



No project that affects people: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the authorities concerned to take development projects that do not adversely affect people.

"We'll definitely undertake development projects, but the development will have to be for the people. There should be no development [project] harming the people," she said.

The PM said this during a presentation of Moheshkhali-Matarbari Integrated Infrastructure Development Initiative (MIDI) Project at her office.

Provide proper compensation in time to the people whose lands are acquired for development projects, Hasina directed the authorities.

Talking about the development of Cox's Bazar, Hasina said the coastal district was once neglected.

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'Danger for democracy'

B Chy frustrated over low voter turnout in upazila polls

UNB, Dhaka

Expressing frustration over the poor voters' presence in many places during the upazila polls, Juktafront Chairman Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday warned that the voters' apathy might put democracy in grave danger.

"The government must think why the upazila elections are not participatory ones. The presence of voters is also very thin in many places. The government will have to find out the reason behind it," he said.

Speaking at a discussion, Badruddoza, also president of Bikalpadhara Bangladesh, said, "I fear if the voters lose interest in elections, democracy will be in serious danger. Nothing can be more alarming than voters' apathy."

Bangladesh Sharia Andolan, one of the components of Juktafront, organised the programme at the Jatiya Press Club, marking the Independence Day and the organisation's second founding anniversary.

Badruddoza, also a former president, said political space for opposition parties must be ensured to make sure participatory elections and increase people's interest in voting.

"A good government which pursues Bangabandhu's dreams and ideals must think of creating scope for opposition to do politics. Opposition parties are there in all the democratic countries in the world. Democracy is incomplete without opposition parties."

It is the government's responsibility to create an atmosphere where opposition can do politics and participate in polls, he said.

Terming the upazila elections one-sided, the Juktafront chief said the

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'Drug peddler' killed in Cumilla 'gunfight'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

An alleged drug peddler was killed in a "gunfight" with police at Dhonpur in Cumilla's Sadar upazila yesterday.

The dead is Jamal Haque alias Jambu Mia, 35, of Joynagar village of the same upazila. At least 11 cases were filed against Jambu with different police stations in the district, said police.

Mamun Ur Rashid, officer-in-charge of Sadar South Police Station, claimed they along with detective branch raided the area around 4:00am on information that a large consignment of drugs was about to be passed there.

Sensing presence of the law enforcers, group of criminals opened fire, forcing them to retaliate, he added.

At one point, Jambu's bullet-ridden body was found but his gang members managed to escape the scene. Doctors later declared him dead after he was taken to Cumilla Medical College Hospital, the OC further claimed.

The body was sent to CMCH morgue for autopsy.

Police also claimed to have recovered 30 kilogrammes of hemp and 2000 yaba pills from the spot.

The Daily Star, however, could not independently verify the police claims.



People celebrate Holi -- the festival of colour -- at Dhakeshwari temple in the capital yesterday. The festival signifies the victory of good over evil and the arrival of spring.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

NZ imposes ban on assault guns

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fastest -- will also be banned.

SILENT MARCH

More than 10,000 people marched silently through the New Zealand city where the alleged shooter had lived, as the country paid its respects to the 50 victims of the tragedy.

Marchers made their way through Dunedin to a rugby stadium where a total of about 15,000 people eventually gathered for a sombre vigil, New Zealand media reported.

The Otago Daily Times said the march began at the University of Otago, about 20 minutes walk away from Forsyth Barr Stadium.

The marchers were joined by thousands more who had made their way there for ceremonies that included Maori incantations and Muslim prayers.

Dunedin Mayor Dave Cull called on New Zealanders to come together in support of those left bereft by the tragedy.

"We need to examine what needs to change so that this does not happen again," he said, according to the newspaper.

'FOLLOW NZ'S LEAD'

Proponents of gun control in the

United States and around the world praised New Zealand government's move and denounced the powerful US pro-gun lobby on social media, while American gun supporters defended their constitutional right to bear arms.

"This is what real action to stop gun violence looks like," Democratic US Senator and presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders tweeted.

"We must follow New Zealand's lead, take on the NRA (National Rifle Association) and ban the sale and distribution of assault weapons in the United States."

High-profile Democratic Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez contrasted Ardern's swift action with US failure to enact even modest controls following recurring horrific shootings such as at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut in 2012, in which 20 children and six school staff died.

"Sandy Hook happened 6 years ago and we can't even get the Senate to hold a vote on universal background checks," Ocasio-Cortez tweeted.

"Christchurch happened, and within days New Zealand acted to get weapons of war out of the consumer

market. This is what leadership looks like."

US President Donald Trump did not immediately react on his Twitter feed, but NRA spokeswoman Dana Loesch responded to Sanders by tweeting that "the US isn't NZ."

"While they do not have an inalienable right to bear arms and to self defense, we do," she said.

Accused shooter Brenton Tarrant livestreamed the carnage in real-time, sparking worldwide revulsion and concern over access to guns and the use of social media by extremists.

Tarrant had written that he planned to use firearms for his attacks to encourage US gun control advocates to push for curbs, thus tearing open the bitter political debate.

"This attempted abolishment of rights by the left will result in a dramatic polarization of the people in the United States and eventually a fracturing of the US along cultural and racial lines," he wrote.

New Zealand's ban includes interim measures to prevent a run on such guns before legislation is enacted, and outlawing weapons already in private possession.

Guns are to be handed in and destroyed via a buyback scheme that will cost between Nz\$100 million and \$200 million (between US\$69 million and \$139 million), depending on how many are received and their valuations.

A CHANGED NATION

NZ Police Commissioner Michael Bush said there were around a quarter of a million firearms users in New Zealand, but he did not give a breakdown on how many possess semi-automatics.

Conservative estimates indicate some 1.5 million weapons are in circulation in New Zealand, equating to three guns for every 10 people, well below the US ratio of more than one weapon per person.

"The vast majority of New Zealanders will support this change. I feel incredibly confident of that," Ardern said.

Simon Bridges, leader of the opposition National Party, embraced the ban and pledged to work with the government on it.

"The terrorist attack in Christchurch last week has changed us as a nation," Bridges said.

No retreat

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whether the government was truly implementing its pledges on safe roads.

The students were seen giving flowers to policemen at 1:45pm, about an hour before ending the protest.

In the city's Khilgaon area, some students were seen checking driving licences and registration documents of vehicles.

At Dhaka University, some 20 students observed two-minute silence near the Raju Sculpture to pay their respect to deceased Abrar.

Meanwhile, students of Rajshahi

and Chittagong universities staged demonstrations yesterday expressing solidarity with the protesters in Dhaka.

Witnesses said RU students blocked the Rajshahi-Dhaka highway near the main entrance to the university around 9:30pm and staged a protest for about one and a half hours.

In Chattagram, several hundred CU students formed a human chain before the university's Central Shaheed Minar in the morning.

Apart from demanding justice for the death of Abrar, they were also protesting over the Wednesday night's road accident near the university gate

in which their fellow student Mehedi Hasan was injured.

The student protest for safe roads had begun in the capital on Tuesday following the death of 20-year-old Abrar.

The following day, a section of students called off the protest until March 28 after Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Atiqul Islam assured them of meeting their demands.

The students, however, warned that they would take to the streets again after March 28 if their demands were not met by then.

Among the demands include freeing the transport sector from political influence, checking necessary documents of all buses each month and banning all unfit vehicles and all drivers without licence from the streets.

CONSTRUCTION OF FOOTBRIDGE BEGINS

The piling work was going on yesterday for the foundation of a footbridge on Pragati Sarani near the entrance to Bashundhara Residential Area.

The foundation plaque of the footbridge, to be named after Abrar, was unveiled on Wednesday by the DNCC mayor.

Running without route permit!

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Bangladesh University of Professionals, on Tuesday, the DMP commissioner pointed out that the accident took place on zebra crossing, a safe zone for pedestrians.

"When an accident takes place in a safe zone, it is not possible to give answers ... So time has come to bring discipline to the transport sector," he noted.

Blaming the contract-basis appointment of drivers for most of the accidents, the DMP commissioner said the deaths of Abrar and two students of Shaheed Ramiz Uddin Cantonment School last year are in no way acceptable.

When a driver is appointed on a

contract basis, he often stops his vehicle in the middle of the road to take passengers, blocking the path of other vehicles, he said.

"This tendency of earning more is one of the main reasons for road accidents," he mentioned.

Sirajul Islam, the driver of the Suprobbat Paribahan bus that killed Abrar in Bashundhara area on Tuesday, was driving recklessly to flee after hitting another pedestrian in Shahjadpur area. Sirajul is now on a seven-day remand.

Abrar's death sparked a firestorm of protest among the students. The situation calmed down after the authorities suspended operation of all buses belonging to Suprobbat and Jabal-e-

Noor, and assured students of visible steps for safe road by a week.

Speaking at yesterday's programme for raising awareness about traffic rules, the commissioner asked the members of the DMP to detain the pedestrians who jaywalk instead of using footbridges or zebra crossings.

"Detain them and present them before the media to show that they are risking their lives by not using footbridges."

Urging all to follow the traffic rules, he said the drive against unfit vehicles and random parking will continue.

At the programme, Dhaka Road Transport Owners' Association General Secretary Khondaker Enayet

Ullah admitted that the contract-basis appointment of drivers is the main cause of road accidents in the capital.

He further said they would introduce ticket system for city buses from next month to stop such contract-basis appointment of drivers.

Enayet hoped the number of road accidents would come down once the system is put in place.

Meanwhile, the BRTA formed a five-member probe committee, led by its Director Sirajul Islam, to scrutinise the papers of the two transport companies -- Suprobbat and Jabal-e-Noor.

The committee has been asked to submit its report by March 27, BRTA Deputy Director Shafiquzzaman Bhuiyan told this newspaper.

Police probe attacks on 5 UK mosques

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the force and the counter terrorism unit are working side-by-side to find whoever is responsible."

UK Home Secretary Sajid Javid called the vandalism "deeply concerning and distressing", while MP for Birmingham Ladywood Shabana Mahmood said the attacks were "truly terrible".

Officers were first alerted in the early hours of yesterday to reports of a man smashing windows with a

sledgehammer at one of the places of worship, police said.

Following reports of a similar attack at another mosque in a nearby neighbourhood, officers launched targeted patrols and discovered "further damage" at three other sites.

"Forensic officers are working to identify evidence, and CCTV is being examined," the West Midlands force added.

British national police chiefs last week announced officers were pro-

viding "reassurance patrols" around mosques in the immediate aftermath of Friday's deadly gun rampage in New Zealand.

Anti-racism groups have warned Islamophobia is on the rise in Britain and spurring a spike in far-right activity in the country.

A report released last month by the Hope Not Hate charity cited a poll which found more than a third of Britons see Islam as "generally a threat to the British way of life".

In another recent incident, Mohammed Mahmoud -- an imam who won praise for shielding the perpetrator of a 2017 deadly terror attack against a north London mosque -- reported he was spat at and abused this week. Mahmoud said he was targeted Monday while returning home from a solidarity event for the New Zealand massacre with other religious leaders, as well as interior minister Sajid Javid and London Mayor Sadiq Khan.

GANGRAPE OF RMG WORKER Swechchasebak League leader arrested

He kept victim confined for 4 days with help of 3 cohorts in Lalmonirhat

STAR REPORT

Police yesterday arrested a leader of the Swechchasebak League on charges of holding a garment worker captive for four days and raping her along with three of his accomplices in Lalmonirhat.

The arrestee, Rezaul Karim, 34, is the general secretary of the organisation's Burimari union unit and a residence of the district's Patgram upazila.

Police did not disclose the identities of Rezaul's alleged accomplices, who are still on the run, for the sake of investigation.

The law enforcers also rescued the victim from a bus counter in Burimari land port area and sent her to Patgram Upazila Health Complex.

The 30-year-old woman is a residence of Sherpur's Nakla upazila and used to work at a garment factory in Dhaka where she met one of the alleged rapists.

The alleged rapist, who is a resident of from Hatibandha upazila in Lalmonirhat, took her to Burimari on Monday morning luring her with the

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College student arrested over animal cruelty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A college girl was arrested from her Gopibagh house in the city last night after she allegedly killed a cat four days ago and video footage of the incident went viral on social media.

Her arrest came hours after animal welfare activists Zahid Hussain and Saurav Shamim filed a case under Cruelty to Animal Act, 1920 in this regard, said Pralay Kumar Saha, OC of Muga Police Station.

Talking to The Daily Star, Zahid, secretary general of Care for Paws, said the girl killed the cat on March 17. A day later, another person known to the girl uploaded video footage of the killing on Facebook.

The accused told police that the cat was ill and she killed and dismembered the animal out of curiosity, the OC added.

INGO Forum

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its concern over the activities of NGOs as some of them were working for the Rohingyas with an "ill motive" and asked law enforcement agencies to submit a list of NGOs operating with "ill motives".

In response, the INGO Forum yesterday said it would like to convey its gratitude to him for bringing the allegations to public attention.

"We fully understand the reasons for the Hon'ble Minister's concern, because in our understanding, operational costs need to be rational and within standard limits," the statement said.

The forum drew the minister's attention to the fact that a number of UN agencies, international and national NGOs have been working with the government in the Rohingya operations, and that each of these institutions has its own form of governance, operational modalities and budgeting.

INGO Forum said it would like to assure the minister and others concerned that INGOs working to help the Rohingyas "abide by the strictest financial rules and regulations, following and the government-approved operational cost standards, with no allowance for excessive overheads."

"All our operations, including our programmes related to the Rohingyas, are carried out only subject to specific approval of the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB) of the government operating under the Office of the Hon'ble Prime Minister.

"These are specific projects approved by the NGOAB based on specific programmatic and financial details including programme-related itemised budgets with approved limit for administrative overhead expenses."

The forum assured the minister that the INGOs were open to any investigation.

Over one million Rohingyas, including 740,000 who fled to Bangladesh after a military crackdown since late 2017, are living in Cox's Bazar and needing humanitarian assistances.

According to Cox's Bazar CSO-NGO Forum (CCNF), a platform of local NGOs and civil society organisations, 69 percent of the funds for the Rohingyas go to UN agencies, followed by INGOs (20 percent) and the Red Cross (7 percent). National NGOs receive only four percent.

CCNF has been demanding more efficient use of the aid money through employing more local people, instead of the expatriates, and investment in income-generating activities in the district.