

DIMLA, JALDHAKA CONSTITUENCIES IN NILPHAMARI

Barbaric arson attack on 21 educational institutions

EAM ASADUZZAMAN,
Nilphamari

Twenty-one educational institutions, used as polling centres in Nilphamari-1 (Dimla) and Nilphamari-3 (Jaldhaka) constituencies for the January 5 elections, still bear testimony to the barbaric arson attacks by criminals on the polls day and the night before.

The attack, committed apparently by anti-election activists, destroyed text-books, furniture, laboratory apparatus, registers, MPO sheets and service books of teachers and caused damage to the schoolhouses.

Defying all odds, the school authorities and teachers are now struggling to revive school activities.

Visiting badly affected Satjan High School in Dimla upazila yesterday, this correspondent found remains of burnt wooden furniture, scattered pieces of glass and metals all around. Chunks of plasters also fell on the floors from walls and roofs due to the heat of fire.

During classes, students were sitting on the floor while wreckage of benches, tables or chairs were kept in corners.

About 9:30pm on January 4, over a hundred attackers entered the school, spread petrol at the rooms and set fire, said advocate Nurul Huq, president of the school managing committee.

"Azizul Islam, who retired from his service as headmaster in last September, is playing the leading role to revive the school activities. At a recent meeting attended by the guardians, we have

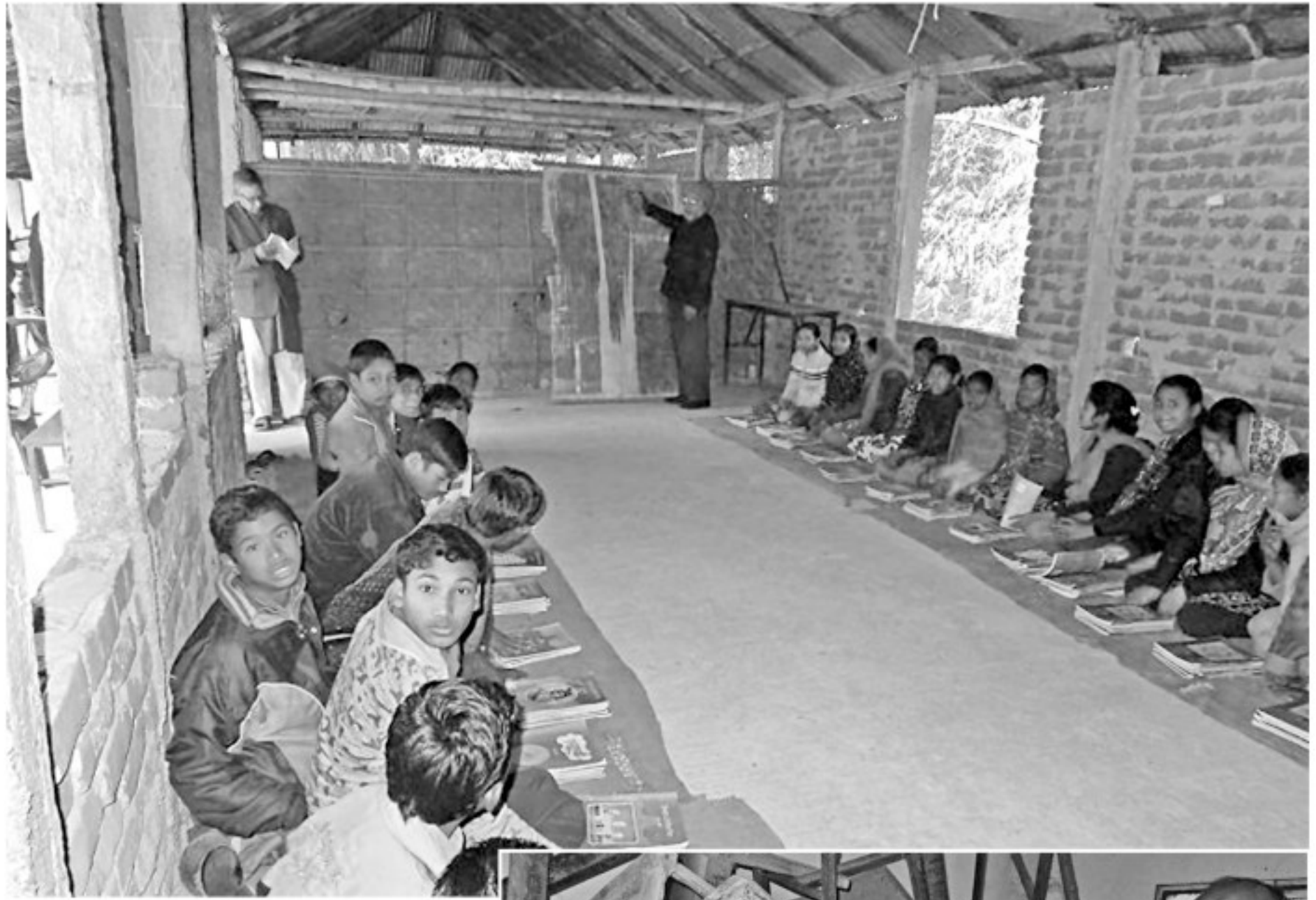


PHOTO: STAR
Students of Satjan High School in Dimla upazila of Nilphamari attend their class sitting on the floor as the arson attack on January 4 left the benches, chairs and tables badly damaged. Inset, Azizul Islam, retired headmaster of the school, shows valuables including furniture, computers and multimedia equipment destroyed in the barbaric act.



requested him to take charge as acting headmaster for one year," he said.

"The sight of destruction is unbearable. Now I will not take any salary for serving the school as it is passing a hard time," said a tearful Azizul Islam, who has served the school for 38 years.

Azizul Sir has started approaching government offices for help to rebuild the school, while the teachers are collecting old text-books and motivating

students to attend classes, said several students and guardians.

"The arson attack destroyed about 2100 text-books meant for free distribution and 1200 books of the school library. Two-desk top computers, a laptop, a projector and a digital screen used for instruction through multimedia as well as valuable apparatus in the science laboratory also got burnt," Nazrul Islam, office assistant of the school.

Dilruba Begum, head-

master of Phutanir Haat Government Primary School in Dimla, and Sirajul Islam, headmaster of Bogulagari Government Primary School of Jaldhaka, said they have continued classes and trying heart and soul to restore normalcy.

Fourteen primary schools, four high schools and three madrasas in the district were damaged in recent attacks, said Roksana Begum, district education officer.

15 shops gutted in Chandpur, Sylhet

STAR COUNTRY DESK

At least 15 shops were gutted in separate fire incidents in Chandpur and Sylhet districts early Friday.

Our Chandpur correspondent reported that at least five shops were destroyed by fire in wireless area under Sadar upazila at around 3:00am.

According Fire Brigade and local people, the fire originated from an electric short circuit at a shop in the area and soon engulfed four adjacent shops.

Being informed, firefighters rushed to the spot and doused the flames with the help of locals at around 4:00am.

At Noapara Arong Bazar in Hajiganj upazila, five shops were gutted in a fire at around 2:00am on the night.

Locals said the fire originated from an electric short circuit at a shop and soon spread to four other shops. Dulal Miah, one of the affected shop owners, said the four shops were completely gutted when the firefighters arrived.

In Sylhet, valuables worth about Tk 20 lakh were gutted in a fire at Dasghar Masukhali Market in Biswanath upazila of the district early Friday, reports UNB.

Locals said the fire originated from a tea stall at around 12:30am and soon spread to five adjacent shops.

On information, a fire fighting unit from Osmaninagar went to the spot and doused the blaze with the help of locals.

Fire service sources said the loss caused by the blaze would go up to Tk 20 lakh.

Robbers loot trawlers, abduct 5 fishermen

Police arrest 5 'robbers' in Bhola

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bhola

A gang of robbers attacked three fishing trawlers near Lalchar point of the Bay in Dhalchar area of Charfassion upazila and abducted five fishermen yesterday morning.

Abul Kalam Patwari, chairman of Dhalchar union, said a gang of 25-30 robbers in two trawlers attacked the fishing trawlers of Solaiman Majhi, Ali Azgar Majhi and Ayub Majhi. The other fishermen in the trawlers jumped into the Bay to escape attack and abduction, he said.

On information, a team from Dhalchar police camp led by ASI Bellal Hossain, raided the spot and arrested six alleged robbers. They also recovered some lethal weapons from a trawler.

worth Tk 10 lakh from the trawlers.

They also abducted Rahul Amin Majhi, Solaiman Majhi, Mostofa Majhi, Ali Azgar Majhi and Ayub Majhi. The other fishermen in the trawlers jumped into the Bay to escape attack and abduction, he said.

On information, a team from Dhalchar police camp led by ASI Bellal Hossain, raided the spot and arrested six alleged robbers. They also recovered some lethal weapons from a trawler.

The arrestees were identified as Jahangir Alam, Kamal Hossain, Taslim Uddin, Nijam Uddin, Shah Alam and Amir Ali.

Bellal said that the arrestees hailed from different villages in Lalmohan upazila and Mirjkalu area of Bhola Sadar.

We could not rescue the abducted fishermen and recover fishing materials as the other trawler of the robbers sped away long before the law enforcers reached the spot, he said.

Drizzle adds to cold spell in northern districts

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

The on-going cold spell has added to the miseries of the poor and disadvantaged people in the northern districts of Thakurgaon and Panchagarh.

The bone-chilling cold for the last 3-4 days coupled with drizzling yesterday disrupted normal life.

As people are forced to stay indoors, business and other activities are hampered while students' attendance in schools and colleges has become thin.

People of low income group, especially who earn on daily basis, are unable to manage work due to the bad weather.

The minimum temperature recorded in Thakurgaon was 8 degrees Celsius while it was 10 degrees in Panchagarh district yesterday, local Met office sources said.

The sun remained invisible

during the last three to four days. Fog and drizzling amid sweeping cold winds from the western and north-western directions have added to the sufferings of the common people.

Although different government and non-government organisations have started distribution of warm clothes, it was too inadequate for the poor in the two districts.

We have already distributed five thousand blankets among the distressed people in five upazilas in Thakurgaon district and wrote to the higher authorities for more 30 thousand blankets and other warm clothes for distribution among the cold-stricken poor people, said Thakurgaon DC Mukesh Chandra Biswas.

Agricultural activities are also being hampered as

farmers cannot work in crop fields due to the chilling cold, said Khairul Alam, deputy director of Thakurgaon Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE).

On the other hand potato farmers are worried due to severe cold as it may cause fungal and pest attack on potato plants, DAE sources said, adding it is also harmful for seed beds of IRRIBoro paddy.

Local DAE suggested the farmers to cover Boro seedbeds with polythene sheets till the sun reappears, put water in seedbeds and later use Sulphur fungicides like cumulus, mixture of urea and potash.

Meanwhile, increasing number of patients, especially children and elderly people, are crowding hospitals with cold-related diseases, said Dr. Afzal Hossain Tarafdar, civil surgeon of Thakurgaon said.

Justice Habibur passes away

FROM PAGE 1
enlightenment in a country frequently pushed into the depths of darkness. He was chief justice of the country.

And then he was chief adviser of a caretaker government at a moment in the nation's history when the collective urge was for a tall man to take charge of the land and get it moving on the right path to political fulfilment. He was a tall man, in the literal sense of the meaning. And he then convinced the nation that he was tall as well in the metaphorical sense of the word.

In a number of ways, in an era underlined by affluence of mediocrity and poverty of imagination, Justice Habibur Rahman was a charming exception, indeed an encouraging instance of the historical truth that even in moments of the most piercing gloom there appear torchbearers ready to inform the depressed and the dispirited that the tunnel is not long, that brilliance engendered by hope gleams through the woods of despair.

As chief adviser in 1996, it was for Rahman to guide the nation into the future, through taking the right path amid the confusion of the crossroads. His sense of judgment, burnished through the years as an interpreter of the law and its practitioner, came in handy.

And then came his sense of aesthetics, that hold on cultural tradition, which informed him of the hugeness of the task before him. He did the job marvellously well, despite the threats and dangers lurking in the bushes. A particular danger threatened to undermine his efforts toward a free, fair and transparent general election when some ambitious men in the military looked about to move against constitutional government yet once again. Justice Rahman, together with President Abdur

Rahman Biswas, did what was expected of him. The two men stood firm in their resolve to preserve democracy. And democracy was saved, through general elections held in June 1996.

In Habibur Rahman, it was a vibrant sense of culture that defined the man. Born in Murshidabad in what used to be undivided Bengal, it was easy for him to relate to history and to the cultural crosscurrents that accorded him and his fellow Bangalees a sense of their place in time and space. The spirit of Renaissance was in him and therefore was he forever in search of knowledge through its manifold dimensions. He pondered over science; and literature was a passion that would keep growing in his consciousness right till the end of his life. As a leading intellectual voice in the land, Habibur Rahman explored Rabindranath through the many dimensions that linked the poet to the majesty of the Bangalee spirit.

Patriotism, in Rahman's concept of the world, began with knowledge of one's own history before reaching out to the wider world. It was in that spirit that he embraced the world or had the world come to him. His research, covering as it did literature, politics, religion and society, demonstrated the larger than life intellectual inhabiting his being. He composed poetry in passion that only poets could identify with. And he took upon himself the painstaking, slow task of noting the dates and months and years which gave Bangladesh's history its form and substance, putting it all in a compendium.

Habibur Rahman's was a moral voice. In his writings, through his remarks at book launches, with his happy presence at sessions of music, he came alive as one of the last Bangalees in whom shone bright the values and principles which have historically

defined life in our part of the world. His sense of humour came in the brightness of sophistication. Unconventional in his approach to the world around him, he kept his audience glued to his words, for those words were gems of wit and wisdom one can expect from the truly erudite, from the absolutely brilliant among men.

Justice Rahman was among those men. The way of all flesh is now his to traverse.

(Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman -- former chief justice of Bangladesh, former chief adviser of the caretaker government, Tagore enthusiast, poet and aesthete -- was born on 3 December 1928 and died on 11 January 2014. He is survived by his wife and three daughters).

CONDOLENCES

Expressing condolences at the death of the former chief justice, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said, "Justice Habibur Rahman played an important role in upholding constitution when he was the chief adviser of the caretaker government in 1996."

President Abdul Hamid, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, Finance Minister AMA Muhith and Chief Justice Md Mozammel Hossain also expressed condolences at Justice Rahman's death.

Justice Rahman's family members said they want to bury him in Banani graveyard. The burial rites are expected to be performed after his second daughter comes from the US tomorrow.

His body will be kept at the United Hospitals mortuary.

He was found lying face down on the floor of his bedroom at his Gulshan residence around 8:50pm, said domestic help Yeasmin, who went to call him for dinner.

PROTEST AGAINST ATTACKS ON HINDUS CONTINUES



Barbaric attacks on Hindus in Jessore and several northern districts during and after the January 5 parliamentary elections triggered wave of protests across the country. Different organisations on Thursday formed human chains, brought out processions and held rallies, condemning the attacks and demanding arrest and punishment of the culprits. They also called for ensuring security of the minority groups. Photos show demonstrations were also held yesterday in Lalmonirhat, Rangpur, Chandpur and Chapainawabganj.

79 BNP, Jamaat-Shibir men held in 8 dists

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Law enforcers arrested at least 79 BNP and Jamaat-Shibir activists in eight districts on charges of various crimes including violence, yesterday and the day before.

Joint forces arrested 40 opposition activists in Rajshahi and Joypurhat from Friday night to yesterday morning on charges of violence during hartals and blockades.

In Joypurhat, the joint forces arrested 15 activists of BNP-Jamaat from four upazilas of the district on Friday night, reports UNB.

Hamidul Alam, superintendent of police, said the members of joint forces arrested two opposition men in Sadar upazila, three

in Panchbibi, nine in Kalai and one in Khetlal upazila.

In Rajshahi, the members of joint forces arrested 25 activists of the 18-party alliance, including district unit BNP general secretary Kamrul Manir, from separate places from Friday night to yesterday morning.

Police said they arrested 20 activists of the 18-party alliance from different areas under Boalia PS, four from the areas under Manihar PS and one from an area under Rajpara PS.

In Rangpur police arrested eight Jamaat-Shibir activists in Pargachha upazila yesterday, reports our correspondent.

Police arrested them on charges of attacking, setting fire to polling centres and

snatching ballot boxes and papers in the upazila on the 10th national elections day and the day before.

They were identified as Belal Hossain, 24, Javed Ali, 42, Abdur Rouf, 30, Khorshed Alam, 40, Abdul Karim, 40, Lal Mian, 60, Harunur Rashid, 50, and Zakir Hossain, 30 of the upazila.

Police in Bogra district arrested 19 BNP men on charges of sabotage, vandalism and arson attack on poll day in Gabtoli and Shajahanpur upazilas yesterday, reports our correspondent.

Police said the BNP men brought out a procession and carried out violence in Gabtoli upazila of Bogra-07 constituency.

Police arrested the 12 BNP

men from the poll areas.

Away in Shajahanpur upazila, police arrested 7 BNP men yesterday on similar charges.

In Narail, police in separate drives arrested four Chhatra Dal and Jamaat leaders yesterday.

The arrestees are Faridul Islam, Sajal Islam of JCD and Majhihpara union Jamaat ameer Asrafuzzaman alias Maulana Ashraf and Jamaat leader Mizanur Rahman, reports our correspondent.

Our Bagerhat correspondent reports: Police picked up Mongla municipality Jamaat ameer Md. Jahangir Alam yesterday noon on charges of arson attack on local AL office and throwing petrol bomb on municipal

AL leader Abdur Rahman's house on December 17.

In Laxmipur, police in a drive arrested two local activists of Jamaat-e-Islami from Hajirhat area in Kamalnagar upazila on Friday.

The arrestees were identified as M Kamal Hossain, publicity secretary of Kamalnagar upazila unit Jamaat, and Amjad Hossain, leader of Kamalnagar union unit of the party.

In Sylhet, police arrested one leader and four activists of local unit Swechhasebak Dal, volunteer front of BNP, in Shibganj area of the city on Friday.

The arrested leader was identified as Raihanul Haque Rakku, president of ward no. 20 unit Swechhasebak Dal.