

It all started

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derogatory photo.

Within a short time many people came to see the image, and at one point Faruk provided the soft copy of the photo to "three to four" people who wanted it, claiming to be journalists.

But that seems to be all. No one else among the several thousand fanatics who gathered in Ramu upazila town that night to destroy century-old Buddhist temples and pagodas has seen it on Uttam's Facebook page.

But the news of the image of a foot planted on a copy of the Quran on Uttam's Facebook account spread like wildfire from the evening.

Through Bluetooth, it passed from one mobile to another while printed copies were circulated and exhibited in the processions and rallies, inciting the demonstrators.

But Faruk, while relating to this correspondent as to how the publicity of the image had begun from his shop, claims neither to have printed it nor sent it to anyone's mobile phone. He says he has no idea about who copied and then distributed those among the demonstrators.

It was around 6:00pm on Saturday that he went back to his shop with his cousin, Abdul Muktedir, after having some snacks at a nearby restaurant.

Two youths, aged about 25, came to his shop at the time. "I don't know them, never saw them before. They came to fix a mobile," Faruk said.

While he was working on the mobile, Muktedir, a student of Shyamoli Polytechnic in Chittagong, was checking his Facebook account.

"At one point, I told Muktedir to log out from his account and log in on my account."

When asked if Muktedir knew his ID and password, he said, "I went to the computer desk and logged in on my account and returned to my work desk. After a few moments, Muktedir shrieked, saying 'What picture is this?'" Faruk said.

At this, he went to the computer desk and saw on his homepage the picture whose source was Uttam Kumar Barua's account.

"The two customers also came to the computer desk and saw it," Faruk said, "They were asking why we were watching it and insisted on knowing where the photo had come from."

"We did not want to tell them but when they kept insisting, I told them that it came from my friend Uttam Kumar Barua's account."

The two youths left the shop around 7:00pm after Faruk had fixed the phone.

After they had left, Faruk again went to the computer desk and had another look at the image when he found Uttam was tagged by another Facebook account titled "Insult allah [sic]."

He then started to cap-

ture all the pictures from the "Insult allah" account and also captured the page where it was evident that the picture had come to his page from Uttam's account.

Faruk said by 7:30pm he found that Uttam's account had become unavailable. By this time, some people had started to gather in front of his shop to see the picture.

"I do not know from where they got the information, but they came soon after the two customers had left the shop. These people were repeatedly asking me to show them the picture."

He claimed he had to show the image to the all-curious people who gathered in his shop.

Though Faruk claimed the photo Uttam was tagged in appeared on his Facebook page, The Daily Star has obtained from a Ramu inhabitant the snapshot of the social networking site that shows the photo appeared on Muktedir's Facebook home page.

Asked if the photo appeared on his page or Muktedir's page, Faruk repeatedly said, "It was on his page because Muktedir is not a Facebook friend of Uttam."

"There was a continuous flow of curious people, many of them unknown, but I knew some of them as they were from our area," he said, adding that from among the crowd three to four persons introduced themselves as journalists.

"They came with a small digital camera and forced me in a way that I had to give them all the images, including the one from Uttam's Facebook account, saved in my computer," Faruk said.

Around 8:00pm some policemen from Ramu Police Station came to his shop and demanded to see the picture.

"I have no idea how the police came to know about it, but when they came the crowd was smaller than before," said Faruk, adding that he showed the picture to the policemen and then they left his shop.

When more people were joining the gathering again, Faruk said, he and Muktedir closed the wooden door of the shop from inside.

But a little later some other policemen came to the shop and asked Faruk to go to the police station with his computer.

"Muktedir and I had to go to the police station with my desktop computer," said Faruk, adding when they went there, they were asked to wait for a top police official "who would come to see it."

"We waited at the police station till 12:30am [Sunday] but none came to the police station to see the picture," Faruk said.

He added that from the police station they were hearing noises of demonstrations and came to know from friends' phone calls that Buddhists' pagodas

had been set on fire.

They also saw the red flames of fire in the dark sky when they were waiting at the station.

At around 12:30am on Sunday, Faruk and Muktedir were asked to leave the police station, leaving their computer there.

"Muktedir went back to his home and I returned to my home and went to bed around 1:00am," said Faruk.

Faruk claimed he did not open his Facebook account regularly and on Saturday evening he opened it without any prior knowledge about the picture.

He also claimed he never saw the two unknown customers before and after the attack but he guessed they possibly spread the information about the picture because no one else knew about the picture on his computer other than those two customers and himself and Muktedir.

Faruk said each and every one, including himself, became very angry after seeing the picture.

He claimed no procession was brought out on Saturday evening from near his shop though some locals said a procession was brought out from there led by some locals, including an elected union member of this area.

Faruk did not continue his studies after class four. He learned operating the computer and Internet from Uttom's cousin, Komol Barua, who also has a mobile servicing shop at Awlad Shopping center in Ramu town.

The shop, Shubho Mobile service, remains closed since Saturday morning, said Nazir Hossain, owner of a computer shop at the market.

And five days into the incident, no one seems to know of the whereabouts of Uttam, his wife and a four-year-old child.

BCL men

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the newly formed unit committee.

Police sources claimed that supporters of a faction of Chhatra League, led by the previous convener of the Chhatra League unit, were involved in the vandalism.

They said the faction did not get satisfactory number of posts in the new unit committee announced in the afternoon. The faction failed to secure the president's and general secretary's posts in the committee as well, the sources said.

Following the vandalism, police raided different dormitories of Dhaka College around midnight and seized some sticks and sharp weapons.

Shahadat Hossain, 26, a bus passenger, sustained burn injuries when a group of youths torched a bus near Nilkhet intersection on Mirpur Road around 10:15pm.

to be named.

"In the last two months we have organised at least 10 peaceful demonstrations in Nayapaltan. But what happened on Tuesday? Some people wanted to show their might to strengthen their position inside the party."

But a leader of Jatiyata badi Swachchhasebok Dal accused the intelligence agencies for the rampage saying that the whole Nayapaltan area was under their (intelligence agencies) control. "We were not even near to the jeep and the bus which were torched."

Torching of vehicles and foiling of the procession have taken place simultaneously, which proves that everything was premeditated and the government's men were involved in it, he mentioned.



Police seize forged government stamps, seals and equipment used for preparing false documents for motor vehicles. The police also arrested 10 members of a gang who steal cars. The photo was taken at Detective Branch headquarters in the capital yesterday.

Carjacking

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He had been arrested on the night of October 1.

From September 30 to October 2, law enforcers arrested 10 members of the gang, including 52-year-old Sarwar and 45-year-old Jahangir, in a series of drives in and around the capital, said DB officials.

The other arrestees are Mostofa Kamal alias Saiful, Abdul Khalek, Bachchu Miah, Ripon Miah, Mohammad Sabu, Nasir Uddin Mollah, Nizam Uddin, and Farid Ahmmed.

During the drives, DB personnel recovered three stolen cars, a machine that can erase the engine and chassis numbers, 40 seals of different government officials, including those of BRTA and Customs, government stamps worth Tk 2 lakh, three computers, three printers, a scanner and forged papers of at least 20 stolen vehicles.

After the arrests, some of the gang members demonstrated how fast they can unlock a vehicle at the DB Media and Community Service Centre yesterday.

Sarwar said, "It takes two to three minutes to unlock and start a car with a master key or Lkey."

"The gang members have special expertise in different fields and it is quite tough to differentiate the cars stolen by them from the legal ones," said Mollah Nazrul Islam, deputy commissioner of DB (north).

"Of the gang members, some steal vehicles, some forge documents, some change the engine and chassis numbers while others market the stolen vehicles," said Sarwar, adding that their gang had contact with carjackers in Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet, Khulna, Jessore, Faridpur, Comilla and other different districts.

He said his gang had sold over 200 vehicles in Sylhet only while many more in Chittagong, Khulna and other districts.

According to police records, 2,094 incidents of carjacking took place in the last three years. Of these, only 693 vehicles could be recovered while 1,397 suspects were arrested.

Masudur Rahman, Deputy Commissioner of Media and Community Service, said "A large number of carjackers had been arrested over the time, but most of them got out of jail on bail and returned to old profession. They don't care while harming drivers and motorists, as they know that they will obtain bail."

He gave instances of one Belal, who had been arrested 36 times for carjacking and one Al-Amin, who had been arrested 32 times for the same crime.

Mohammad Shohidullah, additional deputy commissioner of DB (north), told The Daily Star that around 60 carjacking gangs with more than 600 members were active in and around the capital.

"Detained Sarwar is accused in at least 11 carlifting cases and was arrested by DB police four months ago. But he came out on bail two months ago and resumed his carjacking business," said ADC Shohidullah.

Asked, he said the punishment for carjacking is six months' to one year's imprisonment while almost all the carjackers obtain bail.

Hong Kong seeks answers after deadly ferry crash

AFP, Hong Kong

Hong Kong investigators yesterday examined the wreck of a boat that sank in a collision which killed 38 people, as the city sought answers to its worst maritime accident for decades.

The Lamma IV was towed to a beach to reveal a gaping hole in its left rear from Monday evening's collision with the Sea Smooth ferry. The gash flooded its stern within minutes, trapping passengers in the submerged cabin.

More than 120 passen-

gers and crew were on the Hong Kong Electric company's Lamma IV to watch a huge National Day fireworks display in Victoria Harbour when the accident occurred just off Lamma, an island to the southwest of Hong Kong.

British Prime Minister David Cameron sent his condolences to the victims after the consulate in the former British colony confirmed that an unidentified Briton was among the dead.

Investigators pored over the pleasure boat Lamma IV as they tried to piece

together how such an accident could have happened in one of the world's busiest ports, which prides itself on its state-of-the-art transport infrastructure.

"The investigation is expected to take around six months," a marine department spokeswoman said.

Investigators will examine the boat's structural soundness, why it partially sank so quickly, whether there was adequate safety equipment on board and whether the captain followed the rules of the sea, she said.

HC weighs in

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Supreme Court lawyers Jyotirmoy Barua and Eunus Ali Akond had filed the petitions as public interest litigations.

At least 12 pagodas and 50 homes of Buddhists were destroyed in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar on September 29 and 30. The attack followed the posting of a photo derogatory to the holy Quran on the social website Facebook.

Many in Ramu, who have lost their homes, are now living in tents provided by the Red Crescent.

Police in Ramu filed another case yesterday against 20 people for their alleged involvement in the violence.

So far, 18 cases have been filed with four police stations in connection with the attack on the Buddhist community in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar, said Selim Md Jahangir, superintendent of police of Cox's Bazar.

At least 189 people have been arrested and 20 were picked up yesterday alone, said the policeman.

Meanwhile, protests against the violence in Ramu, Cox's Bazar, continued countrywide. Several organisations staged rallies and issued statements demanding proper investigation and punishment of the culprits.

The government formed a probe committee led by Additional Commissioner (revenue) Nurul Islam to investigate the incident. The committee yesterday visited Ramu and talked to the victims.

The opposition BNP's eight-member probe team, which was formed Tuesday

night, will visit the crime scenes today to investigate the violence.

National Human Rights Commission Chairman Prof Mizanur Rahman along with other commission members is expected to visit the crime scenes in Ramu tomorrow.

Around 300 people in Ramu, irrespective of their religious beliefs, yesterday vowed to uphold religious harmony. They gathered at Ramu upazila parishad auditorium yesterday and took the vow at a programme arranged by the Islamic Foundation.

Ramu has always been a place of religious harmony, but the incidents of Saturday night tarnished the reputation of the whole country, State Minister for Religious Affairs Shahjahan Miah said in his remarks on the occasion.

Sonali directors

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reporters following the meeting.

Asked why the board had failed to detect such a big scam, he said the former directors' answers to that, according to the committee, were satisfactory.

The board expired on August 9 after a three-year term. Between 2010 and May 2012, Hall-Mark pocketed Tk 2,686 crore from the bank's Ruposhi Bangla Hotel branch through letters of credit (LC). The LCs had been opened apparently to purchase yarn and other materials for making finished products for exports.

A central bank report in May this year revealed that most of those LCs had been opened against forged documents. The Hall-Mark Group took away the money by selling those documents to other banks after Sonali Bank had approved those.

The then board of directors said they had been totally unaware of the Hall-Mark loans but still claimed to be successful in operating the country's largest bank.

"I don't think we have failed to play our role in the bank's operation," said Kashem Humayun, one of the nine directors.

The loans were taken out in two years but the big

chunk of the cash was taken in the six months from October 2011, said another board member Anwar Shahid.

The management had never placed memos (documents) of Hall-Mark loans before the board, he said, "We came to know of the issue from the Bangladesh Bank report."

KM Zaman Romel, the then head of Sonali Bank's audit committee (comprising board members) that had a role to play, declined to talk to the media.

"I'm no longer with the bank," was all he said.

Generally, a loan worth Tk 10 crore and more has to be placed and granted by the board and loans of Tk 5 crore or below Tk 10 crore can be approved by the Executive Committee of the board. Loans below these two ranges mentioned can pass through the management.

For a first-time borrower, even a Tk 1 crore loan has to be brought to the board's notice. But it varies from one bank to another.

Pradip Kumar Dutta, managing director of the state-run bank, who was also present at the meeting, declined to make any comment when the bank's board blamed the management for the irregularities.

"I'll not say anything because it is under investigation."

Pradip, however, admitted to the management's failure in supervising the loans.

A chief executive officer of a private bank, asking not to be named, disagreed with the then Sonali Bank board of directors.

"The loans that Sonali gave Hall-Mark were not within the power of the management. It is very unusual that the bank's board did not know it," said the CEO.

Besides, the audit committee had authority over the day to day transactions, he said, and so it could ask for any information from the management.

Mayeedul Islam, a member of the parliamentary probe committee, told The Daily Star, "Criminals, whoever they are, must get punished."

Meanwhile, Anti-Corruption Commission Chairman Ghulam Rahman said the anti-graft body would sue 27 senior officials of the Hall-Mark Group and Sonali Bank today.

The ACC has also decided to investigate the wealth of the bank's eight former directors and its chairman.

Khaleda goes to China next week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is set to visit China next week.

Maruf Kamal Khan Sohel, press secretary of Khaleda Zia, told The Daily Star that she would leave Dhaka for China on October 14. She was expected to return home via Bangkok on October 20, he said.

JP lawmaker's house under 'mob attack'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mob hurled brickbats at the home and office of Jatiya Party lawmaker HM Golam Reza at Mirpur in Dhaka yesterday, a day after his membership of the party presidium was revoked in connection with fraudulence.

The lawmaker claimed that his wife Jinnatul Nahar, 45, and daughters Sharmin Reza, 26, and Tasnim Reza, 11, were injured by shattered glass of windows and brick chips.

On Tuesday, Jatiya Party also cancelled Reza's positions as the whip of Jatiya Party parliamentary party. The party issued a notice upon him asking to explain as to why he should not be expelled from the party altogether.

Abdul Latif, officer-in-charge of Kafrul Police Station, said a mob of 50 to 60 people hurled brickbats at Reza's home around 12:30pm. Police went to the spot and dispersed the mob, Latif added.

Latif said he had no information about anyone being injured in the incident.

BMB Travel Agency, which Reza owns, in Mirpur-10 was also attacked by a similarly sized group of people. They chanted anti-Reza slogans while hurling brickbats at the office.

It could not be known who attacked Reza's home and office and why.

NSI officials

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officer Akbar Hossain Khan and NSI deputy director Maj (retd) Liakat Hossain had rented the trucks on April 1, 2004 saying that the trucks would be needed to transport salt from Indrapur of Patiya upazila in Chittagong to Moulvibazar in Sylhet.

The witness said Akbar was familiar to him, but not his companion. Akbar had introduced Maj (retd) Liakat as Abul Hossain.

Taslim, manager of the transport agency, handed over the seven trucks to Akbar for Tk 6,000 each, said Habibur Rahman.

"The following day around 9:30am, I came to know over the phone that the trucks were seized with arms and ammunition at the CUFL jetty and rushed there," he said, adding that the trucks had also been loaded with some salt.

After the recording of the 45-minute testimony around 1:30 pm, Sahabuddin, counsel for one of the accused Akbar, began to cross-examine the witness.

A little later the court was adjourned until today.

Last day

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farm at Dharmik Para around 12:30pm. But the boat capsize around 20 feet off the bank, Suhrawardy Mia, assistant sub-inspector of Demra Police Station, quoted locals as saying.

The locals rescued seven of them while the duo -- Mainul Islam Bappi, 16, and Sajal, 16, -died. For the surviving seven, the day became memorable in a different way.

Most of them did not know how to swim, said Abed Hossain, Bappi's father, breaking down in tears.

They were all class-X students of Salahuddin Ahmed Adarsha High School in Jatrabari area and were preparing for the next year's SSC examination.

"Bappi left home for school around 8:00am," said Bappi's father. "Bappi was my only son. He always led a disciplined life."

"The boys drove the boat themselves as there was no boatman there at that time. The small boat was used to feed the fish," said the ASI.

The bodies were handed over to their relatives, the ASI added.