



PHOTO: AFP

Leader of the British opposition Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, gives a speech during a rally against a proposed renewal of Britain's Trident nuclear weapon system in Trafalgar Square central London, yesterday. Tens of thousands of people joined the protest against the renewal of the system.

## Thousands join anti-nuke march in London

AFP, London

Tens of thousands of people protested in London yesterday against the proposed renewal of Britain's Trident nuclear weapons system, in what supporters said was the biggest such demonstration in a generation.

Opposition Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, who has been a member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) since he was 16, addressed the crowd in Trafalgar Square alongside Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon.

"If a nuclear war took place there would be mass destruction on both sides of the conflict. Everyone should think about the humanitarian effects on people across this globe if they're ever used," Corbyn said.

Protesters converged on London from around Britain and CND claimed that 60,000 people joined the march. AFP reporters estimated the numbers in the low tens of thousands, while police would not give an estimate.

Corbyn said he was proud to attend "the largest anti-nuclear weapons rally in a generation", adding that it was a "an expression of many people's opinions and views".

A decision is expected to be taken later this year on replacing the ageing submarines which carry the Trident missiles, at an estimated cost of £31 billion (39 billion euros, \$43 billion).

Prime Minister David Cameron's Conservative government is in favour, saying the system is vital to safeguard Britain's security.

"Disarming now would be a reckless gamble with our national security that would play into the hands of our enemies," junior defence minister Philip Dunne said ahead of the march.

Labour is deeply divided on the issue between leftwingers like Corbyn, who want to scrap it, and some centrists who want to keep it.

## Two children

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piece of rope and a towel and fled, claimed Kamal, the father.

Around 1:15pm, Soful's younger sister Sufia Akhtar, who also lives at the house and was sleeping in the other room, saw the bodies lying on the floor. She immediately called her father over the phone and informed him about the incident.

Kamal alleged that his first wife Rokeya Begum, mother of Soful, might have instigated the killings but could not say why she would do that. Rokeya lives in Comilla and in Shariatpur.

Victims' neighbours alleged that Soful was a drug addict and he might have killed his stepbrothers for their father's properties.

Kamal, however, said he was not worth that much for somebody to go after his properties.

Visiting the spot, Abdullah Al Mamun, additional superintendent of police in Comilla, said they recovered a rope and a towel believed to have been used in the murders.

The bodies were sent to Comilla Medical College Hospital for autopsies.

Meanwhile, locals brought out a procession in Dakshin Rasulpur area, demanding exemplary punishment of the killer.

## Afghan blasts kill 25, jeopardising talks

AFP, Kabul

Twenty-five people were killed in two attacks in Afghanistan yesterday, including one in the capital, with the blasts potentially jeopardising attempts by Kabul to persuade the Taliban to join peace talks set for next month.

Witnesses and officials described how the suicide bomber detonated near the Defence Ministry in the centre of Kabul just as offices closed for the day, in an attack later claimed by the Taliban.

"Twelve people, including two Afghan soldiers were killed and eight others injured," a ministry statement said, while a previous toll given by Kabul police chief Abdul Rahman Rahimi stated nine were dead and 13 wounded.

The bomber was on foot, ministry spokesman Dawlat Waziri added.

"I saw wounded civilians and army soldiers. They were begging for help but security forces did not allow common people to help them," witness Sardar Mohammad told AFP.

"The casualties, mostly, were civilians," said another man, Saleh Mohammad. "It was the time when all

the people were going home."

Ambulances converged at the site of the explosion as police and the army set up a security cordon.

Analysts have previously observed the Taliban stepping up attacks in the heart of the capital to gain leverage ahead of attempted peace negotiations with the Western-backed government in Kabul, against whom they have been fighting a bloody insurgency for more than 14 years.

Earlier on Saturday a suicide bomber on a motorbike struck at a market in Asadabad, the capital of restive Kunar province, killing 13 people and wounding at least 39.

No group has yet claimed responsibility for that attack, which a spokesman for the provincial governor and a police official both said targeted a tribal leader fiercely opposed to the insurgents, Haji Khan Jan.

The Taliban do not generally claim attacks with high numbers of civilian casualties, saying they only target Afghan soldiers -- "stooges" of foreign powers -- and NATO troops, considered "invaders", as well as symbols of the central government.

## A Mirpur anticlimax

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There was however a glimpse of that unpredictability that has been associated with a match involving the two teams when India came out to chase an easy target of 84 runs and immediately got caught by one Mohammad Amir storm.

The Pakistan left-arm pacer, bowling perhaps the best six deliveries -- discounting that wide -- a T20 match has ever witnessed, had Rohit Sharma trapped in front with the second ball with a fast and furious off-stump inswinger. Sharma was lucky not to get out in the first ball, a similar delivery that failed to convince the Sri Lankan umpire.

He repeated the magic in the fourth ball of the over and dismissed a clueless Ajinkya Rahane in similar fashion.

With a raucous crowd backing him up, Amir steamed in for his next over and dispatched Suresh Raina, this time with a well-disguised slower delivery that the batsman looped to mid-on.

But apart from Amir's brilliant spell, Pakistan's bowling did not have much to show for as Virat Kohli and Yuvraj Singh slowly but steadily took India close to victory with a 68-run stand for the fourth wicket.

Kohli scored a 51-ball 49 which included seven fours while Yuvraj stayed their till the end with 14 off 32 balls to take India home.

However, the match as a contest was all but over when Pakistan, sent in to bat, lost six of their frontline batsmen for 42 runs against a bowling attack tipped as the weak link of the two battling teams. Pakistan eventually limped to 83 all out in 17.3 overs.

When Mohammad Hafeez hit the second ball of the game, a full-length delivery from Ashish Nehra, between point and cover for four, the audience thought a cracker of a contest was on. But the Professor, unwilling to accept the ground reality that it was not a typical sub-continental wicket, paid the penalty of slashing at a delivery that bounced a bit more and Indian

captain Mahendra Singh did the rest behind the wicket. It started a procession that never stopped, with Sharjeel Khan committing the same crime against Jasprit Bumrah, the better of the two Indian pace bowlers operating with the new ball.

It then turned into a case of coming in to bowl and picking up a wicket for the rest of the Indian bowling attack. Three run-outs, all as good as the other one, summed up India's complete dominance over a Pakistan batting line-up that definitely looked out of depth in terms of quality.

If luck had something to do with the game, then it also did not help Pakistan's cause. Shoaib Malik hit the best shot of the innings, if not the best of the game, a straight drive against Bumrah. But it counted for nothing as the ball struck the middle stump at the non-striker's end. The next ball produced the best fielding effort from India's best fielder Kohli that saw a tumbling Khurram Manzoor stranded halfway down the pitch.

Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi also became a run-out victim much to the disappointment of his fans, who were anticipating something special from the hardest hitter of the ball.

Sarfraz Ahmed with 25 was Pakistan's top-scorer and Khurram, who scored 10, was the other batsman to have reached double figures, while Mr Sundries was the second highest with 15.

Hardik Pandya, whose all-round ability was on show against Bangladesh in the opening match, was the best bowler for India with figures of 3 for eight in 3.3 overs. Bumrah also bowled brilliantly to finish with 1-8. His two maidens at the start of the innings were testament to a mature head on very young shoulders.

With two wins from as many games India are now in pole position to make it to the March 6 final, leaving their bitter rivals with much to do against holders Sri Lanka and hosts Bangladesh in their next games.

## 3 suspects

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disclose their identities.

Criminals slit the throat of Jogeswar Dasadhikari, 50, a priest of Shri Shri Sonto Gaurio Temple at Debiganj's Sonapota, on the early morning of February 21. Two devotees were injured as the criminals fired shots and exploded homemade bombs while fleeing.

A day later, police said they had arrested three suspects -- Khalilur Rahman, Jahangir Hossain and Babul Hossain. They claimed two of the arrestees were JMB operatives while the other was an activist of Jamaat-e-Islami.

On February 23, a Panchagarh court placed the three on a 15-day remand each.

Police on Friday arranged a press conference at Debiganj Police Station where Deputy Inspector General Humayun Kabir of Rangpur police range claimed to have "completely cracked" the case.

He also said three "key suspects", including the one who had slit the priest's throat, had been arrested during drives, conducted on information gleaned from the three detained earlier, on Thursday night.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad in a statement yesterday demanded that the offenders be tried under the Speedy Trial Act.

The platform, along with Bangladesh Hindu Bouddha Christian Oikya Parishad, also formed human chains in Thakurgaon and Panchagarh to press home their demand.

## Two ex-military

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The victims have been demanding accountability for the crimes at Sepur Zarco for decades.

"We were raped, all of this happened. If it wasn't like this, where are our husbands? We don't know where they are," said Demesia Yac, 70, who acted as a representative for the women.

The court had heard harrowing details about what went on at the base in the eastern highlands during the 1980s.

According to the prosecution, in 1982 armed forces repeatedly attacked the village of Sepur Zarco and killed or took away Mayan leaders who had been applying for land titles and had angered local landowners.

The men were accused of being associated with left-wing guerrillas. Agustin Chen, one of the men who survived said the soldiers took him to a cell and beat him every day. "They killed seven people, throwing two grenades into the pit where they had put them."

The court heard how military commanders considered the women to be "available" without their men and had then taken them into sexual and domestic slavery.

They were required to report every third day to the base for "shifts" during which they were raped, sexually abused, and forced to cook and clean for the soldiers.

In a report to the court, anthropologist Irma Alicia Velasquez Nimatuj said military outposts were installed in the region "to give security to the landowner's farms and to take possession of the lands".

For some of the victims, their ordeal lasted as long as six years until the base was closed in 1988.

## Heart of gold

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a bun or vegetables.

When he's done, he helps, filling table jugs unasked or fetching tube well water. More than anything he likes cleaning.

"One evening I saw him asleep in his usual place on the high school veranda," says Kalam. "He was totally covered in mosquitoes. Then I really understood Anwar is ill. It's not possible to sleep through that."

Anwar is greeted by many in the market but it's Kalam who is his friend. When Kalam catches Anwar by the scruff of the neck, Anwar laughs with joy. He recognises a friend's banter. "Anwar is a big eater," says Kalam. "He drinks up to three jugs of water at one sitting."

Another regular, Altaf, is altogether different. "Altaf just sits," says Kalam. "Occasionally he eats a little." In his early 40s, Altaf has the habit of obsessively blowing on his hand and sometimes he suddenly runs, furious and shouting as though arguing with relatives.

Miah Hagla, meaning Miah-the-fool in Hattian Bangla, isn't an outsider. The 60-year-old is from neighbouring Sonadia union where he has a home but nobody to care for him. He swears at people. He gives blessings. "People come to him," Kalam says. "He gets around ten new shirts and lungis per month from followers."

On an average day, three to five mentally ill regulars arrive to dine for free at Abu Kaka's. "I don't feed them thrice a day because they have no schedule," Kalam says, "When they arrive I give what I have."

Of the thirty-odd teashops in Sagoria Bazar his is the only one to provide food so consistently. It's a practice that Kalam, son of a farmer, has continued since opening his first teashop after the devastating 1991 cyclone.

"From the beginning there was Modhu Mama," he recalls. "He was from Brahmanbaria and nobody could understand much of his speech. He had his own language." Modhu Mama spent the rest of his life in Hattiya. A few years ago he died, aged around 60.

"I love all people," Kalam says when asked why he feeds the mentally ill. "I love to talk with the mentally ill. I love

them too." With no history of mental illness in his family, there's no personal motivation.

Mental illness is not always convenient. Modhu Mama often soiled his lungi such way that many were repulsed by his smell. But Kalam offered understanding and compassion regardless.

"There used to be two from Barisal," Kalam says, "Then we had a teacher from Patuakhali who took one home again. I heard they belonged to a rich family."

Kalam has his own family of four sons and one daughter. His oldest son is a Higher School Certificate candidate. He admits family expenses are onerous. Yet neither Kalam's wife nor children object to his caring for vulnerable strangers.

"What can my family say about it?" poses Kalam philosophically. "It's me making the income. Anyway, sometimes I take my guests home too."

Other teashop customers are not always as tolerant. "Some are uncomfortable eating beside a mentally ill visitor," Kalam says. "In my opinion, if you're not eating beside a mentally ill person it's your bad luck!"

While some locals blame insanity on possession by supernatural spirits like jinns or bhoots, Kalam traces its cause to stress. He believes that life's hardships can sometimes push a mind too far. "But I'm different," he freely admits. "I like to walk in the dark. I don't use a light." It's a habit that would have others concerned about the risk of spirit attack.

Although Kalam believes caring for others is a good deed in Islam, from his conversation it's clear that he does it quite simply because, for him, caring for another human is the most natural thing there could be to do.

"It'd be nice if the mentally ill had three proper meals and good shelter, at a minimum," he says, considering the future.

It's evening now. Darkness has come as our chat is done. I want to return the following morning for photographs and ask what time I might meet one of his regulars. "They come at any time," Kalam reminds me, "but if you want Anwar, I'll catch him!" The Daily Star decided it would do as well to let Anwar be.

## Truce takes hold

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the truce along with a UN operations centre and would be first to deal with any infractions.

De Mistura said it was important that any incidents are "quickly brought under control" and a military response should be the "last resort".

Russia, which has waged nearly five months of intense air strikes against rebels in support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, said it had halted bombing in all areas covered by the truce.

Moscow has vowed to keep striking IS, Al-Nusra and other "terrorist groups", but said its warplanes would not fly any sorties over Syria on the first day of the ceasefire to avoid potential "mistakes".

Calm held throughout the night in Aleppo, Syria's second city which has been almost encircled by pro-regime troops after a massive Russian-backed offensive that has caused tens of thousands to flee.

Residents said they were considering taking their children on a normally unthinkable visit to the park.

"I hope the truce continues even for a limited time so we can get back part of our old lives from before the war," said Abu Nadim, who lives in Aleppo with his wife and four children.

In the flashpoint rebel town of Daraya, west of Damascus, the local council told AFP there was no shelling yesterday morning.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based monitoring group, said it was also relatively quiet in the central provinces of Homs and Hama.

But fighting continued in areas where IS and Al-Nusra are present, including in the patchwork of territory in Aleppo province.

Twin suicide bombings killed six people outside the town of Salamiyeh in Hama province, where IS is present, state news agency SANA reported.

The jihadist group also launched an attack on Tal Abyad in Raqa province,

## Pro-AL panel

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The winning candidates from the white panel are Abu Barak Forhad (vice-president), Abdus Salam Khan (senior assistant general secretary), Md Shahadat Hossain Bhuiyan (assistant general secretary), Ali Ahmed (library affairs secretary), Lucky Akhtar (cultural affairs secretary), Abdul Hye Mamun (office secretary) and Md Baharul Alam (sports affairs secretary).

On the other hand, from the blue panel Afroza Begum Shelley has been elected as senior vice-president, Abu Bakar Siddiqui as treasurer and Md Shaful Islam as social welfare affairs secretary.

Among the 15 members' posts, white panel bagged 12 and blue panel got three.

clashing with the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) there.

A US-led coalition targeted the town with air strikes in an attempt to push back IS, according to the Observatory.

The complexities of a conflict which escalated from anti-government protests into a full-blown war drawing in rival world powers make brokering a lasting halt to the fighting a huge challenge.

Assad has been bolstered by the support of Russia and Iran while the West, Turkey and Gulf states back rebel groups.

Less than an hour before the ceasefire began, the UN Security Council gave its unanimous backing to the truce in a resolution drafted by the US and Russia.

Syria's top opposition grouping, the High Negotiations Committee (HNC), said Friday that 97 opposition factions had agreed "to respect a temporary truce", but only for two weeks initially.

It said Damascus and its allies must stop attacking rebel forces "under the pretext of fighting terrorism".

## 2 more die

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Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said sources at the DMCH police camp.

Shohag and Mehedi had 30 and 32 percent of their bodies burnt, added the sources.

The February 24 fire that broke out on February 24 might have originated from a mosquito coil while four people were asleep in the tin-shed shop near a kitchen market in New Market area.

The other two, Amjad and Yeamin, both 25, died of their burns that day.

## Law minister

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Motijheel in the capital.

"I believe he [CJ] will for sure point this out in the upcoming verdict, and if he doesn't do that, I will take his advice for sure about what he tried to say and why."

"After properly learning about the matter, I will act to find a remedy," he said.

Declining to answer a question on the lack of data produced by the prosecution in the trial of Jamaat leader Mir Quasem Ali, the law minister said he would not comment on a sub-judice matter.

On February 23, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court came down hard on the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) prosecution and the investigation agency for their "poor performance" in dealing with the war crimes cases.

Earlier, the apex court in its observation in the verdict on the appeal of Jamaat chief Delwar Hossain Sayeede blamed the prosecution and the investigation agency for "incompetency".