

Monsoon troubles Nepal quake survivors three months on

AFP, Kathmandu

As dark clouds loomed overhead, Rabi Baral hurriedly secured his tent to the ground at a camp for victims of Nepal's earthquake, three months after the disaster upended his life.

The 7.8-magnitude quake on April 25 destroyed the 41-year-old's home and left him without a job, forcing him and his young family to take refuge in a makeshift camp in Nepal's capital Kathmandu.

"The rain has made life even more difficult, but we have no choice right now," Baral told AFP.

As his wife Parwati nursed their 18-month-old son, Baral said he was desperate to return home to the hills east of Kathmandu but was too afraid to risk travelling on quake-hit roads that now face the threat of landslides triggered by heavy rains.

"We are in limbo right now. I am counting days for monsoon to end so we can plan ahead," he said.

Three months on, Nepal is still reeling from the impact of the earthquake that killed over 8,800 people and flattened nearly 600,000 homes, leaving thousands in desperate need of food, clean water and shelter.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), landslides are already hampering delivery of relief supplies to mountainous villages and there are concerns that the monsoon could trigger an outbreak of diarrhoea and other water-borne diseases.

Edwin Salvador, Emergency and Humanitarian Technical Officer at WHO Nepal, told AFP that the agency had already delivered three months' worth of medicines to remote villages at risk of landslides to ensure adequate supplies in the event of an emergency.



Family of Monir who was branded as a robber and beaten dead by some people in Comilla.

PHOTO: TV GRAB

Mob murder or planned killing?

FROM PAGE 1

The victim's father filed a murder case on the night of July 14 with Muradnagar Police Station.

Kamruzzaman, the imam of the mosque, was arrested on that night in this connection. But those who took part in the killing are still in hiding, said police.

"We are trying to arrest the ones who tortured him. The case has been transferred to the detective branch due to its sensitivity," Shah Abid Hossain, superintendent of police in Comilla, told The Daily Star.

Moslem claimed his son had gone to Dubai but was deceived by his travel agent Mohammad Ali, so he had to come back empty-handed.

He alleged that upon his return, Monir demanded the money Ali had taken from him for the Dubai travel. So, Ali called Monir over the phone to collect

the money from his house. When Monir went to Ali's house, he was set up as a "robber" and killed.

However, the SP rejected the father's allegation saying that police checked Monir's call list and found no calls from Ali.

He also said they were yet to find any evidence of Moslem's allegation that Monir had wanted his money back from Ali.

"But that does not justify that people will take law in their hands and kill a person," the SP said.

He added that during the interrogation the imam claimed he had seen Monir coming out of Ali's house around 2:30am on that night. The official also said police were looking into why Monir had been seen walking out of Ali's house at that hour of the night.

"At first, it seemed that a mob killed

him during an attempted robbery. But when the victim's father came to the police station with the allegations, we recorded the case," SP Abid said.

Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Muradnagar Police Station, said Monir had been in jail for a few days in a robbery case filed against him in 2008.

Monir's killing followed the gruesome murder of 13-year-old Rajon by a group of men in Sylhet city early this month for allegedly trying to steal a rickshaw.

The photos of Monir showed that his hands were tied behind his back with a rope, the other end of which was tied to a pole. His legs too were tied and eyes blindfolded. Blood was seen trickling down his legs.

Many people watched the brutal torture video and some of them might have taken pictures and uploaded those on social media.

Law stumbles on mob

FROM PAGE 1

Talking to The Daily Star, Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh, said, "This is a very ominous sign for the country."

A killing in mob beating is always considered an "isolated incident" but it should not be the case, he said.

Iftekharuzzaman said the reason behind such killings lies in the term "mob beating". Law enforcers usually do not take action against the perpetrators whenever they find a man or woman killed in a mob beating.

Though this is a terrible crime, the perpetrators are never identified in most cases, let alone bringing them to book, he said.

Moreover, in exchange for money, some law enforcers often try to portray a murder as an incident of mob beating since such cases rarely see a trial, he said.

"Killing in mob beating continues unabated because the perpetrators are not brought to justice."

People often take law into their own hands with a perception that they would not get justice. Many believe that those with power would remain above the law.

But the offenders must be tried, whoever he is, and an example has to be set by punishing them to stop recurrence of such offences, said the TIB executive director.

Nina Goswami, senior deputy director (legal aid section) of the ASK, said trial of the perpetrators of mob killings was "very rare". One exception was the incident of Aminbazar killing in 2011.

In July that year, a mob killed six students in Aminbazar suspecting them as robbers. Sixty people were indicted for the killing and the trial of the case is on.

"There is no scope for taking the law into one's own hands against anybody even if he is a criminal. Every person has

the right to self-defence."

Though such horrific incidents take place often, they never come up in our discussions. "This must not continue in a society that claims to be civilised. The government must act to stop it," she said.

Shalahuddin Qusar Biplob, associate professor of psychiatry at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, said some people feel encouraged to indulge in mob beating when they see others do it.

"They often get involved in such acts for a lack of social, legal and religious education that control one's behavior," he said.

SHOCKING INCIDENTS OF MOB KILLING

APRIL 13, 2015

A mob murdered Najim Uddin, a teenager, in the capital's Khilkhet for allegedly stealing a pigeon

JANUARY 26, 2015

Seven alleged robbers were killed in a mob beating in Narsingdi

JULY 27, 2011

Police let a mob beat to death 16-year-old Shamsuddin Milon in Noakhali on suspicion that he was a robber

JULY 18, 2011

A mob killed 6 students in Aminbazar, suspecting them as robbers

our," he added.

Contacted, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal claimed whenever an incident of mob killing took place, cases were filed and action was taken against the offender. "It [filing of cases] is not possible when the perpetrator can't be identified."

Asked about the experts' opinion that people's growing mistrust of law enforcers led to such killings, he said, "This is not true. Only journalists say this. Actually, common people do this [mob beating] out of anger."

From rugs to riches

FROM PAGE 1

government launched a project in the northern region to rehabilitate people affected by the war. People were trained in rug making at the time so that they could make a living.

But the initiative did not make much progress.

State-run Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC), which was established to support small initiatives across the country, took over the project in the early 1980s. But it was not successful either.

Then Selim took over the project from BSCIC in 1991 and launched Karupannya as a handicraft manufacturing and retail business.

He had a knack for craftsmanship and probably that was what helped him achieve success in the business. He used to produce portraits out of straws and sell them in the mid-1980s when he was still a university student.

Selim took a stall in an industrial fair in Dhaka to showcase his portraits, which earned him fame among local people.

There were many challenges for him in the little-explored business. The main hurdle was how to arrange skilled manpower and money.

To start off, he organised experienced people with the knowledge of weaving rugs and gave them raw materials and designs to help train young people.

Selim, managing director of Karupannya, then participated in various fairs and exhibitions across the country to popularise handmade rugs.

In 2002, he decided to try his luck on foreign markets and so took part in an exhibition in Germany. Since then he did not look back.

Started with \$230,000 of exports the following year, Karupannya's overseas sales grew by more than 50 times in the last one decade.

Last year the company's turnover was \$12 million. This year it hopes to earn \$20 million. His products are now exported to 36 countries in Europe and Asia and the US.

The company has been focusing on export markets, as the rugs are popular in predominantly colder countries. It has only three outlets in Bangladesh: two in Rangpur and one in Dhaka.

Selim, however, said the company would explore its potential in the domestic market as well in the coming years and open more outlets.

As many as 1,000 people produce rugs for his company from their homes for the local markets.

Karupannya produces about 15 types of products -- all floor coverings from waste from the garment and textile sector, jute, waste yarn, rope and short fibre. It also produces some home textiles and products for a number of local furniture makers as per their designs.

Selim, who studied political science at Carmichael College and Rajshahi University, now plans to create jobs for another 5,000 people in the next two years.

He, however, is not willing to take all the credit of the business's success.

The 49-year-old says the government and BSCIC made efforts to keep

the business alive.

"Thanks to those initiatives, the trade did not disappear completely. Rather, some people were still there with knowledge of making rugs."

He plans to transform his company into an institution which can inspire others.

Thirty-five other entrepreneurs have already opened up factories to produce rugs.

"Now you will find rugs in many shops. But we don't produce all of them," said Selim, a father of two.

He added that Shatoronji became a pride for Rangpur. His initiative has also economically benefited the region, which was once known as poverty-stricken region.

He says he has been empowering women through his initiative as 90 percent of his workers are women.

He has four units in Rangpur and one in Kurigram. The employees directly and indirectly support more than 20,000 people.

Selim said he has to upgrade the quality of his products, enhance the efficiency of workers and modernise the company to keep up with the competition from producers in China and India.

He reinvests most of the profits the company makes in its expansion, which is why he takes meagre salaries, much lower than many of his senior executives.

Entrepreneurs have major responsibility in society as they take forward the civilisation.

"They will have to see his workers and employees as a key driver of their companies," Selim said. Entrepreneurs should not enjoy all the fortunes alone while workers and employees toil.

"Otherwise, they might progress in life but the society will not advance."

Light trim for rough draft of climate pact

AFP, Paris

Senior diplomats charged with condensing an unwieldy draft for a global climate rescue pact, due to be inked in December, handed in their much-anticipated homework on Friday.

A near 90-page draft accord that has emerged from the 195-nation talks so far was a laundry list of unresolved issues and a myriad of options, often clashing, for averting climate disaster. Negotiators agreed at the last UN climate meeting in June to let the body's joint chairmen take a machete -- or at least a scalpel -- to the text.

With only 10 official negotiating days ahead of a crucial November 30-December 11 conference in Paris to seal the deal, the pair produced a slightly shorter version Friday, though still nearly 80 pages long.

The document "presents a clearer picture of the possible final outcome, while not omitting any of the options put forward by the parties," said a statement by the secretariat of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, under whose auspices the negotiations take place.

FROM PAGE 1

The rush of holidaymakers towards Dhaka reached its pick on Friday and yesterday. There were gridlocks on Friday night and yesterday at several places on major highways and two ferry terminals that connect 21 southern districts to the capital.

The Dhaka-Tangail highway had a 65km-long tailback that began Friday night, between Chandra and the Bangabandhu Bridge, highway police said.

"My wife and son fell sick being stuck in a stationary bus for hours," said Anisur Rahman, a bus passenger.

Hundreds of passengers faced indescribable suffering on the highway yesterday.

"I started from Rangpur at 8:00pm on Friday and reached Mirzapur in 15 hours because of gridlocks that started from the east end of the Bangabandhu Bridge," bus driver Babu Miah told our Tangail correspondent.

It took Mithun Palma, a university student, 19 hours to reach Dhaka from Natore, which usually takes four hours.

The whole night he had starved as there were no shops where the bus got stuck, he said.

Highway police said the tailbacks were due to heavy flow of vehicles from both ends, especially the north.

Break down of vehicles, reckless driving, unfit vehicles and violation of traffic rules made the situation worse, they said.

Nazimuddin, a driver of a bus from Bogra, said dilapidated road was the main reason for the tailbacks.

Incessant rain and the plying of heavy vehicles created potholes on around 25km of road between Kaliakoir and Elenga of Tangail, around 10km of road between Ashulia and Baipail, and around 40km of road from the west of the Bangabandhu Bridge to Chandrakona of Sirajganj.

Illegal vehicles, like locally made Nasiman, Kariman, and Bhotbhoti, are responsible for accidents on highways, said Shahidullah, another bus driver. "The drivers of these small vehicles do not have the experience for driving on the highway and do not know traffic rules. They drive haphazardly," he said.

Huge traffic jams developed on Paturia and Daulatdia ferry terminals Friday night, which continued until yesterday afternoon.

Manoj Kumar Adhikary, his wife and three and half-year-old daughter, started from Benapole at 1:00pm on Friday to go to Narayanganj via Dhaka. But their bus got stuck in a jam ahead of Daulatdia for around four hours.

They eventually crossed the river around 9:45pm but got stuck in another jam between Manikganj and Dhamrai. They reached Dhaka around 2:30am yesterday. It was supposed to be a six-hour journey.

At the Paturia end, a bus broke down at Nayarhat area of Savar on



Failing to find space inside the train, people cram its roof in a desperate attempt to return to workplaces after Eid holidays.

PHOTO: STAR

the Dhaka-Paturia highway creating a gridlock, said Sheikh Mohammad Nasim, deputy general manager of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC).

At Kawrakandi ferry terminal, over 100 vehicles got stranded for hours from the early hours of yesterday as ferries slowed down due to navigability issues. Three ferries were not running at all the whole night, said Ashiquzzaman, assistant general manager of BIWTC.

Even though no major traffic jams were seen on Dhaka-Mymensingh and Dhaka-Sylhet highways, vehicular movement was slow due to the heavy flow of vehicles.

Shitangshu Chakrabortee, Kamalapur station manager, said four to five trains from the north were running around two hours behind schedule due to the rush of passengers and rain.

Over the years, the government took a number of initiatives to ensure people's safe journey but the efforts remained unimplemented. Every year, the government takes some temporary measures ahead of Eids, but those measures do not help much due to alleged lack of monitoring and negligence by the authorities concerned.

Mallick Fakhrul Islam, deputy inspector general (DIG) of highway

police, claimed that reckless driving was the reason for accidents on highways.

Over 1,500 cases have been filed between July 19 and July 24 in connection with reckless driving across the country, he said.

About the jams, he said, "We are working round the clock to keep the vehicles moving. But gridlocks sometimes happen due to the heavy flow of traffic as well as narrow roads and bridges."

About illegal vehicles, like Nasiman and Kariman, and unfit vehicles, the DIG claimed that they keep vigil so that those could not be on the highways.