



This private helicopter had to make an emergency landing at a field in Kishoreganj's Bajitpur after a bird hit its windscreen yesterday. The chopper carrying six passengers, including five foreigners, was heading for Sylhet from the capital. None of them was hurt.

PHOTO: STAR

UN envoy decries Myanmar atrocities

FROM PAGE 1

"There was not a single account I heard which was not harrowing," said the human rights observer in a statement after her four-day visit to Bangladesh ended on Friday.

"I was especially affected by a mother who repeatedly expressed regret for mistakenly thinking that her son had been brought out from their burning house."

"She heard him screaming for her and managed to save his life but burn scars have been seared onto him -- scars which I saw with my own eyes."

Lee said she heard "allegation after allegation" of horrific events, including the slitting of throats, houses being set alight with people tied up inside and very

young children thrown into the fire.

Almost 73,000 Rohingya have arrived in Bangladesh since the military unleashed a four-month campaign of violence in Myanmar's Rakhine state which the UN has said may amount to crimes against humanity.

The Rohingyas are a stateless, mainly Muslim minority who have long suffered discrimination in predominantly Buddhist Myanmar, where many people consider them illegal immigrants.

Most of the refugees are now living in squalid camps in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district which borders Rakhine.

Myanmar says its operations, which began last October, were aimed at tracking down militants who attacked

police border posts in Rakhine and have now ended.

The country's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel peace laureate, has faced criticism for failing to act against the crackdown.

Lee accused Myanmar of continued discrimination and urged authorities there to act to prevent further rights abuses, and investigate those already alleged to have occurred.

Bangladeshi authorities estimate 400,000 Rohingya refugees are now living in Bangladesh, including the most recent arrivals.

The Dhaka government has approved a controversial plan for their relocation to an island.

Bill passed okaying underage marriage

FROM PAGE 1

empowerment, she said.

Talking to The Daily Star, Ayesha also mentioned that on March 8 different women and civil rights platforms would hold rally and protest keeping of such a provision.

"We engaged with the government on this particular issue many times in the last few years. We submitted memorandum to the prime minister and an alternative draft law on this to the women and children affairs ministry but to no avail."

State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Meher Afroze Chumki placed the bill, which was passed in voice vote. The new law will replace the existing Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929.

The 1929 law had fixed 18 and 21 as the minimum age of marriage.

Three lawmakers from the opposition Jatiya Party (Ershad) sought to bring in some amendments and elicit public opinion before the passage of the bill, but their pleas were turned down in majority voice vote.

The lawmakers -- Fakhru Imam, Salim Uddin and Rowshan Ara Mannan -- opposed the "special provision" of the bill and proposed that the House should send the bill for eliciting public opinion or send it back to a special committee for further scrutiny.

In reply, Chumki said the government is committed to stop child marriage and for that a time befitting law is immensely important.

The opposition lawmakers' proposals for scrapping the special provision were rejected in voice votes in the House presided over by Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury.

Talking to The Daily Star later, Rebeka Momin, chief of the parliamentary standing committee on women and children affairs ministry, said the concern that keeping the special provision would increase child marriage has no basis.

"Let's see whether child marriage goes up in the country after passage of the law," she said, adding, "There was no alternative to keeping the special provision considering the socio-economic reality, especially in rural areas."

On December 8 last year, the state minister for women and children affairs placed the bill in parliament with a special provision for the marriage of only underage girls in special cases.

But during scrutiny of the bill, the parliamentary standing committee brought a change in the original keeping the provision of "special circumstances" also for boys. Initially, it was only for girls.

According to section 2 of the bill, any male who is yet to complete 21 years or any female who is yet to complete 18 years will be considered underage for getting married.

When one or both are underage, this will be defined as child marriage.

However, as per Section 19 of the proposed law, if any marriage takes place in line with the directives of a court and consent of the parents or guardians alongside specific process in special context in the best interest of an underage female, such marriage will not be considered an offence, according to the report of the House committee.

Earlier in November last year, the cabinet approved the draft law that drew huge criticism from various quarters at home and abroad, including Human Rights Watch, for allowing child marriage in the name of "special cases".

According to the bill, the Mobile Court Act 2009 can be exercised in case of child marriage.

Local officials, including upazila nirbahi officer, executive magistrate, upazila women affairs official, upazila social service officer, upazila primary or secondary education officer and officer-in-charge of the police station concerned can take necessary measures and legal actions to stop any child marriage upon receiving written or verbal complaint.

The court can stop any child marriage while the punishment for breaching the ban on child marriage is maximum six months' imprisonment or a fine of maximum Tk 10,000 or both.

The punishment for marrying any underage person for an adult woman or man will be maximum two years' jail or maximum Tk 100,000 in fine or both.

As per section 7 (2) of the proposed law, underage boy and girl will have to undergo a detention of 30 days or pay Tk 50,000 as fine or both in case of any child marriage.

If the guardians concerned or others remain associated with child marriage, the punishment is six months to two years' jail or Tk 50,000 in fine or both, while the punishment for officiating such child marriage is six months to two years' jail or Tk 50,000 in fine or

both.

Besides, the licence of a marriage registrar can also be revoked for registering such child marriage alongside maximum two years' jail or Tk 50,000 in fine or both.

Birth certificates, national identity cards, passports and certificates of different academic examinations like primary terminal examinations and equivalent tests, JSC and equivalent exams, and SSC and equivalent exams will be considered as legal documents for verifying the age for getting married.

Girls Not Brides, a UK-based global partnership of more than 700 civil society organisations committed to ending child marriage, said, "The Bangladesh Government is concerned that pregnant adolescent girls, particularly in rural areas, would be ostracised by their communities if they could not marry. Allowing marriage in 'special cases', such as pregnancy, is their proposed solution. But marriage does not protect girls. Research consistently shows that child marriage goes hand in hand with dropping out of school, losing out on job opportunities, and experiencing domestic violence."

It further noted that Bangladesh's neighbour, Nepal, increased the minimum age of marriage to 20 for both men and women and came up with a national strategy to end child marriage, which addresses the concerns that drive parents to marry off their daughters before 20.

"The strategy focuses on ensuring quality education for girls, working with families and communities -- including men and boys -- to change mentalities, and ensuring access to government services," it added.

Social Action Committee is a platform of 69 women rights, human rights and development organisations working in the country. While holding a rally protesting the special provision in the proposed Child Marriage Restraint Act at the Central Shahid Minar recently, it said the provision would not only encourage child marriage but also affect children's rights and women empowerment.

According to Unicef, "Early marriage leads to early pregnancy. One third of teenage girls aged 15 to 19 are mothers or are already pregnant [in Bangladesh]. Adolescent mothers are more likely to suffer from birthing complications than adult women."

to bear their monthly living expenses in Dhaka from Tk 800 their father sent from farming.

On March 14, 1984, Ershad, then president, visited their village residence and offered Tk 50,000 to Delwar's parents.

"My father refused but he [Ershad] left leaving the money," said Fazlur. The family afterwards turned down several offers of assistance from the Ershad regime, he added.

A memorial now stands beside a Shaheed Minar in Bhandaria town, inaugurated on the fateful year by Sheikh Hasina, now the prime minister, while the family and Chhatra

League annually observe Shaheed Selim-Delwar Day.

Fazlur declined to comment on Jatiya Party being the main opposition in parliament with three lawmakers as cabinet members of the Awami League-led government.

Ershad, Jatiya Party's chairman, is the special adviser to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

"We want the government to establish a college or a school after him so that the new generation can know about his contribution," said Fazlur.

"At least name a road after him," he said.

CLASH OVER MAHFIL

One killed in Sunamganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A person was killed and at least 50 others were injured in a clash between two groups over arranging a mahfil in Chhatak municipality area in Sunamganj yesterday.

The victim was identified as Abdul Basit Babul, son of Abdul Jabbar of Bagbari area of the municipality and former convener of municipality unit of Jubo League.

Asked, Suja Mamun, officer-in-charge of Chhatak police, said they did not receive the body as he died on way to MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital.

Some of the injured were admitted to the same hospital, while others received treatment at Chhatak Upazila Health Complex and Sunamganj General Hospital, he added.

Arifuzzaman, upazila nirbahi officer of Chhatak, said the two groups, one based on Qaumi madrasa and the other followers of a spiritual leader of Fultali, were supposed to arrange the mahfil. At one stage, disagreement over some issues brought the two groups to a conflicting situation on Sunday evening, he added.

Both the groups locked in a clash around 2:30pm yesterday despite efforts by the police and local administration to ease the situation.

Additional police force was needed to disperse the groups after around an hour, the UNO added.

Harun-Ar-Rashid, superintendent of police of Sunamganj, said the law enforcers brought the situation under control by firing rubber bullets and gas.

He added adequate force had been deployed to avoid further incidents.

Husband jailed

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Asif's parents -- Md Hossain Ramjan and Najmun Nahar Nazil -- and Dr Jubaidur Rahman, assistant professor, forensic department of Rajshahi Medical College, as the charges brought against them were not proved.

The court also expressed disappointment over the investigation by four investigation officers for their failure to unearth the facts of the case.

While delivering the verdict, Judge Ahmed said the prosecution had failed to prove the charges of torturing and killing Sifat for dowry.

But the charge brought against Asif of provoking his wife to commit suicide was undoubtedly proved and he was sentenced to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment for committing the offence.

The court has also fined him Tk 10,000, in default of which he would have to serve six more months in prison.

Sifat, who was a student of journalism and mass communication, was found dead at her in-laws' house in Mahishbathan area of Rajshahi city on March 29, 2015.

Her uncle Mizanur Rahman filed a murder case with Rajpara police accusing Sifat's husband, father-in-law and mother-in-law of torturing and killing her for dowry.

The police pressed charges against the trio and also included the name of Dr Jubaidur Rahman bringing allegation of preparing a false autopsy report.

The case was later handed over to the Speedy Trial Tribunal, which began the trial proceedings on November 11 last year.

The battle

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According to the battle's official website, the orange fight has existed in one form or another since 1858. Huge crowds flock to the event annually, though the legend behind the actual insurrection is a bit murky.

As the most commonly told story would have it, a 12th century miller's daughter fought back against an evil baron when he came to her on the eve of her wedding to exercise his "jus primae noctis" -- a reference to medieval lords having the supposed right to have sexual relations with subordinate women.

Instead, the bride cut off the baron's head and paraded it all over town, sparking the uprising.

Today, that revolt is recreated with townspeople in medieval attire battling teams of the tyrant's guards in period dress, complete with protective helmets and masks.

The townspeople, on foot and without any protection, throw oranges at the guards, who fight back from carts drawn by masked horses.

Crates of oranges are tightly stacked one over the other stand on the sidewalks, and some spectators take refuge to avoid being hit by wayward pulp.

Wearing a red floppy hat marks you as a spectator and safe from flying fruit.

"It is a historical reconstruction of a real fact which happened several hundreds years ago with the revolt against a king," said Roberto, who participated in the battle. "In the last century, the battle is waged with oranges but before we were throwing stones, if you can imagine that."

People suffer for second day

FROM PAGE 16

Federation, yesterday said they would continue the strike until they have an assurance from the government that justice would be done about the sentencing of the bus driver.

Road Transport and Highways Division Secretary MAN Siddique told this newspaper last evening, "Workers enforced the strike following a court verdict. We have nothing to do with this."

The strike was enforced in the 10 districts from 6:00am Sunday over the sentencing of bus driver Jamir Hossain in a case filed over a road accident in 2011.

The additional district and sessions court in Manikganj on February 22 pronounced the verdict in presence of Jamir. The court held the 50-year-old guilty of reckless driving and negligence that led to the deaths of five people.

Among the dead were eminent filmmaker Tareque Masud and media personality Ashfaq Munier Mishuk.

According to transport operators, around 5 lakh people travel on about 4,500 buses to and from the capital to the 10 districts daily. Besides, around 3,000 trucks and covered vans carry goods on these routes daily.

STRIKE CONTINUES

In Khulna, no bus and truck plied the streets yesterday. A few three-wheelers ran on the roads, but some of them came under attack from transport workers.

Jubayer Rahman in the city's Baghmara area said, "I along with one of my relatives took a battery-run easy-bike at Moylapota intersection. As the vehicle moved forward a few yards, protesters carrying sticks waylaid it."

"They forced all the passengers to get down. All of a sudden, they started beating the driver. Seeing the trouble, we came back home," he told The Daily Star.

Khulna resident Sanjoy Kundu also had to suffer badly. As there was no bus to Dhaka in the city, he hired a motorcycle for Tk 3,000 to travel to Kawrakandi ferry terminal of Madaripur.

A tripartite meeting of road transport owners, workers and district administration officials was held at Khulna Circuit House to discuss the

demands of transport workers. But the meeting did not yield any positive results, said meeting sources.

In Jessore, around 1,000 trucks laden with goods, including medicine, oxygen, onion and fish, were stranded at Benapole land port.

Loading and offloading of goods at the port remained stalled, while passengers from India were desperately looking for train tickets to reach their destinations.

"I had to travel from Benapole to Jessore on different modes of transport. I took battery-run three-wheelers, rickshaws and rickshaw-vans," said Narayan Chandra, who was on his way to the capital from India.

After reaching Jessore Railway Station, he took a train to Dhaka.

The government's revenue income at Benapole Customs House declined sharply as export of goods remained almost suspended.

"The government incurred a loss of over Tk 30 crore in revenue in the last two days from this port alone," said Shawkat Hossain, commissioner at Benapole Customs House.

A huge congestion of imported goods was created at the port, said Matiar Rahman, chairman of the port unit sub-committee of the India-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industries.

In Satkhira, around 200 goods-laden trucks were stranded at Bhomra land port.

Businessmen were suffering huge losses as perishable goods like fruits, vegetables and fish were rotting, said Nowshad Delwar, president of Clearing and Forwarding Agents Association at the port.

Many passengers were seen waiting for vehicles at Satkhira Bus Terminal.

Abul Hossain, who came from Kaliganj upazila on a battery-run easy-bike, said transport workers carrying sticks waylaid the vehicle.

The workers were about to beat the driver. However, the driver escaped the assault after paying them some money, claimed Abul.

Our correspondents in Khulna, Benapole and Satkhira contributed to this report.

This is not a joke!

FROM PAGE 16

the actual winners onstage to accept their award.

It all started when Beatty opened the envelope to read the winner for best picture. He looked confused, took a long pause, and then glanced at Dunaway, who clearly thought he was doing some sort of bit.

"You're impossible!" she said, as the crowd laughed nervously. "Come on!" Beatty handed the envelope to Dunaway, who announced: "La La Land!"

As cameras cut to the cast and crew of "La La Land" hugging, Beatty could be heard saying something like, "It says Emma Stone," while Dunaway said, "What?"

It would make (a little bit) of sense shortly.

The "La La Land" team arrived on stage, and producers Jordan Horowitz and Marc Platt delivered their speeches.

All of a sudden, there was a flurry of activity behind them. A man with a headset started talking to several people, as did Martha Ruiz, one of only two accountants in charge of tabulating Oscar ballots -- and therefore one of the only two people who knew all the winners before the show.

As people were conferring, film producer Fred Berger stepped up to the microphone. He thanked his family and director Damien Chazelle, and then he turned around to look at the sudden commotion behind him.

"We lost, by the way -- but, you know," he said, shrugging.

Behind him, Stone could be seen mouthing, "Oh, my God."

That's when Horowitz stepped forward again. "Guys, guys, I'm sorry. No. There's a mistake," he said. "Moonlight," you guys won best picture. This is not a joke."

"This is not a joke," another voice piped up. "I'm afraid they read the wrong thing."

Confused gasps and stunned silence from the crowd quickly turned into a standing ovation.

"This is not a joke," Horowitz repeated. "Moonlight has won best picture."

He held up the card that proved it: "Moonlight" ... Best Picture."

As the audience in the theatre and millions of viewers at home tried to process what happened, the cameras went to the cast of "Moonlight" in the crowd, clearly in shock and hugging each other.

Host Jimmy Kimmel arrived on stage to help sort things out, and crack jokes. "I think you guys should keep it anyway. Guys, this is very unfortunate what happened. Personally, I blame Steve Harvey for this," he said, name-checking the last person who made an epic mix-up on live TV.

Kimmel turned to Horowitz. "I would like to see you get an Oscar, anyway," he said. "Why can't we just give out a whole bunch of them?"

Horowitz demurred: "I'm going to be really proud to hand this to my friends from 'Moonlight,'" he said.

"That's nice of you," Kimmel said.

Beatty then stepped forward to the microphone to try to clear up the confusion: "Hello," he started.

"Warren, what did you do?!" Kimmel yelled.

Beatty went on to explain: "I want to tell you what happened. I opened the envelope and it said, Emma Stone, 'La La Land.'" (Stone had just won best actress moments before.)

"That's why I took such a long look at Faye, and at you. I wasn't trying to be funny," Beatty said to the audience.

"Well, you were funny," Kimmel said. "This is 'Moonlight,' the best picture," Beatty said, turning the correct card around.

So, the cast of "Moonlight" took the stage, as the camera panned to more shocked celebrity faces in the audience. "Very clearly, even in my dreams this could not be true," director Barry Jenkins said. "But to hell with dreams! I'm done with it, because this is true. Oh, my goodness."

He turned his attention to the "La La Land" team: "I have to say, and it is true, it's not fake. We've been on the road with these guys for so long, and that was so gracious, and so generous of them. My love to 'La La Land,' my love to everybody."

Producer Adele Romanski took the stage: "Um, thank you? To the Academy? I don't know what to say. I'm still not sure this is real," she said. "It is so humbling to be standing up here with hopefully still the 'La La' crew? No, okay, they're gone." She went on to say she hopes the movie is inspiring to "people, little black boys and brown girls and other folks watching at home who feel marginalised."

Kimmel returned to the microphone to close out the show. "Well, I don't know what happened; I blame myself for this," he said. "Let's remember, it's just an awards show. I mean, we hate to see people disappointed, but the good news is, we got to see some extra speeches ... I knew I would screw this show up, I really did."

He reported that Warren Beatty was handed the wrong envelope and showed a close-up shot of the envelope labelled as such.

Other close-ups showed Beatty with a card reading "Actress in a Leading Role."

According to USA Today, one of the PricewaterhouseCoopers accountants in charge of the voting ballots jumped up, said that Beatty took the wrong envelope, and rushed onstage.

"Oh, my God. 'Moonlight' won. 'Moonlight' won," a stagehand said.

Horowitz said that he had taken the envelope after the winner was announced and held the card as he gave his acceptance speech.

"There was a guy, a stagehand guy, who started kind of buzzing around, looking for the envelope."

Eventually, the envelope was found. He "opened it, and it said 'Emma Stone, La La Land' on it," Horowitz said. "At that moment, it was clear there was a problem. They eventually found the best picture envelope."

Hours after the fiasco, the studio behind the film noted that it was still stunned.

For its part, PricewaterhouseCoopers said early Monday that it is investigating the incident.

"We sincerely apologise to 'Moonlight,' 'La La Land,' Warren Beatty, Faye Dunaway, and Oscar viewers for the error that was made during the award announcement for Best Picture," the accounting firm said in a statement.

An unpaid debt

FROM PAGE 2

When the procession reached Phulbaria in the capital's Gulistan, police put up barricades on both ends of the road and the truck came out from a road beside a nearby fire station and started following it.

Writer Prasanta Mridha narrates this in his article published in Bangla daily Prothom Alo recently. Walking at the back, Delwar and Selim stood no chance.

"Delwar was very good at sports, especially in football...He used to lead a very simple life," said Fazlur, who is the Bhandaria upazila correspondent of a national daily.

Delwar and one of his brothers used