

STRUCK BY TRACTOR-TRAILER

Bangladeshi boy killed in NY

THE NEW YORK TIMES

An eight-year-old boy who was walking with his sister to school was struck and killed by a tractor-trailer on Friday in an intersection in Queens just two blocks from his home, the authorities said.

Friday was the last day of school before winter break, and the boy, Noshat Nahian, was carrying a present for his third-grade teacher, according to his father.

But as he walked across the intersection of 61 Street and Northern Boulevard in Woodside about 8:00am, Noshat was struck by the truck's rear tires as the driver was making a left turn onto Northern Boulevard, the police said. The boy's sister was not hit, the police said.

"When we came he said, 'I don't want to go back,'" Noshat's father Osma Miah said, crying as his brother translated. "He said, 'I want to stay.'"

Osma Miah said he was training to become a deliveryman and hoped to one day buy Noshat a laptop, because the boy loved video games and computers.

The truck driver, identified by the police as Mauricio Osorio-Palominos, 51, of Newark, was arrested and charged with aggravated unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle, a misdemeanour, and oper-

ating a vehicle in violation of safety rules. Osorio-Palominos was working for Roadtex Transportation Corporation, a shipping company based in New Jersey, the police said.

A spokesman for the company could not immediately be reached for comment.

Roadtex Transportation Corporation has been sued multiple times for negligence, including six times in the tristate area, and its trucks have been involved in several fatal collisions, court records show.

A crossing guard, who was working on Friday morning at an intersection close to the site of the collision, recalled Noshat as a sweet, quiet boy who walked to school most mornings with his sister, often a few short paces in front of her.

"This morning he waited for the light," the guard said, speaking on the condition of anonymity because she was not allowed to speak to the news media. "I told him to wait, and he waited to cross the street. The next thing I knew he was killed."

The children were about half a block away from their school, Public School 152. A spokeswoman for the city's Education Department said a crisis team had been sent to the school to aid students and teachers. In a letter to parents, Vincent

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Criminals vandalised a Shaheed Minar built on the compound of Uttarchak Primary School in Atghori upazila of Pabna yesterday. Locals believe activists of Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir might have vandalised the Shaheed Minar.

PHOTO: STAR

Rice traders, millers

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"On one hand, we are not getting delivery properly from our commission agents and wholesalers. And on the other hand, we are unable to deliver the already-hulled rice to urban areas and get money from the sales," said Protap Saha, one of the owners of Pragati Auto Rice Mill.

The Dinajpur-based mill had to suspend production from Tuesday.

"We have orders from our buyers to send rice, but we do not get paid until delivery. As a result, we do not have the funds to buy paddy," said Reza Humayun Faroque, general secretary of the Rice Millers Association of Dinajpur.

The plight of the rice millers, however, had had a knock-on effect, with the wholesalers struggling to pay the small traders and farmers, in turn.

"Our buyers cannot pay us timely, so we are unable to pay the growers and traders for their paddy up front," said Md Khalequr

Rahman Chowdhury, a paddy wholesaler at Dhelaapeer bazaar at Nillphamari.

On Friday noon, some 42 farmers and small traders were seen waiting at his store for money from their paddy sales. But Chowdhury, on the other hand, was waiting for the money from the millers.

"For the first time, I am having to wait for money after selling paddy," said Dinesh Chandra Roy, a small farmer at Khanshama of Dinajpur, one of the two main rice-growing regions of the country.

The 46-year old has an urgent need for money to buy essentials and fertilisers for the maize field. "We are all being held hostage by the two political parties," added an aggrieved Roy.

Meanwhile, the effects of the ruptured supply chain have started to show up at the consumer level, with the prices of rice on the rise in Dhaka. Fine rice sold for Tk 46-58 per kilogram in city markets yesterday, up from Tk 44-56 on Wednesday.

JP polls drama

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mined not to contest the January 5 elections.

On Friday, GM Quader also said Ershad had authorised him [Quader] and JP Secretary General Ruhul Amin Howlader as the party spokespersons and statements by any other JP leader would not be considered as the party's stance.

Both GM Quader and Ruhul Amin Howlader, however, refrained from commenting on Chunnun's remarks when reporters drew their attention to those at a press conference in the capital yesterday.

Similarly, Chunnun too declined to comment on Quader's comments made on Friday.

He told The Daily Star that as many as 70 to 80 JP leaders were set to contest the elections.

His statement echoes what another senior JP leader Kazi Firoz Rashid earlier had said.

On Thursday, JP presidium member Kazi Firoz Rashid said his party would take part in the elections with the consent of the JP chief and under the leadership of Raushan.

A number of JP leaders, wishing anonymity, yesterday told The Daily Star that they themselves knew Ershad was the most unpredictable politician of the country, and whatever was happening within the party was happening as per his instructions.

Not intended to disrespect

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had to work on a public holiday here, the Victory Day. I would like to make it clear that we would never intend any disrespect to Bangladesh, or to the people of Bangladesh and freedom of Bangladesh," William Hanna, head of the EU delegation to Bangladesh, told a select group of reporters.

About not sending observers for the January 5 parliamentary polls, Hanna said they made the decision when it became clear that the majority of seats were already decided without the voters having voted. "Then it became clear...there'll be no point of observing the polls and sending EU observers."

The absence of necessary conditions for a transparent, inclusive and credible election compelled the EU to halt the decision on sending an Election Observation Mission to Bangladesh, he added. "I'm saying we stand ready to deploy observers when the conditions are right."

Clarifying the EU's position on holding the meeting on Monday morning, he said it was quite an important decision which was taken after a lot of considerations in Bangladesh.

He mentioned: The EU had to send a report to 28 capitals of its member states and Brussels urgently. "So, people can understand that position."

The EU diplomats in Dhaka did not attend the Victory Day programme at Savar citing a reason of their urgent "coordination meeting" on Bangladesh's current situation. But they joined the reception hosted by President Abdul Hamid at Bangabhaban in the afternoon.

On Friday, the EU decided to halt for now the preparations for the deployment of an Election Observation Mission in Bangladesh as main political parties here could not create the necessary conditions for transparent, inclusive and credible elections.

It's all made easy for AL

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constituencies. At least 18 security personnel, including armed police, will be deployed at each of the polling stations. The army will also work alongside law enforcement agencies.

The EC will have to pay the polling personnel and law enforcers from the public exchequer. The officials said they prepared a budget of Tk 500 crore to conduct the January 5 polls across the country.

However, the entire budget will not be spent as they are conducting election to 146 of 300 seats. No voting will be needed in the other 154 constituencies where not a single candidate has got any challenger.

The story does not end in Dinajpur.

With the party's electoral symbol "hammer", the Workers Party candidates are the main opponents of the AL in seven more constituencies elsewhere. All of them are its grassroots leaders.

WP chief Rashed Khan Menon and Politburo Member Fazle Hossain Badsha have been elected unopposed, while two others are contesting with AL's electoral symbol "boat" and are expected to win.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Badsha said they fielded around 30 candidates keeping in mind the negotiation with the AL on seat sharing.

"Initially, we did not know how many seats we might get as an alliance partner. But when the BNP announced a boycott, we decided to let our all candidates contest the polls," he said.

"Through this election, we will be able to judge our strength," he said, adding, "We hope some of our candidates will perform well."

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, another AL ally, has 10 candidates running against the AL contenders with the party's electoral symbol "flaming torch". But its two senior leaders are contesting the polls with the AL's electoral symbol and are expected to win. Two other senior leaders have already been elected unopposed with AL support.

The previous election results show the JSD candidates have little ability to put up a good show in polls. In 2001, none of the 76 JSD candidates was able to win and they together bagged 1.19 lakh votes.

Its chief Hasanul Haq Inu and two other party leaders were elected MPs in the 2008 polls with AL support. Inu is now a minister in the election-time government.

Shah Jikrul Ahmed, a JSD policymaker, said some of his party leaders are contesting with the electoral symbol "flaming torch" as those seats were kept open for all to contest.

He also echoed Badsha's view that the January 5 polls will be an occasion to gauge the party's strength.

Anwar Hossain Manju-led Jatiya Party candidates are pitted against AL candidates in more than 20 constituencies alongside some others. Their past polls performance indicate it would be an easy ride for the AL candidates in those seats.

Manju is now an adviser to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with the status of a minister. Backed by the AL, he has already been elected unopposed from a constituency.

His party was born before the 2001 parliamentary polls after breaking away from the Ershad-led JP. In the 2001 parliamentary polls, it fielded 140 candidates and got no seat bagging 2.43 lakh votes. In the last parliamentary polls on December 29, 2008, its seven candidates together secured only 7,818 votes. The question of its winning any constituency simply does not arise.

Then there is the Ershad-led Jatiya Party.

In some constituencies, a close contest was possible between the JP and the AL. But in 21 such constituencies, they have been elected unopposed with the support of the AL. Following Ershad's announcement to quit the race, the AL withdrew candidates from another 20 seats to keep JP in the election.

For more than two dozen seats, there are JP-nominated candidates to fight the AL contenders with little electoral base there.

More than four dozen independent candidates are also fighting the AL contenders in this lopsided battle of ballots. But a few of them enjoy some popularity in their constituencies.

So, the AL candidates are set to have an easy win in almost 112 constituencies out of 146 seats in the January 5 voting. The AL has already secured victory in 127 of the 154 seats, according to the Election Commission.

So, in what is widely seen as an "election of compromise," the ruling AL looks all set to win two-thirds majority as it needs only 73 more seats for this.

There are only two candidates each for 74 seats and 386 for 146. The number of contesting political parties is 12.

BNP opposes

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election," said BNP spokesperson Nazrul Islam Khan.

Addressing a press conference at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office, he said the "incompetent" EC itself has taken a stand against the people as a tool of the government for fulfilling its desire.

"They (EC) are now making an evil design to put the army, who stands by the people during their bad times, face to face with them."

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad said on Friday that members of the army would remain deployed for 15 days from December 26 to January 9 for maintaining the law and order before, during and after the January-5 election.

Nazrul, also a BNP standing committee member, said, "We condemn the Election Commission's evil move. We think the deployment of army is unnecessary in the farcical election in which people have no participation and interest."

He went on, "We think the army should not get involved in such an election."

When his attention was drawn to the wealth statements of ministers and ruling party leaders published in the media, the BNP leader said people will also know in time what they did not mention in their wealth statements.

"But what has already been published in the media is appalling. It is evident from their wealth statements that the ministers and leaders of the government were given a magical lamp of Aladin by which they amassed the assets," he observed.

He also blasted the Anti-Corruption Commission for its remark that the ACC will investigate only if complaints are filed with it against the ruling party leaders about their amassed wealth.

Pointing to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent proposal for dissolution of 10th parliament (scheduled to be elected on January 5) for 11th parliamentary polls, Nazrul said it is an evil plan of the premier to foil the opposition's ongoing movement.

"The prime minister's pre-conditions are nothing but an evil plan to confuse the people who are in a movement against a parliament and government elected without mandate of the voters," Nazrul said.

The PM on Thursday hinted that she might seek dissolution of parliament for a fresh election if there is a compromise with the opposition.

"But she (Khaleda Zia) has to stop killing and blockade, she has to leave the company of Jamaat for any dialogue. If there's any compromise, we'll dissolve parliament, if necessary, for holding the election again," Hasina said.

Nazrul said, "We want to clearly state that there's no scope for holding talks about 11th parliament or any other election."

He also alleged that by making such remarks, the premier herself shut all the doors for reaching a compromise.

First human trial

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Paris, "went satisfactorily," it said in a statement.

The patient, whom it did not name, is in intensive care, "is conscious and speaking to relatives," Carmat said, adding that it was too early to draw wider conclusions about the operation.

Artificial hearts have been in use for many years as a temporary fix for patients with chronic heart problems.

Tens of thousands of people with hearts damaged by disease or a heart attack die each year because of a lack of a donor.

The Carmat product aims at providing a longer-term solution to bridge the wait and enable hospitalised patients to return home and maybe even resume work.

A self-contained unit implanted in the patient's chest, it uses soft "biomaterials" and an array of sensors, rather than a pump, to mimic the contractions of the heart.

The goal is to lessen the risk of blood clots and rejection by the immune system.

Power comes from an external source or wearable lithium batteries.

The company was authorised in

September by French health watchdogs to carry out four trials in three hospitals after tests on animals.

The 900-gramme (31-ounce) device is the outcome of a years-long collaboration between cardiac surgeon Alain Carpentier and the European aerospace giant EADS.

Nearly 100,000 people in Europe and the United States are in need of a heart transplant, according to Carmat.

The price of the heart is estimated at between 140,000 and 180,000 euros (\$190,000 and \$244,000).

Phase I of the trial, on the small group of volunteers in terminal condition, will assess survival one month after the operation, or earlier if the patient receives a natural heart.

If all goes well, a second phase, conducted among a group of about 20 patients, will look at efficacy -- quality of life, comfort and side effects -- as well as safety.

A US rival to Carmat, an artificial heart called AbioCor made the biotech firm Abiomed, is authorised in the United States for patients with end-stage heart-failure or life expectancy of less than 30 days, who are not eligible for a natural heart plant and have no other viable

'Instigator' arrested

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Mohendranagar union of Lalmonirhat Sadar.

Hamidul was one of the main instigators of the attack, police said.

Though Hamidul was not directly involved in BNP politics, he was a supporter of the party, said Abdul Mazid, BNP general secretary of the union.

On November 4, a gang of local miscreants led by Shaon Islam, the mastermind behind the attack, stormed at least forty Hindu households in the village, and vandalised and looted four of them, leaving at least 15 people, including six women, injured.

The attack was carried out as the local Hindus refused to pay toll, police and the locals said.

The locals said Hamidul and his men used to collect toll from them by issuing threats.

The perpetrators went into hiding after a case was filed with Lalmonirhat Sadar Police Station on the same night, said Sub-Inspector (SI) Asaduzzaman, also investigation officer (IO) of the case.

Since then police have been after the criminals, he added.

Meanwhile, the local Hindus said, they were receiving threats over the phone after Hamidul's arrest.

Nikhil Chandra Roy, the plaintiff of the case, said: "I have been receiving life threat from unknown persons over the phone after Hamidul's arrest since Friday night. I have been warned of dire consequences if I don't withdraw the case immediately."

Police had been informed of the threat, he added.

The IO said they would ensure security of the Hindus in the village.

Jamaat men attack AL rally

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the attack on the rally around 6:45pm and ransacked the venue.

Sundarpur union unit Awami League organised the rally of the upazila's Dashmile area, protesting the recent criminal activities of Jamaat-Shibir and the Pakistan resolution on execution of war criminal Quader Mollah.

Local lawmaker Monoranjan Shil Gopal was supposed to address the rally as chief guest, said locals.

When contacted, Monoranjan Shil confirmed the incident, and blamed the Jamaat-Shibir activists for the attack.

General Secretary of Sundarpur union unit AL Hamidul Alam, who was addressing the rally when the attack was made, alleged that on-duty police did not take any measure to tackle the Jamaat-Shibir men.

Modabberul Haque, officer-in-charge of Kaharol Police Station, admitted that they could do little as the situation was beyond their control.

Meanwhile, Sundarpur AL announced a rally in protest at the attack to be held on the same spot today.

Sohel Rana, publicity secretary of Dinajpur unit Islami Chhatra Shibir, denied the allegation of the attack by the Jamaat-Shibir men.

Tension was running high in the area following the incident.

Fear of further violence grips people

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and the tree fell on her.

Several hundred Hindus and Awami Leaguers had to flee their homes.

After the joint drive began on December 15, Jamaat-Shibir men stabbed an elderly Awami League leader to death in Kaliganj upazila and in the last couple of days, at least a dozen houses and shops owned by opposition and Jamaat men were either torched or vandalised at Gabinda Kathi Bazar and Nalta Bazar in the upazila.

Many fear the situation would worsen as people have started taking revenge.

Golam Mostafa, district Awami League member and Debhata upazila chairman, said, "As long as the top brass of Jamaat-Shibir in Satkhira remain out of

the dragnet, long-term peace would not be possible."

He believes that the administration lacked sincerity in arresting the people involved in violence.

A teacher wishing anonymity said, "Before any raid, police informed Jamaat-Shibir leaders beforehand allowing the criminals to hide."

Denying the allegations, Additional Superintendent of Police Joydev Chowdhury of Satkhira said there might have been a few instances where the joint forces did not make any arrests due to small number of personnel conducting a drive and a large number of people resisting them.

Many claimed that law enforcers did not take strong action and had just picked up a few "innocent" people leaving the real culprits alone.

Lawyer Shyamol Kumar Ghosal of Agardari village said numerous cases were filed in connection with felling trees and many innocent people were implicated.

Violence dominated the district at the south-western edge of the country since February when Jamaat leader Delawar Hossain Sayedee was sentenced to death for crimes against humanity.

Satkhira Awami League joint secretary Sheikh Shaheed Uddin blamed the lack party activities for this. He said during the last five years party activists were more interested in making money rather than carrying on party activities.

He claimed that this had resulted in many people siding with Jamaat-Shibir. He said vigorous party activities were needed.