

# 15 injured in N'ganj clash

Jubo League man threatens cultural activists

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

At least 15 people were injured in a clash between police and activists of Narayanganj Sangskritik Jote at Chashara Shaheed Minar in the town yesterday.

The clash ensued when police tried to rescue Jubo League leader Jahirul Islam Parvez from the mass beating of Jote activists after he threatened its leaders for holding a rally at the Shaheed Minar, witnesses said.

Sangskritik Jote held the rally in the evening protesting the attack on the office of its president allegedly by Parvez, a close associate of Awami League leader Shamim Osman, on Friday.

Jote leaders alleged that police charged batons on them without any provocation. Police, however, said they went to the spot to arrest Parvez.

As the activists hurled

brickbats at the law enforcers, police hit them with truncheons and fired 30 blank shots that left 15 people injured, locals said.

Rafiu Rabbi, ex-president of the Jote and also father of slain Tanvir Mohammad Toki, alleged that Parvez had gone to the Shaheed Minar with the intention of killing him.

He also said police, present at the spot, played the role of silent spectators when Parvez, who is an accused in the Toki murder case, hurled threats at the Jote leaders.

District Police Super Syed Nurul Islam said Parvez has been arrested. About the clash, he said, police had fired blanks shots to bring the situation under control.

Meanwhile, Jubo league activists barricaded the Dhaka-Narayanganj-Munshiganj and Dhaka-Narayanganj link roads last night to demand the immediate release of Parvez.

## Jamaat leader, 4 others held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong police last night detained five people for their alleged attempt to fuel unrest among garment workers.

The detainees include Jamaat-e-Islami's district unit (Chittagong South) general secretary Mohammad Nurullah.

The law enforcers seized Tk 17 lakh from their possession and a microbus that was being used to transport the detainees.

Police suspected that the money was being kept for distribution among the garment workers to fuel the unrest, said Mohiuddin Selim, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station.

Following a tip-off, a team of police raided the office of Accord Holdings, a real estate company, at the port city's Dewan Bazar area around 9:00pm and detained the five.

The other detainees are Accord Holding's chairman Md Shahjahan Mohiuddin, its managing director Mohammad Selim, Abu Sayeed and Shahdat Hossain, of Satkania upazila.

## MUEEN-UDDIN, ASHRAFUZZAMAN Tribunal decides about charges on May 2

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

International Crimes Tribunal-2 yesterday fixed May 2 to decide on taking into cognisance the war crimes charges brought against Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin and Ashrafuzzaman Khan.

The prosecution had submitted formal charges along with other documents on April 25.

"After perusal of the formal charges and other documents, the necessary order will be passed on May 2, 2013," observed the court.

The prosecution pressed war crimes charges against Mueen-Uddin and Ashrafuzzaman in connection with the killing of 18 intellectuals at the fag end of the Liberation War in 1971.

They brought 16 charges against the suspects, who were, according to post-independence newspapers, two of the persons most wanted for killing intellectuals.

According to the probe report, Mueen-Uddin as the "operation-in-charge of Al-Badr" and Ashrafuzzaman as the "chief executor" led an Al-Badr force and "directly took part" in the killing of 18 intellectuals between December 10 and 15.

The prosecution submitted the charges against the two suspects together due to their "joint criminal liability" as they had allegedly taken part in the same offences and their target was also the same.

Meanwhile, the defence at International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday completed cross-examining the fifth prosecution witness, Nazim Uddin Khattab, in the war crimes case against Jamaat-e-Islami chief Motiur Rahman Nizami.

Nazim said he used to deliver food to the freedom fighters' camps but did not provide any information about Razakar and Al-Badr members.

In reply to a question, Nazim said he had seen Nizami first during the election campaign in 1970.

On completion of the cross-examination the tribunal again asked prosecutor Mir Iqbal Hossain to prepare witnesses before producing them for testimony.

When the counsel said his witness would give a brief deposition, it would take at best 15 minutes to complete, the tribunal observed.

Referring to Nazim, the tribunal said as per his statement before the investigation officer, he was supposed to give a brief deposition. But the witness gave along testimony.

"There is no similarity between his deposition and the statement before the investigation officer. Keep your witness within the statement [given before the IO]," the tribunal said.

The tribunal also gave the prosecutor a brief lesson on what is "omission and contradiction".

The tribunal said an omission is when a witness gives a deposition less than his or her earlier statement. On the other hand, contradiction happens when a witness gives a deposition more than his or her statement earlier, the court added.

Iqbal claimed that there was not much difference between Nazim's statement and deposition. He requested the tribunal to take a look at the statement and compare.

The tribunal said once the recording was completed, it had no scope to look back at the statements.

The proceedings of the case were adjourned until tomorrow on the defence's request.

RANA'S ASSETS

## ACC forms probe body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday formed a committee to investigate how Sohel Rana, the owner of Rana Plaza in Savar that collapsed on Wednesday, amassed his wealth.

Comprised of ACC Deputy Director Mohammad Mofidul Islam and Assistant Director Mohammad Mahbubul Alam, the committee will also investigate whether Rana Plaza had followed the Bangladesh National Building Code, a guideline for construction of buildings.

The commission passed the order yesterday afternoon, said ACC sources.

The ACC decided on forming the committee based on a report, headlined "Rising high illegally", run by The Daily Star on Thursday and another by a Bangla daily, the sources added.

According to The Daily Star report, the nine-storey building never had any approval from Rajuk while supervision during its intermittent construction to raise more and more floors was virtually absent.

Sohel Rana is senior joint convener of the Savar town unit of Jubo League, the youth front of ruling Awami League. Locals said none had dared to challenge the construction of the building due to Rana's political influence in the area.

## Shirin

FROM PAGE 20 the country's first female Speaker.

At a meeting of the Awami League Parliamentary Board at the prime minister's parliament office last night, many party leaders favoured Shirin for the ruling party's nomination for the Speaker's position.

Party chief and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina chaired the meeting.

Meeting sources said several other names were discussed about the party's nominee for Speaker but most parliamentary board members favoured Shirin.

The party's Speaker nominee will, however, be finalised at today's Awami League Parliamentary Party meeting.

The Speaker's office in parliament fell vacant after speaker Abdul Hamid was sworn in as president on April 24.



Rana Plaza owner Sohel Rana, centre, and two of his alleged aides paraded before journalists at Rab headquarters in the capital yesterday after his arrest at Benapole trying to cross the border.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Man behind

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Shah Alam Mithu, the trafficker, received him in Jessore.

Finally, around 1:30pm yesterday, the law enforcers arrested Rana along with Mithu. Anil was detained on Saturday night.

On Wednesday, hours after the collapse of the nine-storey building, police and Rajuk filed two separate cases against Rana.

Legal expert advocate Shafiuddin Khan said the investigation officer could bring charges of murder against the owners of the building and the factories that Rana Plaza housed.

Although cracks developed on some pillars and a few floors of the building following a jolt on April 23, and the industrial police gave explicit instructions that the building be shut down, Rana decided to keep it open anyway, giving false assurances to workers and shopkeepers about its safety.

He even brought a so-called engineer, Razzak, to vouch for the safety of his building.

Ignoring workers' misgivings and fears, Rana and the factory owners forced them to join their workplaces.

On Tuesday night, in an interview with Ekushey TV, Rana confidently claimed that the building would be safe for another hundred years.

Denying that Razzak was a "fake engineer", he alleged that the site engineer had hit a crack with a bamboo stick and assured him that it was just broken plaster on the wall.

In addition, the unstable structure of Rana Plaza was constructed through a defiance of multiple laws of the country. Sohel Rana also

forcibly occupied at least occupied 60 percent of the land from a local Hindu Rabindranath Sarkar.

Notorious in Savar as an Awami League muselman and cadre, he is suspected of three murders. Locals allege he is the henchman of AL lawmaker Murad Jong.

Rana pushed the workers into death by forcing them into his risky building which eventually collapsed, observed Additional Home Secretary Mainuddin Khandaker yesterday.

Mainuddin is the head of the five-member committee to investigate the incident.

"I think he [Rana] enjoyed one sort of impunity. Consequently he showed the audacity which was behind the killings. It was not an accident," he said told reporters after visiting the spot in Savar.

In another development, the owner of another garment factory of the collapsed Rana Plaza was arrested last night in the capital's Ramna area.

Anisur Rahman, chairman of Ether Text Ltd, was arrested by detectives around 9:45pm, said Masudur Rahman, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Earlier, police arrested three factory owners and two engineers of Savar municipality.

They are Bazlus Samad Adnan, 45, chairman of New Wave Buttons; its Managing Director Mahmudur Rahman Tapash, 46; Aminul Islam, 50, owner and chairman of Phantom Apparels Ltd and Phantom Tack Ltd; Executive Engineer of Savar Municipality Entemam Hossain, 51, and its Assistant Engineer Alam Miah, 45.

## Hopes fading

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the number of people rescued so far to 2,437.

The survivor, QMA Sadique, a quality inspector of a garment factory, was working on the second floor when the building collapsed.

Rana Plaza that housed five readymade garment factories caved in on Wednesday. The factory owners forced several thousand workers to return to work though cracks had appeared in the building's pillars the previous day.

Rescuers fear that many dead are still trapped in the ruins of the nine-storey building.

Earlier, an army officer involved in the rescue operation said, "The four people are trapped on the third floor, around 40 feet away from a tunnel we dug on the collapsed building. It was almost impossible for an average person to crawl through the two by two feet opening. We had to find a lanky rescue worker to do the job."

"Intense heat and the stench of decaying bodies made conditions unbearable inside the tunnel. The rescuer took with him an oxygen pipe, biscuits and water for the trapped persons. At one point, a huge beam obstructed him. There was no way through."

"On the other side of the beam, he could hear the voices of the men and the woman. He desperately looked for a small opening to slip through the things he carried with him. He then found a small hole under the beam, and he slipped the oxygen pipe, biscuits and water through it."

By the evening, the hope of rescuing all of them alive dimmed, as only the female survivor could communicate with the rescuers.

In the afternoon, another army officer said the rescue team was bringing cutters to slice the top floor into small slabs. "We will use our huge cranes to remove them one by one."

So far the rescuers had been using small tools, for fear the use of heavy machines might lead to further collapse.

Additional reporting by Helemul Alam and Belal Hossain Biplab

## Nato plane crash kills 4 in Afghanistan

AFP, Kabul

A Nato plane crashed in Afghanistan on Saturday killing four service members, the coalition said, adding that early reports suggested the aircraft was not brought down by insurgents.

The plane crashed in the south of the country, according to a statement from Nato's International Security Assistance Force.

Most international soldiers in southern Afghanistan are from the United States, but the nationality of the dead was not released in line with coalition policy.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility from the Taliban, who earlier Saturday announced the start of their annual "spring offensive" vowing a nationwide series of attacks as Nato troops withdraw.

Aircraft crashes are fairly frequent in Afghanistan, where the 100,000-strong international mission relies heavily on air transport as it battles the insurgency across the south and east of the country.

## CPB calls off May 2 hartal

18-party stick to its decision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) yesterday withdrew its May 2 country-wide hartal after the BNP-led opposition declared a shutdown for the same day.

However, two other left-leaning parties, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) and Gonatantrik Bam Morcha, that had jointly called the hartal said they would observe it.

The CPB will hold protest rallies across the country on April 29, April 30 and May 3, party sources said.

It was indecent of the BNP-Jamaat-led alliance that it had decided to enforce a hartal on May 2 even though it had been well aware of the programme set by the leftists, the CPB said in a press release.

The CPB, BSD and Bam Morcha at a press conference Saturday morning announced the hartal to press home their 10-point demand, including arrest and exemplary punishment of those responsible for the deaths in the Savar building collapse.

The BNP-led 18-party alliance that night came up with the decision to enforce a daylong hartal on the same day, in protest at the "killing of garment workers and the government's failure and inadequate action in rescuing the Savar victims."

The opposition said its decision to observe the May 2 hartal would not change.

The 18-party alliance called its programme to protect the anti-liberation war force Jamaat, the press release says.

"In the past they [BNP-Jamaat] did not observe any programme for the inferno at Tazreen Fashions, collapse of Spectrum Garments and such incidents in other garments," CPB President Mujahidul Islam Selim said in the statement.

The left parties' demands also include a quick trial of war crimes at the international crimes tribunals and a ban on Jamaat-Shibir politics.

## MPs want

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Finance Minister AMA Muhith said they wanted a decision right then on inclusion of new schools under the MPO.

The inclusion process could be done in phases if it could not be done at one go, the lawmakers told the minister.

Almost all members of the committees exerted pressure on the minister regarding inclusion of new schools under the MPO, apparently to gain support from voters in their localities in the run-up to the forthcoming national polls.

Md Abdul Wadud, an MP from Rajshahi, said inclusion of new schools under the MPO was one of the government's election pledges and there was no scope for procrastination on the issue.

Muhith, however, told the meeting that it was a popular demand but a dangerous one for the government.

"The secondary education system has been destroyed with the wholesale inclusion of institutions under the MPO," he said, adding that at present around 20,000 schools out of 26,000 are under the MPO system.



The ambulance carrying the body of a Rana Plaza victim first rammed a lorry on Pabna-Nagarbari highway in Shajadpur of Sirajganj and then hit two pedestrians yesterday. The ambulance assistant and the pedestrians were killed.

## Twin tragedy

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Medical College Hospital and could not attend Tahura's funeral yesterday, family sources said.

"I'm so unlucky that I could not even attend the burial of my daughter," Sobhan told The Daily Star at the hospital.

The dead are passers-by

Lokman Hossain, 27, and Taizal Hossain, 50, of Alekdia village under Shahjadpur upazila of Sirajganj and ambulance helper Nurul Islam, 30. All three died instantly around 7:00am.

Abdul Jalil, officer-in-charge of Shahjadpur Police Station, said the ambulance rammed the lorry when its

driver lost control over the steering and skidded off into a roadside ditch.

Tahura and Lal Mia married just last month, on March 26.

Reminiscing on his happy moments with Tahura, Lal Mian said: "We had planned to visit our village home on the next holiday. But that

remains only a memory now."

Early this year, Tahura had come looking for a job in Savar where she met Lal Mia, who works in a nearby garment factory, family sources said.

Tahura used to work at a garment factory on the fifth floor of Rana Plaza, they added.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH