

Mob yells drowned

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She put on her shoes and then asked her cousin to get ready as well. "Let's go look for mother," she said, unaware of the fate that befell Renu.

Since Renu's burial at her Lakshipur house on Sunday evening, Tuba has been looking for her mother. Tuba's brother Mahin Hossain, 11, has gone silent since his mother's death.

Nine people were killed by mobs on suspicion of being child abductors in 26 incidents in different parts of the country in the last two weeks. Many say the recent spate in mob killings started when rumours began circulating about humans being sacrificed for the Padma bridge construction.

The mob beatings took place in 16 districts, leaving 44 others injured.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan recently said that 81 people, out of thousands of accused, had so far been arrested in connection with the murders.

Analysing the incidents, it can be seen that most of the victims were either physically or intellectually challenged. Some were beggars.

In Narayanganj, seven people were murdered by mobs in the last four days. Five of the victims were intellectually challenged.

Elsewhere in Cumilla, all three mob beating victims were beggars; in Rajshahi, five NGO workers and five fishermen were beaten on suspicion of kidnapping.

The growing incidents of mob beatings lead one to ask why these are happening.

According to rights body Ain O Salish Kendra, a total of 39 people were killed in mob beating across the country last year.

But this year such incidents took a sharp rise. From January to June, 36 people had already been killed in such incidents.

GROWING MOB MENTALITY?

Eminent psychologist Mehtab Khanam said when people become frustrated that leads to aggression. "Mob psychology is a manifestation of severe frustration. When people see one thing happens repeatedly and there is no remedy, then they become frustrated...." she said.

She said the media should focus on such cases in depth to understand the reasons. "A detailed case study will help people to understand the problem and work on it. By doing surface reporting, are we really helping the people?"

Prof Zia Rahman, head of the criminology department at the University of Dhaka, said, "Developed countries have established criminal justice systems. But we have not been able to contain aggressive behaviour. In our culture, there is still hostility and aggression."

"Mob beatings have been happening in Bangladesh for a long time. For instance, a mob catches an errant driver after an accident and beats him to death. Sometimes, a pickpocket is left at the mercy of a mob after being caught," he added.

The criminology professor also said there was too much superstition in the society, which is why many people saw the face of Sayeedi, a war criminal, on the moon.

"These superstitions are so prevalent in our society that we tend to believe anything without justifying it scientifically or rationally," he said.

Dr Nehal Karim, professor of Sociology at University of Dhaka, also said such incidents were not new.

He said the role of law enforcement agencies and local government representatives should be brought under the scanner.

"If intelligence agencies worked properly, the situation would have been different. The ward commissioners can play a big role in maintaining peace and containing

rumours in their areas," he said.

He also alleged that people had no confidence in the police and judicial system, which led many to take the law in their own hands.

In terms of police's role or lack of it in meting out justice, the Amin Bazar incident in the outskirts of Dhaka two years ago makes an interesting case study.

Al Amin, the sole survivor of the mob beating which left six of his friends dead, said while a Dhaka court earlier this month framed charges against 60 people, they were beaten by around 15 people. Family members of the victims feared the high number of accused would prolong the case proceedings.

They also expressed surprise that no policemen were indicted even though a judicial probe had found police negligence in protecting the victims. In fact, an investigation by The Daily Star revealed that a police official who was demoted to the rank of assistant sub-inspector for his negligence was again promoted back to his former rank after only a year.

Meanwhile, Law Minister Anisul Huq said, "Rumours of kidnapping creates a charged atmosphere and the situation becomes uncontrollable. But this is not a justification; we are trying to bring all the culprits to book."

Voicing his suspicion, Anisul said, "The violence is clearly being orchestrated by vested quarters. A rumour starts in one part of the country and travels to other parts like wildfire."

Rajib Nandy, assistant professor of the Communication and Journalism Department at the University of Chittagong, researched mob violence and concluded that mob psyche was different from individual psyche.

"When an individual acts, there is a sense of responsibility. But in a mob, there is a dispersion of responsibility and guilt," he said.

The researcher said social media played a big role in spreading of rumours. "When new media expanded in Bangladesh, people of the country were not educated on how to behave responsibly [when using it]."

He also said people still had faith in the law, as they handed over the pickpockets or snatchers to police in some incidents.

The mob justifies its act as heroism to save the community, their identity, their children, themselves, he said.

INCIDENTS OF MOB BEATING		
DISTRICT	KILLED	INJURED
Dhaka (Savar, Keraniganj, Badda)	4	4
Narayanganj	1	3
Moulvibazar	2	
Kushtia	1	5
Netrakona	1	
Mymensingh		3
Lalmonirhat		2
Cumilla		3
Naogaon		7
Tangail		3
Rajshahi		5
Chattogram		4
Madaripur		1
Bogura		5
Gazipur		2
Total district 14	Total killed 9	Total injured 44
SO FAR 26 INCIDENTS HAPPENED		

The technical analysis shows the rise is a dead cat bounce, Xahangir added.

Dead cat bounce means a temporary recovery from a prolonged decline or a bear market that is followed by the continuation of the downtrend.

Were the index and turnover both higher yesterday in comparison with the previous day the rally would have been considered a genuine one.

But the turnover slid 31.7 percent to Tk 317 crore yesterday.

AB Mirza Azizul Islam, a former chairman of the BSEC, however, was more appreciative of the regulators' interventions.

"Since the market has been falling for a long time, it was expected that the regulator would take some steps to boost the investors' confidence. This is a positive move," he added.

The institutional investors were ordered to provide as much support as possible to the market in order to stop the free fall, said Mostaque Ahmed Sadeque, a former president of the DSE Brokers' Association.

"And their activities were monitored. So, some institutions poured money into the market," he added.

If the index does not soar for the next 7 or 8 days at least, investors' confidence will once again sap, he added.



Policemen close Manik Mia Avenue at Khamar Bari roundabout in the capital early today and call in their bomb disposal unit and the fire brigade after a suspicious package, inset, containing taped cylinder-like objects were discovered near a traffic police box. The authorities could not confirm if it was a bomb, as of 2:30am. On April 29 and May 26, bombs went off in Gulistan and Malibagh injuring several law enforcers. PHOTO: SHAHEEN MOLLAH/COLLECTED

Dengue cases keep rising

FROM PAGE 1

Dengue, a mosquito-borne viral disease, has taken an alarming turn this year.

Data from the Directorate General of Health (DGHS) show that 7,766 people had been infected with dengue until yesterday.

Hospital officials, however, said the number could be higher as many dengue cases go unreported.

In 24 hours since 8:00am on Monday, 473 new dengue cases were reported at hospitals, which is the highest for a single day, the DGHS data show.

Doctors said the common symptoms of dengue include fever, vomiting and abdominal pain. In many cases, the number of platelets, which help the body form clots to stop bleeding, come down significantly for which patients need platelet transfusion.

A normal platelet count ranges from 150,000 to 450,000 platelets per microlitre of blood, they said.

Meanwhile, different blood donors' organisations said the demand for blood and platelets had increased in recent days due to dengue.

"We have been experiencing a rise

in demand [of blood] since June," said Sheikh Mohammad Faisal, coordinator of a blood donation programme of Quantum Foundation.

Earlier, they would deliver platelets to 20 to 25 people a day, but the number has now increased to 80 to 85, he said.

To get one bag of platelets, a person needs to bring four donors and spend Tk 3,200. It takes six to eight hours to prepare the platelets, Faisal said, adding that the voluntary blood donors' organisation could also provide platelets without donors.

Nawfal Imtiaz, joint secretary of Shandhani's Dhaka Medical College unit, said they were turning down at least 10 to 15 attendants of dengue patients every day due to a higher demand for blood compared to supply.

He urged people to donate blood on a regular basis, saying that managing blood of the negative groups was a tough challenge.

Liakot Hossain, assistant registrar of DMCH medicine unit-6, said there are three types of dengue and the patients with haemorrhagic fever needed blood the most.

HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate

professor at the Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, said fluid management was extremely important for such patients due to a plasma leakage.

He said if any dengue patient bled, the individual should be given fresh blood, not just platelets, as blood has many necessary components.

COUNTRYWIDE DRIVE

Meanwhile, the government will start a weeklong countrywide mosquito killing and cleanliness programme on July 25.

The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by the Local Government Division Minister Md Tazul Islam on July 13.

A 22-member national committee, headed by Tazul, was formed to implement the decision and make the programme effective, said Mahbub Hossain, additional secretary (urban development wing) of the LGD.

All the local government organisations will observe the week and will work to build awareness among the people about Aedes mosquito, he said.

They will also encourage people to destroy all mosquito breeding grounds at their homes, Mahbub added.

Bad loans put Janata in trouble

FROM PAGE 1

According to BB data, Janata last time faced provisioning shortfall of Tk 82 crore in March 2012. Since then, it was doing well and never failed to maintain the required provisioning till March this year.

Sources in Janata Bank said a surge in nonperforming loans (NPLs) is the main reason behind the sudden rise in its provisioning shortfall.

As of March this year, NPLs at Janata stood at Tk 21,410 crore, which was 44 percent of its total outstanding loans. The amount was Tk 5,818 crore at the end of 2017, show data.

In a letter to the BB on June 19 this year, Janata said if it has to maintain the required provisioning against its NPLs, its net profit and capital adequacy ratio (CAR) will become negative.

"The bank will face an image crisis at home and abroad, posing a potential threat to its smooth operation," the letter read.

The CAR, a measurement of the ratio of capital to the risk weighted assets, is an indicator of whether a bank has enough capital to absorb a particular level of risk.

On July 14, the central bank responded positively to Janata's plea for allowing it to maintain the required provisioning in phases.

The BB relaxed the regulatory provisioning for Janata for four years till 2022. But Janata's profit trends indicate it won't be able to achieve that, say bank sources.

For example, Janata's operating profit was Tk 978 crore in 2018, and it will have Tk 586 crore to keep aside for provisioning after deduction of 40

percent corporate tax.

If Janata continues to make profits at the same scale and doesn't have to deal with any fresh defaulted loans, it will take more than 14 years to fulfil the provisioning requirement, the sources pointed out.

Contacted, Md Abdus Salam Azad, managing director of Janata Bank, said the bank would face net losses if it has to maintain the required provisioning.

"Almost all state-owned banks have taken the deferral support from the central bank to maintain provisioning in phases. This has been happening for the last five to six years and we are not an exception," he said.

Experts say the unusually high provisioning shortfall will affect Janata's operation and profitability.

Ahsan H Mansur, executive director at the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, said hardly any bank in the world can run with such a large amount of shortfall and defaulted loans.

"Large provisioning shortfall means the interests of the depositors are at risk."

"Maintaining the required provisioning is vital, because in case of an emergency, banks pay back its depositors from provisioning," Mansur pointed out.

HOW JANATA GOT INTO TROUBLE Between 2010 and 2015, Janata disbursed more than Tk 5,500 crore to little-known AnonTex Group, involved in textile business, in violation of the banking rules. Now almost the entire loan – Tk 5,282 crore – has become bad.

Crescent Group, another entity involved mostly in leather and footwear industry, has defaulted loans of Tk 3,152 crore with Janata.

Janata also gave loans to Ranka Shoel Composite Textile and Ranka Denim generously. The two companies now have Tk 670 crore in defaulted loans.

The borrowers siphoned money from the bank through fake exports and various other tricks.

Under a large loan restructuring policy in 2015, some 11 corporate groups restructured loans of Tk 14,400 crore. Of the amount, Tk 5,000 crore was restructured by Janata. Now 90 percent of these loans have become bad, putting the lender in further strain.

The bank made a net profit of Tk 268 crore in 2017. But last year, its net profit came down to Tk 24.89 crore, mainly because of the sudden rise in defaulted loans.

AB Mirza Azizul Islam, a former finance adviser to a caretaker government, said that if the large provisioning shortfall persists, the lender will face problems in settling export-import related transactions with foreign banks in the days ahead.

"A total failure of corporate governance has created this unpleasant situation for Janata," he added.

Mansur opposed the idea of giving Janata further support.

"It is time to liquidate the bank [Janata] for the sake of the country's banking sector," he remarked.

If the bank is given more time, the situation will worsen further, noted Mansur, also former economist of the International Monetary Fund.

"If the government delays it [liquidation], the volume of bailout funds will increase manifold as the lender's health is deteriorating fast in the absence of good corporate governance," he added.

Fire in Ctg colony kills two

2 journos injured in blast at a shop in Dhaka's Moghbazar

STAR REPORT

A mother and her daughter were burned alive and 10 houses gutted in a fire that broke out at a colony in Kolshi Dighirpar of Chattogram's Middle Halishahar yesterday night.

In another incident, two journalists sustained burns in a fire after an explosion at a shop in the capital's Moghbazar yesterday.

In Chattogram, the dead were Sheuli Akhter, 35, wife of Kalu Miah, and her six-and-a-half-year-old daughter Lamia Akhter, said Sub-Inspector Abdur Rahim Miah of Middle Halishahar Police outpost.

"The fire broke out at Haider Colony around 7:30pm. Four units of firefighters rushed there and brought the fire under control after an hour," he said.

The fire broke out after a gas cylinder exploded in Sheuli's house. It spread to other parts soon, said the SI, adding valuables worth Tk 22 lakh were gutted in the incident.

In Moghbazar, the two injured journalists are Fazul Haque Shaon, 50, special correspondent of Jagonews, and Mostofa Manwar Sujon, 42, a news editor at SATV. They were admitted to the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

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Millers favoured

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and DCs monitor the process, said officials.

The slow paddy purchase is hurting tens of thousands of farmers some of whom took to the street earlier this year as the market price for Boro paddy was lower than the government-estimated production cost.

The government had estimated the production cost to be Tk 24.83 per kg.

Good Boro and previous Aush and Aman harvests, higher stocks at public and private granaries as well as imports caused paddy prices to plummet in the local market.

This week, a kg of paddy was being sold for Tk 16, according to the data of the Department of Agricultural Marketing. The government buys paddy for Tk 26 a kg from farmers.

MILLERS FAVOURED

Millers have been preferred over growers since 1991. That year, the Directorate of Food bought 15 percent of its procurement target as paddy from growers. It got the rest from millers in the form of rice.

Millers have been gaining more from the government's food grain procurement policy, the objective of which is to provide price support to farmers.

Frustrated by low prices, many farmers this year threatened to stop growing paddy and the government had to say that it would buy 4 lakh tonnes of paddy from growers rather than the 1.5 lakh tonnes it initially intended to.

Md Asaduzzaman, former research director of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, said the price of paddy was poor and it was unlikely to increase this year. "So, the farmers are likely to suffer this year."

"The data of procurement shows that the procurement system favours rice than paddy. I doubt whether the government can achieve its targeted procurement within the timeframe," he said.

The slow procurement process is evident at the field level.

In Kushtia for instance, the local food department has a target to buy 2,730 tonnes of paddy from farmers but until July 18, it purchased only 1,174 tonnes. However, it already bought 26,000 tonnes of rice against its target of 29,000 tonnes.

"Yes, we are lagging behind the targeted paddy procurement. It is because of delay in getting the farmers' lists from the agricultural department. But we hope that we would be able to achieve the target within the deadline," Monowar Hossain, district controller of food in Kushtia, told The Daily Star.

In Bogura Sadar upazila, the local food office purchased 240 tonnes of paddy. Its target is 787 tonnes.

"In the first phase, we planned to purchase 295 tonnes but we could get 240 tonnes. In the second phase, we plan to buy 492 tonnes but we are yet to start procuring as we got the farmers list recently," Monirul Haque, food controller of the upazila, told The Daily Star.

Farmer Milon Islam said, "I cultivated paddy on 25 bighas of land but could not sell a single kg to the government as I could not get enlisted."

Noted economist Hossain Zillur Rahman said the government talks about development of agriculture but not of farmers.

"Farmers take-home pay is very important. If it is not ensured then farmers would not be benefited. Development of agriculture and development of farmers are not the same and paddy procurement has showed us this," he told The Daily Star.