

# 7 killed last year while protecting their homes, land

Says UK-based rights group Global Witness

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Seven people were killed in Bangladesh last year while defending their homes and land from those implementing power or agricultural projects as opposed to no such deaths in 2015.

These figures were released by a UK-based rights group Global Witness in its annual report, titled Defenders of the Earth, published Thursday.

According to the report, growing competition for land and natural resources saw a record number of environmental activists killed in 2016. It was the deadliest year in recent times with at least 200 people killed globally, up about 10 percent from 185 killed in 2015.

Globally nearly four people were murdered each week in 2016 in defending their homes, lands and forests from mining, dams and agricul-

tural projects.

The report states that protest is often the only recourse left to communities exercising their rights to have a say about the use of their land and natural resources, putting them in direct collision with those seeking profit at any cost.

It mentioned the names of the victims in Bangladesh as Anowarul Islam (Angur), Mangal Mardi (Mongol Madri), Mortuza Ali, Ramesh Tudu, Shyamal Hembrom (Shyamal Soren), Zager Ahmed, Zaker Hossain.

Of the seven Bangladeshi victims, Angur, Mortuza, Zager and Zaker were killed on April 4 last year in a clash between law enforcers and locals in Banskhali upazila of Chittagong over installation of a coal-based power plant.

Mangal, Ramesh and Shyamal were killed when a tripartite clash broke out

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A traditional boat race, popularly known as *nauka baich*, is held amid festivity on the river Titas by Brahmanbaria town yesterday. The district administration organised the annual event for which the town people wait eagerly every year.

PHOTO: STAR

## FTA with Sri Lanka this year

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Sirisena and Hasina witnessed the signing of the instruments at the PMO.

The lone agreement on visa waiver for diplomatic and official passport holders of the two countries was signed by Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan and Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Ravi Karunanayake.

Foreign Secretary Shahidul said seven instruments were on trade and investment which means that the two sides focused on boosting trade relations.

About the MoU on cooperation in agriculture, he said Sri Lanka wants to develop its agriculture sector taking lessons from Bangladesh's tremendous success.

Regarding the cooperation on higher education, the foreign secretary said a large number of Sri Lankan medical students were studying in Bangladesh and the MoU was signed to further enhance cooperation in the sector.

The agreement on visa waiver was signed aiming to make official level

consultations more effective, he added.

In FY 2015-16, Bangladesh's export to Sri Lanka totaled \$30.45m while the import stood at \$45.01m. In the previous fiscal, the figures stood at \$23.92m and \$43.54m, according to Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Bangladesh's major export items to Sri Lanka are woven garments, knitwear, home textile, agro products, frozen food, leather & leather products, footwear, raw jute, jute goods and bicycle.

The country's major import items include live animals, animal products, vegetable products, animal or vegetable fats and oils, prepared foodstuffs, mineral products, products of the chemical or allied industries, plastics and rubber articles, raw hides and skins, leather, pulp of wood products and textiles.

### SIRISENA MEETS PRESIDENT

The visiting Sri Lankan president met President Abdul Hamid at the Bangabhaban in the evening.

During the meeting, Hamid stressed

the need for utilising the huge potential of bilateral trade and investment for mutual benefits.

"Both the countries will be benefited if we can explore the trade and investment potentials of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka taking joint initiatives," the president told his Sri Lankan counterpart.

Welcoming Sirisena and his entourage to Bangladesh, Hamid said Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have long-standing relations and hoped that the two countries would continue their close cooperation for strengthening the socio-economic development and emancipation of the South Asian people.

Sirisena said Sri Lanka always considers Bangladesh as a tested friend. He hoped that the development and progress of Bangladesh would accelerate in future.

Later, President Hamid hosted a cultural function followed by dinner at the Darbar Hall in honour of the Sri Lankan president.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina,

Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Chief Justice SK Sinha and opposition leader Raushan Ershad, among others, attended the dinner.

Earlier in the day, the opposition leader and the Speaker called on the Sri Lankan president at a city hotel.

Sirisena is scheduled to leave Dhaka today wrapping up his three-day visit.

### THE DEALS

The 13 MoUs are on cooperation in agriculture, MoU between Ceylon Shipping Corporation and Bangladesh Shipping Corporation, MoU between Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies and Lakshman Kadiragama Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies on cooperation in the field of international and strategic studies, MoU between the university grant commissions of the two countries on cooperation and collaboration in the field of higher education, MoU between Bangladesh Foreign Service Academy and Bandaranaike

Diplomatic Training Institute, MoU between Central Bank of Sri Lanka and Bangladesh Bank for cooperation in financial sector/services, MoU between Bangladesh Investment Development Authority and Board of Investment of Sri Lanka for cooperation on investment matters, MoU between Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution and Sri Lanka Standards Institution, MoU on cooperation in the fields of Information and Communication Technology, MoU on Information and Broadcasting between Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha and Sri Lankan national news agency Lankapuvath Ltd, MoU on cooperation in the fields of radio, film and television between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, MoU on collaboration between Chittagong BGMEA Institute of Fashion and Technology and Sri Lanka Institute for Apparel and Textiles and MoU on Economic Cooperation between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Ravi Karunanayake, State Minister of Agriculture Wasantha Aluwihare, Deputy Minister of Ports and Shipping Affairs Nishantha Muthuhettigama, State Minister of Higher Education and Highways Mohan Lal Grero, Deputy Minister of Finance and Mass Media Lasantha Alagiyawanna and Sri Lankan High Commissioner to Bangladesh Yasoja Gunasekera signed the documents on behalf of Sri Lanka.

Industries Minister Amir Hossain Amu, Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed, Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali, Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan, Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan, State Minister for ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak, UGC Chairman Prof Abdul Mannan, Executive Chairman of BIDA Kazi Aminul Islam and BGMEA President Siddiqur Rahman inked the instruments for Bangladesh side.

## Authorities failed to act timely

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of epidemic, they said at a press conference organised at Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Nagar Bhaban.

Talking to The Daily Star, several city dwellers said a prompt and early response from the two city corporations and the government's relevant health department would have saved many from getting infected with the mosquito-borne disease.

"Despite a public outcry over the chikungunya outbreak, I haven't seen any efforts from the authorities to kill mosquitoes in my area," Anowara Begum, a housewife who lives in Gulshan, said.

"There have been some fogging activities in my area lately. But eight people living in my building had already been suffering from the disease, said Akib Javed, a resident of Shyamali.

"What the authorities are doing doesn't seem adequate," he said.

On July 11, Health Minister Mohammed Nasim and his deputy Zahid Maleque blamed the two city corporations for the chikungunya outbreak in the capital, saying the two governing bodies failed to control the mosquitoes that spread the disease.

In response, city corporation officials said they have recently taken up several programmes to tackle the situation.

Talking to this correspondent, IEDCR Director Prof Sabrina underscored the need for coordinated efforts from the city dwellers, the government, and non-government bodies in this regard.

The IEDCR has been running several programmes to create public awareness on the disease since early

May when the outbreak began.

"We taught people how to destroy larva of Aedes mosquitoes found inside their homes. But we don't know whether they acted on our advice."

Chikungunya, which is transmitted to human bodies by infected Aedes mosquitoes, started spreading in the capital about several months ago. Symptoms of the viral disease include fever, muscle pain, headache, nausea, fatigue, rash, and these are often accompanied by a very debilitating joint pain which can last for days.

The disease was first described during an outbreak in southern Tanzania in 1952.

Chikungunya is not deadly but it may turn fatal if an ailing person is simultaneously found to have immunodeficiency, or carries another disease or infection, say health experts.

Early and frequent rains this year and subsequent stagnant water accumulated on dug up roads -- which turned out to be breeding grounds for the mosquitoes -- are believed to have triggered the outbreak in the capital.

Prevention and control of the disease relies heavily on reducing the number of natural and artificial water-filled container habitats that support breeding of the mosquitoes, says World Health Organisation.

Doctors advice chikungunya patients to take paracetamol tablets, proper rest and drink adequate water.

### RESPONSE FROM CITY CORPORATIONS

Brig Gen SMM Saleh Bhuyan, chief health officer at Dhaka North City Corporation, declined to talk when

this correspondent visited his office and asked him about the steps taken by his corporation to control mosquitoes.

He also refused to comment on the health minister blaming the corporations for the chikungunya outbreak.

However, several officials said the city corporations should not be blamed alone for the current situation.

On July 10, the DNCC issued an order, designating five medical consultants in same number of areas in the city. They would be give advice to chikungunya patients over phone.

The phone number for Uttara is 01756209482, for Mirpur 01715456698 and 01716398886, for Mohakhali 01735843693 and for Karwan Bazaar 01715528898.

The city corporation authorities on July 11 held a meeting with two entomologists. At the meeting, Mayor Annisul Huq said Tk 26 crore has been allocated in the current fiscal year for mosquito-control programmes. The amount was seven crore five years ago, a DNCC press release.

Meanwhile, several officials of Dhaka South City Corporation said khatibs, as asked by them, educated people about prevention of chikungunya when they came to offer Juma prayers at 236 mosques in DNCC on July 7.

The corporation has been conducting several awareness programmes at different schools and holding rallies in different areas of the city since the same day, they said.

An information centre has also been opened at the Nagar Bhaban to help people fight the disease, they said, adding its phone is 9563507.

patient under mosquito net for five days since his infection," said Prof Mahmudur.

Manzur A Chowdhury said an infected mosquito could spread the disease for the next eight to ten days for which killing these mosquitoes is important through aerosol, mosquito coil or using other methods.

### DSCC MAYOR

In Dhaka South City Corporation, Mayor Sayeed Khokon claimed the outbreak of the disease in his area did not reach an epidemic level and that they would be able to fully control chikungunya in three to four weeks.

He also urged people to destroy the breeding grounds of Aedes mosquitoes in their houses and allow city corporation crews to go inside the house to destroy the mosquito.

## 6 more Sitakunda kids hospitalised

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family planning officer was formed and asked to submit a report in three workdays.

### HOSPITAL SITUATION

Seven-year-old Ratan Tripura was the first who fell sick over a week ago. He was still sick and was admitted to BITID. His health was improving, said his father Gunadhan Tripura.

Gunadhan added he had no idea about the disease. "At first I thought it was normal fever, but when children, who became sick after my son, were dying, I was scared," he said.

At first the father did not take his son to the hospital as he thought he could not afford the treatment and went for homeopathy instead. "His condition was improving after being

hospitalised on Wednesday," he observed.

Locals say almost all 64 families of Tripura Para have one or more children having the same symptoms that broke out over a week ago.

Chikan Bala Tripura's two children were admitted to BITID on Wednesday. Three-year-old Sabita fell sick four days ago, while four-month-old Babu became sick three days ago.

She said health of both was improving.

"Earlier, they did not want to eat, but now they are taking food," she said with a smile.

Dr Mahmud Al Farabi of BITID said the children were being provided with nutritious diet. "All the children have been suffering from

malnutrition. Their health was improving after taking nutritious diet," he observed.

Contacted, Dr Ershad Ekramullah, assistant professor of medicine at BITID, said the children were being given symptomatic treatment with nutritious diet.

Faruk Ahmed Bhuiyan, chief scientific officer at the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) in Dhaka, told The Daily Star that it would take four to five days to identify the actual reason behind the disease.

Earlier, a team from IEDCR visited the victims and collected their saliva, urine and blood samples for tests on Thursday. They have also collected surrounding evidence from Tripura Para.

## Defeat for Trump

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United States."

The judge also ruled that refugees who had assurances of a placement by a resettlement agency in the United States should also be exempt.

Such an assurance "meets each of the Supreme Court's touchstones: it is formal, it is a documented contract, it is binding, it triggers responsibilities and obligations, including compensation, it is issued specific to an individual refugee only when that refugee has been approved for entry by the Department of Homeland Security, and it is issued in the ordinary course,

and historically has been for decades," Watson wrote.

"Bona fide does not get any more bona fide than that."

Douglas Chin, attorney general for the state of Hawaii, which filed the lawsuit against the Trump administration, welcomed the ruling.

"The federal court today makes clear that the US Government may not ignore the scope of the partial travel ban as it sees fit," said Chin.

"Family members have been separated and real people have suffered enough. Courts have found that this Executive Order has no basis in stopping

terrorism and is just a pretext for illegal and unconstitutional discrimination."

The Departments of Homeland Security, State and Justice did not immediately respond to requests for comment early yesterday.

Under the version of the travel ban allowed to go forward by the Supreme Court, citizens from the six targeted countries with "bona fide" ties to the United States -- such as a job or acceptance to a university -- are permitted entry.

The High Court will review the overall case in October, after both bans on travellers and refugees have largely run their course.

## Annisul blames

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Bhaban yesterday.

"I cannot go to your home and tie mosquito nets for you," he said for the city dwellers, shrugging off the blame that the city authorities are doing too little to tackle the menace.

But he said he was sorry for the suffering of the city people, and extended his "sympathy" for them.

"We've taken all measures for mosquito control and chikungunya prevention but some factors are not under our control," he said.

People's awareness and participation is very crucial to destroy the breeding ground as it is not possible for the city corporation to destroy the breeding ground in a house, he added.

Epidemiologist Prof Mahmudur Rahman and entomologists Tauhid Uddin Ahmed and Dr Manjur A

Chowdhury were present at the conference to share information on the recent spread of chikungunya.

Mahmudur and Tauhid said the present chikungunya situation could be termed as an epidemic. But it is for the government to decide whether it would declare it so.

In response, the mayor said epidemic or not, his city corporation was not responsible for this.

Mahmudur and Tauhid Uddin suggested keeping chikungunya patients isolated, by keeping them under mosquito nets to prevent further spread of the disease among family members through infected mosquito bites.

"Though Aedes mosquito is responsible for chikungunya, culex mosquito also can be a bearer of the virus. This is why it is very important to keep a

patient under mosquito net for five days since his infection," said Prof Mahmudur.

Manzur A Chowdhury said an infected mosquito could spread the disease for the next eight to ten days for which killing these mosquitoes is important through aerosol, mosquito coil or using other methods.

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## Fresh flood strikes Sirajganj villages

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dumping sand bags and installing bamboo enclosures, he said.

Wazed Ali, a schoolteacher from Shimla, said the villages went under water within a few hours and people could not shift their belongings. "Most of them left home without their household items," he said.

District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer Md Abdur Rahim told The Daily Star the villagers mostly took shelter on the flood protection embankment.

"Flood water entered the villages rapidly and schools and other institutions went under water. We could not open any flood shelter."

He said the district administration distributed 100 packets of relief materials among the victims.

In Gaibandha, flood situation

remained unchanged yesterday with the Jamuna flowing above the danger mark due to onrush of water from the upstream, reports our Gaibandha correspondent.

District Primary Education Officer Aminul Islam Mandol said 141 educational institutes remained closed in flood-affected Sundarganj, Gaibandha Sadar, Phulchhari and Saghata upazilas.

Seventy families in Goghat were shifted to other places due to river erosion in the last two days, locals said.

Lucky Begum, a housewife at a char land of Purbo Ratanpur under Phulchhari, said in fear of looting of their belongings by robbers, adult family members were staying at home.

Gaibandha Deputy Commissioner Gautam Chandra Pal said adequate

relief materials were provided to the flood victims.

In Kurigram, the Brahmaputra was flowing 34cm above the danger level at Chilmari Ghat point yesterday noon, said district WDB sources.

They said water levels of other rivers were below the danger mark.

Meanwhile, Relief and Disaster Management Minister Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya yesterday urged doctors to visit shelter centres in flood-affected areas regularly to tackle water-borne diseases, says a press release.

"The absence of doctors will not be tolerated," he told a meeting on flood situation at Jamalpur Deputy Commissioner's office.

[Our correspondents from Pabna, Gaibandha and Kurigram contributed to the report]