

# Tortured for a good deed

Madrasa teacher, imam tied to trees, beaten up for stopping child marriage in Noakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A madrasa teacher and an imam of a mosque have been beaten up allegedly for preventing a child marriage at Hatia upazila in Noakhali.

The two victims are Maulana Tariqul, teacher of Darul Arqam Ebtedayee Madrasa, and Minhajul, imam of a local mosque in the upazila's Purbo Rasulpur area.

Tariqul said he heard the family members of one of his 13-year-old students arranged a programme at their home to marry off their daughter.

Afterwards, he called the national help line (999) and sought help to stop the marriage. Following the instructions of the national help line, he contacted the local Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mohammad Nur-e-Alam and stopped the marriage with his help.

A few hours later, some people

attacked him when he was going to a market along with Minhajul and some other locals.

At one point, the criminals abducted the duo and took them to the student's home. They tied them to trees and beat them up, he alleged.

The criminals also snatched their mobile phones, cash and some documents.

Locals later rescued the victims.

After the incident, Tariqul filed a complaint with Hatia Police Station yesterday accusing four people -- Abdul Quader, Abdul Zinali, Samir Uddin, Babul and Kamal.

Hatia UNO told The Daily Star that he directed the victims to lodge a case against the attackers.

Kamruzzaman, officer-in-charge of the police station, said they would take legal actions against the culprits after investigation.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is all smiles as she exchanges greetings with other politicians at a tea party at the Gono Bhaban yesterday. She invited leaders of 75 political parties and alliances with whom she had held dialogue before the December 30 election.

PHOTO: PID

# US governor

FROM PAGE 16 prompted calls for him to resign -- including from several Democratic presidential hopefuls.

"These images arouse centuries of anger, anguish, and racist violence and they've eroded all confidence in Gov. Northam's ability to lead. We should expect more from our elected officials. He should resign," tweeted Senator Cory Booker, who is black, hours after announcing he would run in 2020.

California Senator Kamala Harris, another African-American White House hopeful, meanwhile tweeted that "the stain of racism should have no place in the halls of government."

The governor has also been under fire over remarks about a bill that would have rolled back restrictions on late-term abortions.

Republicans took particular issue with comments he made when asked if the bill would allow for abortions to be performed when a woman was already

in labor.

"If a mother is in labor, I can tell you exactly what would happen. The infant would be delivered. The infant would be kept comfortable. The infant would be resuscitated if that's what the mother and the family desired," he said.

"And then a discussion would ensue between the physicians and the mother."

Though his spokeswoman, Northam said his words were taken out of context, and were only meant to apply if a woman in dire circumstances went into labor.

The bill failed to advance out of committee, but Republicans including President Donald Trump pounced on the comments.

"Democrats are becoming the Party of late term abortion, high taxes, Open Borders and Crime!" Trump tweeted.

The US Supreme Court legalized abortion nationwide in 1973 with its decision in Roe v. Wade, but the issue remains one of the most politically divisive in the United States.

# Quiet, cheerful talk over tea

FROM PAGE 1

started around 3:30pm.

Leaders of all the political parties, except the Jatiya Oikyafront, including the BNP, and the Left Democratic Alliance, attended the tea party. Oikyafront and the LDA skipped the programme saying it had "no agenda".

The two political alliances had also rejected the results of the general election, alleging widespread irregularities and vote rigging.

The Awami League won a landslide victory in the polls, bagging 257 out of 299 seats.

While talking to The Daily Star after yesterday's programme, Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon said, "It was a gathering free of any tension. Everyone, including the prime minister, was relaxed and delighted."

The tea party became a joyous get-together of politicians, thanks to the

prime minister's cordial behaviour towards the guests, he said.

"When she was passing near our table, we [jokingly] asked her whether we [leaders of Awami League's partners in the 14-party alliance] have become the opposition. At this, she sat with us with a smile and spent a long time," Menon said.

"You are my companion during both good and bad times," Menon quoted Hasina as telling them in reply.

Unlike the previous cabinet, the current cabinet has no member from the AL's partner in the alliance.

The PM also stressed the need for making the new parliament lively through concerted efforts, he added.

Hasina also said her father, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, often used to organise such gatherings in the past when all politicians maintained good relations among each other.

Hasina also regretted that she could not do many things she wanted, on security grounds.

"You see security personnel surrounding me while I am sitting with you. I don't like it actually. I want to visit the *Boi Mela* everyday and flick through new books. But I can't do that for security reasons," Menon quoted the PM as saying.

Hasina also said she wanted to hold such gatherings of political leaders frequently as those would end divisions among the political parties, said other participants.

For yesterday's tea party, the lush green south lawn of the Gono Bhaban was decorated with *kureghar* (hut), mat, *mora* and earthen pots, while patriotic songs were also played.

The guests were entertained with traditional foods, including *chatpati*, *fuchka*, *muri*, *chanachur*, and *bhapa*, *chitai*, *patisapta*, *puli pitha*, *jilapi*, *kebab*

and *nan ruti*.

Leaders from different political parties, including Awami League, Jatiya Party, Workers Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Jasad-Inu), JP (Monju), Jasod (Ambia), Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (BSD), Gonotantri Party, Samyabadi Dal, Bikalpadhara Bangladesh, Islami Oikya Jote, Tarikat Federation and Bangladesh National Alliance attended the tea party.

AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader, on behalf of the prime minister, later thanked the guests for attending the programme.

"At the end of the election, we seek your cooperation and the prime minister wants to fulfill her electoral pledges, that she made before the nation, word by word," he said.

Hasina had held dialogues with the political parties at the Gono Bhaban from Nov 1-7 ahead of the December 30 election.

# Back to cold-war era?

FROM PAGE 1

President Donald Trump said Friday that Washington was starting a process to withdraw from the agreement in six months.

Trump said he would like to "get everybody in a big and beautiful room and do a new treaty," but in the meantime, the United States "can't be put at a disadvantage."

The US in December gave Moscow a 60-day deadline to dismantle missiles it said breached the agreement.

But Moscow has insisted the disputed 9M729 missile is allowed under the treaty. The defence ministry last month invited journalists and foreign military attaches to a briefing on the weapon system.

Lavrov yesterday repeated Russian accusations that Washington itself has been in violation of the deal for many years. The foreign minister said Russia had "tried everything to save the treaty" in several rounds of diplomatic talks.

Lavrov also voiced concerns that Washington's decision to withdraw from the INF could jeopardise the extension of the New START treaty. That agreement, which caps the number of nuclear warheads held by Washington and Moscow, expires in 2021.

Putin meanwhile said Russia would seek to develop medium-range missiles in response to what he said were similar projects in the US.

He has previously warned of proliferation of weapons but yesterday told that Russia would "not be drawn into a costly new arms race". Russia would only deploy intermediate- and short-range missiles in Europe or elsewhere in answer to similar

moves from the US, he added.

European leaders have voiced fears over the consequences of the treaty's demise and called on Russia to address concerns before the United States formally leaves in August.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas on Friday said Europe will be less secured without the treaty.

Hungary's Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said history had taught his country "a very clear lesson".

"This clear lesson is whenever there was a conflict between east and west, we central Europeans always lost," he said.

"I don't think we have too much leverage on this issue. We can just cross fingers for a more pragmatic cooperation between east and west."

While all 29 Nato allies have endorsed the US view that Russia is in breach of the treaty, differences have emerged over how to respond.

Belgian Foreign Minister Didier Reynders said withdrawing was "not the right response", arguing that leaving the treaty would not "succeed in putting more pressure" on Moscow.

Asked if Russia was to blame for the INF being in jeopardy, Karin Kneissl, the Austrian foreign minister, who is close to Putin, said it was "a bit more complicated" than that, pointing to Moscow's concerns about China, which is not bound by the treaty.

Beijing yesterday also expressed concern over the mutual suspension, calling for the US and Russia to engage in "constructive dialogue".

However, China's foreign ministry has ruled out the possibility of negotiating a new multilateral pact that includes Beijing.

# Bus easier, cheaper

FROM PAGE 1

On the plea of RSTP recommendations, the government with a Dhaka metro rail company embarked on implementing the five metro rail lines, one under construction, two at feasibility stage and two at conceptual stage.

Though an expensive and time-consuming option, building metro rails got priority as they are structurally impressive and earns political points for the government, said insiders.

Transport experts said the government should have given priority to recommendations on facilitating pedestrians (who would account for 25 percent of the journeys in 2035), bus service reforms, and traffic management to have immediate and much greater impact on ending the traffic chaos for a lot less money and in less time.

Completion of all five metro lines would take 24 years and the construction of the first one began in 2012.

The draft report on DAP (Detailed Area Plan) revision said Dhaka's traffic situation would turn terribly unmanageable by then if bus services were not streamlined, safe pedestrian facilities were not installed, non-



motorised vehicles were not managed, the transport sector was not disciplined and waterways were not made functional.

It said instead of advancing expensive metro rail as a priority, it is imperative to go for measures that would require only a minimal financial involvement and far less time but would leave a massive impact on transport system improvement.

The report highly recommends rearrangement of priorities for pedestrian-friendly transport policy, utilisation of waterways, commuter rail service, and developing multi-mode transport system.

Anisur Rahman, a traffic engineer of Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA), in a presentation on World Cities Day in late October last year, said by the year 2035, the population in the 1,625sqkm Rajuk area would be over 26 million and the total daily trips would be 51 million.

Citing the RSTP, he said by 2025, the total daily trips in greater Dhaka city would be around 43 million, of which metro line-6 and -1 and Bus Rapid Transit line-3 together would carry only 6 percent of the people.

If bus services were streamlined, buses would carry 63 percent of the people.

Md Abdul Baquee Miah, additional project director of Dhaka Mass Transport Company Limited for the country's maiden metro line-6, however thinks that there are no sufficient well-planned bus routes in the capital city to offer comprehensive mass transport service.

Introduction of metro rail will

discourage use of small private cars that are considered as a foremost reason behind traffic congestion in the capital, he said.

Noted civil engineer Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury, who steered the 2005 Strategic Transport Plan, believes that metro rail would by and large serve as a major transport corridor.

"But no system will yield results unless traffic is disciplined and pedestrian facilities are developed," he said.

The DTCA is the custodian of Strategic Transport Plan, considered the transport master plan of the metropolitan and greater Dhaka city area.

Its Executive Director Khandakar Rakibur Rahman said, "It is difficult for me to say how a priority of an urban transport scheme is set. However, the implementation directive for the metro rail and Bus Rapid Transit [BRT] scheme came from the prime minister."

As to why disciplining the capital's traffic system and freeing Dhaka's streets and pedestrian passages are not prioritised, he said, "The answer is obvious and known to all, I don't want to specify."

# Ershad

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Hospital. He was staying at an adjacent house.

The party, in a statement yesterday, also said Ershad's physical condition was much better now.

The 89-year-old former military dictator had undergone treatment at the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka for three months before he flew to Singapore.

Earlier on December 10 last year, he had gone to Singapore for treatment and returned on December 26, just three days before the 11th parliamentary election.

He was elected an MP from Rangpur-3, even though he could not carry out any campaign.

# Sixth-grader

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with Charjabbar Police Station in this connection. Police arrested the duo after conducting drives at different places on the same day.

Ibrahim Khalil, inspector (investigation) of Charjabbar Police Station, said the victim was sent to Noakhali General Hospital for medical tests.

# First one by 2026

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Japan has committed to fund the project, and the Economic Relations Division (ERD) accepted Japan's proposal for funding at a meeting in December.

The final loan agreement is expected to happen in June, an ERD official said last week, adding that the amount would be decided later on.

The estimated project cost has been set at Tk 50,000 crore, but the actual amount will be known after the design is finalised, according to the ERD.

Japan is also funding the country's first elevated metro rail, MRT Line-6, from Uttara to Motijheel. Construction of the 20.1km track is now underway and may be completed by next year.

The government wants to build all the five metro lines -- one elevated, one underground, and three underground plus elevated -- in the capital and its adjacent areas by 2030 to ease traffic and reduce pollution, the two major problems facing the mega city of more than 1.5 crore residents.

elevated rail from Notun Bazar to Purbachal.

Of its total length, 3.65km would be for transition from underground to elevated and vice versa.

"We will begin the construction in July and people will be able to use the service by 2026," said MAN Siddique, managing director of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd, which is implementing the project.

There will be a trial run for a year before its formal launching, he said.

The line will have 12 underground stations -- at Airport, terminal-3 of the airport, Khilkhet, Jamuna Future Park, Notun Bazar, Uttar Badda, Badda, Natirjheel, Rampura, Malibagh, Rajarbagh and Kamalapur.

The Purbachal part will have nine stations -- Notun Bazar, Jamuna Future Park, Bashundhara, Police Officers' Housing Society, Mastul, Purbachal West, Purbachal Centre, Purbachal Sector-7 and Purbachal depot.

Of them, seven would be elevated and the remaining two -- Notun Bazar and Jamuna Future Park -- would be underground as part of the Airport-Kamalapur route.

The Notun Bazar station would serve as an interchange.

Siddique said a feasibility study had

been done and the Technical Project Plan (TPP) was approved by the Planning Commission.

"On the basis of the TPP, we are now preparing the Development Project Proposal (DPP)," he said, adding that a Japanese company-led consortium started working on the design on December 9.

The consortium would prepare plans for land acquisition, compensation and rehabilitation of the affected people as well as construction of the depot, Siddique told this paper.

"We will prepare the DPP by June and send it to the Ecneq [Executive Committee of the National Economic Council]. The main work will start after its approval."

The depot will be set up in Rugganj of Narayanganj.

"We will build the depot first. In the meantime, we will float tenders for other work," he said.

In 2017, Japan lent Bangladesh 5,590 million yen (around \$51 million) for appointing consultants and other preliminary work for the project.

Last year, two inspection teams from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) visited Bangladesh to see the progress, said an ERD official.

# Shafin's polls

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Citing a report of the Bangladesh Bank's Credit Information Bureau (CIB), Abul Kasem, returning officer of the DNCC by-election, said Shafin defaulted on a loan he had taken from the Brac Bank's Saat Masjid Road branch.

Shafin, also a popular singer, told The Daily Star that the CIB report seemed mysterious to him.

"My name was not in the CIB report even two days ago. I checked it before submitting the nomination paper. But why did the Bangladesh Bank suddenly include my name in the list?"

He added that he would appeal against the EC decision.

Shafin entered politics by becoming a mayoral candidate from Bobby Hazzaz-led NDM after the EC on January 18 last year announced the schedule for the DNCC by-elections.

The BNP-led 20-party alliance nominated Tabitha Awal as its candidate at the time.

Within days, the High Court stayed the election following writ petitions filed with the court. The HC order came a day before the deadline for the submission of nomination papers.

The HC recently lifted the stay order.

The BNP-led 20-party this time decided to boycott the local government polls.