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BRUTAL MURDER AT FENI MADRASA

16 GET DEATH PENALTY

Nusrat's family expresses satisfaction over the verdict; sacked madrasa principal among the convicts; trial ends in 61 days of proceedings

MASUK HRIDYOY and KHALID BIN NAZRUL, from Feni

A Feni court yesterday handed down death sentence to all the 16 accused, including a sacked madrasa principal and two expelled local Awami League leaders, over the murder of madrasa student Nusrat Jahan Rafi in April, an incident that shocked the entire nation.

Mamunur Rashid, the judge of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal in Feni, also fined the convicts Tk 1 lakh each and ordered the district magistrate to give the money to the victim's parents.

The accused burnt Nusrat to death by pouring kerosene on her in a planned way and they deserved exemplary and harshest punishment, the judge said while delivering the judgment in a packed courtroom.

Sacked madrasa principal Siraj Ud Doula, the prime accused, was awarded capital punishment for giving the order to kill Nusrat while the others were given death penalty for plotting and committing the murder.

The sacked principal of Sonagazi Islamia Fazil Madrasa is also facing another case for sexually harassing Nusrat, who was an Alim student at the madrasa.

All the convicts were in the dock when the judge read out the summary of the 173-page judgment in the much-talked-about murder case.

The convicts include Siraj, two teachers and 11 students of the madrasa, and two expelled AL leaders, who were members of the madrasa governing body.

Nusrat's father and brother, who were present in the courtroom, expressed satisfaction over the verdict.

The 19-year-old lost her battle for life on April 10, four days after she was set afire. She was sexually harassed by the then principal Siraj on March 27. Her mother filed a case against Siraj, who was later arrested and sent to jail.

Following Siraj's arrest, his cohorts threatened Nusrat's family with dire consequences unless they withdrew the case. But the family didn't give in.

On April 6, Nusrat was set on fire when she went to the madrasa to sit for Alim exams. She was taken to the rooftop of the madrasa building where four people wearing veils and niqab asked her to withdraw the case.

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Sacked madrasa principal Siraj Ud Doula being taken to a Feni court yesterday over the Nusrat murder case. He was handed the death penalty for murdering Nusrat.

PHOTO: MASUK HRIDYOY

"The bold sacrifice of victim Nusrat Jahan Rafi for preserving the dignity of womanhood has already given her immortality."

JUDGE MAMUNUR RASHID OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S REPRESSION PREVENTION TRIBUNAL IN FENI

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Inspiration that will last forever

WASIM BIN HABIB and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

"...I will continue to protest against injustice until my death."

On her deathbed, Nusrat Jahan Rafi had uttered those words while describing the fateful event when four people wearing veil and niqab were pressing her to say that the allegation about sexual harassment by her madrasa principal was false.

But the 19-year-old madrasa student resolutely refused to comply.

The four then tied Nusrat up with scarfs, threw kerosene and set her on fire on the roof of the madrasa. She died of burns four days later.

Her courage in speaking out against injustice was lauded by a Feni court that yesterday handed the death penalty to all the 16 accused in the Nusrat murder case -- an incident that touched off outrage all over the country.

"The bold sacrifice of victim Nusrat Jahan Rafi for preserving the dignity of womanhood has already given her immortality. Her immortality is an inspiration that will last forever," said Judge Mamunur Rashid of Women and Children's Repression Prevention Tribunal in his verdict.

The tribunal said Sonagazi Islamia Fazil Degree Madrasa is one

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WORLD BANK'S EASE OF DOING BUSINESS 2020 INDEX

Bangladesh snags its highest ranking in 6yrs

Three small reforms, one big jump up eight rungs

ZINA TASREEN

All great things start from small beginnings, it is often said. And Bangladesh's eight-place leap forward in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business 2020 index can be viewed in this light.

Bangladesh was ranked 168 out of 190 countries in the latest edition of the study, up from 176 last year -- in what was its biggest climb in recent years.

And yet it pales in comparison when the jump made by some of its Saarc neighbours and peer countries are considered. For instance, neighbouring India climbed 14 notches to 63, Pakistan 28 rungs to 108 and Nepal 16 spots to 94. Not just that, Bangladesh's rank is lower than

all its Saarc neighbours save for Afghanistan and competitors vying for foreign direct investment and exports like Myanmar, Ethiopia, Vietnam and Cambodia -- in a sobering reminder of the uphill task that lies ahead for the government.

The report, which is the 17th of its kind from the Washington-based multilateral lender, presents quantitative indicators on business regulations and the protection of property rights that can be compared across countries and over time.

Regulations affecting 10 areas of the life of a business are covered: starting a business, dealing with construction permits, getting electricity, registering property, getting credit, protecting

MORE IN STAR BUSINESS SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Hacker 'not precisely identified'

Home boss tells BBC
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The person who hacked the Facebook ID of Biplob Chandra Baidya has not yet been precisely identified, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday told the BBC.

The Facebook authorities had given the Bangladesh government some idea, but not any concrete information about the hacker, the minister added.

His comments contradict earlier media reports that said the hacker

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Rumour of pir's arrest brought on hell

Rally held despite promise of postponement
SHARIFUL ISLAM, MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and M JAHIRUL ISLAM JEWEL from Bhola

A number of religious leaders, including imams, in Bhola had broken their promise to the local administration of taking all necessary steps to postpone the fateful October 20 rally.

The rally, organised to protest anti-religious messages sent from Biplob Chandra Baidya's hacked Facebook account, was held at the Eidgah Maidan despite the promise and resulted in communal attacks.

On the other hand, the attack on police during the rally was launched after a rumour spread about the arrest of one of the religious leaders.

At a meeting with the deputy commissioner and superintendent of police of Bhola from 9:00pm till 11:30pm on October 19, six leaders under the banner of "Sarbastorer Tawhidi Janata" made a written promise to postpone the rally scheduled for the next day.

They also said they would direct imams of all mosques and principals of all madrasas to announce the postponement after Fajr prayers.

DC Mohammed Masud Alam Siddique and SP Sorker Mohammad Kayser said it was decided that no rally would take place on Sunday morning.

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AL's FRONT BODY Pankaj barred from council activities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina directed Swachhchasebak League General Secretary

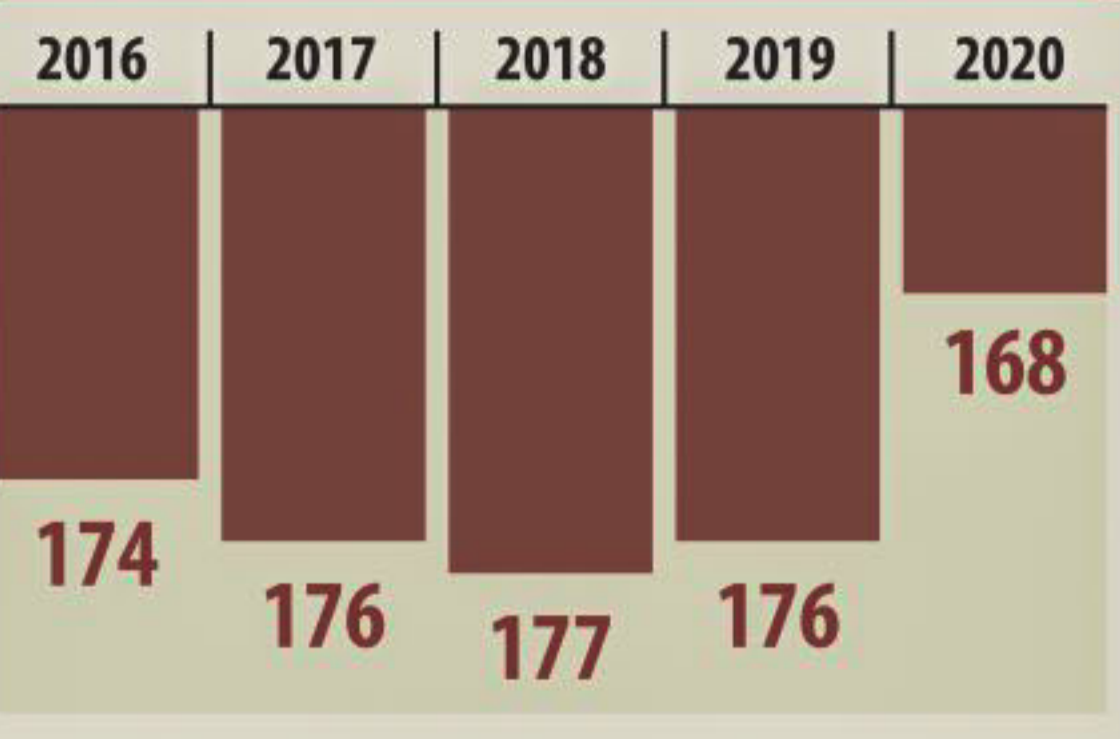


Pankaj Devnath, also a lawmaker, not to take part in any activity of the organisation's November 16 council.

Hasina, also the Awami League president, gave the instruction just a day after Molla Abu Kawser, president of Swachhchasebak League --

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BANGLADESH'S PERFORMANCE IN DOING BUSINESS RANKING



THE GOOD

Category	2019	2020
Starting a Business	138	131
Getting Electricity	179	176
Getting Credit	161	119

THE BAD

Category	2019	2020
Dealing with Construction Permits	138	135
Registering Property	183	184
Protecting Minority Investors	89	72
Paying Taxes	151	151
Trading across Borders	176	176
Enforcing Contracts	189	189
Resolving Insolvency	153	154

SOURCE: WORLD BANK

60pc businesses find market imperfection a key obstacle

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

As many as 59.57 percent of the businesses in a recent government survey complained of market imperfection as the prime obstacle for them to thrive.

Market imperfection can arise for various reasons, but mostly from the low price or demand for goods and services, as per the report "Study on Employment, Productivity and Sectoral Investment in Bangladesh" by the General Economics Division.

The report, which was unveiled in May this year, summarises the findings of a survey on 824 industrial establishments between July 2017 and December 2018 for informed policymaking.

Due to low price or demand, producers eventually change their perspective in terms of upcoming production schedule, which influences the supply side of the market. Conversely, high prices of raw materials further intensify the distortion as they eat into the profit margin.

Some 31.64 percent of the survey respondents complained of interrupted supply of electricity, gas and water and poor infrastructure, as they hamper the projected production schedule, which in turn lowers profitability.

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Locals and firemen try to rescue survivors from a wreckage of a bus. The bus was heading towards Tangail from Mymensingh, when it fell into a ditch after colliding with a truck at Tangail's Kalihati yesterday. At least 15 were hurt, four of them seriously, in the crash.

PHOTO: COLLECTED