

Terror groups may target Rohingyas

Says home minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday said if the Rohingyas were not safely repatriated soon, they would become easy targets of international terrorist groups that always look for new recruits.

He made the comment at a "Meet the Reporters" programme organised by Dhaka Reporters' Unity at its office in the capital.

He, however, said there was no sign of the repatriation though the Myanmar authorities repeatedly said they would take back the Rohingyas.

Around seven lakh Rohingyas fled Myanmar and took refuge in Bangladesh after August 25 last year, fearing persecution by Myanmar security forces.

Staying in camps in Cox's Bazar, many Rohingyas are engaging in criminal activities. According to intelligence agencies, some militant outfits have made attempts to recruit operatives in the camps.

At yesterday's programme, Asaduzzaman said a few foreign non-government organisations had already been blacklisted and sent back home

for their "dubious" activities in the camp. He, however, did not name the NGOs.

Speaking on another issue, he reiterated that the ongoing anti-narcotics drive, which left at least 186 suspected drug dealers dead since May 4, would continue.

Asked why the government did not take action against over 200 police personnel who were mentioned as drug patrols in a list prepared by his ministry, the home minister said, "We are not sparing anyone. Possibly you are not getting all the messages".

Those law enforcers were facing departmental action and suspension, he said, adding "one or two have already been sent to jail".

Asked why the godfathers have not been brought to book, Asaduzzaman said the law enforcers were taking action against those whose names appeared in all the five lists prepared by separate intelligence agencies.

He said they were "going slow" as they were also collecting information and evidence against the others.

"Even honourable lawmakers are

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People try to push a car out of a poorly covered hole on a road in the Dhaka University's TSC area yesterday. Such holes often cause accidents in the area as those go under water after rain.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

More migrants take sea route to Spain than Italy this year

AFP, Geneva

The number of migrants arriving in Spain by boat is surging, the UN said yesterday, and it has now surpassed Italy as the top destination for Mediterranean crossings.

So far this year, 50,872 migrants have crossed the Mediterranean to Europe -- less than half the number that made the treacherous journey during the same period of 2017, according to the UN migration agency.

But while the overall numbers have fallen dramatically, Spain has seen landings on its shores nearly triple, IOM said.

"As we have predicted for several weeks now, Spain has become the most active route of African migrants and people using Africa as a stepping stone into Europe," agency spokesman Joel Millman told reporters in Geneva.

Nothing serious

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Bangla daily Prothom Alo ran a report yesterday saying mixed metals were found in the gold bar kept at the vault, and the percentage of gold in it was found at 46 percent instead of 80 percent.

Rabiul reasoned that it happened because of similarity between the number 4 in Bangla and the number 8 in English.

The only designated goldsmith for the BB -- Shokh Jewellers -- made the mistake, he said.

On July 11, the BB governor sent a reply to the NBR chairman, addressing all the errors in the related documents. Yet, the CIID stuck to its investigation report and refused to accept it as a mere error in record keeping, he added.

The CIID report also mentioned that 20 and 24 carats gold was recorded as 18 carats in the BB register.

Talking to this newspaper, Md Shahidul Islam, director general of the CIID, said, "Everything was done in front of the Bangladesh Bank's representatives. There was no outsider. They [BB officials] received the gold as 22 carats and we have those papers."

He said the probe was carried out by a committee, and everything was done in the presence of BB officials.

"If they had disagreed, it would have been reflected in the [CIID] report."

Asked whether the CIID suspects any wrongdoing at the BB, he said, "We have sent our observations."

Rabiul said the vault is highly secure, and there is no scope for anyone to change the metal.

Refuting the CIID report, Rabiul said customs officials measured the quality of gold digitally but the BB had done it manually when it received the metal.

He explained that the record was maintained following the manual measurement method by the designated jeweller.

According to the CIID report, the purity of the 3.30 kg gold bar was recorded at 80 percent but it was found at 46 percent during inspection.

Rabiul explained that the goldsmith mistakenly recorded the purity of the bar at 80 percent instead of 40 percent.

The jeweller acknowledged this error to the central bank, he said.

What's the logic behind movement?

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understand it," she said.

The premier was speaking at a function marking the launch of the electronic distribution of honorary allowances to freedom fighters' bank accounts in Cox's Bazar. She joined the programme from the Gono Bhaban through videoconferencing.

Hasina said those who appear in Public Service Commission examinations have to go through a serious scrutiny before getting any job. "Aren't those who appear in the exams brilliant? All are brilliant here; the PSC exams are very tough. Without being brilliant nobody can appear in these exams."

One cannot pass the PSC exams if he is not brilliant, she said. "Those who are very talented can go through the PSC exam process and get government jobs."

Hasina said the anti-quota movement was "indirectly against the benefit of freedom fighters and their family members getting government jobs".

She said the Awami League government had ensured the quota for the freedom fighters and their family members so that they could take part in running the country.

"When an anarchic situation was created in the name of anti-quota movement, I declared that the quota system will be removed. But we have

to see that the anti-liberation elements and war criminals cannot return to power and get any government job."

The PM said she could understand the quota reform movement, but she was unable to understand the logic behind ransacking the Dhaka University vice chancellor's house at midnight, entering his bedroom and looting valuables, including gold ornaments and cash.

"We as former Dhaka University students cannot believe the agitators being its students can enter the VC's house... We cannot believe that any student can do that. I feel ashamed of thinking this, and if those involved in the incident are students, then it is more shameful for us."

She mentioned that a writ petition was pending with the High Court about the freedom fighters' quota in government jobs and as per its verdict the unfilled posts should be lying vacant. "But the government moved the Appellate Division [of the Supreme Court] to seek a review [of the verdict]. The Appellate Division said the vacant posts can be filled with candidates from the merit list."

"I feel pity when I see educated and knowledgeable personalities, including university teachers and retired public servants, in talk shows talk against the quota system. They never

say these students did a very bad thing by attacking the Dhaka University VC's house. What could be worse than this for a Dhaka University student? They never talk about this; they even don't know anything about the Appellate Division's directives."

Hasina said the government has introduced appointment of candidates to non-cadre posts through PSC exams. "How talented are they to utter that those who are getting jobs through PSC exams are not brilliant? How dare they talk such nonsense?"

The government cannot fully scrap the quota system due to the HC verdict, she said, adding that the government formed a committee to further examine the matter. "We cannot disobey the High Court verdict."

She said those who were talking about the quota system did not have any idea about the HC verdict or the Appellate Division's directives.

Hasina, also the Awami League chief, said she never minds barristers and knowledgeable people of BNP talking about the issue as they are "expert in uttering lies". But she wondered how the teachers could make such mistakes.

DISTRIBUTION OF ALLOWANCES Some 342 freedom fighters of Cox's Bazar will get the honorary allowances directly through an electronic system. During the programme yesterday, the

PM talked to some beneficiaries through videoconferencing.

Hasina said various allowances were being provided to freedom fighters and their families so that they did not suffer.

As part of such initiatives, the distribution of freedom fighters' honorary allowances through an electronic system was introduced and it would be expanded in all parts of the country in phases, the PM added.

She said those who had grabbed power illegally had distorted the Liberation War history, destroyed the spirit of independence and politically rehabilitated war criminals by giving them voting rights.

Returning to power in 1996 after 21 years, Hasina said her government reestablished the spirit of Liberation War and undertook massive programmes to awaken the spirit.

She asked the local administration, public representatives and people to look after the Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar. She directed them to make sure the local people did not suffer due to the influx of Rohingyas.

Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Huq delivered the welcome speech at the programme. Cap (retd) AB Tajul Islam, chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Liberation War Affairs Ministry, was present.

BCL men were responsible

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goons," said Abdur Razzaque Khan, an associate professor of the mass communication and journalism department of the university.

"I do not know where they study, [that they] do not have any respect for teachers. I have not seen such behaviour in my teaching and journalism career spanning 20 years," Razzaque said at a press conference.

The conference, under the banner of "Teachers Against Repression", was organised by a section of DU teachers, who have been vocal against the attacks on quota reformists.

It was held at the teachers' lounge of TSC two days after a group of BCL men swooped on a procession of teachers and students demanding release of detained quota leaders and assaulted three teachers of the university.

However, BCL leaders denied the accusation while Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader also skirted the issue of the body's involvement in the assault.

After the assault, Quader on the same day said he did not know whether BCL activists had carried out the attacks on quota reformists as they did not have any committee right now.

Criticising the BCL leadership, Razzaque said they did not know their history and glory.

"Can you compare Mr Tofael's or Mr Razzaque's Chhatra League with this

Chhatra League. They are simply a group of hooligans, creating anarchy on the campus," he said.

Razzaque also claimed to have been threatened over phone from an unknown number for joining the protest. "Administration is not taking any steps. Where can we get security?" he asked.

He said he had filed a general diary with Shahabgah Police Station seeking security.

Quota reformists have also said BCL men attacked them at least 13 times in the last three months, injuring around 68 students of four universities.

But the general secretary of the recently dissolved central unit of BCL, SM Jakir Hosain, claimed that the incidents were scuffles between two groups of quota reformists caused by internal conflict.

"Some BCL members may have been involved in this [quota reform movement] but the organisation is not," said Jakir.

"Students of different political parties took part in the quota reform protest spontaneously, in which members of the pro-government student organisation also joined," said Samina Luthfa, associate professor of the sociology department, while reading out a statement.

But the protestors were being suppressed in different ways ever since they started demonstrations demand-

ing gazette notification on reforming the quota system, she alleged.

Recalling Sunday's incident, Samina said some BCL men obstructed the teachers from holding a human chain and used loud speakers to hurl abuses at them. "The BCL men then swooped on the teachers' procession and beat up the students and assaulted the teachers too," she said.

She added that instead of taking action against the attackers, the university authorities were taking action against the injured protestors, making disparaging comments.

Samina also alleged that the authorities were trying to spread fear among the protestors so that they would not hold any further protests.

She claimed that no one from the proctorial body or law enforcers were present during the assault.

"When we contacted the proctor after the attack at the [Central] Shaheed Minar, we were asked that why we had not taken permission for the protest," said Fahmidul Haq, associate professor of the mass communication and journalism department. He pointed out that there was no clause in the University Act-1973 requiring the need for permission to hold rallies inside campus.

"Another group held a rally before ours at the [Central] Shaheed Minar. I don't think they took permission for that," he added.

Speaking at yesterday's conference, Tanzimuddin Khan, an associate professor of the international relations department, said they did not instigate the students to boycott classes.

"We are doing our duty. We are neither supporting nor instigating them to boycott classes. So, those who want to attend classes can do so and those who do not will not," he said.

Professor Abdul Mannan of the international relations department and Professor Munasir Kamal of the English department were present during the conference.

After the conference, the teachers declared that they would hold a "teachers' solidarity assembly" at the foot of Aparajeyo Bangla around 11:00am tomorrow and arrange a cultural programme against repression at Kalabhawan on July 23.

They said they would also send a letter to Dhaka University Teachers' Association asking them to take immediate steps regarding the assault on three teachers.

A memorandum would also be sent to the university's chancellor demanding that the academic dignity of the university is upheld and steps are taken against the repression, they added.

Meanwhile, a group of DU students yesterday submitted a memorandum to the VC demanding resignation of the proctor for his failure to ensure security of the students.

Death penalty

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and the inspector general of police to take necessary steps to arrest the fugitives.

The other two members of the tribunal are Justice Amir Hossain and Justice Md Abu Ahmed Jamadar.

During the Liberation War in 1971, Akmal was a member of the local peace committee, an anti-liberation organisation, who later joined Razakar Bahini like the three other convicts to commit genocide and crimes against humanity, according to the prosecution.

"Despite being Bengali civilians [they] opted to collaborate with the Pakistani occupation army, in exercise of their membership in Razakar Bahini, a paramilitary force in accomplishing the grotesque mayhem," the tribunal said.

Later, the three others except Akmal got involved in Jamaat-e-Islami, a political party that vehemently opposed the Liberation War, the prosecution said.

Syed Haider Ali, conducting prosecutor of the case, expressed satisfaction over the verdict saying, "We have got justice."

Abul Hasan, state-appointed defence counsel for the fugitives, however, said he was aggrieved by the verdict and expressed the hope that if the fugitives surrendered and challenged the verdict with the Supreme Court, they would get justice.

According to the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, a war crimes convict can file an appeal with the SC within 30 days from the date of verdict's pronouncement.

With the latest verdict, the war crimes tribunals have so far delivered 33 judgements against 73 people. Forty-seven of them have been sentenced to death.

'ENEMIES OF MANKIND'

The tribunal handed down death penalty to the four convicts for an act of genocide where 59 Hindu men of Panchgaon village under Rajnagar upazila were killed, Hindu women were raped and at least 132 houses were looted and torched between May 7 and 8, 1971.

"... we are of the view that the perpetrators intended to effect destruction of the civilians belonging to the Hindu religious group by causing indiscriminate killing on a massive scale, sexual abuse, wanton looting and burning down houses," the tribunal observed.

They were given "imprisonment for life till biological death" for an offence of crimes against humanity where two Hindu men of Pashchimbagh in Rajnagar were abducted, confined, tortured and killed and their houses were looted and torched between November 24 and 25.

Not only the actual perpetrators (Pakistani army) but also all the four accused "who remained consciously concerned with such shocking and horrendous crimes committed against humanity would be known as the enemies of the mankind," the tribunal

Mob beats

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charged Iradat on suspicion who confessed to the rape and murder.

After hearing his confession, locals formed a mob and beat him, leaving him critically injured. They then called and informed the police of Meherunessa's rape and murder.

Around midnight, police reached the spot and recovered Meherunessa's body from Iradat's kitchen, and rescued Iradat from in front of his home where he was left injured after the beating.

They were both taken to Jessore General Hospital where on-duty doctors declared Iradat dead.

Dr Bablu Kishor of the forensic department in Jessore Medical College Hospital conducted the autopsy on Meherunessa's body. However, he refused to disclose information before submitting the postmortem report.

Earlier, Iradat Khan had allegedly raped and killed a fifth grade student. Police had detained him at the time, and he was given bail from the High Court, police said.

3 killed as CNG cylinder of microbus explodes

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undergoing treatment at Dhaka Police Lines Hospital, and the microbus driver is receiving treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said Ramzan Ali, a sub-inspector of Tangail Model Police Station.

The accident happened when a police team of Sonargaon Police Station was returning in the microbus after rescuing Bonya, an abduction victim, from Rajshahi's Bagmara, said Sanjit Kumar Roy, superintendent of

Tangail police.

One of the two CNG cylinders of the microbus, carrying the seven people, exploded in Kumudini College Gate area around 4:30am, killing Bonya, her uncle and cousin on the spot, the police official added.

After the blast, firefighters recovered the bodies, rescued the injured people and took them to Tangail General Hospital, said Abdur Razzak, senior station officer of Tangail Fire Service and Civil Defence.

"The woman and her two relatives were killed in the blast as they were sitting in the back seats near the cylinder, while the policemen and the driver sustained injuries as they were at the front seats," he said.

The cylinder exploded when the microbus was going over a speed breaker at speed, he added.

"The driver might have not seen the speed breaker as the speed breaker has no markings," said Abul Bashar, a traffic inspector in Tangail.

Shamsul Alam, chief inspector of the Department of Explosives, said they would investigate the incident to find the reason behind the accident.

"In most cases involving microbus cylinder blast, we see that fire originates after an accident due to poorly installed high-pressure CNG pipes and cylinder remains intact," he told The Daily Star.

He also recommended regular inspections of CNG cylinders.