Biswajit Das is known to us through the gruesome photographs showing him desperately trying to escape his attackers who would not stop hacking him with sharp weapons. Otherwise, he was known as *Bisho* to his peers; an ardent fan of cricket, a happy-go-lucky young man whom everyone liked.

Little is known that his brother Uttom Das, a tailor, brought him to Dhaka six years ago to work at a tailoring shop in Old Dhaka. The rest has been told time and again; how he had become a victim of violent politics, a case of mistaken identity during the road blockade programme by the BNP-led 18-party alliance last December.

Police recently brought murder charges against 21 members of the Awami League's student wing Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), who mistook Biswajit for a Jamaat-Shibir activist and had no qualms about hacking him to death in broad daylight. With seven of the accused in custody, the police are searching for the rest, now in hiding.

Little did we know that it was the police, not Biswajit's family, who brought charges against the BCL men. Biswajit's brother Uttom says he is updated about the progress through newspaper reports or when journalists call him.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Biswajit Das

IN PURSUIT OF JUSTICE

ZAHIR HASSAN NABIL

But why didn't he press charges when the whole nation had witnessed the murder? Uttom requests us to sit as he attends to his customers in the dimly-lit tailoring shop on Hrishikesh Das Lane in Old Dhaka. He now owns the shop he worked at for five years, a support for his family he does not want to give away after losing his brother.

"None among my relatives ever had any feuds with anyone, nor did they come across the police or had to file a case, ever. After Bisho passed away, I fetched my parents from Shariatpur, they were here for some two weeks but they didn't want to stay. My parents are just afraid to get into further trouble. They are concerned that I am still in the city; they want me home. But I cannot earn a living if I go back."

Despite the vagueness in Uttom's response, it is obvious that the family does not want to invite more trouble by talking about it or seeking justice themselves - the accused are individuals backed by those who can do anything with impunity. Uttom mutters incoherently as we ask whether he hopes his brother will get justice.

It may be that Uttom and the family are aware that seeking justice often comes at a price, a perception reaffirmed by recent events.

Take Limon Hossain, the college student from Jhalakathi, who was shot by the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and maimed on March 2011. As things stand, Limon was 'mistaken' for a terrorist. Limon and his mother Henoara Begum sought justice but found themselves caught in the cobweb of false allegations, legal intricacies, and endless harassment. When a police probe found the Rab inno-