

# SHIA MOSQUE ATTACK

## Envoys of US, UK shocked

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The United States and the United Kingdom have separately expressed deep shock at Thursday's attack on a Shia mosque in Bogra which left a man dead and several others injured.

"[We are] deeply saddened by the attack on a Shia mosque while Bangladeshis were at prayer and offer condolences to the victim's family," said US Ambassador to Bangladesh Marcia Bernicat in a twitter statement yesterday.

In another statement on the day, British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Robert Gibson condemned the attack.

The British envoy in his statement said, "I am appalled at the savage attack on worshippers during prayer time in a mosque in Bogra; nothing can justify such attacks on people expressing their faith or beliefs. I extend my deepest condolences to the victims and their families."

"This is the latest in a series of violent extremist incidents in Bangladesh. Recent events, including in Paris, Mali, and Beirut, show that no country is immune from such attacks and reinforce the need for international cooperation to tackle both the immediate threat and the root causes of such extremism," Gibson said.

## BSF men kill another Bangladeshi

UNB, Lalmonirhat

A day after killing two Bangladeshis along a Satkhira border, Indian Border Security Force (BSF) yesterday shot a Bangladeshi cattle trader dead on Gotamari border in Hatibandha upazila.

The dead, Amulya Chandra Barman, 38, was the son of Mohesh Chandra Roy of the upazila's Daikhola area.

When a group of Bangladeshi cattle traders were trying to bring cattle from India, a patrol team of 21 Bara Maricha BSF camp opened fire on them, killing Amulya on the spot, said Lt Col Bazlur Rahman Hayati, captain of 15 BGB Battalion in Lalmonirhat.

On Thursday, two Bangladeshi cattle traders were killed as the BSF members fired on them along Taluigachha border in Satkhira Sadar upazila when the Bangladeshis were returning home with cattle from India.

## JMB leader

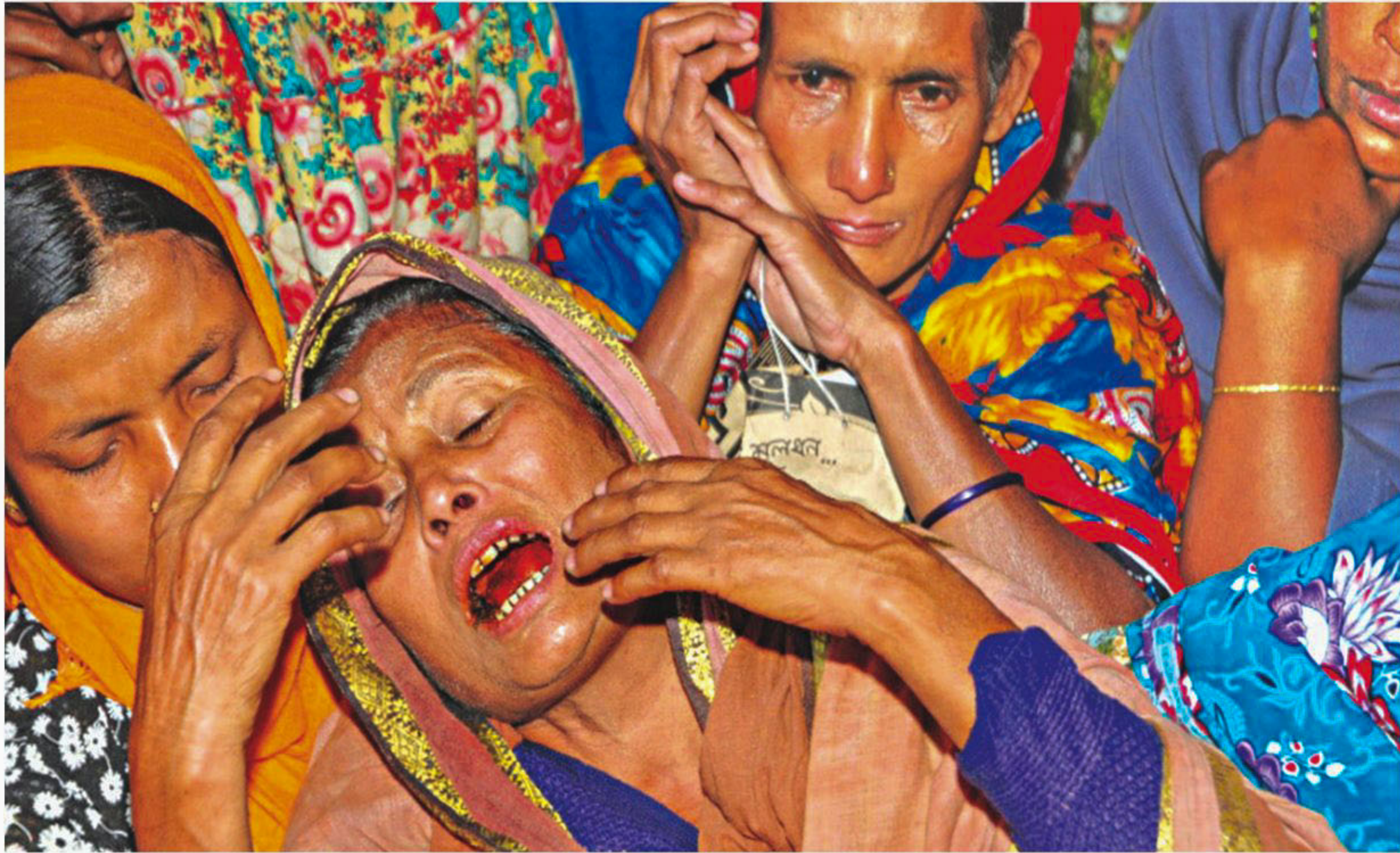
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Pir Lutfur Rahman, his son and four of Lutfur's disciples were slaughtered in his Gopibagha house on December 21, 2013.

Detectives came to know about Tareque's involvement in the Gopibagha six-murder while interrogating him over the murder of former Power Development Board chairman Khijir Khan, Deputy Commissioner (east) Mahbub Alam of the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star.

Khijir Khan was murdered in his Madhya Badda house on October 5 this year. Police arrested Tareque in Tangail on October 15.

On October 25, Tareque confessed to his involvement in the murder, according to detectives.



The wife of Moazzem Hossain, the muezzin killed in a gun attack on a Shia mosque in Bogra, wails at her house in Shibganj upazila's Haripur yesterday morning. *Bottom left*, crowds in front of Masjid Al Hussain, the mosque which came under the attack, in Haripur Bus Stop area. *Bottom right*, bullet shells found at the crime scene.

PHOTO: STAR/COLLECTED

## Shias feel insecure

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present there are at least 110 Shia families (some 600 people) in the three unions under Shibganj upazila. The upazila has some 6,000 Sunni followers in about 2,000 families, he added.

Jafar, who is believed to be the first Shia follower in Shibganj, said: "I never faced any problem because of my faith, let alone facing a threat in the last three decades."

There has been such a harmony between Shia and Sunni there, like in rest of the country, that Sunni Muslims sometimes offer prayers in the Shia mosque that came under the gun attack.

Given the past record, locals, victims and their families said they did not believe the shooting had anything to do with their sect.

Police are clueless about the attackers or their motive, but locals from both the communities see it as an act of Islamist

militants.

The shooting happened around 5:45pm when 30 to 40 people were saying their evening prayers.

At least three gunmen stormed the mosque at Atmul union, locked the main entrance from inside and shot at the praying people at random before fleeing, police said, quoting locals.

Cops yesterday collected evidence, including eight bullet shells and the lock used to close the mosque entrance. Two people -- Anwar Hossain, 48, and Jewel, 25 -- were detained for questioning.

According to the US-based SITE Intelligence Group, Islamic State has claimed responsibility for the attack.

"The Islamic State (IS) claimed credit for the November 26, 2015 attack on a Shi'ite mosque in Bangladesh's Bogra district," SITE, which monitors jihadist activities, said in a tweet at 3:00am yesterday.

The claim could not be independently verified.

Thursday's was the second attack on the Shia community in Bangladesh in just over a month.

On October 24, their Ashura gathering at Hossaini Dalan in the capital was bombed, killing two people and injuring about 100 others.

That attack too bears testimony to the harmonious coexistence of Shia and Sunni in the country, as both the dead and most of the injured were Sunnis, The Daily Star found after talking to the families.

Hossaini Dalan is regarded as the headquarters of the Shia Muslims in the country, and the attack happened about half an hour before the traditional Tajia procession was to be brought out to mark the holy Ashura.

The day commemorates the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA), and the Shia community in Bangladesh has

been observing the day for centuries, but never before came under any attack.

The black flag Jafar hoisted at the Imamia Library, which he founded in 1982 in Shibganj, protesting the Ashura attack still flies.

"We are worried after all these years. We urge the prime minister and law enforcers to take the matter seriously and help us live peacefully," said the 65-year-old.

He said some students of local Qawmi madrasas travelled to Chittagong for attending religious programmes recently, and there might be a connection here.

Last year, two religious gatherings were held in the upazila's Gopinathpur and Aliarhat Bazar. "Speakers censured some religious practices of Shia's in those meetings," said Jafar.

"We live like brothers and sisters and even Sunnis attend prayers in our mosque and the vice versa."

Thirty-five-year-old Idris Ali is just one

CLIMATE CHANGE

## Obama sees chance to make mark

AFP, Washington

Six years after a fiasco in Copenhagen and a year before he leaves office, a Paris summit offers Barack Obama the chance to make his mark in the fight against climate change.

In December 2009, Obama left the Danish capital after signing on to a hastily issued statement by leaders hoping to save face.

His hair now greying, Obama will arrive on Monday in the French capital against a very different backdrop.

A deal to slow global warming seems to be within reach, even if it is less ambitious and less far reaching than first hoped.

After the terror attacks in Paris, Obama was among the first to say he would stick to his plans to attend climate talks on November 30.

Some 150 other leaders are also expected to be there.

Only a few of them, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel were around to remember what Obama has called the "disorganized mess" of Copenhagen.

This time, the ground has been well prepared in advance.

A year ago, Obama inked a deal with the planet's other major polluter, China.

For the first time, Beijing made a firm promise that greenhouse gases would peak by 2030, sending a signal to the rest of the world.

Tellingly, Obama's first meeting when he lands in Paris on Monday will be with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

The negotiations in Paris will also be different, each country is setting its own targets rather than having binding targets imposed upon them.

## Defer polls by 15 days

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certain conditions," he said.

However, the party did not say what it would do if the Election Commission did not defer the polls.

"Ten days to submit nominations is not enough," he said, stressing the need for more time to complete the process of nominating candidates.

Meanwhile, EC Secretary Sirajul Islam last night told The Daily Star that there was no scope of postponing the election date.

Ripon also questioned the decision to hold the election on December 30, barely three days before a large number of new voters would be added to the voter list. He put the number at five

million.

"We demand the rescheduling of the polls to enable them to vote, and for other reasons," said Ripon, also the foreign affairs secretary of the party.

He also criticised the EC as it appointed administrative officers as returning officers though, he claimed,

the commission has sufficient manpower.

He requested the government to lift the block on Facebook so that the aspirants could conduct their campaign in the social media as well.

The decision to participate in the municipality polls was made at a meeting of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia

with senior leaders on Wednesday. The next day, the BNP chief met the leaders of the allies to discuss the issue, said party sources.

The BNP-led 20 party boycotted the 2014 parliamentary elections as it demanded that the polls be conducted under the supervision of a neutral caretaker administration.

## AL's job tougher than BNP's

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16 of them.

In around 70 municipalities, four or more people are trying to win the ruling party's blessings. In the rest, the number of leaders working to get the AL endorsement ranges between two and three in a municipality.

If the grassroots fail to pick a single candidate for a mayor post, they will have to send the list of aspirants to the AL Parliamentary Board which will finalise the nominee, according to the grassroots leaders.

As for the BNP camp, the ruling party's archival has single mayor aspirants in 59 municipalities. In most other places, it has only two leaders who want the party ticket.

The main opposition Jatiya Party men are preparing for the polls in around 30 municipalities of Comilla, Rajbari, Patuakhali, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Joypurhat, Chapainawabganj and Natore. In most of them, it has single candidates.

With the elections ahead, Jamaat-e-Islami grassroots too have become active in over two dozen municipalities of Bhola, Gaibandha, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, Nilphamari, Chapainawabganj, Bogra, Sirajganj, Rajshahi, Habiganj and Sylhet districts. It has single mayor aspirants in each of them.

This is for the first time the municipality polls will be held on party lines. The polls have already generated much heat in the political landscape as both the AL and its arch-foe BNP are stepping in the battle of ballots for the first time since the 2008 parliamentary election.

The elections are also a popularity test for the parties. So, both the AL and the BNP are focused on picking single candidates for the mayoral posts.

From a meeting of its Central Working Committee on Thursday, the ruling party issued specific directives for the grassroots in this regard.

AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif has already warned that the party will take strict actions if any grassroots leader contests the election defying the party decision.

A team of senior BNP leaders too have started working to choose single mayoral candidates. BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will give the final approval to the list they are preparing, party insiders said.

Unlike in the parliamentary polls, the electoral laws in the municipal elections do not allow the parties to nominate more than one candidate.

In the national elections, a party can choose more than one person to file nominations in a constituency. But it needs to formally inform the returning officer about its final choice before the allocation of electoral symbols.

Once the final candidate is allocated the party's electoral symbol, nominations of the others become invalid automatically. And they cannot contest the election as independent candidates either.

But in the municipality polls, a party must nominate one candidate for each mayoral post. This means the nomination aspirants have to ensure at the very beginning of the electoral process that they get the party endorsement. So, those who will not get the tickets will have time to contest the polls as independent candidates.

The report is prepared by Pankaj Karmakar, Partha Pratim Bhattacharjee, Rashidul Hasan, Prabir Barua Chowdhury and Shakhawat Liton in assistance with The Daily Star's district correspondents.

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