

Panic-stricken Rohingyas

FROM PAGE 1
While in flight from Akiyab, one of her daughters died and the family had to bury her at sea, said the emotion-choked mother.

Another middle-aged member of the family said, "We left since we could no longer bear watching our husbands falling in the chest."

"For four long days we had been trying to enter Bangladesh territory on an engine boat but couldn't do so until Monday due to the resistance from border guards. So we made a desperate attempt at the dead of night," she said, adding that a local elderly man who was out on Fazr prayers saw and gave shelter.

So far, dozens of people had been killed in the Rakhine violence, reports AFP.

Asked about the Rohingya influx, State Minister for Home Shamsul Haque Tuku yesterday said the injured refugees who had already entered Bangladesh were receiving treatment.

Meanwhile, a Myanmar citizen, who had received bullet injury in the abdomen and was under treatment at Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH), died yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Kala Hossain, 50, son of Ali Hossain. He was admitted to the hospital early Monday. Doctors removed the bullet from his abdomen but could not save his life.

Along with Kala Hossain, injured Mohammad Selim, 20, and Mohammad Tayab,

20, were also admitted to CMCH. Doctors said Tayab suffered two bullet injuries in the head and was in critical condition.

Condition of Selim was stable and he was under observation, said a source, adding that doctors had removed one bullet from his chest.

A Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) team arrested Kala Hossain from Teknaf upazila health complex Sunday while police arrested Selim and Tayab at CMCH the same day on charge of intruding into Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, border troops, coastguards and other law enforcement agencies have stepped up vigilance along the border with Myanmar. They are urging the local boatmen and fishermen not to help Myanmar nationals cross the border.

BGB yesterday set up a temporary camp and started special monitoring at Monkhal point in Cox's Bazar while the local administration decided to check all the boats plying on the St Martin's Island-Teknaf-Monkhali Bazar route to prevent intrusion.

Movements of engine boats and fishing trawlers in the Naf river between Bangladesh and Myanmar have remained suspended for the last few days.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Cox's Bazaar Jainul Bari said all engine boats and fishing trawlers coming from the sea would be thoroughly checked.

Maj Shafiqur Rahman, second-in-command of BGB 42 Battalion, said they had information that after failing to enter the Bangladesh territory through Shah Pori Island and Teknaf points on Monday, the Myanmar intruders could try to cross the border through Monkhal point at Cox's Bazar.

BGB Sector Commander Col Golam Farooque Chowdhury yesterday visited the nine observatory posts along the Teknaf border and talked to border guards.

Abdul Mohaimen, general manager of United Land Port Teknaf Ltd that operates the land port, said unloading and delivery of goods at the port remained normal while no cargo boats had arrived there since Saturday due to the unrest in Myanmar.

The country has been incurring a loss of around TK 35-40 lakh in revenue each day, he said.

Meanwhile, three Bangladeshi traders who went to Myanmar on business purposes last week returned home Monday, said an immigration official at Teknaf land port.

He said 12 more Bangladeshi traders are still at Maungdaw in Myanmar. The immigration here had contacted their counterparts in Maungdaw to help the trapped return home safely.

"We have come to know that the Bangladeshi nationals left their hotels and moved to safer locations," said the immigration official.

He said around 259 Myanmar nationals remained

stuck in Bangladesh due to the unrest in Rakhine state. They were here on a seven-day border pass, which had already expired, and now paying Tk 200 in fine for each day's stay, he said.

2 brothers killed in landslide

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Two brothers died when their mud house at the foot of a hill collapsed at Baildihara village in Jaintapur of the district yesterday.

The dead are Shahin Miah, 10, and Fahim Miah, 8, sons of Delwar Hossain.

It was raining heavily when the incident happened.

Later, the upazila administration ordered those living at the foot of the hill to immediately move away.

Moscow Meet EU, Iran agrees on nuke talks content

REUTERS, Brussels

European Union officials said on Monday that Iran has agreed to discuss a proposal from six world powers to curb its production of high-grade uranium at a meeting in Moscow next week in an apparent de-escalation of tensions ahead of the talks.

The development follows more than two weeks of wrangling between Iranian diplomats and Western negotiators over preparations for the closely-watched round of nuclear talks which had cast some doubts over what can be achieved in Moscow.

A tense exchange of letters between EU diplomats, who deal with Iran on behalf of the six powers, and Iranian officials had earlier appeared to suggest Tehran may be backtracking on its expressed willingness to discuss their most pressing concern - high-grade uranium enrichment even in broad terms.

AL MPs

FROM PAGE 20
minister for placing a "pro-people and welfare-oriented" budget.

Interestingly, the AL MPs who have recently blasted the state minister for power and energy in parliament for outrage across the country even at midnight yesterday remained mum on this issue.

AL lawmaker Enamul Haque from Rajshahi-2 even claimed there was no load-shedding in his constituency.

They also blasted the past BNP-Jamaat-led government for its "misrule and corruption" in the country.

Besides, the AL lawmakers came down heavily on those who criticise the government for its failure in different sectors on television talk shows.

"Prices of daily essentials, especially soya bean oil in my area [Lalmonirhat] is increasing on a regular basis. Even Tk 1,000 was not enough to ensure food items for one meal for my family," Jatiya Party MP Majibar Rahman kicked off discussion on the proposed budget in the House.

He added: "In spite of being an MP, I could not manage to meet my expenses. Then one could easily understand the condition of the common people."

Finance Minister AMA Muhith on June 7 placed Tk 1,917.38 billion proposed budget for the forthcoming fiscal, 2012-13.

Taking part in the discussion, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal MP Shah Jikrul Ahmed criticised Muhith for "unfriendly" tax policy.

AL lawmaker Engineer Enamul Haque, however, said the proposed budget has "fulfilled" people's expectations.

"There was nothing in the proposed budget to criticise for," he said lauding the budget. He added there was no load-shedding in his constituency at present.

AL MPs Narayan Chandra Chanda, MA Mannan and AA Maruf Saklaan also took part in yesterday's budget discussion.

No more refugees

FROM PAGE 1
"Our position is clear that we won't accept any more refugees in Bangladesh. There are already five lakh Rohingyas here and we can't allow anymore. Rather, we are in a process to send back the existing refugees," said a senior official of the foreign ministry.

According to UNHCR estimate, there are more than 30,000 registered and two lakh illegal refugees in Bangladesh.

In a press statement, the ministry said Bangladesh and Myanmar were maintaining close consultations to ensure that developments in the Rakhine state did not have any trans-boundary spill-over.

It said the local administration and the law enforcement agencies in the border area have been asked to remain alert and increase vigilance.

"Bangladesh is confident that the government of Myanmar would be able to deal with the situation in the best possible manner and restore normalcy in the region in the shortest possible time," said the foreign ministry statement.

The foreign ministry also expressed condolences over the loss of lives and property in the ongoing violence in Myanmar.

Asked, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni told reporters that it would be a serious problem for Bangladesh if there was any fresh influx of Rohingyas, as there were already a huge number of them in the country.

"Bangladesh is a densely populated country and the Rohingyas have impacts on our society, law and order, and environment. Considering all aspects, it will create serious problems for us," said the foreign minister, adding, "We are not interested in more people coming to Bangladesh."

She said the second highest-level official of UNHCR headquarters would visit Bangladesh soon to discuss the issue of existing Rohingya refugees.

The foreign secretary and DG concerned of the ministry yesterday [Tuesday] had talk with the head of Myanmar embassy in Dhaka and apprised the border situation, said Dipu Moni, adding that Bangladesh embassy in Myanmar was in close contact with the government there.

Meanwhile, the UNHCR in its yesterday's briefing expressed concern over media reports that Bangladeshi border guards were pushing back

Myanmar nationals. "UNHCR is seeking clarification from the Bangladesh authorities on this and other similar reports," it said.

"UNHCR is advocating with the Bangladeshi authorities to allow safe haven on its territory for those who need immediate safety and medical assistance. Previously, people have been allowed in Bangladesh for medical treatment. We hope that such good practices will be maintained," it added.

Although security measures have been enhanced along the borders by both the countries, a few refugees had managed to enter the Bangladesh territory, said the UNHCR country representative.

As many as 250,000 Rohingyas from Myanmar entered Bangladesh in 1991 following persecution. Later, most of them returned, but those registered by the UNHCR now reside in two camps -- Kutupalong and Nayapara -- in Cox's Bazar.

In 2009, police investigations found link of Rohingyas with some militant groups in Bangladesh.

Over the years, many of the Rohingyas living here managed to obtain Bangladeshi passport with support from local authori-

An honourable act

FROM PAGE 1
limits to which MPs can go against a citizen and also as a protection of the rights of ordinary people against the collective might of parliament. On both counts the general public can be said to have gained, for which we owe a debt of gratitude to the Speaker, and to the Deputy Speaker who really cast the first stone.

While we thank the Speaker for his extraordinary action of saying sorry when a wrong is done, which by the way is common practice in all other parliamentary systems, it must be pointed out that he did not, in our view, sufficiently put the onus on the offending MPs for not verifying the facts before using the sacred floor of parliament to vilify a citizen, who in this case happens to be a man enjoying universal respect.

The Speaker, in our view, should have come out far stronger in condemning the action of the MPs in question who did not feel the slightest need to ascertain the facts before castigating a citizen on the floor of parliament.

Most disappointing was the role of the presiding MP Prof Ashraf. Instead of discharging his onerous responsibility with circumspection and sobriety, he went further than others in suggesting that Prof Sayeed be summoned, made to stand and apologise before the whole nation. As the presiding MP, in the absence of both the Speaker and Deputy Speaker, it is he more than others who should have stopped the debate and suggest that reports of some newspapers be checked before the debate could be allowed to continue. We understand the chief whip could not play his due role as he was not present. But what about the leader of the House, who was present on the occasion?

Certain words of caution also need to be raised about the role of the media. There is no question that we need to improve our own standards. If all of us had reported correctly, this incident involving MPs and a citizen would not have occurred. While parliament, through the Speaker, has expressed regret the newspapers whose reporting caused the misconstrued debate in the first place, have remained silent. Such disregard for accuracy and the subsequent refusal to publicly admit it, is not healthy for freedom of the press and journalistic professionalism.

Just as we demand freedom, we must also do everything to be fair and factual. And when we fail, which can happen even when we are at our professional best, we must have the moral courage

to accept our fault and publicly apologise. Occasionally our performance can be flawed but our intentions should always be above question. And that can only be proven if we admit our failures when they occur.

Though we are happy that the incident surrounding Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed's vilification has ended in a satisfactory manner, there are some fundamental issues that need to be addressed.

First is the question of relations between a common citizen and our MPs. Do we or do we not have the right to criticise an MP if he or she is involved in wrongdoing? Why should an ordinary citizen be subjected to vilification on the floor of parliament just for exercising his or her right to freedom of speech? If an MP is unjustly or falsely criticised by anybody he can go to court and sue him for defamation, a right that is available to every citizen. Why should the floor of parliament be used for that purpose?

Second, what is the function of parliamentary privileges? Are they to grant immunity to MPs against public criticism? Parliamentary privileges are facilities given to MPs so that they serve their constituencies better. They are meant to be used to protect the right of citizens and to promote freedom and are not to be used to protect the MPs themselves from public criticism and thereby throttle free speech.

The immunity from prosecution that MPs enjoy for their speeches in parliament is to promote the public interest, to fight corruption, injustice, abuse or misuse of law, to protect all sorts of rights, to protect minority groups from the onslaught of the majority. It is never to protect the personal interest or prestige of MPs either as individuals or as a group.

How many times have we seen instances of an MP using his privilege to raise an issue of public concern on the floor of parliament? There have been so many extra judicial killings, so many instances of abuse of the law, misuse of public property or public funds, abuse of authority in high offices or violations of human rights or minority rights, and yet in most cases our MPs have been silent. Shouldn't our MPs have raised the issue of stock market manipulation and the consequent pauperisation of millions in parliament when ordinary people were swindled out of their life's savings? Have we heard our MPs raising a voice when our rivers are being choked due to land

grabbing and its water turn into cesspools? Yet they were so quick in attacking a citizen when they felt that their dignity was being compromised. The real dignity of public representatives comes from serving the public, and in no other way.

Our members of parliament never tire of telling us that they are elected representatives of the people and they should be respected. We fully agree. But they seem to forget that getting elected is a privilege to serve and not an opportunity to dominate or lord it over the very voters who have elected them.

MPs must always keep the public interest highest in their minds. When we see that on no issue of national interest, however urgent, can our venerable parliamentarians speak in one voice, and that the only time that MPs from all parties can unite is to expand their own perks, financial benefits and all sorts of privileges, including duty free cars, then the question automatically arises as to how much of the public interest our MPs keep in mind when discharging their duties.

Let the Speaker's gesture give us a new start in relations between parliament and the public. Let our MPs realise more and more that their real power, respect and dignity come from how effectively and purposefully they represent the public interest and not from any legal framework of privileges.

From the media's side we pledge to support our parliamentarians in all their efforts to serve the public interest.

No billboard

FROM PAGE 1
Corporation (North) to explain in four weeks why their work order to Ritu Advertisement Firm on March 8 for mounting billboards in those areas should not be declared illegal.

The HC bench of Justice Farid Ahmed and Justice Sheikh Hassan Arif came up with the order and rule in response to a writ petition.

Arif Rahman, owner of a building at Gulshan-2, and Anjarul Ahsan, a Supreme Court lawyer, filed the petition on June 10, challenging the legality of the work order. They argued that the public safety and security were being jeopardised due to ever-increasing billboards in the city.

The bench also issued a suo moto rule on the government to explain why it should not formulate guidelines on installing billboards in Dhaka city.

Barrister Rafique-ul Huq and Barrister Sakhawat Hossain represented the petitioners, while Deputy Attorney General Motaheer Hossain Sajou stood for the government.

ARMS HAUL CASE Ex-home secy cross examined

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Former home secretary Omar Faruk was cross-examined by defence lawyers yesterday in two cases in connection with the recovery of 10 truckloads of arms and explosive at the CUFL jetty in Chittagong in 2004.

Faruk headed a five-member enquiry committee formed after the seizure of the arms cache at the jetty of Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd (CUFL) on April 2 that year.

The committee had submitted a unanimous report to the government with its findings and recommendations, prosecution witness Faruk told Chittagong Metropolitan Special Tribunal-1 during his cross-examination.

Lawyers of several accused including former state minister Lutfozzaman Babar cross-examined the ex-secretary.

He claimed that his committee's purpose was to enquire into the incident, not to carry out an investigation.

The committee, during its enquiry, had acted in good faith and tried to find out the source of and destination for the smuggled guns and ammunition.

On conclusion of Faruk's cross-examination, the court

2 killed

FROM PAGE 20
where doctors declared him dead.

In the other incident, a biker, aged about 22, was sandwiched between two vans at Kajla near Jatrabari around 10:00pm, said Aslam Ali, sub-inspector of Jatrabari Police Station.

Identity of the victim could not be immediately known.

He died instantly while the other rider on the back of the bike was slightly injured, Aslam added.

No-one

FROM PAGE 20
Anawar Pasha said he had contacted the Dhaka Zoo authorities and many other government wildlife organisations but no one wanted to take their responsibility.

The forest department then formed a committee of five experts to decide where and how the tiger cubs should be reared since it also lacks expertise to deal with such young tiger cubs.

Suggested by a veterinary surgeon, Malekur Rahman of Dulahazara safari park, the cubs are being fed on milk powder four times a day and fine-chopped meat for once.

"I have no experience in dealing with tiger cubs, but once took care of lion cubs as those were born in the safari park," he said.

Yesterday, the cubs were seen in a cage beside a cage of a gray parrot. The veterinarian said he feared that the cubs could get an infection from birds.

Meanwhile, the environment and forest minister said an international wildlife trafficking ring was active in the country. On Monday, the trafficker's son Zakir Hossain, who was arrested with the cubs, told the press that the animals had been brought in from the Sundarbans for Tapan Kumar Deb, chief of wildlife section of the forest department.

In a press release issued yesterday, Chief Conservator of Forest (CCF) Yunus Ali outright rejected any forest official's links with the trafficking network.

The members of the experts team are Anawarul Islam, executive secretary of Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh; CCF Yunus Ali; Ishtiaq, country representative of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN); wildlife expert Anisuzzaman Khan, and tiger expert Manirul H Khan.

Sikkim

FROM PAGE 20
Himalayan Green Energy Pvt Ltd (which is also co-developer of Polyplex Corporation India Pvt Ltd) for the other three projects in 2008.

Teesta originates in Sikkim and flows through Indian state of West Bengal and Bangladesh.

Shootout at roads office

FROM PAGE 1
Shamim has former Chhatra League leader Farid Ahmed Sentu as his closest associate.

Eyewitnesses said around 15 people riding six to seven motorbikes and a private car stormed Sarak Bhaban and made the attack around 4:00pm.

A three-member committee led by Md Ali, additional chief engineer of RHD, has been formed to investigate the shooting at Sarak Bhaban, the head office of RHD, and submit a report in three days.

Habibur Rahman Litu, a contractor, said, "Kamal was against open bidding as he gets commission from tender manipulation. We support open bidding."

Chowdhury Ruhul Amin, deputy director (security) of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, said, "Around 3:50pm, a contractor named Tutul told me over the phone that a group of hired guns was coming from Tejaon. And within 10 minutes the shooting started as I was calling the police."

The gang fired around 30-35 rounds and left the scene by the time the cops came, he added.

A contractor named Golam Azam alias Mamun of Shamim group filed a case with Shahbagh Police Station around midnight, accusing

Kamal, Bazlur Rahman, Rafiq, Abul Kalam and 18-20 unnamed people.

Nobody, however, was arrested in this connection as of filing this report at about 2:00am today, said Shahbagh police.

Shamim was shot in the right leg, Rajesh in the waist, Ripon in the right hand, Towhid in the head and Zakir in the right leg.

The injured were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital and doctors said all of them were out of danger.

Towhidul Islam, one of the injured, told The Daily Star that they were at the office room of RHD contractors' association when they came under attack.

"Seeing the gang brandishing firearms, we tried to flee. But they opened fire, mainly targeting Shamim Bhai. A bullet hit my head while I was trying to save Shamim Bhai."

Towhidul said the attackers stayed there for around 10 minutes.

RHD sources said Shamim and Sentu, who were known as Chhatra League cadres at Dhaka University, had been holding sway at Sarak Bhaban for the last few years.

But their dominance weakened after a part of the RHD office was shifted to

Elenbari of Tejaon, where Kamal and his group are stronger.

An RHD employee, preferring not to be named, said the Shamim-Sentu group currently controls the tender business at Sarak Bhaban.

They are against a High Court decision to relocate the Sarak Bhaban to Tejaon, as they fear they would lose the dominance in that case. But Kamal supports the verdict as he has influence in Tejaon area.

"The groups fought several times before. On June 3, a case was filed against Kamal and his cohorts for attacking supporters of Shamim Shahriar," said the RHD employee.

Yesterday's incident could have been averted had the police arrested Kamal after filing of the case, he added.

Nurul Islam, deputy commissioner of police (Ramna division), said they were informed that the shooting resulted from rivalry between Shamim-Sentu and Kamal groups.

Talking about the case against Kamal, he said, "We were not able to detain Kamal as we don't know his address."

Asked about the incident, Shamim declined to say anything. Kamal could not be reached for comments.

Design Ltd are leading the movement, it is a concern for the entire sector.

Workers want a rise between Tk 1,500 and 2,000, he added.

Currently, a garment worker gets Tk 3,000 to 5,500 a month.

Meanwhile, owners of the factories at Ashulia decided to resume production today upon assurance from the government and labour leaders that there would be no harm to their factories.

The decision came at a tripartite meeting chaired by Labour and Employment Minister Khander Mosharraf Hossain yesterday afternoon where factory owners and labour leaders were present.

"We will continue the discussions to find out the real causes of unrest at Ashulia. We did not find the real cause as yet," the minister said after the meeting.

The minister will convene another meeting of the committee today at the ministry to find ways to resolve the crisis, he said.

"We will take action once we find out the causes of the unrest," the minister said in a written statement.