

NASIRNAGAR FB POST Rasraj innocent, claims family

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rasraj Das, now behind bars in a case for allegedly defaming Islam in a Facebook post, is an illiterate fisherman and he cannot edit a photo for posting it online, his family members said yesterday.

The arrest of Jahangir who posted the Facebook status on October 28 has made it clear that Rasraj is innocent, they added.

Speaking at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity, Rasraj's mother Nomita Rani Das called for freeing her son.

"Please release my son. He is innocent," she said.

Bangladesh Jatiya Hindu Mohajote (Bangladesh National Hindu Grand Alliance) organised the press conference.

Police arrested Rasraj on October 29, a day after a photo was uploaded on his Facebook wall.

Mobs, including religious zealots and local goons, vandalised and looted over 100 houses and 15 temples in five Hindu villages in Brahmanbaria's Nasirnagar upazila on October 30.

Police filed the case against Rasraj under section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology Act, said leaders of the Hindu alliance. A Brahmanbaria court on Thursday sent him to jail after fixing January 3 for hearing his bail prayer.

Rasraj's father Jagannath Chandra Das told the press conference that he along with his wife and two sons went into hiding following the attack. They had been fleeing from one village to another for about a month.

Dayamoy Das, elder brother of the accused, said he and Rasraj on October 29 went for fishing. He returned home soon to take a nap and later came to know from local children that some people picked up Rasraj and handed him over to police.

He also demanded the government take stern action against culprits to "end impunity" for attacking Hindus.

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Rasheda Begum at the bedside of her daughter Farzana Aktar, a victim of November 22 Ashulia fire, at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital on Tuesday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Battle for life

FROM PAGE 1

minors, suffered burns in the incident. Five of them were admitted to Enam Medical College Hospital in Savar while the rest were taken to the DMCH burn unit in critical condition.

Four of them died of their wounds at the burn unit, while one was released after treatment. Sixteen victims were taking treatment there when these correspondents visited the hospital on Thursday.

Doctors said their condition was critical as they suffered 12 to 70 percent burns. All of them got their respiratory tracts damaged.

Fifteen-year-old Halima Begum suffered 25 percent burns. Her mother-

in-law, Nehara Begum, had 40 percent of her body burnt and was undergoing treatment at the intensive care unit (ICU) of the burn unit.

Halima's husband Bulbul Hossain, a cleaner at Ashulia, said he plunged into financial hardship, as two earning members of his family got injured.

"I stopped work and asked my father and father-in-law to help me," he said.

Samanta Lal Sen, national coordinator of burn units across the country, said it would take one to two months for some victims to recover from their injuries.

They might have to wait three to six

more months to resume their work, he said, adding, "Some patients may need plastic surgery."

Partha Sankar Paul, resident surgeon of the burn unit, said burnt patients with damaged respiratory tracts are more critical than those who suffer only body burns.

Hafiza Begum, who suffered 20 percent burns, told The Daily Star that she was very frightened when the fire engulfed the factory.

"I am a bit happy now as doctors said my condition is improving," she said, adding that she would go back to her village home in Jamalpur once she is released from the hospital.

As there is an acute shortage of

nurses and lower tier staff at the burn unit, the authorities allowed relatives to attend their patients, said hospital sources. Samanta Lal also admitted that they have a shortage of nurses.

However, some relatives of the victims said they had to quit their job to look after their loved ones, while others said they managed temporary leave.

Bilkis Akter, elder sister of two burn victims -- Lovely Akter and Fatema Akter -- said she quit her job at a garment factory to attend her sisters, as her employer refused to grant her leave.

The hospital authorities are bearing all medical expenses of the victims.

Odommo

FROM PAGE 1

After Odommo reached out to Bata, they were quite appreciative of the project and helped out by building a ramp at the entrance of their Tongi store.

Similarly, Bengal Foundation marked out a parking space for people with disabilities. They are also refurbishing a lavatory on their ground

floor, and have floor announcements and Braille on their lifts for assisting the visually impaired.

Most of the North End cafes in Dhaka are accessible to disabled individuals. With the initiative of Odommo, a ramp has recently been built on the premises of Cityscape Tower-1 (in Gulshan, Dhaka) outlet.

Mohammad Mohasin, captain of the Wheelchair Cricket Welfare Association of Bangladesh, co-founder of the Bangladesh Physically Challenged Cricket Team, and an active member of Odommo, said this is a historical movement for the private sector of Bangladesh.

As the International Day of Persons with Disabilities is being observed

today with the objectives for 2016, including laying the foundation for a future of greater inclusion for persons with disabilities, Dhaka Hub hopes to spread the message far and wide so that more establishments join hands to provide access to people with disabilities.

A detailed version of this feature will be published soon in SHOUT.



A ramp at the entrance of Bata's Tongi store and a reserved parking space marked by Bengal Foundation for persons with disabilities.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Mentally strong

FROM PAGE 1

enough to run his family of three. His father, who was a farmer, died several years ago.

Likhon is not the only physically challenged person in the upazila who have been trying hard to overcome their disabilities and become self-reliant. In fact, Ishwardi has 629 such people who have their own organisation called Protibandhi Punorbahon and Manobadhikar Samity.

The organisation works for the rehabilitation and development of people with all sorts of disabilities, by providing them with motivation for work along with training on sewing, computers, dairy farming, shop keeping and other skills. And many of its beneficiaries, including Likhon, have changed their lives with its help.

The Samity, which organises the trainings, is run by funds collected from its members.

Sanwar Hossain, himself a visually-impaired person, established the organisation in 2004 with just 21 members. The man is from Char-Roopur Jigatola area of the upazila.

With the International Day of Persons with Disabilities being observed across the world today, Sanwar, 45, has expressed his determination to work more for the people.

people with disabilities. "We don't want anyone like us to beg on streets."

Recalling the opening of the Samity, he said, "I was a street hawker selling chocolates in the ferry ghat area. One day in 2001, they closed down the ferry ghat and I became unemployed. I was not getting any job either as I cannot see."

Later, he gathered and organised the 21 physically challenged people in the upazila and started the organisation so that they could learn various skills from it and become self-reliant, instead of being jobless and beg.

So far, 629 physically challenged people in that upazila got training for self-employment and other supports from the organisation, and all of them are doing income-generating activities according to their abilities, Sanwar said.

Of them, 20 are making clothes, 25 running shops, 191 operating dairy farms and the rest are performing household-based financial activities as sewing Kantha, handicrafts etc.

Some 50 to 60 physically challenged students are also getting supports for their education and training from the organisation.

Visiting several places of the upazila, this correspondent saw many physically challenged people

working at home. They said they received trainings from the Samity.

Sanwar said the organisation has recently opened a small sewing training centre with a mini garment factory to accommodate the physically challenged workers on its premises.

Mukti Khatun, 30, crawls on her hands to the centre every day with the determination to earn for her family. Daughter of Sadeque Mondol of Shahapur Azizulota, Mukti lost control over her legs after a prolonged fever at the age of two.

"It is quite easy to earn Tk 150 to Tk 200 a day if I can sew four to five dresses. But unfortunately, I don't have much work now," she said, urging the locals to give her work.

On the issue, Sanwar said the EPZ factories at Ishwardi give work orders to many small factories in the upazila but not to the physically challenged workers. He called for government support for ensuring that they get work so that they can lead respectable lives.

Contacted, Monsur Uddin, district disability affairs officer in Pabna, said only government support would not be enough.

"We must change our mindset. We should think that the physically challenged people are the members of this society and they have the

right to enjoy all the benefits like we do," he said, adding some 17,400 people with disabilities came under treatment and logistic support benefits of the government in the district.

A disability is a condition or function judged to be significantly impaired relative to the usual standard of an individual of their group.

According to the social welfare ministry, there are about 15.1 lakh people with disabilities in Bangladesh.

The persons with disabilities face problems particularly in communication in rural and remote areas which are difficult to reach.

As in many other developing countries, in Bangladesh people with disabilities tend to be neglected and as a result are inadequately protected or supported. Several studies in Bangladesh showed how disabled people often live in unfriendly and hostile environments, encounter non-cooperation, ill treatment, neglect and hostility in the families, in communities, in wider society, and in government institutions.

Today, the world population is over seven billion and more than one billion people, or approximately 15 percent, live with some form of disability. Eighty percent of them live in developing countries, according to the United Nations.

wickets and by the ninth over were struggling at 56 for three.

Kumar Sangakkara, who was looking to anchor the innings from one end, was run out brilliantly from the deep by Zakir Hossain for a 35-ball 35 and that brought the Dynamites to 84 for four in 13 overs.

With 51 runs required off 42 balls, Dhaka sent in their trump card Andre Russell and that is what transformed the game.

He began by lofting Imran Khan for a six over long-off in the 15th over and then followed that up by smashing Sagnal Sajib for a six over deep midwicket in the 16th.

Alauddin Babu joined in the fun and pulled Imran for a six over midwicket in the 17th over and brought the equation down to just 17 required from the last 18 balls.

That was a target that the duo needed just eight balls to reach. While Russell finished on 31 runs from 18 balls, Babu remained unbeaten on a 27-ball 33.

On the very day that the Chittagong Vikings needed their heavy batting armoury to fire, they failed. Their innings can be observed based on two perspectives. There was Tamim Iqbal's brilliant 59-ball 74 and then there were the rest of the batters who kept throwing their wickets away.

The dismal performance led to them scoring a below-par 134, 74 off which were scored by Tamim, who hit three sixes and six fours.

Having asked Chittagong to bat first, the Dhaka Dynamites gained the early advantage when they dismissed

HUNGARY TOUR PM to brief press today

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will address a press conference today to brief the media about the outcomes of her recent visit to Hungary.

The media event will be organised at the Gono Bhaban at 4:00pm, said a media release yesterday.

The PM went to Budapest on a four-day tour on November 27 at the invitation of Hungarian President János Áder.

The two countries signed four memorandums of understanding (MoUs) during Hasina's visit.

Those are MoU between the foreign ministries of Hungary and Bangladesh; MoU on cooperation in the field of water management between the two governments; and MoU on cooperation in the field of agriculture between the two countries.

All survived in tourist vessel fire in Sundarbans

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All 26 passengers of a cruise vessel escaped unhurt near Harbaria forest office in the Sundarbans under Chandpuri range in Mongla upazila last evening when a fire broke out on it.

The passengers were out on the shore when the vessel named MV Pelican-1 caught fire around 6:30pm, said our Bagerhat correspondent.

Zahir Uddin, conservator of forest in Khulna, said, a rescue vessel departed from Mongla for Harbaria last evening to bring back the stranded passengers.

The fire started inside a cabin on the boat and later it engulfed the entire boat, the forest conservator said. "After noticing smoke on the boat, our forest officials rushed to the scene. All the passengers and the crew of the boat are safe."

The cause of the fire could not be ascertained immediately, "but it might be due to short circuit," he added.

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Fakhrul warns

FROM PAGE 16

Bangabandhu International Conference Centre and the Planning Commission were parts of architect Louis I Kahn's original design where no space had been allocated for graves. BNP founder Ziaur Rahman and six others were buried within the complex area.

The government on Thursday received Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban's original architectural design prepared by world famous architect Louis I Kahn from the archive of University of Pennsylvania in the US.

"The motive for bringing the original design of the parliament complex is to remove the grave of Ziaur Rahman," Fakhrul said.

The attempt would go in vain as people will never accept the government's decision, he added.

"The spirit of the Liberation War has been banished from the country.

The freedom fighters are also repressed and oppressed by the government deliberately," he alleged.

FAIR POLLS NOT POSSIBLE

About the upcoming Narayanganj City Corporation elections, Fakhrul said there is no likelihood of the elections being held freely and fairly under the current Election Commission.

"The present Election Commission is incapable of holding an acceptable election in Narayanganj," he added.

Despite this, the BNP is going to contest the election for the sake of democracy, he said.

Fakhrul along with BNP leaders and activists visited Zia's grave yesterday, marking the founding anniversary of Jatiyatabadi Mukti Juddha Projonno, the party's front organisation.

Dhaka move clear

FROM PAGE 1

Chris Gayle in the fourth over. The big man was kept quiet for some time and he tried to release the pressure by smashing Russell for a boundary.

Instead, all he did was edge a simple catch towards Shakib Al Hasan at cover.

Two more wickets fell quickly after Gayle and after eight overs Chittagong were struggling at 33 for three. Slowly but steadily Tamim, along with Shoaib Malik, started reviving Chittagong.

The partnership did not yield any boundaries in the first three overs and as a result Chittagong were poised at 45 for three after 10.</p