

HARTAL, BLOCKADE Torching of buses, killing condemned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing concern over torching of public transports during the BNP-led opposition's blockade and hartal, which is resulting in deaths of innocent people almost every day, an anti-communalism and militancy platform yesterday demanded that the attackers be dealt with an iron fist.

"In the name of movement, BNP-Jamaat has enforced hartal and blockade continuously when buses and vehicles were torched. It has created a reign of killing and brutality in the country," Sampradayikota-Jongibad Birodhi Mancha said in a statement, condemning such acts.

"Everyone has a right to movement, but it is nobody's right to do acts of sabotage through killing, burning, uprooting rail tracks. In addition, there have been planned attacks on minorities," it adds.

The Mancha leaders called upon the people and all democratic socio-political bodies to rise against those trying to turn the country into a valley of death and a failed state.

"The country must be saved from destruction. The country must be saved from becoming a Taliban-like state," said the statement signed by Coordinator of the Mancha Ajay Roy, Joint Coordinator Ziauddin Tareq Ali, Member Secretary Noor Mohammad Talukdar, and Assistant Member Secretary Saleh Ahmed.

LALMONIRHAT Fear of another Jamaat attack haunts Hindus

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Fears of recurrence of attacks continue to haunt Hindus of Lalmonirhat's Patgram upazila despite the return of the male family members, the filing of a case and deployment of additional police.

On Thursday, at least 12 women and children were beaten up and at least five shops and two houses were torched and looted allegedly by Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir activists at Ghoshpara village of Jongra union.

Taking place on the third day of the opposition-sponsored 71-hour blockade, the attack, the second one on Lalmonirhat Hindus by opposition activists, had prompted several male members of at least 23 Hindu families to flee the village.

"We are still fearful as the area is covered with Jamaat-Shibir men and they always have a hatred towards Hindus...They will become angrier if police make arrests," one of the victims, Shilpi Rani Ghosh, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Nazrul Islam, member of local Union Parishad and former president of Shibir of Patgram upazila, has been arrested while police claimed they were conducting drives to arrest the rest.

Another victim, Subhas Chandra Ghosh, said, "We are innocent people...we are not involved in politics and have no enmity with anybody here over anything but still we were victimised...I do not know what will happen in the future."

On the previous November 4 assault, the attackers had vandalised and looted several houses after villagers at Satpatki Majhipara in Sadar upazila had refused extortionists.

The case was filed by one victim, Dhanjit Ghosh Tapos, with Patgram Police Station, accusing three local Jamaat-Shibir men and 50 unnamed persons.

Expressing deep concern, Ain o Salish Kendra sent a letter to the Inspector General of Police on Thursday noon urging the perpetrators' arrest.



Debris of an under-construction four-storey building that toppled onto its side on this empty plot at Ray Saheb Bazar in Old Dhaka yesterday around 7:00am. Police say the building's owner had no Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha approval.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Under-construction building collapses in Old Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A four-storey under-construction building collapsed at Ray Saheb Bazar in Old Dhaka yesterday around 7:00am.

The structure fell to its side on an empty plot on its west and no casualty was reported. The Daily Star found two buildings to its north and east with barely any space in between.

A resident of an adjacent building, Mohammad Suman, described the scene as "engulfed in dust and darkness".

"The building's owner Towhid Uddin neither obtained Rajuk approval nor had any design. A case was filed against him," said Sutrapur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Kholilur Rahman.

EASY ACCESS TO PUBLIC SERVICES Govt to develop 100 apps

UNB, Dhaka

The government will develop 100 apps to ensure easy access to public services and to information on social safety programmes, women's safety, agriculture, health, education, old-age allowances and paying utilities over the internet through smartphones and tablet computers.

Officials said 1,000 ideas, 700 individual and 300 group, would be collected from ministries, directorates and departments and the apps would be developed under a Tk 8 crore Mobile Apps Development Project the ICT ministry launched in October.

Already over 150 ideas have been received from various departments of the cultural affairs and social welfare ministries through several workshops in Dhaka and more will be held, they said.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Secretary Md Nazrul Islam Khan said, "The ICT ministry in collaboration with Multimedia Content and Communications Ltd will develop the apps."

He said the developers would be some 2,000 university graduates of 64 districts who have knowledge on Java programming.

"We have planned to open our own apps store," he said.

The project Director Abul Hasan said seven camps would be set up in the country's seven divisions to involve the IT industries and companies.

FELANI KILLING BSF to take more time to start fresh trial

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India's Border Security Force yesterday said it would take some more time to initiate a fresh trial into the killing of teenage Bangladeshi girl Felani Khatun along the border with West Bengal in 2011.

"The process (of starting the fresh trial) has not started as yet. Hopefully, it

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Anniversary of Mahbubul Haque's death today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



The 14th death anniversary of Syed Mahbubul Haque (Benu Mia) will

be observed today.

A valiant freedom fighter and leading businessman in Magura, Mahbubul Haque died of colon cancer on November 30, 1999 at the age of 72.

A doa will be offered followed by feeding of the destitute after Juma prayers at his home in Magura.

Relatives and admirers have been requested to attend the doa and pray for eternal peace of the departed soul.

Anwara Khatun

CITY DESK



Today is the 25th death anniversary of Begum Anwara Khatun, a member of

erstwhile Bengal Legislature Assembly.

On this day in 1988, she died from a prolonged illness, says a press release.

Anwara was one of the very few Bangalee Muslim women who had obtained MA, BT, LLB in British India.

A close associate of Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy, Moulana Bhashani and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, she was actively involved in the Language Movement of 1952.

Qulkhwani

CITY DESK



Qulkhwani of Nazmul Arefeen, former banker, will be held today.

On the occasion, a milad and doa mahfil will be arranged at his residence (T. Hossain Bari) at Nabiganj in Narayanganj after Zohr prayers, says a press release.

TANGENTS BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Mandaar flower from chopped tree.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Abusing Trees

The other day I went for my evening jog in the nearby park. The sun was setting and the mellow light of the early winter evening enveloped the world. Like me, many other visitors were also enjoying the tree-lined park as birds sang in the cool evening.

I ran along a long walkway. Last monsoon many seedlings had been planted on both sides of this path, including *krishnachura*, mahogany, neem and acacia. Due to the unusually long rainy season, these had grown fast, reaching skyward towards their older, bigger brethren.

From a distance I saw a woman stoop in front of a neem sapling which was about four feet tall. As I passed her I noticed she was stripping leaves off the plant. I was annoyed but refrained from saying anything, thinking she was collecting a few leaves for medicinal use.

But on my way back I noticed that the neem sapling had been completely cleaned out. The woman was busily stripping leaves and small branches from another neem sapling. I could hold back no longer.

"How will that plant grow if you strip the leaves and branches like that?" I asked her.

She looked at me, startled. "You must know that trees need leaves to make their food. How will this baby tree get its food if you take away all the leaves?" I asked.

Now she found her tongue. "But I left half the leaves," she protested, turning red with embarrassment.

I did not want to make her miserable or engage her in a prolonged argu-

ment, so I resumed running after asking her to be considerate. Would she please let it grow?

This was not the first time I was aggrieved by tree abuse. Some years ago, soon after my father passed away, I found a *mandaar* (*erythrina indica*) tree he had planted. It was only six feet tall, but that summer it bloomed with the reddest *mandaar* flowers anywhere.

Then, sometime during the rainy season, a youngster from a neighbouring village chopped off the tree leaving a stump where its trunk was.

I was shocked. What was the purpose of this destruction? Villagers will often cut branches of bigger trees for fuel but know better than to destroy whole trees. In any case, this tree was too skinny for burning.

Fortunately the *mandaar* tree proved hardy and grew from the stump in a couple of years. Then one summer its flowers returned.

In villages, it seems that the most danger to trees is from thieves who steal branches for firewood or from cows which attack seedlings. Most villagers - except for the occasional brat - are keenly aware of the value of trees and nurture them with diligence.

But in cities, many people seem ignorant of, or indifferent to, the harm they might be causing a tree - by plucking all the leaves from a baby tree, for example.

Fortunately, the vast majority seem happy to leave trees alone. But it takes only a few to do irreversible damage. It is urgent that we stop them.

www.facebook.com/tangents.ikabir



Prof Hamiduzzaman Khan, left, and Shishir Bhattacharjee make a quick visual note of the sculptural decorations at the Angkor Wat temple in Angkor, Siem Reap, Cambodia. Galleri Kaya organised the ongoing "art trip" to the Unesco world heritage site and to the country's tropical natural landscapes for four eminent artists of Bangladesh -- Hamiduzzaman, Shishir, Samarjit Roy Choudhury and Ranjit Das.

PHOTO: COURTESY

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