

Govt failed to provide security to citizens

Says Dr Kamal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday said the government has failed to ensure the security of citizens.

Speaking at a rally to protest the killing of lawyer Chandan Sarker, he said, "There is an extrajudicial killing spree in the country but all are tight-lipped."

Narayanganj District Lawyers Association organised the rally, held at its auditorium, demanding the arrest and punishment of the killers of Chandan, ward councillor Nazrul Islam and five others.

The seven were kidnapped on April 27 separately around the same time. Three days later, the bodies of six were found in the Shitalakkhya, while another was found the next day.

"The abduction and killing incidents are no more an issue of

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PHOTO: STAR

Eminent citizens, representatives of rights bodies and family members of abduction victims form a human chain before the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday under the banner of "Basic Rights Protection Committee".

Blessing, curse of N'ganj Keep Rab from investigation

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People derived some benefits from electing clean candidates to office. The law and order in Narayanganj city was almost peaceful for around one and a half years. But the murder of meritorious student Toki in March last year changed the situation in a way no one had predicted.

Toki's father, who had worked for Ivy in the mayoral polls, and Ivy herself several times accused Shamim and his family of the murder. But justice has not been done yet, reminding people of the impunity enjoyed by the Osman family for the past many decades.

The culture of impunity certainly contributed to the rise in the number of killings and abductions since Toki's murder. The police have also shown themselves to be siding with people enjoying impunity rather than ensuring citizens' security.

Amid such a situation, the one-sided January 5 parliamentary election seems to have appeared as a curse for the city people. The voterless election denied them the right to pick, from a range of choices, their parliamentary representatives. Shamim Osman and his brother Nasim Osman were elected uncontested from Narayanganj, without a single vote being cast.

So, people who had opted for clean candidates in the 2011 mayoral polls did not have any say in the election of the Osman siblings. But the reality is they are the people's representatives who happen to be using and abusing the powers given to them by the people against the people in whom are constitutionally vested the powers exercised by the state.

Thus the controversial parliamentary elections appeared as a blessing for the Osman family and others loyal to them. They regained their control over the local administration. The story does not end here. Some members of the law enforcement

agencies were not mere silent spectators; rather they have been involved in criminal activities like abductions and killings in exchange of huge amounts of money. And the obvious result has been a dangerous deterioration in law and order in Narayanganj city since the Osman brothers became MPs.

The situation could have been different had not the parliamentary election turned into a one-sided affair, denying the people of Narayanganj their voting rights.

People who had elected the city mayor and councillors, wishing to have their say over the local administration through their representatives, now find the situation is against them. The constitution speaks of their participation in the local administration in Narayanganj through their elected representatives.

The reality denies them that constitutional guarantee. They have been vulnerable in the face of unabated abductions, killings and unlawful and other criminal activities in their town.

Nevertheless, they are enjoying some benefits of electing Ivy, a clean politician, as their city mayor. She keeps raising her voice against criminal gangs who enjoy the support of the administration in carrying out their unlawful activities. She keeps taking to the streets to encourage people to stand united against godfathers and mafias in Narayanganj city. The protests forced the government to bring about changes in some top posts in the local administration.

In other areas, people may not dare to stage protests like the one in Narayanganj in the absence of courageous and honest leaders. The situation could have been worse in Narayanganj city had people elected someone other than Ivy as mayor. In that case people would not have any voice against abductions and killings.

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If the Rab and police investigations find involvement of any Rab member in the killing, action will be taken against the guilty person, he added.

On Sunday, Nazrul's father-in-law Shahidul Islam alleged that some Rab men had abducted and murdered the Narayanganj city councillor in exchange for Tk 6 crore. He claimed that some workers saw Rab men abduct Nazrul near Shibub Market in Narayanganj on April 27.

Nazrul and his four aides, senior lawyer Chandan Sarker and his driver were abducted almost at the same time after they left the court area by two cars in Narayanganj. Six bodies, including that of Nazrul and Chandan, were found floating in the Shitalakkhya river three days later, and another the following day.

Meanwhile, the Narayanganj district administration cancelled the licence of 11 firearms of local Awami League leader Nur Hossain, the main accused in the Nazrul murder case, and his seven aides.

To prevent Hossain and other accused from sneaking out of the country, the home ministry yesterday issued a red alert at the Benapole border, reports our Benapole correspondent.

Immigration police, Border Guard of Bangladesh and the port police station

have been asked to detain them if they try to flee to India, according to officials.

Also yesterday, detectives arrested a person named Ratan from the capital's Gulshan area and seized the cell phone of slain lawyer Chandan from him.

With the latest, the number of arrestees in the murder case rose to seven.

Law enforcers earlier arrested six employees of Hossain, who are now on remand.

Police are also interrogating nine persons whom they picked up in Narayanganj on Saturday.

The family members of Nazrul and Chandan have expressed deep frustration over the police failure to arrest any of the culprits.

Describing the formation of the Rab enquiry committee as an "absurd eyewash", eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik said, "It's like assigning Shamim Osman to probe the criminal elements in the Awami League."

A committee made up of retired judicial and police officials should carry out such enquiry.

On abductions and killings in Narayanganj, Malik said, "Common crimes are committed by miscreants whose level of skill is very low. These abductions and killings were done in such a manner that required vigorous training, technological expertise, and the

skill to remain untraced or identified."

"All these clearly indicate that the criminals are members of specially trained agencies," he said.

HC VERDICT

In a suo moto order, the HC asked the government to form the probe committee with two officials, not below the rank of deputy secretary, from each of the public administration, law, and home ministries.

The court asked the ministries to inform it about the progress in the probe within a week.

The bench of Justice Md Rezaul Haque and Justice Gobinda Chandra Tagore directed the Rab chief to run departmental enquiry to see whether any of its personnel was involved in the abductions and murders.

It directed the inspector general of police to provide protection and security to the family members of the victims and the witnesses.

The IGP was also ordered to involve the Criminal Investigation Department and the Detective Branch of police in the probe of the murder case and submit a progress report in a week.

The HC order came after lawyer Shameem Sardar placed before it news reports of different dailies on the abduction and killing of the seven people in Narayanganj and Rab men's alleged involvement.

Culprits will be punished

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and order in the country and the allegation made against Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) that it kidnapped and killed Narayanganj city councillor Nazrul Islam in exchange for Tk 6 crore. The complaint was made by Nazrul's father-in-law Shahidul Islam on Sunday.

Ministers observed that such killings were aimed at tarnishing the image of the country and destabilising the government in a planned way.

That one of the Rab-11 officials,

who has been withdrawn after the seven-murder incident, is a relative of a minister also came up in the informal discussion, added the sources.

The PM further mentioned that any incident of abduction or extra judicial killing will be investigated by a special unit of the law enforcement agency in future.

Several cabinet members, including the PM, blasted BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia for holding the government responsible for abductions and killings. "It was the BNP and Khaleda

Zia who had carried out grenade attack on an Awami League rally by a special battalion and killed 24 party leaders and activists, including Ivy Rahman," a minister quoted the PM as saying.

The meeting also discussed the recently published book "Tajuddin Ahmad: Neta o Pita", by Tajuddin's daughter Sharmim Ahmad. The book deals with history of Bangladesh's Liberation War and the post-liberation period.

A few cabinet members claimed that some passages of the book were written as part of a conspiracy.

Problem within

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While talking to The Daily Star yesterday, a number of Hefajat leaders in Dhaka admitted that they believe the Hefajat has become "bankrupt" by receiving undue benefits from the Awami League government.

"We have come to know that some top leaders, including Anas Madani, elder son of Hefajat Ameer Shah Ahmed Shafi, Organising Secretary Azizul Haq and Joint Secretary General Moinuddin Ruhee joined hands with the Hasina government after getting undue advantages," said a Hefajat leader who is also a central leader of Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon.

He noted the government had recently completed all formalities regarding a leasing out of 33 acres of railway land to Hefajat.

Wishing anonymity, another Hefajat leader said he has come to know that those leaders even received money from the government as part of an understanding not to act against the administration.

In the last one year, Hefajat also failed to come up with any details in support of their claim that several thousand men were killed by law enforcers during the drive at Motijheel Shapla Chattar on May 5 night last year.

"Due to the opposition of a section of top Hefajat leaders, including those three, we could not launch any major protest programme regarding the May 5 crackdown," admitted a Hefajat leader.

"They [top Hefajat leaders] have told us that as the government is not supporting Gonojagoron Mancha, we should

Another trader missing in Narayanganj

Abducted boy rescued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

A businessman of Narayanganj went missing yesterday.

Amanullah, 35, left home at Minarbari in South Musapur in the morning with Tk 4 lakh to purchase goods in Gazipur.

But did not reach the place in Gazipur where he was supposed to go. His phone has been switched off since 9:00am, his brother Mokta Hossain said.

Their elder brother Amir Hossain received an anonymous phone call around 2:00pm. He was advised to look for Amanullah in Tongi. Accordingly, they went there but to no avail.

Amanullah, son of late Michhir Ali, runs clothing business in No 2 Railgate area of Narayanganj. The family fears he has been abducted.

A general diary was filed with Bandar Police Station last night.

Also yesterday, a three-year-old boy abducted from Manikganj was rescued at a remote village of Santhia upazila in Pabna. Police arrested two suspects in this connection.

Law enforcers raided the Motka village to rescue Tamim, son of Tarek Rahman. The kid was abducted by two staff of his fathers from Gokhra village of Manikganj Sadar upazila on Sunday.

Protect lives

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missing victims took part in the programme, protesting disappearances of people, abductions and extra judicial killings.

"It is the government's responsibility to protect the lives and property of people. The government should handle the current situation seriously," said M Hafizuddin, former adviser to a caretaker government and president of Sujan.

"If we want to become a middle-income country, we need to establish law and order in society," said noted economist Debapriya Bhattacharya.

When the security of life and property of citizens are at stake, foreign investment and savings go down and money is laundered abroad, he added.

Noted jurist Shahdeen Malik raised the question as to why the government failed to realise the worries of some families who had not found any trace of their loved ones for months.

Rights activist Khushi Kabir said the government should not come up with excuses such as shortages of law enforcers to justify the current situation of the country.

Salma Ali, executive director of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association, urged the government to make all investigation reports public.

She also urged the opposition parties to raise their voice in favour of people instead of raising voice for their own agendas.

Hamida Hossain, chairperson of rights organisation Ain O Salish Kendra, urged the political parties to allow police to carry out their duties neutrally.

A Chandpur MP's son

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murder deal was finalised in a clandestine meeting a week before the abduction.

This agent, who also maintains close links with Shahidul, claimed he was at the meeting.

Four days before the abduction, the agent informed Shahidul of the plot and asked him to send Nazrul into hiding.

"As Nazrul was already getting death threats and was already staying outside his area for over two months, I did not pay much attention to the warning," he told The Daily Star.

He said the AL MP whose son made the deal with Rab members holds a cabinet post.

According to the agent, Nur Hossain, Haji Yasin and Hasmat Ali,

three top accused in the case, held the meeting.

Hasmat is Shahidul's younger brother, who turned into a close ally of Nur Hossain, following a family dispute.

Shahidul first made the stunning allegation on Sunday that some Rab members had killed Nazrul in exchange for Tk 6 crore from Nur Hossain and the other accused.

Contacted, Rab Legal and Media Wing Director Habibur Rahman said the force was being implicated in the crime with an ill motive.

"The investigation is underway. The probe will reveal who is responsible for what," he said on Sunday night.

Shahidul said some workers witnessed the abductions near Shibub Market at Ring Road in Narayanganj.

On the day, Nazrul and his four aides -- Tajul, Liton, Swapan and Jahangir -- and senior lawyer Chandan Sarker and his driver Ibrahim were kidnapped separately, but around the same time after they came out of the court area in two cars.

Six bodies were found floating in the Shitalakkhya river three days later and another the next day.

Police suspect a single group was behind the crime, while Nazrul's wife Selina Islam said Nur Hossain was responsible for the kidnab and the killing.

Shahidul said he went to the Rab-11 headquarters in Adamjee to report the abduction soon after he came to know it from the eyewitnesses, but the commanding officer (CO) kept him confined

suggested stopping drives by law enforcers in plainclothes and it is a matter of joy that the ministry has already accepted it and issued an order to this end," he said.

The law enforcers have to show their identity cards even when they conduct drives in uniform and make at least two local witnesses while picking up someone, he added.

"We came to know yesterday (Sunday) that some law enforcers besides criminal groups are involved in such crimes. It has been proved."

The commission voiced concern many times over law enforcers'

NHRC may go

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roundtable discussion, "Universal periodic review and rights of the indigenous people: Bangladesh perspective", organised by ActionAid Bangladesh at Cirdap auditorium in the capital.

The warning came at a time when the country witnessed an alarming rise in abduction, forced disappearance and secret killing due to what he said was a lack of government action to curb crimes.

There have been countless incidents of abduction and forced disappearance in recent times.