



Business leaders and traders under the banner of chambers of commerce and industries form human chains and stage sit-ins in Barisal, top left, in Rangpur, bottom left, in Dhaka, centre, in Sylhet, top right, and in Chittagong, bottom right, to protest against the political violence and turmoil which are hurting their business and the economy.



PHOTO: STAR

## KILLED IN ARSON ATTACK

# Truck helper's family left in distress

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU and MAMUN-UR-RASHID

While leaving home, truck helper Hasib Hossain had promised his wife that he would come back in ten days.

They had their first child only three months ago.

Hasib was being paid on the basis of daily trips and his income had significantly come down since the ongoing blockade began on January 6.

Left without any other choice, he started to travel on highways again to feed his family with his income, despite the danger involving his job.

The 30-year-old was dreaming of reuniting with his family and admitting his son to a school for their better future.

But it will never happen now.

An arson attack took his life, leaving his wife and son in total uncertainty.

Hasib, the only bread earner of his family, died from burns at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital in Bogra early yesterday.

Alleged blockade supporters had carried out a petrol bomb attack on a truck near Shahjahanpur in the district the previous evening.

Hasib was rushed to the hospital with around 90 per cent burns. Three more injured, including the truck driver, are still being treated there.

Hasib's father Abdus Sattar told this correspondent that the victim had left his wife's home in Tezara village of Bogra on February 2.

Hasib was planning to bring his wife Yeasmin Bizli and son Israfil to his village in Sirajganj next month, Sattar said.

## Fix politics to save economy

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brunt of the turmoil, the economy has already counted around Tk 75,000 crore in losses since the BNP-led 20-party alliance launched the non-stop blockade on January 6.

The economy is on the verge of collapse. If this situation doesn't improve, the government should ban shutdowns and blockades, he said.

He urged political parties to follow democratic norms to voice their demands.

Interests on bank loans of affected industries and businesses must be waived and the loans rescheduled. "Otherwise, they will not survive," said Ahmed.

The FBCCI president was joined by business leaders, including former president of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Rokia Afzal Rahman and President of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry Hossain Khaled.

Expressing solidarity with the FBCCI, garment makers demanded an

end to the deadly violence and security for running businesses smoothly.

"We don't want political violence any more. We don't want deaths in arson attacks," said Atiqul Islam, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), a platform of garment exporters.

Garment makers are incurring losses as they face hurdles, including high transport costs of carrying raw materials and goods to and from factories and the Chittagong port, he said.

More than 150 garment makers, workers and leaders of trade unions stood in line in front of the BGMEA office, demanding a peaceful solution to the political unrest.

Leaders of Bangladesh Textile Mills Association and Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association also joined the BGMEA rally.

"The economy is bleeding ... we want a business-friendly environment," said BGMEA Vice President SM

Mannan Kochi.

This was the second programme by the BGMEA in the last two weeks. On January 28, the trade body formed a massive human chain in front of its office, demanding security of businesses.

Yesterday, human chains were also formed in Rajshahi, Barisal, Rangpur, Sylhet, Bagerhat, Sherpur, Chandpur, Satkhira and Narsingdi.

Sylhet Chamber of Commerce and Industry organised a human chain in the city. It was attended by leaders of trade bodies, including CNG Filling Station and Conversion Workshop Owners Association, Coal Importers Group, Petroleum Dealers, Distributors and Agents Association and Shop Owners Association.

Speaking at a human chain programme, Rajshahi Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Monir-uz-zaman said, "We don't want this politics ... Our politicians must think about businesspeople and the masses before launching any political

programme."

Blockade and violence have already wiped out three-fourths of sales. "If this situation persists, we will not be able to give our employees salaries, and many businesses will go under," he said.

Businesspeople in Barisal, Rangpur and Satkhira condemned the ongoing violence and demanded an end to the blockade and shutdown.

In Bagerhat town, businesspersons took part in the human chain programme, keeping their shops shut.

Meanwhile, the BNP said the business community's message was not reaching the government because of the partisan president of the FBCCI.

"The present political crisis and instability arose out of wrong decisions of the head of the government," BNP Joint Secretary General Salahuddin Ahmed said in a statement.

He urged the trade body to ask the government to step down quickly to create a stable political environment.

## 5 BCL men to die for killing Zubair

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end to campus violence.

Zubair, an honours final-year student of JU English department, was tortured and stabbed by some rival group activists on January 8, 2012. He died at a Dhaka hospital the following day, triggering huge uproars in and outside the campus.

Son of Tofael Ahmed of Patuakhali's Khepupara, Zubair belonged to the BCL group opposing the faction allegedly blessed by the then VC Prof Shariff Enamul Kabir.

On January 9, the university filed the murder case. In the syndicate's January 30, 2012 decision, the authorities expelled seven students and suspended six others for two years following its own probe.

The central leaders of Bangladesh Chhatra League claimed none of 13 was involved with the organisation and the JU BCL committee had been dissolved when the murder took place.

The investigation officer of the case on April 8, 2012 pressed charges against the 13 and the court indicted them on September 8, 2013. Twenty-seven people gave testimony as prosecution witnesses.

Following over a year's trial, the court awarded capital punishment to Khandaker Ashiqul Islam alias Ashiq of philosophy department; Rashidul Islam Raju, Khan Mohammad Rais alias Sohan and Zahid Hasan of zoology and Mahabub Akram of government and politics department.

Nazmul Hossain Plaban of public administration and Mahmudul Hasan Masud of History were acquitted.

The six given life term are Ishtiaq Mehbub alias Arup of philosophy, Najmus Sakib Topu of biochemistry and molecular biology, Kamruzzaman Sohag of philosophy, Abhinandon Kundu of statistics, Majharul Islam of history and Shafiu Alam Setu of statistics.

All the 13 were bailed as the trial proceeding started. Early last year the prosecution sought cancellation of bail of Ashiq, Shaon, Akram and Ishtiaq, Raju and Zahid for violating conditions.

But Ashiq, Shaon, Akram and Ishtiaq fled the court dock on February 13, when the court cancelled their bail. Raju and Zahid did not appear before the court that day.

The six still remained on the run while the rest were produced before the court yesterday under tight security amid the ongoing blockade.

On February 4, the court rescheduled the verdict date citing security reasons.

A few days back Ashiq was seen at



With tears in their eyes, the father and mother of Zubair Ahmed looks at the photos of their son in their home in Kalapara of Patuakhali yesterday after a court in Dhaka sentenced five people to death for the murder of Zubair in 2012.



Ashiq



Raju



Sohan



Zahid



Akram

Madhur Canteen with a group of BCL activists. He occasionally visited the DU campus and stayed at its different dormitories, according to BCL insiders.

Investigation Officer Mir Shahin Shah Parvez told The Daily Star that they were trying to arrest the fugitives. "We have already deployed sources to trace them as we have information that the fugitives are still in the country."

He claimed this is the first capital punishment pronounced in a trial over a murder at public university.

Though the family members and university authorities expressed satisfaction, they have to wait for the completion of the next legal phases.

Under the existing law, the con-

victed persons have the right to appeal against the verdict with the High Court within 30 days of receiving the certified copy of the verdict. And they can appeal against the HC verdict.

Earlier on December 18, 2013, eight BCL leaders and activists of Jagannath University were awarded death penalty and 13 others life term for killing tailor Bishwajit Das in Old Dhaka.

During his 15-minute judgment, Nizamul Haque mentioned some findings of the investigation officer.

Victim Zubair and his killers Ashique and Rashedul were involved with pro-BNP student body Chhatra Dal. But the trio along with some

other Chhatra Dal activists joined the politics of Chhatra League when the Awami League came to the power in 2009.

Those students, being divided into different factions in the ruling party's student wing, got involved in criminal activities like extortion, ragging, sexual harassment of female students and even killing, he said.

But the syndicate, the highest policy-making body of the university, failed to prevent the crimes, added the judge.

The court also praised the positive role of the media, but asked newsmen to be more cautious while reporting on sub-judice matters.

[Our JU correspondent SM Najmus Sakib contributed to the report]

## Arson, bomb attack

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Police have so far arrested 11 people in this connection, reports our correspondent.

At least 11 vehicles were set ablaze across the country yesterday, according to fire service and police officials.

In Dhaka, eight people were injured in three separate bomb attacks in Shaheednagar, TSC and Matshya Bhaban areas.

Besides, two alleged blockaders sustained bullet injuries in police fire when they attempted to hurl bombs at a police vehicle in Jatrabari. In a similar incident, another person got shot in the leg in Shaheed Minar area last night.

An Ansar member was injured in a bomb attack in Uttara.

Rab-1 claimed that they recovered a time bomb at Cherag Ali of Tongi yesterday and defused the device.

In Comilla, two Jamaat activists sustained bullet injuries and a police officer was injured in a gunfight between them at Adra union of Langolkot upazila early yesterday.

In Khulna, police arrested five Shibir men with four petrol bombs at the city's Alia Madrasa dormitory in Rupsha area early yesterday.

Alleged blockaders hurled a crude bomb at the book fair in the city's Boyra area Saturday night leaving one person injured.

In Narayanganj, police arrested a youth with five petrol bombs in Siddhirganj area.

In Chittagong, a mob caught a person who was allegedly throwing a home-made bomb and beat him up in the city's Gool Pahar area yesterday afternoon.

Police recovered 10 petrol bombs from the city's Agrabad CGS Colony. They arrested 16 BNP-Jamaat men and a ward councillor at the city and other upazilas of Chittagong yesterday.

In Noakhali, a trader was injured in a petrol bomb attack in the town and a crude bomb blew off the roof of the witnesses' shed at the District Judge Court.

In Feni, a truck helper and a lorry driver sustained burn injuries in separate petrol bomb attacks at Silonia Bazar of Daganbhuian upazila and in Kazir Dhighi area of Feni.

A truck was torched in Senbagh yesterday and alleged blockaders also set fire to a bus at Pachgachiya Bazar Saturday night.

In Tangail, Rab recovered five petrol bombs from the home of a former Chhatra Dal activist at Sakhipur upazila early yesterday.

In Satkhira, police arrested at least 44 people including district Jamaat Ameer Khalek Mandal.

In Dinajpur, alleged blockaders burnt a lorry and beat up the driver and the helper in Amtoli area of Chirirbandar upazila early yesterday.

They also attacked an auto-rickshaw with a petrol bomb and torched a battery run three-wheeler in Baniapara of Biral on Saturday night.

## Last day of exam

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wounds next morning in the capital's United Hospital.

Zubair, who got involved in student politics only after his admission to the university in 2008, is a victim of factional feud on the JU campus, where at least five students have lost lives over internal conflicts since 1973, reports our university correspondent.

Zubair himself belonged to a BCL faction, and along with some activists of the group took control over the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman hall in June 2010, ousting the

rival group. Only a year later, his rivals took control of the hall, ousting him and his fellow BCL men.

After that he rented a room at nearby Radio Colony and used to attend classes from there.

"He was not in politics in his school and college life. It was the university that dragged him into politics," said Zubair's elder brother Abdullah Al Mamun.

"Zubair was my only brother. My parents wanted him to be a police officer or a civil servant," added Mamun, teacher at a private university.

## Judge frees 'drug Queen'

AFP, Mexico City

A Mexican woman whose links to drug traffickers earned her the nickname "Queen of the Pacific" and inspired a soap opera was released from prison Saturday after winning an appeal.

Sandra Avila Beltran, 54, was freed

after a judge ordered her immediate release, saying she could not be put on trial twice for the same crime, a federal official told AFP.

Avila Beltran, whose nickname comes from a drug ballad written in her honor, had been sentenced to five years in prison for money laundering in September.