

Cut ties, boycott Pak products

Gonojagoron Mancha urges govt, people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gonojagoron Mancha yesterday submitted memorandums to the government demanding to sever its diplomatic ties with Pakistan unless Islamabad apologises, and urged all to boycott Pakistani products.

The youth-led platform had raised the demand after the Pakistan national assembly adopted a resolution expressing concern over the execution of war criminal Quader Mollah.

The six-member delegation led by the platform's spokesperson Imran H Sarkar also handed over another memorandum to the home ministry yesterday.

In the memorandum, they protested the police action on the platform's activists during their protest march towards the Pakistan high commission on December 18 and 19.

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali and Additional Secretary to the Home Ministry

Main Uddin Khondker received the memoranda on behalf of their respective sides.

"We have demanded that the government cut off all diplomatic relations with Pakistan ... We also call upon all to boycott Pakistani products," Imran told reporters at the Secretariat.

He said the home secretary had assured them of conveying the message of the memorandum to the higher authority and taking necessary action in this regard.

The police attacked the procession of peaceful protesters that included senior citizens and women, he said.

"We have given the government a week's time to take actions against the police men responsible for the attacks or we will announce fresh programmes after the deadline," he added.

Earlier, police barred a procession of the platform at Doyel Chattar around 12:00 noon from proceeding to the ministries at the Secretariat.

Contest by default?

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picked up the former dictator from his Baridhara residence on December 12, and took him to Combined Military Hospital (CMH). Some of his closed aides claim he is actually detained.

On Saturday, Jadu Miah said he cannot take part in the election while his party chairman is under "detention".

Talking to The Daily Star last night, he said, "I submitted application for withdrawing my candidature on December 13 and the returning officer received it. But it did not come into effect. I don't know why."

Also general secretary of Pirganj upazila JP, Jadu Miah alleged, "A conspiracy is being hatched. Election posters will be published in my name. If anyone does this, I will file a case. I will not print a single poster without my party chairman's instruction."

Contacted last night, Farid Ahmed, deputy commissioner and returning officer of Rangpur, said Jadu Miah's application was not accepted, as he didn't follow section 16/1 of Representation of the People Order (RPO).

According to the section, the application has to be delivered to the returning officer by the candidate himself or his authorised agent. But Jadu Miah's was sent

in by a person without any authorisation letter, he explained.

Though there is no campaigning for Jadu Miah in Pirganj, the local unit of his party is busy demonstrating for the release of "Ershad". It has a strong base in the upazila.

On the other hand, the AL-led 14-party alliance is running campaigns in the two constituencies for Hasina.

SM Humayun Kabir, general secretary of Kotalipara thana AL, said the electioneering was going on in full swing. "We are holding rallies and processions and putting up posters."

AL leaders from both the constituencies said whether or not the two opponents are active, JP's election symbol "plough" will still be on the ballot papers. So they have to continue the campaigns.

Our Gopalganj and Rangpur correspondents report that Hasina's campaigns have caused hardly any excitement in the areas and there is also public apathy for the one-sided election.

The AL chief will visit Gopalganj on December 26 and Rangpur on December 30 or the next day.

In the 2008 national election, Hasina won the two seats along with Narail-1. But she lost Rangpur-6 to JP's Nur Mohammad Mondol in 2001.



Jewel's father Shahjahan Mollah in tears at Shahjalal International Airport. All the Bangladeshi workers who were abducted from the UAE to Iran returned yesterday apart from his son. Coworkers of Jewel beat him to death in Iran a few days after they escaped from captivity.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Nothing left

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Jewel went to the United Arab Emirates three years ago to work as a labourer.

On his death, Ruhul Amin, one of the returnees, said Jewel had a dispute with some of the six and they beat him over the dispute on December 14. When they came to know about the beating, they took him to a hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Jamal, another returnee who was Jewel's roommate, gave a similar version.

Criminal Investigation Department Inspector Borhan Uddin, who interrogated the 29 at the airport, told this newspaper that Jewel was killed over a brawl with the six.

But Jewel's sister Kalpana Akhter alleged her brother was killed as they could not send any money.

Before the fateful story of the 30 began in September, they were working in the UAE and Oman. A group of Bangladeshis involved in kidnapping and human trafficking in some Middle East countries offered them jobs in Greece, Turkey and Italy.

When they agreed, the gang took the migrants to Bandar Abbas by a risky speedboat journey through the Arabian Sea. And their nightmare began. The gang confined them in a house in a deep jungle near the sea, family members said.

Soon, the abductors started torturing them and forced their families to pay ransom to stop torture. The 29 victims gave the gang around Tk 95 lakh in phases through B-kash, a mobile money transferring service.

This means the gang has local agents who collected the money. Police have already arrested one Farid, who runs a computer shop and B-kash service in Chandpur, in this connection.

Some of the money was transacted through Farid's B-kash account, police said.

Only Jewel's family could not send any money.

Ramij Uddin, father of Al Amin, one of the returnees, said he paid Tk 4.6 lakh in ransom to Rabiul Hossain Manik, one of the kidnappers, in phases (He is not the

Manik arrested yesterday.)

"My son cried over the phone, asking us to send money to save his life. I could guess the scale to torture my son was undergoing," Ramij added.

Family members of other victims also claimed they paid ransom to Rabiul Hossain Manik through B-kash accounts.

Describing the torture, Ruhul Amin said: "No one can imagine how the abductors tortured us. They always beat us and threatened to kill us if our families failed to give them money."

The kidnappers often hung them upside down, he said, adding: "Some of us sometimes became senseless because of torture. I'm happy that I'm home."

After three months of torture, the victims finally saw a ray of hope when Binoy Krishna Mallik, executive director of Rights Jessore, an NGO, came to know about their captivity on November 16, and subsequently contacted the Bangladesh Embassy in Tehran.

Binoy then spoke to some of the victims by phone and advised them to escape and go to police.

In the meantime, the abductors somehow sensed that the victims were in touch with the embassy. Fearing arrests, they themselves were trying to flee, leaving the captives, Binoy told The Daily Star.

The victims managed to escape at the end of last month and go to police, he added.

The Bangladesh Embassy in Iran and police took them to a shelter house in Tehran, where Jewel was beaten to death a few days later.

Family members and the embassy, meanwhile, communicated with the CID to trace the families of the abductors.

The CID arrested the father and the wife of Manik from Chandpur and the wife of another kidnapper, Jamal Hossain, from Dhaka late last month.

The 29 victims returned to Bangladesh with the help of the Bangladesh Mission in Iran.

Jewel's body is at a mortuary in Tehran, but officials could not immediately say when the body would arrive.



With tears in her eyes, Bulbul Begum, mother of Shahjahan, inset, calls home to let her family know about his condition yesterday. Cook Shahjahan got severely burnt when blockade supporters torched the auto rickshaw he was in at Mymensingh on Saturday. The photos were taken at the DMCH.

Arson takes toll on them

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Three of them, including Shahjahan, were at the intensive care unit, he added.

The DMCH has treated 126 burn victims, 74 of whom were admitted, since the opposition alliance started enforcing hartals and blockades on October 26, said hospital sources.

Shaheen and Majedul were attacked at Bainyagati intersection in Sirajganj sadar upazila around 10:30pm Saturday. Blockaders hurled a petrol bomb at their truck laden with perishable goods, said Officer-in-Charge Habibul Islam of Sirajganj Police Station.

They were carrying winter vegetables from Naogaon to Comilla, said relatives of the victims.

Both Majedul and Shaheen are from Naogaon.

In Mymensingh, Shahjahan came under attack in Ahmedpur area in Gauripur upazila around 7:30pm. He was heading to his Noahata village home in the upazila.

He was seen wearing an oxygen mask at the intensive care unit yesterday.

Shahjahan, a father of two and the sole breadwinner in

the six-member family, worked as a cook at a restaurant in Mymensingh and lived away from family in the town, said his mother.

"He usually comes to visit us once a week. He was going to make one of those visits that night."

She added, "My younger son died of cancer four years ago.... Who would look after the family if he dies?"

Officer-in-Charge Hamidul Islam of Gauripur Police Station said police were investigating the incident.

Meanwhile, Trucker Ahsan Ullah, 35, another victim who had suffered 25 percent burns in Chittagong, died when he was being taken to the capital for better treatment yesterday morning.

Opposition men had set fire to his truck at Sitakunda upazila around 11:00pm Tuesday, said his relative Rahim.

Doctors had suggested his transfer from Chittagong Medical College Hospital because he needed ICU support, said Dr Mishma Islam of the CMCH.

Ahsan, who hailed from Laxmipur, used to live with his four-member family at Billapara in Chittagong.

Commonwealth

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mission of the organisation which came to Bangladesh in the first week of December upon an invitation of Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad.

The mission was assigned to evaluate the political situation and the preparations for the January 5 elections, and to report to the secretary general on its findings.

Earlier on December 3, the Commonwealth secretary gen-

eral expressed "deep concern" over the countrywide violence triggered by protests against the arrangements for the forthcoming elections.

On Friday, the EU declined to send election observers, saying political forces in the country had failed to create conditions for credible polls despite many efforts, including that under the UN auspices.

Tazreen tragedy

FROM PAGE 1

Fashions in Ashulia on the outskirts of the capital on November 24 last year.

The factory used to produce and supply garments to different international brands, including Walmart.

Ashulia Police filed a case on November 25 in connection with the incident.

Police submitted the charge sheet to the magistrate's court more than seven months after the High Court issued a ruling on the incident.

Following a writ petition, the HC on May 19 asked the government to explain why it should not be directed to prosecute Tazreen owner Delwar for his alleged negligence in protecting the workers from fire.

Delwar appeared before the HC at every hearing on the petition in line with a court order.

In June this year, a probe body formed by the home ministry submitted a report to the HC, saying there was "unpardonable neglect" on the part of the owner.

Talking to The Daily Star on the HC premises the same month, Delwar denied his responsibility in the fire incident and protested his innocence.

He claimed law enforcers had not arrested him, as there were no specific charges against him.

However, on May 29 this year, the brother of a fire victim sued the Tazreen owners and 29 factory staff for gross negligence.

On November 23, the HC again asked Delwar to appear before it on January 5 next year.

According to the charge sheet, Delwar and his wife had constructed the building on a faulty plan with the help of the engineer, and illegally used the ground-floor walkway as a warehouse.

There was no fire exit in the factory though a

provision of the labour law stipulates that there must be two exits in every factory, it said.

Moreover, the factory was built a mile away from the main road making it very difficult for fire service vehicles to enter the factory compound, said Khan, also inspector of Criminal Investigation Department of police.

Managers and security guards were charged over their insistence that workers get back to work though smoke was billowing from the ground floor where the fire started.

Fire alarms rang as soon as the blaze broke out. Panicked workers tried to leave the factory before the fire spread. But managers and security guards told them it was nothing serious, said Khan.

The other 11 accused are Factory Manager Abdur Razzak, Quality Manager Shahiduzzaman Dulal, Production Manager Mobarak Hossain Monju, Manager (admin) Md Dulal Uddin, engineer Morshed Morshed, store-in-charge Hamidul Islam and Md Al Amin, security in-charge Md Al Amin and Anisur Rahman, security guard Md Rana, and loader Shamim Mia.

Of them, only security-in-charge Anisur is now behind bars.

Tazreen owners Delwar and his wife Mahmuda, Factory Manager Razzak, Quality Manager Dulal, engineer Morshed and Production Manager Monju have been shown as fugitives in the charge sheet.

The six other accused got bail from the HC and the lower court on different dates.

The investigation officer has appealed to the court for issuing arrest warrants against the absconding accused and confiscating their properties.

A hearing on the charge sheet would be held at the magistrate's court on December 30, said Khan.

Don't let Philippines become a 'forgotten crisis': UN chief

AFF, Manila

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon yesterday called on donor nations to ramp up aid to typhoon-battered Philippines as it grapples with a funding shortfall on the long road to recovery.

"We must not allow this to be another forgotten crisis," Ban told reporters a day after touring the storm-ravaged city of Tacloban.

He said the UN had only achieved 30 percent of the \$791 million in aid it had

appealed for to boost relief and rehabilitation efforts in areas devastated by Super Typhoon Haiyan last month.

"I am appealing (to) the donor community, to speed up, scale up their support," Ban said, adding that he had met with the ambassadors of key donor countries in Manila on Sunday.

He said he was deeply moved and inspired by his visit to Tacloban on Saturday, where despite the many challenges "people are working hard to recover".

BLAST AT AIRPORT

2 Ctg Shibir men confess involvement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two Shibir men, who were held in connection with the crude bomb blast incident at Shah Amanat International Airport in Chittagong city, have admitted that they had exploded the bomb to create panic in the area, said Chittagong Metropolitan Police.

An activist of Islamic Chhatra Shibir, the student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami, blasted a crude bomb at the parking lot of the airport at night on December 14, just two days after the execution of Jamaat leader Quader Mollah.

Of the arrestees, police caught red-handed M o h a m m e d Shahabuddin, 25, a resident of Charbasti area in the city's Patenga area and a staff of United Airways at the airport, from the spot.

Police said Shahabuddin admitted his involvement in the blast incident and revealed the name of three other Shibir activists who were also involved in the incident.

On Saturday, a team of Detective Branch of police held Shahed Hossain, 28, a neighbour of Shahabuddin, from the city's Nandankanon area. Shahed was then handed over to Patenga Police Station.

During interrogation, Shahed, a law department student of International Islamic University, Chittagong, admitted that he had planned to set off the bomb along with Shahabuddin and two other Shibir activists, namely Javed, a student of Patenga Alia Madrasa, and Jasim, a student of the Islamic University, said police.

Javed provided the bomb to Shahabuddin who tried to blast it at the airport gate but retreated from that place due to the presence of security guards, said Babul Akhter, additional deputy commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (Detective Branch).

Shahabuddin then blasted the bomb at the parking lot but he was caught by on-duty security guards and police, said Kazi Shahabuddin Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Patenga Police Station.

Police are trying to nab two other Shibir activists, said Babul.

Genes shape

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"We've tended to think of political attitudes and behaviours as being rooted in the environment," study co-author Dr Kevin Smith, a political scientist at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, told HuffPost Science.

"What our study shows along with a number of other studies is that they seem to be at least partially rooted in our biology," Smith said.

For the study, published in this month's Political Psychology journal, researchers surveyed 682 pairs of middle-aged twins.

Half of the twins were identical (monozygotic), sharing all of the same genes. The other half were fraternal, sharing about 50 percent of their genes.

The twins were asked about their attitudes to a range of political issues including gay marriage and egalitarianism.

The research found the identical twins' political views were consistently more similar than those of the fraternal twins, with further statistical analysis revealing the differences were due to genetic influences.

The study also revealed about half (48 percent) of the difference in extreme authoritarian beliefs is inherited, while 50 percent of egalitarian views are encoded in our genes.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln co-author Dr John Hibbing said the research could offer insights into how to ease political tensions.