

## VICTIMS IN ARSON ATTACKS

## Government to help families

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will rehabilitate the families of arson victims, said the newly sworn-in Health and Family Welfare Minister Mohammad Nasim on a visit to Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday.

"Those who have been injured are also to be taken into consideration for a future initiative," he added.

A presidium member of the ruling Awami League, Nasim said he was visiting the hospital as per directive by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Several victims of arson attacks and crude bomb explosions have been recovering in the burn unit of DMCH. They now cling to the hope of being rehabilitated.

Meher Ali, a freedom fighter, appearing happy with optimism, asked The Daily Star correspondent if there was indeed any plan to rehabilitate them.

"Please tell the prime minister that when her father [Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman] came to my village in Rajganj of Jessore during one of his campaigns before 1971, I was one of the villagers hosting him. I even arranged for a chair so that he did not have to sit on the ground like us.

"Please ask her to save my life now," Meher Ali said in a pleading tone.

CNG driver Khorshed Alam's wife Shamsunnahar urged the government to help her pay off the loan of Tk 4 lakh with

which her husband had bought the CNG that was burnt down by arsonists in Chittagong.

"Will the government help us get our CNG back? Will we be able to pay off all the installments?" said Shamsunnahar with a deep frown on her face.

She went on in despair, "All three of my younger daughters go to school. Around three weeks have passed [as the new academic year began on January 1] but I have not yet been able to put them in school. The youngest is only seven years old. Should her education stop this early?"

Mosammat Sabila, wife of vegetable trader Lokman, is going through a similar ordeal.

She said she could only think of starting her life afresh if the government fulfilled its pledge.

Two of her daughters go to school and another goes to college. "The new academic year has started but I have not yet been able to pay their admission fees," Sabila said.

Besides, Lokman, who was burnt in an arson attack on a vegetable-laden pick-up in Gazipur last month, has to pay back the supplier from whom he took Tk 80,000 worth of vegetables, she added.

However, Abu Miah, a trucker who was burnt in Fauzdarhat, refused to be moved by words.

"If they mean it, they should do it. Until then I will just have to imagine my life as that of an invalid."

## No room for terrorism

FROM PAGE 16

ahead of the upazila parishad polls as, she said, the polls will be more competitive than the last national elections.

"January 5 elections were held in free, fair and credible manner, but there was no competition in the polls," she was quoted by a party leader as saying.

She also asked the cabinet members and MPs of the ruling party to maintain good ties with the grassroots of the party.

Referring to the rebel AL candidates, who won in the parliamentary polls, the AL chief said they would continue to be considered as independent MPs in parliament.

Fourteen out of 15 independent candidates who won in the last national polls were AL rebel candidates.

Speaking on why some party high ups were not included in the cabinet, Hasina said some of those, who held important organisational posts, were not kept in the cabinet so

that they could properly focus on strengthening the party.

"This time government and the party will function separately," she was quoted by sources as saying.

In his speech, AL General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam said conspiracies were being hatched by different quarters against the government. He also urged the party leaders to remain alert to resist any "evil design" as such.

At the meeting, AL's central committee member Alaaddin Nasim was removed from the highest decision-making body of the party as he did not join any meeting of the committee ever since he became a member, sources said.

The meeting also adopted a condolence motion on the death of former chief justice and chief adviser of the country's first caretaker government Muhammad Habibur Rahman.

## No let-up, as yet

FROM PAGE 16

The arrests were made in a case filed with Barhatha Police Station yesterday evening accusing some unidentified people of carrying out the destruction on Thursday night.

The arrestees do not belong to any political party, said Swapna Chandra Sarker, inspector (inquiry) of the police station and also the investigation officer of the case.

Meanwhile, different social organisations and political parties have continued their protest against post-polls attacks on the Hindus.

International Sri Sri Pranab Math yesterday was to complete its "Peace march" that started on Friday from Madaripur towards Jessore, Abhaynagar to press home its four demands, including a committee headed by a judge from the minority community to investigate the attacks, a separate ministry to look after the issues of minorities and a reserved quota for minorities in all sectors, taking their population ratio into consideration.

The demonstrators distributed relief among 110 affected families.

As many as 15 organisations from four upazilas participated in the march that was going back to Madaripur.

The Communist Party of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal jointly organised rallies in the afternoon at three different points in the capital and in Mymensingh in the morning urging the government to ban

Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir and to punish those involved in the attacks and vandalism.

In Moulvibazar, Paribarik Nirjaton Protirodh Committee formed human chains asking the government to mete out exemplary punishment to the attackers.

Gonojagoron Mancha, on the second day of its second road march yesterday, set off for Thakurgaon to drum up public support for their fight against communal violence.

The platform, which had emerged in February last year demanding the capital punishment to all war criminals, started from Bogra and held several rallies in Gobindaganj, Palashbari, Mithapukur and Pirganj.

The Mancha distributed clothes among 19 affected families in Palashbari.

Spokesperson of the platform Imran H Sarkar said, "They [who hurled crude bombs at a rally in Bogra town on Friday] cannot stop us by attacking us. We will continue our movement."

In Dhaka, Gonojagoron Mancha activists brought out a protest demanding punishment to those involved in the attack that left two people injured.

In Chandpur, Bangladesh Puja Uddipan Committee formed a human chain and held a rally on the Chandpur-Comilla highway in the afternoon protesting attacks on the Hindus and their places of worship.

## Man of 'no surrender' dies at 91

FROM PAGE 16

In 1944, Onoda was sent to the small island of Lubang in the western Philippines to spy on US forces in the area. Allied forces defeated the Japanese imperial army in the Philippines in the latter stages of the war, but Onoda, a lieutenant, evaded capture.

While most of the Japanese troops on the island withdrew or surrendered in the face of oncoming American forces, Onoda and a few fellow holdouts hid in the jungles, dismissing messages saying the war was over.

For 29 years, he survived on food gathered from the jungle or stolen from local farmers.

After losing his comrades to various circumstances, Onoda was eventually persuaded to come out of hiding in 1974.

His former commanding officer travelled to Lubang to see him and tell him he was released from his military duties.

In his battered old army uniform, Onoda handed over his sword, nearly 30 years after Japan surrendered.

"Every Japanese soldier was prepared for death, but as an intelligence officer I was ordered to conduct guerrilla warfare and not to die," Onoda told CNN affiliate, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. "I had to follow my orders as I was a soldier."

He returned to Japan, where he received a hero's welcome, a figure from a different era emerging into post-war modernity.

But anger remained in the Philippines,

where he was blamed for multiple killings.

The Philippines government pardoned him. But when he returned to Lubang in 1996, relatives of people he was accused of killing gathered to demand compensation.

After his return to Japan, he moved to Brazil in 1975 and set up a cattle ranch.

"Japan's philosophy and ideas changed dramatically after World War II," Onoda told ABC. "That philosophy clashed with mine so I went to live in Brazil."

In 1984, he set up an organization, Onoda Shizenjyuku, to train young Japanese in the survival and camping skills he had acquired during his decades in Lubang's jungles.

His adventures are detailed in his book "No Surrender: My Thirty-year War." The Japan Times excerpted some of the book's highlights in 2007.

Onoda was born in March 1922 in Wakayama, western Japan, according to his organization. He was raised in a family with six siblings in a village near the ocean.

Hiroyasu Miwa, a staff member of the organization that Onoda started in 1984, said Onoda died of pneumonia Thursday afternoon at St. Luke's Hospital in Tokyo. He had been sick since December.

Ever the faithful soldier, Onoda did not regret the time he had lost.

"I became an officer and I received an order," Onoda told ABC. "If I could not carry it out, I would feel shame. I am very competitive."

## Gunmen wound Iran diplomat in Yemen capital: police, medic

AFP, Sanaa

Unknown assailants wounded an Iranian diplomat in a drive-by shooting outside the ambassador's residence in the Yemeni capital yesterday, police and a medic said.

"Unidentified assailants in a van fired on the diplomat three times as he was leaving the ambassador's residence near a shopping centre in Hadda," the main diplomatic district of Sanaa, a police source told AFP.

A medic at the capital's Modern German Hospital said the diplomat had been hit in the shoulder and was in a stable condition.

Nobody at the Iranian embassy was immediately available for comment but other diplomats said the wounded man was a security officer.

The shooting comes as another Iranian diplomat, Nour-Ahmad Nikbakht, who was kidnapped in Sanaa last July, remains in captivity, with tribal sources saying his captors are members of Al-Qaeda.

It comes amid deadly fighting in northern Yemen between Sunni Islamists and Zaidi Shiite rebels whom their opponents charge are receiving support from Shiite Iran.

There has been a spate of attacks targeting foreigners in the Yemeni capital in recent months.

On December 15, the Japanese consul was seriously wounded after being dragged from his car in Hadda and repeatedly stabbed.

On November 26, gunmen killed one Belarussian defence contractor and wounded another as they left their Sanaa hotel.

## Natore UP chairman

FROM PAGE 16

intercepted them in Shaoil area around 12:30pm.

Both of them were returning to Kalom union parishad office by a motorbike from the upazila headquarters after attending a party programme, he added.

The criminals then stabbed them with sharp weapons, leaving both of them injured critically.

The duo was whisked off to Natore Sadar Hospital where the on-duty doctor declared Fanu dead.

Police sent the body to the hospital morgue for an autopsy.

None has yet been arrested.

Local lawmaker Zunayed Ahmed Palak blamed BNP men for the murder.

Palak, also state minister for information and communications technology, said Fanu might have been killed as he had taken part in the election campaign for the AL in the 10th parliamentary polls.

Brushing aside the allegations brought against his party men, upazila BNP organising secretary Ibrahim Khalilullah Fatik said Fanu might have been killed in an internal feud of the AL.

## It's just so easy

FROM PAGE 1

residence in Bunagati village under Shalikh upazila to manufacture the device on commercial basis.

"This device not only helps one save time but is also expected to provide employment opportunities to people," Kabir said.

He said since his childhood, he had always dreamt of doing something innovative.

Although he studied general education, science and technology always attracted him, he added.

Kabir started to think about making the device when it occurred to him that making chapattis manually required a lot of time and the process was quite strenuous, especially for women.

"Back in 2011, it took me three months to make a working model and eventually, it evolved as what is known today--Laabih Roti Maker," said Kabir with a shimmering smile.

The best news is all the models of this device are available within an affordable price range.

Kabir now manufactures three types of the chapatti makers at his factory and sells those at Tk 2,850, Tk 5,000 and Tk 6,000 each.

Different kinds of chapattis, including normal wheat roti, vegetable roti, Indian butter roti, cheese roti, egg paratha, gobi paratha, luchi and fuchka, can be made using this appliance.

There are some electric chapatti makers available in the local market, but those do not much fit to the requirements of the Bangladeshis.

Kabir's factory now has 13 workers who can manufacture 30 appliances per month which, he thinks, is not enough against the growing demand.

"Whenever someone learns about the appliance, they order for one from across the country and even from abroad," he said, adding that people from a number of countries, including the UK, the USA, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Singapore, India and Bhutan, have already bought the device from him.

Despite such a huge demand for his invention, Kabir cannot begin a bigger-scale production due to fund crisis.

"If I get some financial assistance, I believe, I can expand my business very fast," he said.

## It's crime against humanity

FROM PAGE 16

eminent personalities.

If the authorities fail to ensure trial, such incidents would recur.

A six-member delegation of the platform made the observations yesterday while visiting the Hindu neighbourhoods in Dinajpur and Thakurgaon that came under attacks by BNP-Jamaat men recently.

Led by renowned educationist Prof Anisuzzaman, the team of Rukhe Darao arrived at Komai village of Dinajpur Sadar upazila around 9:45am. The other members were Sultana Kamal, chief of Ain O Salish Kendra, journalist Abed Khan, trustee of Muktiuddha Jadughar Dr Sarwar Ali, Kaberi Gayen and Tareq Ali.

The team went door-to-door in the affected area and urged people of all communities to thwart such attacks in future.

On January 5, around 1,500 to 2,000 Jamaat-Shibir and BNP men stormed the Hindu neighbourhood in Kornai village. Around 37 shops were damaged, torched and looted and at least 155 families were affected by the attack.

"The attacks are carried out under a political pretext, but they are aimed at ethnic cleansing of religious minorities in the country," said Sultana Kamal, former adviser to a caretaker government.

The population of religious minorities has been in the decline as such attacks have continued since the Liberation War, she added.

Thirteen days have passed since the Hindu neighbourhood came under attack and the people of Kornai village are still in panic. Miscreants not only carried out the attack,

but also hurled abuse at women, she mentioned.

Prof Anisuzzaman said the affected people do not want help but security. He urged the government to take steps for the security of the affected people.

Local lawmaker Iqbalur Rahim (Dinajpur-3) accompanied the delegation during the visit.

Three cases were filed with Dinajpur Police Station in connection with the attack. A temporary police camp has been set up at the village. Besides, members of Border Guard Bangladesh have been patrolling the area regularly.

Ruhul Amin, superintendent of police in Dinajpur, said the law enforcers have already arrested 33 people in connection with the attack.

From Dinajpur, the delegation of Rukhe Darao Bangladesh travelled to Gopalpur and Nimbari villages in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila.

Talking to reporters, TIB Chairperson Sultana Kamal said such attacks would recur if the culprits are let off the hook. She urged the government to rehabilitate the affected Hindu families.

On 5 January, BNP-Jamaat men vandalised and looted about 20 shops of Hindus at Deunia Bazar of Gopalpur village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila. Miscreants also damaged at least 10 houses of Hindu families in the village that afternoon.

On the same day, about 500 Hindu families of Gopalpur village took refuge in a temple of International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) at Goreya village.

On the assurance of the local administration, the Hindus returned to their homes on Tuesday.

## Main accused

FROM PAGE 16

Rabbani, 35, son of Mujibur Rahman of Dubachhuri village in the upazila, was the number-one accused of the attack that killed five people and injured 100 others, including police, said investigation officer Sub-Inspector Asaduzzaman of Sadar Police Station.

On December 14, activists of Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir attacked Noor's motorcade while he was returning to Nilphamari town visiting Laxmichap, Sheeshatoli and Palash Bari villages where Jamaat men two days ago had torched some 80 shops and warehouses of Hindus and AL activists protesting war criminal Abdul Quader Mollah's execution.

Police that night lodged a case in connection with the attack against 15 named and 1,000 unnamed people. So far, police have arrested 45 suspects, including one named accused.

Meanwhile, locals of Arazi Itakhola village said some workers of the Uttara Export Processing Zone in the upazila had spotted Rabbani's body in a ditch in front of a bamboo cluster on their way to work.

They immediately conveyed the matter to Palash Bari upazila chairman Tapan Kumar Roy, who called the police around 7:00am.

Law enforcers recovered the body around 8:30am, said SI Asaduzzaman, adding that the blood-stained body bore deep wounds on the right jaw and the neck.

He said a case had been lodged in this connection.

According to locals, Rabbani had been former organising secretary of BNP

Tupamari union unit, but two months ago he joined Jamaat and got involved in the recent violence by the party.

He used to maintain a strong group of more than 100 members and lead a lavish life despite coming from a poor family, say villagers.

Contacted, Rabbani's wife Shahana Begum, 25, said her husband had fled the locality in fear of police and taken shelter in a relative's house at Borgasheel village of Tetulia upazila, Panchagarh.

Quoting those relatives she alleged that about 18 to 20 men in black shirts and identifying themselves as members of elite force Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) had cordoned off Rabbani's shelter house Wednesday around 5:30am. They picked him up at gunpoint.

She said they were confused whether the men who picked up Rabbani were actually lawmen, as the word "RAB" was not inscribed on the back of their shirts and some of them were wearing sandals and regular shoes.

The relatives afterwards had looked for Rabbani at Tetulia, Panchagarh and Nilphamari police stations, but could not find a trace of him, said Shahana, adding, "This morning we came to know that his body was lying beside the Nilphamari-Domar road."

"If my husband was guilty we would have accepted punishment, but now we want justice," she said.

Md Shahjahan Pasha, officer-in-charge of the Sadar Police Station, said: "I can say that we have just recovered the body and our investigation into the death is on."

## Shibir man killed in 'gunfight' with joint forces in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

An activist of Islami Chhatra Shibir, the student body of Jamaat-e-Islami, was killed during a "gunfight" with the joint forces in the district's Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The dead, Abu Hanif Chhoton, 16, of Padmasankhra village of the upazila, was a class-IX student of Vomra Dakhil Madrasa.

Abul Kashem, a sub-inspector of Sadar Police Station, was also injured during the gunfight, said Enamul Haque, officer-in-charge of the station.

On information that Jamaat-Shibir men of Padmasankhra were urging people from the local mosques to congregate in a place for conducting subversive activities, the law enforcers went to raid the area.

Nearly a kilometre away from the village, the Jamaat Shibir cadres attacked the joint forces members at Purba Bhomra, the OC said.

They charged several crude bombs and fired 11 bullets on the law enforcers, prompting the joint forces team to retaliate with 25 rounds of bullets, he added.

After a 15-minute gunfight, the law enforcers found bullet-riddled Chhoton and rushed him to Satkhira Sadar Hospital where duty doctor declared him dead.

Satkhira district Jamaat Publicity Secretary Azizur Rahman said Chhoton was a Shibir activist and his father Shahar Ali is the general secretary of ward-3 unit Jamaat in Vomra union.

## 21 killed in Kabul

FROM PAGE 1

university told CNN on Saturday. One had recently joined the political science faculty. The other was a member of the student affairs staff.

Two British victims of the assault have been named.

One is Del Singh, a candidate for the upcoming elections for the European Parliament from the southeast of England, a spokesman for the opposition Labour Party said, adding that a full tribute was being arranged.

"We were in the kitchen, and suddenly we heard a big bang and everywhere was dark," Atiqullah, 27, an assistant chef, told AFP by telephone as he attended a funeral for three colleagues.

"We used a backdoor to go to the second floor. Our manager went downstairs to see what was happening. We heard some gunshots and later found out that he had been shot dead.

"Afterwards, the police took us back into the restaurant to identify victims. We identified three guards who were killed.

"There was blood everywhere, on tables, on chairs, apparently the attackers had shot people from a very close range."

Taverna, the restaurant, has been a regular dining spot for foreign diplomats, aid workers and Afghan officials and businessmen, and was busy with customers on Friday, the weekly holiday in Afghanistan.

Like many restaurants in Kabul it ran strict security checks, with diners patted down by armed guards and passing through at least two steel doors before gaining entry.

The Taverna's battered sign was still in place yesterday morning, hanging over the ruined remains of the entrance door. Several badly damaged cars also remained at the scene.

"Our latest figure is 21 killed, including 13 foreigners and eight Afghans," Kabul police chief Mohammad Zahir told AFP.

"Five women were among the dead and about five people were injured."

President Hamid Karzai condemned the attack and called on US-led NATO forces fighting in Afghanistan "to target terrorism" in the country.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon also denounced the killings, which his spokesman said were "completely unacceptable and are in flagrant breach of international humanitarian law".

The assault was claimed by Taliban militants fighting against the Afghan government and NATO forces.

A Taliban spokesman said the attack was to avenge a US airstrike in Parwan province on Tuesday night that Karzai said killed seven children and one woman.

"These invading forces launched a brutal bombardment on civilians... and they have martyred and wounded 30 civilians. This was a revenge attack and we did it well, and we will continue to do so," Zabihullah Mujahid said.

The insurgents regularly make exaggerated claims about death tolls after attacks.

Mujahid said the Taverna du Liban restaurant was "frequented by high ranking foreigners (who) used to dine with booze and liquor".

After the blast, elite security commandos rushed to seal off the small streets around the restaurant as sporadic gunfire erupted. All three attackers died in the attack.

"A man came inside shouting and he started shooting," kebab cook Abdul Majid told AFP while being treated for leg fractures in hospital.

"One of my colleagues was shot and fell down. I ran to the roof and threw myself to the neighbouring property."

## Kazi Zafar to join BNP's

FROM PAGE 3

"The government has chosen the path of forced disappearance, murder, torture and harassment in order to suppress the opposition and establish a one-party rule in the country."

In a statement last night, he also said the law enforcement agencies could not deny the responsibility of the murder of Golam Rabbani, a union-level BNP leader in Nilphamari. The joint force had picked up Rabbani in Panchagarh, Fakhrol claimed.

DANISH ENVOY CALLS ON KHALEDA

Denmark Ambassador to Bangladesh Hanne Fugl Eskjaer called on BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at her Gulshan office last night and talked about mutual interests.

During the meeting, the BNP chief sought her country's support "to restore democracy in Bangladesh", according to sources.

Earlier, envoys of India, Saudi Arabia, and the UK had met Khaleda and discussed Bangladesh's current political situation, among other issues.



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