

Malaysia

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 person" in over the plight of the Rohingya people.

"Over this issue, she seems to be a changed person. She did not want to say anything against the action taken by the military against the Rohingyas. So, we make (it) quite clear that we don't really support her anymore," he told host Ghida Fakhry.

Mahathir also admitted that he had lost all faith in her.

However, he said when he had recently written to Suu Kyi, he did not even receive a reply from her, and thus felt "very disappointed".

"We have complained about the treatment of the Rohingyas to the world. In fact, we have ourselves received quite a lot of Rohingya people in our country," he said.

Mahathir who is currently in New York, had addressed the UN General Assembly on Friday on the state of the Rohingya people in Myanmar.

He had criticised the authorities in Myanmar and Suu Kyi for denying that the Rohingya people were being murdered, and their homes torched, forcing over a million refugees to flee.

Mahathir had also questioned the world for keeping mum on the massacres that were being carried out.

Mahathir asked fellow leaders: "Nations are independent, but does this mean that they have a right to massacre their own people?"

Previously, United Nations investigators have said that Myanmar's military carried out mass killings and gang rapes of Rohingyas with "genocidal intent", and that its commander-in-chief and five generals should be prosecuted under international law.

Suu Kyi has also been heavily criticised for her failure to speak out against the treatment of the Rohingya by her country's military. She has previously said that in hindsight, her government "could have handled it better", referring to the Rohingya situation with a lame understatement.

There have been calls to revoke the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to her in 1991. Canada has also revoked Suu Kyi of her honorary citizenship over the Rohingya crisis.

A United Nations report last month called for the army chief's prosecution for genocide against the Rohingya and singled out Aung San Suu Kyi for failing to speak up for the group. Facebook also took down the accounts of several army generals.

However, many people within the Buddhist-majority country see the issue through the lens of ethnic and religious sentiments, which had been worsened through a revised version of "national history".

They have been influenced by years of rhetoric to be suspicious of Muslims and some regard the military action against the Rohingya as an operation against "terrorists".

Atmosphere

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 She said previous governments whimsically formed election commissions. Now, the commission is formed by a committee.

On the Rohingya issue, she said a list of 3,000 Rohingyas had been made for their safe repatriation. If Myanmar behaves well with them then others would be sent home.

Bangladesh continues to mount pressure on Myanmar so that it takes back its people, she said.

Hasina also talked about the achievements of her government over the years.

Oikya Prokriya

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 Sylhet on October 5 and then in the capital.

The demands of the Oikya Prokriya include reconstitution of the Election Commission and dissolution of parliament before the election schedule is announced. Meanwhile, Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury said a free and fair election is not possible under this government.

"If the national election is held under this government, it will be held in a controlled manner," he said at a blood donation campaign organised by Projonmo Bangladesh, a pro-BDB platform of youths, at Chairman Bari playground in the capital.

Terming the government cheat, Badruddoza, also chairman of Juktofront, said, "You [the Awami League-led government] told us that a fresh inclusive election would be held soon. Five years have gone by, but you are still clinging to power ... What a great cheating! You are a cheat government."

BDB Joint Secretary General Mahi B Chowdhury said there will be no national unity if anti-liberation forces are included in the unity process either directly or indirectly.

Jubo League leader

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 lawyer Abdullah Al Farhad.

The prime accused-- Ferdous-- is president of Sandwip Santoshpur union JL unit, a follower of Sandwip's lawmaker Mahfuzur Rahman Mita, said locals and police adding that the culprit had made a video of the rape and also took picture.

The victim's family members said though the police had not registered the case, they arrested the accused on Thursday after photos of the incident went viral and produced him before the court under section 54 of the Criminal Procedure.

According to the case statement, the victim sought help from the UP member to get a job and the accused asked her to meet and discuss the matter at the house of Surma Begum on July 30. Later, he confined the victim to a room of the house and raped her. Ferdous also allegedly gave Tk 5,000 to Surma for the use of her.

Ferdous pointed a knife at the victim and forced her to take a liquid medicine which made her weak and then he raped her at the house for two hours, said the statement.

During the time, Surma filmed the rape and also took pictures.

Speaking to The Daily Star, the victim said, "After regaining consciousness, I went to my mother and informed her of the matter. My mother then took me and fled to my grandfather's house,

fearing further attacks on me.

"I took treatment at Sandwip Upazila Health Complex the following day, but did not tell the doctors about the rape incident as I was feeling ashamed.

"As my family was feeling insecure, I did not go to the police station that time and hid myself."

The case statements also said Ferdous later circulated the video on the internet and among locals. On September 20, he went to the victim's residence and tried to harass her.

On September 25, the accused, along with 10 to 12 other men, went to victim's grandfather's house and tried to kidnap her but failed to do so.

"After the video was uploaded on the internet, I went to the police station to file a complaint but the Officer-in-Charge MD Shahjahan refused to file the case and told me that I willingly went to the JL leader."

Brushing the allegation aside, OC Shahjahan told The Daily Star, "Seeing the video on the internet and getting an order from superiors, police arrested Ferdous two days ago and produced him before the court under section 54.

"We asked the victim family to file the case, but they did not come to police station," he claimed, adding that after getting the complaint, the police will show the accused as arrested in the case.

Shandhya abuzz

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 7:00am to 12:00pm at the west side of Banaripara Bazar and the east side of Shandhya river, around 25 kilometers away from Barishal District Headquarters. The market operates around the year.

However, during the seasons when the most amount of rice is harvested -- August to October (Aush rice harvest) and December to March (harvest of all other varieties) -- the market operates four days a week, including Wednesdays and Fridays.

According to locals and the district's agriculture office, this market has been operating on the river for about two hundred years and has some special varieties of rice that many farmers proudly flaunt to their customers.

The Balam rice (a special variety), which is a heritage of Barishal, can be found at the market. It is special for its unique taste, said Belal Hossain, a farmer from Masjid Bari village, adding that the rice, however, was not available in large quantities like before.

Apart from the Balam, Godai and Aush are two other special varieties of rice found in the market.

Haridas Shikari, deputy director of the Agriculture Extension office in the district, said that most people from the villages in the upazila were running their rice business in the market. "If anyone does not grow their own paddy, he collects it from the market and processes it to make rice, which he can then bring back to the market and sell," he said.

In the past, naval communication was major in the region due to its many canals and rivers. There would be large boats coming from Dhaka to buy rice. To have easier communication with the buyers, the farmers would sell their rice on boats.

That is how the market established itself here on Shandhya river, Shikari said.

"We are all from different villages

Smugglers not

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 garment factories were also caught in the last couple of years smuggling in cigarettes labelled as tax-free raw materials.

On April 28, the CIID seized another haul worth about Tk 10 crore labelled as raw material by Gram Bangla Food Corporation.

Investigators said the three companies that brought the cigarettes exist only on papers.

Importers can be easily identified after submission of taxation documents, said Nuruddin Milon, deputy commissioner of CCH. "But in these cases, we conducted the drives before submission of the relevant documents, as we had information that the hauls would soon be replaced with some other goods."

In March last year, customs seized cigarettes worth about Tk 37 crore from 12 containers labelled as machinery.

A case was filed against the importers Henan Anhui Agro Lc and Agro BD & JP with Paltan Model Police Station in the capital. Several months later, National Revenue Board in two separate investigations found that only one person was behind the two companies that existed mainly on paper. The case is being investigated now.

Although there is a rule that a bank official must visit a company before issuing it a letter of credit (LC), it is hardly followed. Moreover, some customs officials are negligent in

scattered across the upazila and this is the only way we make our livelihood," said one of the farmers who set up the market on Shandhya river, adding, "about 95 percent of the sellers are farmers from Nalejsree, Didihar, Dandyat, Baishari, Masjid Bari, Aura, Kali Bazar, Khodaboksho, Mangol, Chakhar, Bakpur, Jirakathi, Bhaitashar, Chalta Bari, Chaulkathi, Kajlahar, Braman Kathi, Jammu Dip villages."

Amjad Hossain, a farmer from Aura village, said, "We finish all the preparations the night before we set up the market. The women of our families assist us while we load the boats with sacks of rice. In the morning, we leave for the market after breakfast."

He added that the market operates till noon because all the farmers prefer selling off their products to the buyers, who wait on big trawlers on the river, before the sun is at its peak at noon.

The profit, however, was higher in the past, said Rafiqul Islam, who processes rice from paddy. "The number of buyers has declined, and the price of the paddy has also increased," he said, adding that machine-based modern rice processing factories are the main threat to the floating market.

Adding to this, Shikari said that the special varieties of rice, that the market was popular for, were also being sold less compared to the rice grown by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI). "More farmers prefer selling IRRI and BRRI rice over the special varieties now, since that is what the buyers prefer," he said.

Compared to other rice markets, where rice is sold for Tk 1,800-2,000 per maund, the floating market offers the product at a lower cost-- currently Tk 1,600 per maund.

Mamun Hossain, a businessman from Barishal's Aroddar Patti, said, "I come to this market due to the large variety of rice being sold here and also because of the fair price."

thoroughly examining the import related papers and the containers, the customs investigators found.

In 2016, the customs busted cigarettes of FRC Knit Composite worth Tk 4.70 crore, M/S Genetic Fashion Ltd Tk 7.20 crore, RAZ Apparel Ltd Tk 9 crore and Kadera Sportswear Ltd Tk 9 crore.

The companies told investigators that their names and addresses were used by frauds.

Smaller amounts of cigarettes are often busted by customs officials, but smugglers remain untouched in most cases.

Customs employees help the smugglers by making passbook, importer's permission letter and BKMEA utilisation declaration disappear, multiple CCH investigations found in recent years.

The investigation reports recommended properly examining customs procedure codes, verifying LCs, importer's permission letter and imported goods.

The reports also recommended engaging customs employees in handling important documents. At present, import-related files are often handled by importers and their agents.

Asked about this, customs Commissioner AKM Nuruzzaman said all documents are supposed to be handled by customs employees, but due to manpower shortage, the importers take the documents from one section to another. He admitted that forgery and disappearance of documents resulted from the practice.

Six killed

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 The drug peddlers opened fire on police, who retaliated, resulting in a "gunfight", in which Nur was injured.

He was taken to a local hospital where doctors declared him dead. Police claimed to have recovered 300 yaba pills, a gun and 1.5kg of cannabis from the spot.

The death came days after Narayanganj police put a bounty of Tk 10,000 for information leading to his arrest.

Another alleged drug peddler, Imran alias Putia Mistri, 35, was killed in a "shootout" with police in Cox's Bazar's Teknaf upazila around 5:00am yesterday.

Ranajit Kumar Barua, officer-in-charge of Teknaf police, said they arrested Imran on Saturday night and took him to Dargahpara graveyard area to recover stashed yaba pills.

Sensing the presence of police, his cohorts opened fire on them, prompting them to retaliate, he said, adding that Ranajit was hit and he died on the spot.

Police claimed to have recovered three firearms, five bullets and 7,000 yaba pills from the spot.

With these, at least 238 suspected drug dealers have been killed since the nationwide anti-narcotics drive began on May 4. Most of them were killed in so-called shootouts involving police and Rab.

In Maheshkhali upazila of the district, suspected robber Mohammad Karim, 32, was killed in a so-called gunfight with police.

Pradip Kumar Das, officer-in-charge of Maheshkhali police, said the gunfight took place in Shapladeba village when robbers opened fire on law enforcers.

Bullet-hit Karim was rushed to Maheshkhali Upazila Health Complex where he was declared dead. Police claimed to have recovered eight locally made guns and 20 bullets from the spot.

In Bandarban, three alleged robbers were killed in what police claimed was a gunfight between two gangs in Baisharia area.

The deceased were identified as Anwar Hossain alias Anaiya, 28, Hamidur Rahman, 25, and Parvez Hossain Bappi, 26.

Zaker Hossain Majumadar, superintendent of Bandarban police, said a team of law enforcers rushed to the spot after hearing gunshots and recovered the bodies.

Four homemade guns and eight bullets were also found there, he claimed.

The deceased were accused in cases filed for robbery, murder, and abduction, the SP said.

Our correspondents in the districts concerned contributed to this report.
ASK REPORT

Of the 413 people who died in the last nine months while in custody, during "shootings" and "shootouts" involving law enforcers, 260 were killed during the countrywide anti-narcotics drive between May 15 and yesterday, according to a report released by the ASK.

The rights body prepared the report based on reports published in eight newspapers and information collected from its own sources.

Referring to the killings of 260 people during the drive, the rights body said the situation was panicking people.

Cox's Bazar Municipality councilor Akramul Haque was killed in a "gunfight" involving law enforcers on May 26, the report said, adding that his audio on May 31 revealed an heroic clip creating more controversy about involvement of law enforcers in such killings.

According to allegations raised by family members and witnesses, 21 people were detained by plainclothes men in the last nine months, the report said. Of them, two returned and 10 were later found to be arrested. However, the law-enforcement agencies denied such allegations.

The report further said 62 people died in jail custody during the corresponding time, while 20 people were killed and 2,609 wounded in 194 incidents of political violence.

The ASK said 95 women fell victim to sexual harassment. Of them, four committed suicide and seven people including a woman were killed for protesting harassment.

Besides, 616 women were raped and 54 of them were killed after rape, the report added.

Thief falls

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 Police say that the man, named Timothy Zacharie, had stolen from eight cars in the neighbourhood before falling asleep in the car he was found in.

According to AJC, police found Timothy Zacharie inside the car with credit cards, cash, gift cards and IDs. The 23-year-old was taken into custody and charged with eight counts of entering an auto, one count of burglary and violation of probation.

This isn't the first time a felon has fallen asleep on the job. In November last year, a thief who broke into a house in Scotland promptly fell asleep after eating a pie and woke up in handcuffs the next morning.

Journos' concerns

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 postponed its programme.

On September 22, the Parishad expressed its deep regret that the House passed the Digital Security Bill 2018, which the platform considers to be against media freedom and freedom of speech guaranteed by the constitution.

Earlier on September 16, the Council expressed its surprise, disappointment and shock at the final report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Post, Telecommunication and ICT Ministry on the draft law.

The Council said the report "totally ignored" the concerns expressed by journalists and media organisations.

"We are forced to reject the said report as it suggested no fundamental changes to sections 8, 21, 25, 28, 29, 31, 32, and 43 of the Draft Act that pose serious threats to freedom of expression and media operation," the Parishad said in a statement.

After the meeting with the Editors' Council, Inu and Jabbar also held talks with leaders of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ), Dhaka Union of Journalists and Dhaka Reporters Unity at the same venue over their concerns about the law.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, BFUJ President Molla Jalal said the journalist community would launch a stronger protest if the law was not amended in light of their concerns.

On September 19, parliament passed the bill despite opposition from several lawmakers of the main opposition Jatiya Party.

Journalists and rights activists also expressed serious concerns over the new law, saying it goes against the main spirit of the constitution and that the law will restrict free-thinking, freedom of speech and freedom of expression.

It will also impede independent journalism, they added.

Briefing reporters after the meeting with the Editors' Council, the law minister assured that the Council's objections to nine sections of the law and its demand for amending those would be placed before the cabinet for discussions.

"There is a need for a law like this and the Editors' Council at the meeting agreed on the necessity of section 21 of the act. But they demanded amendment to sections 8, 21, 25, 28, 29, 31, 32, 43 and 53.

"I'll place their demands at the cabinet meeting and we'll sit with the Editors' Council again over the terms of reference to be given by the cabinet," he added.

Inu said the Editors' Council

Pakistan

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 Malaysia and Maldives, where new administrations have come to power wary of Chinese deals struck by their predecessors.

Pakistan's new government had wanted to review all BRI contracts. Officials say there are concerns the deals were badly negotiated, too expensive or overly favoured China.

But to Islamabad's frustration, Beijing is only willing to review projects that have not yet begun, three senior government officials have told Reuters.

China's Foreign Ministry said, in a statement in response to questions faxed by Reuters, that both sides were committed to pressing forward with BRI projects, "to ensure those projects that are already built operate as normal, and those which are being built proceed smoothly".

Pakistani officials say they remain committed to Chinese investment but want to push harder on price and affordability, while re-orientating the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) - for which Beijing has pledged about \$60 billion in infrastructure funds - to focus on projects that deliver social development in line with Khan's election platform.

China's Ambassador to Pakistan, Yao Jing, told Reuters that Beijing was open to changes proposed by the new government and "we will definitely follow their agenda" to work out a roadmap for BRI projects based on "mutual consultation".

"It constitutes a process of discussion with each other about this kind of model, about this kind of roadmap for the future," Yao said.

Beijing would only proceed with projects that Pakistan wanted, he added. "This is Pakistan's economy, this is their society," Yao said.

Islamabad's efforts to recalibrate CPEC are made trickier by its dependence on Chinese loans to prop up its vulnerable economy.

Growing fissures in relations with Pakistan's historic ally the United States have also weakened the country's negotiating hand, as has a current account crisis likely to lead to a bailout by the International Monetary Fund, which may demand spending cuts.

"We have reservations, but no other country is investing in Pakistan. What can we do?" one Pakistani minister told Reuters.

The ML-1 rail line is the spine of country's dilapidated rail network, which has in recent years been edging towards collapse as passenger numbers plunge, train lines close and the vital freight business nosedives.

expressed worries and registered objections to some sections.

"Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is committed to ensuring freedom of the press and security of the media people. She is also firm about expansion of the media. To make that happen, we had asked them [Editors' Council and journalists] to sit in a meeting and they responded to our call," Inu said.

"We have prepared a list of the concern of the Editors' Council about the new law and need to meet the editors again for more discussions.

"The aim of the law is to combat digital crime with an iron hand. We want to build a safe digital Bangladesh without affecting the media," he said.

Mahfuz Anam, general secretary of the Editors' Council and editor and publisher of The Daily Star, also spoke at the briefing.

"We have serious concerns about several sections of the act. We think these go against the spirit of the Liberation War and is in conflict with democratic rights."

Mentioning that the Council published in detail their concerns, he called on everyone to go through the law and judge it for themselves whether it is a good or a bad law.

"They [the ministers] have heard us and agreed with us. About our objections, the law minister said he would place our objections or proposals before the cabinet meeting and then they would sit with us again," Mahfuz said, adding that the ministers assured them that they did not want to enact any law that is in conflict with democracy.

"We are hopeful that the law will be amended addressing our concerns. We are very much aware of the country's digital security and that a law is necessary for that. But that law should not deny freedom of the press as guaranteed in our constitution," he said.

City entries

FROM PAGE 16
 vehicles entering the capital from different districts at a check point near Parbat Cinema Hall in Gabtoli. It led to a long tailback from Gabtoli to Hemayetpur on the Dhaka-Aricha highway.

Many people were seen walking to their destinations to avoid the unusual congestion.

About the check, Selimuzzaman, officer-in-charge of Darussalam Police Station, said that was a permanent check point and it was their routine work.

Our Savar correspondent adds: Hundreds of passengers were stuck in a gridlock on the Dhaka-Aricha highway due to the checks in Gabtoli.

Anisur Rahman said he boarded a bus in Savar around 11:00am and reached the capital's Darussalam area around 2:00pm. It usually took around an hour to reach Darussalam, but it took three hours yesterday due to the tailback.

Talking to The Daily Star in Amin Bazar area, Md Jewel, who was travelling to Dhaka, said he along with 20 to 25 other passengers got on a Dhaka-bound bus in Nabinagar bus stand area around 10:00am.

After reaching Hemayetpur, the bus driver refused to go to Dhaka, saying that he would not go because of the gridlock.

Later, they took another bus around 1:30pm from Hemayetpur, but the vehicle got stranded in traffic. They left the bus and reached Dhaka after walking for three hours, said Jewel.

In Gazipur, police searched vehicles after setting up check points in Tongi Station Road area of the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway, Vogra Bypass Road, and in Kaliakoir-Chandra area of the Dhaka-Tangail highway, reports our correspondent there.

Police even checked mobile phones and personal documents of BNP leaders and activists after stopping their vehicles. They forced them to turn back when they came to know that the BNP men were going to the rally, some local BNP leaders alleged.

Dismissing the allegation, Abul Kalam Azad, assistant superintendent of police of Gazipur traffic division, they conducted the search "for security purpose" and it was their routine work.

Mofazzal Hossain Dulal, joint convener of Dinajpur district BNP, said he got on a bus from Dinajpur's Kalitola area around 11:00pm on Saturday for Dhaka. The bus was checked before reaching the Bangabandhu bridge, he alleged.

Later, police stopped the bus again at Amin Bazar early in the morning, reports our Dinajpur correspondent, quoting the BNP leader.

"After walking around 4km, I got a rickshaw for going to my destination," he said while talking to this correspondent over the phone.

Azaharul Islam Arzu, convener of Dhaleswari Nodi Banchao Andolon, a social movement to save the river, said they hired a bus to go to the National Museum to attend a seminar on World Rivers Day scheduled to be held at 10:00am, but failed, reports our Manikganj correspondent.

They got on the bus around 8:00am and arrived in Hemayetpur around 8:45am. After being stranded for five hours, they returned home from Boliarpur near Amin Bazar, he added.