



Workers of Latif Bawany and Karim jute mills block the Demra-Jatrabari road near the city's Sultana Kamal Bridge yesterday, demanding implementation of a wage board and payment of their nine-month wage arrears.

Italian ship rescues migrants as Rome vows crackdown

AFP, Rome

An Italian charity ship rescued 49 migrants at sea off Libya Monday, prompting fresh threats from Rome against all private vessels saving people off the coast of North Africa.

Italy's hardline Interior Minister Matteo Salvini has repeatedly declared Italian waters closed to NGO rescue vessels, leaving several of them stranded at sea in the past in a bid to force Europe to take its share of asylum seekers.

"Mare Jonio has just rescued a rubber boat in distress that was sinking with around 50 people on board," the Mediterranean collective of aid groups and associations that runs the ship said.

The vessel was headed for the Italian island of Lampedusa, "the closest safe port", in deteriorating weather conditions, it said.

"We have formally asked Italy, under whose flag we sail and which legally and geographically bears responsibility, to indicate a port for disembarkation," it added.

No progress yet

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protests were held demanding punishment of the killers.

Two autopsies at the Cumilla Medical College could not determine the cause of her death though Yaar Hossain, who first spotted the body in a bush, saw that the back of his daughter's head was smashed and there were injury marks on her nose.

The police inquest report did not cite any sign of injury. The report said most of her long hair was cut and her mouth and eyes were closed.

There was a minor cut and blood spots on the upper part of her left ear. There were bruises on the left side of her face and right knee as well.

Tonu's kameez was torn, the report says, without specifying the area.

The victim's family had seen a ray of hope for getting justice after officials from the CID confirmed that Tonu was raped before murdered through DNA tests in May that year. The specimens collected from Tonu's clothes found spermatozoa of three males.

They claimed to have interrogated more than 200 people, including some army men, but to no avail.

The CID officials also claimed to have collected DNA samples from some people, but those did not match with the three DNA samples found on Tonu's clothes.

Kazi Mahtab Sumon, a cultural activist, said, "Tonu was killed in a highly secured place of the country. Who will be responsible -- state, people or judiciary system -- if her family doesn't get justice?"

Bhutan PM

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Consultation (FOC).

Tshering would sign deals in areas of connectivity, health, agriculture and public administration trainings, the Bangladesh foreign secretary said, adding that he would be visiting the country following an invitation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

At the FOC, Foreign Secretary Shahidul led a 19-member delegation of Bangladesh while Bhutanese Foreign Secretary Sonam Tshong led an eight-member delegation.

During the foreign secretary-level talks, both sides discussed the entire gamut of bilateral relations and took stock of the progress in ongoing bilateral cooperation.

At the outset of the talks, Haque recalled the relationship Bangladesh and Bhutan have been sharing since 1971 as Bhutan became the first country to recognise the newly independent Bangladesh.

He also highlighted the successful visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to Bhutan in 2017 which further deepened the existing cooperation and prospects for collaboration.

Time for N Korea to take concrete steps

Says top security adviser of Moon

AFP, Seoul

North Korea should take "actual action" towards giving up its nuclear weapons to break the deadlock in talks with Washington, a top security adviser to the South's president said, suggesting Seoul's patience with Pyongyang may be wearing thin.

President Moon Jae-in was instrumental in brokering the negotiations between Pyongyang and Washington, seizing on the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea to catalyse a rapid diplomatic rapprochement after a year of missile tests, threats and tensions.

But the first summit between the North's leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump in Singapore in June produced only a vague commitment to "work toward complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula".

Their second meeting in Hanoi last month broke up without agreement, or even a joint statement, as the two failed to come to a deal over sanctions relief and denuclearisation.

Since then, Pyongyang has said it is considering suspending the talks and images have emerged of rebuilding works at the Sohae rocket launch facilities.

That triggered international alarm that North Korea might be preparing a long-range missile or space launch, which could put the whole negotiations process at risk -- Pyongyang has not carried one out for more than a year and Trump has repeatedly said its

continued moratorium is crucial.

A launch of any kind by the North would be a "disaster", said Moon's special adviser on national security Moon Chung-in.

The "outcome will be catastrophic", he told AFP.

In Hanoi, US officials said, Trump urged Kim to "go all in" and that "the weapons themselves need to be on the table". In return, they were "prepared to go all in as well".

But it was not clear exactly which facilities at the Yongbyon nuclear complex the North was willing to give up, while they wanted "basically all the sanctions except for armaments" lifted, the officials said.

For its part the North's foreign minister said it only wanted some of the measures eased, and that its proposal to close "all the nuclear production facilities" at Yongbyon was its best and final offer.

Moon's goal, his adviser said, was a "nuclear weapons-free, peaceful and prosperous Korean peninsula" -- and he would not accept a peaceful accommodation with a nuclear-armed North.

The South Korean president has long pushed engagement with Pyongyang to bring it to the negotiating table, but his security adviser backed US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's assessment that "talk is cheap", saying that the North had given "words and commitment, but no actions".

Khaleda is sick

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proper treatment" to her, the BNP secretary general drew the government's attention to the matter.

Earlier on Monday, the jail authorities did not produce Khaleda before another Dhaka court in the Gatco graft case as she was ill.

Around 12:40pm yesterday, the BNP chief was taken to the Special Judge Court-9 of Dhaka, set up inside the erstwhile Dhaka central jail, in a wheelchair.

Sitting in a chair beside Khaleda, Fakhrul talked to her several times till the hearing ended at 1:20pm.

The BNP chief also spoke to her lawyers AJ Mohammad Ali and Masud Ahmed Talukder after the judge left the courtroom.

She asked the lawyers why they were not filing a prayer with the court, seeking her exemption from the case, said witnesses.

Mohammad Ali in reply said an application was already prepared, but it was yet to be submitted to the court.

Judge Sheikh Hafizur Rahman also granted a petition, filed by BNP standing committee member Moudud Ahmed, an accused in the case, seeking time as he was not present at the court.

However, the judge rejected another petition filed by the defence, seeking certified copies of the case documents.

During the hearing, advocate Masud told the court that they were yet to have the certified copies which were necessary for them to take part in the hearing on charge framing.

The judge said he had passed an order on the matter. He also said the defence did not file the prayer to the court in the prescribed way and the application also contained mistakes.

ACC Public Prosecutor Mosharruf Hossain Kajol said the defence was only delaying the hearing, citing lack of documents. The defence could participate in the hearing with the case documents they already had, he added.

Asked about Khaleda's treatment, he told journalists that there was a court order regarding the matter, but she was not receiving treatment in line with the order.

India may not have polls if Modi returns

Says Rajasthan CM

PTI, New Delhi

India may not see another election if Narendra Modi is re-elected as Prime Minister, Rajasthan chief minister and senior Congress leader Ashok Gehlot has claimed, suggesting that the country may go the way of China and Russia.

Gehlot also said both democracy and the country were in danger under Modi, who he said would "do anything" to get back to power. People felt he could even go to war with Pakistan to achieve this goal, the Congress leader said.

Dubbing Modi a "good actor", Gehlot said he could do much better in Bollywood and would have left his indelible mark in acting. He also alleged that he was a "master in marketing false promises".

"If people re-elect Modi, then there is no surety on whether elections will be held in the country or not," Gehlot said during an interaction with PTI yesterday.

He was suggesting that polls will be held on the lines of those in China and Russia, where only one party rules and who becomes the president or the prime minister is decided beforehand.

AL leader killed

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Larma) might have a hand in the killing.

But PCJSS General Secretary (Rangamati) Nilutpal Khisa rejected the allegation and termed it ill-motivated.

On Monday evening, unknown gunmen opened a hail of gunfire in Noymile area of Baghaichhari upazila, killing seven people, including two polling officials and four Ansar personnel.

The polling officials and security personnel were coming back to the upazila town from a polling centre at Sajek union during the second phase of upazila elections.

Panic and tension has since gripped the area.

Vehicle movement was brought under restrictions and shops remained closed yesterday. Additional law enforcers were deployed to avert further untoward incidents.

Meanwhile, senior officials from the police and the district administration met the family members of the victims at the Baghaichhari Upazila Parishad conference room.

After the meeting, Rangamati Deputy Commissioner AKM Mamunur Rashid said each of the families of the deceased was given Tk 20,000 for completing burial. Each of the injured got Tk 10,000 for treatment.

He announced that a joint force would soon launch drives to arrest killers.

No one was arrested till last night. Bodies of the victims were handed over to the family members following autopsy.

On the other hand, Chattogram Divisional Commissioner Abdul Mannan yesterday formed a seven-member committee to investigate the brutal attack on Monday.

The probe body, headed by a director of the local government division in Chattogram, was asked to submit report in 10 working days, said the DC.

Locals, under the banner of "Baghaichhari Upazilabashi", demonstrated in the upazila town area, demanding immediate arrest of the killers.

Parbattya Nagorik Committee President Goutam Dewan and the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) in separate statements condemned the killings and demanded that the attackers are punished.

Meanwhile, Parbatya Bangalee Chhatra Parishad, another local body, yesterday staged protests in Rangamati town around 6:00pm yesterday. From there, the announced a daylong hartal for today in Khagrachhari, demanding arrest of the killers.

Bangladesh

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attack on the worshippers, he declared himself as a "racist" in his 74-page manifesto containing slogans, poems and diatribes against immigrants and Muslims.

Hours after the shocking attacks, an Australian senator issued a statement pinning the mosque massacre blame on the Muslims and expressed growing fear within Australian community of the increasing Muslim presence in Australia and New Zealand.

Such extremist stand from an Australian lawmaker triggers fears of hatred of racism in Australia, the foreign ministry said.

The High Commission of Bangladesh in Canberra remains at service and can be contacted at the following numbers for information: Phone: +61 424472544, +61 424472544, +61 450173035. The Honorary Consul of Bangladesh to Auckland can be contacted at +64 210 246 5819.

GDP growth

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"All 15 components of the GDP have increased, especially the significant rise in export receipts and investment. As a result, we may cross 8 percent growth," Kamal said.

"We are expecting a double-digit growth in the next three years," he added.

Zahid Hussain, lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office, agrees that the recent growth has been driven by manufacturing and construction.

Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute, a think-tank, said the revenue collection and private sector credit growth did not match the government estimate.

"The GDP growth is not consistent with the revenue collection, which is weak and does not match the economic growth," Mansur said.

Normally, the private sector credit growth indicates economic growth, but here too the performance is weak, the economist said.

The economy has been growing riding on manufacturing growth, and the manufacturing sector is mainly export-led. But the export growth is below the GDP growth estimated by the government, he noted.

Bangladesh's export is mainly dependent on garment sector. But in the first eight months of the current fiscal year, garment export grew by 14.17 percent against the expectation for 20 percent, he pointed out.

Also, private investment increased marginally by just 0.1 percentage point of the GDP while public investment by 0.2 percentage points, he said.

The ratio of private investment in the national GDP was 23.4 percent in the current fiscal year, according to the

provisional data from the BBS. Last fiscal year, the ratio was 23.26 percent.

On the other hand, the ratio of public investment in the national GDP was 8.17 percent, which was 7.97 percent in the previous fiscal year.

"The growth therefore appears to have come from increased efficiency of capital as indicated by a decline in the incremental capital-output ratio from 3.97 last year to 3.88 this year," Zahid said.

"Explaining the increased efficiency of capital is a bit of a puzzle, particularly when viewed against Bangladesh's rather low and almost unchanged ranking on the Ease of Doing Business and Global Competitiveness Index indicators," he headed.

The government's provisional estimates show the industries sector grew 13.02 percent this fiscal year compared to 12.06 percent the previous year.

The provisional figures are based on data from the last six to eight months. The final estimate will be disclosed in September.

The services sector grew 6.5 percent this year, up from 6.39 percent a year ago, according to the BBS data.

Data also show that the farm sector grew 3.51 percent in the current fiscal, down from 4.19 percent last year.

Talking to reporters, the finance minister said Bangladesh had been continuously achieving GDP growth at over 7 percent for the last several years. And last year, the growth rose close to 8 percent despite the global economic volatility.

This year's high GDP growth is the outcome of the last several years' continued growth, he said.

No more wait

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passport and immigration department is also scheduled to visit Bangladesh from April 6 to 9 to make the final assessment on the measure.

Only two countries -- Malaysia and Indonesia -- can now complete the immigration process of their pilgrims at their own airports, sources said.

The Bangladeshi pilgrims will be able to have their immigration procedures completed in Dhaka before their departure within a minute which usually takes hours in Saudi Arabia, said Anisur.

After landing at airports, the pilgrims can enter Saudi Arabia through jet bridge without facing immigration formalities, he added.

Around 1.27 lakh Bangladeshis are scheduled to perform hajj this year, which is likely to be held in August. About 20 lakh people from across the world gather in Saudi Arabia to perform hajj each year.

Talking to this correspondent, several people, who had performed hajj in recent years, said it would be a great relief for Bangladeshi pilgrims if the government could convince the Saudi government to complete their immigration process in Dhaka.

It often takes hours -- even up to six hours -- to finish the immigration procedures at airports in Jeddah and Riyadh for Bangladeshi citizens during

the rush hour of hajj causing sufferings of them, they said.

The religious affairs secretary said a delegation, led by state minister of religious affairs ministry Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, recently visited Saudi Arabia and requested its government to this end.

He said the Saudi government at that time assured the delegation of accepting Bangladesh's request. Anisur said they will finish all necessary requirements before the high-powered delegation from the Saudi government visits Bangladesh.

"We are going to hold an inter-ministerial meeting where representatives of relevant ministries and departments will be present. We will discuss how to fulfill the requirements of the Saudi government," he added.

The secretary said after the visit of the high-powered Saudi team, it would be finalised whether the immigration process would be completed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport or Ashkona Hajj camp.

Anisur said during the month-long hajj flight operation, officials of the Saudi government would stay in Dhaka to look after the immigration process of Bangladeshi pilgrims. "But all these things will be finalised following the visit of the Saudi delegation in April."

'He will be nameless'

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Dressed in black, the 38-year-old leader opened her remarks in parliament with a symbolic gesture, repeating the greeting uttered every day across the Islamic world: "as-salaam alaikum".

She closed her address by noting that "on Friday, it will be a week since the attack, members of the Muslim community will gather for worship on that day. Let us acknowledge their grief as they do."

"Wa alaikum salaam wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh," she said -- "May the peace, mercy, and blessings of Allah be with you too."

SIX BODIES RETURNED TO FAMILIES

The bodies of six of victims have been released to their families, New Zealand police said yesterday, but they warned only a fraction of the 50 people killed had been fully identified, with the delay angering anguished relatives.

Muslims have had their grief compounded by the failure of the authorities to return bodies to families in time for a speedy burial, as required under Islamic custom.

Police in Christchurch said only 12 of the 50 victims had been identified, and appeared to warn next of kin to brace for further delays.

"We are doing all we can to undertake this work as quickly as possible and return the victims to their loved ones," a police statement said.

"While identification may seem straightforward the reality is much more complex, particularly in a situation like this."

Javed Dadabhai, who travelled from Auckland to help bury his cousin, said families and volunteers had been warned of a slow process.

"The majority of people still have not had the opportunity to see their family members," he told AFP.

Mohamed Safi, 23, whose father Matiullah Safi died in Al Noor mosque, pleaded for officials to let him identify his father and set a date for his burial.

"There's nothing they are offering," Safi, an Afghan refugee, said outside a

family support centre.

GUN LAW DEBATE RAGES

The gunman used a semi-automatic AR-15 during the mosque shootings, police said. A New Zealand gun shop owner said the store had sold Tarrant four weapons and ammunition online between December 2017 and March 2018, but not the high-powered weapon used in the massacre.

Arden has said she supports a ban on semi-automatic weapons and that cabinet has made in-principle decisions to change gun laws which she will announce next Monday.

While some New Zealanders have voluntarily surrendered guns, others have been buying more to beat the ban.

A gun club in the northern town of Kaitiaki burned down early yesterday and police were treating the blaze as suspicious.

Simon Bridges, leader of the opposition National Party, said he wanted to get details of the changes to see if there could be bipartisan support in parliament. The Nationals draw support from rural areas, where gun ownership is high.

"We know that change is required. I'm willing to look at anything that is going to enhance our safety - that's our position," Bridges told TVNZ.

A consortium of global technology firms has shared on its collective database the digital fingerprints of more than 800 versions of the video of the mass shooting.

Anyone caught sharing the massacre video in New Zealand faces a fine of up to NZ\$10,000 (\$6,855) or up to 14 years in jail, reported Reuters.

Facebook, the world's largest social media network, has said it removed 1.5 million videos within 24 hours of the attack.

Arden said there would be an inquiry into what government agencies "knew, or could or should have known" about the alleged gunman and whether the attack could have been prevented.

More than 250 New Zealand police are working on the inquiry, with staff from the US FBI and Australia's Federal Police joining them.