

2 shot during Durga Puja celebrations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two people, including a woman, sustained bullet injuries after a gang of local criminals opened fire in Chittagong city's Nandankanan during Durga Puja celebrations early yesterday.

The incident took place inside the Lokonath Mandir at Lane No 1 of Nandankanan under Kotwali Police Station around 2:30am.

Local residents said tension had been prevailing in the area for the past few days as a criminal group led by one Niloy was trying to establish supremacy there after the arrest of a rival - a Jabo League (JL) activist named Amit Muhuri.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) SM Mostain Hossen of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP)'s South Zone told The Daily Star, "On Friday midnight Niloy and his cohorts went to the area and opened fire leaving the woman and the youth injured."

"He fled the spot before police arrived," the DC said adding that police were trying to arrest him.

The injured Krishna Das, 42, and Shaon Hossain, 20, were treated at Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

Krishna is the secretary of Lokonath Mandir and a member of the Trustee Board of the temple while Shaon is a private employee.

Ashura today

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Members of the Shia community will bring out a Tazia procession in the capital marking the day. The procession will start from Imambara Husaini Dalan in Old Dhaka.

Adequate security measures have already been put in place to ensure that Holy Ashura is observed smoothly.

Apart from Husaini Dalan, police will be deployed on the rooftops of some buildings in Imambara area for security reasons.

Meanwhile, police have banned carrying metal weapons, knife and sword during the Tazia procession.

Radio and television channels have been airing special programmes highlighting the significance of the day.



Bangladesh officials give money for daily food ration to Rohingya refugees on the shore of the Naf river in Teknaf on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

Weighed down by age, anguish

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camps along with nearly half a million Rohingyas who have fled violence in Myanmar since the military crackdown began on August 25.

These people at the last stage of their lives had endured a terrible time while escaping the relentless persecution back home. Life here may well be better than the grim persecution they fled, although they are living in 10 feet by 10 feet huts on the hill slopes and collecting relief amid scorching heat and almost daily torrential rains. The conditions breed exhaustion and illnesses.

Scores of refugees are suffering from diarrhoea due to a lack of safe drinking water, toilets and hygiene facilities. Although government and non-government organisations have installed a number of tube wells at the shelters, there still remains a serious shortage of fresh water.

"Perhaps this is what was written in our fate," Syed said, as he finally received a bag of rice and lentil at Balukhali temporary camp.

Just beside the place, a long queue of Rohingyas was seen waiting to see the doctor at a temporary medical camp set up by the government.

Khodiza, 62, was one of many patients, waiting to seek treatment for diarrhoea and severe muscle pain. Her daughter, Asma, carried her on her

shoulders.

"She vomited several times and has gone to the toilet frequently since early morning. Now she can barely stand on her feet," Asma said.

A female doctor at the camp said many children and elderly people were coming to the camp with water-borne illnesses. Another doctor feared that there was a presence of contagious diseases like tuberculosis and hepatitis.

"The number of patients seeking treatment is increasing day by day. A majority of them are children and the elderly," she said, adding that they are sending people in critical condition to hospitals.

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Some elderly people are receiving treatment at hospitals in Cox's Bazar and Ukhia.

Seventy-five-year-old Rabeya Khatun was referred by doctors at the temporary medical camp at Kutupalang to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital on Thursday.

A mother of four, she fled her home in Shahebazar in Maungdaw with 12 family members a fortnight ago and entered Teknaf two days later.

"My mother fell ill while crossing the border. Along with high fever and cough, she has pain all over her body. She cannot stand without anyone's help," said her daughter, Amena.

The International Coordinating Group on Vaccine Provision will release 900,000 doses of the Oral Cholera Vaccine from the global stockpile to prevent the spread of cholera among Rohingya refugees and host communities in Cox's Bazar.

The ICG, a coordinating body of the World Health Organisation, Unicef, Médecins Sans Frontières, and the International Federation of the Red Cross, approved the appeal in 24 hours after Bangladesh government's request on September 27.

ICG partners - with support from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance - will deliver 900,000 doses of OCV to Bangladesh within two weeks for an immunization campaign due to start in October, says a press release of the WHO yesterday.

Half a billion used in 7yrs

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Many projects under the second LoC still could not be readied by the ministries concerned. In future, the secretary said, they will try to disburse 20 percent of the project money every year, which is a standard performance criterion.

ERD has asked all parties to work accordingly.

Regarding the third LoC, Shofiqul Azam said they already completed the project selection to reduce delays. He hoped that the project implementation rate will increase in future.

Until last month, India disbursed around 60 percent of its first LoC of \$1.06 billion, sanctioned in August 2010.

And the disbursement of the second LoC of \$2 billion, committed during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Dhaka visit in June 2015 and approved in March 2016, is yet to begin, finance ministry data show.

A third LoC involving \$4.5 billion was initiated during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's India visit in April this year.

Of the first loan, \$200 million was channelled to the Padma bridge project as grants.

New Delhi later provided another \$62 million after the cost of several projects rose. The total amount of project credit finally stood at \$862 million, of which \$376 million has been received till last month.

Of the sum, \$240 million was

spent under nine projects to buy buses, passenger coaches, wagons, locomotives and a dredger from India. Three other projects were almost completed.

Implementation of three remaining projects -- construction of Dhaka-Tongi-Joydevpur dual gauge rail line and construction of Khulna-Mongla rail line with a bridge over the Rupsa River -- have been delayed for difficulties in acquiring land.

The allocation for Dhaka-Joydevpur rail line was \$123 million and only \$0.13 million of it has been spent. Of \$78 million for Kulaura-Shahbazpur dual gauge rail line project, \$0.12 million has been spent. The Khulna-Mongla rail line project got \$308 million allocation but only \$43 million was used.

A finance ministry official said implementation of the Khulna-Mongla rail line project can now start as the issues blocking the project have been resolved recently. The work on the project has begun but the problem regarding Dhaka-Joydevpur dual gauge rail line has not yet been solved.

With the second LoC, 14 projects are to be implemented and Indian Exim Bank approved 12 of those.

About one and a half years after signing of the loan agreement, only three projects were approved by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecnec). Now the process of tender document preparation is on.

The three ready-to-be-implemented projects involve procurement of trucks and buses for Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation as well as equipment and machinery for road construction and repair and maintenance of road infrastructures. Indian allocation for these three projects is \$136 million.

Of the nine other projects, Ecnec approved improvement of Ashuganj River port to Akhaura land port road as four lane national highway where Indian allocation is \$283.67 million.

Besides, Ecnec has approved construction of two out of five medical colleges under a project of the health ministry.

The two medical colleges will be built at Patuakhali and Jamalpur; Indian allocation for this is around \$70 million.

Under the third LoC, 17 projects have primarily been selected and Indian Exim Bank has consented to those. Finance ministry officials say that to expedite the implementation, the projects were selected before signing of the local agreement. However, the projects have not yet been readied for implementation.

As per the rules, the implementation of any project starts only after Ecnec okays it. But not a single project has been approved by Ecnec after signing of the primary deals during Hasina's India visit in April.

Of around \$4.5 billion under the third credit deal, \$1b will be spent on

the infrastructure development for power evacuation facilities of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant. When the power plant will generate electricity, a line will be set up to supply the power to the national grid.

This time India will also provide credit for upgrading 245km roads -- Benapole-Jessore-Narail-Bhanga (135km), Ramgarh-Baruera (35km) and Mainamati-Brahmanbaria-Sarail (75km) -- considering transit and transhipment facilities and the operation of Chittagong and Mongla ports.

At least three of the projects involve the development of economic zones, a priority for the Bangladeshi government as it looks to ramp up private sector investment.

Of the total amount of the credit, about \$500 million will be used for setting up new economic zones for Indian and other investors, according to officials of the finance ministry and Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority.

Some \$100 million will be provided for building a dedicated economic zone spanning 1,005 acres in Mirsarai of Chittagong for the neighbouring country's investors -- a move that has been hailed by Narendra Modi.

Another \$100 million may be used for developing a special economic zone at Payra or Moheshkhali; \$300 million may be allocated for developing infrastructure of different economic zones.

At least 97 killed

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Besides, nine people died due to torture, heart attack, illness or mysterious causes while they were in custody.

At least 588 women were raped. Of them, 33 were killed afterwards and 11 committed suicide. Seventy-seven women escaped rape attempts.

In 256 incidents of political violence, 44 died and 3,506 injured.

Moreover, 114 women were sexually harassed and four of them committed suicide. Two women and eight men were killed for protesting sexual assaults.

Almost 250 women were subjected to domestic violence. Of them, 242 were killed and 39 committed suicide.

The ASK report said 221 women fell victim to dowry-related violence. Of them, 107 were killed, seven committed suicide, 87 were tortured and 20

were abandoned by their husbands.

The report also added that four domestic helps were killed after being tortured, one was raped and killed and 13 died due to mysterious causes.

There were acid attacks on 27 women while eight women fell victim to arbitration and fatwa.

Violence against children was alarming this year with at least 252 killed. Seventy-seven committed suicides and bodies of 93 were found. Moreover, 24 children died due to mysterious reasons.

In the past nine months, 26 Hindu houses were vandalised and torched. Temples and altars were vandalised or torched in 166 cases.

One got killed and 57 injured in these incidents.

Eighty-three journalists on duty were tortured, harassed and threatened.

Scandal-hit

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The trips were for government business, Price's department said, but some of the flights were to destinations where the health chief owns property, or where he met relatives.

Since Wednesday calls for Price's resignation had grown louder and louder.

Price's penchant for traveling on luxury jets, Democratic Senator Patty Murray said Thursday, is "particularly shocking as you serve in an administra-

tion that routinely calls for draconian spending cuts and a reduction in government waste, and you yourself have repeatedly advocated for fiscal restraint."

Price had also been intimately involved in Trump's failed efforts to overturn Obama-era health care reforms. His forced departure can also be viewed as punishment for this failure.

With that effort now stalled in Congress, Price's replacement will have to decide whether to take measures to prop up the current system or let it fail.

EC goes for new smart NID scheme

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Ltd distribute them."

On January 14 2015, OT got the contract for production and distribution of the cards with 25 security features within 18 months. The company failed to meet the deadline and then it was extended up to June 30 this year. OT could not complete the task within that deadline as well.

"The French company has violated the contract. We cannot suffer for their failure," Brig Gen Mohammed Saidul Islam, project director of IDEA, told The Daily Star.

He also said, "We have blank cards in our hands, we have machines, we have software, we have a strong IT team, and we have already trained 44 people of the project. So, we will do the rest on our own."

Saidul avoided a question on taking actions against OT but, a top EC official, seeking anonymity, said the commission has already appointed a legal adviser to take legal steps against the company.

Within the June 2017 deadline, OT could produce 77.30 million blank cards and only 12.41 million cards were personalised. It supplied 10.98 million cards to Thana and upazila election offices.

Then, the EC decided not to renew the agreement with OT and complete the rest of the task by itself, said EC officials.

Although the target was set at distributing 90 million cards, new voters have been included in the voter list and the number now would be 101.68 million, according to EC's latest estimates. The commission has to deliver 11.68 million more NID smart cards within June next year.

The IDEA project director said, "We will do it without depending on others. We will make all out efforts to deliver the cards within the timeframe. The French company worked in one shift, but we will work round the clock, if necessary, to deliver the cards within the deadline."

Another EC official seeking anonym-

Hindus bid farewell to Devi Durga

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Nabami Puja on Friday.

As many as 30,077 permanent and temporary puja mandaps (makeshift temples), including 231 in the capital, were set up across the country this year.

Bijoya Dashami, marking the victory of good over evil, is celebrated on the 10th day of the bright fortnight (Shukla Paksha) in the Bikram Samvat calendar month of Ashwin, as per Hindu tradition.

The government provided tight security around the puja mandaps. Plainclothes and uniformed policemen kept vigil in and around the mandaps to avoid any law and order problem.

Talking to BSS, some Hindu devotees yesterday said Bangladesh has set an instance of communal harmony as people of all Hindu faiths have been observing Durga Puja freely for long.

A puja udjapan committee member

said thousands of devout Hindus joined colourful processions on city streets as the idols of goddess Durga were being carried to Waiseghat point of the Buriganga in the evening.

The main traditional puja procession, arranged by Mahanagar Sarbojanin Puja Udjapan Committee, started from Dhakeshwari Temple at 4:00pm and ended at Sadarghat on the banks of the Buriganga.

Before removing Durga's idols from the altar of mandaps for immersion, Hindu devotees danced and sang "kirtan" expressing their deep emotional pathos as "Durga Maa" was leaving all of her sons and daughters for a year.

DN Chatterjee, president of Mahanagar Sarbojanin Puja Udjapan Committee, and Shyamal Kumar Roy, general secretary, thanked the prime minister, law enforcement agencies and journalists for extending cooperation with devotees in holding the puja