

RANGPUR MAYHEM

2 UP members arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

Two union parishad members were arrested late Thursday night for their alleged involvement in the attack on Hindus of Thakurpara village in Rangpur on November 10.

The arrestees are: Fazlul Haque and Joynul Abedin, members of ward-1 and -3 of Mominpur union parishad.

The police have so far arrested 161 people in connection with the mayhem.

Shariful Islam, officer-in-charge of Directive Branch (North) of police in Rangpur, said police arrested the two during a raid at Mominpur and that they were being interrogated.

On November 10, hundreds of people attacked Thakurpara village, a Hindu-dominated area, and torched 11 houses and looted and vandalised nine others.

The attack was carried out following a Facebook post that allegedly hurt the religious sentiments of the Muslims.

There was a rumour that on November 4 Titu Chandra Roy, 40, of Thakurpara posted an image “de-meaning the Prophet” on his Facebook page.

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Horrors

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The Save the Children report said those who fled Myanmar spoke of seeing children targeted for brutal sexual violence, killed and maimed indiscriminately and abducted.

“These appalling crimes amount to grave violations against children in conflict. They must stop and those carrying them out must be held accountable,” it said.

Around 60 percent of the Rohingyas, who came to Cox’s Bazar since August 25, are children, and almost each of them witnessed a family member or someone from their community killed, it observed.

“They have seen and experienced things that no child should ever see.”

Shadibabiran, a 16-year-old girl cited in the report, said military went to their village and started shooting. Her mother was shot in the ankle.

“They hit me in the face with a gun, kicked me in my chest and stamped on my arms and legs. Then I was raped by three soldiers. They raped me for about two hours and at some stage I fainted.

“They broke one of my ribs when they kicked me in the chest. It was very painful and I could hardly breathe. I still have difficulty breathing, but I haven’t been to a doctor, as I feel too ashamed,” she told Save the Children, which changed the real names of the victims to protect their identities.

In recent weeks, several human rights watchdogs have accused Myanmar military of genocide and widespread sexual violence.

“These children, who have endured so much suffering, were desperate with no place to go,” said Save the Children Bangladesh Country Director Mark Pierce, urging the authorities to act.

He also demanded Myanmar to identify perpetrators of the crimes and bring them to justice or accept the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.

“If Myanmar government fails to take credible and timely steps to investigate the crimes...and end impunity, the UN Security Council must act and refer the situation to the ICC,” the report concluded.

It also asked the international community to ensure all Rohingya children, who fled to Bangladesh, receive adequate care and support to recover from trauma.

Pabna college

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phone call from an unknown number and the caller demanded Tk 50 lakh as ransom for Robiul’s release.

The family filed a general diary with the police station.

After investigation, police arrested Mamun on Thursday by tracking his cell phone, the police official said.

During interrogation, Mamun confessed that he was involved in the murder. He also said Robiul’s body was buried in his bedroom, the OC said.

As per his statement, the law enforcers dug out the decomposed body yesterday morning.

The OC said they primarily suspected that the victim was killed over ransom money.

“Why the victim was killed and how many people were involved in the killing, we are not clear about it at all. Investigation is going on,” the police official added.

The body was sent to Pabna Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

Talking to journalists, victim’s brother Nazrul Islam said they are poor and they had no ability to pay the ransom.

He demanded punishment of those involved in the killing.



Water in Hatirjheel near the city's Tongi Diversion Road has become badly polluted by sewage released into the lake from nearby residential areas. Visitors find it difficult to stay there due to the stinking water.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Green brick shows hope

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organisations have already started using the alternative bricks.

“There is no use of topsoil and firewood and there is no pollution. This [the brick] is eco-friendly, agriculture-friendly and cost-effective,” said HBRI Director Mohammad Abu Sadeque.

Funded by the European Union, a project under SWITCH-Asia Programme is being implemented by the HBRI, an autonomous body under the Ministry of Housing and Public Works, to promote the alternative bricks among consumers and producers.

BRICK KILNS: ENEMY OF ENVIRONMENT

Brick kilns are one of largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions in Bangladesh.

According to a 2016 Asian Development Bank (ADB) report, the country produces 22.71 billion pieces of bricks a year. In doing so, a World Bank report says, the brick kiln sector consumes 3.5 million tonnes of coal and 1.9 million tonnes of firewood, emitting 9.8 million tonnes of greenhouse gas annually.

During the dry season, 58 percent of the total air pollution in Dhaka city is caused by the brickfields, show DoE data.

It is needless to say how these gases affect the public health.

Besides, digging up topsoil from agricultural lands reduces fertility.

Many marginal farmers are lured or forced into selling topsoil to the wealthy and influential brick kiln owners in the country.

Taking the harmful consequences into account, India and China have already prohibited collecting topsoil from agricultural land. Bangladesh’s

Brick Burning Control Act, 1989 (revised in 2013) also prohibits such use of soil of agricultural land where two crops are grown a year, say environmentalists.

Moreover, as per the seventh five-year plan, the government is to stop the use of topsoil in brickfields by 2020.

But, the harmful practice continues unabated in Bangladesh with experts warning that it might put the country’s food security under threat.

THE ALTERNATIVE BRICK

The alternative bricks could be a relief for the environment, say experts, as they would help reduce pollution and prevent destruction of arable land.

During a visit to the HBRI’s office in Darussalam area of Mirpur recently, this correspondent saw some workers making such bricks with the use of a moulding machine. They were working under the supervision of a researcher.

Each of the bricks contained 90 percent river-dredged soil and the rest was cement. The machine pressurised the two components and gave them the shape. Later, the bricks were left in the open for 14 to 28 days before they became ready for use.

The raw materials are found easily and the bricks can be produced with auto or manual moulding machines, Mesbah Uddin, a researcher at HBRI, said.

The price of an auto moulding machine is around Tk 20 lakh. It can produce 5,000 to 10,000 bricks every day, he said, adding that, the machine, unlike the kilns, doesn’t occupy much space.

Apart from making the alternative bricks, HBRI claims to have invented 20 to 25 types of alternative building materials like ferrocement and thermal block

for making floor, roof and wall.

On its office premise, the HBRI has constructed different structures, including a five-storey building, cyclone shelters and a floating building, using these materials to demonstrate them.

The production of alternative bricks are 30 percent cost effective than that of the traditional bricks, said Abu Sadeque, the HBRI director, adding that, the earth blocks are not that prone to erosion.

The institute gives technical support to the users and those who want to manufacture the materials commercially.

Researcher Mesbah Uddin said the response they have been getting of late from people was encouraging. “Eight to 10 interested people come every day to us to know about the materials,” he added.

Nazrul Islam, a resident of Mirpur, was one of those people found at the office. “I would like to build a house in my village home with these materials,” he said.

MORE MEASURES REQUIRED

Abu Sadeque, however, said they were yet to get the expected response from the major government institutions, including the Public Works Department (PWD), the Education Engineering Department (EED) and the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED).

HBRI-made 15 building materials have recently been incorporated into the “red schedule” of PWD, opening up scope of their use in government projects.

A proposal has also been given to include a provision in the Brick Manufacturing and Brick Kilns Establishment (Control) Act. The provi-

sion would be that 20 percent of the total bricks produced by each kiln would have to be alternative bricks.

“In that case, the use of 20 percent alternatives bricks has to be made mandatory in every government project. Otherwise, the private kilns owners won’t be interested in producing the bricks,” Abu Sadeque said.

As the country has no dedicated organisation to take the HBRI-invented products to the filed level, the role of the PWD, the EED and the LGED would be crucial in this regard, he added.

Talking to The Daily Star recently, architect Iqbal Habib said the government should start using environment-friendly and cost-effective building materials in all its projects right away.

Iqbal, also a joint-secretary of the Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa), said the government also should give incentive and encourage private investors to produce the alternative bricks.

“If these can be done, we will be able to save our air, water, land and labourers from permanent losses caused by the brick kilns,” he added.

A leading environmental activist Syeda Rizwana Hasan said the government must stop giving approval to new brick kilns and set a specific timeframe for the closure of the existing kilns.

The government can provide financial support to the kiln owners through Bangladesh Bank’s green financing fund so that they can go for producing alternative bricks instead of fire bricks, she said.

The government also has to incorporate provisions in the Building Construction Act, its rules and the National Building Code, making the use of alternative bricks mandatory, she added.

AL, BNP gear up for polls

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About internal conflicts, AL Organising Secretary Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury told this newspaper that every big party has internal feuds, and it is normal.

“We are working to resolve the disputes,” he added.

BNP’S PREPARATION

Apart from making preparations for the next national election, the party is mobilising its leaders and activists to materialise the demand for a non-partisan election-time government.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will embark on divisional and district tours with an aim to boost morale of party leaders and activists, say party leaders.

Talking to this newspaper, a number of BNP leaders said that right now they don’t have any plan to announce tough programmes over the demand for polls-time government or place any formula for an interim administration.

At a party rally on November 12, Khaleda categorically said a fair election is not possible with Hasina in power, and that the election should be held under a non-partisan government.

She addressed the rally in the capital’s Suhrawardy Udyan upon her return from London where she had stayed for around two months.

BNP Standing Committee Member

Moudud Ahmed yesterday said, “We are now moving forward keeping in mind two issues -- preparations for the next polls and the demand for a neutral election-time government.”

The party seeks to put pressure on the government by creating public opinion in favour of a non-partisan election-time administration.

“We will try our best to hold talks with the government and not to go for any tough political programmes,” mentioned the former law minister.

About the election preparations, he said the party is taking new members and keeping a close eye on the voter list update by the Election Commission.

Asked, Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain, another member of the party’s standing committee, said Khaleda will first tour the divisional headquarters and then go to some important districts.

“We expect that Khaleda Zia will also visit the city corporations that will go to polls in the coming months.”

The former minister further said the BNP’s election manifesto will be based on its Vision 2030 the party chief unveiled before the nation in May.

About the selection of candidates, he said, “We are evaluating the prospective candidates but the formal process will begin after the announcement of the election schedule.”

Tesla unveils electric truck

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Musk said customers can put down a \$5,000 deposit for the semi now and production will begin in 2019.

“We’re confident that this is a product that’s better in every way from a feature standpoint,” Musk told a crowd of Tesla fans gathered for the unveiling. Musk didn’t reveal the semi’s price.

The truck will have Tesla’s Autopilot system, which can maintain a set speed and slow down automatically in traffic. It also has a system that automatically keeps the vehicle in its lane. Musk said several Tesla semis will be able to travel in a convoy, autonomously following each other.

Musk said Tesla plans a worldwide network of solar-powered “megachargers” that could get the trucks back up to 400 miles of range after charging for only 30 minutes.

The move fits with Musk’s stated

goal for the company of accelerating the shift to sustainable transportation. Trucks account for nearly a quarter of transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S., according to government statistics.

But the semi also piles on more chaos at the Palo Alto, California-based company. Tesla is way behind on production of the Model 3, a new lower-cost sedan, with some customers facing waits of 18 months or more. It’s also ramping up production of solar panels after buying Solar City Corp. last year. Tesla is working on a pickup truck and a lower-cost SUV and negotiating a new factory in China. Meanwhile, the company posted a record quarterly loss of \$619 million in its most recent quarter.

Musk is being pulled in many directions. He leads rocket maker SpaceX and is dabbling in other projects, including

high-speed transit, artificial intelligence research and a new company that’s digging tunnels beneath Los Angeles to alleviate traffic congestion.

“He’s got so much on his plate right now. This could present another distraction from really just making sure that the Model 3 is moved along effectively,” said Bruce Clark, a senior vice president and automotive analyst at Moody’s.

Tesla’s semi is venturing into an uncertain market. Demand for electric trucks is expected to grow over the next decade as the U.S., Europe and China all tighten their emissions regulations. Electric truck sales totaled 4,100 in 2016, but are expected to grow to more than 70,000 in 2026, says Navigant Research.

But most of that growth is expected to be for smaller, medium-duty haulers like garbage trucks or delivery vans. Those trucks can have a more limited range of 100 miles or less, which

requires fewer expensive batteries. They can also be fully charged overnight.

Long-haul semi trucks, on the other hand, would be expected to go greater distances, and that would be challenging. Right now, there’s little charging infrastructure on global highways. Without Tesla’s promised fast-charging, even a mid-sized truck would likely require a two-hour stop, cutting into companies’ efficiency and profits, says Brian Irwin, managing director of the North American industrial group for the consulting firm Accenture.

Irwin says truck companies will have to watch the market carefully, because tougher regulations on diesels or an improvement in charging infrastructure could make electric trucks more viable very quickly. Falling battery costs also will help make electric trucks more appealing compared to diesels.

ROHINGYA CRISIS

Int’l community should do more

Says panel of global experts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A number of international experts yesterday said there were not enough protests across the world and by the Rohingyas themselves to mount pressure on the Myanmar government to resolve the Rohingya crisis.

Blaming the Myanmar army for committing atrocities, they called upon the international community to document each serious crime for ensuring justice in future.

The experts were addressing a discussion titled “Rohingyas: Landless Future” at the Dhaka Literary Festival at the Bangla Academy.

Escaping a military crackdown in Myanmar’s Rakhine State, more than 618,000 Rohingyas have fled to Bangladesh since late August.

Recalling a huge international outrage over the Darfur crisis in 2004, Ameerah Haq, under-secretary general at the UN Department of Field Support, said such a protest from renowned global personalities, including Hollywood celebrities, was needed to show support to the Rohingya community.

There could be a regional solution to the crisis, but the South-East Asian nations seemed stuck on the issue at

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US lists

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According to documents, Md Khawaja Moinuddin of M/S Star Gold International, a recruiting agency office in Banani, owns the vehicle.

There were no senior officials at the agency office when The Daily Star correspondent visited last Thursday.

Identifying himself as Asaduzzaman, one of the two people present at the office said Khawaja was in Saudi Arabia and that they did not know anything about the cubs.

Police had arrested two people in the SUV -- Rana Bhuiyan and Md Kamruzzaman Babu, said Syed Bayejid Hossain, in charge of Chansara police camp in Jessore.

The cubs were apparently being smuggled to India, which is on the US state department’s “focus countries” list along with Brazil, Burma, Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Indonesia, Kenya, Laos, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Mozambique, Nigeria, Philippines, South Africa, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, and Vietnam.

The report said that being enlisted as a “focus country” did not indicate that the country was not working diligently to end wildlife trafficking. Many of those countries have strong political will to combat wildlife trafficking, it said.

Some of them were in partnership with the US to fight the problem, it said.

“Countries of concern” were those that had actively engaged in or knowingly profited from trafficking endangered or threatened species.

Madagascar, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Laos were mentioned as “countries of concern”.

The US government is trying to combat this illegal trade at home and abroad by targeting three strategic priorities: strengthening enforcement; reducing demand for illegally traded wildlife; and building international cooperation.

It also plans to continue its dialogue with focus and concern countries to identify steps to thwart the crime, the report said.

Asked, Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain, another member of the party’s standing committee, said Khaleda will first tour the divisional headquarters and then go to some important districts.

“We expect that Khaleda Zia will also visit the city corporations that will go to polls in the coming months.”

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Indian plane

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A broken bearing seemed to have caused the fire, he said.

The aircraft was brought back to the tarmac for repairing.

Mother, son

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Pukuria in Fatikchhari upazila. The deceased and the injured were travelling in the three-wheelers.

Belal Muhammad Jahangir, officer-in-charge of Hathazari Police Station, said the accident happened on Chittagong-Rangamati highway around 8:30am. The armoured vehicle along with the three-wheelers fell into a roadside ditch.

On information, a team of fire service rushed to the spot and recovered the bodies and rescued the injured, said Shahadat Hossain, senior station officer of Hathazari Fire Service Station.

Physicians from Combined Military Hospital in Chittagong went to the spot immediately after the accident and declared Rokeya and her son dead, he said.

The injured were given primary treatment, he added.

Contacted, Lt Col Rashidul Hasan, director of ISPR, told The Daily Star that the APC (armoured personnel carrier) was heading for Charia in Hathazari to be a part of an exercise.