

China to develop

FROM PAGE 20
CASC has already been involved in developing satellites, rockets and missiles; now plans are afoot to turn its futuristic tech closer to home.

China already has the largest network of high speed trains in the world, and is obviously keen to continue outstripping the competition. CASC officials have said they will work with more than 20 other research institutes, both domestic and international, in the quest to create the proposed 2,500mph trains.

Although the 'flying train' may be a way off becoming a reality, Chinese scientists also announced plans for an intercity train that can travel at more than 600mph - clearly designed to compete with American Canadian inventor Elon Musk's hyperloop concept, which uses air instead of wheels and could result in speeds of more than 700mph.

No date has been announced for when the hyperloop will be fully up and running, but earlier this week Musk shared footage of a test pod accelerating to 200mph in a few seconds as part of a competition to design pods for the high-speed system.

Pensioners

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The two were deputy assistant agricultural officers of Sreepur agricultural extension department.

Kamruzzaman said a microbus waylaid their CNG-run auto-rickshaw in Garaban area around 12noon. Four plainclothes people got down from the vehicle and identified themselves as Rab members. The gang then started beating them up and forced them into the microbus at gunpoint and blindfolded them, Kamruzzaman added. They took their money, mobile phones and ID cards, chequebooks and pension documents and dropped them inside the Shalban jungle in Doaibari area.

Kamruzzaman said he withdrew Tk 44.45 lakh pension at one go from the bank around 11:00am and later deposited Tk 40 lakh to another account with Sonali Bank. Jamal withdrew Tk 17,000 monthly pension from the same branch.

Kamruzzaman with rest of the money and Jamal with Tk 17,000 were going home.

ASP Asaduzzaman, acting company commander of Rab's Gazipur camp, told The Daily Star that Rab members were not involved in the incident.

Hafizur Rahman, sub-inspector of Sreepur Police Station, said they started an investigation upon receiving a complaint in this connection.

ACC begins

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Chittagong, but found none.

The Hajj Office on behalf of the victim pilgrims on August 28 filed a general diary with Biman Bandar Police Station over the alleged irregularities and misappropriation of money.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism at a meeting on Tuesday recommended cancelling licences and slapping fines on the hajj agencies involved in irregularities.

The parliamentary watchdog said many pilgrims couldn't go to Saudi Arabia to perform hajj this year even after obtaining visas as some hajj agencies didn't confirm their air tickets.

The committee, chaired by Awami League lawmaker Faruk Khan, asked the religious affairs ministry to conduct an investigation into the allegations and take legal actions against the fraudulent hajj tour operators.

On August 28, the last day of hajj flight operations, police arrested three brokers of hajj agencies in the capital on charges of cheating pilgrims.

Md Ezaz Shafi, inspector (investigation) of Biman Bandar Police Station, yesterday said they sent three arrestees, Faridur Rahman, Ataur Rahman and his wife Chaina Khatun Sumona, to Keraniganj Central Jail through a Dhaka court.

Abdur Razzak, officer-in-charge of Nandigram Police Station in Bogra, said pilgrim Lokman Ali, who was cheated by a hajj agency, yesterday filed a case with the police station against Faridur Rahman and two other unnamed people for misappropriating money of nine aspirant hajjis from his area.

Sayedur Rahman, OC of Puthia Police Station in Rajshahi, said pilgrim Almas Ali yesterday filed a case with the police station against Ataur Rahman and two others for misappropriating money of 23 pilgrims.

Both the OCs said they have already contacted Biman Bandar Police Station seeking custody of the arrested accused for interrogation. A top religious affairs ministry official on Tuesday told journalist that some 98 pilgrims couldn't fly to Saudi Arabia due to fraudulence of 18 hajj agencies. Some victim pilgrims filed a case with Biman Bandar Police Station against the agencies on charges of cheating them, he added.

Civil Aviation Minister Rashed Khan Menon said 1,27,103 Bangladeshis pilgrims have reached Saudi Arabia since the beginning of pre-hajj flight operation on July 24.

A total of 635 private hajj agencies were involved in this year's hajj tour operations.

Supply chain affected

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Citing an example, he said that a few months back, it took a covered van eight to nine hours to reach Dinajpur town from the capital. But now it takes almost double the time because of bad condition of the road, he said.

The cost of carrying goods by a covered van on the route went up by 50 percent to Tk 30,000 from Tk 20,000.

"We have been paying this additional cost of transportation for the last 15-20 days," Khairul told The Daily Star early this week.

Not only big companies, wholesalers and retailers of perishable items are also suffering.

Mohammad Afsar Uddin, a potato wholesaler at Karwan Bazar market, said supply of vegetable declined up to 30 percent due to floods in the country's northern parts.

Besides, vegetables rot and their quality falls if there is long delay in transporting those to the capital. "Ultimately, it's the consumers who pay for the loss," he said.

Rustom Ali Khan, general secretary of Bangladesh Truck and Covered Van Owners Association, said the overall condition of highways deteriorated in recent days due to heavy rainfall and floods.

Overloading of trucks damages the roads further, said Rustom. "We have asked all truckers not to overload those. But some of them still do it to earn extra."

Exodus of refugees

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Talking to some people who managed to swim ashore, he learnt that the dead were residents of Dongkhali and Fatngza areas of Maungdaw in Rakhine State of Myanmar.

As their identities were not known and none claimed their bodies, the dead were buried in a graveyard at Shah Porir Dweep, said Cox's Bazar Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Ali Hossain.

Thousands of Rohingyas are fleeing to Bangladesh with Myanmar law enforcers conducting a "clearing operation".

Rohingya militants attacked 30 police posts and an army base last Friday, triggering a military response. More than 100 people, mostly insurgents, were killed.

Refugees and rights groups alleged Rohingya villages were set on fire in Rakhine, triggering the influx. While most are walking to cross the border, many are taking rickety boats to enter Bangladesh.

UN agencies estimate more than 27,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled to Bangladesh, while some 20,000 have been stranded in no man's land along the border.

Some Rohingya people with bullet and burn injuries have been admitted to different hospitals in Bangladesh in the last three days. They claim to be the victims of Myanmar military offensive.

HINDUS FLEEING TOO
Alongside the Rohingya Muslims, over 400 Hindus from Maungdaw made it to Bangladesh yesterday through Rezu Amtola of Ukhiya amid attacks by an "unidentified armed group".

They took shelter in a makeshift tent at Paschim Hindupara of Kutupalong. They said unidentified people with firearms, bombs and knives besieged their villages last Friday.

The attackers, wearing black clothes and veils, surrounded Fakirabazar, Riktapara and Chikonchhari villages till yesterday and "killed some 86 people of the community", they claimed.

"My husband Kanu Rudro went to visit our son-in-law's house at Fakirabazar. But they [unidentified armed men] killed all of them [Kanu, his daughter, and son-in-law]," said Bakul Bala, wailing.

Niranjan Rudro from Chikonchhari of Maungdaw, too, said some people in black clothes besieged the villages and set fire to the Hindu houses.

"They were carrying guns, bombs and knives."

The refugees said one or two Hindu children went missing while crossing the border with Rohingya refugees.

"We have been living in Burma for generations. We are Burmese Hindus," said Chitya Ranjan Paul, who reached Kutupalong around 5:30pm yesterday.

His identity card issued by the Myanmar government described him as "Indian".

Aid workers were seen enlisting the names of the Hindu refugees while local Hindus providing them with food and shelter.

MEDICAL CAMP FOR ROHINGYAS
BCG has set up a medical camp for the several thousand Rohingyas now stranded in no man's land along the Naikhyangchhari border and waiting to enter Bangladesh.

Some 200-300 refugees have been seeking treatment daily at the medical camp set up two days back, said Dr Mohammad Shahidul Islam, who is treating them.

The patients, mostly children and women, come with fever, cold, diarrhoea, minor cuts and scrapes and skin diseases, he added.

A few youths from a Rohingya camp in Kutupalong of Cox's Bazar also provided some relief materials to the refugees at the makeshift shelter in no man's land.

A team of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society also visited the site yesterday morning.

CHANGED ROUTE

As per the rules, a truck should not weigh more than 20 tonnes including its freight, he said.

Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said, "Supply from urban to rural areas gets affected because of damages to transport infrastructure by floods."

He further said farmers' income is reduced because of problems in transportation of their produce to urban areas. As a result of reduced supply, prices of farm produce go up and hurt consumers.

The economist stressed the need for building a multimodal transport system to keep supply chain of commodities intact and make it cost-effective.

"Supply chains suffer, both during normal time and during calamities, for too much dependence on roads," he said.

Road-based trade network is not sustainable, he pointed out.

According to a Planning Commission report on Sustainable Transportation and Infrastructure, roads carry 80 percent of the total freight traffic and more than 88 percent of the passenger traffic in the country. Waterways and railways carry the rest of the freight and passenger traffic.

In neighbouring India, roads carry 60 percent of freight traffic and 80 percent of passenger traffic, while the figures are only 13.5 percent and 49.1 percent in China.

In the first five days since last Friday, Rohingyas entered Bangladesh through the hills and land routes. However, since Tuesday, they are mostly crossing the border through 11 points of the Naf River, locals said.

The points include Anjman Para and Rahmater Beel of Ukhiya, and Leda, Moulvibazar, Lambabil, Kanjarpara, Unichiaprang, Jhimangkhali, Ulubunia, Kharangkhali and Karainga of Teknaf.

Locals said the Rohingyas are taking river routes because of restrictions on the land points.

During a visit to Hoyaikong Kanjarpara around 11:00am yesterday, these correspondents found some 800 Rohingya men, women and children gathered by BGB.

Some of the Rohingyas said they crossed the Naf River by boats to reach Bangladesh in the wee hours yesterday. Each of them had to pay 10,000 Burmese kyat (Myanmar currency) to the boatmen.

Many in the villages along the borders, meanwhile, are providing temporary shelter and food to the Rohingyas before the refugees move to the unregistered camps in Leda, Balukhali and Kutupalong.

Haji Abdul Malek, a leader in Kanjarpara village, said some 3,000 Rohingyas entered Bangladesh through Kanjarpara point of the Naf River on Wednesday and Thursday night.

UNSC DISCUSSES ROHINGYA ISSUE
The UN Security Council on Wednesday discussed the violence in Myanmar though there was no formal statement from the 15-member council following the closed-door meeting.

British Ambassador Matthew Rycroft to the UN said there were calls from council members for de-escalation. "We all condemned the violence, we all called on all the parties to de-escalate," Rycroft told reporters.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Parliamentarians for Human Rights on Wednesday also called on Myanmar to take immediate action to protect civilians from violent clashes in Rakhine.

"The priority here must be civilian protection," Indonesian MP Eva Kusuma Sundari said in a statement from Indonesia.

"Urgent measures must be taken by all parties to protect all individuals caught up in this violence, regardless of their ethnicity or citizenship."

In March this year, China, backed by Russia, blocked a UN Security Council statement on Myanmar. Just a month before, the UN human rights office had accused the country's military of mass killing and rape of Rohingya Muslims.

21 killed

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populated areas of the city housed a nursery school, despite being declared unsafe by the city's municipal housing authority in 2011.

And families were still living there. Desperate relatives pleaded with rescuers to help find their loved ones after getting phone calls from trapped survivors. About 200 police and fire personnel sorted through the debris.

Police had yet to determine what caused the collapse near Crawford market, a landmark of south Mumbai's old city with narrow streets packed with markets and shops. Many Muslims live in the neighbourhood.

Rescuers said the area's narrow roads made it difficult to bring in excavators. The building housed a sweet shop warehouse on the ground floor and a nursery school on the first floor, although the collapse happened before the children arrived.

Devendra Fadnavis, the chief minister of the state of Maharashtra, said the government had given final notice for the building's demolition in May 2016, but added some families had refused to leave.

A rough road

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Kader Hossain, bent and slowly made his mother, aged around 90, get down from his back.

"This is the first thing we are eating in days. I have been walking like this for a long time as my mother is too weak to walk," said the 30-year-old who brought with himself a tale of horror.

"We have come here looking for shelter as horrible things were happening in Rakhine."

Myanmar army attacked his village, Lemsipara, in Fakirabazar of Maungdaw on Friday night. The troops raided and set ablaze many houses in that village, forcing the locals to flee.

Around 9:00pm, all his family members, including his mother, wife, children, two brothers and a sister, left their home empty handed and took shelter at a nearby hill. After waiting there the entire night, the Rohingya family along with some 1,000 other Rohingyas started their journey towards Bangladesh, said Kader.

The refugees were divided into five groups so that they could slip through the border easily. On the way, Kader's mother, Shahara Khatun, somehow got lost.

"I lost my mother and I was looking for her before crossing the border. On Monday, somebody told me a very old lady was lying down in a forest behind us," said Kader.

Kader sent his wife and children along with his siblings to the Kutupalong Camp in Cox's Bazar, and then went back to look for his mother.

Walking for hours, he finally found Shahara lying beside Patahola Chhara near Walden Hills, Kader said.

"She hardly had any strength to stand up. I gave her some water and took her on my back and started walking," he said, adding the journey was rough as the hilly road was difficult to cross.

Kader said they crossed the border without much trouble, and that they were happy to reach Bangladesh.

"However, we are really worried about our future. I don't know what lies ahead," he said before starting for the Kutupalong camp.

Girl gang-raped

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chairman of Khanpur Union Parishad, said Mahatab Uddin, officer-in-charge of Bagerhat Sadar Police Station.

On Wednesday night, the accused took the girl to a bush forcibly and raped her. She was going to visit her relative's house in North Khanpur village, the OC said.

On information, police rescued the girl and admitted her to Bagerhat Sadar Hospital for medical tests, the police official added.

Tigers enjoy

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Off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz, left-arm spinner Tajjul Islam and pacer Mustafizur Rahman, meanwhile, spent time at the National Academy in Mirpur.

Bangladesh lead the series 1-0 and will play the final match of the two-Test series from September 4.

His Eid

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where he is being treated.

The 23-year-old Titumir College student, managed to force a smile. "This would be my first Eid in darkness. My world is really different now."

He then wiped a drop of tear off his cheek and continued, "I know it would take a miracle for me to see again. So I am learning how to survive without it."

He also remembered how he used to go to Eid prayers with the kids and his brother and came back home to the delicacies prepared by his mother. Whenever he felt unwell or sad, he spent time with the children and felt better.

"But I do not want to brood over grievances. I want to move on," he said, adding that he had no other ailments.

He had gone to a mosque near the hospital with his friends once.

On July 20, when he was hit on his eye by a tear gas canister fired by police at Shahbagh, he was supposed to attend an English class in Uttara to prepare for BCS exams. But now the third-year student of political science has no clue as to what future awaits him.

"I want to finish my studies at any cost and live with dignity. I do not want to be anyone's liability," he said.

His father died when he was only three, leaving his elder brother to become the breadwinner in the family. He worked as a day labourer at construction sites.

After his eyes were damaged, he was treated at NIO for a week. He was then taken to Sankara Nethralaya at India's Chennai on July 27. With no hope of improvement, Siddiqur came back home on August 11.

"The thought of my family waiting for me in Mymensingh's Tarakanda before Eid haunts me," he said.

NHRC for maximum

FROM PAGE 20
and financial and political influence, he added.

The killing of Rupa has surpassed medieval barbarism. Violence against women has increased recently in the country at an alarming rate, the NHRC chief said.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Rukhe Darao, a platform of progressive and pro-liberation forces, in another statement yesterday said the country saw recurrent rape incidents, but the government did little to ensure justice.

Expressing grave concern over the recent rise in violence against women, the organisation said culprits became reckless due to authorities' failure in ensuring justice.

"Several rape incidents took place in public transport. Except for one or two incidents, justice has not been served. Some sporadic protests were staged after the incidents, but there was no wave of demonstrations like those held following the rape and killing of Yasmin in Dinajpur," read the statement.

On the night of August 25, three staffers of a bus allegedly raped Rupa before breaking her neck and throwing her body in a secluded area in Tangail's Pachish Mile. She was on way to Mymensingh from Bogra after taking a job test.

Tangail police recovered her body around 11:00pm that night and arrested bus driver Habibur Rahman Habib, 40, supervisor Gendu Miah, 50, and helpers Shamim, 30, Akram, 35, and Jahangir, 20.

Daughter of Jelhas Pramanik from Tarash upazila of Sirajganj, Rupa had completed Masters in Accounting from Government Azizul Haque College, Bogra in 2014. The following year, she started studying LLB at Ideal Law College in the capital.

BODY EXHUMED
Police yesterday afternoon exhumed Rupa's body from Tangail Central Graveyard and handed it over to her family for burial at her village.

Tangail Executive Magistrate Abdur Rahim Sujon, Kaiyum Khan Siddique, in-charge of Aronkhola Police Outpost in Madhupur, also the investigating officer of the case, and Rupa's elder brother Hafizur Paramanik were present.

Earlier in the morning, Tangail District Magistrate Khan Mohammad Nurul Amin passed an order to exhume the body after hearing a petition of Hafizur.

Following an autopsy, police on August 26 had buried her at the Tangail graveyard as an unidentified woman. Sub-Inspector Aminul Islam of Aronkhola Police Outpost on the same day filed the murder case against unidentified criminals in this regard.

Seeing news and her photo in media, Rupa's family members on Monday identified the victim as Rupa.

Law enforcers early on Tuesday arrested the five bus staffers from Tangail's Madhupur.

Police said the arrestees during interrogation admitted their involvement in the crime. A Tangail court later sent them to jail after they gave confessional statements under section 164 of CrPC to a senior judicial magistrate in

War crimes trial stalled

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Justice Anwarul, it is not clear whether the tribunal will hear the closing arguments again.

As per the war crimes law, a tribunal can resume a case's trial from where it stopped even after any change in the judges' panel but there are at least two precedents when the tribunal reheard closing arguments.

In the case against Jamaat-e-Islami leader Delawar Hossain Sayedee, the tribunal-1 heard the closing arguments for the second time after Justice Md Nizamul Huq had stepped down over a controversy and ATM Fazle Kabir took over the charge as chairman.

And it was all done, the court said, for the sake of justice. The government took only two days to reconstitute the tribunal at that time.

Similar series of events took place in the case against Jamaat chief Motiur Rahman Nizami after Justice Fazle Kabir had gone into retirement keeping the verdict waiting.

At the time, the government took 53 days to appoint the chairman. However, there was a second war crimes tribunal functioning.

Expressing frustration, Shaariar Kabir, a prominent advocate of war crimes trial, said, "It is beyond our understanding why it is taking so much time to appoint the chairman and reconstitute the tribunal."

The government should not consider the war crimes cases like any other cases, added Shaariar, president of Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee that has been campaigning for the trial of war-time offenders for more than two decades.

Victims of the crimes committed four and a half decades ago are now dying. The accused are dying too. "It would be a glaring example of impunity if the perpetrators are not brought to book due to the delay in trial proceedings."

"There might be conflicts between the government and the Supreme

Tangail on Tuesday and Wednesday.

VILLAGE IN SHOCK
A mood of shock and grief descended on Ashanbari village in Tarash upazila after the news of Rupa's rape and death broke.

"My mother fell sick after hearing that Rupa was no more. Nobody could console her as my sister was holding our family's dream," her brother Hafizur told this newspaper yesterday.

Her mother Hasna Hena Begum, 55, was crying and fainting frequently in the last couple of days. She was admitted to Tarash Upazila Health Complex on Wednesday night.

Sajib Roy, medical officer at the health complex, said they gave treatment to the patient as she suffered a mental shock.

Md Jafar Iqbal, principal of Tarash Degree College and also a teacher of Rupa, said her death reminds all parents that their children were not safe.

"Being a father myself, I can't tolerate such a brutality," he said.

Meanwhile, the victim's body reached Ashanbari village last evening. Her family members said she would be buried at the family graveyard at night.

Our Tangail and Pabna correspondents contributed to this report.

Pilgrims throng

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dedicated to prayer and reflection.

"I came up here last night and prayed, took pictures and called my family and friends," said Maolana Yahia, 32, who made the trip from Indonesia.

This year's hajj has seen the return of pilgrims from Saudi Arabia's archival Iran following a diplomatic row and a deadly stampede in 2015.

But thousands who would normally make the journey from neighbouring Qatar are absent apart from a few dozen because of the diplomatic crisis shaking the Gulf.

Helicopters flew around the area as the pilgrims converged from dawn on the Mount Arafat plain and the hill known as Jabal al-Rahma, or Mount of Mercy.

Forming a sea of white, the pilgrims ascended the hill and took up positions to pray on rocks already heated by the morning sun.

On the concrete pathways linking the plain to the hill, hundreds of thousands of devout Muslims invoked God, as others rested in makeshift tents or on sheets along the side of the road amid empty bottles and waste.

Tunisian mother-of-three Fatima Arfawi said she was moved beyond words.

"This is the first time I see anything like this, ever," she said. "This day is dedicated to prayer for my three children and my family."

In a hospital opposite the mountain, an area was set aside for people suffering dehydration or heat exhaustion.

Saudi Arabia's Red Crescent said it had deployed 326 ambulances along the pilgrimage route to handle health emergencies.

"Some pilgrims, for example, forget to protect their heads with an umbrella when they pray," said Bandar Al-Harhi, a nurse at a hospital facing Mount Arafat.

Court over different issues but the impact of the conflict should not fall upon the war crimes trial as the entire nation is united in favour of the trial," Shaariar said.

Prosecutor Zead Al Malum said it was unfortunate that the only court trying war criminals had remained non-functional while the victims' families were demanding more tribunals to expedite the cases' proceedings.

The prosecution would have to send back around 20 witnesses, he said.

If the only tribunal is not reconstituted soon and more tribunals are not formed, it will be tantamount to breaking the promise the government made to the people over the trial, the prosecutor added.

Abdul Hannan Khan, coordinator of the investigation agency, told The Daily Star on August 21 that the delay might raise doubt about the trial proceedings.

"Likely-to-be witnesses in the under-investigation cases may feel discouraged from giving testimonies for this delay," he said.

Hannan also lamented that activists and civil society men, who were very strong supporter of the trial, remained silent about the non-functional tribunal.

"It seems the trial is not getting priority."

Two days after the death of the chairman, Law Minister Anisul Huq told this newspaper that a new chairman would be appointed very soon.

However on August 21, he said he was hopeful of appointment of the chairman after Eid-ul-Azha. The minister declined to comment