

Bodies of two Christchurch shooting victims arrive in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The bodies of two Bangladeshi citizens, who were killed in the Christchurch mosque shooting in New Zealand, arrived in Dhaka last night.

They were Zakaria Bhuiyan of Narsingdi and Omar Faruk of Narayanganj.

Family members and relatives of the deceased received the bodies at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport around 11:15pm, a relative of Zakaria told The Daily Star.

"We left for Narsingdi after receiving the body. Zakaria will be buried

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 16

than they could have in 2009. They now have visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 60 countries.

Sri Lanka improved more than Bangladesh in the last decade. Sri Lankan passport gives people visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 43 countries.

In South Asia, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan fared worse than Bangladesh in the latest edition of the index unveiled yesterday.

The Maldives got the highest ranking amongst the South Asian nations, 58, followed by neighbouring India, 80, Bhutan, 84, and Sri Lanka, 95.

Feeble efforts from the government to work out visa waiver agreements with other countries and diplomatic ties are the reasons behind the poor performance of the Bangladesh passport, Dominic Volek, managing partner and head of Southeast Asia of Henley & Partners, told The Daily Star over telephone yesterday.

Visa waiver agreements are a two-way street, so Bangladesh would also have to offer nationals of those countries visa-on-arrival facility, he said.

At present, Bangladesh offers visa-on-arrival to nationals of 48 countries, including EU member nations, the US, Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Canada, China, Japan.

PASSPORT RANKING

| SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES | Rank |
|-----------------------|------|
| Maldives | 58 |
| India | 80 |
| Bhutan | 84 |
| Sri Lanka | 95 |
| Bangladesh | 97 |
| Nepal | 98 |
| Pakistan | 102 |
| Afghanistan | 104 |

Volek advised the government to start a conversation with other countries to improve the efficacy of the Bangladesh passport.

He went on to cite the UAE and China as examples of countries whose passports paced up the rankings in the past decade thanks to deft diplomacy.

Both the countries had quite restricted visa policies; the UAE is now just one spot away from entry into the index's top 20.

"The index has also been a great indicator of bilateral ties and international relations between countries. A snapshot at the index's top 20 today compared to what it was 20 years ago tells an interesting story."

European countries dominated the index then and were immovable. But now they are surely but steadily dropping down the ranks as Asian countries improve to take their place.

The index, which covers 199 passports, is based on "exclusive" data provided by the International Air Transport Authority. The data is enhanced by extensive research and updated as and when visa policy changes come into effect.

Henley & Partners provides consultancy service for obtaining a second citizenship and Bangladesh's weak passport is giving the UK-based firm good business.

Bangladeshis are among its top three clientele of alternative citizenship, Volek said.

"We have been seeing demand from Bangladeshis for second citizenship of countries such as Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, Malta and St Kitts and Nevis."

And according to a Wealth-X report, Bangladesh tops the list of countries that saw the quickest growth in the number of ultra-high net worth population with a 17.3 percent growth during the 2012-17 period.

"So, we can expect more and more super-wealthy Bangladeshis looking to alternative citizenship as way to improve their travel mobility and freedom," he added.

Singapore and Japan held on to the top spot in the index and were joined by South Korea this time, in a resounding demonstration of Asia's growing power and influence on the world stage.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina opens a rally of children and juveniles by releasing a pigeon at the city's Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday, marking the Independence and National Day.

PHOTO: BSS

Working to give children a secure life

FROM PAGE 1

and juveniles at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on the occasion of the Independence and National Day.

She said the government launched satellite Bangabandhu-1 and introduced multimedia classrooms across the country. It was also providing free textbooks and stipends for students.

"You have to take the country forward and build a developed and prosperous Bangladesh," she told the children. "It was the dream of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman."

She said the government wanted to free the country from terrorism, militancy and drugs.

The PM urged parents, guardians, teachers and religious clerics to convey the bad effects of drugs, terrorism and militancy to the children.

She asked the children to focus on study, sports, cultural activities and competitions. "Only education is not enough," she said, noting that good health of children is also necessary.

"Their merits and creativity have to be flourished. They will lead a beautiful life. That is our aim. We have started various types of competitions across the country for that purpose," she said.

She briefly described various steps of the government for flourishing children as worthy citizens of the

country.

The premier also highlighted various steps taken by Bangabandhu to reconstruct a war-ravaged country and for the welfare of children and juveniles during his three-and-a-half-year tenure.

The Dhaka district administration organised the rally where Deputy Commissioner Abu Saleh Mohammed Ferdous Khan gave the vote of thanks.

Before her speech, Hasina inspected a parade comprising various teams of students of the district schools and colleges.

She later took salute from a march-past by the students of various schools.

Liberation War Affairs Minister

AKM Mozammel Huq was present there. The prime minister enjoyed a colourful performance of the students and various artistes.

She inaugurated the rally by releasing pigeons, the symbol of peace, and balloons.

The PM also distributed prizes among the winners of the competition on singing the national anthem in appropriate tone and tune.

On the occasion, the galleries of Bangabandhu National Stadium was decorated with portraits of Father of the Nation, four national leaders, birshresthas, photographs of the prime minister and natural beauties of Bangladesh.

Sacrifices recalled

FROM PAGE 1

On March 26, 1971, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared Bangladesh's independence following a crackdown on unarmed Bangladeshi at midnight by the Pakistani occupation forces.

After the nine-month Liberation War, Bangladesh achieved its cherished independence on December 16, 1971 with the supreme sacrifices of three million people.

President Abdul Hamid first placed a wreath at the altar of the National Memorial followed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, BSS reports.

Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, Deputy Speaker Advocate Fazle Rabbi Mia, members of the cabi-

net, MPs, chiefs of the armed forces, freedom fighters, foreign diplomats, and civil and military officials also paid tributes.

Wreaths were also placed by Jatiya Party's Co-Chairperson Begum Raushan Ershad, Secretary General Moshirur Rahman Ranga and BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

Besides, leaders of almost all political parties and their organs also paid tributes.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina hoisted the national flag and led the nation in singing the national anthem "Amar Sonar Bangla" simultaneously at Bangabandhu National Stadium while attending Jatiya Shishu Kishore Samabesh around 8:00am.

Hasina urged the children and juveniles to advance the country being imbued with the spirit of patriotism and the Liberation War.

"You're the future leaders of the country. So you'll have to take the country forward by loving it deeply," she said.

Sheikh Hasina yesterday released a commemorative postage stamp, a first-day cover and a data card marking the occasion.

In the afternoon, President Hamid hosted a reception for eminent personalities, diplomats, civil and military officials, politicians and professionals at the Bangabhaban, UNB reports.

Government, autonomous and other organisations as well as diplo-

matic missions of Bangladesh around the world celebrated the day in a befitting manner.

The national flag was hoisted atop government and private buildings while the government and semi-government buildings and other public places were illuminated.

National dailies published special supplements while TV and radio stations aired special programmes highlighting the significance of the day.

Special prayers were offered at all places of worship. Improved diets were served to the inmates in jails, hospitals, old homes and other public institutions.

People across the country paid their tributes to the martyrs placing wreaths at memorials in their towns.

37 families lose homes to arson

FROM PAGE 1

evicting the landless families, 23 of whom are Pahan. They had been living there for over a year.

Mosharraf had sued the families almost a year ago, claiming that the land, about 1 acre and 4 decimals, in Bostabor area belonged to him, said Noren Chandra Pahan, organising secretary of Rajshahi division unit of Jatiya Adivasi Parishad.

Locals said the attackers came around 1:00am on Monday wielding sharp weapons, sticks, and several gallons of what they thought was petrol or other inflammable fuel. They poured the fuel on the houses before setting them on fire.

"I woke up hearing loud screams and feeling extremely hot in my hut," said Basanti Munda, who narrowly escaped from being injured by running outside with her children and saw her belongings, including clothes, being burnt.

Most of the homeless people said their stock of food had also been burnt in the sudden attack.

They added that the attackers left after members of Border Guards of Bangladesh from a nearby camp rushed there noticing the fire and commotion.

"Some of us might have been dead if the BGB men hadn't appeared," Basanti said.

The 37 families started living on the disputed land 13 months ago. Monday's attack followed repeated harassment by Mosharraf and sometimes by police, the affected families alleged.

Nur Jahan, another affected woman, said she along with her neighbours was often threatened and police frequently raided their houses and picked up the men to show them arrested in different criminal cases.

"Our men cannot live with us fearing detention by police. They went into hiding," the grieving



She had her home on this khas land in Naogaon's Dhamoirhat upazila two days ago. At least 37 homes, including that of her, were burnt down to ashes early on Monday by alleged land grabbers. Yesterday, she could only find a broken lantern, a pitcher and a mug from the ashes of her home. Most of the victim families are now living under the open sky.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

woman said.

"Most of our men were not home at the time of the attack," she said, adding that police raided their houses and arrested a man in a mugging case only two nights before the attack.

Contacted, Zakirul Islam, officer-in-charge of Dhamurhat Police Station, said the allegation was baseless.

He added that police learnt about the incident around at 9:00am on Monday and, following a primary

investigation, they arrested Mosharraf.

"No one was harassed with false cases," he said.

Naogaon Deputy Commissioner Mizanur Rahman visited the village yesterday and distributed 20kg rice and Tk 5,000 to each affected family and ordered setting up a temporary police camp to protect them from any further attacks.

"I don't know who among the feuding groups have legal claim over the land. The khas land was never

leased out to the landless families," the DC said.

The DC had called claimants of the land to his office to find out more about the land in question. "Through discussion, I hope we will be able to arrange a solution."

Lt Col Md Zahid Hasan, commanding officer of BGB 14 battalion said, the BGB men went to the spot, doused the fire, and took wounded people to a hospital. But the attackers had fled before the BGB men reached there.

EU MPs back

FROM PAGE 16

accounting for 11.65 million jobs and 6.8 percent of the EU economy.

The new rules mean that Google and other online platforms will have to sign licensing agreements with musicians, performers, authors, news publishers and journalists to use their work online.

Google's YouTube, Facebook's Instagram and other sharing platforms will also have to install filters to prevent users from uploading copyrighted materials.

Both provisions triggered fierce lobbying from both sides.

The Commission's digital chief for Europe Andrus Ansip welcomed the outcome, saying the reforms would improve the position of writers, journalists, singers, musicians and actors vis-a-vis the big platforms using their content.

"Today's vote ensures the right balance between the interests of all players - users, creators, authors, press - while putting in place proportionate obligations on online platforms," he said in a statement.

But Google said the reforms would lead to legal uncertainty and hurt Europe's creative and digital economies. The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) echoed the criticism.

"Consumers will have to bear the consequences of this decision. Their concerns had been voiced loud and clearly but MEPs chose to ignore them," BEUC director general Monique Goyens said.

Firefox browser-maker Mozilla was scathing about the vote.

"The EU institutions have squandered the progress made by innovators and creators to imagine new content and share it with people across the world," its EU policy head Raegan MacDonald said.

"They have handed the power back to large U.S. owned record labels, film studios and big tech.

Vast swathes of online services, not just those concerning music or news, could face unintended consequences, said Raffaella De Santis at law firm Harbottle & Lewis.

"Care will need to be taken to ensure that smaller services are not disproportionately disadvantaged by measures which are in reality designed to curtail the formerly unchecked power of the tech giants," she said.

Lawmaker Julia Reda, a prominent critic of the reforms, said they threatened the free internet.

"Algorithms cannot distinguish between actual copyright infringements and the perfectly legal re-use of content for purposes such as parody," she said.

But lawmaker Axel Voss, who is in charge of the subject, rejected the criticism.

"We have agreed a new set of rules which will do exactly the opposite of killing the internet," he said.

Road crashes

FROM PAGE 16

over the steering.

Protesting the incident, students blocked the road in front of the school for over an hour.

On information, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control, the OC said, adding that they seized the vehicle and arrested its driver.

The police official said driver Monowar Hossain admitted that he has no driving licence.

In another incident, a tenth grader of Bijoypur High School in Sadar Dakkhin upazila lost her life when a human haulier, locally known as Leguna, carrying students fell into a roadside ditch at Mustofapur around 9:15am. Five others were also hurt.

The victim, Rina Saha Riya, 15, was the daughter of Labu Saha of Baropara.

Hearing the news, her fellows barricaded the Dhaka-Chattogram highway in front of the school and staged demonstrations.

Mamunur Rashid, officer-in-charge of Cumilla Sadar Dakkhin Police Station, said the injured were admitted to Cumilla Medical College Hospital.

In Dinajpur, Rois Uddin, 58, of Itai village in Hakimpur upazila, died on the spot as a motorbike hit him in Bawna area on Hakimpur-Ghoraghat road around 7:00am. The victim was crossing the road.

In Jhalakathi's Rajapur upazila, a motorcyclist was killed and two pillion riders were critically wounded when a bus ran over the motorcycle on the Barishal-Pathorghata highway near Rajapur Bypass intersection around noon.

The deceased is Touhidul Islam, 22, of Koibortokhali village in the upazila.

The injured were admitted to Barishal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital.

Jahid Hossain, OC of Rajapur Police Station, said they seized the bus, but its driver fled.

Our correspondents in Cumilla, Dinajpur and Jhalakathi contributed to this report.