

The way

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start saying their "unscheduled" prayers that continue for an "unusually" long period, without taking permission from the judge, he added.

In many cases, their lawyers also remain absent. When the time comes for the defence to cross-examine the witnesses, the judge finds no one and is forced to complete the procedure later.

These are common scenes at the hearings in the August 21 grenade attack cases, and many of the accused are employing these tactics apparently to delay the trial, added the lawyer.

Twenty-four people were killed in a grisly grenade attack on an Awami League rally on Bangabandhu Avenue on August 21, 2004. The cases were filed soon after.

Of the 52 accused, some 34, including the then home minister Lutfuzzaman Babar, BNP leader Abdus Salam Pintu, Huji leaders Mufti Hannan and Moulana Sheikh Farid, and the then senior officials of Criminal Investigation Department Ruhul Amin and Munshi Atiqur Rahman, appear before the speedy trial tribunal, which is trying the cases, in Old Dhaka.

On a given date, the court usually sits in the morning.

Coming to the courtroom, the accused take their designated seats, and immediately start these "unusual" activities with an obvious air of nonchalance, said court sources.

Take Lutfuzzaman Babar for an example.

He brings at least 10 newspapers with him to the courtroom. He at first goes through the papers, although reading newspapers during trial proceedings is prohibited, said another lawyer.

Around 11:30am, the former minister starts to the back of the courtroom and starts saying his "unscheduled" prayers, without taking permission from the judge.

In many cases, his lawyer was absent and the judge found no one in his defence when it was needed, obstructing the trial, said the lawyer.

Many other accused were doing the same as Babar, according to court sources.

The sources also said the accused had been resorting to these tactics in almost every hearing apparently to interrupt the trial.

"Though it is not the time for any scheduled prayers, yet they say prayers. Because they want to waste time," said a lawyer, preferring anonymity.

"Nobody dares to say anything since it's a religious matter," he added.

Parrot detained

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the pet to "hurl obscenities" at her.

The woman who complained, Janabai Sakharkar, obviously felt the parrot, Hariyal, had been trained to bad mouth her as it was owned by her stepson, Suresh.

"I am being harassed for the last two years. On seeing me, the parrot uses bad language and foul words. That is why I have complained thrice in the last two years. Police called me, Suresh and the parrot to the police station. Police should investigate and seize the parrot," said Janabai.

Police decided to call in all three parties, including the parrot. However, the parrot reportedly remained silent while in police custody and did not swear at Janabai in front of the officers.

"There is a dispute over land and property between the woman and her stepson. We watched the parrot carefully but it did not utter a word at the police station after being confronted by the complainant," the local police Inspector told reporters.

As there is no law to imprison a parrot, the police officials later handed it over to the forest department officials.

S Africa

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and for this, they want to sign an extradition treaty with us," the home minister said, adding, "We have exchanged information and other documents for the next course of measure to this end."

During the meeting, Asaduzzaman told the South African deputy minister that a terrorist was always a terrorist wherever he stayed. Agreeing on this, Mfeketo stressed on signing an extradition treaty with Bangladesh.

The South African deputy minister informed Asaduzzaman that some 2.5 lakh Bangladeshis are living in her country.

On August 19, 2014, the Interpol informed Bangladesh Police that Maulana Tajuddin was staying in South Africa. The Interpol has also issued a red alert against Tajuddin as a most wanted criminal.

Another key accused in the cases, BNP Senior Vice-chairman Tarique Rahman, now living in London, was also wanted by the International Police Organisation. Besides, Tajuddin's brother, detained former BNP deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu, is also an accused in the August 21 grenade attack cases.

Probir Sikdar freed

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of the minister through a Facebook post.

In the post, Probir expressed fear for his life, saying that the minister, controversial businessman Moosa bin Shamsher and condemned fugitive war criminal Abul Kalam Azad would be responsible if he were killed.

Local Awami League leader Swapna Kumar Paul, also assistant public prosecutor of Faridpur Judge's Court, filed the case, saying the post tarnished the minister's image.

On Sunday evening, Probir was arrested from his office on the capital's Indira Road. Two days later, the First Cognisance Court of Faridpur granted remand for the ailing journalist.

After producing Probir before Senior Judicial Magistrate Hamidul Islam's court around 11:00am yesterday, police said they no more needed to interrogate him.

Sub-Inspector Monir Hossain, also the investigation officer of the case, said they had already "gleaned sufficient information from the accused."

Then Probir's counsel Ali Ashraf Nannu submitted a bail petition. The plaintiff lawyers didn't oppose the prayer, as instructed by the minister, court sources said.

After hearing the plea, the court granted Probir, editor of Bangla daily Bangla 71 and online news portal u71news.com, an ad-interim bail till September 22 upon a bond of Tk 5,000.

Contacted, Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain told The Daily Star: "He [Probir] is ill. As his wife over the phone sought cooperation from me, I asked the [plaintiff] lawyers not to oppose any bail petition, if filed."

Probir's wife Anita Sikdar, however, said: "After coming to court this morning, a man, possibly some minister, called me over the phone of a police officer, and said that he was working for my husband's release. I thanked him for that."

She claimed that she could not recognise the caller.

Probir's lawyer Nannu said, "During the hearing, we made the court convinced that he [Probir] wouldn't flee anywhere if the bail is granted not only because he is crippled but also because he's a member of a martyred family, and an idealist journalist and teacher."

Probir lost his father and several other family members during the 1971 war.

In 2001, he wrote a series of reports titled "Sei Razakar" in Bangla daily Janakantha, revealing specific details of war crimes by some people includ-

ing Moosa bin Shamsher and Abul Kalam Azad, also known as Bachchu Razakar, during the Liberation War.

After the reports were published, he was attacked in April that year. He lost a leg and also the mobility of one hand in the attack.

The arrest of journalist Probir, also a Liberation War researcher, created a huge stir among the people. Many labelled this incident as an abuse of power by the LGRD minister.

DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG: PROBIR

Talking to The Daily Star last night after his release, Probir Sikdar said he hadn't made any mistake by posting the status on Facebook.

"I went to everybody. But none responded to my plea. Who should I turn to? Getting no alternative, I resorted to Facebook to let people know of my fear for life."

He said the police did not record his general diary but arrested him even before the case was filed. "Isn't it a maltreatment of law? Will the law always favour the influential?"

"Under pressure, I had to tell police that posting the status was a mistake. I also had told the court about the pressure," he added.

Though Probir was released on bail, the case was not dropped.

"I am not sure if it was a strategy to mitigate the mass uproar that followed my arrest," the journalist said, adding: "I still feel threatened."

PROTESTS ON

Earlier in the day, aggrieved journalists observed a token hunger strike in front of the Jatiya Press Club. Eminent citizens expressed solidarity with them.

Speaking there, historian Prof Muntasir Mamoon demanded security for and compensation to Probir's family. "If any influential person of the government, no matter how influential, sides with the war criminals, we will resist it."

Columnist Syed Abul Maksud said, "The way he [Probir] was arrested goes completely against the norms of a democratic state."

Executive President of Ekatturer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee Shahriar Kabir said: "Why those, against whom Probir had written, didn't file the case? It's because they knew that there's nothing false in what he has been writing for around 20 years."

Protest programmes were held in some other places of the country as well.

Meanwhile, Lord Avebury, vice chair of the UK All Party Parliamentary Group

on Human Rights, has expressed his concern at Probir Sikdar's arrest.

"As a friend of Bangladesh, I was deeply concerned about the detention of the eminent journalist Probir Sikdar and allegations of his ill treatment and threats made against him in Faridpur Sadar Police Station. I respectfully suggest that the Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission should conduct an inquiry into these events, which I have reported to the International Committee to Protect Journalists," he said in a statement issued before the journalist's release.

Bomber part

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"We believe there must be people helping him, Thai people," Somyot told reporters, referring to the prime suspect.

The attack occurred on Monday evening as worshippers and tourists crowded into the Erawan shrine in Bangkok's commercial heart, shredding bodies and incinerating motorcyclists.

At least 13 foreigners were killed, from China, Hong Kong, Britain, Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia.

Another 68 people remained in hospital yesterday, 12 of whom were in critical conditions.

The shrine, a popular tourist attraction that typifies the kingdom's unusual blend of Hindu and Buddhist traditions, reopened yesterday morning with a ceremony led by chanting monks.

Its surroundings had been largely restored and the pools of congealed blood scrubbed away.

Twisted iron railings were the only immediate sign of the blast point, which police believe was caused by a bomb made up of three kilogrammes of high explosives.

The police sketch of the suspected bomber showed him with black-rimmed glasses, a full head of dark hair and a light complexion.

Police spokesman Prawut Thavorn Sirisai said his features were gleaned partly from security footage taken of him at the shrine in the minutes before the attack.

That footage, released to the public on Tuesday, showed him wearing a bright yellow T-shirt and dark shorts, walking into the shrine with a backpack.

He casually placed the backpack underneath a bench and then slowly walked away clutching a blue plastic bag while looking at what appeared to be a smartphone.

The home boss added that the prime minister had given the message much earlier that no criminals would be spared.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday at a programme at the Jatiya Press Club said no one would be able to escape after committing a crime.

"If someone supports a party, s/he must follow its rules. Violation of rules through infighting and killings will not be allowed," he said.

On Tuesday, Bangladesh Chhatra League's Hazaribagh Thana unit leader Arzu Miah was killed in a "gunfight" between his cohorts and Rab members in the capital's Hazaribagh. On the same day, former BCL leader Mehedi Hasan Ajibor, who was an accused in a case over the July 23 shooting in Magura, was killed in another "gun battle" between his accomplices and police in the district town.

Meanwhile, rights body Ain O Salish Kendra yesterday in a statement expressed grave concern over the law enforcers' tendency to contain criminal activities through "extrajudicial killings".

ASK Director Noor Khan alleged that some ruling party activists have been victims of the so-called "gunfights".

Law enforcers do this to make the stories of gunfights more credible," he said.

According to ASK, 72 people were killed in "crossfire" between law enforcers and alleged criminals in the first six months of this year.

According to reports published in this newspaper, 20 people were killed in "gunfights" or "shootouts" between July 1 and August 18.

Meanwhile, Home Minister

Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday at a programme in the capital said, "Rab says it's a gunfight, police says it's a gunfight. Among these, we are looking into the Hazaribagh incident."

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Meanwhile, Home Minister

Cheaper way to treat

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Bubbles are created in the bottle, which then put backpressure on lungs, thus creating continuous positive airway pressure, said the scientist at the Centre for Nutrition and Food Security of the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases Control, Bangladesh (icddr,b).

With the continuous bubble pressure, a child's lung opens and his/her collapsed tissues get active, increasing the chances of their survival, he added.

Famous medical journal, The Lancet, published an article on Bubble CPAP for children with severe pneumonia and hypoxaemia in Bangladesh: an open, randomised controlled trial on Tuesday.

Scientists at the icddr,b and the Centre for International Child Health at the University of Melbourne conducted the research in Dhaka between August 2011 and July 2013.

The random trial was conducted on 225 children. Of them, 79 received oxygen therapy by Bubble CPAP, 67 low-flow oxygen therapy, and 79 high-flow oxygen therapy that is an expensive treatment used mostly in developed nations.

Significantly, fewer children in the Bubble CPAP group had treatment failure and deaths than the low-flow

oxygen therapy group, said Dr Chisti, lead scientist and author of the research. On the other hand, the success rates in the Bubble CPAP group and the high-flow oxygen therapy group were very close.

Dr Chisti explained that Bubble CPAP is not something new globally. It is used in the developed countries to treat newborns, but the equipment they use is very expensive.

"Our research, however, focused on children under five, not only newborns. Also, we used cheap equipment," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

A circuit, a bottle and a small piece of pipe cost no more than Tk 50 in Bangladesh and US\$100 in a developed country.

"icddr,b's study is the first in a developing country to trial the effectiveness of a cheaper version of Bubble-CPAP at reducing mortality and treatment failure for the children under five with severe pneumonia and hypoxemia," said Dr Chisti.

The new method can be used in other hospitals in the country and in other countries having high child mortality rates because of pneumonia, especially those in Sub-Saharan Africa and South-East Asia, he added.

Khaleda slams

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shunning its "repressive acts and politics of vengeance".

In a statement, Khaleda also said her party, if it returns to power, would never choose the path of political vengeance and give priority to upholding the spirit of national unity.

The BNP chief alleged that the government, after assuming power through the January 5 "one sided and voter less" polls, had destroyed all the democratic institutions only to cling on to power. "The entire nation is under the grasp of its misrule."

"We are disheartened over the 86-year-old veteran popular leader and BNP standing committee member MK Anwar being sent to jail when he surrendered before a court, despite having bail from the High Court, showing respect to the law in a false case filed in Comilla," she said.

"The government's such attitude towards a respected and elderly poli-

cian of the country is a proof of its intolerance. It's nothing but the abuse of power."

On Tuesday, a Comilla court sent Anwar, also a former minister and cabinet secretary, to jail rejecting his bail petition in a case filed in connection with a petrol bomb attack on