

22 hurt in cocktail blasts in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 22 people were injured as several crude bombs were blasted at different spots in the capital yesterday amid the ongoing blockade enforced by the BNP-led 20-party alliance.

Most of the attacks were carried out targeting the Awami League procession. The AL activists were going to Suhrawardy Udyan to attend a rally marking the historic March 7.

The bombs exploded in front of Shikkha Bhaban, the Central Shaheed Minar, Azimpur Graveyard, Krishi Market in Mohammadpur, near Karwan Bazar underpass and in Shantinagar.

Three homemade bombs went off near Karwan Bazar underpass after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's motorcade crossed the area around 2:45pm. An on-duty policeman was injured, Tejgaon police said.

Around 4:00pm, three bombs were exploded in a procession of the ruling AL in front of Shikkha Bhaban, leaving

14 people hurt. They took first aid.

Shiblee Noman, assistant commissioner (Ramna zone) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said locals caught three people on suspicion of their involvement in the blast and handed them over to police.

Criminals exploded four crude bombs targeting an AL procession in front of the Central Shaheed Minar. Prabha, a doctor of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, who was crossing the area on a rickshaw was hurt.

A rickshaw-puller was hurt when a homemade bomb was blasted near Azimpur Graveyard when an AL procession was passing the area around 4:00pm.

In Shantinagar, three people were hurt as a crude bomb was hurled at a bus around 3:00pm.

In Mohammadpur, several homemade bombs exploded in front of Krishi Market around 7:00pm, leaving two traders injured. One of them Abed Ali, 50, was critically injured. He is undergoing treatment at the DMCH.



A section of the crowd that gathered at Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday to listen to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's speech on the Historic March 7. On this day in 1971, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had declared the struggle for independence on this very ground. PHOTO: PMO

DESTRUCTION OF IRAQ'S HISTORY

After Mosul, Nimrud, ISIS targets Hatra

BBC ONLINE

Islamic State militants have begun destroying the ruins of the ancient city of Hatra, Kurdish sources in northern Iraq said yesterday.

Hatra was founded in the days of the Parthian Empire over 2,000 years ago and is a Unesco world heritage site.

Earlier this week, ISIS militants began bulldozing the nearby ruins of the Assyrian city of Nimrud.

ISIS, which controls large areas of Iraq and Syria, says shrines and statues are "false idols" that have to be smashed.

It not yet clear how extensive any damage might have been.

Hatra, located about 110km southwest of Mosul, was a fortified city that withstood invasions by the Romans thanks to its thick walls reinforced by

towers.

Said Mamuzini, a Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) local official, told Kurdish media that ISIS militants had started destroying the site.

"The city of Hatra is very big and many artefacts of that era were protected inside the site," he said, adding that the militants had already taken away gold and silver.

There is no independent confirmation of the destruction.

Reports of the bulldozer attack in Nimrud, an Assyrian city founded in the 13th Century BC, emerged on Thursday.

On Friday Unesco head Irina Bokova condemned the "cultural cleansing" in Iraq as a "war crime".

"There is absolutely no political or religious justification for the destruction of humanity's cultural heritage."

Youth murdered for protesting stalking

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A youth was hacked to death for protesting the stalking of his cousin in Baufal upazila of Patuakhali yesterday.

The dead, Feroj Hawlader, 25, was son of Hasan Hawlader of Laxmipasha village.

Some youths were stalking his cousin, a class IX student, for the last couple of months which he had protested several times, said Rokonzaman, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Baufal Police Station.

"Some four to five youths, wielding sharp weapons, went to Feroj's house around 9:30am and picked up a quarrel with him over the issue," he

said.

"Sensing danger, Feroj started running to escape the attack, but the stalkers managed to catch him at a nearby field and stabbed him indiscriminately. Feroj died on the spot," the police official added.

Ripon, one of the stalkers, hurled unwelcomed comments towards Feroz's cousin at a religious function on Thursday night. Feroz protested it and Ripon killed Feroz over the issue, Feroz's father Hasan alleged.

Locals caught Ripon, 20, a neighbour of Feroj, and Khalilur Rahman, 26, of Lohalia village in Patuakhali Sadar upazila on the spot.

They then handed them over to the police.

Punishment must

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Branding her archival as the leader of militants, the PM alleged Khaleda has let loose terrorists on the common people.

Also the ruling AL president, Hasina said patrons of terrorism have to get punishment just like the attackers and "in line with international standards."

She urged people from all sections of the society to unite against terrorist activities.

Turning to Zia Orphanage Trust graft case, the prime minister said, "If she [Khaleda] thinks she is honest, why doesn't she face the court? Khaleda Zia knows that she has siphoned off money and that's why she is afraid of facing court."

Blasting the BNP chief for calling blockade and hartal, the PM said Khaleda is dreaming of assuming power by killing people. But her dream would never come true, she added.

Hasina presided over the rally, also addressed by party leaders Tofail

Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, Matia Chowdhury, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Mohammad Nasim, Mahabub-ul-Alam Hanif, Jahangir Kabir Nanak, MA Aziz and Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, among others.

A large contingent of law enforcers cordoned off the venue, and frisked everyone at the entrance.

Ruling party leaders, activists and supporters started flocking to the ground around 12:30pm. Noticeably, most of the banners read names of ward-level leaders and their posts.

Earlier in the morning, the PM, her colleagues in the AL and leaders of like-minded parties and organisations paid tributes to Bangabandhu by placing wreaths at his portrait in front of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at Dhanmondi.

On this day in 1971, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in his fiery speech called upon the Bangalee nation to wage a decisive struggle against the Pakistan junta.



Known as the father of Bangladesh's garment industry, Noorul Quader, left, is seen supervising work at Desh Garments in Chittagong in 1979. Noorul passed away in 1998 and his daughter took the helm of the first export-oriented garment factory of Bangladesh in 2008. FILE PHOTO

Hard work to success

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She returned to Bangladesh in 2005 and joined Barrister Rafique-ul-Huq's law firm in Dhaka, and worked for about six months.

"I gave up practising law as I wanted to do something on my own," she said.

She started with a trading firm of her family which has been working as an agent for Swiss company Buhler to market machinery for food milling sector. She also got involved in her family's another business of locomotive supplies to Bangladesh Railway.

In 2008, the family sat together and decided to run Desh Garments properly. Her mother and brother were reluctant to let Vidiya take such a responsibility at such an age. She had to convince them.

Vidiya appointed a German consultant and moved to Chittagong.

"Initially, nobody took me seriously. It was not very easy for me as I

have had a very comfortable life."

She stationed herself at the factory in the port city for the next four years. She dedicated herself to the business. "I personally learnt almost everything by staying at the factory."

She successfully turned the factory into an efficient and a compliant one in four years. "Workers are more disciplined today."

She moved to Dhaka one and a half years ago. Now she visits the factory at least once a week.

Vidiya is now the group director of Desh Group, which has interests in packaging, distribution, IT and real estate. Although her mother is the chairman of the group and her elder brother is the managing director, she is the decision-maker in the company.

"I have been able to turn it around a bit. Not all families can sustain its business," she said. She gave credit to her father for her success.

"Abba [father] taught me everything. He groomed me up. I even learnt cooking from him. Living with my father was like being in another school."

The single-storey factory located on over 80,000sqft of land has 976 workers. "These workers are very nice."

Vidiya now plans to expand the production capacity of her factory, which could happen within this year. And the company will cash in on its expertise in shirt-making.

Now the factory produces 2 lakh shirts a month. Vidiya said she plans to double the capacity in two to three years adding another factory floor on top.

She said the group's packaging factory will also see expansion in the coming months.

The public limited company now exports its products to the US and the European Union. Desh Garments' buyers include Kohl's, Aldi and Li &

Fung.

Vidiya said any woman who is planning to establish herself as an entrepreneur must prepare for the obstacles they would encounter. "It is not an easy world. You will have to be ready for the fight."

"We have not diversified production yet. We still make shirts only and will continue to export this particular item."

Also a director of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, Vidiya is very hopeful about the sector's potential in the world market, as the industry is very competitive and has a huge workforce.

"Our future is very, very bright. I also think that the \$50-billion export target by 2021 is within our ability. The government will have to create the right infrastructure. We will also have to educate the workforce as well as factory managers."

Hartal on again

FROM PAGE 1

no affiliation with any political party. Besides, 41 people were killed in "shoot-outs" with law enforcement agencies during the ongoing political turmoil, according to The Daily Star reports.

The country's top business chambers estimate daily loss of businesses at Tk 2,277 crore a day in the ongoing blockade.

Meanwhile, incidents of arson attack, recovery of firebombs and arrests of leaders and activists of the 20-party alliance were reported from across the country yesterday.

In Noakhali, criminals torched the local land office (assistant commissioner's office) by hurling two petrol bombs inside it through the window early yesterday. Several furniture and some important documents were burnt, reports our Noakhali correspondent, quoting Mahub Alam, station officer of Noakhali fire service.

Criminals broke the window of the office and threw the bombs inside a room, said Assistant Commissioner Mohammad Shamsuzzaman. Fire fighters doused the flames later.

No one was arrested in connection with the arson attack, police said.

Criminals set fire to a carriage of a shuttle train of Chittagong University at Sholoshohor Railway Station in the port city around 8:00pm yesterday.

Locals extinguished the fire before it could spread further.

Mohammad Suman, 18, a garment worker, suffered injuries in the throat

when criminals exploded several crude bombs at the station to make an escape, said Ekram Hossain, sub-inspector of Panchlaish Police Station.

Suman was rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

No one was detained in this connection.

In two separate incidents, members of Border Guard Bangladesh recovered 29 firebombs from Comilla and Chapainawabganj yesterday.

In Comilla, a team of BGB-10, on information, raided Balutupa area in Sadar upazila around 12:10am and recovered 25 abandoned petrol bombs, said Lt Col Mokhlesur Rahman, commanding officer of BGB 10 Battalion.

In Chapainawabganj, BGB personnel and police in a drive recovered four petrol bombs and some bomb making materials from an abandoned cinema hall at Udayan intersection in the town yesterday.

Meanwhile, alleged pickets torched two buses in Dhaka and Comilla yesterday.

In Dhaka, hartal supporters set alight a bus at Mirpur-14 around 9:45pm, while criminals torched a bus at Chandina in Comilla around 11:30pm.

Police yesterday detained at least 37 BNP-Jamaat men at Sitakunda and Lohagara upazilas in Chittagong and from different places in Rangpur for their alleged involvement in subversive activities, report our district correspondents.

Work equal, wage not

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Citing a 2011 BILS study, he said 72 percent women construction workers are paid less than the male ones.

Against such a backdrop, Bangladesh, like all other countries across the globe, observes International Women's Day today with the theme "Empowering Women, Empowering Humanity: Picture it!"

Sultan said the claim that women cannot work as much as men is unacceptable. But it is being used as an excuse for paying women labourers less.

However, women in formal sectors such as corporate establishments and government offices don't face blatant wage discrimination as in informal sectors, he observed.

"But it should be noted that less than one-fourth of government

employees are women," said Sultan.

Quoting Bangladesh Factory Rules 1979, he said women must be paid the same wage as their male co-workers.

Eminent agriculture development activist Shykh Seraj said women labourers are discriminated against also in the farm sector that largely depends on their labour.

"From the hill districts to the northern region, men's daily wage is at least one and a half times that of women," said Shykh Seraj.

According to the Labour Force Survey, of the 2.57 crore agricultural labourers, 64 percent are women.

Founding President of Karmojibi Nari Shirin Akhter said there are cases where women organised themselves and fought for fair wage.

The only way for women to get fair wage is to protest discrimination, she said.