



An injured man is being taken to a hospital after a clash between the activists of indigenous students' group Pahari Chhatra Parishad and pro-Awami League organisations over the inauguration of Rangamati Medical College yesterday.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

OPENING OF RANGAMATI MEDICAL COLLEGE 31 hurt as AL men clash with PCP

A CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

At least 31 people, including policemen, journalists and students, were injured yesterday when activists of indigenous students' group Pahari Chhatra Parishad and pro-Awami League organisations clashed over the inauguration of Rangamati Medical College.

The clash took place during a blockade called by the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS-Santu Larma)-backed student group as they wanted the implementation of the 1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts peace accord before the inauguration of the public medical college.

Kotwali Police Station Officer-in-Charge Sohail Intiaj and some local journalists were among the injured.

Meanwhile, local administration imposed Section 144 prohibiting gathering of five or more people in the district town for an indefinite period following the clash at Bonorupa Bazar in the morning.

The indigenous student group and pro-ruling party activists were locked into a clash just before Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated 11 public medical colleges, including one in Rangamati, through videoconferencing from her official residence Gono Bhaban in the capital.

When Chhatra League and Jubo League activists brought out a procession around 9:00am from Hapiar Mor in the town and headed towards the medical college, some PCP activists chased them triggering the clash.

Activists of the student group allegedly vandalised some business establishments and Rupali Bank and Islami Bank branches in the area while pro-AL activists allegedly vandalised a diagnostic centre and a Teletalk customer care centre.

The violence then spread over the entire district town.

The police rushed in and brought the situation under control.

Victims want justice

FROM PAGE 1

hurler from a motorcycle fell on his lap. A rickshaw puller in Narayanganj, Amulya was going to his hometown Panchagarh to see his wife and children.

His face, hands and arms were burnt. Hoping to reach home safe, Amulya started early in the morning.

The money he was taking home for his family is now being used to cover the costs of his treatment at the burn unit.

"I don't know how my three sons and wife would make ends meet without the money," he lamented.

Amulya has been at the burn unit without any relatives attending to him.

"I have asked my wife not to come to Dhaka no matter what happens to me. I don't want them to have my fate," he said.

The reality, however, was that his wife could not afford to come to Dhaka even if she wanted to.

Murad Mollah, 20, another arson victim, was seen screaming in agony at the burn unit yesterday.

Thirty-two percent of his body was burnt, including his face.

Helper of a bus in Jessore, Mollah was sleeping in the vehicle when it was set on fire in the early hours of January 6. He had also been left in the burn unit unattended as his family members could not come to Dhaka amidst the blockade.

In a pre-hartal violence on the evening of December 28 last year, Shamsun Nahar, 55, a school teacher from Noakhali; her son Tanjimul Haque, 22, a student of Jahangirnagar University; and her HSC student daughter Anika Akter, 18, were burnt after criminals set fire to the CNG-run auto-rickshaw they were travelling in the capital's Kazipara.

Anika was lucky to have come out of the incident with minor burn injuries while her mother and brother sustained inhalation burn.

Talking to The Daily Star on January 7 at the burn unit, Anika's father Javed Uddin, 60, a small trader in Noakhali, said more than Tk 3 lakh had already been spent on their treatment.

"I just want them to live. I told my brother in the village to immediately sell off my pieces of land and send the money," he said.

PABNA POLYTECHNIC INST 30 hurt as BCL men clash with outsiders

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

At least 30 people were injured in clash between Chhatra League men and non-students on Pabna Polytechnic Institute campus yesterday over establishing supremacy in the area.

Sources said the outsiders, under the aegis of the local leaders of the ruling Awami League, often entered the campus and tortured students.

To address the issue, leaders of Pabna district BCL went to the institute to talk with the general students and college authorities in the afternoon.

Suddenly, the non-students backed by Islami Chhatra Shibir men attacked the BCL men around 6:00pm sparking a clash, claimed Ahmed Sharif Dablu, president of the district BCL.

Two of the injured were in a critical condition and were being treated at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

The others, including organising secretary of Pabna district BCL Prince and president of Bulbul College unit Shibli, were admitted to Pabna Medical College Hospital.

The office room and three classrooms were vandalised during the clash, said Principal Md Abdul Halim of the institute.

"Outsiders would often harass the female students and extort the general students," a student said, seeking anonymity.

Police picked up four non-students in connection with the violence.

Officer-in-Charge Ahsanul Haque of Pabna Police Station said additional law enforcers were deployed at the institute.

Railway struggles to keep schedule

FROM PAGE 1

There were no injuries reported. But on Thursday, at least 50 passengers were hurt as five carriages and the locomotive of a train heading for Chittagong derailed at Kulara of Moulvibazar after suspected blockaders removed fishplates.

On the same day, rail communications in the western zone were disrupted for four hours after "pickets" uprooted lines in Joypurhat.

Over half the trains across the country were behind schedule as they were travelling slowly specially at night to avoid falling off the lines due to sabotage. Besides, derailments of trains in the last three days have had an impact on the service and schedule, Syed Zahirul Islam, director (traffic) of Bangladesh Railway, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Sixty-two trains were supposed to leave Kamalapur Railway Station in Dhaka. Almost all of them were delayed, Station Master NC Saha told The Daily Star last night. "Trains are leaving with delay of two hours at the minimum and 17 hours at the maximum," he added.

Paharika Express, scheduled to leave for Sylhet at 8:15am, left Chittagong Railway Station over 14 hours late and Meghna Express, scheduled to leave for Chandpur at 5:00pm, left around three hours late. Bijoy Express, bound for Mymensingh, departed the station almost 10 hours late.

Meanwhile, in a saddening development yesterday, Altaf, 45, headmaster of Bhagabanpur Govt Primary School in Gaibandha, died of his injuries at Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

On Friday, the battery-run rickshaw he was travelling on turned turtle

whilst trying to escape the wrath of pickets on Gaibandha-Palashbari road in Gaibandha.

The fifth day of the indefinite blockade saw sporadic violence in several districts as blockaders clashed with police, torched and vandalised vehicles and exploded crude bombs, to be followed by the arrest of dozens of BNP-Jamaat men.

Road communications across the country were disrupted but the number of long-distance buses pressed into service increased yesterday and launch services were normal like the days before.

The BNP-led alliance has called hartals in Sirajganj, Patuakhali, Lalmonirhat and Pirojpur for today, protesting party chief Khaleda Zia's "confinement and killings and arrests of its leaders and activists".

In Chapainawabganj, at least three people, including a BGB personnel, were injured when blockaders hurled homemade bombs at a truck convoy in Kansat of Shibganj upazila, police said.

Moinul Islam, officer-in-charge of Shibganj Police Station, said the convoy of 11 trucks loaded with imported goods left for their destinations from Sonamasjid Land Port escorted by 10 vehicles of police, Rab and the BGB.

When the convoy reached Kansat area around 9:15am, pickets hurled at least 25 crude bombs, injuring a truck helper, an employee of an importer, and a BGB man, he said.

Criminals also exploded a crude bomb in front of the home of Chief Judicial Magistrate Mustakinur Rahman in the court area of Chapainawabganj yesterday evening.

Judge Mustakinur was at home but none was hurt in the incident.

In Moulvibazar, at least two people received burn injuries when criminals set fire to a bus at Kowla area in Kulara upazila, police said.

In Dinajpur, a truck helper was burnt badly when alleged pro-blockade activists of Birganj upazila hurled petrol bombs at his vehicle early yesterday.

Victim Abul Kalam, 55, was rushed to Dinajpur Medical College Hospital with 25 percent burns, police and doctors said.

Criminals had also torched three more trucks in the district.

In the capital, Shafiqul Alam, 35, sustained burn injuries when criminals hurled a petrol bomb on a bus at Kalsi around 8:30pm last night.

The victim was being treated at the burn unit of DMCH with injuries on his face.

In another incident at Chhuritola area of Bangshal around 11:00pm, rickshaw puller Motaleb, 28, was injured in a crude bomb attack. He received treatment at DMCH.

A homemade bomb was also hurled inside the BTV office at Rampura in Dhaka.

Ten people were injured in a clash between Awami League and BNP activists at Ramchandrapur Bazar in Hajiganj upazila of Chandpur.

At least 10 BNP men were injured during their clash with police in Dhanbandhi area of Sirajganj yesterday.

Police also picked up three activists of pro-Jamaat student body Islami Chhatra Shibir in possession of petrol bombs in Pirojpur.

There were reports of vandalism, bomb explosions, arson attacks and arrests from Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Satkhira and Bogra.

Akheri Munajat

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Akhaura, Tongi-Comilla and Tongi-Mymensingh routes. All regular trains will stop at Tongi station before and after the Munajat. More than 50 shuttle buses will be operating under special arrangements of the law enforcers.

FIVE DIE ON SECOND DAY

Five devotees died at the Ijtema venue from cardiac arrests and other complications.

The deceased are: Abdus Salam, 50, of Gazipur; Jahangir Alalm Sarker, 65, of Dhaka; Kafil Uddin Mandol, 50, of Natore; and Khairul Kabir, 55, and Riaz Uddin, 52, of Kishoreganj.

Meanwhile, law enforcers picked up 17 people on charges of pick-pocketing and mugging. A mobile court also lodged 10 cases and realised Tk 13,000 in fines for sale of adulterated food.

2,000 feared killed

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northeast Nigeria yesterday, including one by a female suicide bomber thought to be just 10 years old who blew herself up in a crowded market.

At least 19 people were killed at the Monday Market in the Borno State capital, Maiduguri, at about 12:40 pm when it was packed with shoppers and traders.

Boko Haram were seen as behind the attack in Maiduguri as it has increasingly used women and young girls as human bombs in their deadly campaign for a hardline Islamic state.

Civilian vigilante Ashiru Mustapha said the blast happened as the girl was being searched at the entrance to the market.

"The girl was about 10 years old and I doubt if she actually knew what was strapped to her body," he told AFP.

Witness Abubakar Bakura said: "The blast split the suicide bomber into two and flung one part across the road. Among the dead are two vigilantes who were searching the girl. I am pretty sure the bomb was remotely controlled."

Hours later, a suspicious vehicle that had been stopped at a checkpoint outside the city of Potiskum, in neighbouring Yobe, exploded at a police station as its driver was being taken in for questioning.

A police officer accompanying the car and the driver were killed, an officer said. Potiskum has been a repeated target for militant violence.

Earlier, local authorities on Friday said Islamist militants sprayed bullets as they stormed in last weekend in trucks and armored vehicles.

When they arrived, they unloaded motorcycles and pursued residents who fled into the bush, firing indiscriminately, said Baba Abba Hassan, a local district head.

Local officials reported death tolls ranging from hundreds to as many as 2,000 people.

"Dead bodies litter the bushes in the area and it is still not safe to go and pick them (up) for burial," said Musa Bukar, the chairman of the local government where Baga is located.

"Some people who hid in their homes were burned alive."

Though local officials gave conflicting death tolls, they agreed on the massive number of fatalities.

More than 2,000 people were killed in attacks on 16 villages, Bukar said. He could not explain how he arrived at that toll. But the local district head said hundreds of people had been killed, not thousands. The actual toll will be

known after a headcount of households is complete, Hassan said.

An offensive is underway to reclaim the areas from the militants, according to Mike Omeri, a government spokesman.

At least 30,000 people were displaced, authorities said. About 20,000 of the displaced camped in Maiduguri city, the capital of Borno state.

Authorities are making arrangements to transport the 10,000 others from Monguno town, 60 kilometers from Baga. Some residents fled into neighboring Cameroon and Chad.

"If reports that the town was largely razed to the ground and that hundreds or even as many as 2,000 civilians were killed are true, this marks a disturbing and bloody escalation of Boko Haram's ongoing onslaught against the civilian population," Amnesty International's Daniel Eyre said.

Boko Haram has terrorized northern Nigeria regularly since 2009, attacking police, schools, churches and civilians, and bombing government buildings. It has also kidnapped students, including more than 200 schoolgirls who were abducted in April and remain missing.

The Islamist group has said its aim is to impose a stricter form of Sharia law across Nigeria.

11 public medical colleges opened

FROM PAGE 1

Hasina said her government took various steps for the development of the health sector and the newly established 11 medical colleges are results of that initiative.

She hoped that the new medical colleges would play an effective role in creating efficient doctors as the country has huge demand for physicians.

These colleges would help reduce pressure on the doctors in the future when new physicians will come out successfully from there, she said.

Hasina regretted that Bangladesh's health sector remained neglected for a

long time though the country needed more medical colleges and universities to create physicians for the country's huge population.

She mentioned that her government has taken steps to establish medical universities in every divisional headquarters, and the process of establishing two new medical universities -- one in Chittagong and another in Rajshahi -- to this end is going on fast.

"This is how we can ensure better healthcare services in every corner of the country."

The prime minister also talked to

leaders, public representatives and army officials of the respective districts and regions through the videoconferencing, and assured them of fulfilling their various demands of respective regions, including establishment of a full-fledged university in Jamalpur.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Mohammad Nasim delivered the welcome address while State Minister for Health Jahid Malek, Chief of Army Staff General Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan, PMO Secretary Abul Kalam Azad and Press Secretary AKM Shameem Chowdhuri were also present on the occasion.

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