



Seized current nets at Tilabari Jele Para in Chandpur town yesterday afternoon. Earlier in the day, district taskforce officials recovered nearly 1 lakh metres of banned current nets, raiding 24 houses in the area.

PHOTO: ALAM PALASH

NZ pledges gun control

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horrifying attack, as questions swirl over whether intelligence agencies should have spotted warning signs.

The role of social media has also come under the spotlight, after the gunman live-streamed his rampage on Facebook.

A teenager, whose name cannot be published, appeared in court yesterday and charged with distributing that footage.

Meanwhile, police launched a probe into a bomb hoax that forced an hours-long closure of the airport in Dunedin on Sunday, where Tarrant lived.

Grief continued to wash across the nation yesterday, with New Zealanders of all stripes gathering to express revulsion over the killings -- and a unified front against racial hatred.

Family and friends outside Al Noor mosque -- the scene of the largest massacre -- held a sunset prayer session, with their mournful cries echoing through a park as locals looked on.

"It just happened to be the time of our evening prayer. Anywhere you are, you can just pray anywhere," Saiday Raza, who had travelled from Auckland to bury his cousin who died in the shootings, told AFP.

Earlier, a Maori cleansing ceremony was performed at the mosque, bringing together indigenous Kiwis, Muslim leaders and local officials.

Dozens of students then paid their respects, with many coming together for a haka -- traditional Maori ceremonial dance that has been performed by groups across New Zealand in the wake of killings.

And in Auckland, students at Orewa College gathered to form a heart and the message "Kia Kaha" -- "stay strong" in Maori.

Turkish-origin gunman kills 3

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remained unclear. A prosecutor said it could be for "family reasons" and Turkey's state-run Anadolu news agency, quoting relatives of the gunman, said he had fired at a relative on the tram and had then shot at others who tried to help her.

The Turkish intelligence agency said it is investigating whether the attack was personally motivated or an act of terrorism, President Tayyip Erdogan said.

Earlier on Wednesday, Dutch authorities had raised the terrorism threat in Utrecht province to its highest level, schools were told to shut their doors and paramilitary police increased security at airports, other vital infrastructure and at mosques.

The threat level was reduced by one notch to where it had been after the suspect was arrested, the National Counter-Terrorism Agency said.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte convened crisis talks immediately after the incident, which came three days after a lone gunman killed 50 people

'NOTHING EXTRAORDINARY'

The organisers of New Zealand's largest gun show -- the Kumeu Militaria Show, near Auckland -- announced yesterday they had cancelled the event in the wake of the massacre and because of "elevated security risks".

Despite having tightened the rules in the 1990s after the last mass shooting, New Zealand has relatively permissive gun laws, with licences granted to nearly every applicant.

David Tipple, the managing director of Gun City, whose online store sold Tarrant four weapons, said he felt no responsibility for the killings.

"We detected nothing extraordinary about this licence holder," he told reporters.

Tarrant, who appeared in court on Saturday charged with murder, yesterday sacked his state-appointed lawyer.

Richard Peters, who represented the alleged killer during the hearing, told AFP the 28-year-old "wants to be self-represented in this case".

"The way he presented was rational and someone who was not suffering any mental disability. He seemed to understand what was going on," Peters said.

Under New Zealand law, if Tarrant pleads not guilty his case would normally go to trial, raising the possibility that he could face survivors and victims' families in court.

Mustafa Farouk, president of the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand, told reporters he had faith in the system.

"As a community, we would like that person to go through the process, the due process, and to be given all his rights," he said.

"We believe in the justice system here and we know it will do what is

right."

But, he cautioned, the attitudes that gave rise to the killing -- documented in a rambling, racist screed released online minutes before the attacks began -- must be tackled.

"This rise in hatred... by people who call themselves right-wing, whether smaller groups or through reckless politicians, should not be allowed to continue."

DIGGING GRAVES

Frustrated families of the 50 victims were still waiting yesterday for the release of the bodies of their loved ones, as officials worked their way through a painstaking investigation.

Dozens of graves were being dug in readiness for that release, which Police Deputy Commissioner Wally Haumaha said would hopefully happen soon.

"The process has been highly emotional and stressful for all... as in accordance with Islamic faith the families have wanted the bodies to be returned as soon as possible," he said.

"We have burial expert teams in place ready to receive the bodies at a point in time."

The dead span generations, aged between three and 77, according to a list circulated among relatives.

Some victims came from the neighbourhood, others from as far afield as Egypt. At least two of the dead came from the same family -- a father and son.

Delhi said Sunday that five of its nationals were killed, while Pakistan said nine of its citizens were among the dead, including one man who died trying to rush Tarrant.

Authorities said 31 people remained in hospital, nine in critical condition.

Three killed

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was mounting in the area between the two groups. In the aftermath, both the groups locked into a clash with lethal weapons on Saturday morning, said the police official.

Soon the clash spread elsewhere and affected the entire village and continued for up to two hours. At least 28 people, including women, were injured and admitted to different clinics and hospitals.

Three of the injured, including the pregnant woman, died while undergoing treatment.

The additional SP said both the groups filed separate cases with the police station concerned.

5,000 uncharted

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In 2005, a US nuclear submarine collided at full speed with a previously undetected seamount near Guam, revealing the extent to which this environment is still largely a mystery.

Dr Sandwell told New Scientist about their new work, explaining that enormous progress had been made in the resolution of seamount mapping.

While five years ago scientists were capable of detecting all structures greater than 2km (1.2 miles) tall using satellite data, they are now able to detect anything above 1.5km (0.9 miles).

He said there will probably be thousands more seamounts discovered after Nasa's SWOT satellite -- which can detect anything down to 1km (0.6 miles) high -- is launched in two years' time.

Another project, the United Nations-backed Seabed 2030 initiative, has been set up to create a high-resolution chart of the underwater environment comparable with existing efforts to map the land.

The team behind the project intend to gather data from a wide range of countries and private companies to create a freely accessible depiction of the ocean floor.

This could involve equipping fishing vessels and other boats with acoustic devices that capture information about water depth and send it back to the scientists.

Seabed 2030 launched in 2017 and is expected to cost around \$3 billion (£2.3bn).

China says 13,000 'terrorists' arrested in Xinjiang

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday defended its controversial security crackdown in the fractious far west region of Xinjiang, saying nearly 13,000 "terrorists" have been arrested there since 2014.

Beijing has come under international criticism over its policies in the region, where as many as one million Uighurs and other mostly Muslim minorities are being held in internment camps, according to human rights groups.

The State Council, China's cabinet, hit back again with a white paper saying that the government "is relentless in striking hard, in accordance with the law, at any conduct advocating terrorism and extremism".

The document states that Xinjiang has long been part of Chinese territory but that "terrorist and extremist forces" have fomented separatist activities by "falsifying" the region's history.

"Since 2014, Xinjiang has destroyed 1,588 violent and terrorist gangs, arrested 12,995 terrorists, seized 2,052 explosive devices, punished 30,645 people for 4,858 illegal religious activities, and confiscated 345,229 copies of illegal religious materials," according to the white paper.

"The counter-terrorism work and the de-extremism struggle in Xinjiang

have always been carried out in accordance with the rule of law."

A emphasis is also on "preventive counter-terrorism", the document said, including setting up "education centres" to "eliminate terrorist activities before they are launched".

The paper was quickly condemned by a Uighur rights group, which called it a "political excuse to suppress the Uighurs".

The purpose of releasing the so-called white paper is a means of getting local support for its extreme policies and to cover up human rights abuses," Dilxat Raxit, spokesman of the exiled World Uyghur Congress, said in a statement.

Xinjiang, which shares a border with several countries including Pakistan and Afghanistan, has long suffered from violent unrest, which China claims is orchestrated by an organised "terrorist" movement seeking the region's independence.

No sign of imminent N Korea missile launch: S Korea

REUTERS, Seoul

It is premature to say whether recent activity at some of North Korea's rocket facilities involved preparation for a missile launch, South Korea's defence minister told a parliamentary hearing yesterday. Early in March, several American think-tanks and South Korean officials reported that satellite imagery showed possible preparations for a launch from the Sohae rocket launch site at Tongchang-ri, North Korea, which has been used in the past to launch satellites but not intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of delivering a nuclear warhead.

"It's hasty to call it missile-related activity," Defence Minister Jeong Kyeong-doo told a parliamentary defence committee. "Tongchang-ri is a launch site but we don't see any activity being carried out for a missile launch."

Executive meet

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"As the office hour is until 5:00pm, we are suspending today's programme," she added.

The next course of action would be announced soon after a meeting among members of all five panels that boycotted the Ducsu and hall union elections.

Muhammad Rashed Khan, also joint convener of quota movement platform Bangladesh Sadharan Chhatra Adhikar Sangrakshan Parishad, said the attitude of the authorities had frustrated the students.

"The voting rights of students in Ducsu elections held after 28 years were been snatched. The administration was directly involved in the fraudulence and has become morally so weak that it does not have the courage to come before us," said Rashed, who was a general secretary candidate for Ducsu.

Earlier in the day, the protesting students boycotted their classes and examinations brought out a procession from Raju Sculpture around noon and paraded through the campus.

Activists and followers of the five panels -- Pragatishil Chhatra Oikya, Chhatra Federation, Swatantra Jote, Swadharik Swatantra Parishad and Bangladesh Sadharan Chhatra Adhikar Sangrakshan Parishad -- then staged the sit-in.

The protesters were chanting slogans demanding cancellation of the Ducsu election results, re-elections, resignation of the VC, withdrawal of cases against the students and punishment of those involved in alleged attacks on the election day.

Earlier in the morning, the students who had observed hunger strikes at Raju Sculpture and Ruqayyah Hall, held a meeting with the VC at his office around 11:00am.

They also submitted a written complaint along with the evidence of irregularities in the Ducsu elections.

One of the students, Tauhid Tanzim, said VC Akhtaruzzaman had told them the irregularities that allegedly occurred during the recently held Ducsu election were "normal compared to the previous Ducsu elections that were marred by anomalies and violence including incidents of killing".

Sohel Mahmud, Rafia Tamanna and Rabul Islam were also present at the meeting representing the hunger strikers.

They said the assurance from the VC of proper investigation into their allegations over Ducsu polls did not satisfy them as he was repeatedly giving examples of irregularities in the previous elections.

"We requested him [the VC] to withdraw all false cases against the students but he seemed reluctant to hear this," said Moinuddin, a student who attended the meeting.

He said the university authorities should clearly explain why they had taken so much time to count the votes and delayed announcing the polls

results.

"We want the papers where students put their signatures after casting vote as we have no faith in this administration," Moin added.

CONFUSION OVER NUR'S STANCE

On March 16, all the elected student representatives met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban.

Speaking there, Nur sought the premier's all-out cooperation in proper functioning of Ducsu for the welfare of students but the next day he called a sit-in programme for Monday (yesterday), creating controversy and confusion.

Liton Nandi, a VP contender from the leftist panel Pragatishil Chhatra Oikya, criticised Nur and said the Gono Bhaban speech of the quota movement leader was completely contradictory to his earlier statement.

"Since the election day, Nur had been demanding re-election. But in his speech at the Gono Bhaban, he said there were a few mistakes in the election this time and demanded the prime minister's help to avert recurrence of those in the next polls," Liton told the press on Sunday.

Muhammad Rashed Khan, who contested for general secretary form quota reformists' platform, said Nur would decided on taking over as VP after discussing with other panel members and taking opinion of other agitating platforms.

Nur could not be contacted and he did not attend yesterday's protest.

Relying to a query, Rashed told The Daily Star, "Nur did not come as he has to take care of his sister who fell sick".

Liton Nandi was also absent and it was due to sickness, according to Rajib Raj, DU general secretary of Chhatra Union.

ARM Asifur Rahman, general secretary candidate from Swadharik Swatantra Parishad, said it is Nur's personal matter whether he would take charge or not.

Talking to this paper, Liton echoed the same view.

The 28-year wait for Ducsu election ended in boycott by all major panels, except for that of the pro-government organisation Chhatra League, amid allegations of irregularities.

On the election day, students of Bangladesh-Kuwait Maitree Hall recovered a stash of ballots, marked in favour of BCL panel for hall union polls, from beside a reading room of the dormitory.

Students of another female dormitory, Ruqayyah Hall, recovered unmarked ballot papers for Ducsu and hall union polls in two trunks from hall union room.

Both the incidents led to suspension of voting for about three hours at the halls as students protested "marking ballot papers at Maitree Hall before the polling began and an attempted electoral fraud at Ruqayyah Hall".

Combo deal

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Arman said their service would allow parents to have control over their underaged children's internet use. They would be able to set schedule, time and data limits on their ward's devices.

They would be able to block certain sites as well.

With the service, people would be able to use 57 parental-control features and their internet service would be much safer, said Gazi Zehadul Hakir, a general manager of the company.

Within the next month, other companies may also launch IPTV and video-on-demand services alongside high-speed internet and telephone services as 13 ISPs got permission for launching these, said a senior official of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission.

In December, the BTSC removed the restriction it had imposed two years ago on IPTV and video-on-demand services.

The ISPs are stepping on the cable operators' toes and the cable operators are even thinking about legal actions.

"Definitely this service will destroy our business and we will take measures to save ourselves," said Md Lutfur Rahman, managing director of United Communication Services Ltd, market leader in the cable TV service in Dhaka.

Lutfur said they were observing the situation and were considering legal process. "If the ISPs can provide TV service then why not give us the chance to offer internet service under the existing licences?"

But at the moment, ISPs are