

Hasnat Karim

FROM PAGE 16
A former teacher of North South University, Hasnat was shown arrested on August 13 in the case linked with the murders of 20 hostages, including 17 foreigners, in the attack.
He was later remanded for 16 days in the case.

Hasnat along with Canadian university student Tahmid Hasib, two survivors of the July 1 attack, was taken on remand for eight days from August 4 after they were shown arrested under section-54 of the Criminal Procedure Code.
Hasnat was again remanded for eight days. Tahmid was sent to jail after he was grilled for 14 days in remand in two phases.
Tahmid was later released in bail in a case filed under section-54 of the CrPC as he was not shown arrested in the café attack case.

On July 1, armed militants stormed Holey Artisan Bakery at the diplomatic zone in Dhaka's Gulshan area and killed nine Italians, seven Japanese, two Bangladeshis, one Indian and one Bangladesh-born US citizen. Two police officers were also killed.

Solar lamps

FOUNDATION AND Bangladesh Environment and Development Society have distributed solar lamps to the students. Solar home system has been installed on the primary school's roof for recharging the lamps. West Khejuria's school goes these days carry their lamps to and from school, and they carry them with pride.

"I can't explain how much having a solar lamp has changed my life," says Mitali, "or how much it has reduced daily life's burden for my family."
Classmates Suchitra Shil, Akash Barmon and Dipok Mondal are equally delighted by the change. Speaking with The Daily Star they expressed greater confidence in being able to continue their education and excitement at being able to study more easily of an evening.
"Our students never had enough after-school time to prepare homework," says the school's Headmistress Jhama Mondal. "Now they do. Our students have become more serious about attending classes and more competitive performers in examinations."
Around 1,500 solar lamps have been distributed across Banishanta union to which West Khejuria belongs.
Union Chairman Shudeb Kumar Roy says that solar lamps have done not less than to light up in local students a spirit for learning.
Parents are happy too.
"The solar lamp is very helpful to us," says Mitali's father.

AL to observe

South unit of AL will hold similar programmes in front of the party's central office on Bangabandhu Avenue.
In a statement, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader has called upon all units of the party and its associated organisations to observe the day. He also urged people of all strata to celebrate the day in a festive manner.
The BNP has sought permission from the authorities concerned for holding a protest rally in the city's Shuhrawardy Udyan on January 7. But the ruling party has already declared that it would not allow the BNP to hold the rally on that day.

The BNP will bring out processions in all the district headquarters except Dhaka, carrying black flags and wearing black badges to protest the 2014 national election.
On the first anniversary of the polls, the BNP and its allies had enforced almost a ceaseless blockade and hartals for three months. Street violence left at least 95 people killed and about 1,000 injured, mostly in targeted arson attacks on public transport.
On the second anniversary, the party had held a rally in the capital, but did not enforce any strike. The AL and the BNP held rallies in the capital on two different dates.

Students

FROM PAGE 2
headmaster of the school on different occasions, alleged Hafiz.
Hafiz said he felt embarrassed to go before the students as he was assaulted before them.
Hafiz was admitted to Bhaluka Upazila Health Complex and released from the hospital yesterday, sources said.
Shah Mohammad Abdul Matin, headmaster of the school, alleged that Harun was demanding money from the school funds. As they refused his illegal demand, Harun became angry with the schoolteachers.
Around 11:30am Tuesday, Harun entered the classroom of seventh-graders and demanded money from Hafiz. As Harun was refused, he beat up Hafiz, the headmaster said.
Harun then went to the classroom of sixth-graders and attempted to assault another teacher, Ruhul Amin, he alleged.
He also tore an attendance sheet of class-VII, Hafiz alleged.

You celebrate, we suffer

FROM PAGE 1
did they have to cause suffering to millions of residents of Dhaka and to those who travelled to and from our capital city. Why was the city allowed to be paralysed? Why hundreds of thousands of people were made to waste untold hours, why school students, office-goers, garment workers, day labourers, etc. were forced to miss their daily obligations just because Chhatra League wanted to celebrate its anniversary? Why thousands of gallons of petrol, gas, etc. were wasted as vehicles stood stranded forcing commuters to inhale polluted air for hours.

BCL could have just as well celebrated their anniversary without causing this public suffering. They could have easily started gathering earlier, like 8am, instead of from 10am or even later. The buses ferrying the activists could have reached the venue in the morning instead of during the height of traffic. BCL leaders could have instructed their processions to proceed along the side of the roads instead of occupying the entirety. In fact, a lot could have been done if public convenience was at all a consideration. We are afraid it seldom is.

Being stranded for more than three hours on the road yesterday and forced to walk to office, I was able to watch from close the occupants of the hundreds of buses that carried the Chhatra League activists joining the celebrations. As I walked past them I noticed that most of them did not fit the usual profile of students. The language they were using, the gestures they were making and the indiscipline they exhibited made me wonder how they strengthened the Awami League, or the government.

In one bus, I heard, Bangabandhu's historic 7th March speech being played. I instantly connected and tried to relive those fiery and exhilarating moments of '71. I saw with deep sadness that occupants of the bus paid no heed to it. I wondered why this exquisite and historic treasure was being subjected to this indignity.

Especially disturbing was the fact that they thought nothing of the inconvenience they were causing to thousands of people who were on their way to their daily chores. I saw many people alighting from their stranded buses and being forced to walk. Some were not able to go beyond a few steps because of their old age. As our photo-feature shows, people in ambulances waited for hours in traffic deprived of urgent medical treatment.

The BCL activists exuded a feeling that since they were a part of the ruling party they had a right to do whatever they liked and we the ordinary citizens had to just swallow it. In several places, the BCL buses were allowed to ply on the wrong side of the road while thousands of commuters hopelessly

and helplessly looked on. In fact, while I was crossing the old Rangs Bhavan intersection on foot, I saw police signaling these buses to use the wrong side while the law abiding commuters suffered in silence.

Many processions consisting of only a few hundred activists, who could have easily taken a side of the road to march, preferred to block the traffic completely as they slowly marched towards the Dhaka University several kilometers away. For the hours they took to reach their destination, traffic could only creep behind them creating a tailback going back several kilometers. In several busy intersections, traffic was halted for hours to allow BCL processions to pass.

Anybody who lives in Dhaka knows how inadequate the city roads are to manage the ever growing traffic. Dhaka is mainly a North-South oriented city. Only a few roads (I think three) serve as main arteries for city traffic. If these roads are blocked, even for a few minutes, the tailback takes hours to clear. In yesterday's case, it started from the morning and lasted at least till 2pm creating havoc for the whole city which only those who suffered can comprehend.

The AL General Secretary and former Chhatra League president Obaidul Quader said in his speech on the occasion, to keep Sheikh Hasina above controversy, Chhatra League must also be above controversy. A very bold and timely advice. But what does a reality check reveal? Most of the disturbances in campuses emanate from infighting of Chhatra League, and the origin of these infightings had very little to do with party work but everything to do with money making ventures. Just saying that outsiders are responsible for disruptive and criminal activities of BCL is not really addressing the problem. In fact it gives the signal that leaders are more interested in ignoring the malaise rather than doing something to fix it.

As we suffered the logjam in Dhaka, in Thakurgaon two factions of Chhatra League were fighting each other with heavy sticks and other implements of physical assault (as could be seen on TV footage) with police saying that leaders of both factions were involved.

It was not only yesterday. Every time AL, BCL, Jubo League, Krishak League or any other associate body of the ruling party has a programme, they seem to have a free reign of city streets. The general public may not be saying anything but it would be completely wrong to think they are not feeling anything. Such utter disdain for public inconvenience, such fundamental disrespect for public welfare and deep seated disregard for public rights cannot bode well for any political party, howsoever powerful and entrenched.

Farming solution

FROM PAGE 1
apps contain databases of pictures along with texts that can be accessed both online and offline, and on computers and mobile phones.

Inaugurating the launching programme at AKM Giasuddin Milky Auditorium in the capital's Khamarbari, Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury said, "We will have to remain dependent on others if we lag behind in food production. We will take all measures to provide extension services to farmers."
The Access to Information (a2i) programme of the Prime Minister's Office and the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) jointly organised the event.

Those who developed the apps said their focus was to help farmers grow crops more efficiently, prevent pest attacks and control numerous diseases that eat up a significant portion of crops every year.
Farmers lose an estimated average of 37 percent of their annual rice crop to pests and diseases, according to Rice Knowledge Bank developed by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI).

But by using the app, Krishoker Janala, farmers and extension officials can easily identify a disease inflicting damage on paddy fields. A farmer will have to select the picture showing the particular kind of disease on his mobile screen to learn about the problem and how to address it.
The app has information on more than 1,000 diseases of 120 plants, including major crops.
Its innovator Md Abdul Malek, an upazila-level agriculture officer, said the idea of developing such an app had crossed his mind as he faced difficulty in identifying the problems that farmers were complaining about.
"What I thought was a pictorial description would be helpful to understand [diseases] and suggest ways [to address them]," he said at the event.

Apart from identifying diseases or fertilizer deficiency, farmers will also learn about production, harvesting and processing techniques and pest and disease control methods through the app, Krishoker Digital Thikana.

The software will enable growers in remote locations to follow modern methods.
"Farmers from the bank of the

Jamuna [river] had to come to us taking a lot of trouble. The app will reduce their hassles in getting extension support," said Muhammad Shahadat Hussain Siddiqui who developed Krishoker Digital Thikana.

The other app, Pesticide Prescriber contains readily available and easily accessible information on pesticides so that farmers can fight pest and save their crops, according to A2i.

Its brainchild, Sukalpa Das built the app to help growers and agricultural workers identify crop-specific pesticides with validated information on the generic names, available brands, pack size, application methods and manufacturers.

The app provides the names of all pesticides approved by the government's plant protection authority.
"It is difficult for an extension official to keep in mind names of thousands of pesticides. But this app will be instrumental in offering solutions," Sukalpa said.
Steps have been taken also to engage 15,000 government officials in ensuring that farmers use these apps.

Secretary of the agriculture ministry Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah said crop production has reached close to the optimum level.
"It will be difficult to sustain the achievement without innovation." So, farmers should be encouraged to use the apps, Moinuddin said.
DAE Director General Md hamidur Rahman said his office would start working to ensure the use of the apps by farmers from next month.

China's first-ever

FROM PAGE 16
The center also renewed an orange alert for smog in the same period in northern, eastern and central China, with smog continuing to blanket the regions since Friday.

By yesterday, the fog alert in Beijing had been downgraded to yellow, though the city issued a red alert for smog, according to the Beijing Meteorological Service.

China is in the third year of a war on pollution aimed at reversing the damage done to its skies, soil and water after decades of untrammelled economic growth. But measures taken so far have had little or no effect.

Next national

FROM PAGE 16
party central committee member.
The last parliamentary elections held on January 5, 2014, were boycotted by most of the political parties, including the BNP. In the elections, 153 lawmakers were elected unopposed and of them 127 were from the Awami League.

The polls triggered a huge uproar as more than half the electorate had no choice in voting.

Recently, the BNP has indicated that it would join the next national polls.

Meeting sources said the AL chief asked party leaders and MPs to visit door-to-door from now on to woo voters and avoid being surrounded only by friends and family.

The party's dialogue with President Abdul Hamid about reconstitution of the Election Commission, slated for January 11, was also discussed in the meeting.

The AL decided not to place any significant proposals in this regard before the president as it might put pressure on him. Rather, the AL would request the president to reconstitute the EC in accordance with article 118 (1) of the constitution.

The meeting decide that the party would accept any decision made by the president regarding the reconstitution of the EC and the AL would place proposals before the reconstituted EC.

Oddly enough, the meeting formed a 10-member committee, led by HT Imam, for preparing proposals to be made before the president on the reconstitution of the EC. The committee was asked to submit the proposals to Hasina.

Quader asks

FROM PAGE 2
authorities as they are closing their institutions every now and then. Hand over the campus troublemakers to police, but never close the campuses jeopardising students' lives."

BCL central President Saifur Rahman Sohag presided over the programme while its General Secretary SM Jakir Hossain conducted it. Several AL leaders including former BCL leaders were also present.

Later, BCL units from different parts of Dhaka brought out a colourful procession that marched towards the AL office on Bangabandhu Avenue.

Earlier in the morning, the programme began by placing of wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu at Bangabandhu Bhaban and hoisting of the organisation's flag at the central office of BCL.

Two factions of BCL, backed by the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), also observed the day with separate programmes on the DU campus.

In the port city, ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, president of Chittagong city AL, urged BCL leaders to refrain from getting involved in internal feuds and ensure harmony in the organisation.

Firearms

FROM PAGE 16
yesterday's incident was underway. He said the arrestees were being quizzed and that they hope to glean more information and identify other members of the gang.

Rab and local sources said an organised gang had set up firearm-making factories deep inside the forest of Pahartali, and had been selling those to criminals, local robbers and Rohingyas. Law enforcement agencies frequently conduct drives there.

On April 11, 2015, police raided Baro Kulalpara in Baro Moheshkhali and recovered firearms and arms-making equipment. Two people -- Maqbul Ahmed and his wife Nasima Akhter -- were arrested during the drive, according to sources in Rab and police.

Rab in a drive in the same area on June 9 last year recovered eight locally-made guns and 15 bullets. One Jalal Uddin, who according to Rab is an expert in manufacturing arms, was arrested then.

On June 13 last year, police in a drive at Uttar Jhapua in Kalamarchhara union arrested Sarwar Kamal and recovered a gun and arms-making equipment from him. Sarwar was accused in murder and bank robbery cases.

On September 9, Rab in a raid at Keruntoli arrested Shahjahan, who stood accused in 11 cases. Seven locally-made firearms were recovered from his possession.

In a drive at Panirchhara on October 10, police arrested Abu Taleb, an alleged expert in making firearms, and recovered a locally-made gun and arms-making materials from his possession.

'No evidence' of genocide

FROM PAGE 16
Its interim findings come days after the government detained multiple police officers over a video showing policemen beating and kicking Rohingya villagers, reports AFP.

The footage, shot by one of officers, has sparked outrage and undermined the government's blanket denials that soldiers and police have carried out rights abuses.

The size of the "Bengali" population, mosques and religious buildings in the unrest-hit area "are proof that there were no cases of genocide and religious persecution", it said in a statement carried in state media.

The commission also found "insufficient evidence" of rape but added it was still looking into claims security forces committed arson, illegal arrests and torture of the Rohingya.

It blamed the unrest on foreign-backed extremists, whom it said had attacked security forces in October to harm "the sovereignty of the state...with the intention of fighting riots and conflicts".

Legal action has been taken against 485 people arrested during the army's subsequent clearance operation, it added, without giving further details.

Chris Lewa, from the Arakan project, said the commission had failed to properly investigate the widespread allegations of rape and rights abuses.

"The methodology is not credible, it's totally unprofessional," she said.

"There is no corroboration from the villagers they are meant to have talked to. Their job was to verify the allegations and the report has not verified them."

The commission has faced opposition from across the spectrum since it was announced last month -- the second body created by Suu Kyi to try

to heal the simmering religious divide in Rakhine state.

Rights activists dismissed the 13-member commission as toothless, pointing out it is headed by the vice-president, a former army general.

Rakhine nationalists and many of the state's MPs have denounced it as a tool for government propaganda.

MYANMAR FACES DANGER FROM IS Malaysia's top counter-terrorism official has said Myanmar faces a growing danger of attacks by foreign supporters of Islamic State (IS) recruited from Southeast Asian networks in support of persecuted Muslim Rohingyas, reports Reuters.

Malaysian authorities have detained a suspected IS follower planning to head to Myanmar to carry out attacks, the head of the Malaysian police counter-terrorism division, Ayob Khan Mydin Pitchay, said in an interview.

The suspect, an Indonesian whom he did not identify, was detained in Malaysia last month. The suspect was scheduled to be charged yesterday for possession of materials linked to terrorist groups, which carries a seven-year jail term or fine, Ayob Khan said.

More militants are likely to try to follow his lead in support of the Rohingya cause, Ayob Khan said.

"He was planning to perform jihad in Myanmar, fighting against the Myanmar government for this Rohingya group in Rakhine State," Ayob Khan said.

A Myanmar army sweep since October in the north of Rakhine State, on its border with Bangladesh, has sent about 34,000 members of the Rohingya minority fleeing into Bangladesh, the United Nations says.

Rehabilitate us

FROM PAGE 1
"We are going to measure the open space, including the car park, tonight [last night] for allotment to make sure that the businesses can open within two to three days," Sher Mohammad told The Daily Star yesterday.

The kitchen market traders will set up shops on the lane behind the market building.

The market housed 543 shops, including those of kitchen and household items, furniture, clothes, electronic appliances, shoes and bakery. Although some shop owners managed to save some items, owners of 309 shops at the collapsed portion known as DCC "Kancha Market" could not.

Contacted, DNCC Mayor Annisul Huq said rebuilding the market would take time, as much of the two-storey building was reduced to rubble in the fire.

"We cannot say anything right now as to how long it would take," he added.
On the businessmen's plan to set up makeshift shops, Annisul said the traders had no rights to do that. "We are the legal authority and the city corporation will decide where to rehabilitate them."

He also partly blamed the businessmen for the collapse.

The now-defunct Dhaka City Corporation declared the market risky in 2009. But the businessmen ignored the warning and constructed another floor on the original one-storey building, he said.

"We also found some gas cylinders and welding cylinders inside the market," he added, hinting that those may have caused the fire to spread quickly.

But Sher Mohammad said, "If the building were indeed risky, its electric and gas lines should have been disconnected. Instead of doing so, the city

corporation in 2015 increased the tax for the shops from Tk 3 to Tk 13 per square foot per year."

The cause of the fire, which swept through the market for about 16 hours since around 2:00am on Tuesday, is yet to be determined, but businessmen suspect it was a sabotage to drive them out of the market by some vested quarters.

A security guard, however, told The Daily Star that the fire broke out after an explosion of a transformer just a few feet from the building.

No one was killed or injured in the blaze but over 300 shops were gutted causing an estimated loss of several hundred crores of taka.

Around 8:00pm yesterday, firefighters were still working at the scene as smokes spiralled out of the collapsed portion of the building. They made small holes on the wall to douse water on the smoke.

"It may take us two to three more days to clear the rubble," said Lt Col M Mosharraf Hossain, director (training) of Fire Service and Civil Defence.

Mosharraf, also chief of a seven-member committee probing the fire incident, said they already started working to determine the cause of the blaze.

Md Akhtaruzzaman, joint secretary of the Paka Market Businessmen's Association, said as the structure in that portion remained largely unaffected, they would open their shops in a day or two.

Awami League General Secretary and Roads and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader visited the market yesterday and assured the businesspersons of compensation and rehabilitation.

3 key obstacles

FROM PAGE 16
draw the water from the lake. But in the meantime, they were continuing their operation with their other fire engines, he said.

A fire-fighting vehicle can carry around 3,000 litres of water at a time. The water runs out in just 10 to 15 minutes.

Talking about the issue, another fire service official suggested the two city corporations need to set up water reservoirs at different parts of the city. He said those would help firefighters immensely.

Just around 45 years ago, he said, the city had 26 natural water reservoirs for the fire fighters, apart from numerous other ponds and canals. However, most of those have been filled up over the years.

Though fire pumps are very necessary for markets and high rise buildings, most of them do not have them.

Shakil said ensuring in-built fire equipment in such establishments has to be mandatory as firefighters need some time before reaching the spot due to traffic.

A market or high-rise building should be equipped with fire extinguishers, hose reel, sprinklers and heat or smoke detector for fighting fire initially.

Talking about other issues creating hindrance to the rescue operation, the fire service official named lack of public awareness about fire safety and proper training for the firefighters.

"Though a citizen is supposed to call the nearby fire station for help immedi-

ately after a fire breaks out, we came to know about the fire at the DCC Market from the Bhatara Police Station.

"We could have acted sooner had we been contacted directly from the spot [by anyone witnessing the fire]," Shakil said.

There is almost no awareness about fire safety among many people. Both government and private organisations should conduct awareness programmes among their employees. The media can also play a vital role in raising the awareness.

"Many people don't even know the phone number of the fire station in their area," he said, adding that such lack of awareness hinders the rescue drive.

Auto shutdown systems or circuit breakers for power connections in buildings and markets are quite useful during fire incidents, Shakil said.

Fire officials said owners of many shopping complexes and markets in the city have violated rules of the city corporation as they did not keep enough space between their shops for the movement of firefighters.

There are 316 fire stations in the country. Of them, 19 are inside the Dhaka Metropolitan area.

Some 8,000 people are currently working at the Fire service and Civil Defence that has 103 fire trucks, 114 tow trucks, 260 pumps, 26 fire and rescue vehicles and 14 motorcycles, said sources at the service.