

CHRISTCHURCH SHOOTING

Two Bangladeshi victims laid to rest

STAR REPORT

Two Bangladeshis, who were killed in the recent mosque shootings in Christchurch of New Zealand, were buried yesterday at their ancestral homes in Narayanganj and Narsingdi.



Faruk



Zakaria

Earlier on Tuesday night, their bodies arrived at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka.

On March 15, a white supremacist shot and killed 50 praying Muslims in two mosques -- Al Noor and Linwood -- at Christchurch. Among the dead, five were identified as Bangladeshi nationals.

In Narayanganj, Faruk was buried at a graveyard in Bandar upazila's Rajbari around 11:00am following a Namaz-e-Janaza at the field of Sirajuddoula Club.

Faruk was the son of Late Abdur

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6



Wife of Omar Faruk in tears after the body of the Christchurch massacre victim arrives in a coffin at his home in Rajbari area of Narayanganj yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Voters' apathy will end need for polls: CEC

STAR REPORT

The need for an election will cease to exist if people do not vote, Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda has warned.

"Ensuring people's participation in elections is vital," he said, reports UNB.

He was addressing a meeting with law enforcers and election officials at the deputy commissioner's office in Noakhali yesterday ahead of the 4th phase upazila elections that are seeing very poor voters' presence. In at least two upazilas, turnouts were in single-digits.

The polls began on March 10, just about three months after the national election. That election, held on December 30, was boycotted by the Jatiya Oikyafront, the opposition alliance, over allegations of vote rigging.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Dhaka worried over Trump's Golan Heights decision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has expressed deep concern over the recent announcement of the US's recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan Heights.

"This is a clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations, principles of international law and relevant Security Council Resolutions," a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said yesterday.

Bangladesh has always urged the occupying State of Israel to immediately halt its actions to alter the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan Heights in accordance with the Security Council Resolution 497, it said.

Bangladesh believes that changing the status of occupied Syrian Golan Heights by the US bypassing the Security Council is a direct violation of the UN's decisions.

"Bangladesh maintains its principled position on a comprehensive solution to the issues in the Middle East in accordance with the relevant Security Council Resolutions, the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Charge sheet

FROM PAGE 16

Subarnachar Awami League.

Of the rest, law enforcers have so far arrested eleven, eight of whom gave confessional statements before the court.

On the midnight of the December 30 election day, the mother of four was gang-raped allegedly for not voting for "boat", the electoral symbol of the AL.

The victim had alleged that Ruhul ordered his men to rape her on the night of the incident as she had voted for "sheaf of paddy", the BNP's electoral symbol.

Afterwards, some 10 to 12 men carrying sticks stormed her home and raped her. They also tied up her husband, a CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver, and four children, she said.

The victim's husband sued nine people. But Ruhul's name was not mentioned in the FIR.

The complainant later told The Daily Star that even though he informed police about Ruhul's role, the law enforcers did not include his name in the FIR. The police denied the claim.

Conductor, not driver was at the wheel

FROM PAGE 1

place, Baten said, adding that Yasin ran over and killed Abrar, a first-year honours student at Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP), near the Bashundhara Residential Area around 7:30am, while driving recklessly to flee the spot of the first accident.

Yasin had no driving licence, he added.

He was held in Chandpur on Tuesday while helper Ibrahim was detained in the capital's Madhya Badda yesterday. A Dhaka court placed each of them on a seven-day remand yesterday.

After Abrar's death, a case was filed. The additional commissioner yesterday said another case would be filed over the accident of Synthia, who lives with her family in Bhatara area.

Earlier, police had said Sirajul had run over the BUP student after hitting the college student. Yesterday, they came up with the new development.

During primary interrogation, Sirajul admitted hitting the girl on March 19 and that made police believe that he might have also run over and killed Abrar.

"But further investigation revealed that the conductor was at the wheel when Abrar died," Baten said.

Queried on the bus owner Nani Gopal, another accused in the case, police said they would soon take action in this regard.

Baten hopes to submit the probe report within a month.

CCTV FOOTAGE

The Daily Star has obtained CCTV footage of the accident that left Abrar

dead on the spot.

The footage shows the bus hitting and dragging the 20-year-old near a zebra crossing on the Pragati Sarani Road.

According to witnesses, there are two zebra crossings within 10 to 15 yards of the spot.

The incident triggered a public outcry with agitated students blocking some major thoroughfares of the city for safe roads.

Similar student protests had rocked the country in July last year, after two college students were killed near the airport by a Jabal-e-Noor Paribahan bus, which was competing with another.

Under pressure from road safety protesters, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) on March 20 sus-

pending operation of all the buses of the two operators -- Suprobhat Paribahan and Jabal-e-Noor Paribahan.

At a programme recently, DMP Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia said the bus that killed Abrar faced legal actions 27 times and was not allowed to ply city roads, rather it had permission to ply Dhaka-Brahmanbaria road.

Following a meeting with Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Atiqul Islam and the DMP boss on March 20, a section of BUP students postponed their demonstrations till today, upon assurances that their demands would be fulfilled.

The DNCC mayor is scheduled to meet student leaders today at his office. A press briefing would be held later.

Rohingyas faced horrific crimes

FROM PAGE 1

committed "murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation or forcible transfer, imprisonment, torture, and rape, as part of a widespread and systematic attack directed against Rohingya civilians from Myanmar and Bangladesh" with knowledge of the widespread and systematic attack underway, the report said.

The majority of people trafficked were Rohingya Muslims, but in late 2014 and 2015, traffickers began to target Bangladeshi nationals as well, says the joint report "Sold Like Fish" released in Bangkok yesterday.

"The Commission and Fortify Rights therefore have reasonable grounds to believe that human-trafficking networks committed crimes against humanity at sea and in camps in Malaysia and Thailand against Rohingya civilians from 2012 to 2015," said the report.

It comes at a time when the world witnesses one of the biggest refugee crisis as some 750,000 Rohingyas fled a brutal military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine state, where they are denied citizenship and basic rights, since August 2017.

Escalation of conflicts between Arakan Army and Myanmar military is currently displacing thousands in Rakhine state.

Meanwhile, dozens of cases of trafficking of Rohingyas from the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar to Malaysia and Indonesia made headlines in recent months.

"The victims of these crimes and their families suffered tremendously, and these horrific crimes should never happen again in Malaysia and any-

where else for that matter," said SUHAKAM Commissioner Jerald Joseph in a statement.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2012-2015?

On April 30, 2015, the Thai authorities discovered more than 30 bodies in a mass grave in a makeshift camp near Malaysian border. Then on May 25 the same year, Malaysian police announced discovery of 139 graves and 28 suspected human-trafficking camps in Wang Kelian, Perlis State.

The discoveries led to a crackdown against human traffickers only to find another crisis in the sea where some 5000 to 6000 victims of human trafficking -- believed to be Rohingyas and Bangladeshis -- were found drifting in rickety boats. After initial reluctance, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia rescued them.

The investigation is based on more than 270 interviews with eyewitnesses, survivors, human traffickers, government officials, and others from 2013 to 2019.

It revealed traffickers piled hundreds and thousands of Rohingya refugees into repurposed fishing vessels and deprived them of adequate food, water, and space, committing torture and, in some cases, rape at sea.

Traffickers murdered captives, and many died by suicide at sea. In the Thai and Malaysian jungle camps, traffickers provided their captives with three options: raise upwards of \$2,000 in exchange for release, be sold into further exploitation, or die in the camps, the report said.

Members of a syndicate tortured, killed, raped, and otherwise abused untold numbers of men, women, and

children, buying and selling them systematically in many cases, in concert with government officials.

Traffickers from Myanmar, Thailand, and Malaysia denied their captives access to adequate food, water, and space, resulting in deaths, illness, and injury. They tortured Rohingya captives with pipes, bats, clubs, belts, wires, tasers, nails, threats and intimidation, and other means, the report said.

"When I was unable to pay the money to the men, they poured boiling water on my head and body," said a Rohingya Muslim who was 16 years old when traffickers tortured him in a camp on the Malaysia-Thailand border in 2014.

The perpetrators also murdered or caused the death of captives and buried bodies in mass graves and, in some cases, forced captives to bury bodies.

"People died every day," said a 20-year-old Rohingya woman who survived a human-trafficking camp on the border. "Some days more, some days less, but people died every day."

Traffickers also systematically sold untold numbers of Rohingya women and girls into forced marriages and situations of domestic servitude in Malaysia, said the report.

"For years, this was a calculated business and attack on the Rohingya community," said Matthew Smith, Chief Executive Officer of Fortify Rights.

"The massive scale and horrific severity of these operations were never properly documented or fully prosecuted. This new evidence demonstrates the need for accountability."

However, that still remains a far cry.

In 2017, Thailand convicted 62 defendants, including nine Thai government officials, for crimes related to the human trafficking. Since 2015, Malaysian courts convicted only four non-Malaysian persons of trafficking-related offences connected to the mass graves discovered at Wang Kelian in Perlis.

Eyewitness testimonies indicate the complicity or, in some cases, direct involvement of government authorities in the transnational trade over Rohingya refugees. Thai authorities extra-judicially transferred or sold them from state custody to members of a transnational human-trafficking syndicate, the report said.

Late last month, Malaysia created a Royal Commission of Inquiry to investigate and ensure accountability for the human trafficking and mass graves in Wang Kelian.

"There's a fresh political will in Malaysia to right these wrongs and ensure justice and accountability for Rohingya and all victims of these heinous crimes," said Jerald Joseph of SUHAKAM.

SUHAKAM and Fortify Rights demand protection of the survivors of these attacks under Malaysian law as survivors of human trafficking, and, in the case of Rohingya, protection as refugees.

The Malaysia government should put into place measures to prevent such crimes from occurring again, the report said.

"The international community should do everything in its power to address the root causes of this crisis in Myanmar."

Six killed in a single day

FROM PAGE 1

BGB-2 Battalion in Cox's Bazar, said a "gunfight" broke out between BGB and a group of drug traders in Teknaf's Kharangkhal area around 4:30am yesterday when a BGB team was conducting an anti-narcotic drive there.

At one stage, the drug traders, who were entering Bangladesh crossing the Naf River, retreated, Shariful added.

The BGB men found two bullet-hit men lying injured on the spot later.

The two were rushed to Teknaf Upazila Health Complex, where doctors declared them dead.

Police later identified the two as Mohammad Ilias, 18, of Kutupalong

Rohingya camp and Faruk Mia of Balukhali camp.

The BGB official claimed to have recovered 1.9 lakh yaba tablets from the spot.

In Pekua upazila of Cox's Bazar, two suspected robbers were killed in another "gunfight" with Rab in Magnama coastal area around 4:00am. The identities of the two could not be confirmed.

Mehedi Hasan, company commander of Rab-7, said they were members of a robbery gang operating in the Bay of Bengal.

He claimed they recovered eight arms and 26 bullets from the spot.

In the capital, an alleged top criminal from Narsingdi was killed in a "shootout" with Rab in Bhasantek area. The dead is Shafik, 42.

Lt Col Kazi Shamsher Uddin, commanding officer of Rab-11, said a Rab team raided a house in Bhasantek around midnight on Tuesday to arrest Shafik.

Sensing the presence of law enforcers, criminals opened fire on the Rab men. The law enforcers fired retaliatory shots, triggering the "gunfight", the Rab official added.

Shafik, accused in at least 12 cases, was injured by bullets. He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead

around 1:30am yesterday.

His associates Faruk and Pradip were held with three arms and bullets from the spot.

In Gazipur, a suspected criminal was injured in a "shootout" with police in Tongi around 4:00am, hours after he was picked up by law enforcers from Gazipur area.

Police took injured Kawsar Mia, 28, to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

OC Kamal Hossain of Tongi East Police Station said they picked up Kawsar, accused in several criminal cases, on Tuesday afternoon when he was preparing to commit mugging.

Later, a police team took him to Tongi's Banshpatti area and conducted a drive to recover illegal arms.

At one stage, Kawsar's associates fired bullets at police to snatch him away. Law enforcers fired retaliatory shots, forcing them to retreat.

The OC claimed the arrestee was hit with bullets fired by his cohorts.

Kawsar's family members said he was not facing any murder or robbery case. Police picked him up from near his home around 3:00pm on Tuesday. They heard the news of his death yesterday morning.

Our correspondents in Cox's Bazar and Gazipur contributed to this report.

Indian carriers to get armed sky marshals

FROM PAGE 1

Plainclothes sky marshals are mainly deployed in civilian aircraft to counter hijack attempts and prevent hostage situations.

Talking to this newspaper yesterday, CAAB Chairman Air Vice-Marshal M Naim Hassan said, "We are taking necessary measures to this effect."

Group Capt Abdullah Al Farooq, director of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport where 29 foreign carriers operate, said currently only Saudi Arabian Airlines uses security personnel [armed sky marshals] on its flights to and from Dhaka.

"Deploying armed sky marshals inside aircraft is the decision of the

carriers," he said, adding that the operators deploy the marshals to ensure security of its passengers.

The Indian High Commission in the letter proposed a delegation of National Security Guard (NSG) visits Bangladesh to discuss the deployment of the marshals.

It asked the foreign ministry "to indicate a convenient date for the

meeting at the earliest."

As per Indian media reports, sky marshals are handpicked from the NSG commandoes. The commandoes are specially trained in dealing with hijack and hostage situations. They carry guns with rubber bullets, tasers, and handcuffs.

Security at airports and aircraft was beefed up after 9/11 and deployment

of sky marshals expanded significantly.

The Indian High Commission sent the letter 14 days after Polish Ahmed, with a toy gun, allegedly attempted to hijack a Biman flight to Dubai. He was killed after a commando operation into the Boeing 737 on the tarmac of Shah Amanat International Airport.

7 Thai parties forge a front against junta

AFP, Bangkok

Seven political parties formed a coalition in Thailand yesterday, vowing to thwart a military-backed proxy in a bid to end years of junta rule following the country's first election since a 2014 coup.

A junta-aligned party and its main rival have both claimed the right to govern the country after Sunday's vote, prompting a political standoff.

Questions over irregularities are swirling following invalidated ballots and accusations of skewed numbers.

Pheu Thai, affiliated with self-exiled former premier Thaksin Shinawatra, joined forces with six other parties in a bid to halt military-backed factions from leading the country.

"We want to stop the regime from hanging onto power," Pheu Thai's prime ministerial candidate Sudarat Keyuraphan told reporters.

"Pro-democracy parties received the most trust and consensus by the people," she added, conceding that final results have not yet been released.

Thailand has been ruled by a junta since a 2014 putsch led by General Prayut Chan-O-Cha, the prime ministerial candidate for the Phalang Pracharat Party.

But Phalang Pracharat stunned the pro-democracy camp by winning the popular vote on Sunday with 7.6 million ballots, according to preliminary results.

Its main rival Pheu Thai got 400,000 fewer votes, but is now aiming to take the majority of seats in the lower house with its newly-formed coalition.

The seven-party bloc claimed it would take 255 out of the 500 lower house seats that are up for grabs, but with all official results yet to be confirmed the numbers are not ironclad.

A clearer picture of the lower house could emerge as early as Friday when more comprehensive figures are expected to be released.

But the party still cannot elect a prime minister without commanding more than half -- or 376 -- of all 750 seats in the combined lower and upper houses.

The balance of power is stacked in the junta's favour thanks to a charter it drafted creating 250 military-appointed upper house seats.

That means non-military parties like Pheu Thai need an avalanche of votes in order to elect a prime minister.

The coalition formed yesterday does not include two other high-profile parties -- Bhumjithai and the Democrat Party -- which together have around 70 seats so far and whose allegiances are still up for grabs.

Phalang Pracharat is expected to seek its own allied bloc.

Sunday's election had been repeatedly delayed and was seen as a test for Thailand's tattered democracy, which has seen at least 12 coups since 1932.

Phalang Pracharat did better than expected by clinching the most popular votes, and the junta-backed party dismissed the coalition's claim to be the democratic choice.

"Please stop using 'democratic front' because in this election, no matter how many votes each party receives, everyone enters the election democratically," the party's secretary general Sontirat Sontijirawong told reporters.

Its leader said the party was confident but was waiting to see how many seats it would get.

A small protest was held outside its party headquarters yesterday, led by activist Ekachai Hongkangwan who cautioned potential allies from joining forces with Phalang Pracharat.

"I don't want any snakes to enter the party," he said, throwing reptile repellent on the ground for effect.

Despite the coalition efforts to create a united front, it will be almost impossible for them to get the votes they need to elect a prime minister, said Aaron Connelly, Singapore-based research fellow at the Institute for International and Strategic Studies.

They "seem to be laying down a marker, claiming the legitimacy to oppose the junta in the next parliament", he told AFP.

Initial results have been plagued by controversy after the Election Commission unexpectedly said it would delay the final count.

The head of Future Forward, a newly-formed party that targeted first-time millennial voters, urged a swift tally of votes across the country.

"We are calling for the Election Commission to perform its duty in a free and fair manner," the party's telegenic billionaire leader Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit said yesterday after joining the coalition.