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Candles are lit at Central Shaheed Minar yesterday evening. The Nepal embassy in Dhaka organised the event in memory of the 51 lives lost in the US-Bangla plane crash on Monday.

PHOTO:
RASHED SHUMON

Test of patience after shock

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too busy looking for her brother.

"No one has updated me on anything. They won't let me see the body of my own brother. I had to run around and be confirmed that my brother is no more," she said.

Basimah was in the shower when she heard her sister-in-law crying. Rushing out, she heard the US-Bangla plane had just crashed. The news sent shock waves through the entire family. Her maternal grandfather passed away hearing that Shafey had possibly died. "My mother lost her son and father on the same day and I am stuck here trying to get my brother's body. No one is helping us."

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, she alleged that her brother never wanted to go to Kathmandu and be on that ill-fated flight.

This newspaper could not verify the claim.

"I had to go to the hospitals myself and investigate whether my brother was alive. They say his body is unrecognisable but others have seen it. He is wearing his ID card!" Basimah added.

She was not the only one who was

having the trouble. Jibon, whose uncle Matiur Rahman died in the accident, had the same complaint.

"Why am I here? I only brought one pair of clothes because they said we would have to identify the body and take it back home. What is my embassy doing? Why is the media not talking to us?"

Jibon said while they had officers around them no one was really taking any responsibility.

The Daily Star has learnt that despite its limited resources, Nepal was trying its best to deal with the issue.

TWO MORE DAYS

Imran Asif, the chief executive officer of US-Bangla Airlines, soon arrived for the awaited press conference inside the institute. He spent around 20 minutes speaking to the reporters. "We aren't just working with the Bangladeshis but with people of all nationalities. It's hard to identify who is who and according to the international laws, we can't let the relatives see the victims until the identification process is complete."

"Doctors have informed us that the test will take a few more days and that

a DNA test may not be necessary. Once the bodies are identified and the FIR is done, we can send the bodies back."

He said the relatives may have to wait for two more days, pointing out that a lot of factors were involved in the process. He added that they themselves had not seen the bodies.

Asked why the name of Nabila, another cabin crew member, was not on the passengers' list, he claimed that the airlines did not prepare that list.

"We had a passenger called Shahreen Ahmed and as words spread some believe that Sharmin Akhter Nabila was the same person."

Relatives wanted to take some of the injured elsewhere for treatment, he said, adding that they could do that once they got the doctor's approval. He pointed to the case of passenger Rezwanul Haque who was being sent to Singapore for further treatment.

MINISTER'S WHIRLWIND VISIT

Right after the US-Bangla press conference, journalists came to know that Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister AKM Shajahan Kamal was on his way

to the hospital. The relatives of the victims started waiting, hoping to finally have a chance to talk about their grievances. That, however, was not to be.

Shahjahan arrived at the hospital on a whirlwind visit that lasted around an hour. During that time, he visited a few departments of the hospital. He was flanked by a number of armed guards, representatives from US-Bangla airlines and Ambassador of Bangladesh to Nepal Mashfee Binte Shams.

Seeing him, the relatives of the victims gathered and tried to draw his attention to some placards that read "Where are the bodies?"

The minister entered the institute building and went up the stairs. After around 40 minutes, he slowly got down, holding the hand of one of his team members. Later, he went straight to the forensic department, which is on the ground floor.

Getting out from there, he went to the main gate of the building, without talking to the relatives.

He stopped in front of the hospital gate and told journalists that he had spoken to the prime minister and

Flight safety

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anaesthesiologists, have also been formed and it would leave for Kathmandu today to help Nepalese doctors treat the survivors.

The team, led by Lutfar Kader Lenin of DMCH burn unit, has a forensic specialist to collect DNA samples of the deceased, Director General Abul Kalam Azad of Directorate General of Health Services told The Daily Star.

However, the team is being sent at a time when the Nepalese authorities are about to send some of the seriously injured to Singapore for better treatment.

Samanta Lal Sen, founder of the burn and plastic surgery unit of DMCH, said Nepal did not have a large burn unit like the DMCH has but they had treatment facilities for burn injuries.

Asked if it was rather late for sending a medical team, he said, "No, it is not late. We have to know the ground realities [in Nepal] before we move. Also, we need permission of the country."

Bangladesh government sent ministers, and high officials while US-Bangla took relatives of the victims to Kathmandu a day after the crash but no doctor was sent, which many believe was required.

Of the eight Bangladeshi survivors being treated at two hospitals in Kathmandu, the conditions of five are critical and one or two of them could

be sent to Singapore, US-Bangla CEO Imran Asif told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said Rezwanul Haque was one who might be sent to Singapore in an air ambulance. He also said conditions of two Bangladeshis were better and they could be sent home today on receipt of no-objection certificates.

A team of civil aviation officials of Nepal and Bangladesh are investigating the crash.

Team leader Yagya Prasad Gautam, former director general of the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal, said the team collected evidence from the scene and also talked to survivors.

"I also sought some technical documents from Bangladesh authorities for the investigation," he told The Daily Star over telephone.

Identification of all the bodies could not be completed. The Nepalese authorities said it would take several more days before those could be sent back to Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, US-Bangla Airlines has closed its flight operations between Dhaka and Kathmandu for indefinite period.

"Our flight operations between Dhaka and Kathmandu have been shut from today due to shortage of aircraft," Kamrul Islam, general manager (public relations) of the US-Bangla Airlines, told The Daily Star.

DENSE FOG

Passengers suffer as ferry service disrupted

ZAHANGIR SHAH, Manikganj

Thousands of passengers including women and children were stranded for hours at Paturia ghat of Manikganj and Daulatdia ghat in Rajbari across the Padma river yesterday following disruption of ferry services on the river.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation office sources said Paturia Daulatdia ferry service was disrupted for 3 hours and 15 minutes from 4:30am due to dense fog, causing buses to wait on both sides of the ghats.

Manager of the corporation's Daulatdia office Shafiqul Islam said that the fog increased after midnight and around 4:30am services had to be stopped altogether. The authority stopped services from 4:30am to 7:45am to avoid accidents.

Five ferries were stranded in the middle of the river with passengers and vehicles aboard while nine ferries were stranded at Paturia and Daulatdia ferry ghat.

Najnin Ahmed of Magura said she started from Gataboli in Dhaka around 10:00pm Tuesday with her two children for Magura. She reached Paturia Ghat around midnight and was finally able to cross the river at around 11:00am, after 11 hours, she said.

Passengers were stranded in the area without access to proper food, water or toilets.

Rashed Ahmad, a staff reporter of The New Age, and Abdullah Al Naim of The Daily Star told this correspondent that the sufferings of stranded passengers increased due to negligence of duties of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation and policemen as many vehicles were seen disrupting movement on the roads by driving on the wrongside.

The same condition was seen at Daulatdia side in Rajbari district. Passengers and staff of vehicles alleged that a section of officials of the corporation and police were selling 'priority' tickets at high prices causing untold sufferings to passengers who could not pay the higher prices.

However, Shafiqul Islam, manager of the corporation's Daulatdia office,

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Top court stays Khaleda's bail

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Syed Mahmud Hossain passed the stay order after the Anti-Corruption Commission and the government filed two petitions seeking stay on the HC order on Khaleda's bail.

The apex court also asked the ACC and the government to file two separate leave-to-appeal petitions with it by Sunday to challenge the HC order.

Hours after the apex court's stay order, Khaleda filed a petition with the SC to vacate its stay order on the HC ruling that granted her bail in the Zia Orphanage Trust case.

Upon receiving the petition, SC Chamber Judge Hasan Foez Siddique forwarded it to the apex court's full bench for hearing on Sunday.

In the petition, Khaleda said her lawyers didn't get scope for placing arguments at the SC before it stayed the HC's bail order, Sagir Hossain Leon, a counsel for Khaleda, told this newspaper.

Citing from the petition, he said Khaleda was given a short sentence of five years' imprisonment, and she has been in jail since February 8. Courts

have a long tradition of granting bail to a convict or an accused if the person is a woman. Khaleda is now 73, and she has been suffering from various chronic degenerative medical conditions.

Following the SC's stay order, Zainul Abedin, another lawyer for Khaleda, told the court that it had passed the order without hearing their arguments.

He further said the court cannot pass any order without hearing the BNP chief's lawyers, and that the issuance of order without hearing their arguments would have a negative impact on public perception.

Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain said the SC does not take into account public perception before passing any order.

He also said the judges will hear arguments from Khaleda's lawyers when the leave-to-appeal petitions will be moved before them, and that the HC's bail order will remain stayed till Sunday.

Zainul told the court that there was no need to stay the HC order of bail

since Khaleda cannot walk out of jail now.

AJ Mohammad Ali, another counsel for Khaleda, told the SC that they didn't get any opportunity to place arguments before it on behalf of Khaleda.

Then, Giasuddin Ahmed, a pro-BNP lawyer, told the chief justice in a loud voice that the judges must hear arguments from Khaleda's lawyers.

The chief justice told pro-BNP lawyers that they were doing excesses, and wondered whether they were threatening the SC.

As Giasuddin made the same demand, the chief justice said, "Don't make threats."

Some of the pro-BNP lawyers then shouted "shame", "shame", and left the courtroom.

Earlier at the beginning of the SC proceedings, ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan moved the commission's stay petition and prayed to the apex court for staying the HC order that granted Khaleda bail.

Khurshid told the SC that the ACC

will move a leave-to-appeal petition against the HC order after receiving a certified copy of the HC order.

The SC then asked the ACC and the government to file two separate leave-to-appeal petitions with the court by Sunday and stayed the HC order till then.

Later, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told reporters at his office that the government will file a leave-to-appeal petition today with the SC, challenging the HC order.

He also criticised pro-BNP lawyers' behaviour towards the SC judges, saying the lawyers also vented their anger on the HC in the past.

COMILLA COURT PROCEEDINGS

A Comilla Court yesterday rejected Khaleda's bail petition in the case filed over an arson attack on a bus, which left eight people dead in Chouddagram upazila on February 3, 2015.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Mustain Billah fixed March 28 for the next hearing in the case, reports our Comilla correspondent.

Earlier on March 12, the same court

Mud slung, hands wrung

FROM PAGE 1

the crash. One of those on board had been flung out of the window, still strapped to their seat. It was a sign of the severity of the impact.

In the city, the atmosphere was no different. Bikram, a local journalist, spoke of the traffic being light on the day. It seemed like a pall of gloom had descended on the city but Bikram said it could also be the presidential elections which had just concluded.

No overtaking and no horns. It almost seemed peaceful.

As we travelled through the Kathmandu Valley, the place where ancient civilisation met a modern one, I wonder how March 12 would be remembered in Nepal's history. Would the impact of the day be gauged from looking around? The answer to that question came when we reached.

Lalitpur (Patan) Dinesh, a resident of the area came out to greet us. He had

just heard of a funeral in the area. According to him, three people from the locality had died in the crash.

As evening came, we went to Maitighar Mandala, in Kathmandu. It was a community area in the middle of three major roads. Here, students from all over the country had gathered to observe a candle light vigil for the victims.

Around 10-12 students huddled together trying to light around 50 candles. The wind would not allow it, but they were committed and refused to give up. Seeing them struggle, a bunch of boys came and formed a tight circle, leaving no room for a breeze to sneak in.

Once the candles were lit, they all bowed their heads and closed their eyes. They were praying. In the same area, another vigil had just started. That one was led by the Nepal Students Union.

Padam Bhattarai, a member of the

union, said they were remembering the students who had lost their lives in the crash. "Our party president has asked the leaders to provide free treatment and monetary compensation to all those affected."

Many other vigils by different students took place at the same location and continued till 8:00pm.

By then, the city was going to sleep. A few restaurants were open. In each, groups of people could be seen together, talking about the day's event. The president's victory though was overshadowed by the crash.

The toxicity of the blame game also seemed to have seeped into everyday life. The Bangladeshis were adamant that the air traffic control tower was to blame while most of the Nepalese believed it was the pilot. Rumors of what went on gushed all over...the pilot was intoxicated, it was a failed attack and so on.

The incessant mud-slinging among the various bodies involved though hasn't had much affect on everyday relations.

But it's a matter of time.

Newly paved roads took us back home. No longer did anyone worry about blackouts. Nepal had come far and even a devastating earthquake had only been a stumble and not a fall.

For now, looking at the restaurants housed in earthquake damaged buildings reminded me of the country's resilience. It is an idea that also breeds a form of camaraderie between Bangladesh and Nepal: resilience, a dirty word coined to absolve everyone else of their blame.

In Nepal, the belief is that a thorough investigation needs to be conducted. The nation is on the rise and incompetency cannot be tolerated. Bangladesh should feel the same. Flinging mud and wringing hands have to stop.

Schoolgirl stabbed

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Monirul dropped by their home hours before the attack. His daughter was preparing to go to school at that time, said Salam.

"Monirul asked about my wellbeing and left smiling," said the girl's mother at RMCH.

Sathi's father left home for work minutes after Monirul left their home. On his way, he too saw Monirul. They also asked about each other's wellbeing.

Sobbing, Salam said, "How would I know he was waiting there to attack my daughter?"

Around 9:00am, when Sathi was going to school on a rickshaw with a classmate, she saw Monirul.

All of a sudden, Monirul started stabbing her, jumping onto the rickshaw, the girl said.

Her classmate managed to run away.

Sathi was taken to Chapainawabganj

Sadar Hospital. She was later moved to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

The victim has multiple stab injuries on different parts of her body, said RMCH Director Brig Gen Jamilur Rahman.

Sathi was undergoing surgery around 10:00pm when this report was being filed.

After the attack on Sathi, residents of Hujrapur ransacked the house of Monirul in Railbagana area.

Monirul stands accused in three cases, said OC Manjur.

Other than the case of the girl's brother, Monirul was facing two cases filed over abusing and selling narcotics, he said.

Monirul was arrested a month ago with drugs and was out on bail, said the OC.

Police also detained Monirul's wife Rubi Khatun and his two sisters Shahin Akhtar and Jahanara Khatun.