



Kazi Reazul Hoque, chairman of National Human Rights Commission, addresses a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday. Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), right, and Abdullah Al Mamun, its programme coordinator, left, at the MJF event where a report titled Bangladesh Child Rights Situation-2016 was presented.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

All forms of crime up

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to accept the marriage, one was killed by the in-laws for failure to pay dowry and the reason for the other's death could not be known.

"The girls were forced to marry men nearly double their ages," said Abdullah Al Mamun, programme coordinator of MJF, while presenting the survey report at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

The survey report "Bangladesh Child Rights Situation 2016" was prepared on the basis of reports published in six major national newspapers. He said the report does not show the actual situation of children in the country, but reflects on the trend.

National Human Rights Commission Chairman Kazi Reazul Hoque expressed his sheer frustration over the passage of Child Marriage Restraint Bill 2017 that allows, under a special provision, a boy or a girl to get married before reaching the minimum age.

The "special circumstances" provision of the law passed on February 27 would permit parents or a boy or a girl's guardians to get a court order and marry their wards off "for their best interests" even before they reach the minimum marriageable age. No age limit was specified there.

"Child marriage means violation of human rights. In that, children are deprived of education, sporting and natural development," said Kazi Reazul Hoque while speaking as the chief guest at the programme.

Such special provision of the law would encourage child marriage, he said. Now that the law has been passed, the rules of the law should be such that the special provision of the law could not be misused, said MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam.

"We have to monitor the issue of child marriage very strictly," she said.

On the rise of violations of child rights, Shaheen Anam said violence against children and women continues because the criminals are not brought to book in most cases.

Abdullah Al Mamun said the newspapers reported 408 incidents of repression on children, which was 393 in 2015.

"Not only the number of incidents of violence, but also its severity has increased," he said.

At least 11 children were killed and 397 were injured in such incidents of violence in 2016.

According to the survey report, 1,536 children were affected by the lack of medical treatment, wrong treatment, unknown diseases and othersicknesses.

Also, 52,300 children were affected by various problems, including shortage of teachers in schools, education materials and excessive school fees.

Road accidents, murder and murder attempts, kidnap or kidnap attempts, suicide, acid and political violence affected fewer numbers of children in 2016 than that of 2015.

For example, 221 children were affected by road accidents last year and 173 of them were killed, while the figure of the affected was 357 in 2015.

There were some good news in 2016, including media reports on the achievements of children, their exam results, and art and extracurricular activity competitions.

There were 133 media reports on the enforcement of laws regarding child rights violations and trials of cases in which children were the victims.

Of the 133, 50 were on halting child marriages, and 40 were on bringing child rapists to book, says the survey report.

The report recommended setting up of a separate directorate for children, and forming a national child protection framework to coordinate all government and non-government activities involving children.

It also suggested allocating separate budget for children and making sure all anti-pornography laws are enforced.

Bangabandhu

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the nation was born in Tungipara of Gopalganj.

Through his dynamic leadership, Bangabandhu had organised the Bangalee nation to fight against exploitation and repression by the Pakistani rulers. The movement culminated in independent Bangladesh through the nine-month Liberation War in 1971.

On August 15, 1975, the great leader along with most of his family members was assassinated by a group of army men.

Different socio-political organisations, including Awami League and its associate bodies, have drawn up various programmes to observe the day.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will place wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu at Bangabandhu Bhaban in the city's Dhanmondi at 7:00am.

President Abdul Hamid and the PM will pay homage to Bangabandhu by placing wreaths at his grave in Tungipara at 10:00am.

Hasina will also join a cultural programme, a children's gathering and a discussion in Tungipara.

The AL will organise a discussion at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre at 3:00pm. The PM is expected to chair the programme.

Besides, a 3D video, "Pita", on Bangabandhu will be screened at Star Cineplex of Bashundhara City from 10:00am-1:00pm.

A Qurankhani and a milad mahfil will be held at the national mosque, Baitul Mukarram.

Meanwhile, the president and the PM yesterday issued separate messages on the occasion.

In his message, the president said, "We'll have to build our young generation with the spirit of noble qualities so that they can materialise Bangabandhu's dream of transforming the country into Sonar Bangla [Golden Bengal]. We have to put in our sincere efforts to flourish the intrinsic values of our children from their very childhood."

He urged all to make united efforts for building a happy and prosperous Bangladesh and ensuring a bright future for children.

Hasina in her statement said, "The charismatic leadership and personal-ity of Bangabandhu had brought the whole nation under one umbrella. As a result, we got the independence and sovereign Bangladesh and the Bangalee nationalism flourished."

Even divorce

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of excessive blood loss. But before her death she told police that her husband Khan Firobin alias Robin made the attack on her, said Bachchu Miah, in-charge of DMCH police camp.

Just like any other day she left her rented flat on the ground floor, where she lived with her mother, around 8:30am for office, said the guard who was on duty at the time at the compound.

Minutes later, she and Robin walked in. The caretaker went to his room for a while and when he came out he heard some people screaming inside one of the buildings in the compound. The guard, who requested for anonymity, then saw neighbours carrying Arifa out as she was bleeding profusely.

The CCTV footage collected by police shows that Robin entered the compound with Arifa but left alone, said Inspector Samir of Kalabagan Police Station.

Since the divorce, Robin had been pestering Arifa to get back together. But

Arifa was firm in her decision, which infuriated Robin, said the victim's elder brother Bulbul and friends at the hospital.

She had been threatened by her ex-husband on several occasions. Concerned over safety of herself, Arifa lodged a general diary with Kalabagan Police Station.

Her childhood friend Tanzina Afrin said Robin approached her on the street about two weeks ago and said brandishing a knife that she should keep it, otherwise he might kill her with it.

The relationship between Arifa and Robin didn't get this worse overnight. They grew up in the same neighbourhood in Jamalpur when they got close to each other.

Four years ago they got married and went to Robin's house in Jamalpur. Arifa, who was then a 2nd year student in Eden College, came back to Dhaka a couple of months later and started living with her mother due to torture by the husband and in-laws, Tanzina said.

'Huji militant'

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Police also recovered 35 homemade bombs, one improvised firearm, nine bullets and five machetes from the scene, said Kasba Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Md Mohiuddin.

Tajul's name surfaced in a confessional statement of one Zahir Mia, arrested in his locality in Jagannathpur village of Kayempur union on February 24, he said.

Tajul reportedly instigated Zahir into murdering a herbal medicine practitioner, Farid Mia, on February 17 claiming that the latter raped women luring them with assurances of cures and killing him "would ensure a place in heaven", said the OC.

Tajul was allegedly trying to organise the militant group in the region and police conducted the raid in Kuti area around 1:30am on information that he and his group had gathered there to conduct subversive activities, he said.

The gang hurled at least 14 crude bombs and police fired back, leading to Tajul being hit and dying on the spot, said the OC, adding that the body was sent to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital for an autopsy.

The arrestee Abul Farah Romman, 37, is the son of late Mir Kashim of Golgonda village in Mymensingh sadar upazila. On information, a police team raided Abul's house and arrested him around 4:30am, said Kotwali Police Station Sub-Inspector Md Mushfiqur Rahman.

Abul is accused in two cases filed with Raozan Police Station in Chittagong in 2010 under the explosives and anti-terrorism acts, he informed.

Why 2 drug

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Director Mizanur Rahman, directors Sheuli Rahman and Abdul Gani, and pharmacists Mahbubul Islam and Enamul Haque.

On November 28 last year, Judge M Atoar Rahman of the drug court acquitted all the five officials, observing that the prosecution utterly failed to prove the charge brought against the accused.

Negligence, inefficiency and incompetence of the drug administration in dealing with the case led to the acquittal of all the accused, the judge said in the verdict.

Two officials of the drug administration involved in the case against Rid Pharmaceuticals knowingly violated due procedure of law, and exhibited sheer negligence, inefficiency and incompetence in dealing with the case, the verdict said.

The two officials -- Shafiqul Islam and Altaf Hossain -- were drug super-intendents in 2009.

A day after the verdict pronouncement, Health Minister Mohammed Nasim said if the accused were acquitted due to negligence of the drug administration officials, appropriate actions would be taken against them after receiving the full verdict.

Relief

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in April and May, and a general election in September in Germany.

After flirting for some months with putting anti-Islam MP Geert Wilders at the helm of the country of 17 million people, in the end Dutch voters, who turned out in droves, opted for stability in one of the eurozone's biggest economies.

With 100 percent of votes counted, Rutte's Liberal VVD was seen as emerging as the largest party in the 150-seat parliament with 33 seats, public broadcaster NOS said according to its own tally.

That is about 21 percent of the vote and eight seats less than in the last election in 2012.

But officials acknowledged that as the largest group in the parliament the VVD had won the right to take the lead in seeking to form the next coalition.

Instead of knocking out Rutte, Wilders and his Freedom Party (PVV) came second with 20 seats, or roughly just 13 percent of the vote, NOS said.

Wilders however had reason to crow. "We were the 3rd largest party of the Netherlands. Now we are the 2nd largest party. Next time we will be nr. 1!" he tweeted.

The leader of France's far-right National Front, Marine Le Pen, who called Wilders "a patriot" for his anti-immigration stand, is also seen as doing well enough in her country's presidential poll to reach the second round.

But analyst Hajo Funke, from Berlin's Free University, said the Dutch result showed "the fascination for the rise of right-wing populism in Europe is over".

People had seen right-wing populism "can destroy countries' economies and trigger a chain-reaction of destruction in Europe".

Rutte is unlikely to ask Wilders to join him in the new coalition, having been stabbed in the back in 2012 when the MP withdrew his support for the government over austerity talks, forcing a snap election.

"I think it will be difficult for them to negotiate about lot of issues. But I think within a couple of months we will see a centre-right government being formed with these results," Leiden University analyst Geerten Waling told AEP.

All top party leaders gathered for the first time since the vote at the centuries-old Dutch parliament yesterday as outgoing health minister Edith Schippers was appointed to start the process of trying to see which parties could work together.

Rutte said the coalition-building could be "a complex formation" taking several weeks, as the programmes of different parties have to be married.

Wilders adopted a conciliatory tone, saying he was willing "to talk to everybody including Mr Rutte," and willing "to help govern".

"It's prudent to talk to us, because brushing us aside, as the second-largest party would not be a very good idea."

Rutte has however already ruled out working with Wilders again, and is more likely to turn to natural coalition partners the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) and Democracy party D66 which came joint third with 19 seats each.

Rutte plus the CDA and D66 would have 71 of the 76 seats needed for a parliamentary majority.

That means they would have to woo a fourth party for a centre-right coalition. Two contenders could be the Christian Union with five seats or the more orthodox Calvinist Reformed Political Party (SCP) which took three.

One of the biggest winners in the election was Jesse Klaver who has turned around the fortunes of his ecologist, left-wing party GroenLinks.

The charismatic leader appears to have drawn huge support among younger voters, and boosted his party from just four seats to 14. But it remains unclear if he would agree to work in a coalition dominated by centre-right parties.

Man forcibly

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state minister.

Bappy went to different classes and got angry as some boys had long hair, added Pranab. He brought in a pair scissors and cut the hair of five students, which angered teachers and students, the UNO said.

"I talked to Bappy over the phone and he admitted that his identity was fake," said Pranab, adding, "In his locality the man is known to have mental problems."

Mohammad Haider Hossain, headmaster of the school, said Bappy had visited the school three or four times before introducing himself as the APS of the state minister for expatriate welfare.

"We did not know that there was no such portfolio," he said, adding, "We drove him out of the school and asked him not to come again after students protested the cutting of their hair."

Officer-in-Charge Syed Abdullah of Bhanga Police Station said he had heard about the incident but nobody filed a complaint with the police station.

A few locals, however, claimed that over 200 students of the school had their hair cut by Bappy.

The Daily Star could neither reach Bappy nor Abdur Rahim for comments.

UNO Pranab said his office has instructed educational institutions of the upazila not to allow unknown people to enter their institutions.

"Besides, I have also said that it is the school authorities who will monitor whether students abide by school rules. No one from outside will interfere in this regard," added the UNO.

Facilitate return of Rohingyas

Annan commission tells Myanmar about refugees in Bangladesh

UNB, Dhaka

The Annan commission on Rakhine State yesterday recommended facilitating voluntary return of refugees from Bangladesh to Myanmar through joint verification, complying with international standards.

In its interim report released yesterday, the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State said, "When refugees from northern Rakhine State return from Bangladesh, the government of Myanmar should help create a secure environment and, where necessary, assist with shelter construction for those whose homes have been destroyed."

It suggested the Myanmar government and the Rakhine State government should allow full and unimpeded humanitarian access to all areas affected by recent violence.

Headed by former UN chief Kofi Annan, the commission also recommended that the government, assisted by international partners, should ensure adequate assistance to all communities affected by the violence.

It said Myanmar authorities should

provide full and regular access for domestic and international media to all areas affected by recent violence.

"In light of the allegations of serious violations of human rights law, the government should -- based on independent and impartial investigation -- ensure that perpetrators of serious human rights violations are held accountable," the 15-page interim report mentioned in its recommendations.

It also recommended that the governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh should strengthen bilateral ties by immediately activating a joint commission, consisting of senior political and security officials from both sides.

The joint commission, which should meet at least every quarter, should address issues that include establishing a joint mechanism to combat human trafficking, drugs smuggling and illicit trade, developing a joint strategy to address the issue of illegal migration, promoting a joint strategy to revive cross-border trade and investment and strengthening intelligence sharing and cooperation to combat terrorism.

US Senate Intel committee

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Intelligence Committee have said they have yet to see any evidence of wiretapping, but have yet to flatly rule out all surveillance.

House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes said on Wednesday that it was possible that Trump aides were surveilled via "incidental" collection.

Ranking Democrat of the House committee Adam Schiff told CNN that he expects FBI Director James Comey to also say that he's seen no evidence of Trump's claim when the director testifies before his committee on Monday.

"Because there's no evidence of this at all," Schiff told CNN. "But again you can see the President trying to say, 'Well I didn't mean what I said or what I said could mean various different things' -- he was very specific in what he said. So we'll ask the director to address that very specific allegation."

Their statement came hours after

House Speaker Paul Ryan said that "no such wiretap existed," citing intelligence reports to House leaders.

"The intelligence committees, in their continuing, widening, ongoing investigations of all things Russia, got to the bottom -- at least so far with respect to our intelligence community - that no such wiretap existed," Ryan said in response to a question from CNN at a news conference.

Ryan's comment follows Trump and the White House retreating from the President's stunning accusation in a tweet two weeks ago.

"When I say wiretapping, those words were in quotes. That really covers -- because wiretapping is pretty old-fashioned stuff -- but that really covers surveillance and many other things. And nobody ever talks about the fact that it was in quotes, but that's a very important thing," Trump told Fox News on Wednesday.

2 workers killed

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'SYNDICATE OF TRADERS ACTIVE' The committee formed by the Sylhet district administration to probe the January 23 landslide at a Companiganj quarry found evidence of cutting hillocks in the upazila.

It filed the probe report to the Sylhet deputy commissioner on February 3.

Abu Shafayat Md Shahedul Islam, additional district magistrate of Sylhet and also the only member of the probe body, said at least 47 stone traders formed a syndicate in Companiganj to extract and sell stone in connivance with some local police and administration officials, elected public representatives and journalists.

He said the Companiganj UNO and OC of the local police station took more than four hours to reach the landslide scene on January 23. Five workers were killed on that day.

Police could not arrest Anju Miah, the prime accused in the case filed in connection with the landslide, although he was staying at a Sylhet hotel that day, added Shahedul.

Police conducted another investigation into the incident and submitted the report to the deputy inspector general of Sylhet police last month.

The district administration later transferred Companiganj UNO Md Masum Billah to Shalla upazila in Sunamganj, former Sylhet deputy

commissioner Joynal Abedin told The Daily Star last month.

Baes Alam, OC of Companiganj Police Station, was closed to the district police lines.

Joynal said he could not make the probe report public as there were some issues which should not be disclosed immediately.

He denied the allegation of some district administration officials' involvement in illegal extraction of stone.

Abdul Karim Kim, general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon's (Bapa) Sylhet chapter, alleged that the local administration always tries to cover up the incidents of hillock cutting and stone extraction as it is responsible for the casualties of workers.

WORKERS DENIED RIGHTS According to local NGOs, thousands of workers work at stone quarries in Sylhet without any safety gears.

Emad Ullah Shahidul Islam, former president of Sylhet District Bar Association, said stone traders never allow the workers to enjoy their rights set out in Bangladesh Labour Code 2006. The workers are denied safety and proper wages, he added.

Md Ariful Islam, deputy inspector general of Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments in Sylhet, said they so far filed 15 cases in connection with landslides at quarries.

Red crabs fast disappearing

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the beach and I used to think that someone had laid a red carpet on the beach," Sabuj Hawladar, a biker, told The Daily Star. He carries tourists to different spots on his vehicle.

"But nowadays, red crabs have reduced greatly," he remarked.

Mostofa Ali Reza Hossain, a professor of fisheries biology and genetics of fisheries faculty at Bangladesh Agricultural University in Mymensingh, said, "The number of red crabs is disappearing from the beaches of Kuakata due to disturbances by tourists, sound pollution and environment pollution."

Other human interferences cause habitat destruction for the species.

Not only in Kuakata, one would find the same picture in Cox's Bazar and Teknaf where red crabs have reduced significantly over the years, said the marine life expert.

According to locals, about 200 motorbikes carrying hundreds of tourists run on the beach every day.

Prof Mostofa said, "The sound

produced from bikes drives away a good number of crabs and they start running. Sometimes they cannot find the directions to their nests. Some even die this way."

A number of dead red crabs were seen on the beach when this correspondent visited the island recently.

When some pictures of the dead crabs were shown to Prof Mostofa, he said those were young crabs and that their deaths were not natural.

ABM Sadiqur Rahman, upazila nirbahi officer of Kalapara, said they plan to build a marine drive along the 18km Kuakata beach so that bikes could run at a safe distance.

A project for constructing a 2km marine drive on both sides from the Kuakata Zero Point has been taken, he added.

Red Ghost Crab is in the "least concern category" on the red list for Bangladesh of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). But it recommends that the animal's habitat be protected.