

# Panic grips Bede Palli after attack

Following rumours, dozens of houses vandalised, looted by locals in Noakhali Sadar



A damaged house in Bede Palli in Noakhali's Purba Eojbalia village. The photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

The residents of a Bede (gypsy) Palli in Noakhali Sadar upazila are in fear following an attack on their homes on Monday night.

On Friday, a teenage girl from the Bede Palli went to a shop at Purba Eojbalia Bazar to buy an ice-cream when the shopkeeper hurled abusive words at her. Following the matter, an altercation ensued between the bedes, locals and the shopkeeper. At one

stage, they clashed, bedes said.

During the clash, a 17-year-old boy named Tarek Aziz suffered burn injuries as some hot oil from a large frying pan at a shop fell on him. He has been undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

On Monday evening, a rumour spread that the boy died and locals attacked the Bede Palli, where over 1,000 bedes live, in Purba Eojbalia village, the bedes added.

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# Madrasas get big boost

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Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal.

Each of the 300 lawmakers has provided the planning ministry with a list of six madrasas -- to have new buildings -- from his or her electoral area.

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Eneec) approved the "Selected Madrasa Development Project" at a meeting at the National Economic Council yesterday, with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

"The work would begin soon," Kamal told a press briefing after the meeting.

Asked whether the project would influence the parliamentary polls, he said, "Of course, it will influence [the election]. We want it to influence [the polls] effectively. So we are passing it [the project]."

The Directorate of Madrasa Education and Education Engineering Department would implement the project by June 2021, he said.

Kamal said the MPs gave his ministry the list of the madrasas long ago. "I also gave mine."

"We have taken the list from the existing MPs. We did not consider who belongs to which party...," he said.

He also said there would be polls and all the development work would continue as usual.

The project operations include construction of new four- to six-storey madrasa buildings in rural, divisional, metropolitan, hilly, coastal, haor, baor, beel, river and salinity prone areas; building classrooms; upward extension of madrasa buildings; and procurement of necessary furniture.

Currently, the country has 9,311 madrasas offering Dakhil, Alim, Fazil and Kamil degrees, according to the Education Statistics-2016 of Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics.

Of the madrasas, only three are state-run while the rest are being privately operated.

The project documents said most of the private madrasas are either makeshift or semi-concrete structures. The number of madrasas with concrete

structures is very limited while the infrastructure of most of the madrasas is weak and risky.

The government has already constructed one-storey buildings with two-three classrooms at 4,559 madrasas. The infrastructure of the rest 4,752 madrasas is yet to be developed, according to the documents.

"Therefore, students are being compelled to attend classes in inappropriate conditions at those madrasas, which lack infrastructural facilities."

Apart from constructing new buildings, furniture would be procured and teachers would be trained up under the project to be financed with the government's own fund.

Of the total amount, Tk 5,355 crore would be spent for constructing academic buildings, classrooms and toilets.

In the fiscal 2018-19, the government would spend Tk 1,442 crore while Tk 2879.65 crore would be spent in the next fiscal year. In 2020-21, the expenditure would be Tk 1,596.98 crore, added the documents.

Asked whether the project would benefit the MPs in the upcoming polls, the planning minister said he did not know how much the impact would be.

"Election is a complex issue. A voter considers many issues, including the honesty of the candidate, before casting his vote," he said.

Earlier, a similar project was taken in the election year.

In January, each of the MPs, under a Tk 10,649 crore project, received funds for the construction and extension of 10 school buildings in their constituencies.

Two similar projects, involving the lawmakers, were pending with the Planning Commission.

One of them is "Water and Sanitation Scheme" under which deep tube-wells and public toilets would be constructed. The project cost is estimated at Tk 903 crore. Each of the MPs would get Tk 3 crore as allocation.

The other one is a Tk 1,785 crore infrastructure project for constructing village markets. The lawmakers would get funds for the work.

whether it had a route permit and registration papers," said the SP.

"We will also investigate whether there was any negligence on the part of the police officials stationed in the area."

GM Mohiuddin, Chakoria Fire Service and Civil Defence official said passengers were stuck inside the vehicles after the accident. Fire Brigade personnel rescued them and they were taken to hospital where doctors pronounced seven of them dead.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Chakoria Police Station Md Bakhtiar Uddin Chowdhury said the dead were identified as Khair Ahmed, 35; Rokeya Begum, 50, and her daughter Jaitun Akter, 30; Basanti Sikder, 65, from Lohagara upazila; Zahir Ahmed, 35; Shafiqul Kader Tushar, 18, from Chakoria upazila; and Abul Kashem, 27, from Harbang union.

Police said they seized the two vehicles involved in the accident and legal action was being taken in this regard.

# 7 killed

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Chakoria upazila health complex and different private hospitals nearby. Three others died on the way to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

The seven dead and 10 injured were all passengers of the two vehicles and included children and women. They were first taken to Chakoria upazila health complex and later shifted to CMCH.

Md Nazrul Islam, superintendent of police (SP) of Highway Police in Comilla, told The Daily Star that police had been trying very hard to stop the plying of legunas on highways, as per the order from the High Court, but one or two escaped the notice of on-duty police officials and got on the highways.

"Some legunas were also given route permit before the High Court passed this order," said the SP, adding that they have written to the roads and bridges ministry, asking for directives.

"We are investigating how this leguna got on the highway and

# Women face risk of abuse

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that Myanmar has used rape as a weapon for creating terror among the Rohingyas and thus fuelling their mass exodus, he added.

More than a third of women surveyed by Oxfam and partner agencies said they didn't feel safe or comfortable going to collect water or using toilets and shower cubicles -- many of which lack a roof and a lockable door.

Half the women and three quarters of adolescent girls said they didn't have what they needed to manage their periods, including a female-only place to wash sanitary cloths without embarrassment.

As a result, women are going hungry and thirsty to avoid needing the toilet as frequently, suffering abdominal pain and infections by not relieving themselves or using unhygienic sanitary cloths, and resorting to defecation by their tents, which increases the risk of a major outbreak of disease -- especially in the monsoon, the inter-

national agency said.

Oxfam found that poor facilities were also increasing the risk of sexual abuse and harassment. Hundreds of incidents of gender-based violence were reported each week.

The state minister asked the international partners to intensify their campaign for a permanent solution to the Rohingya problem and ensure safe and sustainable return of the forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals.

Speaking at the event, Australian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Julia Niblett said her country has focused its funding on the needs of women and girls -- not just protection, but also health, food and nutrition, sexual and reproductive health services.

Dorothy Sang, Oxfam's advocacy manager in Cox's Bazar, said the breakneck speed at which the Rohingya refugee crisis unfolded meant that many emergency facilities

were installed in a rush and women's specific needs were not considered.

"This needs to be rectified urgently with substantial sums set aside to support and protect Rohingya women, such as lighting to improve safety, toilets and wash rooms that provide privacy, and extra assistance for the most vulnerable," she added.

According to the report, single mothers whose husbands are missing or dead head-up one in six families in the Rohingya camps and they face specific problems in having to take on public roles that challenge cultural and religious assumptions about women's place in society.

Oxfam Country Director Dipankar Datta, Director General of NGO Affairs Bureau KM Abdus Salam, Prof Mesbah Kamal of Dhaka University, Country Representative of UN Women Shoko Ishikawa and Nazmun Nahar of Oxfam's gender justice programme also spoke on the occasion.

# Three killed in 'gunfights'

STAR REPORT

Three people including a drug trader were killed in "gunfights" in Rajshahi and Narayanganj early yesterday.

The alleged drug peddler killed in a "shootout" between Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and drug peddlers in Rajshahi's Mohonpur upazila was identified as Md Dulal Mia, 45, son of Ibrahim of Horihorpur village.

He was accused in more than three cases related to drug peddling, Abul Kashem, officer-in-charge of Mohonpur police, said.

Dulal was well-known as a wholesaler of different kinds of drugs and was absconding since the drive against drugs began, the OC added.

The Rab-5 in a press release said the "shootout" took place at Dhuroil intersection in the upazila around 1:00am when around six suspected people opened fire on the elite force

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Traders have set up illegal makeshift shops along the Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Bhulta of Narayanganj's Araihasar upazila, choking the flow of traffic in the area where a flyover is being built to ease traffic congestion. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

# Polls-time govt in mid-October

FROM PAGE 1

from the AL, the Jatiya Party and the Workers Party.

The BNP and its allies, who wanted a nonpartisan interim administration to hold the election, boycotted the polls.

The BNP has one seat in parliament while Tarikat has two. Tarikat Chairman Syed Nazibul Bashar Maizvandy said election-time government should be formed with all the political parties who have representation in parliament.

"We hope we will be in the polls-time government," he told The Daily Star last night.

SM Abul Kalam Azad, the lone lawmaker from BNF, expressed the same view. "If the prime minister wants me in her cabinet, I will be happy to be a part of it."

There is no specific constitutional provision about the formation or the function of a polls-time administration.

But AL leaders said that after the announcement of the polls schedule by the Election Commission, the government will do only routine work and will not make any policy decisions such as project approval, fund allocation and so on.

At the time, the EC will have the authority over the executive branch in line with article 126 of the constitution.

The article says, "It shall be the duty of all executive authorities to assist the Election Commission in the discharge of its functions [related to the holding of election]."

During this period, for example, there will be no meeting of the Executive Committee of the National

Economic Council (Eneec), which approves development projects, said a senior AL leader, who is also a lawyer.

Also, the election-time cabinet will not hold weekly meetings. But they will sit time to time to discuss election-related matters to fulfil EC's requirement, the leader said, asking not to be named.

However, it is unlikely that the BNP will be included in the cabinet as it has no representation in parliament.

The BNP and its allies have been demanding formation of a polls-time government in consultation with all political parties.

They want such a government to be formed in line with the now-scrapped caretaker government system, which was introduced in 1996 after mass protests by the AL, then in opposition.

The BNP, which was in power at the time, initially opposed the idea, although it eventually amended the constitution to incorporate the caretaker government system to oversee national elections.

Under the constitution, the caretaker government, comprised of 10 advisers and a chief adviser, had the jurisdiction to carry out only routine work. Its main job was to assist the Election Commission to hold the election.

That system was abolished in 2011, leading to a political crisis.

Amid growing concerns ahead of the 2014 election, Hasina proposed forming an all-party election-time cabinet, and urged the then main opposition BNP to join it and take ministerial portfolios of its choice.

But the BNP rejected the offer.

Defending their decision, some of the BNP-led alliance leaders referred to the PM's absolute power to overrule ministers' decisions.

The crisis remains unresolved till date. With the next parliamentary election just around three months away, the issue of an election-time government still dominates the political scene. The BNP and some other parties continue to demand a neutral polls-time administration.

Contacted, Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, BNP standing committee member, said, "Who gave the Awami League the mandate to form an election-time government? It is against the spirit of democracy and against peoples' expectations as people want an all-party polls-time government."

The BNP leader said the election-time administration should be formed upon a consensus among all political parties.

"If the government forms such a polls-time government without any consensus, it will be questionable and it will not be acceptable to anyone," he added.

**NOMINATION, SEAT-SHARING**

The AL will finalise its candidates by next month, Quader said.

About unconfirmed reports that a list of 100 candidates has already been prepared, he said he was not aware of it. "Even if there is one such list, only the prime minister knows it."

About the seat-sharing with its allies, he said they could offer their partners some 65-70 seats.

But if the BNP does not join the race, the Jatiya Party will contest the election separately, Quader added.

# 100 killed in Afghan violence

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There has been no claim of responsibility for any of the attacks, but the Taliban and the Islamic State (IS) group are active in Nangarhar.

**TALIBAN ATTACK**  
Taliban fighters killed nearly 60 members of Afghanistan's beleaguered security forces in a spate of attacks across the country's north, officials said Monday, as diplomatic efforts to end the 17-year war intensify.

After seizing a military base in Sar-e-Pul, Taliban fighters were threatening the provincial capital in a situation that could result in "disaster" if reinforcements were not sent, the area's

police chief Abdul Qayom Baqizoy warned.

Baqizoy compared the threat to the Taliban's extraordinary raid last month on the provincial capital of Ghazni -- fighters held large parts of the city located just two hours from Kabul for days.

At least 17 security forces have been killed near Sar-e-Pul city after militants seized a checkpoint in Sayyad district and burned it to the ground, provincial governor Zahir Wahdat told journalists Monday.

Air support has been called in, he said. About 39 Taliban fighters have been killed and 14 wounded.

"The fighting is still ongoing near the city and the central government is going to send more reinforcements soon," Wahdat said.

Elsewhere in Afghanistan's north, the Taliban's elite Red unit attacked several police posts in Kunduz, killing at least 19 officers and wounding around 20, Dasht-e-Archi district chief Nasruddin Saadi told AFP.

Insurgents also raided two police checkpoints in Dara-e-Suf district of Samangan province, killing 14 officers, northern Afghanistan police spokesman Sarwar Hussaini said.

In Jowzjan province hundreds of Taliban fighters stormed Khomab

district centre, near Turkmenistan, killing eight security force members and seizing control of government headquarters, provincial deputy police chief Abdul Hafeez Khashi told AFP.

The increased violence comes as Afghan and international players ratchet up efforts to hold peace talks with the Taliban, which was toppled from power by US-led forces in 2001.

The intensified fighting has also fuelled speculation over whether Afghanistan's long-delayed parliamentary elections will go ahead on October 20.