

Bangladeshi held

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Cuomo, speaking at a news conference near the site, described the device as "amateur-level."

De Blasio told the same news conference that the incident, which happened at the start of the city's rush hour, was "an attempted terrorist attack."

New York City was a target, said John Miller, deputy police commissioner of intelligence and counterterrorism.

"When you hear about a bomb in the subway station, which is in many ways one of our worst nightmares, the reality turns out better than the initial expectation and fear," Cuomo told reporters. Later on CNN, he said the attacker apparently used the internet to obtain information on how to make a bomb.

WABC reported the suspect was in his 20s and that he has been in the United States for seven years and has an address in New York's Brooklyn borough. Police shut down the entire block and there was a heavy police presence outside the home.

First reports of the incident began soon after 7 am (1200 GMT). New York in December sees a surge of visitors who come to see elaborate store displays, the Rockefeller Center

Christmas tree and Broadway shows.

The bus terminal is the busiest in the United States, according to the Port Authority. On a typical weekday, about 220,000 passengers arrive or depart on more than 7,000 buses.

More than 200,000 people use the Times Square station, the city's busiest, each weekday, according to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

The bus terminal is connected to different sections of the sprawling Times Square subway station - which serves 10 train lines - through a long, narrow below-ground tunnel that carries thousands of commuters during rush hour. Buskers and other entertainers at entrances to the tunnel often draw crowds.

Talking to The Daily Star, Shamim Ahsan, Consul General at Bangladesh Consulate in New York, said that they came to know from the media that the suspect was a Bangladeshi. He was in touch with the authorities and was awaiting confirmation of the attacker's identity.

Meanwhile, a statement issued by the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington after the terror incident, reiterated the country's commitment to zero tolerance against terrorism.



Police respond to a reported explosion at the Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York yesterday. New York police said they were investigating an explosion of "unknown origin" in busy downtown Manhattan, and that people were being evacuated. Media reports said at least one person had been detained after the blast near the Port Authority transit terminal, close to Times Square.

PHOTO: AFP

NASIRNAGAR MAYHEM

Court accepts charge sheet against 228

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A Brahmanbaria court yesterday accepted the charge sheet against 228 accused, including several Awami League and BNP leaders, in a case filed in connection with attacking a Hindu temple in Nasirnagar over 13 months ago.

Court Inspector Mahbubur Rahman submitted the charge sheet to the Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court.

He said the court would issue arrest warrants for the accused in the next hearing of the case.

Abu Zafar, officer-in-charge of Nasirnagar Police Station, submitted the charge sheet to Mahbubur on Sunday afternoon.

The charges were pressed in the case filed by Nirmal Chowdhury, general secretary of Gaur Mandir, a temple vandalised on October 30 last year. Over 1,000 unnamed persons were accused in the case.

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Relief with tap on app

FROM PAGE 1

And above all, he continued, "when I am with my family and children going somewhere at night, security is my first concern."

Surely, riding in a vehicle with its details and its driver's details available on the mobile phone gives a sense of security.

Khairul is not alone. Many office goers now use the ride-sharing apps to get to and from work. Pathao, which initially offered motorbike services, gained popularity on their promise of beating the traffic at a reasonable rate. Many others have followed.

However, as a result of the changing landscape, auto-rickshaw drivers are taking a hit.

A year after the launch of Uber, they were not this vocal, probably because the changes were not visible.

But in a press release issued on November 30 by Dhaka and Chittagong Districts CNG Auto-rickshaw Sramik Oikya Parishad, the drivers' association in the release demanded banning of all app-based ride-sharing services like Uber and Pathao and implementation of not more than government-fixed Tk 900 in daily rent to owners.

AUTORICKSHAW'S LATEST

CHALLENGE

Mohammad Mojibor, who has been driving auto-rickshaws for the last six months, said he started feeling the impact particularly after the launch of apps that hired out motorbikes.

Even a month ago, his daily income hovered between Tk 800-1,000 excluding the Tk 1,050 vehicle and garage rent to the owner and the fuel cost. Now, he toils up to 12 hours a day to make Tk 500-600. Other drivers like him share the same grievances.

There have been several attempts by the government to fix the auto-rickshaw fares but to no avail. Commuters have continued complaining against drivers of overcharging them.

Against this backdrop, the ride-sharing companies have eased travel experiences for those reluctant to journey in crowded and often rundown public buses. Earlier, their only other option was auto-rickshaws which often entailed heated exchanges over fares.

Fifty-seven year old Mojibor says drivers don't go by the metre because the owners demand more than the government-fixed daily rent of TK 900.

"I want more Uber [cars and motorbikes] to hit the roads. Owners will

then understand the consequences. ... I will then return to my previous profession [as a rickshaw driver]."

Another auto-rickshaw driver, Shafiqul Islam says he pays the vehicle owner Tk 700 in rent for a six hour shift. "Someday, hours go by simply doing the vehicle's maintenance works but still owners take the full rent."

Mojibor also leveled the same accusation against his vehicle's owner.

On the allegation of additional rent, Barkatullah Bulu, president of Dhaka Metropolitan CNG Owners Association, said the claim is partially true; some owners charge more than the fixed rate.

He, at the same time, explained why drivers' income is less than expected.

Many of them don't make trips if the destination is not of their convenience and so they limit trips to a few locations, Barkatullah said.

There are 13,000 registered and as many unregistered auto-rickshaws plying across the capital, Bulu said.

Until November, 10,000 active Uber cars were operating in Dhaka and hundreds more are getting registered every day, according to a recent press release issued by the world's largest ride-sharing company. Uber received

15 lakh ride requests last month and 2 lakh people took an Uber trip within the same timeframe.

Responding to an e-mail, local company Pathao, popular for its ride-sharing motorbikes inside Dhaka, said it provides more than a thousand rides per day. It, however, has not given the exact figure as to how many cars, motorbikes or drivers are registered with it.

The competition is growing as more local startups with similar concepts are joining the transport business.

Amid the situation, CNG Auto-rickshaw Owners' Association ran an advertisement in a daily Bangla newspaper on December 4, in which it cautioned against charging more than Tk 900 as daily rent and running vehicles in shifts.

Any violation of the instructions will lead to the cancellation of the vehicles' registration, according to the advert. The association also asked drivers to abide by the rules and behave well with passengers.

LEGAL OBSTACLES TO TECH-BASED SERVICES

But Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) ran a notice in different newspapers, in which it said operating any taxicab service without permission from BRTA or the government was

an illegal and punishable offence.

Referring to transport guidelines, it also said any rent-a-car or run-on-fare vehicles must have a different colour (Black body and yellow top) and route permits.

Since Uber was the first service of its kind in Bangladesh, the government lacked any framework to regulate such transport operation.

In a query over legal issues, Uber through an e-mail, said, "We are working with the government and policymakers to help bring innovation to our cities through constructive dialogue and engagement."

Pathao also gave a reply to similar queries. "Pathao, and other ride-hailing companies are in constant communication with the BRTA. The final draft has already been submitted," it said.

Road Transport and Highways Division Secretary Md Nazrul Islam yesterday also said a regulation for the app-based services had recently been submitted to the cabinet. "We appreciate the services ...and so prepared the regulation to promote them."

Meanwhile, more and more drivers are turning to get registered with the app-based services.

Uber said hundreds are getting registered every day.

EMPLOYMENT WITH FREEDOM

Most car and motorbike drivers The Daily Star spoke to mentioned freedom and scope to earn an additional income as motivations for undertaking the profession.

24-year-old Mostafa Reaz has been working with Pathao for the past two months. He is happy that he can now earn around Tk 30,000 a month by making trips with passengers on his motorbike. This is more than what his job at a private company pays him.

"It feels like I am a self-employed person and am earning enough to meet my needs," Mostafa said.

Another motorbike owner, Saimul Islam, said he could easily have additional income just by sharing rides with a passenger on his way from his Paltan office to Mohakhali.

Part of his job is to communicate with pharmaceutical companies on a regular basis, to which his employer supplies raw materials. "For my job, I have to move around all the time and so I can give a ride to another person going in the same direction," said Saimul, who is registered with both Uber and Pathao.

Nightmare in Rakhine

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soldiers charged into their bedroom. The men bound her husband with rope and gagged him with a scarf they ripped from F's head.

They yanked off F's jewellery and stripped off her clothes. They threw her to the floor, where the first soldier began to rape her.

In September, her nightmare began again. F was asleep at a neighbour's house when five soldiers broke down the door. The soldiers slashed the throat of the 5-year-old boy who lived there and killed his father. They stripped off the women's clothes. Two men raped F, and three men raped her friend.

SHE COULDN'T RUN

K and her family were settling down to breakfast one morning in late August when they heard the screams of other villagers outside. Her husband and three oldest children bolted out the door.

But K was nearly 9 months pregnant and had two toddlers to watch.

The men barged in, threw her on the bed. They ripped off her clothes and tied down her hands and legs with rope. When she resisted, they choked her. And then they began to rape her.

I WAS IN IMMENSE PAIN

R was at home in late August with her husband and five of her six children when she heard a commotion outside. She saw houses going up in flames in her village.

Her husband ran out, but she had the children to take care of. Five soldiers barged into the house. Her children screamed and ran outside.

The men stripped off her clothes, took her necklace and kicked her in her back with their knees. Then one of the men began to rape her, while the other four held her down and hit her with their guns.

"I was in immense pain," she says.

THEY HIT HER UNTIL SHE FELL

A was at home praying with her four children in late August when about 50 soldiers surrounded her village and opened fire on the men.

Three men burst into her house and told her to get out. She refused. They beat her. Her children screamed. The soldiers slapped them, then threw them out of the house.

Two of the soldiers hit her until she fell. One pressed his boot against her chest, pinning her down. Then all three raped her.

THE BABY GIRL WAS DEAD

M was at home feeding her son rice in late August when a bullet from the military blasted through the bamboo wall of her house and struck her teenage brother.

Her husband and children ran out of the house. But M was 8 months preg-

nant, and did not want to leave her brother behind. For two days, she stayed by his side, until he died.

Soon after, four soldiers charged into her house.

They dragged her outside the house, stripped her and beat her. The first man began to rape her, while the other two held her down and punched and kicked her pregnant belly.

After the second rape, she kicked them so ferociously, they finally left.

M felt intense cramping in her belly. She gave birth that night at home. The baby girl was dead. M buried the infant in an unmarked grave by her house.

CHILDREN REFUSED TO LEAVE HER SIDE

H was reciting the sunrise prayer at home in late August with her husband and six children. A dozen soldiers burst through her door and started beating her husband. They grabbed three of her children by their feet, carried them outside and bashed them against trees, killing them.

Her husband screamed, and H ran out of the house. As she fled, she heard gunshots behind her. She never saw her husband again.

She made it with her three other children to the nearby hills, where other women from her village were hiding. But soldiers descended upon the women and dragged them away to rape them.

Her crying children refused to leave her side during the assault. The soldiers slapped them, kicked them, tried to shove them away. They refused to budge.

When the soldiers finished, her 8-year-old daughter tried to cover her naked body with her torn clothing.

BABIES WENT UP IN FLAMES

When seven soldiers stormed into the house in October 2016, S's husband fled. The soldiers began beating her parents.

A soldier beat S with his gun, ripped two of her babies from her arms and dropped them on the floor. Two soldiers took S to a field. They held her down and raped her.

When it was over, she hid in the hills but eventually returned home.

In August, S was at home with her family when the military began firing rocket launchers at houses, setting them ablaze. Her husband and two eldest children fled, but she stayed behind to pack up her baby girls and a few belongings. One baby was in a swing, the other sleeping on the floor.

A rocket launcher hit the house. The babies went up in flames before her eyes.

ALL THREE RAPED HER

The military surrounded N's village one early morning in late August. Around 18 soldiers stormed her house, and dragged N outside with her sister-in-law and mother-in-law.

The women were taken to the centre of the village. Three men then took her to the hills and stripped her naked. Two men held down her hands while a third raped her. Then they switched positions. All three raped her.

THEY SLASHED HER HUSBAND'S NECK

There was no warning before five soldiers suddenly stormed into 16-year-old S's house one morning in early August. They slashed her husband's neck, killing him.

Two soldiers pulled her into a room, snatched her 3-month-old son from her arms and put him on the floor. They searched her clothes for valuables and took her earrings. Another three men came in and began to beat her with guns while the others stripped off her clothes.

One soldier held down her hands, and another put his gun in her mouth. All five men raped her.

SHE NEVER SAW HER SON AGAIN

The soldiers had been harassing T's family for days: Showing up and stealing their food, urinating in their rice, hitting T and, once, stripping off her clothes.

And then one morning in mid-August, five men dragged her husband out of the house, where they slashed his neck. They grabbed her 10-year-old son and dragged him outside; she never saw him again. Her 12-year-old daughter managed to flee.

The soldiers pinned her to the floor. Two men held her while the first man raped her. Then they switched.

CLEARLY BEEN RAPED

N's husband was walking down a road in late August when several villagers saw soldiers grab him and drag him into the hills. Later that day, children in the hills came upon his head, along with several other corpses. Soldiers were milling around near the bodies.

N stayed in her house with her 8-year-old daughter for the next few days, unable to stop crying. Then suddenly, around 80 soldiers descended on the village. Five soldiers came to her door and shouted: "Who's inside?"

The men barged in.

They ripped her clothes off and beat her in the head with a gun until she blacked out. When she awoke, her vagina was swollen, bleeding and covered in sores. She had clearly been raped; by how many men, she does not know.

SHE BLED FOR SIX DAYS

N, 17, was at home with her parents and siblings in late August when she heard the crackle of gunfire. Suddenly, 10 men burst into the house.

Five men then took turns raping her, while the others helped hold her down. Her parents were forced to watch. When they screamed, the soldiers beat

them. Eventually, they stood in silence as their daughter was assaulted.

After the men left, N's parents untied her and washed her. She bled for six days.

THEY LAUGHED AT HER

Around 100 soldiers surrounded A's village one afternoon in late August. A's husband fled, leaving her alone in the house with their 2-year-old son.

Two soldiers came into her house. They tore off her clothes. She wept and begged them to stop. Then they shoved her to the ground, laughing at her.

One soldier pressed his knife to her right hip and cut into her flesh. Both of them punched her in the face. The men then took turns raping her.

TEARING HER FLESH WITH THEIR TEETH

M was at home with her husband, her sister-in-law and her sister-in-law's brother in late August when security forces stormed their village. The husbands fled, leaving M alone in the house with her sister-in-law, who was in the shower.

Three men kicked the door open. They tied M's arms behind her back.

They dragged her sister-in-law out of the shower. They bit her face and body, tearing her flesh with their teeth. All three men raped her.

One of the men came over to M, stripped her clothes off and took her earrings and then raped her.

SHE STIFLED HER SCREAMS

D was at home one evening in late August when she heard noise outside. Her two older sons and husband rushed out of the house, leaving her alone with her 3-year-old boy. Three men entered her home. She screamed and her son began to cry.

One man restrained her arms and held a knife to her hip while the other two men raped her. She feared the men would kill her, so she stifled her screams.

IT WAS NEVER-ENDING

It was late August and K was around four months pregnant when soldiers swarmed her village.

Four men smashed the door open, tied up her husband and began beating and kicking the couple's children. They kicked K's 3-year-old daughter in the head so hard that she died of her injuries three days later.

They tied her up and began to rape her, one after the other. The men kicked her so viciously, she feared the baby inside her would die. "It was never-ending," she says now.

SHE FEARED HER BABY WAS DYING

two crying toddlers and beat them.

They ripped her clothes off, and threw her to the floor. One man held her left arm, one held her right arm and one held down her legs, while the fourth man raped her. Then they switched.

They kicked and punched her so hard, she feared the baby inside her was dying. Finally, they left.

IT LASTED FOR HOURS

It was mid-afternoon one day in late August when about 10 men in camouflage uniforms entered M's house. Her three children began to scream and cry. Five men took her husband away, and four forced her out of the house and into the nearby hills.

One of the men held a gun to her. They bit her face and her body and hit her. They tied her mouth with her own headscarf. And then three of the men held her down while the other man raped her. The attack lasted for hours.

TEN MEN RAPED HER

F was at home in late August when she heard screaming outside. Her husband went to investigate and saw that about 300 soldiers and Buddhist villagers had surrounded the area.

About eight soldiers and villagers grabbed F's husband and tied his hands behind his back. Around 100 men took F, her mother and about 20 other women to another village. The soldiers beat them with guns, kicking and slapping them.

Once they reached the next village, the women were forced to lie down on the ground next to each other. The men tied their wrists together with rope and began to rape them.

Ten men raped F.

SHE WAS IN AGONY

S was lying in bed with her husband and son after dinner in late August when around 10 soldiers burst into the house. A few took her husband outside. Five stayed behind, and one pointed his gun at her.

She tried to run, but they grabbed her and kicked her back, stomach and chest. They stripped off her clothes and took her necklace and earrings. Three men raped her.

S was in agony. After the men were finished, they took her outside, naked. Her son followed them. About two dozen other women, also naked, had been dragged outside as well.

The soldiers forced the women to march toward a rice paddy, beating and kicking them as they walked. S felt blood running down her legs. Once they arrived, the men ordered them to lie down. S fought back and soldiers kicked her. She fell to the ground.

Three more soldiers began to rape her. (Abridged)

128 joint secretaries promoted

UNB, Dhaka

The government has promoted 128 joint secretaries to additional secretaries, raising the number of additional secretaries to 560.

The number of joint secretaries now stands 653.

The public administration ministry yesterday issued a notification in this regard.

According to the ministry sources, there are 111 permanent posts of

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Dhaka, Rangpur

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The Dynamites, led by Shakib Al Hasan, finished the group stage in second place and earned themselves a one-way ticket to the title match by beating Comilla in Qualifier-1 on Friday. Rangpur took the scenic route as the Mashrafe Bin Mortaza-led outfit had to overcome a disappointing start to the season to rally midway through the tournament through the efforts of the skipper and foreign stalwarts like Chris Gayle, Brendon McCullum and Johnson Charles, who helped dump Comilla out of the event with a century yesterday. Before that, they had to play the Eliminator on Friday against third-placed Khulna Titans, when Gayle hit a thunderous, unbeaten 51-ball 126 to settle the issue.

If Dhaka manage to win the tournament today, it will be the fourth time that a Dhaka outfit has won the event, with the first two editions going to the now-disbanded Dhaka Gladiators. It will also be the icing on the cake for Shakib, who was named Bangladesh's new Test captain on Sunday. Rangpur have never won the title, but Mashrafe did lead Comilla Victorians to the trophy in 2015.

Rangpur's place in the final has some controversy associated with it as, according to the tournament bylaws, the higher ranked team would progress in a playoff situation if at least five overs of both innings could not be completed because of weather interruptions and a Super Over could not be played for the same reason. In that respect, Comilla as the top-ranked group finishers could have gone through, but according to the governing council the management of both teams decided to continue the match yesterday.