

It may be crimes

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of rapes and killings, and lodged a protest over a UN official in Bangladesh who said the state was carrying out "ethnic cleansing" of Rohingya.

Foreign journalists and independent investigators have been banned from accessing the area to probe the claims. Yesterday, the UN OHCHR said Myanmar's treatment of the Rohingya could be tantamount to crimes against humanity, reiterating the findings of a June report.

More than 120,000 Rohingyas have been crammed into displacement camps since sectarian violence in 2012, where they are denied citizenship, healthcare and education and their movements are heavily curbed.

"The government has largely failed to act on the recommendations made in a report by the UN Human Rights Office... [that] raised the possibility that the pattern of violations against the Rohingyas may amount to crimes against humanity," the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) said in a statement.

Amid the mounting crisis, former UN chief Annan yesterday began a week-long visit to Myanmar. Aung San Suu Kyi in August appointed her fellow Nobel laureate to head a special commission to investigate how to mend bitter religious and ethnic divides that split the impoverished state.

Annan has expressed "deep concern" over the violence in Rakhine, which has seen thousands of angry Muslims take to the streets across Asia in protest.

But Aye Win, a Muslim member of the Rakhine commission, defended Suu Kyi's handling of the crisis.

"What she has inherited is a dump of rubbish, a junk yard," he told AFP, pointing out the army retains control of security and defence under a constitution written under the former junta.

"Her hands are tied -- she can't do anything. What she is doing is trying to talk and negotiate and build trust with the army," he added.

One of the main

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circulated the Facebook post the day before the attacks on Hindus, the SP said.

Jahangir, of Shangkardah village at Haripur union of Nasirnagar, is one of the prime suspects and organisers of the attacks. He along with his men caught Rasraj from his Horinber village and beat him up before handing him over to police.

The next day the gang along with an angry mob attacked Horinber village and vandalised and looted houses and temples, the SP said.

They also participated in vandalising and looting of 100 houses and 15 temples in five Hindu villages in asirnagar, 13 km from Horinber village.

The SP said a forensic lab test of Rasraj's mobile phone at the laboratory of the Police Bureau of Investigation in the capital had found that the Facebook post was not uploaded from that phone.

"We are convinced that someone else uploaded it using Rasraj's account as part of a plot," the police official said.

On October 28, a photo was uploaded on the Facebook wall of Rasraj Das, a 27-year-old fisherman with very little education.

Brahmanbaria police said they also seized a computer from Jahangir's Alamin Cyber Point and Studio at Horinber Bazar, which Jahangir used for copying the post.

Based on the information extracted from him, another hard disk was seized from Madhabpur and sent to the lab for examination.

Terminating the arrest a "big success," police officials said it would help them get names of the masterminds and other instigators behind the atrocities.

Jahangir was produced before the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court in Brahmanbaria yesterday afternoon, which placed him on remand for four days. Earlier, police in making wholesale arrest picked up 99 people, most of whom were innocent villagers. Even a mentally-challenged person was arrested in the case filed for vandalism, drawing huge criticism.

Militants

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"This is reality, that in South Asia, lasting peace and progress is impossible without solution of the Kashmir issue. For that, international community's special attention is necessary," he continued.

The attack also comes days before a scheduled visit to India by Pakistan's foreign affairs advisor Sartaj Aziz for a weekend conference on Afghanistan.

"It clearly suggests there is an attempt by certain groups to sabotage the apparent peace outreach by Pakistan's government," said Mohan Guruswamy, head of the Centre for Policy Alternatives think-tank in New Delhi.

India has repeatedly accused Pakistan of sponsoring militant groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), which it blames for the 2008 Mumbai attacks that killed 166 people.

Separately, Indian authorities said three militants were killed in a shoot-out with security forces after crossing into Jammu and Kashmir from Pakistan.

Tensions between the nuclear-armed neighbours have escalated since the September 18 attack on an Indian army base, the deadliest in a decade.

India said after that attack it had launched "surgical strikes" on militant bases across the heavily militarised de-facto border known as the Line of Control (LoC) in disputed Kashmir, a claim Islamabad has denied.

India and Pakistan both claim the region in full and their troops regularly exchange fire across the LoC, but they rarely send ground troops over the line.

Philippine bank

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said that was "irrelevant" and argued that RCBC should shoulder the burden for accepting stolen cash.

"It is not for RCBC to point fingers. They should explain their conduct, and the conduct has been very much culpable," he told a news conference in Manila.

Most of the money that ended up in the Philippines was laundered through casinos. About \$15 million has been recovered from a gaming junket operator and was returned to Bangladesh, with a further \$2.7 million frozen.

Huq, who is in Manila to speed recovery of the money, said that his delegation met the Philippines finance minister, gaming regulators, justice department and the Senate speaker.

All had assured him of their full cooperation in getting the money returned, Huq said, adding that Senate President Aquilino Pimentel Jr told him that he would start the process to resume a legislative hearing into the heist saga.

Bangladesh Bank has refused to disclose the findings of its own inquiry, saying that it wanted to deny the crime's perpetrators knowledge of the investigation.

'ABNORMAL' AND 'QUESTIONABLE' But RCBC external counsel Thea Daep said it should share those results and shed light on the identity of the perpetrators.

"They have no case against us. BB (Bangladesh Bank) was the one who was negligent," Daep said in a statement.

RCBC received the funds after they went through three layers of highly protected financial institutions, Daep said, adding that reports from Bangladesh officials indicated there were insiders in Dhaka facilitating the heist.

"Shortly after, BB decided to abort its investigation, which raises a lot of questions, to say the least," Daep said.

Bangladesh Bank spokesman Subhankar Saha told Reuters that "halt payment" instructions were sent to RCBC from both Dhaka and New York but RCBC did not comply.

"The payment in cash was also abnormal," he said in Dhaka. "...The mechanism of transfer of money was also not transparent. So all these are

questionable."

The Bangladesh delegation was due on Thursday to meet the Philippine central bank governor and the anti-money laundering body, which last week filed charges against five RCBC staff in connection with the heist.

The central bank fined RCBC a record 1 billion pesos (\$20 million) for failing to prevent the transfer of stolen money through its accounts.

Huq said that by paying that fine RCBC had shown its culpability.

"They have accepted the liability by paying the fine," he said. "That is why we are asking them to return our money." (\$1 = 50 pesos).

EC apologises

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High Court bench concerned, was sick. The new date for the hearing would be announced later, Mohammed Yeasin Khan, the lawyer for the EC, told The Daily Star.

He refused to talk about the contents of the petition saying it was pending with the HC.

Elections to around 4,000 UPs were held in six phases from March to June this year. The first and second phases, which were held on March 22 and March 31, were marred by irregularities and violence.

Hundreds of complaints were lodged with the EC over poll-time irregularities and violence. The commission was supposed to resolve the complaints. But it neither investigated nor took any action.

Being aggrieved, Zahidul Islam, a chairman candidate of Chabhairab UP in Chandpur's Haimchar upazila, filed a petition with the HC in April. Following the petition, the court asked the EC to dispose of the complaints.

But the commission did not comply with the order; rather it on April 23 asked all aggrieved people to take their complaints to the election tribunal for disposal. This is why, the EC faced contempt of court charges, said several EC officials.

In the affidavit, the commission said it could not properly understand the court order.

The affidavit would be placed before the court on the next hearing.

Hijras assault youth

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house in old Dhaka. He had just come from his village home in Manikganj's Shibbaloy upazila.

"I took a bus at Gabtoli and the moment it stopped near a signal at Khejurbagan intersection, two hijras got on it," he said.

Sometimes later, the bus started to move again. Then, one of the hijras went to him and asked for some money.

As he refused, the hijra sat on his lap and kept on asking for the money, creating a moment of laughter among the other passengers.

It, however, embarrassed the young cricketer. So, he pushed off the hijra right away.

Furious, both the hijras started to slap and kick Sujun. At one point, they dragged him by his collars and pushed him off the moving bus. No one on the bus came to his rescue, he alleged.

As he was trying to get back to his feet, another bus knocked him down and went over his right leg. He was rescued and rushed to the hospital by some locals.

"I don't know whether I will ever be able to play cricket again," he wept at the hospital.

Sujun had been training at a cricket academy in Dhanmondi since he came to the capital over a year ago, said his

mother Rina Begum.

She said her poor family was struggling to meet their daily needs but dreamt that Sujun would be a professional cricketer one day.

"They have almost destroyed our dream. We want justice," she said as tears rolled down her cheeks.

Sujun lives with a relative in old Dhaka. He did his Higher Secondary Certificate from Kabi Nazrul Government College and was preparing to get admitted to a good college or university, said his family members.

Police said they picked up two hijras -- Saju, 23, and Kabir, 22 -- as suspects and produced them before a Dhaka court yesterday.

They sought a three-day remand for each of the duo in a case filed on Monday night with Tejgaon Police Station over the incident.

The court, however, ordered investigators to quiz the accused at the jail gate for a day, said court sources.

Sub-inspector Azahar Ali of Tejgaon Police Station, also the investigation officer of the case, said locals picked up the hijras from Khamarbari area after the incident and handed them over to police.

Quoting the accused, the police official said although the hijras scuffled with Sujun, they did not push him out of the bus.

Commuters suffer badly

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They then changed their decision not to go to their workplace and started coming back home, thinking that the sufferings they already experienced on the streets might be severe at night when they returned home from the factory.

"It takes 7:00pm or more to leave the factory. In this situation [scarcity of transports], how will I return with my two daughters? Thinking this, we are returning home instead of going to the factory," said exhausted Hafeza while talking to this correspondent in Sholoshahar Gate-2 area around 10:15am.

The three were walking towards their home through CDA Avenue.

"We have no other choice but walking as it is impossible for us to travel by rickshaw, spending extra," she further said.

Like Hafeza and her two daughters, hundreds of people had to undergo untold sufferings yesterday due to the transport strike.

On Saturday, leaders of Chittagong Regional Committee of Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation announced the strike in Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban to press home their nine-point demand, including construction of terminals for bus, truck, prime-mover and trailer, providing appointment letters to transport workers by owners, stopping harassment of transport workers by police

and registering the unregistered CNG-run auto-rickshaws.

Visiting different areas in the city, including Muradpur, Gate-2, GEC Intersection, Wasa Intersection, Ispahani Intersection and Oxygen Intersection, this correspondent found immense sufferings of the commuters in the morning as there were no public transports, except rickshaws and private cars. Only a handful of auto-tempos were seen plying different streets.

As the people were compelled to go to their destinations either on foot or by rickshaws, rickshaw-pullers charged them extra.

"I went to Ispahani Intersection from the city's Gate-2 area as I had an urgent task there. It took me Tk 60 to go there by a rickshaw whereas it normally needs Tk 40 to Tk 45," said Mohammad Ishaq, a resident of Gate-2 area in the city.

Shawkatul Islam, a bank employee, arrived in Muradpur area by a rickshaw-van from his home in Aturar Depot area around 9:45am, finding no other transports after about an hour long wait.

"My office time is at 10:00am and I have to reach Chawkbazar by then ... So I boarded the rickshaw-van as there were no other transports," said Shawkatul.

"I don't know how will I go to my office at Chawkbazar from here [Muradpur]? It is very much boring and painful," he added.

Do not use

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the BRTA chairman added.

Uber has been becoming popular among the Dhaka's commuters after its official launching on November 22. It is an online platform that connects people to facilitate transportation through a mobile application.

Two days after the introduction of the service, the BRTA declared Uber illegal, saying the company did not take permission from the government for running the service in the country.

Terminating Uber operation a punishable offense, the BRTA in a newspaper advertisement also warned of taking legal action against the operators.

However, welcoming the service, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader on November 26 said Uber needs to follow legal framework and systematic procedures to run the service.

The biggest advantage of Uber is it does not own any cars. It acts like a middleman between customers and cab drivers. It has made the task of booking a cab easier. Any car owner can become drivers after getting registered with Uber with valid documents, national identity card and a photograph, said sources at Uber.

The service of the US-based firm can come as a relief for many in Dhaka where commuters suffer every day due to lack of transport. And Uber came when the existing taxi services failed to gain popularity due to unavailability and high fare.

On the other hand, Uber cars will be available and cheaper than the existing usual taxis, said a source at Uber.

Venezuelans

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decimated Venezuela's economy. President Nicolás Maduro responded by fixing the official exchange rate and ordering banks to print more cash, which ultimately devalued the currency further, while goods prices soared.

The country of 30 million does not publish consumer-price data on a regular basis, but observers have said scenes on the streets of the capital, Caracas, are reminiscent of the past century's most chaotic cases of hyperinflation.

Humberto Gonzalez, who runs a delicatessen in the city, said he uses the same scales to weigh slices of salty white cheese and the stacks of bolívar notes handed over by his customers.

"It's sad," Gonzalez told Bloomberg. "At this point, I think the cheese is worth more."

Jesus Casique, a consulting firm director, told the news site that although weighing cash was not ubiquitous, it was indicative of a financial crisis.

"When they start weighing cash, it's a sign of runaway inflation," he said. "But Venezuelans don't know just how bad it is because the government refuses to publish figures."

In one of Caracas richer neighbourhoods, the owner of a tiny kiosk selling newspapers, cigarettes and snacks told the Washington Post that every evening he quietly stuffs a plastic bag full of the day's earnings, around 100,000 bolívares (about £42) in notes of 10, 20, 50 and 100 bolívares. Venezuela has one of the highest crime rates in the world, and he said carrying that much cash frightens him.

The shrinking value of the currency has meant that withdrawing the equivalent of £5 from an ATM produces a fistful of more than 100 bills. Some ATMs now need to be refilled every three hours, because the machines can only hold so much cash.

BNP writes

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hopeful that the current Election Commission would take good initiatives to improve its image as it was reaching the end of its tenure.

"We've demanded deployment of army in Narayanganj seven days ahead of the polling day to ensure a fair election," said the BNP leader.

The returning officer himself classified all the polling stations as vulnerable to violence, Rizvi said, adding that the EC will have to take proper steps, considering the overall situation in the electoral area.

In the letter signed by BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, the party also called for ensuring a level playing field, recovering illegal arms and creating a congenial atmosphere so that voters can safely go to polling stations and cast their votes without any intimidation.

BNP's other demands include keeping election officials free from political influence, providing candidates with the list of election officials 10 days ahead of voting, ensuring security for polling agents and deploying adequate number of law enforcers at every polling stations. **20-PARTY TO BACK SAKHAWAT** Leaders of the BNP-led 20-party alliance yesterday decided that BNP mayoral nominee Sakhawat Hossain Khan would be considered as the combine's candidate.

The decision came at a meeting of the alliance leaders at the BNP chief's Gulshan office last night, with party Chairperson Khaleida Zia in the chair.

The meeting also decided that the alliance components will not field any candidate at the January 20 zila parishad polls as the electoral system "conflicts with the constitution", said National People's Party Chairman Farhad Hossain, who was present at the meeting.

The alliance called upon the government to provide shelter for Myanmar Rohingyas, he added.

Tamim powers Vikings

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cricket and Tamim, you would ideally expect a whirlwind innings. However, the knock that the left-hander played yesterday was anything but that.

He scored a 59-ball 66 and in the process helped the Vikings recover from 64 for four in 11 overs to reach their target of 132 with eight balls remaining.

When the Titans were restricted to 131, many reckoned that the game would be over early, considering that the Vikings possess the best batting lineup of the tournament, including Chris Gayle.

The second innings of the match initially seemed to be moving towards that path with Chris Gayle smashing Junaid Khan and Mahmudullah Riyad for three fours and a six within the first three overs.

Tamim joined in the fun as well, hitting Junaid for three consecutive fours in the fourth over. However, in the very first ball of the next over, Shuvagata Hom got Chris Gayle caught at long-on, and that is where the game slipped temporarily from the Vikings.

Following his wicket, Tamim shifted and began playing the role of the anchor. Shuvagata Hom ran Anamul Haque out from the deep in the seventh over, while Shoaib Malik and Zakir Hossain were dismissed before the 11th over.

While Tamim managed to hold one end up, he kept losing partners and by the 11th over, they were poised at 64 for four.

Jahurul Islam joined Tamim and eased the pressure a bit at that point of time with a number of boundaries. He lofted Junaid for a six and then smacked him for a four in the 15th

over and helped them bring the equation down to 38 required off 30. However, the pressure momentarily shifted towards the Titans once Jahurul was dismissed in the 16th over.

Tamim then took over and calmly drove Mosharrar Hossain and Shafiqul Islam for two fours in the 17th and 18th overs to bring the equation down to eight from 12. Mohammad Nabi hit two fours in the 19th over and brought the match to an end in style.

Earlier, a cautious 42 off 39 balls from Mahmudullah Riyad and a few lusty hits from the tail helped the Khulna Titans post 131.

Khulna's batting struggled initially with the Titans slumping to 38 for four after the first six overs. All the batsmen got out while attempting to go for big hits.

Mohammad Nabi and Saqlain Sajid bowled Taibur Rahman and Alok Kapal within the first three overs. Shuvagata Hom was brilliantly caught in the deep by Shoaib Malik in the fourth over, while Riki Wessels was caught by Chris Gayle at fine-leg off Imran Khan two balls before the end of the Powerplay.

Mahmudullah and Ariful Haque joined hands to put in a 44-run stand for the fifth wicket. Ariful however was run-out in the 14th over, while Riyad was caught off Taskin Ahmed in the 15th.

Nicholas Pooran hit a 17-ball 18, while Kevon Cooper hit 15 off 14 to help the Titans cross the 130-run mark. The key wicket-takers for the Vikings were Imran Khan, who finished with figures of two for 16, while Taskin took two for 28.

Indian defence minister

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firm up a proposed framework of bilateral defence cooperation deal expected to be signed during Hasina's visit likely in the third week of December.

This is going to be the first-ever visit to Bangladesh by an Indian defence minister in last 45 years and is also seen to counter Chinese growing strategic footprints in Bangladesh. However, officials in Dhaka have ruled out any link between the visit and supply of two Chinese submarines to Bangladesh.

Indian media made a series of reports since Bangladesh received the submarines, considering it as a development indicative of increasing footprints of Beijing in India's immediate neighbourhood, especially in the Indian Ocean, which is an area of domination of the Indian armed forces.

The Indian defence minister would lead a powerful delegation that includes the vice chiefs of army, air force, navy and the director general of Coast Guard.

Parrkar is expected to arrive in Dhaka at 11:00am by a special Indian Air Force plane and would call on President Abdul Hamid and meet Security Adviser to the Prime Minister Maj Gen (ret'd) Tarique Ahmed Siddiqui, diplomatic sources told The Daily Star.

He is scheduled to fly to Chittagong tomorrow to visit the Bangladesh Military Academy. Upon his return to Dhaka, he along with his accompanying delegation would call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who also holds the defence portfolio, for the crucial meeting before flying back to India.

The meeting is scheduled to take place at Gono Bhavan at 4:00pm.

Victims must get justice

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"Why won't those who lost their children get justice? Some have surely committed the crime. Else, how did the children die? ... I want to ensure justice," the minister said at a press conference following a meeting with officials of the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) and his ministry.

While delivering the verdict, the drug court in Dhaka said the prosecution had utterly failed to prove the charges brought against the accused.

Negligence, inefficiency and incompetence of the DGDA in handling the case led to the acquittal of the accused whose pharmaceutical company allegedly manufactured the toxic medicine, it said.

Nasim said he summoned DGDA officials to the ministry and saw their investigation report. The health secretary has already been asked to look at the DGDA probe report and the court's verdict.

If the accused have been acquitted for negligence of any of the drug administration officials, appropriate actions will be taken against them. "They will not be spared," the minister said, adding that the matter was of huge public interest since it involved lives and so he would not let it die down.

The accused in the case disposed of by the drug court are Rid's Managing Director Mizanur Rahman, directors Sheuli Rahman and Abdul Gani, and pharmacists Mahbulul Islam and Enamul Haque. Sheuli is the wife of Mizanur.

Between June and August of 2009, 28 children across the country died of renal failure after they took paracetamol syrup and suspension.

On July 22 that year, the Drug Administration sealed off Rid's factory in Brahmanbaria following wide media coverage of the children's death, and findings of Dhaka Shishu Hospital physician Prof Mohammad Hanif that Rid Pharma's Temset had toxic substance.

A government-formed probe body at the time also found deadly Diethylene Glycol instead of Propylene Glycol in the syrup manu-

factured by Rid. Shafiqul Islam, the then superintendent of the DGDA, filed the case with the Dhaka Drug Court in August 2009. Three other cases were also filed in this connection in Narayanganj, Brahmanbaria and Sylhet.

Loopholes were found when charges were framed by the court in March 2011.

For example, autopsy was not done on any of the children who died allegedly after taking the paracetamol syrup laced with diethylene glycol, an industrial solvent and an ingredient in antifreeze and brake fluid.

So, there was hardly any chance of linking the deaths to the presence of the toxic substance.

Besides, the fact that diethylene glycol was present in Rid Pharma's paracetamol syrup, Temset, was not even mentioned at all in three of the cases.

The cases' statements only say that the syrup was "substandard". The case filed in Narayanganj is the only exception.

Bangladesh Law Commission in an investigation in 2014 found "manipulation" of the legal process and "sheer indifference" by the DGDA in handling of four drug adulteration cases filed in the early 90s.

Ex-BCL man

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Metropolitan Magistrate Ummeey Sharaban Tahura, confessed to hacking Khadiza Begum Nargis with an intention to kill her.

On November 8, Harun Ur Rashid, sub-inspector of Shah Paran Police Station, filed charge sheet against Badrul for attempted murder.

On November 15, Ummeey Sharaban Tahura, additional chief metropolitan magistrate, accepted the charge sheet against Badrul and forwarded it to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court.

On November 28, Khadiza was transferred from Square Hospitals to the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP) at Savar, where she will undergo the process of rehabilitation into normal life.