

Why is our foreign office silent?

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million Bengalis and the rape of two hundred thousand Bengali women.

The move in the national assembly is once again a sign of Pakistan's inability to forget the humiliation it went through in Bangladesh in December 1971. Because it cannot forget, it remains attitudinally bitter towards Bengalis.

Activists and supporters of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan have been staging noisy demonstrations in various cities and towns of the country to protest the execution of Abdul Quader Mollah in Bangladesh. Mollah, a notorious collaborator of the Pakistan occupation forces in Bangladesh in 1971, has been described as shaheed-e-Pakistan (martyr of Pakistan). These protesters have carried posters inscribed with the question, in Urdu, "Bangladesh mein Jamaat-e-Islami mujrim kyun" (why is the Jamaat-e-Islami a convict in Bangladesh?).

Leading figures in the Pakistani Jamaat have demanded that their government sever diplomatic relations with Bangladesh as a way of registering its outrage over the hanging of Mollah. As if in response to this demand, Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, minister for interior in Pakistan's federal cabinet, earlier came forth with expressions of his "deep grief" over Mollah's hanging. Khan has minced no words in suggesting that the Bangladesh Jamaat poli-

tician was hanged because of his solidarity with Pakistan during Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971. "Till the very end before the creation of Bangladesh", as the Pakistani minister has put it, Mollah remained a supporter of a united Pakistan, which is why "today every Pakistani is saddened".

That said, Jamaat leaders in Pakistan have drawn attention to an alleged deal reached by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to the effect that no one would die or be punished in Bangladesh over his role during 1971 and after. The statement is a lie.

For its part, the Pakistan foreign ministry, on its website, records its concern that the war crimes trials in Bangladesh have "added to the current instability" in the country. The ministry nevertheless wishes the "brotherly people of Bangladesh" well.

All these factors, coming from Pakistan in light of Mollah's execution, highlight yet once again the state of denial that has been at work in the Pakistani establishment since the Pakistan army surrendered in Dhaka on 16 December 1971.

The state of denial began soon after ZA Bhutto took over as president and chief martial law administrator from a discredited Yahya Khan in

late December 1971. At his very first meeting with Bangabandhu in Rawalpindi after having the latter moved from solitary confinement to house arrest, Bhutto informed Bangladesh's founder that the Indian army was in occupation of "East Pakistan". In the years leading up to Islamabad's recognition of Dhaka's independence, Pakistan persisted in referring to Bangladesh as the "Dhaka authorities".

Pakistan was compelled to accord recognition to Bangladesh prior to the Islamic conference, held in Lahore, in February 1974. Later that year, in response to an appeal from Abdul Haq, a pro-Beijing communist leader in Bangladesh, for aid to overthrow the government of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bhutto instructed his cabinet to help Haq. Reference on the subject can be traced to Stanley Wolpert's "Zulfi Bhutto of Pakistan".

During his visit to Dhaka in June 1974, a clearly reluctant and angry Bhutto was compelled to visit the National Memorial at Savar to honour Bangladesh's freedom fighters. His behaviour bordered on the insulting. He refused to doff the Mao cap he had on; and when the visitors' book was presented before him for his comments, he lashed out, "Enough of this nonsense", before pushing the book aside.

Pakistanis cheered the assassination of Bangabandhu on 15 August 1975. Prime minis-

ter Bhutto, carried away by the "good news", quickly recognised the "Islamic Republic" of Bangladesh when no such change had come despite the coup and ordered sacks of rice to be sent to the "brotherly" people of Bangladesh.

In his time, General Ziaul Haq, Pakistan's third military ruler, laid a wreath at the Savar memorial during his visit to Bangladesh in 1985. When Bangladesh's media people asked him about his feelings on the occasion, he gave them a rather glib and confusing reply, "Your freedom fighters are our freedom fighters".

In all the years since December 1971, no Pakistani government has expressed any apologies or remorse over the atrocities carried out by the Pakistan army in Bangladesh. Pervez Musharraf, the country's fourth military ruler, once expressed no more than "regret" at what had transpired in 1971.

Under the tripartite agreement reached by Bangladesh, India and Pakistan in Delhi in April 1974, all Bangalees stranded in Pakistan were to return home to Bangladesh, which they did. All Pakistani prisoners of war in camps across India were to go back to their country, which they did. As for the 195 Pakistani military officers Bangladesh wanted to try for war crimes, the Bhutto government, aware of the backlash it could face from Pakistanis, promised the

Bangladesh government that if the officers were freed, they would be tried in Pakistan itself. The 195 went back home, but Pakistan's promise about trying them was never kept.

Today, against the background of the Pakistani interior minister's comments on the Mollah execution and the national assembly resolution and in light of the "concerns" expressed on the Pakistani foreign office website, the silence of the Bangladesh government, especially the foreign office, is deeply mystifying, indeed stupefying. No protest has been made to the Pakistan authorities. The Pakistani high commissioner in Dhaka has not been summoned to the foreign office for an explanation.

The Pakistani Jamaat's diatribe against Bangladesh may be understandable. But when it is a Pakistani minister and Pakistan's foreign policy establishment taking issue over Mollah's execution, there is no question that the move is a blatant and therefore unacceptable interference in the internal affairs of a country now engaged in meting out justice to the perpetrators of the genocide that left three million Bangalees dead.

Will Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali enlighten the nation on his silence?

Will the foreign office explain why it has chosen to ignore Pakistan's behaviour on the war crimes issue?

Ctg auto driver

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buy the vehicle three years ago, and was repaying the money in instalments, said his elder brother Kamal Uddin.

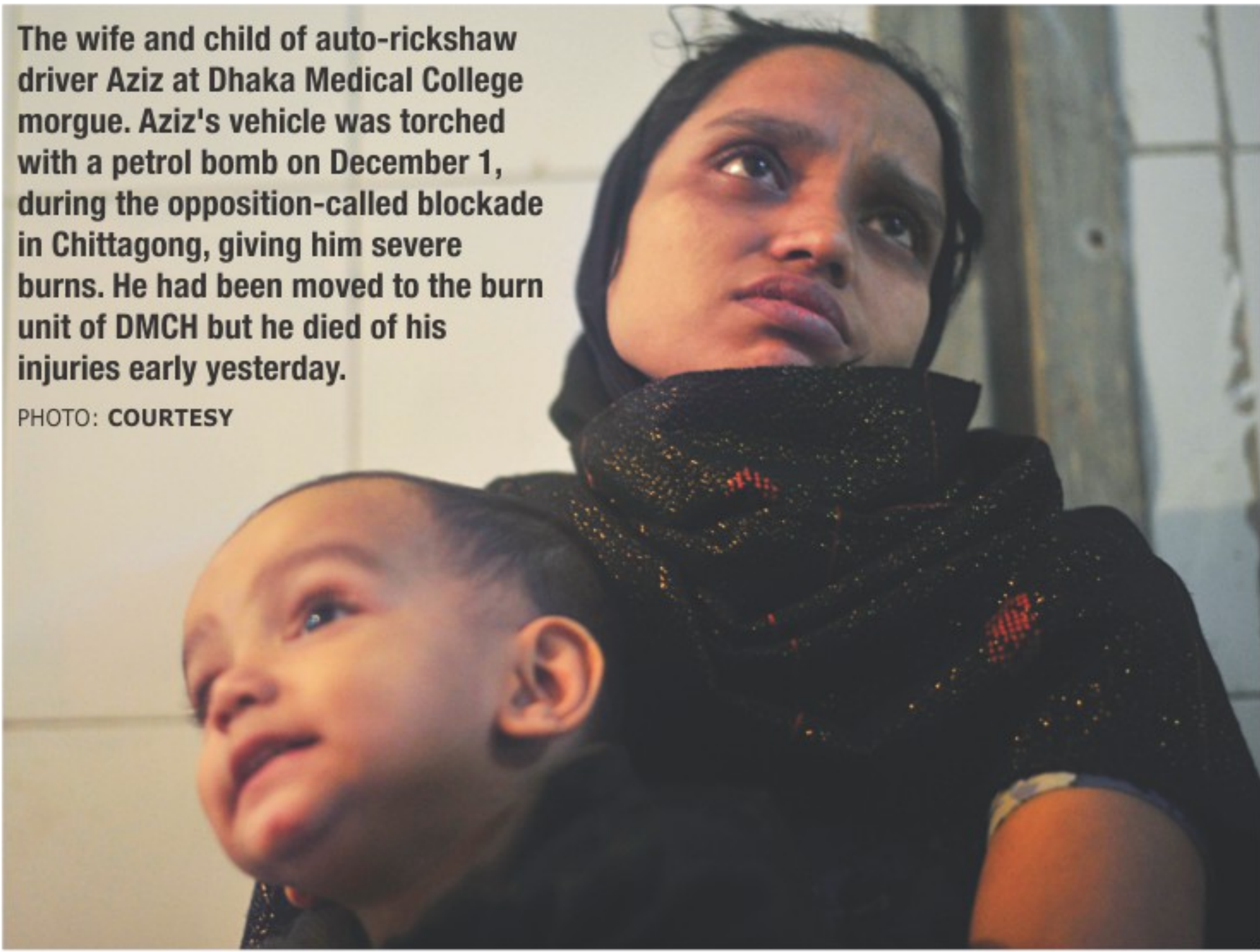
"His death means that his son and two daughters will be left in a state of destitution," he added.

Over the last one week, he was seen lying at the DMCH intensive care unit with an oxygen mask, his face burnt and blackened.

Because of the burns to the windpipe, Aziz had difficulty breathing and had been wheezing in the last few days.

His relatives, who came to take his body to Chittagong, stressed that he was not involved in politics, and that he did not deserve to die like this.

Fourteen victims of political violence, including Aziz, have died at the burn unit since October 26, when the BNP-led opposition alliance began to enforce back-to-back hartals and blockades.



The wife and child of auto-rickshaw driver Aziz at Dhaka Medical College morgue. Aziz's vehicle was torched with a petrol bomb on December 1, during the opposition-called blockade in Chittagong, giving him severe burns. He had been moved to the burn unit of DMCH but he died of his injuries early yesterday.

PHOTO: COURTESY

Near collapse for railway

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officials said.

For instance, railway earns around Tk 63 lakh by carrying 45,000 passengers in Dhaka division alone on a normal day. The revenue earning came down to Tk 35 lakh while the number of passengers fell to 23,000 during the blockade days.

Besides, schedules have collapsed due to the attacks as trains now move at an average speed of 30-40 kilometres per hour doubling the journey time and adding to the woes of passengers.

Despite preventive measures like increasing security patrols on tracks and trains and deploying Ansar personnel, attacks continue to wreak havoc on the railway which once used to be known as the safest mode of public transport.

During the three bouts of blockade, miscreants set fire to tracks and rail bridges at 85 points, ripped off tracks and fishplates at 64 points and halted 91 trains midway across the country.

Nine engines and 22 coaches were dam-

aged in the derailments caused by these subversive acts, triggering a severe shortage of locomotives required to operate trains on different routes.

The two forces responsible for railway security -- Government Railway Police (GRP) and Railway Nirapatta Bahini (RNB) -- together have 3,549 personnel which, under the current circumstances, is clearly not enough to safeguard the vast network that includes 2,835-kilometre tracks and 456 stations.

Worried by the attacks, the authorities have already deployed 8328 Ansar personnel.

"We have identified 1,041 points on 17 important routes as vulnerable and deployed eight Ansar personnel at each of the points which include railway stations, bridges and tracks," said Abu Taher.

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh would also be deployed if the existing measures failed to check attacks, said the railway DG.

Earlier this year, railway incurred a loss of about Tk 26 crore due to attacks by Jamaat-Shibir men after their leader Delawar Hossain Sayedee was sentenced to death for war crimes.

RAILWAY NOT ALONE

Besides the railway sector, Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) has been heavily hit by the recent blockades and hartals enforced by the opposition combine.

At least 153 buses of state-run BRTC were vandalised while 32 were torched inflicting a loss of Tk 12 crore, according to the official records.

The corporation also lost Tk 10 crore in revenue as it could not run most of its 1400 buses during these opposition programmes.

Blockaders felled a huge number of trees, mostly the ones on the roadsides, to put obstacles on roads and highways across the country. Although the forest department could not show any specific data, it said a few thousand trees worth several crore taka were knocked down.

Blockaders also either vandalised or torched at least 10 regional offices of the Election Commission in different places of the country.

A number of police vehicles were vandalised and torched as well during the blockades and hartals but police did not give any details.

Dogs can 'predict human behaviour'

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ability of dogs to interpret and predict human behaviour due to thousands of years spent evolving alongside humans.

The research explains that as particular breeds of dogs are prized above others for their ability to best serve their masters, future generations will become much "smarter", according to the Sunday Times.

It is predicted that dogs will be able to perform basic chores without being told or trained

to, such as retrieving a paper, due to their increased cognitive abilities.

Clare Cunningham, the leader of this project, said: "As dogs have become domesticated, one of the abilities that has been selected for is attending to human behaviour.

"As they get to know particular humans, they pay more attention to them and this may mean they can read, and even predict human behaviour with more efficiency as familiarity grows."

Cunningham and her colleague, Mari Ramos, monitored 24 dogs with varying degrees of training from the highly trained, house trained pets and abandoned dogs from a shelter.

The dogs were observed as to their response to visual clues from humans such as pointing or gazing at a location for a dog to move to.

The research team extracted from this result that it is DNA not training that controls the cognitive development of a dog.

JP protests 'confinement' of Ershad

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to all deputy commissioners' office, said JP Secretary General Ruhul Amin Howlader at a press conference at Ershad's Banani office.

Meanwhile, JP senior presidium member Raushan Ershad met HM Ershad last night at the CMH, two private television channels reported quoting sources in the government.

The meeting lasted for about 40 minutes but what the two discussed could not be known.

Another JP presidium member and younger brother of Ershad, GM Quader, said those, who had violated the party chairman's decision of not participating in the national election by not withdrawing their nomination papers, would

face disciplinary actions.

As many as 21 JP leaders have so far been elected unopposed, as some of them did not withdraw their nomination papers while returning officers did not accept applications seeking withdrawal of nomination papers of some others, including HM Ershad and GM Quader.

EU envoys skip Savar V-Day programme

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In a note verbal in late Sunday, EU Ambassador William Hanna informed the foreign ministry that the EU envoys had a coordination meeting yesterday (Monday) to prepare a report on the prevailing situation in Bangladesh for the EU headquarters and thus they could not attend the Victory Day programmes.

In a reply also sent on Sunday night, the foreign ministry reminded the envoys that the Victory Day is a state level programme and skipping the programme may carry a message that the EU diplomats are not showing due respect to the millions of people who sacrificed their lives for the independence of Bangladesh.

The ministry hoped that the EU envoys

would attend the Victory day programmes.

It has been reliably learnt that the EU envoys had security concerns over attending the programme at the National Memorial following a bad experience in 2011. Therefore, even last year, most of the EU diplomats did not go to Savar.

Official sources said the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs invites foreign missions and others concerned for paying tributes to the martyrs at National Memorial.

They said generally about 40 to 50 percent foreign diplomats attend the programme at Savar as it is not obligatory for them.

The EU, which had its coordination meeting at 3:00pm yesterday, advanced it to 11:00am. It

was held at the residence of the EU ambassador.

"We had to work all morning to draft and agree on a report to Brussels as the EU's political and security committee will discuss the new situation tomorrow [today]. We managed to finish our work in time for the president's reception, and were delighted to be there," said one of the envoys of the EU countries.

The president had invited the foreign diplomats in Dhaka on December 10 to attend the reception at Bangabhaban.

Envoys from different countries, including the United States, India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, the Vatican, and the UN resident coordinator yesterday paid tributes to the liberation war martyrs.

Air raids in Syria kill 76

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There are two types of barrel bombs, one of which is home-made, and the other of which is made in factories.

A Syrian security official said the army prefers the TNT-packed barrels because they are cheaper than regular bombs, which need to be imported from Russia.

The Aleppo Media Centre, a network of activists on the ground, called Sunday's raids on the northern city "unprecedented".

"Everyone is looking up at the skies and watching the planes. But there's nothing to be done," AMC activist Mohammed al-Khatieb said.

Aleppo, Syria's second city and pre-war commercial hub, is now divided between areas occupied by troops loyal to President Bashar al-Assad and rebel fighters.

Fighting that erupted with a rebel offensive in July last year has caused massive damage to the historic city.

Activists posted video footage online of the aftermath of Sunday's barrel bomb attacks, showing bulldozers clearing rubble from the streets as

men searched for survivors in wrecked buildings.

The barrel bombings came as Swedish expert Ake Sellstrom prepared to brief the United Nations Security Council on the use of internationally-banned chemical weapons in the unrelenting war.

Sellstrom led an investigation into the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria.

His team published a report on Thursday, saying there was "credible evidence" that the controversial arms had been used five times since the conflict broke out 33 months ago.

The United States was on the brink of launching air strikes against Assad in August after a deadly chemical weapons attack in the Eastern Ghouta area on the outskirts of the capital Damascus.

It and other world powers blamed regime forces for the attack, but a deal for Assad to surrender his chemical arsenal narrowly averted the strikes.

Under UN Security Council Resolution 2118 passed in September, all of Syria's chemical weapons are to be destroyed by June 30.

78 risky points in the west

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(Bangladesh Railway-West Zone), said, "To avoid sabotage at these points during blockade and hartal days, 688 Ansar members have been deployed."

The zone's engineering department has put rail push trolleys on standby at 12 railway police stations to deal with any emergencies, railway police sources said.

Each trolley with four armed GRP (Government Railway Police) men will start from the base station at least one hour before the start of a scheduled passenger train to inspect the condition of tracks and inform the control room accordingly.

The risky points under 1,550 km rail network include Sarda, Ishwardi, Abdulpur and Horian on Rajshahi-Ishwardi route; Ansarbaria, Kotchandpur, Rupdia and Bejerdanga on Iswardi-Khulna route; Kalukhali, Boalmari and Pangsa on Poradah-Goalandra route; Bamondanga, Bonarpara, Gaibandha, Noldanga, Sonatola, Adomdighi and Bogra on Rangpur-Shantahar route; Mohendranagar, Kakina and Tushvandar on Lalmonirhat-Burimari route,

and Joypurhat, Phulbari and Panchbibi on Khulna-Saidpur route.

"During the hartal and blockade days, Ansar members clustered together in small groups will patrol the tracks, maintaining a duty rota shift," Additional SP Rakib told The Daily Star yesterday.

They will inform the control room beforehand if any act of sabotage is spotted on railway tracks at 78 risky points, he said.

At least 35 cases were filed in connection with the sabotage on trains and tracks in the zone that left six people, including law enforcers, dead and scores injured, he added.

Ferdous Alam, general manager of BR (West Zone), said the railway sector was passing through the worst of times as it had never experienced such destructive activities in the past.

Necessary measures have been taken to foil any sabotage attempt on the establishments of railways, he added.

At least 35 subversive incidents were reported in the zone since the war crimes tribunal sentenced Jamaat-e-Islami leader Delawar Hossain Sayedee to death on February 28.

Raids in Satkhira

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prised of Rab, BGB and police personnel and they have been deployed across the country to contain violence."

The forces are preparing crackdowns on Jamaat-Shibir men who have been fighting with law enforcers and attacking Hindus in Lalmonirhat over the past weeks, reported our correspondent.

Many Hindu families and Awami League men in Patgram upazila of the northern district have fled following repeated threats from Jamaat and its student wing.

On Sunday morning, three Shibir members were killed in a clash with police in the upazila. Their fellow activists later hacked an AL activist to death in broad daylight.

After the BNP-led opposition yesterday evening announced a three-day blockade, sticks-wielding Jamaat-Shibir men brought out processions in Lalmonirhat sadar upazila.

In the early hours, six idols of a temple were vandalised at Shafinagar village of Patgram.

"Over a hundred Jamaat-Shibir men carry-

ing with sharp weapons marched through the area till midnight," caretaker of the temple Harendra Nath Roy said, adding Jamaat-Shibir men might have destroyed the idols.

Laxmipur, another violence-hit district, local BNP leader Asaduzzaman Babul and his follower Khorshed Alam Sumon were killed in a "shootout" when Rab were conducting a raid to arrest them around 11:00pm on Sunday.

Babul's wife told our reporter that Rab personnel stormed her house, shot dead her husband and left the area taking away the body.

On Sunday, Mirajul Islam, 22, a Chhatra League activist, was killed in the district. Alleged Jamaat-Shibir men attacked him on his way to a relative's house and slit his throat.

Earlier on Thursday, the district town turned into a battle zone after a Rab team raided the house of local BNP leader Sahabuddin Sabu.

Activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, a pro-BNP student body, engaged in a clash with the Rab team in Chawkbazar area. Three people were killed as Rab personnel opened fire to bring the situation under control.

Police raids in France, Spain in new horsemeat scandal

AFP, Narbonne

French police made 21 arrests yesterday as part of an investigation into claims that meat from horses used for drugs testing found its way into the food chain.

The arrests were made at various locations in the south of France following a tip-off that hundreds of horses, including some that had been owned by pharmaceutical giant Sanofi, were sold to abattoirs after their veterinary papers were falsified, a police source told AFP.

More than 100 officers were involved in raids at several Sanofi offices and at various abattoirs, including one in Girona in northern Spain.

Among those arrested were at least three vets and several meat dealers, including one based in Narbonne in southwestern France who is suspected of being the ringleader of the illicit trade, police sources said.

Sanofi said in a statement that the company was cooperating with the investigation into "possible fraud" and that it had sold around 200 horses in the last three years, generally to veterinary colleges, individuals or horse centres.