



Opposition activists chop down trees on Dhaka-Ishwardi highway to block the road during the opposition's blockade and Jamaat-e-Islami's hartal yesterday.

PHOTO:
FOCUS BANGLA

Jamaat, Shibir on rampage

FROM PAGE 1

officer-in-charge of Boalia Police Station.

Criminals set fire to the village home of Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha in Kamalganj upazila of Moulvibazar around 5:30am. None was injured in the attack. Police picked up Abu Taleb, a local Jamaat activist, in this connection.

Shibir activists severed the tendons of the right leg of a Chhatra League activist at Bagha upazila in Rajshahi around 6:30pm.

Armed with machetes, about 10 activists of the pro-Jamaat student body Islami Chhatra Shibir ambushed Mizanur Rahman, a second-year student of Shah Doula Degree College, when he was going to his village home in Chhatari.

On Tuesday, when the news spread that Jamaat leader Quader Mollah would be executed, Jamaat men went on the rampage across the country. They enforced a hartal that coincided with the opposition's ongoing countrywide blockade.

At least 27 policemen were injured as activists of Jamaat-Shibir clashed with police in Narail, Sylhet and Cox's Bazar districts.

Following a new tactic, the activists of the opposition alliance yesterday removed several steel plates of three bailey bridges in Sirajganj and Pirojpur, disrupting vehicular movement.

The opposition activists also vandalised three offices of Awami League and its associate organisations in Sonarmore area in Shamnagar upazila of Satkhira around 10:00pm Tuesday.

Train communications on Lalmonirhat-Burimari route remained suspended since around 4:20am yesterday as criminals had removed at least 250 sleeper clips of the lines between Bawra and Patgram stations in Lalmonirhat.

In Narail, at least 15 policemen including the officer-in-charge (investigation) and an ASI of Sadar Police Station were severely injured in an attack by Jamaat-Shibir men in Dumurtola of the municipality around 8:00am.

OC Muktar Hossain was rushed to Khulna

Medical College Hospital.

According to district Additional Superintendent of Police BM Nuruzzaman, over 100 Jamaat-Shibir men armed with sharp weapons brought out a procession and blocked Narail-Magura road at Dumurtola. As a police team on a pick-up van reached the spot, the activists in four groups attacked them and set the vehicle on fire.

Policemen fired shots to disperse the marauding activists.

In Sylhet, around 40 people, including two policemen, were injured as activists of the opposition alliance clashed with police on Sylhet-Sunamganj road at Tukerbazar.

Over 300 Jamaat-Shibir men blocked the road around 9:30am and began vandalising some rickshaws and battery-run three-wheelers, witnesses said.

As police tried to disperse them, the blockaders hurled brick chunks at law enforcers and exploded several crude bombs triggering a running battle.

Police fired around 200 rubber bullets and teargas canisters, said Md Ayub, additional deputy commissioner of Sylhet Metropolitan Police.

In Bagerhat, at least 15 people, including five policemen, sustained injuries in a clash between Jamaat men and law enforcers.

Jamaat claimed that three of its activists were wounded by bullets, but police refuted the claim.

Criminals also set fire to an office of Awami League and six business establishments at Srighat Bazar in Bagerhat early yesterday.

In Khulna, a clash between Shibir activists and police at Sonadanga in the city left at least 15 injured.

The clash sparked when police resisted the activists who had blocked a road with logs and hurled 16 crude bombs at the men of the law, police said.

In Natore, Jamaat-Shibir men vandalised a freedom fighters' memorial at the Madrasa

intersection and smashed windowpanes of six banks at Kanaikhal. They also ransacked around 15 shops.

In Cox's Bazar, five policemen were hurt, one severely, as Jamaat-Shibir men clashed with the law enforcers at Bazarghata.

In Gaibandha, opposition activists vandalised and torched at least 25 shops and houses of ruling party leaders at Dariyapur upazila Tuesday night.

Activists of the Awami League and its associate organisations burnt some 20 shops at Bhai Bhai market at Dariyapur around yesterday noon.

In Dinajpur, several hundred Jamaat-Shibir men went on the rampage and set fire to some establishments of Haji Danesh Science and Technology University.

On Tuesday night, hartal supporters chopped down several hundred roadside trees in Ambari area of Dinajpur-Phulbari highway.

Pickets also vandalised the motorbike of a Jessore correspondent of Bangla daily Prothom Alo at Chanchara Jessore.

Suspected Jamaat-Shibir men attacked an activist of Gonojagoron Mancha at Methorpara intersection of Chapainawabganj last night injuring him badly.

Victim Munshi Nazrul Islam Sujon, 30, was the former organising secretary of Bangladesh Chhatra League of Chapainawabganj district unit.

Officer-in-Charge Jasim Uddin of Sadar Police Station said criminals exploded two homemade bombs at Methorpara intersection around 8:15pm and stormed the pharmacy Sujon owned. They stabbed Sujon indiscriminately injuring him in the head and legs.

The attackers also set fire to the shop. Sujon was taken to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

There were reports of violence and vandalism in Feni, Jhenidah, Noakhali, Chandpur, Pabna, Pirojpur, Sherpur, Munshiganj and Bogra late Tuesday night and yesterday.

Milk supply blockade-hit

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He said Milk Vita had failed to supply butter to the armed forces, and also to the luxurious hotels and renowned bakeries despite its high demand for the Christmas season.

On December 7, the state-run dairy farm procured and distributed 1.60 lakh litres of milk under police surveillance.

"I feed my two baby daughters Milk Vita liquid milk, but since mid-November all the outlets of our neighbourhood ran out of it," said Ahsan Kamal, a resident of Banani in the capital.

Nasrin Jahan Beena of Shajahanpur, Dhaka, said despite several attempts over the last couple of weeks, she could not manage liquid milk for her third-grader son during his annual

exams.

Omar Aazm of College Road in Chittagong said, "We prefer Milk Vita liquid milk for our three daughters, especially for the youngest who is just three. But the product ran out in the market for the last two weeks."

Md Mosleh Uddin, general manager of another leading producer Brac Dairy, said they purchase 1.2 lakh litres of milk every day for an estimated half a million consumers.

"But just for a couple of days during blockades we could collect only 65,000 litres with the police escorting the tankers all the way," he said.

Kamruzzaman Kamal, marketing manager of Pran dairy, said they usually collect 1.2 lakh

litres of milk daily but during blockades they could only collect one-third of the volume.

Executive Director (Marketing) of Akij Foods (Farm Fresh) Altaf Hossain said, "Our milk procurement and dairy production have drastically fallen due to the supply chain disruption."

Akij, on average, procures 40,000 litres of milk per day from Sirajganj, Pabna, Rajshahi and Kushtia, but the collection had declined almost to one-third of the volume, according to Altaf.

He said they could mobilise only a scanty amount of milk under police protection on a couple of days in the last three weeks.

The condition of Aftab Milk Products Ltd could not be known despite repeated attempts.

42 Hindus shot dead on Yusuf's order

Another witness to wartime killing tells tribunal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Yet another freedom fighter has testified that 42 Hindus were shot dead at Shakhrikathi Bazar of Kachua upazila in Bagerhat on November 5, 1971, following Jamaat-e-Islami Nayeb-e-Ameer AKM Yusuf's orders.

Sikdar Habibur Rahman, a platoon commander and the 18th prosecution witness in Yusuf's case, yesterday told the International Crimes Tribunal-2 that he heard about the mass killing from a co-fighter, who was an eyewitness to the incident.

He said two freedom fighters on reconnaissance duty had told him that 40-50 Razakars killed the 42 Hindus on Yusuf's instructions.

On Monday, Lutfar Rahman Nakib, a freedom fighter and the 16th prosecution witness, told the tribunal that Razakars shot 42 Hindus dead at Shakhrikathi Bazar.

During his 61-minute testimony, Habibur said Yusuf, at a Peace Committee meeting at the Collectorate Office in Kachua on April 22, 1971, had delivered an inflammatory speech.

Following his speech, armed cadres of Jamaat-e-Islami and Muslim League looted at least 10 Hindu-dominated villages in Kachua and took the booty to Bagerhat the same day.

He also told the tribunal that Razakars attacked his home and the home of Sunil Kumar Ghosh in Kachua in mid-May. They shot Sunil dead and critically injured Habibur's father by stabbing him.

Habibur said he learnt from the villagers of Shakhrikathi that Razakars had forcefully converted 200 Hindus.

Iftekhar new IG-Prisons

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday appointed Brig Gen Syed Iftekhar Uddin as the inspector general of prisons, replacing Additional Home Secretary Main Uddin Khandaker, who was given the charge about a week ago.

Mohibul Huq, joint secretary of the public administration ministry, confirmed The Daily Star about the appointment.

Formerly, Iftekhar was director of the Central Medical Stores Department under the health ministry, he added.

On December 5, Main Uddin took responsibility for IG prisons as an additional charge.

Contacted, the additional secretary said "We have heard he [Iftekhar] has been appointed, but we are yet to receive any official orders in this connection."

Justice Sinha's

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On September 17, a five-member bench of the Appellate Division including Justice SK Sinha awarded death sentence to Jamaat assistant secretary general Abdul Quader Molla for committing crimes against humanity during the country's Liberation War in 1971.

Nilmani's wife Laxmirani Sinha claimed that Jamaat-Shibir men had carried out the arson attack out of vengeance.

The OC said only two wooden chairs were burnt as the locals had doused the fire immediately.

Sub-inspector Jiaur Rahman filed a case against 10-12 unknown miscreants.

Superintendent of Police of Moulvibazar Tofael Ahmed, Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Kamalganj Md Jahidul Miah, and members of Rapid Action Battalion-9 visited the spot.

War crimes, Kerry & history

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famine-like situation in the country.

In 1971, even as the whole world took note of the genocide being committed by the Pakistan army in occupied Bangladesh and condemned the Yahya Khan junta, president Nixon and Henry Kissinger looked the other way because they needed Pakistan's dictator to help Washington open up a route to Beijing.

All of the above is part of history. And now this telephone call by Kerry, a former senator and presidential candidate, to the leader of a free nation raises a number of questions. Those questions have to do with what the Obama administration, through both Kerry and his predecessor Hillary Clinton, has not said about the role the Jamaat-e-Islami played in the nine months of the Liberation War seventy-five million Bangalees waged back in 1971 against a vicious occupation force.

At the time of the struggle, men like Edward Kennedy and Edmund Muskie and the US media observed it all and drew Americans' attention to the pogrom. The American consul general in Dhaka at the time, Archer Blood, systematically despatched graphic details of the gruesome killings of Bangalees the army and its quislings were committing to the State Department. His concerns were brushed aside.

The point is simple: Americans in responsible positions, back in 1971 and forty-two years later, knew and know what the local collaborators of the Pakistan army did in the war, how many Bangalees were murdered, how many Bangalee women were raped and how many towns and villages were destroyed. They know history. They know of the role the Jamaat and its leaders played in that period of darkness.

And yet today, when the state of Bangladesh tries to bring the perpetrators of the old repression to justice, tries to handle its domestic criminals under laws that take care to uphold international standards of crime investigation and trial, Secretary Kerry speaks of the need for a maintenance of global norms in the matter of dealing with such war criminals as Abdul Quader Mollah. Note that the secretary says nothing about the incontrovertible evidence that went into the judgment against the Jamaat leader.

Interestingly, this emphasis on international standards raises the very grave issue of what has been happening in Afghanistan

and Pakistan through an indiscriminate use of American firepower. Thousands of innocent men, women and children have perished in these two countries through drone attacks, protests against which have gone unheeded. The impunity with which US aircraft have been pounding away at the Taliban in Pakistani territory has clearly not been in consonance with the rules of international behaviour. People celebrating weddings in Afghan villages have been blown to pieces by drones.

Go back a decade. The lie, which Colin Powell presented in detail before the UN Security Council, on which the Anglo-US attack on Iraq was made contemptuously cast aside any and all thoughts of an upholding of international standards of behaviour.

And the lie? That Iraq was in possession of weapons of mass destruction, that Saddam could employ them against his enemies in a mere 45 minutes. The weapons were never discovered, for they never existed. But in patent violation of international law, a beautiful country named Iraq was reduced to rubble.

Now, observe the confusion into which John Kerry has placed himself. He believes that hanging Mollah will put Bangladesh's election in jeopardy. Is he informing us that the future of our democracy depends on the way our justice system deals with a war criminal? Are we expected to persuade ourselves that what we saw the war criminals doing in 1971 was not real, was an illusion and that what the powerful men in Washington now tell us is the reality?

Think back on the alacrity with which Nazi war criminals were dispatched in Nuremberg and imperial Japanese war criminals were dealt with in Tokyo. International standards? Think too of the manifest injustice employed in the name of justice at Guantanamo and on those so-called rendition flights. What forms of international standards went into the eavesdropping of global leaders' telephone conversations by the National Security Agency?

For the people of Bangladesh, despite the divisive nature of their democratic politics, the truth holds that the war criminals committed unprecedented outrage within the geographical contours of Bangladesh in 1971, that it is the right of this republic to deal with such a domestic issue on its own and on a necessary underpinning of properly civilised, moral and legal behaviour.

Mollah execution

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Follow the same in implementing the verdicts of the International Crimes Tribunal, including the one against Quader Mollah.

The US official welcomed the government's position, added Iqbal.

Asked whether Kerry expressed concern over the move to execute Mollah, Iqbal said, "He [Kerry] just wanted to know about the procedure of executing the verdict."

The government has no agenda of its own to influence the judicial process as the judiciary is completely independent, insisted Hasina, adding that the government will execute the verdicts as per the judgments.

Kerry also hoped that political parties would stop violence and sit together to reach a consensus on holding the next election as there is no alternative to reaching a consensus on holding a free, fair and peaceful election.

Contacted, US embassy spokesperson Kelly McCarthy said, "I can confirm Secretary Kerry spoke with Sheikh Hasina today [Wednesday] about the current events in Bangladesh."

Enquired whether the US secretary talked about the pending execution of Mollah, she said, "Before any sentence is carried out, it is essential that the process itself stands up to international standards."

"We believe that the trials should be fair and

transparent, and in accordance with international standards Bangladesh has agreed to uphold through its ratification of international agreements, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," she added.

Meantime, Australian high commission in Dhaka in a statement yesterday expressed concern about the pending execution of death convict Jamaat leader.

"Australia notes the concerns recently expressed by the United Nations special rapporteur on independence of judges and lawyers and by the special rapporteur on summary executions regarding the lack of opportunity for appeal or review of the sentence," said the statement.

It added: "Australia calls on Bangladesh to address these concerns before taking the judicial process further. Consistent with Australia's universal opposition to the death penalty, Australia also calls on Bangladesh to establish a moratorium on the death penalty."

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay on Tuesday called for staying the execution of Mollah.

The European Union and the United Kingdom also expressed concern at the government's move to execute the war crime convict.

Tearful mourners

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"I never met Mandela, so this is my only chance and it's important I pay my respects. I'm South African -- I have to be here," said 28-year-old Vaughan Motshwene.

Some cheered but many were tearful, aware that Mandela's death on Thursday aged 95, opened a new chapter in South African history.

"It feels like the end of an era. All the opportunities I've had growing up with my parents never had, Madiba gave me that," said government employee Faaiqia Hartley, 27.

"He gave all of us an opportunity to be the best we could be."

At Union Buildings, the seat of South African government, the casket was unloaded by eight pallbearers representing the branches of the armed forces in full uniform.

From there it was carried up the steps toward the towering acropolis of beige free-stone, where nearly two decades ago Mandela was sworn in as the country's first black president, signifying the rebirth of this long-troubled nation.

Trailing behind the coffin was Mandela's oldest grandson, Mandla Mandela, his man-

ifest grief a poignant reminder that while the nation lost a hero, Mandela's family lost a father, grandfather and husband.

Mandela's open coffin was placed on a cubic platform in the building's amphitheatre, soon to be renamed in his honour, where it will be on view for three days.

Mandela's final journey through Pretoria is laden with symbolism and replete with landmarks that carry resonance in his life and that of this deeply scarred nation.

The procession passed the central prison where he was jailed in 1962 for incitement and leaving the country illegally.

Another landmark is the Palace of Justice, the court where Mandela famously stood trial in 1963-64 for treason and sabotage with 10 other codefendants.

His conviction and subsequent life sentence marked the beginning of a 27-year jail stint, from which he finally emerged in 1990 as the structure of apartheid crumbled around its white minority supporters.

The cortege will pass near the one-time home of Paul Kruger, the father of the Afrikaner nation.

"Oom (Uncle) Paul" was the president

of the Transvaal, leading a resistance movement against British rule during the first Anglo-Boer War, which began in 1880.

That Afrikaner nationalism later morphed into support for the National Party, which introduced apartheid.

The funeral procession will be repeated for three days, ending each time at the Union Buildings where previous presidents signed aspects of the apartheid system into law.

The public will be allowed to view the casket each afternoon, before Mandela's body is transported to his boyhood home of Qunu in the Eastern cape for its eventual burial on Sunday.

The lying in state was a sombre, subdued affair compared to Tuesday's celebratory memorial service in Soweto -- the crucible of the anti-apartheid movement.

Tens of thousands of people attended the event in Soweto's World Cup stadium where US President Barack Obama led foreign tributes to the life and legacy of Mandela, whose appeal and influence spread far beyond his native land.