

Another Hindu

FROM PAGE 1
minorities, including Shia and Sufi Muslims, Christians and Hindus.

At least nine people have become victims of such killings since May 1. They include a Christian grocer, a Hindu priest and the wife of a police superintendent hailed for successful anti-militancy drives.

Shyamananda's murder took place just a couple of weeks after police launched a weeklong crackdown across the country, arresting about 194 suspected militants. According to the police headquarters, the first four days of the drive saw arrests of around 11,500 others, mostly wanted accused.

A devotee, who witnessed the murder from a few yards away, told The Daily Star that she was standing outside her house nearby the temple around 5:30am when Shyamananda opened the gate of the temple. He lived near the temple, locals say. Shyamananda entered the temple complex and started plucking flowers. "Suddenly, three people aged between 22 and 25 years came in a motorcycle and stopped just 15 to 20 yards off the temple. All of them were wearing masks," police quoted the witness as saying.

Two of the youths got down from the bike and walked into the temple complex. The third was on the bike, a 100cc Bajaj Discovery motorcycle, keeping the engine on.

The two, wielding machetes, first hacked him in the head, then in the neck and finally in the back. The priest fell down on the ground instantly.

After around two to three minutes, the youths sped away with the motorcycle through Magura road, police quoted the witness as saying.

As the devotee and another witness screamed for help, locals rushed to the spot and took the priest to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

While talking to The Daily Star, the second witness gave a similar version of the incident.

OC Hasan Hafizur Rahman of Sadar Police Station said this murder bears the hallmarks of militant-style killings taking place all over the country.

Shyamananda left home 10 years back and since then he had been serving as a priest at the temple. He was unmarried and a follower of Vaishnavism, said temple's President Subal Chandra Ghosh.

Earlier on June 7, Ananda Gopal Ganguly was killed in a similar fashion in Sonakali area under Jhenidah sadar.

On March 15, homeopathic doctor Abdur Razzak was hacked to death in Kaliganj Nimtala bus stand area while another homeopathic doctor, Khaza Jamir Uddin Sarkar, was murdered on January 7.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad yesterday formed human chain in front of the national press club, protesting the killings of minority people one after another.

They also demanded government steps to catch the killers.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal hoped they would be able to arrest the killers since there were eyewitnesses.

"We have been watching the movement of such criminals since long. So, we'll be able to reveal the mystery like that of other such incidents," he told reporters at his residence in the capital.

Two suspects

FROM PAGE 16
husband and her brother-in-law Saidul from the port city's Katgar area on June 22.

Saidul gave the motorcycle to Musa, which was used in carrying out the murder, claimed Devdas.

Asked whether Saidul is the owner of the motorcycle, Assistant Commissioner Mohammad Kamruzzaman of Detective Branch of the CMP said Saidul could not show any documents of the motorcycle.

"We will interrogate him to know how and from where he managed the motorcycle," said the CMP official, also the investigation officer of the case.

Police produced the arrestees before a Chittagong court yesterday and sought a 10-day remand for each of them.

The court, however, did not hear the remand prayer yesterday, and sent them to jail custody. It fixed July 17 for hearing on the remand prayer, said Nirmalendu Bikash Dey, assistant deputy commissioner (prosecution) of CMP.

Police so far arrested eight people in connection with the murder. Five were shown arrested with specific charge of involvement in the murder. Of the five, Wasim and Anwar already gave their confessional statements before a court while Bhola was sent to jail.

Meanwhile, police were yet to recover the knife used for stabbing Mitu.

Devdas said the murderers threw the knife on a road immediately after the murder and that it might have mingled with garbage, as sweepers swept the road.

He said police were trying to recover the knife as it is important evidence.

On June 5, three assailants stabbed and shot Mitu dead when she was taking her son to his school bus stop at GEC intersection in the port city.

Thousands leave Dhaka

FROM PAGE 16
However, traffic gridlocks were created on some streets adjacent to the shopping malls and kitchen markets.

Besides, several passengers, who left the city yesterday, said they faced traffic jam at the exit points due to haphazard parking of vehicles on the roads.

"I was stuck for around 20 minutes at Abdullapur of Uttara as several local buses were taking passengers blocking the road," said Mamunur Rashid, who went to Bogra from Mohakhali bus terminal yesterday.

Officials of the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) have identified the 36-kilometre-long road from Joydebpur to Mirzapur and 20km-long road from Abdullapur to Chandra on Dhaka-Tangail Highway as the most vulnerable roads to face traffic gridlock.

"I faced no major traffic jam on the Dhaka-Tangail Highway today [Friday]. I have reached Rangpur in average time of around eight hours. But I think traffic congestion may be created next day when the rush of vehicles will get momentum," said Ruhul Amin, a college student.

Passengers faced a little traffic jam at Bhulta intersection on Dhaka-Sylhet Highway, Kanchpur on Dhaka-Chittagong Highway and Babubazar Bridge on Dhaka-Mawa Highway.

Around 60-70 lakh people are likely to travel on road, rail and river routes until Wednesday to reach their destinations, according to transport operators. This year the Eid-ul-Fitr, the largest festival of the Muslims, will be celebrated either on July 6 or the following day subject to sighting of the moon.

The Bangladesh Passengers Welfare Association and the National

Committee to Protect Shipping, Roads and Railways (NCPSRR) have meanwhile demanded in separate statements that the government strictly check charging additional fares and ensure safety of the passengers.

PATURIA GHAT
An around-three-kilometre-long tailback was created since yesterday morning at Paturia ferry ghat. As the day progressed, the tailback became longer, reports our Manikganj correspondent.

Around 1,200 different modes of vehicles were waiting at the ghat to cross the Padma river as of filing of the report last evening.

The authorities said the tailback was created due to excessive rush of vehicles and they were trying their best to ease the gridlock.

MAWA GHAT
Cashing in on the excessive rush passengers, launch and speedboat operators were charging high fares on the Mawa-Kawrakandi river route, reports our Munshiganj correspondent.

A mobile court has fined around 16 buses on Dhaka-Mawa route Tk 34,500 for charging additional fares.

In another drive in the district headquarters, another mobile court fined a bus company Tk 1 lakh.

SADARGHAT
Thousands of passengers heading for southern districts thronged the Sadarghat terminal since morning. All the launches leaving the terminal were seen jam-packed with passengers.

Although the government and launch operators warned of taking stern actions against those who will travel on rooftop, many passengers were seen violating the warning.

'Mastermind' Khalid held

FROM PAGE 16
They also said Saifullah's father Kazi Belayet Hossain has been missing since Tuesday and his phone was found switched off.

Criminals hacked Ripon, a lecturer of mathematics at Govt Nazimuddin University College in Madaripur, inside his home in Madaripur town on June 15, leaving him badly injured.

Golam Faijullah Fahim, one of Ripon's assailants and a suspected member of banned militant outfit Hizb-ut Tahrir, was caught red-handed by locals while fleeing and was handed over to police.

Briefing journalists at the DMP Media Centre yesterday, police officials referred Faijullah as Prince Faijullah Faim, although his family members as well as Madaripur police earlier said his name was Golam Faijullah Fahim.

DMP Joint Commissioner Monirul Islam said going through the content of social media apps on Saifullah's phone, police identified 49 other suspected militants.

"We've details of those under and above his command," Monirul told newsmen.

During his stay in Demra, Saifullah alias Jamil alias Afif Kaifi alias Pothbhola Pathik along with his associates had planned to carry out a similar attack during the month of Ramadan, he added.

During primary interrogation, he

admitted to law enforcers of creating groups in social media to propagate religious extremism and encourage group members to kill people in parts of the country for creating anarchy.

On June 12, three days before the attack on Ripon, Saifullah took permission from his group leader "Amir" through the online messaging app Telegram, Monirul said.

He then bought a pair of machetes, a Chinese axe and a knife for Tk 2,700 from blacksmiths in Puran Bazaar area of Madaripur.

On the fateful day, Saifullah along with Golam Faijullah Fahim and three-four others gathered and carried out the attack on the teacher, the DMP official added.

Faijullah was killed in a "shootout" between police and criminals in Madaripur on July 18.

Mastermind Saifullah stayed a little far away from Ripon's house during the attack as he knew Ripon quite well for being a colleague of his father.

Before attacking the victim, Faijullah had left his mobile phone with Saifullah. The phones of Saifullah and Faijullah bore testimony to how the perpetrators had planned the attack, Monirul said.

Saifullah's father Kazi Belayet Hossain is the head of the mathematics department at the college where Ripon is a lecturer. Ripon had visited Belayet at his home when he fell ill, he added.

Two Shibir leaders

FROM PAGE 16
priest Ananda Gopal Ganguly, said Ajbahar Ali Sheikh, assistant superintendent of police (ASP) in Jhenidah.

At least four Shibir men, including Shahid and Anisur, were killed in Jhenidah in the last three months.

Around 22, including seven suspected militants, were killed in "shootouts" since police launched a special crackdown against militants after the murder of Mahmuda Khanam Mitu, wife of Superintendent of Police Babul Akter, in Chittagong on June 5.

'GUNFIGHT'
A police team was patrolling on Tatultala-Naldanga road on Thursday night. Some criminals hurled four or five bombs at the police van around 3:30am, said ASP Ajbahar.

Police then returned fire, triggering the "gunfight". After the 20-minute gun battle, police found Shahid and Anisur dead on the spot.

Police also claimed to have recovered a firearm, two bullets, five sharp weapons and five crude bombs from the spot.

Shahid's cousin Altaf Hossain claimed that some plainclothes men who introduced themselves as detectives picked up Shahid from their home in Badanpur village on June 13.

Shahid's elder brother Abdur Rahim said they had contacted police and Rab several times after his brother had been picked up.

"We went to Sadar Police Station and wanted to know about my brother. But police said they had no information about him [Shahid]. Then we wanted to file a GD [general diary], but police refused to register it," he told BBC Bangla Service.

The family also held a press conference at Jhenidah Press Club on June 18, said Farid Ahmed, maternal uncle of Shahid.

"His [Shahid] only fault was that he was a Shibir activist. There was no case against Shahid," he claimed.

Now, police cooked up the gunfight story, he alleged.

Meanwhile, Anisur's family claimed that he was picked up by some plainclothes men from a house in the capital's Mohammadia Housing Society on June 16.

On Thursday, rights organisation, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), revealed that 79 people were killed either in "crossfire" with or while in the custody of law enforcement agencies over the first six months of 2016.

ASK acting executive director Nur Khan Liton told BBC Bangla that the number of such so-called "gunfights" had increased alarmingly in the last three months.

"Families of the missing people usually go to the law enforcers, but don't get any information about their relatives' detention. But we see that many of those missing are either killed or sent to jail later," he added.

FIGHT AGAINST MILITANTS

Pakistan warns of 'blowback'

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan's top foreign policy official yesterday warned that pushing too fast against all Islamist militants in the country could lead to "blowback" in the form of more terrorist attacks.

Sartaj Aziz sought to deflect criticism that Pakistan has not done enough to crack down on the Haqqani network and that it still shelters Afghan Taliban leaders, highlighted by the U.S. drone strike that killed Taliban chief Mullah Akhtar Mansour in May.

Aziz said he would defend Pakistan's record of fighting militants when meeting this weekend with a US congressional delegation headed by Senator John McCain, chairman of the Senate Armed Forces Committee.

2 'militants' held near church in Lalmonirhat

They claim themselves innocent

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Detectives detained two militant suspects in front of a Christian church in Lalmonirhat town yesterday morning, but another managed to flee the spot.

The detainees are Mominul Islam, 32, of Manda upazila in Naogaon, and Obaidur Rahman, 44, of Mahadevpur upazila of the district.

Mominul was a student of Naogaon Polytechnic Institute and Obaidur Rahman an NGO worker, police said.

The man who fled the spot is Rezaul Karim, 35, son of Jamaat leader Maulana Sayedur Rahman in Lalmonirhat's Aditmar upazila, police said.

Police said three people on a motorcycle stood in front of the church at Station Road around 7:30am. Of them, two were trying to enter the church, while another was waiting outside on the motorbike.

On-duty plain-clothes detectives rushed to the spot and caught Mominul and Obaidur. Another suspected militant, Rezaul, fled the spot on the bike.

Night guard of the church Sudhir Chandra Barmon said a red colour bag was with the man who fled with the motorbike.

"Arms or sharp weapons were in the bag," he suspected.

Tapan Kumar Barmon, administrator of Lalmonirhat Christian mission and the priest of the church, said on 28 June, six youths on two motorcycles rushed to the church and tried to take photos of the church. They fled the spot before police reached the spot.

Tapan said he informed the police chief of the district about the matter, and the police chief assured him of providing security to the church by deploying plain-clothes police there.

Tapan also said he received death threats twice through letters on December 12 in 2015 and March 24 in 2016. "The letters were sent to me, saying that IS men of Dinajpur region command will kill me anytime."

He lodged a general diary with Lalmonirhat Sadar Police Station.

The priest said he was now feeling insecure. He did not come out of the church at night. He even did not go outside the church alone during the daytime. "Militants have planned to kill me," he said, adding that he and other priests of the church were feeling insecure.

Kawsar Ali, officer-in-charge of Detective Branch (DB) of police in Lalmonirhat, said police were interrogating the two suspected militants.

During the interrogation, the two claimed that they have no links with any militant organisation, the police official said.

They went to the church to visit it, but they had no "ill motive", they said.

Antarctic ozone

FROM PAGE 16
cataract damage, and harm to humans, animals and plants.

British scientists first noticed a dramatic thinning of ozone in the stratosphere some 10 kilometres above Antarctica in the mid 1980s.

In 1986, US researcher Susan Solomon showed that ozone was being destroyed by the presence of molecules containing chlorine and bromine that came from chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). These gases were found in everything from hairsprays to refrigerators to air conditioning units.

The reason the thinning was occurring mainly over Antarctica was because of the extreme cold and large amounts of light. These helped produce what are termed Polar Stratospheric Clouds.

In these chilled-out clouds, the chlorine chemistry occurs that destroys the ozone.

Thanks to the global ban on the use of CFCs in the Montreal Protocol in 1987, the situation in Antarctica has been slowly improving.

Several studies have shown the declining influence of CFCs, but according to the authors this new study shows the "first fingerprints of healing" and the ozone layer is actively growing again.

Prof Solomon and colleagues, including researchers from the University of Leeds in the UK, carried out detailed measurements of the amount of ozone in the stratosphere between 2000 and 2015.

Using data from weather balloons, satellites and model simulations, they were able to show that the thinning of the layer had declined by 4 million sq km over the period. They found that more than half the shrinkage was due solely to the reduction in atmospheric chlorine.

The study has been hailed as "historically significant" by some other researchers in the field.

Faster travel

FROM PAGE 1
Bhawal National Park, are refreshing.

However, the journey on this 87km highway -- from Joydebpur intersection to Mymensingh -- will be interrupted as construction work on several kilometres in Bhaluka is yet to be complete. Final surfacing and installation of medians are going on there.

Still, one can reach Mymensingh from Joydebpur in only one and a half hours, which used to take at least three hours or even more due to the dilapidated condition and narrowness of the road.

Both passengers and drivers expressed satisfaction over the condition of the highway on Wednesday.

"Now I visit my village home in Trishal every week and it takes less travel time," said Aslamul Alam, who works for an insurance company.

Azam, a driver of a car rental company, said he wants to have more trips on Dhaka-Mymensingh or Dhaka-Chittagong highway as both have been widened.

"Driving on a good, wide road is less tiring for a driver," he told The Daily Star at Mawna Bus Stand.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will open the highway today through a video-conference at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the city.

People travelling to Sherpur, Netrakona and Jamalpur from Dhaka also use the road and will be benefitted from its expansion.

Once fully complete, journey on this highway would be more comfortable than what it is now, hoped Roads and Highways Department officials. They said three more months will be needed to complete the rest of the work.

However, danger still lurks on the highway as the road markings are faulty and reckless driving of vehicles continues unabated.

This correspondent made a round trip to Mymensingh on Wednesday to get hands-on experience.

During the journey, it was found

that inadequate road markings and signals along the highway, haphazard driving and driving on the wrong side of the road and plying of slow-moving three-wheelers were the impediments to smooth traffic movement.

Besides, buses and other vehicles often stop in the middle of the road to take and drop off passengers. The roadside bazaars and people haphazardly crossing the highway make the journey more hazardous.

Passengers are yet to reap the full benefits of the road expansion due to these problems.

Accidents may happen anytime if drivers are not conscious enough. Even, battery-run auto-rickshaws often use the wrong side of the road.

"Expanding road for faster communication can pose serious threats; there is no control on the enforcement of traffic rules. All types of vehicles -- fast and slow moving -- use the road, making it risky for all," said transport expert Prof Shamsul Hoque.

He said the newly built road might turn into a chaotic one if these issues were not taken care of.

"There should be a separate lane for slow-moving vehicles while shops, parking and bazaars should not be allowed along or adjacent to the road," Shamsul, who teaches civil engineering at Buet, said.

Necessary instructions for road use like right-turns, u-turn signs, island markings are not there, while fading marks on speed bumps have made the road unsafe both at day and night.

Project Director of Dhaka-Mymensingh four-lane Project Hafiz Uddin said the rest of the work, including placing road signs and markings, would be completed soon to make the journey safer and smooth.

Regarding haphazard plying of vehicles, he said, "It's the problem of road management."

Currently, an average of 20,000 vehicles ply Dhaka-Mymensingh highway daily and the number will be increasing during Eid rush.

Efforts on but standards

FROM PAGE 16
maintaining a Tier 2 position since 2012 when it was upgraded to that rank after staying three years on the Tier 2 Watch List since 2010.

The US Department of State's TIP Report was released in Washington on June 30, which shows Myanmar, Sudan and Haiti are currently among the worst offenders for human trafficking.

The three nations are among 27 to be downgraded in this year's annual TIP report. On the other side, seven countries have made a leap from Tier 2 to Tier 1 including Colombia, Cyprus, Lithuania and the Philippines where human trafficking has historically been a critical issue.

"Bangladesh is primarily a source and, to a lesser extent, a transit and destination country for men, women and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking," the report notes.

The US strongly supports the Bangladesh government's efforts to address trafficking and will continue its support through the US Agency for International Development's Bangladesh Counter-Trafficking-in-Persons programme, it adds.

However, the government for the third consecutive year continued to prepare but did not finalise the implementing rules for the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act (PSHTA), 2012, it says.

"Convictions decreased, and although complicity of some officials in trafficking offenses remained a serious problem, the government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government officials complicit in human trafficking offenses in 2015," the report mentions.

The government reported identifying significantly fewer victims in 2015 and its efforts to refer victims to care during the reporting period were unknown, the report points out.

It suggests that Bangladesh finalise, adopt, and disseminate the implementing rules for the PSHTA and train up government officials on its use.

It also suggests that Bangladesh take steps to eliminate all recruitment fees charged to workers by licensed labour recruiters; increase prosecutions and convictions, particularly of labour trafficking, while strictly respecting due process; establish minimal guidelines for provision of adequate victim care and standard operating procedures for the referral of victims to such services.

The government continued to allow Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA) to legally set extremely high recruitment fees, which may have facilitated debt bondage of Bangladeshi workers abroad, the report observes.

The government also did not demonstrate efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex or forced labour and also demonstrated decreased efforts to protect trafficking victims.

The report puts emphasis on expanding the support services avail-

able to victims within Bangladesh and at Bangladesh embassies abroad; use of the PSHTA to prosecute fraudulent labour recruiters; improve quality of pre-departure trainings for migrant workers including sessions on labour rights, labour laws and methods to access justice and assistance in destination countries and in Bangladesh; and accede to the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.

The government has reported identification of 1,815 victims in 2015. Of them, 1,310 were men, 315 women and 190 were children. This was a significant decrease from 2,899 victims identified in 2014.

Of the 1,815 victims identified in 2015, police have rescued 1,306, says the report.

It mentions that the government did not provide services specifically designed for trafficking victims, but children and adult female victims could access support services for vulnerable people through nine multi-purpose shelters, drop-in centres and safe homes administered by the social welfare ministry.

The government placed an unknown number of victims in government-operated shelters in 2015 compared to nine of the 2,899 victims identified in 2014.

Buddhist

FROM PAGE 1
from Baishari Bazar to his home in Dabangkhal Marma Para area, said Abul Khair, officer-in-charge of Naikkhangchhari Police Station.

This attack has similarities with those carried out by suspected militants in recent months, the OC said.

The victim was found with deep gashes in the neck and the head, said locals.

The spot of the killing is just four kilometres from where the Buddhist monk was murdered on May 14 by suspected militants, said Md Alam, chairman of Baishari union parishad.

Police detained three people on suspicion in connection with that killing. But there has not been further progress in the investigation.

Alam said people were terrified as two similar murders have taken place in less than two months.

"Mong was known to locals as a kind-hearted and generous person ... We cannot accept this brutal killing of such a wonderful person," he said.

"We are scared to go out of our homes after seeing two gruesome murders in our area," said Mong Thoi Ching Marma, a senior resident there.

Victim's son Usha Thoi Marma said his father had no enmity with anyone. "My father was a simple farmer ... locals considered him a decent man."

Meanwhile, additional forces have been deployed in the area following the killing, police said.

The victim's body has been sent to Bandarban Sadar Hospital for an autopsy and a case filed in this connection.

"We are investigating the incident keeping in mind any possible militant links and land disputes, among other things," said Mizanur Rahman, superintendent of Bandarban police.