

Witness against Sayedee

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hole from outside and started hacking Mostafa targeting the head. The sharp weapon pierced the left side of the forehead, family members say.

The perpetrator vanished from sight as locals came hearing screams of Mostafa's wife Hasina, reports our Pirojpur correspondent.

The injured was rushed to Pirojpur Sadar Hospital. After primary treatment there, he was sent to Khulna Medical College Hospital. Doctors at the hospital referred him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for better treatment.

Mostafa's wife Hasina holds the Jamaat-e-Islami responsible for the "planned" attack.

She said her husband often was intimidated by Jamaat-Shibir men in the area. The family received death threats time and again after her husband testified against Sayedee before the International Crimes Tribunal-1.

In his testimony on January 1 last year, Mostafa said he had seen Sayedee and other collaborators looting and burning a number of shops in Parerhat Bazar during the Liberation War.

Sayedee was sentenced to death on February 28.

On October 28, alleged Jamaat-Shibir men attacked the house of another prosecution witness, Mahabubul Alam Howlader, in the same upazila and vandalised every valuable he had. He escaped unhurt hiding in the attic.

"I have been living in extreme fear and

facing serious hardship. I cannot even go out to earn my living," Mahabubul, also a freedom fighter, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"I cannot send my children to school or to playground," he added. "The government has posted some policemen to protect me and my family, but it's not enough."

Prosecutor Rana Dasgupta said, "We have long been demanding victim and witness protection act. But the government didn't enact it." He added a law could have prevented such attacks.

Prof Muntasir Mamoon, vice-president of Ekatturer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee, which has been campaigning for war crimes trial since 1992, said, "We have long been demanding security for the people related with the trial specially witnesses."

"But we are tired now."

It is the responsibility of the government and the state to provide security to the prosecution witnesses, said Mamoon, himself a prosecution witness in the war crimes case against former Jamaat ameer Ghulam Azam.

He feared further attack on witnesses and other people concerned as "Jamaat and its student wing Shibir have become desperate".

Five top Jamaat leaders have been convicted of crimes committed against humanity in 1971.

In the verdict against Ghulam, the International Crimes Tribunal-1 terms Jamaat-e-Islami a criminal organisation while investigation continues into the party's war crimes role in 1971.



The attacker made this hole to enter Mostafa Howlader's room when he was asleep.

PHOTO: STAR

In pain

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"What if the person who set my bus on fire was a kid like that? The judiciary will still punish him without taking into consideration the fact that they have grown up amid violence," said Mannan, when asked if he would seek justice.

Eight others were seriously burned when arsonists set the bus aflame near Jatrabari in the capital on November 12.

A case was filed in this connection with Jatrabari Police Station but law enforcers have yet to arrest anyone, said Minhazul Islam, assistant commissioner (Demra zone) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Kamal, who suffered 25 percent burns in an attack in Laxmibazar on November 10, said: "I do not know how the police will catch the right people. No one recognised who set the vehicle on fire."

Sutrapur police arrested nine people in this connection, all BNP, Jamaat, Shibir and Chhatra Dal men, said Mahbub Alam, sub-inspector of Sutrapur Police Station.

The case was filed against 15 unidentified people.

All talks lead to polls schedule

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jurist Dr Kamal Hossain said, "It is legally possible to defer the election schedule ... I believe it is possible ... still it is possible."

Dr Kamal along with academic Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, jurist Shahdeen Malik and Sujon Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar had talks with Fernández-Taranco for over an hour.

They conveyed to the UN official their strong disapproval of a one-sided election.

Earlier, the JP had told Fernández-Taranco that the election schedule must be deferred to find a way to hold an inclusive election through dialogue among all political parties.

After a meeting with the UN official at the Election Commission, Kazi Rakiuddin Ahmed, chief election commissioner, said everything was possible under the legal framework if all political parties could reach a consensus.

"The delegation wanted to know whether it is possible to defer the election. We told them [the UN delegation] that there are scopes for many things if a consensus is reached among all parties," he told reporters in the afternoon.

"As the UN delegation is trying to find out a way for holding an election with the participation of all, it will not be wise to make further comment on it. Rather, we all should keep our hopes alive," he added.

Fernández-Taranco was supposed to hold a meeting with a delegation of Jamaat-e-Islami at 4:30pm, but it was postponed.

The UN official arrived in Dhaka on Friday on a four-day visit to see an agreement between the ruling and the opposition parties over the holding of the next parliamentary election.

Meanwhile, US Ambassador Dan Mozena met the Indian high commissioner at the latter's

residence yesterday morning to discuss the latest political development in Bangladesh and the UN initiative to break the political deadlock.

Contacted, US Embassy Spokesperson Kelly McCarthy said it was part of the US ambassador's regular meetings with his counterparts and day-to-day activities in Bangladesh.

Briefing reporters around 4:00pm, Dr Kamal said, "Nobody wants a one-sided election ... what is happening now is unexpected ... we told them that the train of one-sided election needs to be stopped."

The UN official echoed the view and told the civil society members that the UN would continue its efforts to see an "inclusive, non-violent and acceptable" election, he said.

"We have asked them [the UN] to keep up their efforts."

Dr Kamal, also president of the Gono Forum, said they had been working to help the political parties reach a consensus and they would continue their efforts.

Asked whether they suggested holding the election under a caretaker government or in line with the present constitution, he said the election should be participatory and acceptable to all irrespective of the method.

Expressing concern at the ongoing violence, he said what is happening now is unexpected and the country is suffering irreparable losses.

Referring to the CEC's recent statements, Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of Sushashoner Jonno Nagorik, said the CEC repeatedly stated that the election schedule could be deferred if all political parties could reach a consensus.

Shahdeen Malik said they want an election with everyone's participation, and it must be peaceful.

"We want it ... the UN and the entire world wants a peaceful and participatory election."

After the UN delegation met JP leaders at Ershad's Baridhara residence yesterday morning, JP General Secretary Ruhul Amin Howlader said the current situation is not conducive to holding the polls according to the existing election schedule.

JP presidium member GM Quader said, "The UN official wanted to know the Jatiya Party's view on the political impasse. We told him that it is not a proper time to hold the polls."

The JP leaders told him that the election should be deferred and it has to be ensured that all parties can participate in the election, said Quader.

Fernández-Taranco also held a 90-minute meeting with BNP leaders Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury and Sabihuddin Ahmed at Mobin's Banani residence in the evening.

Mobin, however, declined to give any details, saying the issues discussed at the meeting were very sensitive.

The visiting UN official is scheduled to hold a breakfast meeting with a business delegation at 8:30am today at the Sonargaon Hotel and to have talks with a Jamaat delegation at 10:00am.

He is expected to have meetings again with an Awami League delegation led by party's General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at 6:00pm at her Gulshan residence, and have dinner with foreign diplomats at 7:30pm.

Fernández-Taranco will hold a second round of meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and hold a press conference before his departure tomorrow evening.

Justice denied

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enforced by the then opposition Awami League.

Based on the probe report, Metropolitan Magistrate Keshob Roy Chowdhury yesterday relieved AL lawmakers Jahangir Kabir Nanak and Mirza Azam and the other accused of the charges.

Although the case becomes virtually dead after such a report, it can be revived as per legal provisions if police find any perpetrators responsible for the incident, said criminal law expert Shahjahan Miah.

Investigators were negligent in finding the attackers and that can encourage people to commit such crimes, he added.

The CID in the report submitted to the court said the arson attack had killed 11 people. But the charges brought against Nanak, Azam and the others were false, said Assistant Superintendent of Police (CID) Kondaker Md Abdul Halim.

Abdul, the investigation officer of the case, also said Detective Branch of police, which had carried out the first investigation, could not identify the criminals too.

Following the arson attack, Ramna police filed a case accusing some unknown attackers.

In the case statement, they also said the attack had been well planned to kill people and create panic.

Later, police showed Masum and Shafiqul Islam Kalu arrested in the case. They confessed before magistrates that they had committed the offence on instructions of AL leaders Nanak and Azam.

Their confessional statements were recorded on July 10 and 28 of 2004.

However, CID investigator Abdul Halim in his probe report said the duo had been forced to name Nanak, Azam and several other AL leaders and activists. During an investigation, it was found that Kalu and Masum had been in custody when the incident took place, according to the CID report.

Earlier in January, 2009, DB police filed a chage sheet accusing Masum and Kalu and dropping the names of others, saying the charges against them could not be proved.

The case was revived in July, 2010 after police had appealed to the court for reinvestigation.

PM meets president

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the president of the overall situation of the country, President's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim told a press briefing.

Hasina inquired about the health condition of the president as he returned home on Friday after undergoing medical check-up and eye treatment in Singapore.

They also discussed the president's South Africa visit to pay respect to the memories of legendary leader Nelson Mandela.

Hamid will leave for South Africa today to pay last respect to Mandela on behalf of himself and the people of Bangladesh.

On her arrival at Bangabhaban, Hasina was received by the president. The premier was accompanied by LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashraful Islam.

Secretaries and high officials of both the President and Prime Minister's Offices were present.

2 more dead

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Uddin Milon and AL activists loyal to Kalam Chowdhury. Several people, including Masud, sustained injuries at that time.

Masud was admitted to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital where he died around 8:15pm, said Nazrul Hussain, Sunamganj superintendent of police (SP).

Kolim Uddin Milon, meanwhile, at a press conference at the upazila BNP office called hartal at Chhatak and Doarabazar upazilas for today.

Following the announcement, additional police had been deployed at Chhatak town, said the SP.

In Savar at Enam Medical College and Hospital, Rehana Begum died after fighting for life for seven days.

She and nine others had sustained injuries when they hurried out of a speeding bus at Rajfulbaria in Savar on the Dhaka-Aricha highway on December 2, as pickets hurled a petrol bomb at the vehicle heading to Dhaka.

Three buses were torched on the Dhaka-Mawa highway at Rajendrapur of Dakshin Keraniganj early today ahead of the Jamaat-e-Islami's country-wide dawn-to-dusk hartal. The party called the shutdown protesting the death warrant issued against its leader and war crimes convict Abdul Quader Mollah.

Meanwhile, sporadic incidents of violence marked the second day of the 72-hour blockade yesterday as the opposition men blasted crude bombs and carried out arson attacks across the country.

BNP and its associate organisations called hartal in 27 districts for today.

In the capital, the intensity of violence or the damage done was less compared to that of the first day. A mobile court sentenced a youth to one year's imprisonment for possessing crude bombs at North Badda.

The BNP-led 18-party alliance enforced country-wide blockade thrice in the last two weeks, demanding the suspension of the election schedule, installation of a non-party government to oversee the next polls, and release of its detained leaders.

The opposition activists went on the rampage at Gangni upazila in Meherpur, leaving a policeman and two local journalists injured.

Police said around 2,000 BNP and Jamaat-Shibir activists brought out a procession from Shishirpara area around 8:30am. The rowdy activists hurled at least 10 crude bombs at the Gangni upazila election office and vandalised the office. They, however, could not enter the office as police baton-charged them.

Hartal-supporters also ransacked upazila higher secondary education office, sub-registrar's office, a private clinic, roadside shops and other business establishments, said Masudul Alam, officer-in-charge of Gangni Police Station.

Later, police in association with the Rapid Action Battalion dispersed the marauding activists.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Abdus Salam said three platoons of Border Guard Bangladesh were deployed in the upazila.

At least 10 people were injured in a clash between blockaders and police at Basurhat in Companganj of Noakhali, while a running battle between police and opposition men left 10, including three policemen, injured in Jhenidah town.

Two people, including a police constable, suffered splinter injuries as blockaders hurled at least four-five crude bombs at a police-carrying van in Chittagong city around 6:00pm, police said. In another incident, bank official Sabuj Chowdhury sustained wounds in a crude bomb blast in the city's Didar market area.

In Bogra, blockaders removed at least 32 elastic rail clips on Bogra-Shantahar rail route early yesterday. No casualty was reported, as no train was to take the route at that time. The rail clips were later reinstalled.

Bomb blasts and vandalism of vehicles were also reported from Khulna, Munshiganj, and Narayanganj. The opposition men blocked the highways by putting logs and burning tyres, reported our district correspondents.

Vandalism in S'pore

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vehicles and people attacking the windshield of a bus with sticks and garbage bins. It was not clear if anyone was injured in the rioting that began late in the evening.

Such violence is unheard of in Singapore, an orderly and modern city-state known for strict punishments and generally law-abiding citizens.

In a statement, police confirmed that rioting took place but gave no details. It only said police were on the scene in Little India, an area popular among Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Sri Lankan and Nepali expatriates.

A witness, Dharmendra Yadav, told Channel News Asia that at least two vehicles were on fire, and that rubbish and broken bottles were strewn on the streets.

He said he and many others were in a nearby Hindu temple attending a wedding when temple officials received a call from the police asking that the gates be locked and the guests stay inside until given clearance by the police.

He said a short while later he heard a commotion in the street and bottles being thrown. "We heard explosions. We also heard warnings from riot police," he said.

The situation was eventually brought under control but the guests were still not allowed to leave the temple, he said.

Channel News Asia said the riot apparently started after a Bangladeshi worker was hit by a bus and killed. This could not be independently confirmed. No other details were available.

BJP set to win polls

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swept India in 2011, that made its political debut. The party, whose symbol is a broom, emerged as the second largest party in Delhi just behind BJP and relegating Congress to a distant third place.

The icing on the cake is that AAP chief 44-year-old Arvind Kejriwal, a former income tax inspector, whose party had campaigned on the plank of anti-corruption, has defeated three-time Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit by 22,000 votes in New Delhi assembly constituency.

The elections to the four states are seen by political observers as a dry run ahead of national elections expected early next year.

Quitting 'by post'

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by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The resignation letters were sent to the PM by registered post in the afternoon for submission to the president, Howlader added.

The JP ministers had not attended their offices at Bangladesh Secretariat and would not attend the cabinet meeting today, said a number of ministers.

"I submitted my resignation letter to the party president on Thursday. So, I can't attend the cabinet meeting anymore," Mujibul Haq Chunnun, state minister for youth and sports, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Contacted, Salma Islam, state minister for women and children affairs, echoed the same.

A JP leader told The Daily Star that the JP chairman HM Ershad asked them not to join today's cabinet meeting no matter whether their resignation letters reached the Prime Minister's Office or not.

In an interview with BBC Bangla service, Ershad said the only way to resolve the present political stalemate is through the resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina from her post.

Asked about the effectiveness of JP ministers' resignation letters, jurist Shahdeen Malik said legally their letters seem to have been delivered to the prime ministers and they would not remain as ministers from tomorrow.

According to article 58 (1) of the constitution, a minister needs to submit his/her resignation letter to the prime minister for submission to the president.

Their resignation may remain pending for some time as President Abdul Hamid is scheduled to leave Dhaka today for South Africa to attend the funeral of Nelson Mandela scheduled for December 15.

A senior AL leader yesterday said it would take some days to reach the resignation letters to the president. The situation might change by that time, he added.

Howlader, civil aviation and tourism minister, Raushan Ershad, health minister, Anisul Islam Mahmud, water resources minister, Chunnun and Salma Islam were

Pickets feast

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of trees on every occasion of their political protests.

Shibir has also sent press releases to the media claiming credit as to how many roads they had blocked by felling trees. The green campaigners have termed it an irony for a country which is facing the adverse effects of climate change.

After their leader Delwar Hossain Sayedee was sentenced to death in a war crimes trial on February 28, Jamaat-Shibir activists went on the rampage across the country. Minister for Forest and Environment Hasan Mahmud on June 23 said 10,042 trees were felled across the country only after Sayedee verdict was delivered.

In the last few months, BNP-Jamaat activists have cleared as long as 12 kilometres of Dhaka-Pabna Highway, felling a few thousands trees. The government agencies concerned, however, could not give any data on the tree felled by the opposition activists, reports our Pabna correspondent.

Police and eyewitness say the opposi-

tion men put up barricades on a 12-km-stretch of the highway from Pabna bus terminal to Pushpopara point by felling roadside trees indiscriminately.

"More than a hundred trees were felled only in Rajapur, Modhupur, Bangabaria, Pushpopara and a few other spots of the highway. In the last few months the opposition men have indiscriminately felled trees. We have recovered the felled trees and a few cases were filed," said Kazi Haniful Islam, officer-in-charge of Pabna sadar police.

At least 130 roadside trees were cut down by the activists of the 18-party alliance in Gaibandha during the last three days of the blockade, reports our Gaibandha correspondent.

According to the district forest office, trees were felled along the highways in Sunderganj, Gobindaganj and Palashbari.

"The number will increase as we are still getting information on more felled trees," said Jamal Uddin, in-charge, district forest office.