminately in a surprise attack," Mahmudul Alam, officer-in-charge of the police station, told The Daily Star.

Police opened fire to bring the situation under control, said Bogra Superintendent of Police Mozammel Haq.

Four people died there.

Atiar Rahman, an inspector of the police station, identified the four as Arjinba Begum, 45, Monjila Begum, 48, Achhia Begum, 45, and Abdur Rahman, 60.

The protesters set fire to the house of Momtaz Uddin, president of district AL unit, in the town.

The vandalism continued for nearly 50 minutes. Three more persons died in clashes in Bogra Sadar.

Their identities could not be known.

Section 144 was imposed in Bogra municipality from 7:00am to contain violence, and it would remain in force until further orders, said Arifuzzaman, nezarat deputy collector in Bogra.

In a statement, Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) condemned attacks on the house of FBCCI director Momtaz Uddin, business establishments and the office of Rajshahi Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Joypurhat witnessed a spate of violence, as pro-hartal activists clashed with police in Panchbibi

and law enforcers in Panchbibi

and Sadar upazila. At least six persons were killed and 30 others were hit by bullets during the clashes.

The dead are Nasir Uddin, 18, of Bashkuri village, Hasib Uddin, 50, of Baramanik, Forman Ali, 30 of Rasulpur, Abdul Hakim, 32, of Salaipur, Mojidul Islam, 35, of Kashra village, and Abdul Bari, 24, of Rahmatpur village.

Five of them were killed in Panchbibi and the other in Joypurhat sadar, said sources.

Jamaat-Shibir activists swooped on police in front of Joypurhat Palli Bidyut Samity office around 11:00am, prompting police to fire shots. One person was killed on the spot.

Another group of Jamaat men gathered at Panchbibi Bazar to lay siege to the Panchbibi Police Station. As they marched towards the police station, BGB and police personnel fired shots, leaving two persons dead.

Three of the injured later died at Panchbibi Health Complex.

Md Hamidul Islam, superintendent of police in Joypurhat, confirmed that three persons died in the clashes.

However, Fazlur Rahman, Jamaat ameer in Joypurhat, said six persons were killed during the clashes in Panchbibi and Joypurhat.

Section 144 was imposed in Panchbibi and Joypurhat sadar following the clashes.

OTHER DISTRICTS

Jamaat men launched attacks on law enforcers at Godagari upazila in Rajshahi, leaving at least two persons dead and 30 people injured.

The dead are Rafiqul Islam, 12, of Godagari municipality, and Mojahid Hossain, 45, activist of Jamaat municipality unit and Imam of Mohishalbari mosque, said Wahidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Godagari Police Station.

Section 144 was slapped in the municipality for an indefinite period after the clash, said Godagari Upazila Nirbahi Officer Tuhinur Alam.

Witnesses said the clash erupted when more than 500 Jamaat-Shibir men barricaded the Chhapaia wabganj-Rajshahi highway with logs, and burnt tyres around 9:00am.

Another group of pickets chased law enforcers at the cinema hall intersection, damaged vehicles and threw brickbats at police.

At one stage, the pickets fired shots and threw cocktails at the law enforcers.

In retaliation, police and BGB personnel fired over 100 rounds of rubber bullets to disperse the attackers, said OC Wahidul.

Pro-hartal activists also put up barricades on Chhapaia wabganj-

and law enforcers in Panchbibi

Rajshahi road at Abhoyer intersection, on Rajshahi-Naogaon road in Mohonpur upazila and Rajshahi-Natore road at Kharkhara around 9:00am.

In Jhenidah, Jamaat-Shibir men hacked to death a policeman and gouged out his eye at Sanatanpur police camp in Harinakundo upazila.

They attacked the police camp, forcing the on-duty policemen to retreat to the headquarters. They soon caught up with the policemen and hacked them indiscriminately.

The Jamaat activists hacked Constable Omar Faruque to death and gouged out his eye.

Several seriously injured policemen were admitted to the hospital.

Nearly 3,000 Jamaat-Shibir and BNP activists also brought out a procession in Harinakundo upazila.

Jamaat men vandalised establishments in the upazila and set fire to government offices. Police lobbed teargas canisters and fired rubber bullets to disperse them.

At least one person was killed and seven others, including three BGB members, were injured in a clash between BGB personnel and Jamaat activists at Raichhpur in Sadar thana, two kilometres away from Sathkhira town.

It Col Abu Basir of BGB in Sathkhira said Jamaat men attacked two BGB vans near the border around 12:00pm, prompting the BGB personnel to fire shots.

A Jamaat supporter was killed and three BGB members were injured in the incident.

A clash between Jamaat men and Awami League activists ensued at Nalat, when ruling party men tried to prevent Jamaat-Shibir activists from carrying out vandalism.

In Chittagong, clashes and gunfights between Jamaat men and Rab personnel left at least 14 people injured at Shekher Khil in Banskhali upazila.

Vehicular movement on Chittagong-Cox's Bazar highway remained suspended, as Jamaat-Shibir men barricaded the highway with logs.

Meanwhile, pro-hartal activists in Pabna put up barricades on the Dhaka-Pabna and Pabna-Kushtia highways after Fajr prayers.

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