

Bandits kill 30 in northwest Nigeria attack

AFP, Kano

Armed gangs killed 30 people in raids on two villages in an area of northwest Nigeria plagued by cattle rustlers and kidnappers, police said yesterday.

Dozens of gunmen on motorcycles attacked the villages of Tsauwa and Dankar in Katsina state on Friday, shooting residents and burning homes.

"The bandits killed 21 people in Tsauwa and another nine in nearby Dankar," Katsina police spokesman Gambo Isah said.

"Most of those killed were old people and children who couldn't escape."

Police and soldiers deployed in the area after the attack and arrested one

suspect, Isah said.

The attackers burnt homes, livestock and food supplies before fleeing, said Tukur Mu'azu, traditional chief of Batsari, a district the straddles the two attacked villages.

He gave the same death toll as the police for what he described as an "unprovoked attack".

"I have never seen such destruction in my life," the local leader told AFP as he attended the burial of the victims.

Rural communities in Katsina state, the home region of President Muhammadu Buhari, have frequently been targeted by gangs of cattle thieves and kidnappers abducting people for ransom.

'Go alone' policy

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chief choose him.

Over the years, Mayor Nasir kept alive his rivalry with the Mohiuddin family. He also alienated most of the senior AL leaders of Chattogram, including presidium member Engineer Mosharraf Hossain, insiders said.

Nasir, also general secretary of Chattogram city AL, forced Mohiuddin's wife Hasina Mohiuddin, also president of Chattogram city Mahila AL, to leave the stage during a programme in the presence of AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader in last October.

AL insiders said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was fond of Mohiuddin's family and she didn't approve of the way Nasir treated Mohiuddin and his family members.

Resident so the city as well as politicians were a little surprised by Rezaul's nomination.

Rezaul was never under the spotlight when people, political activists and even analysts in media were talking about the probable mayoral nominees.

According to Chattogram AL leaders, Nasir also had a rivalry with Mosharraf Hossain over the ownership of Jatinsangha Park when Mosharraf was the minister for housing and public works.

Nasir also could not bring any significant change in the city as a mayor, said an AL leader, adding that he could not even set up a new park and rather made shops and business establishments in parks and on footpaths.

"Surveys were conducted on Nasir's

popularity by different agencies and all the agency reports went against him," the AL leader said.

Days after taking over as mayor, Nasir alleged that the bureaucrats demanded 5 percent of the allocation for development works. It angered the bureaucrats and as a result, the city corporation "did not get enough funds" for development in first two years of his five-year tenure, said another AL leader.

Contacted, Farid Mahmud, joint convener of Chattogram city Juba League, said the prime minister valued a dedicated and tested leader from the grassroots by nominating Rezaul, adding, the grassroots leaders and activists were glad.

Contacted, Mohammed Nasim, member of AL Local Government Nomination Board, said Rezaul was given nomination as the board wanted to give chance to a new leader.

"I think, in some cases, the new faces should be given chances to prove their potentials," he said, adding, "We also gave nomination to new faces in other city corporations in the past."

Contacted, AL presidium member Engineer Mosharraf Hossain said Rezaul had a clean image.

Mayor Nasir told The Daily Star that getting or denied nomination was a common practice in politics, adding that he had accepted the decision of the prime minister. "I am always loyal to her and will remain so forever."

He and his followers would do everything possible for the victory of the party nominee, he said.

Contacted, Rezaul said, "I am grateful to her [PM]. I do not have any rivalry or rift with anyone."

Release Khaleda

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Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan echoed the same view after attending a branch opening ceremony of Sydney International School in Gulshan yesterday.

Meanwhile, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir on Friday spoke to Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader over phone about the release of Khaleda.

On February 10, Khaleda's younger brother Shameem Iskander wrote to the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) authorities, requesting them to recommend that she needed to be sent abroad for better treatment.

According to BNP sources, Khaleda declined to seek any parole as she believed that she had not committed any crime and she deserved bail.

On the other hand, several ministers said the government would not compromise on Khaleda's release until she seeks parole.

Many BNP leaders believe that it is not possible to get her released through legal means as the government is "influencing" the judicial process.

On December 12 last year, the

Appellate Division of the Supreme Court rejected the BNP chief's bail petition in the Zia Charitable Trust graft case.

Khaleda's lawyer Zainul Abedin told journalists that they would file a bail petition again this week.

Pointing to section 401(1) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the lawyer said the government could suspend jail term of such convicts under special consideration.

The section says, "When any person has been sentenced to punishment for an offence, the government may at any time without conditions or upon any condition which the person sentenced accepts, suspend the execution of his sentence or remit the whole or any part of the punishment to which he has been sentenced."

Khaleda has been receiving treatment at the BSMMU since April 1 last year.

She landed in jail on February 8, 2018 after being convicted in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case. She was convicted in another case later that year.

The BNP claims that both the cases are politically motivated.

Will ask ACC to investigate

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Bangladeshi MP is involved in human trafficking, as reported in the Kuwaiti media, is fake news.

"We have heard it's fake news. We don't have any information," he told journalists at his ministry yesterday.

"Our mission has not provided any information about him. We don't know about it. One newspaper published it, but then it said its factuality was not verified," Momen said.

According to media reports, Quazi Shaheed Islam alias Papul is one of the three Bangladeshis who have been involved in human trafficking in Kuwait.

He left Kuwait just before a crackdown on human traffickers began there, Al-Qabas newspaper of Kuwait reported, quoting the country's home ministry.

The ring of the three amassed about Tk 1,400 crore through trafficking 20,000 Bangladeshis to that country, the CID in Kuwait claimed.

Kuwait's Arabic daily Al-Qabas and Arab Times last Wednesday published

a report against the Bangladeshi human traffickers.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Anisuzzaman, head of chancery at the Bangladesh embassy in Kuwait, said following the media reports naming a Bangladeshi MP, the embassy sought details from the Kuwaiti CID.

"We are yet to get any response," he told The Daily Star.

Quazi Shaheed Islam is managing director & CEO of Marafie Kuwaitia Group of Companies, one of the largest companies in Kuwait.

Major work of the company is providing cleaning services and construction.

Kuwait is home to some three lakh Bangladeshis workers.

Recruitment cost for workers is around Tk 6 lakh, but the minimum monthly salary is 75 Kuwaiti Dinar (Tk 20,000).

Including overtime, the salary stands at around Tk 27,000, which means it takes around two years to earn the money a Bangladeshi migrant spends as recruitment cost in Kuwait.



Department of Environment officials, led by Director Begum Rubina Ferdousi, conducting a drive yesterday to disconnect the utility connections of 23 dyeing and a steel re-rolling mill in the capital's Kadamtali for polluting the Buriganga river and the air.

PHOTO: STAR

DoE punish 24 errant factories

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231 industries in Dhaka, she added.

"We cut off electricity lines and water connections of 23 factories. Gas connections of six of them were also severed," the DoE director said.

"If these factories and mills applied to the DoE for environmental clearance certificates after fulfilling all necessary requirements, we will restore their lines," she added.

On January 20, the HC directed the DoE to immediately shut down all the 231 industries in Dhaka metropolitan area near the Buriganga.

The court asked Wasa, Titas, and Dhaka Power Distribution Company Ltd to disconnect water, gas, and electricity supply to the illegal industries.

It also directed the DoE to submit a report to the court by February 20 after complying with the directive.

The court further ordered the DoE to submit a detailed report by the next three months on the industries and organisations in the Dhaka metropolitan area which have no environmental certificate.

The HC ordered the local administration to stop dumping waste into the Buriganga and submit a report before the court by February 20.

The bench of Justice Gobinda

Chandra Tagore and Justice Mohammad Ullah came up with the directives during hearing a writ petition filed by the Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh.

On December 8 last year, the HC also ordered the DoE to close all industries, factories, and other structures on both sides of the river, which were running without the DoE approval and polluting the river.

PM approves masterplan to save them

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minister.

The committee was formed on December 5, 2016, to finalise the masterplan in line with the PM's directives. At the end of last year, it finalised the masterplan which was approved by the PM recently.

According to the masterplan, the government has set a short-term goal for one year, a midterm goal for five years and a long-term goal for 10

years. Those will be implemented simultaneously by different ministries and departments.

All the ministries and departments concerned are now preparing their action plans to free the rivers from pollution and encroachment. Those include the ministries of LGRD, environment, forest and climate change, land, home, public administration, shipping, water resources, housing and public works,

and fisheries and livestock.

As per the masterplan, all liquid waste from industries, households and other establishments must be treated at effluent treatment plants (ETPs) before it ends up in rivers.

Also, grabbers of the rivers as well as canals will be evicted, and the rivers will be dredged to restore their normal flow.

Earlier in 2007, the government and the World Bank jointly conducted a study where it was found nearly

Govt finds 5 doctors of NICRH negligent

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a professor from August 16, 2009 to May 19, 2013; Professor Dr Md Moarraf Hossain, a director and project director from December 31, 2014 to June 6, 2019; and Professor Dr Dr Manosh Kumar Bashu, who has been the chief of the anaesthesia department since February 7, 2015.

Besides, Professor Dr Md Hafizur Rahman Ansary, who was the director of the NICRH from February 8, 2009 to August 16, 2009, did not taken any initiative to install ICU ventilators and Professor Dr Sheikh Golam Mostafa, who was the director and project director from May 19, 2014 to August 3, 2014, did not have the time to set the ICU ventilators, the probe

committee said in the report.

The probe committee, led by the health ministry's Additional Secretary Md Sirajul Islam, submitted the report before the HC yesterday through Deputy Attorney General Amit Talukder, as per its January 2 suo moto (voluntary) order.

After going through the report, the HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman expressed dissatisfaction because the probe committee the report did not mention whether any action has been taken against the NICRH officials for their negligence.

The court asked the government authorities concerned to inform it of the steps taken against the officials

within a week.

The HC bench set February 23 as the date to pass an order on the issue.

Following a report titled "ICU on sickbed" published in The Daily Star on January 2, the HC bench issued the suo moto rule on the same day and directed the government to suspend the retirement benefits of Prof Dr Md Moarraf Hossain for his negligence in preserving and protecting hospital equipment.

It also ordered the health secretary and the director general of the Directorate of Health Services to form a committee and conduct an inquiry into the allegations of negligence of NICRH authorities, and submit a report before the court upon its

Measures starting to pay dividend

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The province and its capital, Wuhan, have been virtually sealed off and locked down since Jan 23, with schools, offices and factories shut and most travel suspended.

The virus is believed to have an incubation period of 14 days which would appear to indicate it has been spreading since the lockdown was imposed. But health commission spokesman Mi Feng said the campaign was beginning to show results.

"The effect of the coronavirus controls is appearing," Mi told reporters.

Increased medical support and preventive measures in Hubei had headed off more critical cases and the proportion of critical cases among confirmed cases had fallen to 21.6% on Saturday, from 32.4% on Jan. 27, Mi said.

Mild cases were also being treated more quickly, preventing them from becoming critical, Mi said.

Nevertheless, restrictions were tightened in Hubei yesterday with a ban on vehicles, apart from essential services, and companies told to stay shut until further notice.

Outside mainland China, there have

been about 500 cases in some two dozen countries and territories, with 5 deaths - in Japan, Chinese-ruled Hong Kong, the Philippines, France and Taiwan.

The biggest cluster outside China has been on the Diamond Princess cruise ship quarantined off Japan's Yokohama, with 70 more cases reported yesterday, taking the total to 355 of the roughly 3,700 passengers and crew on board.

Those testing positive are sent to hospital. No one from the ship has died of the virus.

The US Embassy in Tokyo said passengers and crew were at high risk of exposure to the virus and it recommended that the estimated 400 US citizens onboard get off and take one of the evacuation flights it is arranging yesterday.

"This is a rapidly evolving situation," the embassy said in a notice.

The embassy said everyone would be screened before being allowed to board the chartered flights and quarantined for 14 days upon arrival back in the United States.

"No symptomatic or infected passengers will be allowed to board," it said.

employees are nervous, and travel bans and quarantine orders are in place around the country.

Many factories are yet to re-open, disrupting supply chains in China and beyond for everyone from smartphone makers to car manufacturers.

While there was been some hope that the disease may be peaking in China, a trend has been hard to discern, especially after a reclassification that widened the definition of cases.

World Health Organization (WHO) chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Saturday it was impossible to tell where the epidemic will spread.

"We are concerned by the continued increase in the number of cases in China," Tedros told the Munich Security Conference in Germany.

The sickness, now officially labelled COVID-19, has killed about 2% of those infected. Cases have spread faster than other respiratory viruses this century.

The economic ripple effects go far beyond China.

White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow said the coronavirus might knock two- to three-tenths of a percent off US gross domestic product in the first quarter.

Bloomberg will not excite voters: Sanders

REUTERS, Las Vegas

Democratic US presidential candidate Bernie Sanders said on Saturday Mike Bloomberg would not generate the "excitement and energy" needed to win the White House, focusing on a rival still not fully participating in the

race.

"The simple truth is that Mayor Bloomberg, with all his money, will not create the kind of excitement and energy we need to have the voter turnout we must have to defeat Donald Trump," Sanders said at a Democratic party gala.

Sanders, eager to build momentum after winning New Hampshire and a photo-finish for first place in Iowa, mentioned only the billionaire former New York City mayor among his competitors in a Las Vegas speech. He was critical of Bloomberg's stances on

minimum wage laws, policing, taxing the rich and regulating Wall Street.

Nevada will hold on Feb. 22 the next contest in the state-by-state race to pick a Democratic opponent for Republican President Trump in November's election.