

Homeless boy set on fire by unknown man

The reason behind it unclear; no arrest yet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A homeless child was set on fire by an unidentified man in the capital's Fakirpool area yesterday evening.

Selim, 12, was critically injured with 27 percent burns to his body and is now taking treatment in Dhaka Medical College's burn unit.

The child could not provide any information about his parents and the person who set him on fire, said police officials.

Bachchu Mia, Inspector of DMCH outpost, said two other homeless people, Bappy and Rokeya, brought the child to the hospital around 6:30pm and they also could not say who set Selim on fire.

Mia added that the incident occurred when the boy had an argument with the unidentified man about where he was sitting in the area.

Police also said the full identity of the child and the identity of the man who did it could not be found immediately.

Yeasir Arif, officer-in-charge of Motijheel police station, said they did not get any complaint in this regard yet.

French commuters suffer as transport strike continues

AFP, Paris

French commuters endured a twelfth day of misery yesterday as the government and unions traded blame for a crippling transport strike over a pensions overhaul that has put holiday travel plans at risk for thousands.

Some 630 kilometres (390 miles) of traffic jams clogged Paris and its suburbs during the morning rush hour, nearly double the average levels, as most metro lines were again closed or operating just a handful of trains.



Mamata Banerjee, the Chief Minister of West Bengal, and her party supporters attend a protest march against the new citizenship law and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Kolkata, India, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Protests spread all over India

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evening during protests at the Jamia Millia Islamia University against the citizenship law.

Damage to public property and disturbing normal life had not been part of the country's ethos, he said in a series of tweets yesterday.

Modi's tweets came a day after protests against the law escalated at two universities - Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi and the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) in Uttar Pradesh.

The police have been accused of using excessive force to control both the protests, which left scores of students injured and property damaged.

The Indian Supreme Court disapproved of the violence during the Jamia students protest against the

citizenship law.

"Rioting" must stop and there should be peace," Chief Justice of India S A Bobde said responding to a request to take note of police action on students at Jamia Millia Islamia University and Aligarh Muslim University. The apex court will hear the case today.

Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra led a two-hour symbolic silent protest near the landmark India Gate to show solidarity with the students of Jamia Millia Islamia and said "the country's atmosphere is bad. Police are entering university to beat up (students). The government has tinkered with the Constitution. We will fight for the

Constitution."

In solidarity with the students of Jamia Millia and AMU, students of Hyderabad's Maulana Azad Urdu University, Jadavpur University in Kolkata and the Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi took out protest marches on Sunday night, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh has challenged the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in the Supreme Court and his plea will be heard on Wednesday.

WEEKEND OF VIOLENCE

Protests were also reported in Mumbai, Hyderabad, Patna and Raipur over the weekend.

Authorities in northern Uttar Pradesh, meanwhile, have cut internet access in western parts of

the state, which has a sizable Muslim population, following demonstrations in Aligarh.

The epicentre of the protests has been in India's far-flung northeastern states, long a seething and violent melting pot of ethnic tensions.

On Sunday night in Assam state -- following days of rioting and clashes with police -- around 6,000 people protested, with no major incidents reported, reports AFP.

Curfew was relaxed in Guwahati for 15 hours from 6:00am yesterday, Assam Police Chief Public Relations Officer Rajiv Saikia said. Night curfew in the city, however, will remain in force, he said.

In Dibrugarh district, curfew has been eased from 6:00am to 8:00pm.

Protests were held in Mumbai's Indian Institute of Technology and Tata Institute of Social Sciences overnight and more were planned at Bombay University and in the southern city of Bengaluru yesterday.

Some Bollywood celebrities like actress Konkona Sen Sharma, and directors Mahesh Bhatt and Anubhav Sinha, also criticised the police action on Twitter and called on others to speak up, reports Reuters.

Mamata's main political rival in West Bengal the Bharatiya Janata Party also took out a street march from Garia to Jadavpur in south Kolkata celebrating the changed citizenship law and at one point broke police barricades following a brief skirmish before proceeding further.

A glorious day

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Pakistan occupation forces after a nine-month bloodstained war for liberation.

Forty-eight years ago on December 16, 1971, the Pakistan army had surrendered to the Allied Forces of Bangladesh and India at the Racecourse Maidan (now Suhrawardy Udyana) in the capital.

The Pakistani occupation forces had launched a barbarous crackdown killing innocent people in the erstwhile East Pakistan at midnight past March 25, 1971.

The nation, under the paramount leadership of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, finally clinched victory on December 16, after the sacrifice of the lives of three million people and the rape of nearly half a million women.

Different socio-political, educational and cultural institutions and organisations arranged a series of programmes to celebrate the nation's glorious victory.

The government also celebrated the day with different programmes at national level.

The day began with a 31-gun salute, followed by rich tributes by President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the National Martyrs' Memorial in Savar, which symbolises the valour and sacrifice of the martyrs who laid down their lives for the emancipation of the nation.

A large gathering -- some with flags of green and red in their hands and some tying those around their foreheads -- was seen at the memorial.

"We dream of a better Bangladesh as cherished by martyred freedom fighters," said Mohammad Rafiqul, a private employee, from Mirpur. He took his seven-year-old son with him to Savar.

"I have brought my child here today [yesterday] so that he can know the history of the Liberation War and the sacrifices made by the martyrs," he said.

Jannatul Mawa, a fourth grader of a primary school in Savar, went there with her uncle.

"I have learnt from my books about the significance of Victory Day. Our freedom fighters are our pride. I have come here to pay homage to them," she said.

Five construction workers also went there from Ashulia.

"When we were kids, we used to hear many stories from our parents that made us love our country and our martyrs more. We are labourers; yet we took a day-off to come here to pay homage to our valiant martyrs," said Mohammad Alam, one of the five workers.

Some people said the country made significant progress over the years, but inequality and disparity still remain.

"We have to eliminate disparity

and corruption from the society," said Rashidul Alam Babu, general secretary of Pabna Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, who came along with his family members.

Before the memorial was opened for public, President Abdul Hamid placed wreaths at the altar. He was followed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, reports BSS.

After placing the wreaths, the president and the PM stood in solemn silence for some time as a mark of profound respect to the martyrs' memories.

A contingent of Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Navy, and Bangladesh Air Force presented a state salute on the occasion when bugles played the last post.

Flanked by senior party leaders, Hasina, also the Awami League president, laid another wreath at the memorial as the party chief.

The day was a public holiday.

Parts of the capital wore a festive look on the day. Many buildings were illuminated. Special prayers were offered at mosques, temples, churches, and other religious institutions, seeking divine blessings for peace and progress of the country.

State-run Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Betar, along with private TV channels and radio stations, broadcast special programmes while the newspapers brought out special supplements.

Bangladesh missions abroad also celebrated the day with different programmes.

Accused killed

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Police identified Yasin upon analyzing the CCTV camera footage in the area, the additional SP said.

During interrogation, he confessed to have raped and killed the girl, he said, adding that based on the information, police took him to recover the cloth that he wore during the incident and weapon used for murdering the girl.

As soon as they had reached Double Bridge Rahakhol Launch Ghat area around 2:30am yesterday, Yasin snatched a gun from a policeman and tried to flee forcing the law enforcers to open fire, he claimed.

Yasin suffered bullet injuries in the "shootout". He was taken to Faridpur Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead on arrival, he added.

Yasin was also accused in two other cases of drug and theft with the police station, police said.

Meanwhile, his sister Rahima Begum told The Daily Star that he came out of jail on December 4 on a bail and went to Dhaka the same day. Upon his return on Sunday, police arrested him.

Trapped in flames; help never came

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paralysed and mother unemployed.

The factory had no clearance from the Department of Environment. There was only one stairwell and one gate. The factory had been running illegally for three years in Keshorita, a residential area, locals and firefighters said.

Jakaria Khan, station officer of Joydebpur Fire Station, said the fire originated near the only door on the 2nd floor. The roof and walls on the floor were made of corrugated iron sheets.

Mamunur Rashid, deputy assistant director of fire service, said the factory had no fire safety clearance and lacked fire safety measures.

Farid Ahmed, joint inspector general (safety) at Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments, said the owners didn't even apply for permission before establishing the factory.

His department would file a case

with the labour court and take steps to make the owners properly compensate the victims' families.

Meanwhile, Kamal Hossain, father of another victim, filed a murder case with Joydebpur Police Station accusing five owners and a manager of the factory, said Jabelul Islam, officer-in-charge of the police station.

In the case statement, he wrote that the accused, despite being aware of the risks, employed the workers in the unauthorised factory and thus, killed them, police said.

Workers and locals alleged that the factory management used to lock every floor as well as the main gate of the building during work hours in the name of preventing theft.

The authorities also frisked every worker before they left, they added.

AKM Zahirul Islam, additional superintendent of police in Gazipur, said, "We heard allegations from the victims' families that the doors of the

factory were locked... We are dealing with the matter with due diligence."

The owners had fled after the incident, police said.

In a similar fire on Wednesday at a plastic factory in Keraniganj, 19 workers died and 13 others are still fighting for life.

Survivors and firefighters said the workers could not evacuate on time as there was only one gate.

At the Gazipur factory, around 100 workers were at the building on Sunday. The cause of the fire is still unknown.

The 10 charred bodies found in the factory were identified as Uttam, Tarikul Islam, Parvez, Mohammad Limon, Faisal Khan, Shamim, Faridul Islam, Rashed, Sazal Mia and Yusuf Mia.

Five of them were from Gazipur district. They were the breadwinners of their families.

Like Uttam, Faisal also called his friend Tanvir and asked him for help. "Friend, I am dying. I am trapped," Tanvir quoted Faisal as saying over the

phone.

Faisal's sister Konika said, "We knew that the workers were locked. Despite this, my brother and others worked there because there are no other factories nearby."

As the Daily Star visited Faisal's home in Kalni village, locals were seen trying to console his father Saiful Islam.

"My son went to the factory to take his salary. He had plans to join a bicycle rally with his friends on the Victory Day," Saiful said before he lost consciousness.

Another victim Shamim had a 10-month old girl. His wife is unemployed.

The families demanded proper compensation for their losses. Locals demonstrated yesterday for immediate removal of the factory.

The bodies were handed to the families after DNA verification yesterday, said Gazipur Deputy Commissioner SM Tarikul Islam.

Bhai), who was president of Barguna Mukti Sangram Parishad in 1971, was also named as a Razakar on the list.

Nurjahan Begum, wife of the late freedom fighter, said her husband was a close aide to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and was never a collaborator.

Barguna district Muktijodhba Sangsad Deputy Commander Abdul Motaleb Mridha said the freedom fighter had also been the president of the Awami League's Patharghat unit for 10 years.

"There is information that Naya Bhai was not a Razakar. We will take necessary steps soon," Mustain Billah, deputy commissioner of Barguna told reporters.

Historian and prominent Liberation War researcher Muntassir Mamoon said the step for listing the Razakars was a good one but the outcome was unclear.

"We are hearing that this list has many who, as far as we know, are not anti-liberation elements. As a result, the list is going to stir a controversy. This is unexpected," he said.

"This list was prepared bureaucratically and it is high time to understand that this type of work is not possible to complete in a bureaucratic way," he added.

Liberation War researcher ASM Shamsul Arefin said the government has created a confusion.

"I have not seen the list. So it will not be wise to make any comment. But a person informed me about Ghulam Arief Tipoo's name on the list ... There is a chance that people will lose their trust in the list if this kind of incidents happen."

"A proper scrutiny was needed before publishing the names. It is a sensitive issue."

Our Rajshahi, Pirojpur, and Barisal correspondents contributed in this report.

Erdogan threatens to close two US military bases

AFP, Istanbul

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Sunday threatened to close two strategic military bases used by the United States in Turkey, after Washington warned of sanctions over Ankara buying Russian arms.

"If necessary, we can close Incirlik and we can close Kurecik," Erdogan on the pro-government A Haber television channel. The two bases sit on Turkey's southwest coast, near the border with Syria.

Erdogan has regularly raised this possibility in the past, at times of tension between the two countries.

The US airforce uses the airbase at Incirlik for raids on positions held by the so-called Islamic State group in Syria. The Kurecik base houses a major NATO radar station.

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu raised the issue of the bases last week. Responding to the US threat of fresh sanctions, he warned that their closure could be "put on the table".

Turkey faces US sanctions over its decision to buy the Russian S-400 missile defence system, despite warnings from Washington.