

## Buddhists

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generations irrespective of religious belief. But now, mistrust and suspicion will reign in their neighbourhoods, locals apprehend.

The way the government bodies are conducting probes, it will not be a secret who is testifying against whom. This places the witnesses in a dilemma, they added.

An investigator from the police told The Daily Star that most of the Buddhists are scared to disclose the names of the locals whom they saw among the miscreants on the night of September 29.

A sense of insecurity is increasing among the Buddhists as some of them have already been warned by Muslim neighbours not to disclose the names.

Santosh Barua, a former member of Fatekharkul union, gave a statement to the investigators Thursday morning.

He mentioned some names of Muslim neighbours who incited and helped others to carry out arson and vandalism.

After giving the statement, while talking to this correspondent, he received a phone call.

After the conversation, Santosh told this correspondent, "He [the Caller] was threatening me that the consequences would not be good if I do not withdraw his brother's name from my statement."

"I will never withdraw the names as I saw them how they instigated people," he added. "That night I saw who came forward to help us and who provoked the attackers."

He said many local participants of anti-Buddhist processions are now claiming they were not there or they were there to prevent the demonstrators from destroying Buddhist establishments.

All are not as bold as Santosh. Many Buddhists of Ramu told The Daily Star that they were in fear of further attacks and losses.

"Some of us have been receiving messages from our well-wishers to take care as we are helping the investigation to the displeasure of neighbours," said a Buddhist teacher preferring anonymity.

Yesterday afternoon, a former minister went to visit the ruins of century-old Sima Bihar. He talked to Buddhist victims in the open and wanted to know about the rioters.

A local leader told him that nobody would speak the truth in front of others.

## 800 shanties

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that they had been recovering the 6.12 acre land from grabbers.

The Bhandari slum had been home to low-income people like rickshaw pullers and day labourers for about two decades.

Of the evicted, 80 persons have claimed to be freedom fighters and members of "Grihaheen Muktijoddha Samabay Samity", a cooperative society of homeless freedom fighters.

They also claimed that some ministers of the then Awami League government in 1999 had assured them of allotting the land and that later they had applied to the NHA for the allotment in response to which the NHA said it could be possible.

They, however, could not immediately show any documents in support of the claim.

The evicted people, including women and children, are now looking for shelter.

Many said they had to passed the rainy night on Thursday under the open sky, as they were not given sufficient time to move, except for an announcement on loudspeaker on Wednesday.

An NHA official, preferring anonymity, said the housing authority had served eviction notice on the slum dwellers three months ago.

Joint Secretary Ibrahim Dewan of the Grihaheen Muktijoddha Samabay Samity, however, said they had received no such notice.

## Tk 74 lakh

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Thursday night.

Azam, driver of Suranjit's ex-assistant personal secretary Omar Faruq Talukder, had been missing since the railwaygate scandal.

Around 11:30pm on April 9, Azam drove Faruq's microbus into Pilkhana, and blew the whistle that there was illegal money in the vehicle.

Apart from Faruq, railway's suspended general manager (east) Yusuf Ali Mridha and suspended Dhaka division security commandant Enamul Huq were on the microbus.

Initial reports said there was Tk 70 lakh in the car, which was part of the "bribe money" collected from jobseekers in the railway.

After the vehicle entered Pilkhana, the Border Guard Bangladesh detained the four for that night but freed them around 1:00pm the next day.

"No, no, no, I had no link with anyone. I didn't take money from anybody promising jobs. Though later rumours were spread about me," he said in the exclusive interview with Rtv's Bayezid Ahmed.

The interview was also aired throughout yesterday.

As he was driving into the BGB headquarters through gate No 4, Faruq asked him where he was going. "I said this is bribe money collected from jobseekers in the railway. I will have you arrested with this money," Azam told Rtv.

"Then Faruq said this is not right. You drove the car inside [Pilkhana]. Then they offered me Tk 5 lakh and asked me to come out. Later, they offered me half the amount.... But I said, 'no, sir.' Finally, they offered me the whole amount."

Upon counting in the morning, it turned out that there was Tk 74 lakh in the car, he said, adding: "Then along with the money, they went away in the car driven by another person."

In the 4-minute interview given at an unspecified location, Azam said Major Mashiur Rahman was also involved in the recruitment business. "As far as I know he was involved in a Tk 3 crore recruitment deal. He wanted to have several hundred people appointed in the railway through Omar Faruq."

According to him, Faruq, a political appointee of the former rail minister, headed the syndicate of the recruitment business.

"I heard them talk in the car that they would give Tk 10 crore to the minister from recruitment business. And 600 'personal' people of Suranjit Sengupta would be recruited."

However, it was not clear from the interview if that discussion took place on the night of April 9 or on other occasions.

"They want to put the blame on the government. The minister was involved in the scam. There was a syndicate. They threatened me, saying that the government was involved in this."

"But I know the honourable prime minister is against corruption. Let no corrupt go unpunished. I appeal to the prime minister for my safety."

The railwaygate scandal led to the resignation of Suranjit Sengupta as minister

## France to propose Mali resolution at UN

AFP, United Nations

France will soon propose a resolution to the Security Council paving the way for United Nations approval of military intervention in Mali, the French ambassador said Thursday.

The text will combine "a military and political response" to the crisis in the west African country and appeal for dialogue between Bamako and Islamists controlling the north of the country, said French envoy Gerard Araud.

"It will also authorize people to send trainers to Bamako because we have to rebuild the Malian army," he added.

ter on April 16. However, the government in a dramatic move made him minister without portfolio the following day.

Suranjit, however, termed Azam's interview a "media creation".

"Why didn't he say this before? Why is he telling this now? The media is doing this to tarnish my image," he told Rtv.

Earlier on April 15, suspended railway official Yusuf Ali Mridha in a written statement to the Anti-Corruption Commission said that he along with Faruq and Enamul was going to Suranjit's house that night.

Though a government investigation found irregularities in the recruitment in the railway's east zone, a railway departmental report on May 13 gave a clean chit to Suranjit Sengupta, saying he had no involvement in the scandal.

According to railway sources, some 1,128 people were given jobs in the railway's east zone in the last one year. Allegations are Yusuf and Faruq took Tk 3 to 5 lakh from each of the jobseekers.

The probe committee also found that Mridha and four other railway officials "changed the exam papers of many disqualified jobseekers in exchange for money".

### AZAM'S WIFE'S INTERVIEW

Earlier on April 17, Azam's wife Swapna Aktar told Maasranga television Faruq had been forcing Azam to drive the car with stashes of bribe money for the last several months.

She said Azam told her about 15 days ago that he would not carry such illegal money anymore.

"I told him, 'You are only a driver. You shouldn't bother about whether it is bribe money,'" Swapna said, adding, "He [Azam] told me that he was unable to bear the burden any longer."

## Attack

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authorities and members of the local Buddhist community.

He said they were trying to conduct an impartial probe as it was a sensitive issue.

BNP leaders Abdul Moyeen Khan, Abdullah Al Noman, and Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury were also present.

Meanwhile, the government yesterday gave money to 85 victims of last Saturday's attack on pagodas and Buddhist homes in Ramu.

Disaster Management Minister AH Mahmood Ali handed over Tk 1 lakh to each of the 24 victims whose homes or pagodas were destroyed. Apart from them, 61 others received Tk 50,000 each as their homes or pagodas were damaged, said Debi Chanda, upazila nirbahi officer of Ramu.

Every victim family got 30kg of rice as well.

A mob destroyed 12 pagodas and more than 50 houses in Ramu on the night of September 29. The violence was apparently triggered by a Facebook posting of a photo derogatory to the holy Quran.

Yesterday, protest and condemnation of Buddhist monks outside the country continued with about 100 monks demonstrating in Myanmar's main city Yangon.

Holding placards saying "The earth is for everyone, not only for Muslims" and "Stop insulting Buddhism", the monks staged a short protest outside the Bangladesh Embassy of the former Myanmar capital, reports AFP.

Meanwhile, National Human Rights Commission Chairman Prof Mizanur Rahman apologised to the Buddhist community yesterday during his visit Shima Bihar at Ramu.

A 14-member delegation of civil society would visit the scenes of violence at Ramu and Ukhia upazilas in Cox's Bazar and Hindu temples in Chittagong's Patiya upazila today.

During the visit, the delegation was expected to mount pressure on local administration to start immediate investigation into the incidents, said columnist Syed Abul Maksud, who would lead the delegation.

## Move fast

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Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi, Mukherjee called for expediting implementation of the projects already agreed on between the two countries, said a Rashtrapati Bhavan spokesperson in a release.

He also favoured a greater sub-regional cooperation between Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and India, especially on improving connectivity and issue of transit.

Mukherjee, who became President in July, said India had the privilege of extending some assistance in the historical struggle of Bangladesh for freedom and would like to see Bangladesh developed and prosperous.

"There is broad consensus amongst various political parties in India that the two countries must develop and progress together," he was quoted in the release as saying.

Noting that the dialogue process between scholars of the two countries was extremely important, he said, such an exercise should identify critical areas where intervention by senior policymakers was required and bring those to the attention of the respective governments.

Mukherjee has received an invitation from Bangladesh government and expressed the hope to visit the country at a mutually convenient date.

The delegation praised Mukherjee and said the people of Bangladesh see him as a "sincere friend" and hope that bilateral relations under his guidance would reach new heights, the release said.

They also appreciated India's decision to grant zero duty access for Bangladeshi goods to Indian market.

The intellectuals who were in Delhi to attend the second Track-II Dialogue between the Asian Institute of Transport Development of India and the Centre for Policy Dialogue, Dhaka included Prof Rehman Sobhan, chairman of Centre for Policy Dialogue and former member of Planning Commission; Gowher Rizvi, foreign affairs advisor to the Bangladesh prime minister; Reza Ali, MP and member of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Planning; Anisul Islam Mahmud, MP, vice president of Jatiya Party and Former foreign minister of Bangladesh; Nazrul Islam Khan, member of BNP National Standing Committee; Ambassador Farooq Sobhan, ambassador of Bangladesh Enterprise Institute and former foreign secretary of Bangladesh; AK Azad, president of Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry and managing director of Ha-Meem Group.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star; Matiur Rahman, editor of Prothom Alo; Prof Ainun Nishat, vice chancellor of Brac University and eminent water expert; M Rahmatullah, Visiting Fellow, CPD and former director of UNESCAP and eminent transport expert; Debapriya Bhattacharya, Distinguished Fellow, CPD and former Bangladesh ambassador to WTO and UN Office in Geneva and Vienna; Prof Mustafizur Rahman, executive director of CPD; Tariq Karim, high commissioner of Bangladesh to India; and KL Thapar, chairman of Asian Institute of Transport Development also attended the meeting, among others.

## BCL expels 4

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joint secretary Nur Mohammad Nazmul and deputy secretary of library and publications Abu Taiyob of the unit.

Sheikh Russell, office secretary of BCL central committee, confirmed the incident of taking action against the nine.

A notice will be sent to the CU unit committee in this regard soon, added Russell.

On September 29, two groups of supporters loyal to BCL CU unit president Mamunul Hoque and organizing secretary Alamgir Tipu clashed with each other that left at least six activists injured.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

The wreckage of the microbus and the bus at Tetli of Sylhet on Dhaka-Sylhet highway. The head-on collision early yesterday claimed 13 lives including 12 of a family.

## Fatal crash takes 13 lives

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Abdul Karim, 32.

Waris' grandsons Salman, 5, and Al-Amin, 2, granddaughter Fatema, 6, younger brother's wife Razia Begum, 50, Piara's brother Rafique Miah, 50, one of their relatives Jamal Ahmed 35, and the microbus driver Hiron Mia, 27, were among the dead.

Twelve of the victims died on the spot while a female passenger succumbed to her injuries after being admitted to Osmani Medical College Hospital, police said.

All the bodies were taken to the South Surma Police Station.

They were later handed over to the family members without autopsies following their request in the afternoon, said Md Nasiruddin, officer-in-charge of the police station.

The injured bus passengers took treatment at Osmani Medical College Hospital and other local clinics, he added.

The bus driver and its helper managed to flee.

Police Commissioner Barua said all the bus passengers were from Raipura upazila in Laxmipur district.

They were going to Sylhet to join the annual Urs (religious congregation) at

Hazrat Shahjalal (RA) shrine.

Soon after the accident, locals put up barricades on the highway for around four hours and vandalised a number of buses.

A long queue of around 400 vehicles clogged the highway on both directions.

Vehicular movement resumed on the highway around 10:45 am after police and local administration intervened.

Khan Mohammad Bilal, deputy commissioner of Sylhet police, said Tk 10,000 would be distributed to each of the victims' family members.

## Ministry flouting

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Natundhara, Swarnali and United City projects and removal of what have already been developed at those sites. The experts mentioned that those projects had been developed on floodplains.

However, Md Nurul Huda, chairman of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk), the custodian of housing rules, claimed that they had recommended the approvals in compliance with the DAP proposals.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), said, "While the government was supposed to take legal action against the developers of such housing schemes, it rewarded those with approval. And, by doing so, the government violated its own law, as there was no scope for delay condone."

Prior to giving approval, she said, the government should have sought the court's permission had there been anything contradictory with the court's directions.

"Approval of shady schemes is aimed at protecting the interests of real estate developers against the country's laws and public interests," she told The Daily Star.

"There may be some underhand deal in it. We will challenge such approval in court," Rizwana added.

The full judgement is yet to be published.

Abdul Mannan Khan, the state minister, said the environment department and utility agencies had already issued clearance in their favour. "The developers would have sued us had we not approved the schemes," he mentioned.

Refuting the argument, Rizwana said the housing authorities should have challenged the issuance of clearances because "the developers have destroyed the character of land and its use".

One may recall that Mannan Khan, immediately after taking office, had created a public stunt by condemning unauthorised real estate developers, including the Bashundhara Group as "land grabbers". He got locked in a heated altercation with the Bashundhara proprietor at a ministry meeting.

At a meeting of the approval committee in May this year, the state minister, however, asked officials whether they could approve the Bashundhara project conditionally to help the plot owners build their houses.

The salient conditions slapped on the approved schemes include settlement of land ownership disputes,

exclusion and preservation of all the government lands, providing all the civic amenities as per rules, conservation of existing wetlands and layout revision as per land ministry decision on the government lands.

AMENDMENTS DONE 'SECRETLY'  
Meanwhile, the ministry amended the housing rules providing for three-fourths land ownership of a proposed scheme instead of cent percent ownership to secure approval.

Another new provision of "development contract" with private individuals for 30 percent land ownership would help grabbing individual's land forcibly by the real estate developers and dictate the deal as per its desire and convenience, said official sources.

It would also deprive the government of registration fees required in the case of ownership transfer through registrar's office.

Another new provision implies that a housing scheme approved earlier would remain valid even if the developer resorts to anomalies. Only the developer's registration would be cancelled as a punishment for the offence.

Mannan Khan claimed that the amendments had been made in consultation with all concerned.

Rajuk Chairman Nurul Huda said he was unaware of the amendment.

Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury said he, too, was unaware of the amendments. Rizwana, also a member of the DAP committee, said, "We know nothing about the amendments."

### PROPOSED SCHEMES INCLUDE OTHERS' LANDS TOO

According to Dhaka district administration records, Bashundhara submitted a 1,435-acre layout (A-L blocks), of which it owns 1,213 acres. The proposed area includes 216 acres of Court of Wards land and 18 acres of Khas or government land, including river and canal.

The Court of Wards under the land ministry is the management body to oversee the government lands under Bhawal estate.

While Ashiyani City has got approval of a 43-acre area layout, its proposed site is many times larger, according to official findings. The proposed site includes some amount of Court of Wards and local Union Parishad lands.

Swarnali Abashan has ownership of 75 acres of land although it has earmarked a much larger area, according

to the DC office records; BDDL Natundhara owns 173 acres of its 360-acre proposed area. The area includes six acres of government land and two acres vested property.

United City owns 122 acres of its proposed 137-acre project area that includes nearly 10 acres vested property and 30 decimals government land.

Green Model Town submitted a 149-acre layout for approval. Of the total area, it owns 130 acres.

## Forgive us

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Mizanur Rahman told a crowd while visiting Shima Bihar temple at Ramu in Cox's Bazar.

Satyapriya Mohathero, principal of the temple, told the NHRC chief though they are Bengali and gave shelters to Hindus and Muslims in his area during the Liberation War, they fell victim to such violence.

The monastery, which was not only a temple but also a museum of the history of Buddhism, had been lost forever, Mohathero continued.

He demanded security of his community as well as of the temples from the NHRC chairman.

Mizanur Rahman said the attacks on temples were premeditated.

Mentioning that the miscreants staged a demonstration before attacking the establishments, the NHRC chief said if the law enforcement agencies had taken up initiatives at early stage, they would have been able to stop the violence.

This type of incident was a crime not only against the minority people but also against the state and nation as well, he said.

He also urged the government to identify the culprits and bring them to book after proper investigation.

### BNP INQUIRY TEAM

Earlier in the morning, an eight-member probe body of BNP formed to investigate the violence visited the burnt monasteries at Ramu.

The team led by barrister Moudud Ahmed reached Shima Bihar around 10:30 am and talked with the monastery authority and members of the local Buddhist community.

Later, Moudud told reporters that they did not go there as a political team. As it was a sensitive issue, they were trying to make an impartial probe.

## Aussies caught

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unsuited to aggressive batting.

The Australians found the huge target too hot to handle and folded up for 131 in 16.4 overs at the Premadasa stadium in front of 28,000 awe-struck spectators still reeling from the West Indies innings.

Skipper George Bailey played a lone hand for the Aussies, making 63 off 29 balls with four sixes and six boundaries after adding 61 for the seventh wicket with Pat Cummins.

Darren Sammy's mistake on hosts Sri Lanka in Sunday's final with both sides looking for their first World Twenty20 title.

The biggest Twenty20 win for the West Indies, surpassing their 70-run victory over Ireland in 2010, was celebrated by the entire team performing an energetic version of global hit "Gangnam Style" in the middle.

Gayle, who lost his opening partner Johnson Charles in the third over, plodded for nine balls to make four before swinging Shane Watson for a six over long-off.

That opened the floodgates for an onslaught as Marlon Samuels and Gayle smashed left-arm spinner Xavier Doherty for a six each in one over and Brad Hogg was greeted into the attack with another six from Samuels.

Samuels contributed 26 in a second-wicket stand of 41 with Gayle when he was bowled by Cummins attempting another big hit.

Gayle, who faced just 18 balls in the first 10 overs, still managed to bring up his half-century off 29 deliveries with the help of four sixes and three boundaries.

All-rounder Dwayne Bravo (37) helped Gayle add 83 for the third wicket from just 51 deliveries to propel the innings at a brisk pace.

Kieron Pollard hit 38 off 15 balls as the West Indies plundered 55 runs in the final three overs, including 25 off the last six deliveries by Doherty.

Doherty was the most expensive Australian bowler with 1-48 from three overs, while Watson went for 35 runs in four unsuccessful overs.

Australia never recovered after opener David Warner was bowled by spinner Samuel Badree with the sixth delivery and crashed to 43-6 by the eighth over.

Badree took two of those wickets and seamer Ravi Rampaul chipped in by removing Cameron White and the recalled David Hussey in the space of three balls.

Pollard dismissed Bailey and Cummins off successive deliveries in the 14th over to end Australia's resistance.

Both teams had met in a preliminary league match which was washed out after Australia reached 100-1 in 9.1 overs in pursuit of the West Indies' total of 191-8.

The Aussies were declared winners by 17 runs through the Duckworth-Lewis method.

## Philippine president defends cybercrime law

AFP, Manila

Philippine President Benigno Aquino defended a new cybercrime law yesterday amid a storm of protests from critics who say it will severely curb Internet freedoms and intimidate netizens into self-censorship.

Aquino specifically backed one of the most controversial elements of the law, which mandates that people who post defamatory comments online be given much longer jail sentences than those who commit libel in traditional media.

"I do not agree that it (the provision on libel) should be removed. If you say something libellous through the Internet, then it is still libellous... no matter what the format," Aquino told reporters.