



Fazlur Rahman, a rickshaw-puller, being treated for burns in Chittagong Medical College Hospital yesterday. He came under a bomb attack in Colonel Haat area of the port city on Friday night, allegedly by a blockader. Doctors said about 35 percent of his body had been affected.

PHOTO: STAR

Blockade turning way too costly for people

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

"I don't know what my fault was," wonders Fazlur Rahman, a rickshaw-puller who toils day and night to make ends meet and hardly knows what a blockade really means and what politics is really for. His only daily concern is how to earn the bread for his family of four.

"I didn't know driving rickshaws is prohibited during the blockade," he said. "We usually operate rickshaws on a hartal day...so I thought I could do the same at the time of the blockade."

"I was surprised when someone emerged from the roadside in the dark and threw an object at me in Colonel Haat area. I was carrying two passengers, and it was about 10:30pm," he said. "I immediately felt my whole body going up in flames. I don't remember anything after that."

With 35 percent burns to his body, Fazlur Rahman is being treated at the Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit of Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH). He narrated the incident of Friday night to The Daily Star there yesterday.

The wounds cover his wrists and legs from below the waist.

The rickshaw-puller said, "I don't know what my fault was. I live hand to mouth. How will I support my family if I stay at home day after day without work?"

Such stories have been produced almost every day, many leading to deaths, since January 6, when the BNP-led alliance launched a countrywide indefinite blockade to restore the "people's democratic rights", which has virtually become a matter of life and death for those very people.

Aminur Rahman, son of Fazlur who also drives a rickshaw, said they were struggling to pay for the treatment. "My younger sister is an SSC examinee. I don't know how could I manage the cost of her study on one hand and the cost of my father's treatment on the other?"

His family has received some financial assistance from Chittagong Metropolitan Police and AZM Nasir Uddin, general secretary of Chittagong city unit of the Awami League.

Tajul Islam, another victim under treatment in CMCH, was driving his rice-laden truck, bound for Chittagong from Satkhira, on Saturday evening. When it reached Kotbari of Comilla around 8:30pm, some 20 to 30 people chased it and hurled a petrol-bomb at him.

He was taken first to Comilla Medical College Hospital but was shifted for deterioration of his health condition. At the burn unit, Tajul said he had no alternative to driving a truck to support his family.

"I don't understand politics. I am the only earning member. I have three daughters, two of whom are going to school," he said. "The attackers not only ruined me but also my whole family."

Tajul's suffered burns to the entire face, left leg and hands. Dr Mishma, who is attending him, said around 20 percent of his body was burnt, and the injuries were serious.

His hapless wife, Tahera Begum, said, "I have to pay Tk 5,000 every alternate day as the dressing charge." She requested the well-off people to extend support.

In Patiya upazila, Munni Dhar came under a bomb attack while traveling with her husband and son to attend the wedding of her niece in Chittagong city around 8:30pm on Sunday. At AJ Chowdhury College bazar, a cocktail hit the bus window, and the flying shards struck her eyes.

Dr Md Wajed Chowdhury, who operated on her eyes in CMCH, said Munni sustained extraocular injuries. "She is lucky enough that the eye balls were not hurt."

Munni's five-year-old son Dipayan Dhar had five stitches in the forehead, while her husband was released yesterday after primary treatment.

Sitting quietly by her mother, the boy said, "Ghosts tried to kill us."

Arrest warrants against Tarique, Fakhrul

For distorting history, defaming PM

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued arrest warrants against BNP leaders Tarique Rahman and Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir in a defamation case filed against them on the charges of distorting history and defaming Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The orders came after police submitted the probe report on the incident before it.

The court directed the Paltan police officer-in-charge to submit by March 5 a progress report on execution of the arrest warrants issued against the duo.

The case was filed by AB Siddique, president of Bangladesh Jananetri Parishad, a pro-Awami League organisation, with another Dhaka court on September 8 last year.

In the case statement, the complainant said BNP Senior Vice-Chairman Tarique, at a seminar in London on August

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Monument for martyr Asad demanded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

The 46th death anniversary of Md Asaduzzaman, a student leader who sacrificed his life during the 1969 mass upsurge, was observed in Barisal city yesterday with a call to build a monument on the spot at the capital's Chankharpul where he was shot.

Asad, a history student of Dhaka University, and also DU unit president and Dhaka city unit general secretary of East Pakistan Chhatra Union (Menon-led group), was killed in firing by the Pakistani forces near Dhaka Medical College Hospital while protesting state repression on the then East Pakistan people.

The participants of a rally and a discussion, marking the day, also called for inclusion of the objective history of the mass upsurge and life sketches of its leaders in the national curriculum.

Shaheed Asad Parishad's Barisal unit, the organiser, also placed wreaths at his portrait and held a cultural function before Ashwini Kumar Hall.

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