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## ABDUCTION, RELEASE

# Questions go unanswred

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

He was abducted in broad daylight at gunpoint, released unharmed about 33 hours later, and his captors demanded no ransom from him or his family. So why was Abu Bakar Siddique, husband of prominent environment lawyer Syeda Rizwana Hasan, kidnapped and by whom?

Neither the law enforcers nor the victim and his family can say it for sure, but it is intriguing that the kidnappers deliberately tried to conceal their purpose.

Briefing journalists at their Central Road house yesterday, Rizwana said that during the captivity her husband got no clue about the kidnappers or their motive.

"The abductors talked about money several times before him so he could hear, but they did not demand any ransom or ask for any telephone number of any family members so they can demand money. This seems to be a mystery," said the chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela).

If it was not for money, it was for something else but that, too, remains a puzzle.

Siddique is known to be a friendly person and is said to have no enemy. He is the

managing director of Hamid Fashion, a Narayanganj-based garment factory owned by Awami League lawmaker and State Minister for Power Nasrul Hamid Bipu.

According to Bipu, Siddique, his school friend, joined his factory 15 years ago. "He [Siddique] is a modest, amicable and trustworthy man, and I have no clue why he had been abducted."

Siddique's wife Rizwana, a Ramon Magsaysay Award winner, is renowned for her campaign and legal battles against environment polluters, including ship-breaking industries and tanneries, and some big housing companies owned by influential people.

One of her recent campaigns was to save Dhanmondi playground.

Asked if her work had any link with her husband's kidnap, Rizwana said such possibilities could not be ruled out.

In the past, she said, she received threats on several occasions for her work. "Those threats and this abduction are both violent acts. There is a link here, as both are criminal acts."

She, however, received no threats after gunmen kidnapped her husband around 2:30pm on Wednesday in Fatullah of Narayanganj.



After the nerve-racking ordeal, the ecstatic family of Abu Bakar Siddique and Syeda Rizwana Hasan reunited at their Dhanmondi home yesterday. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## ASSAULT ON DOCTORS

# Strike cannot be means of protest

Say rights activists, physicians

PORIMOL PALMA

Work abstention by doctors cannot be an instrument of protest as such actions deprive people of their fundamental rights of healthcare and even put people's life at risk, think physicians and rights activists.

However, they also observe that assaulting doctors, even in case of their negligence of duty, is not something permissible in a civilised society.

Earlier this week, the doctors of Birdem General Hospital went for a wildcat work abstention on Tuesday and Wednesday to protest an alleged assault on three of their

colleagues by relatives of a patient, who died on April 13. The deceased's relatives claimed negligence of doctors caused the death.

The work abstention caused immense sufferings to patients seeking emergency or regular medical services.

"I went to the outdoor and then the emergency section but no doctor was there. Who will take the responsibility if something serious happens to me?" said 60-year-old diabetic Ruhul Amin who had come from Noakhali and could not see a doctor despite waiting for two days.

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## Same group kidnapped Ilias Ali

Claims Rizvi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP has claimed that the same persons, who abducted environment lawyer Syeda Rizwana Hasan's husband Abu Bakar Siddique, had been behind the disappearance of M Ilias Ali as well.

BNP Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi made the claim at a press conference at the party's Nayapaltan central office in the capital yesterday.

However, the BNP spokesperson failed to substantiate his claim when reporters asked him

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# Any land-related case your wife filed?

## Man asked blindfolded Abu Bakar while guarding him during his 33 hours in captivity

PINAKI ROY

Abu Bakar Siddique was not the first person to have been confined to that house.

"Some other people were also brought and kept there. A few of them were killed and others were released," Siddique, businessman and husband of environment lawyer Syeda Rizwana Hasan, told The Daily Star yesterday, quoting a person who stood guard at the house.

The house was on a high ground, possibly in Gazipur, as the abductors' vehicle reached there travelling a steep road. And it was not a solitary place, as horns of vehicles and Azaan from a mosque nearby could be heard, said Siddique who was freed by the kidnappers on Thursday night, about 33 hours after the abduction.

At least three persons -- two inside the house and another outside it -- were on guard, said Siddique who had heard three voices.

Two of them told him that they had been working there for six months.

At one point of conversation, one of them asked him whether his wife had filed any case against anyone over land-related issues, he said.

Except for the three, no other people were at the house. All the food including rice, curry, banana and buns that the abductors fed him was bought from restaurants, he said.

Siddique was kidnapped at

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## GAS LINE FIRE

# One dies, 2 others burnt critically

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

One of the five Gazipur fire victims died from his burn injuries at Dhaka Medical College Hospital early yesterday.

The dead, Anwar Hossain, 38, was an electrician of Mita Textiles at Gargaria Masterbari Bazar in Sreepur upazila.

The fire originated from a leak in a gas pipeline on Thursday evening.

Construction workers who were digging earth along Dhaka-Mymensingh highway to expand the width of the road accidentally ruptured the pipe.

The fire soon engulfed the Gargaria Masterbari Bazar and gutted at least 80 shops and two houses. Five people received burn injuries while trying to douse the blaze.

Two other critically injured have been undergoing treatment at the burn unit of the hospital.

As the news of death spread, locals took to the streets and blocked Dhaka-Mymensingh highway for two hours and vandalised several vehicles.

Sreepur Upazila Nirbahi

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## FROM HAZARDOUS TO GREEN BRICK KILNS



Smoke billows from a chimney of a brick kiln inside the restricted area declared by the forest department at Kattali of Chittagong. The sign there says no trespassing and warns of jail terms for violators. Several brick kilns, left, are still in the eco-sensitive area and the move to making brick kilns environment friendly has been rather slow. The photos were taken last month.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

## Deadline June; 30pc converted

Owners claim proper guidelines missing in law

TAMANNA KHAN

The new law on brick kilns lacks proper guidelines for setting up eco-friendly manufacturing units with sustainable technology, and has failed to speed up the conversion of environmentally hazardous traditional kilns, observe experts and kiln owners.

The Brick Making and Kiln Establishment (Control) Act 2013 aims to transform the traditional kilns, numbering approximately 8,000 according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) data, into "energy efficient and modern" ones by June 30 this year.

To this end, the law suggests conversion of the traditional Fixed Chimney Kilns (FCKs), which are often set up on arable lands and forest areas without permission from the Department of Environment (DoE), into Zigzag, Hybrid Hoffman and Vertical Shaft kilns.

However, meeting the objective within the deadline seems almost impossible at the moment as the law does not define "energy efficient non-polluting technology."

It doesn't mention the permissible limit for hazardous gas emission and the means of measuring it, or specify the authorities to oversee the emission.

"We were not told who would measure the pollution of kilns or verify emission standards," said Mizanur Rahman Babul, president of Bangladesh Brick Manufacturing Owners Association (BBMOA).

Contacted, DoE Director General Raisul Alam Mondal said, "The emission standards are mentioned in the Environment Act 1995 [amended in 2010]. There is no need to repeat the same thing in every law".

DoE's air quality management section will monitor the emission of polluting gases from the kilns, he said.

Mizanur said in order to meet the deadline set by the law, many owners hurriedly went for conversion of their

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