

3,266 murdered this year: BHRB report

By Staff Correspondent

A total of 3,266 people were murdered, 6,234 killed and 40,116 injured in different incidents this year, according to a report of the Bureau of Human Rights of Bangladesh (BHRB).

The report said the law and order situation in the country has deteriorated. Two murders were committed on the court premises and eminent personalities like journalist Shamsur Rahman, advocate Habibur Rahman Mandal, and Alhaj Majibur Rahman Chishti were murdered.

It said 90 people died in police custody and four dock labourers died in police firing at the Mongla port.

The report was presented at a press conference organised by BHRB in the city yesterday. Former Chief Election Commissioner and Justice of the Appellate division of Supreme Court Abdur Rauf and Executive Director of the Bureau Advocate Md. Shajahan presented the report. Chairman of PSC Dr. SMA Fayez

and Justice Mohammad Abdul Ohab were also present.

The report attributed the murders to various incidents like hijacking, theft, robbery, terrorist activities, acid throwing, rape, abduction, repression of women and children, intra-party feud, toll collection, beating by mob and campus violence.

Violence against women has claimed 272 lives and 615 women and children were raped, the report said.

The number of suicidal and accidental deaths are 1,120 and 1,900 respectively. Natural disaster claimed 363 lives while fire incidents took 121 lives.

The report described the toll collection as a horrifying trend. Terrorists and political cadres are involved in it. Fifty people were murdered and 334 injured by the extremists this year.

Twenty-nine Bangladeshi citizens were shot dead by BSF at border areas.



Pakistani police officials look at bloodstained clothes at the site of a market bomb explosion in Lahore yesterday. At least 37 people were injured in three bomb explosions in Pakistan as the Christian minority celebrated Christmas and Muslims prepared for Eid-ul-Fitr. -AFP photo

Rajshahi Sugar Mills CBA polls 40 injured in post election violence

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Dec 25: Tense situation has been prevailing at Rajshahi Sugar Mills and its adjacent areas following a post-election clash between the supporters of two rival panels in the CBA election.

At least 40 people were injured, 10 of them seriously.

The clash continued till mid night last night. Both the groups exchanged gun-shots. At one stage one group attacked the residence of the Mill's Managing Director. They damaged the window panes.

The supporters of the panel, led by Alauddin, also attacked the residence of Muslim Uddin

who led the other panel.

Additional police forces from Muthar thana and RMP headquarters rushed to the spot to bring the situation under control.

Of the injured, four were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

Meanwhile, different political parties in separate statements condemned the incident.

They urged the authorities concerned to arrest the culprits.

They also demanded exemplary punishment to those responsible for the incident.

Coming JS session

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Rafiqul Islam Bakul of BNP.

Having boycotted parliamentary proceedings for nearly two years now, the main opposition BNP and its allies are still undecided about joining the 21st session of the seventh parliament.

The opposition parties, especially the BNP, are now under growing pressure from within to come back to parliament. One argument has it that such a move would intensify the anti-government agitation and do them a lot of good in the next general election, as well.

Top leaders of the BNP and other alliance partners in their latest meetings failed to resolve the disputed issue of going back to parliament. The opposition leaders are due to meet again after the Eid-ul-Fitr to arrive at a decision on the long-standing issue.

Opposition lawmakers willing to join the session argue that such a move would enable them to effectively highlight the government's failures and misdeeds. Such projection in the House would also have a positive impact on the opposition's planned post-Eid street agitation to force the government to resign, they added.

Besides, this section of MPs also believe that the parliament could be used as an effective tool in soliciting public support ahead of the next general election as the House proceedings are broadcast live on radio. Even if the government fails to behave in the House, we can create the ground for our long-pending decision to resign en masse," said a BNP legislator, seeking anonymity.

Nevertheless, BNP Chairperson and the Leader of the Opposition in parliament Khaleda Zia, who is reported to be under the grip of the party hardliners, told the visiting Greek foreign minister in the city that the atmosphere is not conducive for her party to return to parliament.

Neither the Speaker nor is the ruling party likely to initiate any fresh move to bring the boycotting opposition back to the House, as all their efforts in the past two years failed to yield any positive result.

Speaker Humayun Rashed Chowdhury told a group of reporters last week that many opposition lawmakers had told him about their willingness to join the upcoming parliament session.

Ratan suspended

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The party is suffering from cancer but treatment is being given for diarrhoea," Ratan said.

"I don't feel to be in a party which is influenced and run by an illiterate person like Mosaddek Ali Falu."

Party insiders said Ratan has been victimised for his stance against Khaleda Zia's private secretary Falu and formation of the JCD central committee with Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu as its president.

They said the BNP Chairperson recently instructed the party

secretary general to issue expulsion order on Ratan for his public stance against Falu. But the process was delayed as majority of the party leaders suggested her not to take any action against Ratan.

A reliable source told The Daily Star yesterday that BNP hardliners convinced Khaleda Zia that Ratan was provoking JCD activists to resist the Pintu-Laltu committee and suggested her to expel Ratan from the party.

Mirhajiribagh

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both to clean the reservoir for the last one year.

Experts say natural marsh gas and Methane may accumulate naturally in an underground water reservoir.

The explosion took place as soon as one of the tenants got inside the dark reservoir with a burning candle to clean it.

Beheaded body

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During interrogation, Mehedi, also a Juba League activist told police that he killed Shah Alam as he (Alam) was having an illicit affair with Immon, Mehedi's wife. Immon Begam and Sohrab Howladar will also be interrogated on December 30, police said.

IT convention recommends modification of banking rules

Review and modification of country's banking rules and regulations are urgently required to finance IT projects and draw investment from expatriates, reports UNB.

The recommendation came from a two-day convention titled "TechTransfer-2000: Bangladesh" that concluded in the city Sunday.

The convention of Bangladeshi technologists, investors and entrepreneurs from home and abroad, held at Bangladesh University of Science and Technology, observed in its recommendation that there is a general lack of readiness of the banks to finance IT projects.

"A dialogue between bankers and IT business community is essential to figure out the modalities of IT project financing," the recommendation said, adding that review and modification of banking rules and regulations are urgently required to finance IT projects.

It further suggested that BOI be expanded to offer services to a variety of offers of the non-resident Bangladeshis, and not investment alone.

The meet stressed the need for developing the infrastructure for the growth of resident Bangladeshis (RB) and non-resident Bangladeshis (NRB) cooperation on sustainable basis.

"The cooperation of NRB's in terms of human resource development can be executed through

existing educational infrastructure," the recommendation at the end of the two-day brainstorming convention said.

The NRBs are ready to offer their assistance in the following: creation of a marketing office in established hi-tech areas in the west, creation of a technology consulate or a counsellor in established hi-tech areas in the west, creation of a center of excellence with NRB partnership to provide state-of-the-art hands-on technology education.

In the field of Biotech and Chemical Technology, the two-day convention suggested some hi-tech educational programmes in university curriculum in fields of biotech genetic and chemical technology.

For biotech and chemical technology industries strong analytical and quality control support base needs to be developed. Supports available in BCISIR, BAEC and universities need to be collected and published, preferably in the Internet.

During the two-day convention, it was revealed that environmental pollution, particularly air pollution, is a strong deterrent to the NRBs' active participation in local ventures.

"NRBs are very concerned about the high traffic congestion, which kills valuable man-hours.

About E-Commerce, the recommendation said combination of private entrepreneurs, government, NGOs and international donor agencies want to contribute to Bangladesh e-commerce through pilot project.

For IT policy, the recommendation said E-governance would accelerate the formation of a domestic market thereby maturing the indigenous IT skills quicker. The Jamilur Reza Chowdhury report on IT needs to be fully implemented, it said.

About energy and power policy, the two-day convention suggested extending gas pipelines and gas-grid networks all over the country as opposed to gas transmission line for export.

"Export of gas-generated products is more viable than exporting gas itself," the meet observed.

Car bomb

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resolution of their 50-year old dispute over Kashmir. The neighbors have fought two wars over the region, divided between them since independence in 1947.

India extended a unilateral cease-fire in its portion of Kashmir last week, and Pakistan responded by withdrawing some of its troops along the 1972 line that divides the province.

India says the insurgency has claimed 30,000 lives. Human rights groups say at least 60,000 civilians, soldiers and militants have been killed.



Sadek Hossain Khoka, city BNP president, was warmly welcomed by party leaders and activists at ZIA yesterday on his arrival from New York after treatment. City BNP General Secretary Abdus Salam, party leaders Eklashuddin Mollah, Mohammad Mohan and Ahsanullah Hasan were present among others at the airport.

Frustration in BNP

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University campus. Two JCD activists were gunned down in one such incident on July 2.

Instead of removing the two from JCD, the party chief has rewarded them through upgrading their status," lamented a member of the BNP standing committee. It could also be interpreted as the party chief's inclination to have non-students and terrorists in the student body, he added.

Moreover, such dedicated leaders as Habibunnabi Khan Sohel, were dropped from the new committee, he pointed out. This trend of giving non-students and armed cadres the upper hand would ruin JCD in the coming days, he feared.

A group of hard-line leaders has talked Khaleda into believing that militant activists like Pintu and Laltu are now needed in JCD to recapture Dhaka University and other educational institutions in the city as soon as the caretaker government takes over, he said.

She has been made to believe that it would not be possible for BNP to come to power, if the edu-

plan to intensify the out-governance movement after the Ramadan would be seriously affected by formation of such an unpopular JCD central committee.

It seems that Khaleda is trying to be a hard-liner and wants to turn the party into an extreme rightwing force from its centrist disposition, a BNP policy-maker said. This trend would definitely discourage moderate people in the party to continue politics under the banner of BNP, he said.

The leader said BNP got popularity within a very short time because of its centrist character and political ideology. If it turned into a rightwing party, he argued, no one would feel the urge to do its politics.

There is already Jamaat and other rightwing forces in the country... so why will people join BNP, instead of supporting them should it (BNP) emerge as an extreme rightwing force?" he asked. People in BNP who do not believe in extreme right or left may be rendered inactive due to the party chief's recent role, he feared.

Unocal

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Petrobangla brushed aside the projected cost of Tk 134 crore as an incurred cost. Besides, Petrobangla said, it was not officially informed of other costs except for the payment of Tk 40 crore to railway authorities, tea estates and local people.

"The insurance claims would show us what was our true loss caused by the Magurchara blowout," said a source. "Whatever was Unocal's claim to its insurer is what it believed to be the genuine loss incurred by the blowout. If Unocal gives us the documents we are asking for, it would dispel misunderstanding over the blowout issue."

In addition, difference between Unocal's insurance claim and its proclaimed compensation payments to various parties would make clear whether the country was being denied of any amount of money.

"For instance, if Unocal has got Tk 40 crore from its insurer and paid, say, Tk 300 crore as compensation, it means Bangladesh deserves to get a share of Tk 100 crore," he explained.

"Magurchara blowout has damaged our resources, not Unocal's. Nobody should try to reap financial benefits from our misfortune."

Three policemen suspended on charge of toll collection in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 25: Three police constables were suspended today on charge of toll collection at Miakhan Nagar area under Bakalla thana in the port city, police sources said.

The three policemen were caught by the mob while they demanded toll from local businessmen at 9-30 last night, they said.

The mob also beat them up as they went there in plain cloth without informing Bakalla thana, police sources said.

Departmental cases were initiated against them in this connection.

Pintu, Laltu

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Pintu and Laltu amid tough police protection to complete the rituals while the two assuming the top offices of BNP student wing.

Although traditionally high-command leaders of BNP, including the secretary general and the student advisor, remain present on such occasions, this time none was seen. That, observers say, virtually exposed their dissatisfaction.

On the other side angry JCD activists continued their violent agitation yesterday demanding dissolution of the newly declared JCD committee.

The protestors damaged cars and shops in front of the Nayapallan BNP office yesterday morning during frenzied demonstrations against the committee headed by Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu and Shahabuddin Laltu.

On the Dhaka University campus, hundreds of JCD activists brought out protest procession and held rally in front of the DUCSU Bhawan at noon. They chanted slogans against the new committee during the demonstrations.

Shopping

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who could manage their Eid budget a little later.

"I was not able to buy Eid gifts for my family members due to delayed disbursement of Eid bonus from my office," said Abul Kalam, an official at a private firm.

A shopkeeper at Eastern Plaza said, "We are now trying to sell off our stock for the Eid festival as time is running out. This would continue till 'chand rat' (the night before the Eid day)."

He added, "It is a tradition of business community, particularly that in Old Dhaka, to buy Eid gifts at chand rat."

A salesman at a shop on Elephant road said, "We kept our shop open till 2 on 'Isuriday night'."

Meanwhile, vendors on pavements were also doing brisk business before the Eid.

SEMP impasse

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It also proposed that it would engage an independent auditor to investigate the allegations against the SIAs.

There has been no reply to the letter so far. Sources said the MOEF is preparing a letter, referring the matter to the Finance Minister. But its contents are not known.

Exports show

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uct processing. This means that the more processed a product is, the more duty is imposed on it.

"So, these high-duty product areas should be explored by Bangladeshi exporters to get the most out of the ABA," he said. "EU will cut its subsidy on agriculture by 2006, which also opens up a new export diversification scope."

However, he warned that Bangladesh should carefully look at the ABA rules of origin. If the rules of origin are stringent then the country would not be able to reap much benefit out of the system and, in such case, it should lobby to have the rules relaxed.

The third LDC conference to be held in Brussels in May 2001 will be an important meeting for Bangladesh and for that matter for any LDC. A number of new initiatives like infrastructure support programme for the LDCs would be taken from this forum and Bangladesh should rally for its share in such initiatives.

No police action

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arrested, stayed at Hotel Saht Martin at Agrabad using the local address of Imam Textile Mill, which is owned by an industrialist of southern Chittagong, police and hotel sources said.

The three Pakistanis stayed in rooms 502 and 512 of the hotel, the sources said.

The kingpin of the smuggling ring made his fortune through smuggling and officials of different agencies are on his payroll, sources said.

He also owns a palatial house at DOHS in Mohakhali, Dhaka, the source also added. One of his elder brothers, who is reportedly also a member of the syndicate, is staying in Singapore to escape arrest in Bangladesh on charges of smuggling.

BSS adds: The cartons dropped into the Bay of Bengal



The Duke of Edinburgh (L), Britain's Queen Elizabeth II, Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother (2ndR) and the Prince of Wales (R) leave St. Mary Magdalene Church after a Christmas Day church service in Sandringham, Norfolk, yesterday. -AFP photo

Eid tomorrow

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however.

"All our 36 meteorological stations will report to the (meteorological) department today (Tuesday) as to whether the Shawal Moon has been sighted or not. Based on their report, we will notify the Islamic Foundation, Bangladesh," said a source in the Met Office last night.

The National Moon Sighting Committee headed by State Minister for Religious Affairs Maulana Nurul Islam will meet in the conference room of the Islamic Foundation after Maghreb prayers this evening.

The Foundation has already requested all its district offices to inform it immediately if the moon is sighted in their respective areas.

Any one to have sighted the Shawal Moon today has been requested to inform the Islamic Foundation by calling 9559493, 9556407, 9555947, 9559643 and 9558337.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed in a message on the eve of Eid greeted the countrymen. He said the characteristics of Eid-ul-Fitr pave the way for social harmony and universal brotherhood. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in her message called upon the

countrymen to turn the joys of Eid into a universal festivity.

Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Khaleda Zia greeted the countrymen on the occasion of Eid and wished happiness, peace and prosperity for the Muslim Ummah.

Meantime, four Eid Jamaats will be held at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque on the day of the Eid at 7:15, 8:00, 9:00 and 9:45 in the morning. PID sources said yesterday.

National flags will be hoisted atop all government buildings as well as private establishments. The main city thoroughfares will be decorated with the national flag and colourful festoons. Important government buildings will be illuminated on the night of the Eid day.

Improved diet will be served in hospitals, jails, orphanages, vagrant and welfare centres, and in destitute homes.

Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television will broadcast special programmes while newspapers will bring out special supplements.

Other programmes include screening of films; seminars and discussion meetings; reunion of children and friendly football matches.

BCP cadre's body handed over to son

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Dec 25: Alike Sarder, son of slain BCP cadre Porimal Sarder, filed a case with Khulna thana on Sunday night.

The body was handed over to him after he identified his father's body in the General Hospital morgue.

In the FIR Alike mentioned that his father Porimal Sarder was an armed cadre of Biplobi Communist Party and had no connection with the family members since last four years due to intra-party rivalry.

He further said that his father was hounded by son-in-law of retired SP Alaul Gani Badsha.

My father was involved in

many murders, extortions and forcible occupation of different fish farms in Dumuria and Tala upazilas.

Alike said that Porimal was given life-term in a murder case trial in absentia, while four murder cases are still under trial in Khulna and Sakhira Judges' courts.

Meanwhile, the murder of Porimal has sparked off tension among armed cadres of Dumuria and Tala based unit of Biplobi Communist Party, police said.

Dumuria police said several rounds of blank shots were fired at the house of Porimal Sunday night at Magurkhal union.

Auto-rickshaw drivers

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They chanted slogans against police and demanded immediate release of their colleagues, witnesses said.

Riot police rushed to the spot and charged batons to disperse the mob.

The retreating drivers hurled crackers and bricks to police. Gunshots were also heard. Police then lobbed several tear gas shells and fired blank shots, witnesses said.

Police chased the mob from two sides and arrested 32 people.

Several traders at Talala market there said that some shops were looted during the clash.

Earlier, auto-rickshaw drivers put up barricades on Demra road and at Jatrabari at about 7:30 am.

from two boats on December 17 are believed to contain arms and ammunition, intelligence sources said in Dhaka.

The intelligence agencies will bring some of the main suspects among the 28 Bangladeshi crew who have been arrested and a Pakistani citizen to Dhaka from Chittagong for interrogation after Eid, the sources said.

A senior intelligence official told the news agency Monday night that the arrested confessed that the boxes dropped into the deep sea contained arms and ammunition.

Police are on a hunt for two other Pakistanis who are suspected to be involved in the smuggling.

A Navy ship during regular patrol on December 17 arrested 28 Bangladeshi crew and a Pakistani citizen from two mechanised boats.