

RANGAMATI ARSON

Amnesty Int'l for impartial probe

NHRC forms fact-finding committee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amnesty International (AI) urged the Bangladesh government to initiate a thorough, impartial and independent investigation into the attacks on indigenous people in Rangamati's Longaid.

The human rights watchdog also recommended making the result of the investigation public.

"Ensure that those suspected to be responsible are prosecuted in fair and transparent trials, without resort to the death penalty," read an statement addressed to authorities in Bangladesh.

Publicly condemn attacks against members of Indigenous People in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and take effective steps to prevent any recurrence of such attacks and measures to ensure protection of members of Indigenous People," added the statement published on its website on Monday.

In another development, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Monday formed a three-member fact finding committee over the arson

attack.

Following the death of a local Jubo League man, Bangladesh settlers unleashed a series of arson attacks on the indigenous community in three villages on Friday over the death of a local Jubo League leader. Over 200 homes and shops were vandalised and burned after they were looted.

In its statement, NHRC ensure that the right to freedom of peaceful assembly is respected, and that security forces do not use excessive force against protesters.

Investigate allegations of use of excessive force by security personnel against those protesting the Longaid violence, and hold those responsible to account," it added.

NHRC's fact finding committee is headed by Banchita Chakma, honorary member of NHRC and includes NHRC Deputy Director, Gazi Sajjadul and Assistant Director Sajjadur Rahman.

The committee was asked to submit report within four working days. Kazi Reza Hossain, NHRC chairman told The Daily Star.

Paris police shoot, injure lone attacker

Counter-terrorism unit opens probe

AFP, Paris

French police shot and injured a man who had attacked one of Paris's Notre-Dame cathedral yesterday, prompting an anti-terrorist investigation. Police sources said the officer sustained only minor injuries in the assault, which comes with France on high alert for jihadist strikes after a weekend attack in London.

One of the officer's colleagues opened fire, the source added. The attacker, whose motives were unclear, lay injured on the ground as police sealed off the area.

A witness told AFP he heard someone "shoot very loudly." "Then there was a crowd surge and people panicked. I heard two shots and saw a man lying on the ground in a pool of blood," he said.

Pictures on social media from inside the cathedral showed people sitting down with their hands in the air apparently at the request of police. The incident comes three days after extremists used a van and knives to crush to death and kill seven people enjoying a night out in London, one of them French.

Authorities in Paris asked the public to stay away from Notre-Dame, one of France's biggest tourist attractions, which is situated on the banks of the Seine river in the heart of the capital.

France is under a state of emergency and on its highest possible level of alert following a string of terror attacks that began in 2015.

SEE PAGE 10, COL 4

Losses

FROM PAGE 16
Providing financial losses with compensation.

The list, which has names of 212 affected families from Tintila, Manikchhora and Baitapara villages, shows that only one house had valuables worth Tk 15 lakh, one nine lakh, four 8 lakh and one 7 lakh. But the victims say the list does not reflect "the real picture of the damages".

The government official contacted me before making the list of my damages," said Mangal Kanti Chakma, Atharakhora union parishad chairman, and also a victim. "I lost valuables worth at least Tk 40 lakh," he said, adding, "I am a public representative. The district administration should have contacted me before making the list."

Contacted, Upazila Project Implementation Officer Abu Tyeab, who prepared the list, admitted that he did not talk to the victims in the three villages. "It would have taken at least two weeks to make an accurate list. I had to do it hurriedly because most of the victims fled after the attack," he said, adding, "I made the estimations based on my experience of 20 to 30 years."

Following the death of a local Jubo League man, several hundred people from different Bangalee-dominated villages brought out a procession carrying the body and attacked indigenous people in three villages in the morning of Longaid on Friday morning. Some 200 homes and shops were burnt and damaged.

Tax measures to help institutionalise corruption: TIB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh says tax measures and other budgetary proposals for the fiscal year 2017-18 will "help institutionalise corruption".

In a statement yesterday, the TIB said the government's move to recapitalize the state-owned banks with Tk 2,000 crore, beset by corruption scandals, would "nurture and encourage corruption in a way."

"Not only that, it is an evil initiative to institutionalise culture of looting money and default loan in the banking sector, and the initiative was taken through people's money," TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzaman was quoted as saying in the statement.

He also said imposing additional burden of tax on poor and middle-income people through the proposed national budget was "discriminatory", and such way of tax collection could not be a sustainable way for the country's revenue growth.

The government's revenue authority has become dependent on Value

Added Tax (VAT) as it could not extend its income tax collection. The poor and middle-income people will ultimately have to bear the burden of VAT which will create inflation, thereby they will have to suffer," he said.

Iftekharuzaman urged the government to "avoid the corruption-friendly path" and implement a "people-friendly revenue policy".

TIB also voiced strong protest against the "continuation of the scope for whitening black money" in the budget. It also criticised inadequate allocation for Climate Change Trust Fund and imposition of 10 percent tax on the import of solar panels, added the statement.

Clarification

In our report headlined "Oishee's sentence commuted to life" published yesterday, we mentioned advocate Sujit Chatterjee as Oishee Rahman's lawyer. However, advocate Afzal H Khan, principal counsel for Oishee, placed arguments before the High Court, which was not mentioned in the report.

Improve labour rights

FROM PAGE 1
Action plan in the compact meeting in order to address the International Labour Organisation (ILO) recommendations on labour rights, as was requested in the letter.

"With regards to the preferences granted to Bangladesh under the EU's CSP regulation, we would like to recall that Bangladesh needs to demonstrate, as a matter of urgency, that concrete and lasting measures are taken to ensure respect of fundamental human and labour rights," the EU letter reads.

"Without such progress, the EU will need to monitor the situation more closely in the context of the CSP regulation, including through a dedicated mission to Bangladesh. Such monitoring could eventually lead to the launching of a formal investigation, which could result in temporary withdrawal of preferences."

In fiscal 2015-16, Bangladesh exported goods worth \$18.68 billion to the EU, which was 54.57 percent of the total receipts for the year.

Of the \$18.68 billion, \$17.15 billion came from apparel shipments. Currently, export to the EU accounts for over 60 percent of Bangladesh's total garment export receipts in a year.

The letter was signed by Sandra Gallina, director of the Directorate General of Trade of the European Commission, Jordi Curell, director of

Labour Mobility at the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission, and Lotte Knudsen, managing director of Human Rights, Global and Multilateral Issues at the European External Action Service.

"We take this opportunity to recall the EU position: it is essential that the government of Bangladesh comes forward with a strategy with concrete and time-bound actions for each of the ILO recommendations ahead of the 106th session of the ILC," it said.

It is of the utmost importance and urgency to provide the compact partners and the ILO supervisory mechanisms with the necessary confidence in Bangladesh's commitment to respect fundamental labour rights, the EU said.

The 106th session of the International Labour Conference started in Geneva on Sunday.

"The government of Bangladesh should then start immediately implementing this strategy following a pre-defined and appropriate time line, in order to deliver tangible progress by the end of August 2017," the EU letter says.

Referring to the May 18 meeting in Dhaka, the letter said the joint conclusions agreed at the meeting were insufficient to restore confidence in Bangladesh's commitment to the compact.

The EU asked Bangladesh to under-

take legislative changes to the Bangladesh Labour Act and the implement rules to bring it in line with ILO standards and to allow full freedom of association.

It called for lowering the membership threshold requirement for unionisation to 10 percent from the existing 30 percent. The EU also wants to see the trade union registration procedures are made smooth immediately.

It also called for legislative changes to the Export Processing Zones (EPZ) law to bring it in line with the ILO standards.

The drafts of the revised laws of the Bangladesh Labour Act and the EPZ law have to be presented to the ILO committee of Expert on the Applications of Conventions and Recommendations by August 31 and adopted before the International Labour Conference in June next year.

The EU also Dhaka to ensure the newly formed garment Tripartite Consultative Committee acts as an effective and credible body through establishing a well-resourced secretariat immediately.

The EU also wants to see that the newly established Remediation Coordination Council functions properly.

It asked Bangladesh to investigate unfair labour practices in a transparent and accountable manner through the development and implementation of Standard Operating Procedures by August 31.

3 workers die falling from 10th floor

FROM PAGE 16

The three victims fell off from the 10th floor while the building around 3:00pm while they were working on a bamboo scaffolding to set up a lift," Shipon, a worker at the site, told The Daily Star.

The three were rushed to DMCH immediately where the duty doctors declared them dead.

Shipon said around 25 youths from Sylhet were working at the construction site for the past one year. Yesterday, they started working around 8:00am and the three fell off just after the lunch break.

Visiting the spot, this correspondent found three security guards guarding the under-construction building. Some broken pieces of bamboo and blood stains were seen on the building's basement where the three workers fell.

No official from the construction company was found at the site.

When contacted, an officer of Rupayan Group, the site's construction company, wishing not to be named, said they are aware of the

incident and were looking into the matter.

According to Bangladesh

Coarse rice price soars

FROM PAGE 1

registered 9 to 20 percent rise during the same period, price hike of coarse rice was worrying the government.

To add to its worries, public granaries now only have 2.5 lakh tonnes of rice, a six-year low year-end stock.

Over 10 lakh tonnes of brood crop were lost this year to early flooding in seven haor districts and fungi (rice blast) attack in 19 districts.

These forced the government to renew a 2011 memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Vietnam for 3 lakh tonnes of emergency rice imports.

Three international tenders have also been floated during the last fortnight for importing 1.5 lakh tonnes more.

A day after the finance minister passed 2017-18 fiscal year's budget in parliament, Agriculture Minister Motiur Chowdhury said rice prices went up due to sudden floods in the haor areas and that prices would come down quickly as the government took steps to import rice.

However, the government's rather late move to stabilise the rice market would yield no immediate results with local millers reluctant to sell to the food department for a non-lucrative price offered by the government. The government's rice imports are unlikely to reach ports before the end of July.

To make matters worse, market sources told The Daily Star that prices of rice in the international market have been rising for the last two weeks.

Prices of rice in the international market have been rising for the last two weeks. Sources at the food ministry and the office of the Director General of Food said the government floated three international tenders in quick succession in May and in the first week of June seeking to buy 1 lakh tonnes of parboiled (Shiddho) and another 50,000 tonnes of white rice (Arap).

Dubai-based Sukhbir Agro Agri quoted the lowest price, \$427.85 a tonne, for 50,000 tonnes of parboiled rice (first tender) and Singapore-based Agropoc International quoted the lowest price, \$406.48 a tonne, for 50,000 tonnes of white rice (second tender).

3 workers plunged to their deaths yesterday in this open lift shaft in an under-construction building in the capital's Siddheswari area. They were working at the 10th floor level on bamboo scaffolding. Police blamed unsafe working conditions and negligence of the construction company.

FROM PAGE 1

Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation, around 147 construction workers died in 2016.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Unexamined, yet it gets JS nod

FROM PAGE 1

listed for around five hours in last two days. Then, the proposals seeking to legalise the additional expense were put to the vote and were passed in a voice vote.

But according to the JS Rules of Procedure, the Public Accounts Committee is supposed to examine the reasons behind the additional expenditure.

Section 233 (4) of the rules of procedure clearly state: "If any money has been spent any year in excess of the amount granted by the House for that purpose, the committee shall examine with reference to the facts of each case the circumstances leading to such an excess and make such recommendation as it may deem fit."

In many countries, the Public Accounts Committee is another institution through which parliament controls government's financial operations.

A senior official at the parliament secretariat said this provision was included in the rules of procedure in 1974. But the Public Accounts Committee is never allowed to do its job, he added.

Every year, the demands for additional expenditure are placed before the House in the form of supplementary budget along with the proposed budget for next fiscal year. A brief discussion is held on the supplementary budget and then it gets passed. This has become a practice, the official said.

"The provision has been included in the



Loaded rickshaw vans share the Dhaka-Chittagong highway with buses and trucks in the capital's Shanik Akhra. The road transport ministry point to the slow-moving three-wheelers as a key reason behind the growing number of road accidents. However, the ministry could not take the vans off the roads. The photo was taken on Sunday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN