



**A blaze at the Chasara police outpost in Narayanganj following a bomb attack carried out by Shibir activists yesterday. Right, a building, owned by State Minister of Home Shamsul Haque Tuku and rented by the regional passport office, also caught fire as alleged opposition men hurled bombs in Pabna.**



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA/STAR

# Violence kills 11

FROM PAGE 1  
the morning. State Minister for Home Shamsul Haque Tuku owns the building that houses the passport office.

Besides, Jamaat-Shibir men attacked two police outposts in Narayanganj.

### 5 KILLED IN NILPHAMARI

Jamaat-Shibir men attacked Noor's motorcade while he was returning to Nilphamari town after visiting Laxmichap, Shishatoli and Palash Bari villages where Jamaat men on Thursday night set ablaze 70-80 shops and storehouses belonging to Hindus and AL activists.

The attack on the motorcade triggered a three-way clash between Jamaat men, AL activists and law enforcers near Ramganj Bazar in Sadar upazila, leaving five people dead and at least 50 others injured.

According to police and witnesses, when Noor and his entourage were coming back to the town via Ramganj-Mirganj road around 4:00pm, they found that a part of the road had been dug up by Jamaat men.

As the AL activists accompanying Noor tried to repair the road, several hundred Jamaat-Shibir men pelted them with stones and brickbats from roadside bamboo groves and houses, prompting the AL men to retaliate.

Locals alleged that the Jamaat men had forcibly entered many roadside houses and lay in wait to attack Noor's motorcade.

At one stage, the law enforcers escorting Noor and his entourage fired teargas shells and rubber bullets to disperse the attackers, said witnesses.

Jamaat men torched at least 25 to 30 motorbikes belonging to local AL leaders and activists.

As the situation deteriorated further, additional police and BGB personnel from

the district headquarters went to the spot to ensure safe passage for Noor after more than an hour.

In a bid to prevent the AL lawmaker from reaching Nilphamari town, Jamaat men blocked the road by felling roadside trees. But he finally reached the town safely, as police, locals and AL men removed the barricades.

Noor, also cultural secretary of the Awami League, told The Daily Star last night, "The pattern of the attack indicates that it was well-planned. The attackers were also well-trained."

They went on the offensive like the Pakistan occupation army did in 1971, he said.

The five people killed in the clash are Khorshed Chowdhury, 50, president of Tupamari union Krishok League, Jubo League men Farhad Hossain, 35, and Lebu, 30, Murad Hossain, 35, an AL activist, and Abu Bakar Siddique, 45, reports our Nilphamari Correspondent.

At least 50 people, mostly AL activists, were wounded in the clash. The condition of six of the injured was stated to be critical.

Ten policemen, including ASP (circle) Shafiu, also suffered injuries.

### 6 KILLED IN NOAKHALI

Activists of the Islamist party clashed with law enforcers in Companiganj upazila, leaving six Shibir men dead and 15 people injured.

The clash erupted around 4:00pm when police intercepted a procession brought out by Jamaat-Shibir men from the KM Model High School, reports our Noakhali correspondent, said police and witnesses.

Unruly Jamaat activists set alight the offices of land, family planning and public health engineering, and some shops there. They hurled crude bombs and brickbats at

police, prompting the law enforcers to open fire.

Six Shibir men died on the spot. They are Motiur, 22, Raihan, 21, and Abdus Sattar, 24, Saiful Islam, 21, Sajib, 22, and Russel, 20, said local sources.

Police, however, confirmed the death of three.

Sajidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Companiganj Police Station, said they brought the bodies of three Shibir activists to the police station.

At least five policemen, including Shafiqul Islam, OC (investigation) of the police station, were injured in the clash, said Anisur Rahman, superintendent of police in the district.

On information, fire fighters went to the spot and brought the flames under control. Additional policemen were deployed in the area to ward off further violence.

### OTHER DISTRICTS

In Laxmipur, Fayez Ahmed, 66, nayeb-e-ameer of Jamaat's district unit, was found dead after a team of police and Rab personnel raided his house at Dakkhin Temuhoni early yesterday.

Marzia Begum, wife of the Jamaat leader, said a group of men, identifying themselves as Rab personnel, forced into their house in Laxmipur Sadar around 12:30am.

They took Ahmed to the rooftop, shot him in the head, and then tossed the body from there, she claimed.

However, a top official of Rab-11 that conducted the raid refuted the allegation and said there had been no shooting during the raid. The Jamaat leader fell from the roof as he tried to escape arrest.

The Rab official said law enforcers raided the house on information that Ahmed and his son were planning to carry out subversive

activities.

The Jamaat leader died as he fell from the roof of his house. None tossed him from there. His son managed to escape, said the Rab official.

Mohammad Lokman Hossain, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station, declined to comment on the matter.

As the news of Ahmed's death spread, Jamaat-Shibir men brought out processions in the upazila.

In Pabna, a three-storey building housing the regional passport office in Sadar municipality caught fire as at least five bombs were hurled at it, allegedly by Jamaat men, around 4:00am.

The blaze damaged the windowpanes and doors on the first and second floors of the building that Tuku had rented out, said police.

Some documents kept at the office were gutted in flames. There was no report of any casualty in the incident.

Blaming Jamaat-Shibir activists for the attack, Rezaul Rahim Lal, vice president of AL Pabna district unit, said it was a planned attack to create panic among locals. He demanded immediate action against the attackers.

In Narayanganj, two police outposts at Chasara and Hajiganj caught fire as activists of the Islamist party hurled petrol bombs at those. The windowpanes and doors at the stations were damaged but none was hurt, police said.

An office of ward AL unit was set alight by miscreants at Shakharikathi Bazar of Kachua upazila in Bagerhat. Local AL leaders blamed Jamaat activists for the arson attack.

In Satkhira, Jamaat-Shibir men attacked and looted the houses and businesses of nine AL leaders and activists early yesterday.

# India told US to play positive role on Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 16  
Bangladesh and due to the significance of the situation the disappointment has been conveyed to the White House.

Indian Foreign Secretary Sujatha Singh discussed the current situation in Dhaka with her US counterpart Wendy Sherman during her recent visit to the country, says the report.

The South Block has explicitly told the US leadership that the West should help bring back the democratic and congenial environment in Bangladesh for the sake of the security of the entire South Asia.

But the Indian foreign ministry thinks that the US is yet to take any active measure to this end, says the report.

According to the newspaper, Indian government sources claim that the US believes Jamaat-e-Islami does not support terrorism; so if the party is allowed in the political arena, it will help combat extremist Taliban supporters. The US also thinks BNP believes in their (US) principles to a good extent and if it assumes power, it will be easier for the US to access Bangladeshi market. On strategic issue, BNP is more preferred by the US, says the report.

However, New Delhi has been trying to convince the US of the fact that the situation of Bangladesh is gradually going out of hand due to the destructive activities of Jamaat.

Spokesperson of the Indian Foreign Ministry Syed Akbaruddin said, "We believe that as the people of a democratic nation Bangladeshi politicians will resolve their differences through dialogue."

Meanwhile, New Delhi fears that a large number of refugees may intrude into the country, says the report, adding that they

are also worried that the huge amount of money channelled through Islami Bank to the Islamist organisations in Bangladesh, including Jamaat-e-Islami, might have a negative impact across the borders as well.

As per the report, 5,000 extra BSF men (Border Security Force) have been deployed along the Indian frontier. Border state West Bengal is also worried about the issue. Its Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has taken steps in this matter. The DG of the state police has beefed up vigilance in the border areas as per her orders.

## Violent politics

FROM PAGE 16  
painful sometimes, he added.

Seeing his son lying motionless on a hospital bed, Sobhan Bepari lost his consciousness and had to be taken away home, Rokhsana said.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association circulated a press statement demanding that the people responsible for Shanto's injuries be brought to justice.

Deputy Commissioner of police, Motijheel zone Ashrafuzzaman told The Daily Star that it would not be possible to find out whose gun the rubber bullets belonged to.

"Besides, the riot erupted at a very crowded place where there were a lot of civilians. The protesters were throwing cocktails and setting fire to vehicles. We had to stop them anyhow and so we had to use rubber bullets," he added.

Khorshed Alam, a CNG driver who sustained 35 percent burns in an arson attack on his vehicle in Chandgaon on December 5 should immediately be shifted to Dhaka from Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH), for better treatment, said doctors.

But his family is too poor to do so. "I do not know what to do," said his wife Shamsunnahar, with tears.

Similarly another arson victim, Mohammad Abdul Alam, has to be brought to Dhaka without any delay, said head of the CMCH burn unit Mrinal Kanti Das.

"He [Abdul] needs to be taken to an intensive care unit. We do not have one here," the doctor said.

Alam, who suffered 22 percent burn injuries when pro-blockade activists set fire to his autorickshaw in front of VIP Tower in the port city on November 27, said he could not sleep for the last 18 days.

Lying close by, Mohammad Yasin, a truck driver and the sole bread earner of a seven-member family, described how he had fell victim to an arson on December 2.

Some eight to 10 teenagers stopped his truck in Sitakunda upazila that day and demanded money. His was one of 200 trucks going to Chittagong from Dhaka under police escort, he said.

"I gave Tk 38,000 to the youths and requested them not to set fire to my truck. But they did not listen to me and hurled a petrol bomb at the driver's seat.

"Before setting the fire, the miscreants beat me up and asked me why I had come out with the vehicle," said Yasin who had burn injuries in the face, chest and both hands.

## Mandela's

FROM PAGE 16  
guests including Prince Charles and the US civil rights activist Reverend Jessie Jackson.

Yesterday's ANC ceremony came after nine days of mourning and memorials held in Johannesburg and Pretoria.

This included three days of lying in state at the Union Buildings in Pretoria from Wednesday to Friday. More than 100,000 people queued for hours to say a last personal goodbye.

Mandela's eldest grandchild, Mandla, thanked those who had come to pay their respects to the Nobel peace laureate.

"I have witnessed his army, I have witnessed his people, I have witnessed ordinary South Africans who walked this long walk to freedom with him, and I can assure the African National Congress today that the future of this country looks bright."

Representatives from leftwing parties such as Angola's MPLA and Ireland's Sinn Féin attended yesterday's homage.

Zuma, whose rule has faced widespread criticism, addressed the leadership issue in his speech.

"The question is, can we produce as ANC other Madibas?" he asked, using Mandela's Xhosa name.

"We need more Madibas so that our country can prosper. Yes we are free, but the challenges of inequality remain."

Today's funeral at Qunu, planned as a more intimate event than the stadium memorial held on Tuesday and attended by a host of world leaders, will bring together members of Mandela's family and clan and a smaller group of dignitaries.

# Businesses lie in ashes

FROM PAGE 1  
The story is the same everywhere.

A single day of a strike or blockade costs Tk 250 crore in financial losses in the country's apparel sector only.

According to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), only 10 of its factories faced cancellation of nearly \$4 lakh (Tk 3 crore) worth of export orders since December 1 this year. The figure will be many times higher if the conditions of all factories are taken into account.

A study conducted earlier by the United

Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and rough estimates by the International Chamber of Commerce Bangladesh revealed that 15 days of shutdown have cost the economy the equivalent of \$3 billion, each day causing a loss of around \$200 million.

Accordingly, 52 days of hartals and nine days of blockades so far this year have caused the country \$12.2 billion in financial losses, a figure that is good enough to finance the construction of four Padma bridges.

Bangladesh's economy has grown by an

average over 6 percent for the last one decade, but this year's growth rate has already been projected to go down close to 5 percent.

With the country's economy becoming more integrated with the global economy today, it will be difficult for the industries to get back to business because global confidence in Bangladesh has been shattered by the unprecedented scale of violence and blockade.

And this situation is not only hitting the rich, but people across the spectrum. All corners of the country are now facing a dearth of

essential commodities since trucks cannot ply on the highways.

"Dealers from the districts are crying for wheat, oil, sugar and everything, but we cannot reach out to them," says Mostafa Kamal, chairman of Meghna Group, a leading commodity importer.

Trucks are hard to find and even if one finds one, one has to pay five times the normal fare, as Bidhan Sarkar, general manager of Uttara Group said. He had to pay Tk 50,000 for a truck to come to his Gazipur factory from Chittagong instead of the normal Tk 10,000.

But the worst hit are the daily wage labourers.

"I break bricks into chips," said Akram, who was sitting at Mohammadpur market in the misplaced hope of being called to a construction site. "I did not get work in the last three days as the contractor has suspended construction."

Akram does not know how long he can last on his half-fed stomach. But he is more worried about his wife and three children.

"We will die, simply die," said Akram, fear playing in his eyes. "When will this end?"

# No way

FROM PAGE 1  
politics. Most of them had no choice but to come out on the streets for a living.

What the BNP-led opposition is doing in the name of politics is downright a crime, and the media coverage every day for over a month now is a testament to it.

Never before have so many people been a target of senseless political violence. Just recall a few incidents. Kids travelling with parents, patients, daily-earners, students and office-goers -- none was spared.

And what was their fault? They ventured out either for a living or for an emergency. They had to risk their lives, no matter what the politics called for that day, be it hartal or blockade. Needless to say, there is no guarantee of returning home safely also on the day before hartal or blockade. These days, the opposition parties feel people need a lethal reminder of their programmes the next day.

Look at the ruthless manner in which the

attacks were carried out on people who have no control over politics. It is as if cold-blooded murderers are on the prowl.

The 14-year-old Monir was waiting early last month inside a parked supply van for his father, who had gone up to see if the Gazipur road ahead was free of trouble. Hartal pickets appeared from nowhere to set the vehicle alight, leaving the boy charred beyond recognition. He died after three long days of agony at the DMCH burn unit.

A crude bomb was blasted on the head of a woman, who, before her death a couple of days later, had worked as a cook at different offices in Karwan Bazar.

A parked bus in Demra was set afire with the helper sleeping inside. With burns on 90 percent of his body, the young boy clung to life for a few hours in pain so excruciating that no one could ever survive to describe.

Then a bus crammed full of passengers was set ablaze at the capital's Shahbagh. Some

arsonists posing as passengers boarded the bus and sprayed it with gunpowder. Before they got down, they threw a petrol bomb inside the vehicle. Like a band of steely professional killers, they ensured the blaze engulfed the bus fast and casualties were high. Four have died and 14 others are still fighting for life.

Adam Ali, security guard of a Narayanganj factory, was desperate to go home in Sirajganj during the blockade last week to visit his ailing father and father-in-law. Coincidentally, his company's covered van was also going there on an emergency. With his wife and three children, he boarded the vehicle, which came under a petrol bomb attack in Gazipur by activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir.

"I have three kids with me. Please don't kill us." His pleas to the predators went in vain. Adam along with two kids survived only to mourn his wife and seven-year-old daughter.

Some 250 attacks on people were reported in the last six weeks -- all carried out to ensure

death.

Trains were made to derail at least nine times during this time. Fortunately, the death toll is four so far, but it could shoot up any day.

Despite all this, no apologies came from the politicians. To them, public properties are meant to be plundered. And who cares about people's lives? At least, not the politicians! They do condemn violence but only to blame it on the rival parties.

Those who are dead or injured in these attacks will never get justice. Cases in this regard will eventually be treated as politically motivated ones and dismissed in the end, just like the way the bus-arson case of 2004 when 11 passengers were burnt to death with the Awami League in opposition then. They are aware of the sad reality that even the law cannot overcome the twisted narrative of politics to ensure justice. And the culture of impunity for the culprits -- either politicians or those hired by

politicians -- goes on.

"The blood of my son is on the hands of politicians."

"Why does not a single politician become a victim of arson?"

"Swear upon God, I will burn the houses of politicians. I will then set myself alight along with my family in Shahbagh."

This was how the family members of some arson victims fumed.

They are, however, still law-abiding. But how long will they continue to be so? Won't there come a time when some among the silent masses will hiss, "Enough is enough ... we will now take care of ourselves"?

What will happen should some of the furious few decide to settle scores?

We will head for total lawlessness if the politicians continue to stay heedless of the anger simmering within the people. They must wake up before the people rise up against them.