



Sitting beside her mother, a girl lights a candle on the grave of a deceased loved one at Patharghata Catholic Church in Chattogram city yesterday. The church dons a new look as hundreds of Christians gather there to pray for their departed family members and friends on All Souls' Day.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAJHAN

BNP'S COUNTRYWIDE BLOCKADE

AL continues to dominate Dhaka streets

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders and activists of Awami League and its affiliated organisations remained on the streets yesterday as well on the final day of the three-day blockade programme called by BNP.

The AL men said they took positions on the streets to "safeguard" lives and property, and vowed they would continue doing so in protest of BNP's blockade or hartal-like demonstrations.

"We are on the streets to prevent BNP from causing any unrest. No matter what they call for, be it hartal or blockade, we will stay on the streets until the election," Masud Bari, president of ward-32 AL unit, told The Daily Star.

BNP and Jamaat separately called the three-day countrywide blockade of roads, railways, and waterways, claiming that it was in protest of police action during their events and arrests of activists.

Meanwhile, AL announced that it would be in the field protesting the blockade.

While visiting Lalmatia, Mohammadpur, Shyamoli, Panthapath, Mirpur, Sabujbagh, Sutrapur, Gulistan, and Sadarghat areas, AL men were seen stationed at almost every important road and intersection.

Leaders and activists were seen sitting on the sidewalks, at least 20 to 25 in number at each junction, for almost the whole day.

They also brought out small processions and staged show-downs wielding bamboo sticks and cricket stumps in different areas across the capital.

Meanwhile, Dhaka city (south) unit AL men took position in front of the party's central office on Bangabandhu Avenue, along with the members of Sweekhchhasebak League, Jubo League, and other affiliated organisations.

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STAFF CORRESPONDENT

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Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan placed the bill, which was passed by voice vote.

The Ansar Battalion Bill, 2023, was placed in parliament on October 23. The bill triggered huge opposition from the police force.

Some amendments were recommended in clauses 7 and 8 of the bill by the parliamentary standing committee on the home ministry.

Section 8 of the bill had stipulated that an Ansar battalion member shall, if an offence is committed in front of him, with the approval of the superior officer concerned, arrest the offender and immediately hand him over to the police and, as the case may be, as per the directives of the judicial magistrate or the executive magistrate or the official concerned, will frisk the detainee; and enter any place, conduct a search, and seize goods.

The parliamentary committee recommended amendments in this section.

According to committee sources, police proposed the amendments in this section.

Section 7 of the bill regarding the responsibility of the Ansar battalion, states that the government or any government authority with the approval of the government will carry out the responsibility in any public security work.

The committee had proposed that the Ansar battalion "assist in fulfilling responsibilities".

'Our lives at stake'

Day labourers finding it hard to survive amid recent political turmoil

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MASHFIQ MIZAN

A group of day labourers was waiting for employers to come and hire them to work on construction sites at Mirpur-II yesterday morning.

Day labourers usually gather like this at certain spots in the city and wait to be hired, mostly for contractual jobs. They maintain a work-or-starve existence on a daily basis, and barely earn enough to eke out a living for their family.

Runaway inflation had already placed them in a difficult situation, and the three-day opposition-enforced blockade that followed Sunday's hartal has further exacerbated their sufferings.

When this newspaper approached them, at first they became excited, hoping for job opportunities. But they soon became disappointed after realising that these correspondents wanted to talk to them.

Yet, some of them decided to share their ordeal.

Shushil Barman, 51, was among them. He said he was prepared to be paid half of what he usually gets, as he did not get a single opportunity to earn any money in the last three days.

"I make Tk 600 per day by assisting construction workers," he said.



Apart from his wife, he has two daughters and a visually impaired son to take care of.

"I usually find an employer by 10:00am. But it is already 12:00pm. I don't think anyone will come today. I didn't earn a single penny in the last three days. People like us continue to suffer, blockade or no blockade," said a worried Shushil.

He said job opportunities have diminished this year, possibly because fewer people are starting construction projects, to cut costs amid inflation.

Hira Mia, a mason by profession, echoed the same. "If this situation persists, I don't know how I will feed my family of five. Our lives are at stake."

In a corner, this newspaper saw an elderly person waiting idly with

his equipment -- a shovel, basket and a hammer. His name is Hakim Mia; like Shushil, he too assists construction workers.

"The rent in the slum where I live with my wife is Tk 5,000. I didn't earn anything in the last few days. My wife is ill. I don't know how I will manage her treatment," he said.

He said he has five sons and a daughter, most of whom have grown up. When asked why he had to do such high intensity jobs at this age, he replied with teary eyes, "You can understand why..."

The situation was more or less the same in other areas of the city -- Malibagh Rail Crossing, Khilgaon, Doyaganj, Shanir Akhra, Mohammadpur Bus Stand, Jhigatola Crossing, Badda Crossing and Nayabazar.

Expose real character of BNP to world PM tells journalists

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the country's journalists to expose the real face of the BNP before the international community.

"You, journalists, should expose internationally the real character of those who attacked you while performing duty," she said referring to the attacks on media persons who were covering BNP's October 28 rally.

The premier was addressing the Delegates Conference 2023 of BFUJ-Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists at Jatiya Press Club.

"Those who believe in terrorism and militancy have no right [to exist] here. They don't want the welfare of the people of this country."

The PM said the attackers of journalists and police must pay as some 30 journalists were injured in the attacks carried out by BNP men on October 28.

She said the BNP men carried out attacks even in disguise on that day, believing that they could remain unidentified and escape punishment. But they've finally been caught, she said.

"Those who kill and attack journalists and police must face punishment," she said.

Information Minister Hasan Mahmud spoke as the special guest at the event chaired by BFUJ President Omar Faruque.

BFUJ Secretary General Dip Azad conducted the event, while President of Dhaka Union of Journalists Sohel Haider Chowdhury and leaders of different units of BFUJ spoke on the occasion.

At the event, former BFUJ leaders were honoured with crests.

11.97cr eligible to vote: EC

1.55cr added since 2018 polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The EC yesterday published the final voters' list for the upcoming 12th parliamentary polls, with 11,96,91,633 eligible to cast their votes.

This is the final voter list before polls, said EC's NID wing Director General AKM Humayun Kabir.

He mentioned that there are 60,771,579 male and 58,919,202 female voters, and 852 hijra voters.

The number of voters increased by 1,54,52,956 since December 30, 2018. There were 10,42,38,677 voters in the last national polls, said EC officials.

There were 49.56 percent female voters during the 2018 polls. Earlier, the figures were 49.84 percent and 50.87 percent during the 2014 and 2008 polls respectively.

The EC is now preparing to announce the election schedule and is likely to meet the president on November 5. The commission might announce the schedule in mid November.

JAIL KILLING DAY

48 years on, justice still elusive



Syed Nazrul Islam



Tajuddin Ahmad



M Mansur Ali



Quamruzzaman

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

It has been 48 years since, on this very day in 1975, four national leaders were assassinated at the Dhaka Central Jail.

As the nation mourns the four stalwarts of the Liberation War -- Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmad, AHM Quamruzzaman and M Mansur Ali -- justice still eludes the nation.

It has been more than 17 years since a trial court handed down sentences to the 11 convicted perpetrators of this heinous crime.

However, the government could implement the verdict of only one of the killers -- Captain Abdul Majed.

Majed, who was sentenced to life

imprisonment in the jail killing case, was arrested on April 7, 2020 after remaining absconding for decades, and was executed in connection with Bangabandhu murder case as he was also a convicted killer of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Other than Majed's execution, the progress in implementing the Supreme Court's verdict in the case has not been satisfactory.

Of the other convicted killers, who are allegedly hiding abroad, only two -- Rashed Chowdhury and Noor Chowdhury -- have been traced by the government so far in the US and Canada respectively.

The government, however, failed to bring them back due to some legal tangles.

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'Ma, will I survive?'

RAFIUL ISLAM

This is what 19-year-old Rabiu Islam kept asking his mother Yeasmin Akter whenever she went to see him at the HDU unit of Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery.

"Ma, will I survive? Where is my friend? Is he still alive?" he kept on asking.

Rabiu, a helper of Achhim Paribahan bus, has been suffering from excruciating pain with burns on his face and the upper parts of his body.

But still, he kept looking for his friend Nayeem, who was asleep alongside him inside a bus on Saturday night.

Aronists set the vehicle on fire, which was parked by a road in the Paschim Deila area of Demra around 3:00am on Sunday, hours before BNP and Jamaat's dawn-to-dusk hartal began.

Nayeem, another staffer of the bus, was burnt to death. Doctors said Rabiu is not out of danger either.

"Why do they burn poor people like us?" Rabiu's

mother asked while describing the ordeal of her only son.

"My son groans with pain. Seeing him covered in bandages... and crying in pain... the sight is intolerable for me. I can't stand to see my son in this state," Yeasmin told The Daily Star in the corridor of the hospital yesterday.

She asked this reporter to sit but felt embarrassed as they did not have anything for him to sit

"I had to step away from his bed as I have no answer," Yeasmin wept.

Yeasmin, her two daughters, and a relative were talking to this correspondent, sitting on a piece of polythene on the floor.

She asked this reporter to sit but felt embarrassed as they did not have anything for him to sit

on Rabiu's burns as they were talking to this correspondent. Suddenly, Rabiu's father Hazrat Ali, a rickshaw-puller, arrived there and sat on the floor with his hands on his head.

Hazrat, 55, who suffered from stroke twice, kept saying "How will I manage the expense of my son's treatment? Everything is so expensive now."

He said the authorities told them that his son would get everything free of cost but they have already spent Tk 12,000.

"I have no savings. I borrowed the money from a relative," he said.

The family, who lives in a rented room in Demra are now preparing to sell their fridge to manage some money. Uncertainty surrounds them as they knew the money would not be enough for Rabiu's treatment.

Samanta Lal Sen, coordinator of the burn institute, said, "We can't say that Rabiu is out of danger, as his respiratory track was burnt. But his condition is improving." He said they knew that the family of the bus helper is very poor and they are providing all facilities free of cost. "They do not need to buy anything," he added.

Dressings were being put



Uncertainty surrounds Hazrat Ali, as he sits on the floor of the hospital's corridor, praying for his son's survival. Rabiu Islam, his only son (Inset), was burnt after arsonists set a bus on fire early Sunday, hours before the BNP and Jamaat's dawn-to-dusk hartal began. His friend and another bus helper Nayeem died in the same incident.

PHOTO: STAR