



Hindu families, whose houses were burnt and vandalised on Friday at Horkoli Thakurpara village of Rangpur, forms human chains on Dinajpur-Dhaka highway yesterday morning demanding justice. Below from left, village elders lamenting their losses, a ruined idol at a Hindu household and a man trying to salvage books from the ruins of a temple.

PHOTOS: KONGKON KARMAKER

Hatred stirred up for days

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on digital platforms late last month, demanding punishment of Titu Chandra Roy, aged about 40, of Horkoli Thakurpara village for allegedly making an "anti-Islam" post on Facebook.

Copies of what looked like the screenshot of a Facebook post were also distributed among villagers. The issue of the Facebook post was also discussed at a Waz Mehfil (religious gathering) at Hazipur Kabarthan Nurania Hafizia Yatimkhana in Rangpur's Taraganj upazila on Thursday night. Speakers at the mehfil provoked the religious devotees to stage protests, said a devotee who was present there.

Alamgir Hossain, Julfikar Ali, Raihan Ali, Md Kahar and Abdus Sattar. Khandakar Golam Faruk, DIG of Rangpur police, hinted that the five were involved in Jamaat-Shibir politics. Many victims alleged that the attack was aimed at evicting Hindus from their land.

Alamgir Hossain, son of Abdus Sattar from Soleya Shah Bazaar, filed a case with Gangachara Police Station on November 5, accusing Titu Chandra of the hurting religious sentiments of the local people. Alamgir, however, fled the area after the Friday's incident.

Faruk Hossain, chairman of Kholeya Union Parishad in Rangpur Sadar upazila, was present at the mehfil, said another devotee. Md Alam, aged about 62, of Lalchandpur village in the same upazila said he learnt about the Facebook post from announcements of local mosques. He gathered at Soleya Shah Bazaar on Friday afternoon after offering Juma prayers.

Kazi Hasan Ahmed, divisional commissioner of Rangpur, and Waheduzzaman, deputy commissioner of Rangpur, visited the village yesterday and assured Hindus of security. Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, lawmaker from Dinajpur-2, and also the organising secretary of the central Awami League, along with lawmaker Monoranjan Shil Gopal from Dinajpur-1 visited the area. Local MP Moshir Rahman Ranga, also the state minister for LGRD and cooperatives, had been there.

Police picked up 57 people, including two Shibir men, in connection with the case, said Zinnat Ali, officer-in-charge of the police station. Jiten Bala, mother of Titu Chandra, said her son, a garment worker, has been staying in Narayanganj for the last four years. He last came home seven months ago.

People formed a human chain there protesting the Facebook post for about 10 minutes. They later returned home. "The situation became tense after 3:30pm," said Alam. Around 10,000 to 12,000 people, carrying sticks and brickbats, gathered in the area. They came from Badarganj, Gangachara and Taraganj upazilas of Rangpur and Jalhdhaka of Nilphamari. They later marched towards Horkoli Thakurpara village, around one kilometre off Soleya Shah Bazaar.

DC Waheduzzaman said, "All I knew from the UNOs of Taraganj and Gangachara that a human chain would be formed on Friday protesting a Facebook post. I had no idea about the propaganda campaign or announcements." Meanwhile, Hindus of Horkoli Thakurpara and nearby villages formed human chains on both sides of Rangpur-Dinajpur highway near the Thakurpara village around 11:00am yesterday, demanding exemplary punishment for the perpetrators.

"Announcements were made through loudspeakers hired from shops and those in local mosques since November 5 about holding protest rallies and forming human chains, but the local administration didn't take any steps to prevent the attack," alleged Md Rohidul Islam of Harkali Thakurbari village.

At one stage, the attackers entered the village and went on a rampage. They torched and damaged Hindu houses and looted valuables. Around 25 cattle were looted, said Polish Chandra Roy of the village. Villages said they could not identify the attackers. Locals and police said five youths masterminded the attack. They are Md

Ekatturer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee and Sammillito Samajik Andolon in separate statements yesterday strongly protested the attack and demanded immediate arrest of the attackers. In Bangladesh, the rape victims have to go for medical tests where doctors use their index or middle finger to check the condition of their hymen and also to look for injuries on the vaginal wall. "This test is humiliating," she said. Salma said it was important that the authorities think of a mechanism where privacy of the complainants was ensured during the legal process, and that circumstances of rape were considered as evidence instead of the medical test known as the "two-finger test".

BCL leader sued

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told The Daily Star yesterday evening. Other victims of accused Arif Hossain Hawladar, 22, former general secretary of Bangladesh Chhatra League's Narayanpur unit, refused to come forward.

SP Saifullah said they were able to persuade one of the women to lodge the case with Bhedarganj Police Station yesterday afternoon. He, however, said, "We would have filed a case if she had refused to file one... the evidence is already there online."

The video clips were first released on October 15 and continued to spread yesterday. Bhedarganj MA Reza Degree College teacher Sayedur Rahman said the six women were still being victimised as the videos were being shared online, and police must act promptly to stop its spread. Shariatpur Chhatra League President Mohsin Madbar said Arif's acts were in no way acceptable and he must be tried.

Unable to deal with the social stigma, two of them stopped going to college, one of them left home, and the in-laws of another kicked her out. Arif allegedly sexually harassed the six, secretly filmed the act and then blackmailed them with the footage. "Women are generally reluctant to file a complaint in rape cases, but police should have been proactive in filing a case under ICT Act for the serious nature of the crime. They should have arrested the culprit," said Salma Ali, member of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association. Officer-in-Charge Mehedi Hasan of Bhedarganj Police Station said the women were reluctant to file a case and this being a sensitive issue, "we could

not go forward on our own". Arif was expelled from Chhatra League, a pro-Awami League student body, yesterday over the allegations. He had been suspended on October 19, reports a correspondent in Shariatpur quoting Chhatra League Shariatpur unit. Lawyer Salma Ali said they recently received a number of complaints of sexual assault where the victims were reluctant to file a case because of social stigmatisation. "The rape complainants get victimised repeatedly when they go for legal procedures and medical tests," she said.

Salma said it was important that the authorities think of a mechanism where privacy of the complainants was ensured during the legal process, and that circumstances of rape were considered as evidence instead of the medical test known as the "two-finger test". The video clips were first released on October 15 and continued to spread yesterday. Bhedarganj MA Reza Degree College teacher Sayedur Rahman said the six women were still being victimised as the videos were being shared online, and police must act promptly to stop its spread. Shariatpur Chhatra League President Mohsin Madbar said Arif's acts were in no way acceptable and he must be tried.

Pro-independence Catalans to protest in Barcelona

AFP, Madrid
A protest was expected in Barcelona yesterday calling for the release of jailed separatist leaders, the day after pro-independence Catalan parliamentarian Carme Forcadell was freed on bail.

Catalonia's parliament, left a prison near Madrid on Friday hours after supporters posted her bail of 150,000 euros (\$175,000), ending her brief detention. A judge at the Supreme Court in Madrid on Thursday had ordered Forcadell to be held on charges of "rebellion" -- which carries a maximum jail term of 30 years -- as Spain's worst political crisis in a generation rumbles on. She was one of several dismissed Catalan officials to be detained after their shock decision last month to

declare the region of 7.5 million people independent from Spain. Forcadell appeared at the Supreme Court in Madrid on Thursday along with five former Catalan lawmakers. The others were given a temporary reprieve by the judge, who said they must pay 25,000 euros each within a week or be detained. Acting judge Pablo Larena said his decision to grant bail was made after they either "renounced all future political activity" or agreed to respect the law, according to a court document.

BNP gets

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DMP for sending the letter a bit earlier this time. The BNP leader sought cooperation from the government in holding the peaceful rally. "I would like to urge the ruling party and the DMP to cooperate with us... We hope you'll help us. Please don't spoil the democratic environment by putting any obstacle to our rally."

He also called upon the ruling party to refrain from making any provocation. "Some incidents that have taken place over a few days indicate different meanings. Police have become frantic to arrest the leaders and activists of our Dhaka city units and implicate them in false cases."

The BNP leader alleged that police arrested 20 party men on Friday night when they were returning home after joining a preparatory meeting at the Sahjahanpur house of BNP standing committee member Mirza Abbas. Fakhru asked BNP leaders and activists not to respond to any provocation of the Awami League. "To make the rally a success, exercise restraint and have patience in the case of any provocation."

As per the conditions set by the DMP, the rally will have to be concluded by 5:00pm and the BNP leader and activist will be allowed to enter the meeting venue two hours before the beginning of the rally. The other conditions are refraining from showing any cartoon or making any statement hurting religious sentiments, making any provocative statement, carrying out any anti-state, anti-peace activities, creating any obstacle to traffic, using loudspeakers at unapproved places, using rods and sticks with banners and festoons, entering the venue with processions and gathering on footpaths.

Fakhru said their rally will reflect people's hopes and aspirations. BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is expected to address the rally as the chief guest. She last addressed a rally at the same venue on January 20, 2014, 15 days after the 10th parliamentary polls. On November 3, the BNP announced to hold the rally at the Suhrawardy Udyan on November 8, marking what it said "the civil-military uprising on November 7, 1975". Later, the party deferred it to Sunday.

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Rezia walks

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The leg started to swell and at one point it rendered her unable to walk. As the condition worsened it took at least three people to move her. "I was almost immobile for years. I could not even move an inch. I had been a burden on the family," she said. Her husband, Abdul Malek, of Osmaninagar village, took her to different doctors over the last 18 years, but it helped little. Her hopes rekindled when she heard success stories of Muktamoni and Abul Bajandar's treatment at the DMCH. Rezia was brought to the burn and plastic surgery unit of the hospital on August 22.

Doctors conducted a debulking surgery on her about a month later. She had been kept at the intensive care unit for over a month after the surgery and needed 40 bags of blood. She would go home today. Samanta Lal Sen, national coordinator at burn units at government hospitals, said she would be able to walk with support now, and that the condition would improve. An eleven-member medical team headed by Prof Abul Kalam conducted the surgery. "We told her to come back after two weeks. She has to be under regular follow-ups," Sen added.

Rezia, dreaming of going back home, said, "I am not feeling any pain now. I hope I would be able to walk on my own soon." Her daughter Shayla Akhter said most of her father's earnings were spent for her treatment over the years. Moreover, the family is in Tk 2 lakh debt now.

Rohingya rafts

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mostly women and children. Mobile courts have so far meted out punishment to 452 Bangladeshis, including boat owners and middlemen or brokers, for illegally boarding Rohingyas on boats and trawlers. ROHINGYAS INVITING RELATIVES Rohingyas who have managed to secure shelter at different camps in Cox's Bazar, are now encouraging their relatives in the Rakhine State to come to Bangladesh for a "safe and better life". Md Moinuddin, officer-in-charge of Teknaf Police Station, told The Daily Star over telephone, "We have come across some Rohingyas who recently came to Cox's Bazar after being convinced by relatives, who reached here before. Rohingyas already living in government-sponsored shelters and getting food and other humanitarian assistance from local and international agencies are informing their relatives about the conditions in the camps."

He said Rohingyas have been communicating with their relatives via mobile phone and assuring them of their safe stay in temporary government shelters. The police official however could not be sure how many had arrived following such communication.

Saudi easing of Yemen blockade not enough: UN

AFP, United Nations

The Saudi-led coalition is still blocking desperately-needed UN aid deliveries to Yemen despite the re-opening of the port of Aden and of a land border crossing, a UN spokesman said yesterday.

"Humanitarian movements into Yemen remain blocked," said Russell Geekie, spokesman for the UN office for the coordination of humanitarian aid OCHA. "The reopening of the port in Aden is not enough. We need to see the blockade of all the ports lifted, especially Hodeida, for both humanitarians and for commercial imports."

The coalition shut down Yemen's borders on Monday in response to a missile attack by Huthi rebels that was intercepted near Riyadh airport.

UN aid chief Mark Lowcock told the Security Council this week that unless the blockade is lifted, Yemen will face "the largest famine the world has seen for many decades, with millions of victims."

After an outcry from the United Nations, the coalition on Wednesday reopened Aden, which is controlled by pro-Saudi government forces, and on Thursday opened the land crossing at Wadaea on the Saudi-Yemen border.

But Geekie said no aid had gone into Aden yet and the reopening of the Wadaea crossing did not affect UN operations.

The transport minister of Yemen's internationally recognized government, Murad al-Halimi, said that two airports in the loyalist-held southern cities of Aden and Seiyun would also reopen from today, Yemeni media reported.

He said national carrier Yemenia would resume its flights to and from the two airports, from where it flies to

destinations including Amman and Cairo.

The sea port at Hodeida, which is in rebel-held territory, is key to UN aid efforts as it is closest to the majority of people in need.

The coalition accuses rebels of using aid shipments to smuggle in weapons.

Before the blockade, UN aid agencies were delivering food and medicine through Hodeida, Saleef and Aden ports.

"There can be no alternative for all these ports being fully functional and receiving commercial and humanitarian cargo," said the spokesman.

The United Nations has listed Yemen as the world's number one humanitarian crisis, with 17 million people in need of food, seven million of whom are at risk of famine.

Sharfuddin

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He was elected an upazila chairman in 1987 and the chairman of Rangpur Municipality in 1992. He also became a lawmaker with Jatiya Party ticket in 1996. Later he joined the Awami League.

Jatiya Party has already announced Mostafizur Rahman Mostofa, president of its Rangpur city unit, as its mayor candidate.

The Election Commission on November 5 declared the schedule for the RCC election.

According to the schedule, the last date for submission of nomination papers is November 22. The submitted nomination papers would be scrutinised on November 25-26 and the last day of withdrawal is December 3.

Electoral symbols would be allocated on December 4.

Four days on, no trace

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journalism of Dhaka University is going to form a human chain this morning on the campus, demanding the authorities' action to trace him.

A handout provided by the department cites that Prof Gitiara Nasreen, on behalf of the department, called for the human chain to be held at 10:00am at Aparajeyo Bangla.

The administration has yet to take any visible steps, although he has been missing for more than 72 hours, Prof Nasreen said yesterday afternoon.

The teachers and students of the department are extremely concerned and worried regarding Mubashar's whereabouts, she added.

A teacher of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at NSU, Mubashar is a former student of the DU department.

On Wednesday, his family filed a general diary over his going missing with Khilgaon Police Station.

Police said Mubashar last talked to someone on his mobile phone at 6:41pm on Tuesday when he was near Lions Eye Hospital at Agargaon.

His father Motahar Hossain yesterday said he has informed law enforcers, and the media is also writing about his disappearance. "Now I can only pray for my son's safe return."

A former DU student wrote on Facebook at 4:12pm that Mubashar was "online" on the social media's messaging app. "I am texting him, but no replies. Suppose our state agencies have not arrested him, but is it too hard to locate the IP address?"

Another Facebook user yesterday posted a collage including Mubashar's photo and words written in Bangla that demand an end to the country's "missing culture".

Contacted, Anwar Hossain, deputy commissioner (Motijheel Division) of

Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told this newspaper yesterday evening that police were looking for Mubashar.

He said they were doing their best.

Rights body Ain o Salish Kendra says 334 of the 524 people, who allegedly became victims of enforced disappearance between 2010 and October 2017 across the country, are still missing.

Many of those who returned to their families never disclosed anything to the media about their abductors.

The latest victim of a series of disappearance is Tanvir Yasin Karim, owner of Karim International and Darus Salam Publications. He was picked up allegedly by plainclothes men from his house in Gulshan on Wednesday.

Journalist Utpal Das has been unaccounted for since October 10. Mithun Chowdhury, president of the newly formed Bangladesh Janata Party, and his associate Ashit Ghosh were picked up allegedly by law enforcers from the city's Sutrapur area on October 27.

"I sought remedy from the police but I have yet to get back my son," Utpal's father Chitta Ranjan, who lives in Narsingdi, told this newspaper over the phone.

Those who went missing in recent times include McGill University student Ishrak Ahmed Fahim, who was abducted on August 26 from the capital.

Bangladesh Kalyan Party Secretary General MM Aminur Rahman went missing after he had gone out of his office in Nayapaltan on August 27.

On August 22, businessman Syed Sadat Ahmed, also a BNP leader, was picked up from near Banani flyover. Another businessman, Aniruddha Kumar, was abducted from Gulshan on August 27.

Nasa finds '10 planets

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What's more, 10 of these worlds may be rocky, about the size of Earth, and habitable.

The data comes from the space agency's long-running Kepler exoplanet-hunting mission. From March 2009 through May 2013, Kepler stared down about 145,000 sunlike stars in a tiny section of the night sky near the constellation Cygnus.

Most of those stars are hundreds or thousands of light-years away, so there's little chance humans will ever visit them -- at least anytime soon. However, the data could tell astronomers how common Earthlike planets are and what the chances of finding intelligent extraterrestrial life might be.

"We have taken our telescope, and we have counted up how many planets are similar to the Earth in this part of the sky," Susan Thompson, a Kepler research scientist at the SETI Institute, said during a press conference at Nasa Ames Research Center on Monday. "We said, 'How many planets there

are similar to Earth?' With the data I have, I can now make that count," she said. "We're going to determine how common other planets are. Are there other places we could live in the galaxy that we don't yet call home?"

Added to Kepler's previous discoveries, the 10 new Earthlike planet candidates make 49 total, Thompson said. If any of them have stable atmospheres, there's even a chance they could harbor alien life.

Scientists wouldn't say too much about the 10 new planets, only that they appear to be roughly Earth-size and orbit in their stars' "habitable zone" -- where water is likely to be stable and liquid, not frozen or boiled away. That doesn't guarantee these planets are habitable, though. Beyond harboring a stable atmosphere, things like plate tectonics and not being tidally locked may also be essential.

However, Kepler researchers suspect that almost countless Earthlike planets are waiting to be found, because the telescope can "see" only exoplanets that pass in front of their stars.