

## It is to know if he was involved

### *Says home boss about Titu's arrest*

STAR REPORT

Police have arrested Titu Chandra Roy to know whether he has links to the Facebook post that allegedly led to the mayhem in Thakurbari village of Rangpur, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said yesterday. He also said Titu, of Thakurbari village, who was arrested in connection with the Facebook post that "hurt Muslim sentiments", was living elsewhere for the last few years.

The minister made the comments in reply to a question of journalists at a press briefing in his ministry office at the secretariat.

"A Facebook post was made from the mobile phone of Titu Chandra Roy. If he is found guilty, steps will be taken. If he is found innocent, he will be let go.

"It is true that vested quarters are trying to hatch a conspiracy in the country, but we are tackling it," the minister said.

Police arrested Titu on Tuesday in Jaldhaka of Nilphamari, and the court placed him on a four-day remand.

Earlier, Asaduzzaman said the attack on Hindu houses in Thakurbari was similar to that of Ramu in Cox's Bazar and Nasirnagar in Brahmanbaria. He said this while visiting the village in Rangpur's Gangachara upazila after the attack on November 10.

A man was killed and 20 others were injured after police fired rubber bullets and teargas shells as violence flared up in the village over the alleged Facebook post.

At least 20 Hindu houses were torched and vandalised as religious zealots ran riot there.

Meanwhile, locals raised question about the role of police and the local administration before the attack as a campaign against the Facebook post had been going on for at least five days before the incident by using loudspeakers and distributing leaflets, reports our Dinajpur correspondent.

Deputy Commissioner of Rangpur Muhammad Waheduzzaman told The Daily Star that he was totally unaware of the campaign as the UNOs did not inform him of the matter.

The DC said preventive measures could have been taken had he known about the incident.

The protesters launched the campaign, demanding punishment of Titu, aged about 40, for allegedly making the "anti-Islam" post on Facebook.

As part of the protest, an announcement was made through the loudspeakers of Paglapir Mosque in Rangpur Sadar on November 4 evening. Protesters brought out a procession that night, locals said.

Rafiqul Islam, president of Paglapir Mosque committee, said he organised a rally on November 4 night when Sirajul Islam, the imam of Koleyra Shah Bazaar Mosque, and his aide Alamgir Hossain informed him about insulting Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (pbuh) in a Facebook post.

Police arrested Sirajul on Sunday. The following day, the campaign started in full swing in nearby villages of Thakurbari after hiring loudspeakers.

## MPs want

FROM PAGE 20

suddenly towards the end of the government's tenure, it would invite a huge reaction from the people.

Tofail said, "On behalf of all concerned, I want to say that the government's move to increase holding tax should be reconsidered.

"We are the representatives of people ... We will have to face the people in the upcoming general elections."

Deputy Speaker Fazle Rabbi Miah, who was presiding over the session, suggested that the minister discuss the matter in the cabinet.

"I do believe Jononetri Sheikh Hasina's government will consider the issue from a humanitarian point of view and will take due decision in this regard," he said.

In his speech, Ziauddin Ahmed, a lawmaker from Chittagong, said people were criticising the move in Chittagong.

Noting that power and gas tariffs have been increased, he said, "If the holding tax was increased ahead of the elections, how can we seek votes from the people? We [MPs] are accountable to them [people]."

After Ziauddin's speech, the deputy speaker said it would not be nicely accepted if the tax was increased manifolds at one go. The Sheikh Hasina-led government is people-friendly. The government would definitely consider it, he said.

Lawmaker Abu Hossain said the decision to increase the tax just a year before the elections would tarnish the government's image. He urged the government to keep the holding tax within tolerable level.

## Thrashed by trash

FROM PAGE 20

mayor later rejected the allegations.

The matter came to a head when men loyal to the mayor announced a counter programme in front of the community centre on the exact same day protesting the assault on Ward No-38 councillor Abu Ahmed Mannafi. Mannafi was allegedly assaulted by party activists loyal to Murad on October 26 during the inaugural ceremony of Mouchak-Moghbaraz flyover.

As councillors Farid Uddin Ratan and Hasibur Rahman Manik, two of the mayor's men, tried to gather their followers near the community centre, they were chased by Murad's men. A clash then ensued between the two factions.

Both sides hurled brick chips at each other at around 10:45am, witnesses said.

At least three motorcycles were torched and several others were vandalised near Azimpur intersection.

Panicked people were seen running away while traffic came to a halt for more than an hour until police got the situation under control around 12:45pm after firing several rounds of tear canisters, witnesses said.

Party sources said Dhaka South City unit arranged an extended meeting at the community centre.

The programme was organised for AL's November 18 rally at Suhrawardy Uddyan to welcome the UN recognition of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's March 7 speech. The programme was organised to also begin membership collection and for the renewal drive.

Food Minister Qamrul Islam, former lawmaker Mostafa Jalal

Mohiuddin and other AL leaders entered the community centre bypassing the garbage.

The mayor was not invited to the event, sources said.

While visiting the spot, this correspondent found people, including students of Viqarunnisa Noon School & College which is located next to the community centre, covering their noses due to the stench from the garbage.

Shamima Rahman, a student's guardian, told this correspondent that they are the victims of a political rivalry. "It was totally unacceptable to dump garbage in front of a school," she added.

A security guard at the community centre told The Daily Star that the garbage was dumped there after 3:00am by two to three trucks. He, however, said he could not identify whether the trucks belonged to the city corporation.

Contacted, Sayeed Khokon denied the allegation of dumping the waste.

"Sometimes, it happens that garbage is not cleared for two or three days and it piles up. This might be a case of that," he said.

Khokon said they are looking into the matter.

Moniruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Lalbagh Police Station said they picked up several people for interrogation following the clash between the two rival groups of AL.

Back at the programme, Qamrul Islam mentioned the party's internal feud saying that it is not possible for Awami League to retain power if such things continue. "Such a feud within the party is unexpected," he said and stressed the need for unity within the ruling party.

## Doubtful

FROM PAGE 1

down in a particular way", according to a press statement of the BNP.

"Under this circumstance, I am making this statement with confusion whether I will get justice," Khaleda said.

The former prime minister said she was implicated in 36 cases, but it was very much clear to people that all those were filed out of "political vengeance". She claimed all those cases were filed based on untrue and baseless allegations.

"Everything has been done only to harass me and to tarnish my image and dignity. These cases have been filed as I am politically active and as the rulers consider me as a big challenge for them. However, the corruption cases filed against Sheikh Hasina have been withdrawn."

The BNP leader alleged that the ruling party adopted the strategy of filing false cases to isolate her from the people.

"But their intention will not be fulfilled. By doing so, rather they are becoming isolated from the people."

Khaleda said she was not afraid at all of false cases. But she feared that the atmosphere of getting justice had been "destroyed" in the country.

The ruling party was "conspiring to achieve their agendas", she told the court. "And that's why there is no atmosphere in the country of getting justice."

Regarding the case, she claimed that she never held any post either at the Zia charitable trust or at the orphanage trust and she was not involved in bringing in donation money from abroad or its distribution.

"None of the trust employees are government officials. If anyone violates the law or get involved in any irregularity, cases can be filed against those under the trust law. But how can the Anti-Corruption Commission file a so-called case on irregularities at the trust? Does this fall under its jurisdiction?"

"Apart from this, there was no corruption. It is not clear to me why I was implicated in the case."

Later, the court asked Khaleda to appear before it on November 23 to make her statement on self-defense.

Judge Md Akhteruzzaman of Special Judge's Court-5 passed the order as the BNP chief could not complete her statement and sought more time.

The former premier at the same court had earlier expressed doubt about getting justice in the case.

## Trishal girls

FROM PAGE 2

child marriage has been arranged or is about to be arranged, she calls the hot line number. Then an official of the administration accompany the girls to speak to the parents to stop the marriage.

Mahbuba Alam Tripti, the squad leader said, "We managed to stop two child marriages in Dhala village on November 4".

"We also managed to prevent two other child marriages in Dakkhin Balipara and Dhala Bazar area through discussions with the girls' parents and their relatives on November 9 and November 13."

She added that they were getting spontaneous support from guardians and locals alike.

Other members of the group are Mahima Sultana Anu, Diya, Mim, Eti, Jakia, Niva, Jenny, Rima, Binafa, Afsana and Aklima.

The squad was formally formed at a programme on Dhala High School and College ground on October 31.

Deputy Commissioner of Mymensingh Md Khalilur Rahman inaugurated the programme as chief guest. District secretary of Awami League advocate Moazzem Hossain Babul, local union parishad chairman Golam Mohamamd Badal, school headmaster Anwar Hossain and school managing committee president Abdul Baten addressed the session, among others.

Anwar Hossain praised the squad members, saying the girls were monitoring the local area and ready to intervene whenever necessary.

The UNO said at the launch that it is easier to prevent child marriages by discussions with the girls' parents than trying to stop the marriage after everything has been fixed because it becomes a social embarrassment for all persons concerned.

Rafiqul Alam, a local parent, reiterated this by saying that in such circumstances it is the girl child who is again victimised because people are able to identify her and talk about her.

The UP chairman Golam Mohammad Badal said formation of such a squad, an initiative the by UNO Abu Jafor Ripon, has already created positivity among the locals.

The UNO is very optimistic about this initiative. He hopes that soon two such squads will be formed in every union of the upazila gradually to fight prevent child marriage.

## Mugabe resists pressure

FROM PAGE 20

"It's a sort of stand-off, a stalemate," the source said. "They are insisting the president must finish his term."

The army's takeover signalled the collapse in less than 36 hours of the security, intelligence and patronage networks that sustained Mugabe through 37 years in power and built him into the "Grand Old Man" of African politics.

A priest mediating between Mugabe and the generals, who seized power on Wednesday in what they called a targeted operation against "criminals" in Mugabe's entourage, has made little headway, a senior political source told Reuters.

Opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai called for Mugabe's departure "in the interest of the people". In a statement read to reporters, Tsvangirai pointedly referred to him as "Mr Robert Mugabe", not President.

The army appears to want Mugabe, who has ruled Zimbabwe since independence in 1980, to go quietly and allow a smooth and bloodless transition to Emmerson Mnangagwa, the vice president Mugabe sacked last week triggering the political crisis.

The main goal of the generals is to prevent Mugabe from handing power to his wife Grace, 41 years his junior, who has built a following among the ruling party's youth wing and appeared on the cusp of power after Mnangagwa was pushed out.

The last of Africa's state founders from the heyday of the struggle against European colonisation still in power, Mugabe is still seen by many Africans as a liberation hero. But he is reviled in the West as a despot whose disastrous handling of the economy and willingness to resort to violence to maintain power pauperised one of Africa's most promising states.

Once a regional bread-basket, Zimbabwe saw its economy collapse in the wake of the seizure of white-owned farms in the early 2000s, followed by runaway money-printing that catapulted inflation to 500 billion percent in 2008.

Millions, from highly skilled bankers to semi-literate farmers, emigrated, mostly to neighbouring South Africa, where an estimated 3 million still live.

After a brief revival under a 2009-13 power-sharing government, when Mugabe was forced to work with the opposition, the economy has once again cratered, with dollars scarce, inflation surging, imports running out and queues outside banks.

A fighter, both literally and figuratively during a political career that included several assassination attempts, Mugabe now appears to have reached the end of the road.

With the army camped on his front door and the police - once seen as a bastion of support - showing no signs of resistance, force is not an option. Similarly, he has no popular backing in Harare, where he is widely loathed, and his influence in the ruling ZANU-PF party is evaporating.

ZANU-PF youth leader Kudzai Chipanga, a vocal Mugabe supporter, publicly apologised for opposing the army after being marched by soldiers into the state television headquarters

## Jolie to visit

FROM PAGE 2

proposed trip.

The Myanmar army released a report on Monday refuting all allegations of rape and killings by security forces, days after replacing the general in charge of the operation.

More than 600,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled Buddhist-majority Myanmar since late August, driven out by the military's actions that a top UN official has described as a classic case of "ethnic cleansing".

There were already about 300,000 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh before the most recent exodus.

## Take Rohingyas

FROM PAGE 1

said the violence amounted to ethnic cleansing.

Addressing the committee, Saudi Ambassador Abdallah al-Mouallimi said the resolution backed a solution that recognises the "legitimate rights of Muslim citizens" in Myanmar.

Myanmar's Ambassador Hau Do Suan said his government was "making positive efforts to ease the situation" in Rakhine state, which he said was now "stable".

Earlier this month, the UN Security Council agreed on a statement calling on Myanmar to "ensure no further excessive use of military force in Rakhine state".

Britain and France had initially proposed that the council adopted a formal resolution on Myanmar but China opposed such a move.

Human Rights Watch said the vote sent "a strong message to Myanmar that the world will not stand by while its military engages in ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya".

to read out a statement, sources at the broadcaster said.

He was then taken back to the army's main KGVI (pronounced KG Six) barracks in Harare, where Finance Minister Ignatius Chombo is also being held, an army source said.

Video footage obtained by Reuters from the houses of two key allies of Grace Mugabe - cabinet ministers Jonathan Moyo and Saviour Kasukuwere - indicated that the army was also prepared to use force if necessary.

Moyo's front door was blown open with explosives, scattering glass across the entrance hall, while the inside walls of Kasukuwere's house were pocked with bullet holes.

### Myanmar troops

FROM PAGE 2

sometimes after repeated harassment."

In every case, the report said, "The perpetrators were uniformed members of security forces, almost all military personnel."

Author of the report Skye Wheeler, women's rights emergencies researcher at the HRW, in a statement, said, "Rape has been a prominent and devastating feature of the Burmese military's campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya."

"The Burmese military's barbaric acts of violence have left countless women and girls brutally harmed and traumatised."

Meanwhile, the US House Foreign Affairs Committee on Wednesday condemned the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingyas in a resolution.

Pramila Patten, the UN special envoy on sexual violence in conflict, on November 12 also said sexual violence was "being commanded, orchestrated and perpetrated by the armed forces of Myanmar."

On November 19, foreign ministers of Japan, Germany and Sweden accompanied by their Bangladeshi counterpart AH Mahmood Ali will visit Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar, said a foreign ministry press release.

The foreign minister of China will also arrive on Nov 18, but he has no plan yet to visit the refugees.

The US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Wednesday announced in Nay Pyi Taw that the US will provide an additional \$47 million in humanitarian assistance bringing the total US assistance to \$83 million since August, said a press release of the US Embassy in Dhaka yesterday.

Bangladesh's National Human Rights Commission Chairman Kazi Reazul Hoque said Myanmar military officials responsible for the atrocities should be brought to justice.

He made the comment as the newly appointed UN Resident Coordinator Mia Seppo made a courtesy call at his office yesterday, said a press release.

## Rohingya return

FROM PAGE 1

Yesterday he signalled repatriation of the Rohingya was a long way off, saying their return must first be accepted by ethnic Rakhine Buddhists -- many of whom loathe the Muslim minority and are accused of aiding soldiers in torching their homes.

"Emphasis must be placed on wish of local Rakhine ethnic people who are real Myanmar citizens. Only when local Rakhine ethnic people accept it, will all the people satisfy it (sic)," the statement, written in English, said on his Facebook page.

The army commander also said Myanmar would not allow the return of all Rohingya in Bangladesh, a country that was already hosting hundreds of thousands of the minority from previous waves of persecution.

"It is impossible to accept the number of persons proposed by Bangladesh," the army statement said, after branding the refugees as "terrorists" who fled with their families.

The general's comments came a day after he met with US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who on Wednesday called on the army to support efforts to return "all refugees", adding that the reports of widespread atrocities by Myanmar's soldiers were "credible".

Bangladesh and Myanmar have agreed in principle to begin repatriation but are still tussling over the details.

Questions are mounting over how many Rohingya will be allowed to return, where they will live after they homes have been burned down and how they will coexist peacefully among ethnic Rakhine neighbours.

Tensions between the two groups have simmered for years, erupting into bouts of bloodshed in 2012 that pushed more than 100,000 Rohingya into grim displacement camps.

The Muslim minority has for years suffered under discrimination from a government that denies them citizenship and severely restricts their access to work, healthcare and education.