

Scores injured in post-polls violence

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attack by supporters of Murad Hossain, who lost in the polls, victims and locals said.

The injured are Manumati Biswas, 45, Molina Biswas, 50, Rekha Rani, 40, Vakti Biswas, 40, Shibani Biswas, 45, Laxmi Rani Biswas, 40, and Surajit Biswas, 25. Of them, Manumati and Molina were undergoing treatment at the Upazila Health Complex while the rest took first aid.

During the attack, the homes of Khokon Biswas, Kalipado Biswas, Robin Biswas, Ananda Bala, Tapos Biswas, Sribash Biswas and Satyaranjan Biswas were ransacked, said police and villagers.

Bikash Kumar Biswas, general secretary of the union Puja Udjapan Committee, said followers of Murad Hossain beat up Taposh Biswas, a polling agent of his rival candidate Nur Mia, during vote-counting at Tita Panail Government Primary School polling centre.

Then, around 10 to 12 of his supporters went to the nearby Shikarpur village and attacked the houses, he said.

Despite repeated attempts, Murad Hossain could not be reached for comments.

Contacted, Nazmul Karim, officer-in-charge of Alfadanga Police Station, confirmed the attack, but did not name the attackers.

In Brahmanbaria, at least 20 people were injured in a clash between supporters of the chairman-elect and defeated candidates over establishing supremacy at Durgapur union under Ashuganj upazila yesterday.

The clash began around 8:00am when supporters of the chairman-elect swooped on the supporters of the defeated candidate. Both groups used locally-made arms during the clash, reports a correspondent.

In the district's Nobinagar upazila,

at least 15 people were injured when supporters of the chairman-elect and a defeated chairman candidate clashed with each other at Birgaon union.

The incident happened when followers of defeated candidate Kabir Hossain attacked chairman-elect Kabir Ahmed and his men around 11:00am yesterday, said police and witnesses.

In Natore, at least 15 houses were torched and 15 more vandalised in Baknai and Khapara villages in Lalpur sadar union yesterday during a clash between supporters of member candidates of ward no-2 in the union.

No one was injured as the residents fled for life.

Supporters of Abdul Hannan, who was defeated in the polls, attacked the houses belonging to the supporters of member-elect Yousuf Ali around 10:00am. The attack happened centring on a clash on the polling day. Followers of another member-elect of ward no-3 Abdul Goni joined Hannan's side.

Babul Hossain, sub-inspector of Lalpur Police Station, confirmed the incident.

Victims claimed that the attackers looted their valuables, including ornaments and cash.

In Sherpur, at least four houses and four shops of seven supporters of a defeated chairman candidate were vandalised in two villages of Urfa union in Nakla on Thursday night.

Nur-e-Alam Talukdar, a rebel candidate of Awami League, alleged that supporters of AL candidate Rezaul Haque, who won the polls, attacked the houses of his supporters in Khicha and Barmaisha villages soon after the polls results were announced.

The attackers looted goods after vandalising a readymade garment shop and a grocery, he alleged.

Contacted, Rezaul Haque denied the allegations outright.

Golam Haider, officer-in-charge of Nakla Police Station, said some unknown people "hit" the houses with bamboo sticks a few times.

In Madaripur, at least 15 people were injured, three of them bullet-hit, in a clash between supporters of AL-nominated candidate and AL's rebel candidate at Kuniya union under Sadar upazila yesterday.

CASES FILED

A case was filed with Keraniganj Police Station against some unnamed people over the death of fourth-grader Shuvo Kazi Srabon, who was hit by a spray bullet fired allegedly by a supporter of the AL chairman candidate at Madhurchar Government Primary School polling station.

Salal Kazi, uncle of the victim, was named as the plaintiff of the case. But Salal told The Daily Star that he did not file any case, but some policemen came and took his signature.

OC Ferdous Hossain said the family was unwilling to file any case, which is why they filed it.

In Manikganj, police arrested a man named Arshed Ali in connection with the murder of Nomesa Begum, a supporter of defeated member candidate Shipon Ali.

In Jessore, a case was filed with Kotwali Police Station against 28 named people, including member candidate Billal Hossain, over the death of Abdus Sattar, who was killed during clashes between supporters of two rival candidates in Chanchara union under Sadar upazila, police said.

No one has been arrested in the case filed by victim's son Faruk Hossain.

In Chittagong, police filed a case against 200 to 300 unidentified people over the attack on police officials in Sandwip upazila where two people were killed in a gunfight between supporters of two rival chairman candidates and police.

Forge unity to protect minorities

Urges Syed Ashraf

BSS, Dhaka

Public Administration Minister Syed Ashraf Islam yesterday urged all to forge a unity to protect the existence of religious minorities in Bangladesh.

The minister was speaking at the biennial conference of Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad at the city's Dakeswari Temple.

"The survival of the minorities is the existence of the nation," he said.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina would not remain silent if minority people are tortured or harassed, said Ashraf, also the Awami League general secretary.

"The government is trying to ensure the full safety of the minority people all over the country in many ways," he added.

Referring to arson attacks on them, the minister categorically said, "If anyone is tortured anywhere, the Sheikh Hasina government will not sit idle."

Speaking on the occasion, AL advisory council member Suranjit Sengupta said a vested quarter destroyed the spirit of the Liberation War by killing Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, but it failed to do so ultimately.

"Subsequently, the Awami League established a secular Bangladesh," he added.

Puja Udjapan Parishad President Kajol Debnath chaired the programme.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Biren Shikder, State Minister for Fisheries and Livestock Narayan Chandra Chanda, Swachhchasebak League General Secretary Pankaj Debnath and General Secretary of Puja Udjapan Parishad Joyonta Kumar Deb, among others, were present.

A little care

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development and communication skills do not match her age, Parvin is proud that her daughter is dancing on stage.

"With proper training in her school, my daughter now performs like a perfect dancer. She has participated in different competitions in Pabna and other districts, and got prizes," she says.

Parvin, however, said their days in the past were hard as Kohinur, being an autistic child, did not have the social acceptance.

"When Kohinur was growing up, she was neglected by many of our own family members. Some of my relatives blamed me for giving birth to an autistic child. They said she was the result of my sins."

In many cases, people like Kohinur are regarded as mentally retarded but in reality, they are intelligent and require special care for their intellectual development, she said.

Kohinur is one of the 62 people with autism studying in the Pabna school run by Jatiya Protibondhi Unnayan Foundation under the social welfare ministry.

Headmistress Rashida Akter Ripa said the students attend various cultural programmes and participate in sports competitions at divisional and national levels, and win dozens of prizes.

However, they are often deprived of the basic education and nursing they need both at family and government levels, she said.

There are some special schools for them but most of them lack skilled teachers and other facilities, she added.

Around 0.8 percent of children between the ages of 5 and 17 have autism or neurodevelopment disorders in Bangladesh, according to the Neurodevelopment Disability Protection Trust under the social welfare ministry.

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person

communicates with, and relates to, other people. The neural disorder usually appears in the early years of a person.

Monsur Rahman, district disability affairs officer in Pabna, said there was a lack of facilities for autistic children at the special schools.

Also, there are just two specialised schools in Pabna and they can teach only up to 100 autistic children at a time. However, the number of such children in the district would approximately be 1,100, he said.

Rahman also called for promoting social acceptance of autistic children and generating awareness on autism in Bangladesh.

World Autism Awareness Day is being observed across the globe today with the theme -- "Autism and the 2030 Agenda: Inclusion and Neurodiversity."

In his message, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called for advancing the rights of individuals with autism and ensuring their full participation and inclusion as valued members of diverse human family who can contribute to a future of dignity and opportunity for all.

The call is very much relevant to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted at the United Nations. The agenda promises to leave no one behind.

However, Bangladesh still portrays a sorry state of the people with autism, said Rowan Hafiz, chairperson of the Autism Welfare Foundation.

"Awareness on autism has increased to some extent. But, the facilities for their [children with autism] education are really scanty."

"A tiny portion of some five lakh autistic children in Bangladesh can avail schooling... If we talk about inclusion, the mainstreamed schools need to have separate facilities for the autistic children," she told The Daily Star.

Caribbean revelry amid

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celebrated by the 'Champion' move where the Windies players stretch out and retract both their arms in a rhythmic fashion, chanting the opening of the phrase lyrically.

And while India suffered a heart-breaking exit from the World T20, the cricketing fraternity led by Sachin Tendulkar lauded the home team for its impressive performance and asked the players not to lose heart.

"Tough luck boys. It was a good match and well fought! Best wishes to West Indies and England for the finals," Tendulkar tweeted.

Former Australian fast bowler Glenn McGrath said he had not seen a

game like the India vs West Indies at the Wankhede Stadium.

"What a game!! I've never seen anything like it. West Indies will need next 2 days to get over celebrations tonight," he tweeted.

Commenting about the match, former England captain Michael Vaughan said on his Twitter account, "Forget the result. That was a fantastic game of cricket. Two great teams, brilliant pitch and an incredible crowd. Bloody Love T20."

Virat Kohli dragged India ahead throughout the tournament with some match-winning knocks and he also ended as their top run-getter. However, Sri Lankan legend believes that he did

not get the required support from the rest of the team which is required to win any tournament.

"Virat Kohli dragged India ahead throughout the tournament. Hardik Pandya has been a problem. He was lucky to get two wickets against Bangladesh. [Ravindra] Jadeja and Pandya did not adjust well to the conditions," Sangakkara said.

The West Indies will now play against England in the final of the showcase event on April 3. England had defeated New Zealand in the first semifinal by seven wickets at the Feroz Shah Kotla Stadium in New Delhi on Wednesday to book their spot in the final.

Number rising in Mumbai brothels

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There are more than 3 million people of Bangladeshi origin in India, according to official data. Hundreds arrive undocumented every day, often crossing the 4,000 km (2,500 mile) border with a trafficker or "agent" who preys on poor, rural communities with promises of good jobs and a better life.

Rising migration within Asia is putting growing numbers of migrants at risk of being trafficked and abused by human smuggling networks, the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said in a report last year on the criminal trade, which is worth \$2 billion a year in Asia.

South Asia is the fastest-growing region for human trafficking in the

world, and the second-largest after Southeast Asia, according to the UNODC.

More than 150,000 people are known to be trafficked within South Asia every year, but the trade is underground and the real number is likely to be much higher. The numbers are expected to rise as migration within Asia grows.

Trafficked Bangladeshi women in Mumbai are often too afraid and ignorant of their rights to seek help, Patkar said. They are also reluctant to bring charges against their traffickers after being rescued from the brothels.

India signed an agreement with Bangladesh last year to strengthen cooperation and information sharing and ensure speedier investigations and

prosecutions of traffickers.

The agreement has made it easier to rescue and repatriate victims of trafficking, some of whom were previously treated as illegal immigrants.

"Now, there is a clear process: we take their deposition, then hand them over to an NGO there, which takes responsibility for their rehabilitation," a Mumbai police spokesman said. "This is a better outcome for the women."

This week, for the first time, a Bangladeshi trafficker was convicted on the strength of the victim's testimony given over a video link from Dhaka, where she had been repatriated after her rescue from a brothel in Mumbai. Activists and lawyers say such depositions could help curb trafficking.

No headway in probe

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Another CID team will visit the area on Monday, said the ASP.

The murder case was transferred to the CID on March 29 to expedite the probe.

Law enforcers are yet to detain any suspect or quiz anyone apart from the family members.

Meanwhile, different socio-political organisations continued demonstrations at different parts of the country yesterday.

A mass signature campaign began at Shahbagh intersection, demanding immediate arrest of Tonu's killer(s).

The Gonojagoron Mancha organised the campaign, also pressing for "capital punishment to rapists, implementation of High Court guidelines to prevent sexual harassment of women and children and security of women everywhere".

In Comilla, several organisations

joined locals at Pubali Chattar of Kandirpar area in a protest rally.

Speaking at the rally, local CPB leader Abul Bashar said delay in nabbing culprits will only raise questions about law enforcers' capability.

Nabil Hasan, a Victoria College student, said the whole country want to see that the perpetrators are brought to book.

"Tonu is the daughter of Comilla. We want to continue our protest by any means," he said.

Locals, especially cultural activists, have been demonstrating at Kandirpar since March 22.

Initially, students of Victoria College, where Tonu was a second-year student of history department and a theatre activist, joined the protests at Kandirpar. They started fresh demonstration on the college campus on March 27.

The college went on "summer vacation" yesterday for 17 days, according to the college principal, Prof. Abdul Rashid.

He said it was a prescheduled government vacation and that they had informed students about the vacation.

Shahadat Hossain, a student of the college and former president of Victoria College Theatre, said the vacation will have an impact on their ongoing protest.

"But we will continue our agitation," he told The Daily Star over the phone.

Tonu, 19, was found murdered about 400 yards from her house inside Comilla Cantonment on the night of March 20, according to her family members.

Protesting the killing, agitating students in Dhaka have called a strike at all educational institutions in the country for tomorrow.

Greed knows

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coast guard, said they recovered the lobsters after raiding Harina Ferry ghat, Alurbazar and Chandpur Machh ghat on Thursday.

"Some traders used jelly to increase the weight of lobsters," he said, adding that they conducted the drive acting on a tip-off.

Following test, they found that each lobster contained 100-150 grams of jelly.

Chandpur Executive Magistrate Litus Loren Chiran said the lobsters were buried under soil on the bank of river Dakatia in Ichli area.

Chandpur Deputy Commissioner Abdus Sabur Mondal said jelly was injected into the head of the lobsters. "We've sent a sample to a Chittagong lab to examine whether the jelly is poisonous."

Girl 'raped'

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woman before forcing her out of the bus in a desolate place by the road.

She was later given treatment at Tangail Medical College Hospital, police said.

Three of the four transport staff were held following the incident, said Nazmul Haque Bhuiyan, officer-in-charge of Tangail Model Police Station.

In Laxmipur, the two sisters, aged 16 and 14, called outside their house by a neighbour named Khokon around 9:00pm on Tuesday, said police, citing the victims' family.

Once they came outside, Khokon and three others gagged and dragged the girls to an abandoned house nearby and raped them.

The news broke only after the victims' mother yesterday filed a case with Komolnagar Police Station against Khokon, his cousin Siraj, and their friends Yousuf and Abdul Karim.

About the delay in filing the case, police said the locals first tried to settle the matter on their own.

None of the accused was arrested yet, said Kabir Ahmed, officer-in-charge of the police station.

DAMASCUS AIR STRIKES

Death toll rises to 30

REUTERS, Beirut

The death toll from air strikes in the Deir al-Asafir district southeast of Damascus has risen to more than 30, mostly women and children, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and the White Helmet civil defence group.

The strikes on Thursday, which the Observatory monitoring group said were carried out by Syrian aircraft, came despite a month-long "cessation of hostilities" in Syria between government forces and their opponents, excluding Islamic State and al Qaeda's Nusra Front.

Air strikes continued in the area yesterday. Two strikes hit the outskirts of Deir al-Asafir and at least seven hit the village of Bala, just north of Deir al-Asafir, the Observatory said.

US, China agree

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Pyongyang. The UN steps were drafted with support by China and reportedly came after two months of negotiations between Beijing and Washington.

Previous UN sanctions imposed after North Korea tests in 2006, 2009 and 2013 did little to dispel its nuclear ambitions, reports BBC.

Much of the burden of making sure the sanctions are implemented is falling on China.

Under the new measures, any North Korean ships arriving in China must be inspected for contraband and imports halted if there is proof profits from those exchanges go towards the North's nuclear programme.

Washington has long pushed for Beijing to put more pressure on North Korea. A White House statement in February said China's "unique influence over the North Korean regime" gave it the chance to do so.

China's foreign ministry last week said it was keen to push for wider talks on North Korea, involving a number of regional powers, during the meeting with Obama. There was no confirmation whether new talks were agreed on Thursday.

Obama also vowed to closely work on the same issue with its allies South Korea and Japan after meeting their leaders on Thursday.

No more survivors

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detained for questioning," said Kolkata deputy commissioner of police Akhilesh Chaturvedi, referring to the contractor.

Another police official speaking on condition of anonymity said the five "hold senior positions in the company".

Police earlier said they had registered a case of culpable homicide against the firm, whose offices in Kolkata have been sealed by investigators.

Derek O'Brien, a state lawmaker, said the company had been blacklisted in other states and had a "bad reputation".

"The law will take its own course, no one will be spared," he told reporters in Kolkata.

Construction of the two-kilometre-long flyover began in 2009 and was supposed to be completed within 18 months, but suffered a series of hold-ups.

A company representative infuriated victims on Thursday when he described the disaster as an "act of God".

Yesterday, the company appeared again to deny any responsibility for the disaster, and said the construction had been repeatedly delayed because it had been unable to get the necessary approvals.

"Prima facie we feel it is a mere accident for which we also feel very, very sorry," IVRCL's legal chief Seetha Peddapatil told reporters in the southern city of Hyderabad where the company is based.

"IVRCL and its staff will cooperate with the investigations and provide maximum support."

A group of about 50 mourners led a candlelit procession through the streets of Kolkata to the accident site yesterday evening in memory of the victims, an AFP reporter at the scene said.

"GROSS NEGLIGENCE" Survivors being treated at a nearby hospi-

"We are united in our efforts to deter and defend against North Korean provocations," he said.

Meanwhile, a top Pyongyang envoy told Reuters yesterday North Korea will pursue its nuclear and ballistic missile programme in defiance of the US and its allies, saying there is now a state of "semi-war" on the divided peninsula.

So Se Pyong, North Korea's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva denounced huge joint US-South Korea military exercises taking place which he said were aimed at "decapitation of the supreme leadership of the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea)".

"If the United States continues, then we have to make the counter-measures also. So we have to develop, and we have to make more deterrence, nuclear deterrence," So, who is also North Korea's envoy to the UN-sponsored Conference on Disarmament, said in an interview.

North Korea has lashed out against the UN sanctions - approved by the Security Council - aimed at withholding funds to its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes.

In a letter which reportedly condemns Beijing's part in the sanctions, the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of North Korea has commanded its people to actively confront China with a "nuclear storm". The letter was obtained by the Daily NK but could not be independently verified.

Target heaven

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children will help me go to heaven."

Mohammad's current wives - Bibi Naz Gul, 32, Noor Bibi, 28, and Hayat Bibi, 25 - have borne him a total of 14 boys and 21 girls so far. Two of the baby girls were born only a few weeks ago to two of his wives, but the doctor has already made plans to marry again.

"The bigger the family, the better," he explained. "I hope to find a fourth wife I can marry soon."

All 39 members of Mohammad's

family live under the same roof, in a 12-room house built on a 4,000 square-meter property. He runs a small practice in Quetta and earns a salary of 100,000 rupees (\$955) a month, which allows him to "provide everything his children need."

He doesn't discriminate between his daughters and sons, believing that women have the right to be educated. "All of my daughters will be educated," he said. In fact, his favourite child happens to be his eldest daughter, Shaguffa Nasreen.

Mohammad admits that he cannot remember the names of all his sons and daughters, but he's happy to have the house full of children. "I am very happy and lucky because of my children," he said.

"When I get home, 12 or 15 of my children run to give me a welcome. They seem very happy when they see me." He loves playing with his kids, especially organising cricket matches where both 11-member teams come from his own family. And for family vacations, he actually charters an entire bus!