

16 get death penalty

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When she refused, they tied her legs and hands with scarfs, poured kerosene on her and set her ablaze.

The perpetrators wanted to make it look like a suicide. But their plan failed as Nusrat was rescued after they fled the scene.

With 80 percent burns, she was admitted to the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

People in different parts of the country took to the streets, seeking exemplary punishment to the killers.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had asked the law enforcement agencies to take prompt steps to bring the perpetrators to book.

The AL expelled its two local leaders -- Sonagazi upazila AL president Ruhul Amin and acting general secretary of Sonagazi municipality AL unit Maksud Alam.

SM Jahangir Alam Sarkar, the then superintendent of police in Feni, was also closed for negligence in performing duties regarding the incident.

Moazzem Hossain, officer-in-charge of Sonagazi Model Police Station, was also withdrawn after the victim's family alleged that they were not getting cooperation from him.

He was later sued for recording Nusrat's statement on his phone without her consent and circulating the clip on the social media.

Yesterday, the tribunal rebuked Moazzem for negligence in performing

duties. It lauded the role of the media.

COURT PROCEEDINGS

On September 30, the tribunal set yesterday for delivering its judgment after 61 days of proceedings -- a considerably short period for completing trial in such cases.

Around 250 law enforcers were deployed in and around the court yesterday.

A large number of people gathered on the court premises since morning. But the court allowed only the lawyers, journalists and victim's family members inside the building.

All the accused were brought to the court in a prison van around 11:00am. The judge started reading out the judgement at 11:05am and finished within 13 minutes.

Some of the convicts looked arrogant and a few others shouted at the judge while he was delivering the verdict.

Later, some of them broke into tears while being taken to jail in a prison van.

The convicts will get the chance to file appeal with the High Court within seven days. And if they are not happy with the HC verdict, they will have scope to lodge appeal with the Supreme Court.

Talking to reporters, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam termed the verdict a milestone, reports UNB.

FAMILY WANTS QUICK EXECUTION

In his immediate reaction, Nusrat's

father AK Musa said, "We are satisfied with the verdict. We want quick execution of the verdict."

He demanded that the authorities beef up security for his family, alleging that the family members of the accused threatened them on the court premises.

Nusrat's mother Shirin Akhter and brother Mahmudul Hasan, also the complainant of the murder case, said they were grateful to the PM and that they were willing to meet her.

Public Prosecutor Hafez Ahmad said the verdict proved that an offender gets punished no matter how powerful he or she is.

Terming the verdict unexpected, Gias Uddin Nannu, who defended five of the accused, said they will challenge the verdict at the High Court and hope all the convicts will be acquitted.

Moments after he talked to journalists, some locals chased him. But police intervened and took him to safety.

THE CONVICTS

The convicts include madrasa teachers Abdul Kader and Afsar Uddin; and madrasa students Saifur Rahman Mohammad Zubayer, Javed Hossain alias Sakhawat Hossain, Kamrunnahar Moni, Ummeh Sultana Poppy, Abdur Rahim Sharif, Iftekhar Uddin Rana, Imran Hossain Mamun, Mohiuddin Shakil, Mohammad Shamim, Nuruddin, and Shahadat Hossain Shamim.

THEIR ROLE IN THE HEINOUS MURDER

SIRAJ UD DOULA
The then madrasa principal
Gave order to kill her by setting fire

SHAHADAT HOSSAIN SHAMIM
Madrasa student
Planned, led the execution of the plan, collected kerosene, and directly took part in setting fire

NUR UDDIN
Madrasa student
Planned, helped execute the plan, tied victim's legs and set her on fire

MAKSUD ALAM
Then madrasa's governing body member and acting general secretary of Sonagazi municipality AL
Planned, led the execution of the plan, provided Tk 10,000 and attempted to label the killing as suicide

SAIFUR RAHMAN MOHAMMAD ZUBAYER
Madrasa student
Planned, helped execute the plan and stood guard outside the madrasa

ABDUL KADER
Madrasa teacher
Planned, led the execution of the plan and stood guard outside the madrasa

AFSAR UDDIN
Madrasa teacher
Planned, helped execute the plan and stood guard inside the madrasa

UMME SULTANA POPPY
Madrasa student
Planned, helped execute the plan, took the victim to the spot, tied victim and helped set her on fire

ABDUR RAHIM SHARIF
Madrasa student
Planned, helped execute the plan and stood guard inside the madrasa

IMRAN HOSSAIN MAMUN
Madrasa student
Planned, helped execute the plan and stood guard outside the madrasa

MOHAMMAD SHAMIM
Madrasa student
Planned, led the execution of the plan and tried to save accused

MOHIUDDIN SHAKIL
Madrasa student
Planned, helped execute the plan and stood guard inside the madrasa

RUHUL AMIN
The then president of Sonagazi upazila AL and vice president of the madrasa's governing body
Planned, helped execute the plan and stood guard outside the madrasa

KAMRUNNAHAR MONI
Madrasa student
Planned, helped execute the plan, collected veils and gloves and helped set her on fire

IFTEKHAR UDDIN RANA
Madrasa student
Planned, helped execute the plan and stood guard outside the madrasa

Nusrat murder verdict hailed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing satisfaction over the verdict in Feni madrasa student Nusrat Jahan Rafi murder case, different rights bodies, political parties, and socio-cultural organisations yesterday urged the authorities concerned to quickly execute the verdict.

In a press statement, National Human Rights Commission Chairman Nasima Begum demanded early implementation of the verdict.

"Such a verdict is a warning for those who conduct violence against women," she said.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said the government was satisfied at the verdict as the trial of the case was completed at an "incredible speed".

Oikya Nap President Pankaj Bhattacharya and General Secretary Asadullah Tarek, in a press release, said such a swift announcement of verdict is a good illustration of establishing rule of law in the country.

They also demanded early execution of the verdict.

Sammilita Samajik Andolon (SSA), a platform against communalism and militancy, issued a press statement saying this verdict reflects the sincerity of authorities concerned to prevent violence against women and it will bring satisfaction to the countrymen.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, however, expressed anger over the verdict as the police officials were exempted from charges in this case.

"It proves that this government are dependent on police," he told journalists at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport following his return from Australia.

Earlier on the day, a tribunal in Feni sentenced 16 people to death for their involvement in Nusrat murder.

Nusrat was set on fire on April 6 on the roof of a madrasah by a group of people loyal to Sirajuddoula, whom she had accused of sexually harassing her.

Nusrat succumbed to her injuries four days later at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Bangladesh snags its highest ranking

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minority investors, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcing contracts and resolving insolvency.

This year, Bangladesh made reforms on three fronts -- the most in a decade.

In contrast, Pakistan and Kenya made six reforms, Myanmar five, India four, China eight, and Saudi Arabia and Bahrain nine.

Bangladesh made setting up a new business less expensive with the reduction of registration and name clearance fees and removal of the certifying fee for digital certificates.

In Dhaka, obtaining an electrical connection was made more efficient as the city invested in digitisation and human capital.

And yet, a business still needs to complete nine procedures, the most not only in the region, but also globally. Only two other economies in the world require nine steps to obtain a connection.

Bangladesh also reduced the amount of the security deposit required for a new connection this year.

Access to credit information was improved thanks to expanded coverage by the credit information bureau. This reform delivered Bangladesh's most significant improvement, as it climbed 42 notches to 119 in the ranking for this category.

But the country made no progress in categories of: enforcing contracts, trading across borders, paying taxes and protecting minority investors.

It still takes an eye watering four

years on average to resolve a dispute through the legal channel, putting Bangladesh next to last globally on the enforcing contracts indicator.

To prepare, file and pay tax it takes 435 hours on average in Bangladesh, as opposed to 273.5 hours in South Asia. It still takes up to 168 hours for obtaining, preparing and submitting documents at the port and get customs clearance, which is more than twice the time needed in South Asia. It takes just an hour in 19 countries, found the study.

In case of resolving insolvency, the country's score dropped from last year. The foreclosure procedure takes up to four years, as opposed to 2.2 years in South Asia. In Ireland, it just takes 0.4 years.

The recovery rate is 29.1 cent on the dollar, in contrast to 38.1 cent in South Asia and 92.9 cent in Norway.

Minimal progress was seen in case of property registration and getting construction permits.

As many as 16 procedures must be overcome to start construction, which take up to 281 days. In South Asia, the average number of procedures is 14.6 and the median duration is 149.7 days.

In case of property registration, 8 steps must be completed, which takes a staggering 264 days, leaving Bangladesh in the 184th spot out of 190 in this category's indicator.

The South Asian average is 6.9 procedures and 107.8 days for property registration, meaning Bangladesh has

a long way to go to catch up with its neighbours, let alone the global best practices.

Transferring a property title in Bangladesh takes on average 271 days, almost six times longer than the global average of 47 days, according to the WB study.

To sum up, it is a dismal picture from all angles.

But the government though is well aware of the scenario, as this year's reforms came after years of inactivity.

And, it has set the target of climbing up to double digits in the ranking by 2021 -- an ambition that might seem far-fetched but neighbouring India under its Prime Minister Narendra Modi has demonstrated that it is possible.

In a space of two years, India went from 130 to 77 in the rankings. In one year, India managed a jump of record 30 notches.

India brought on wholesale reforms in getting construction permits, starting business, resolving insolvency, paying taxes and doing international trade.

Perhaps, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina can take a leaf out of Modi's book as he goes about trying to transform his country's image as a difficult place to do business.

Because, if Bangladesh is to achieve its growth ambitions and become a higher middle-income country by 2030 and a developed economy by 2041, a fostering business climate is imperative.

Postpone Rohingya relocation plan

Says US acting assistant secretary at the Bureau of South and Central Asia

UNB, Dhaka

Appreciating Bangladesh for opening its borders to huge number of Rohingya refugees, the United States has urged the country to "postpone" its Rohingya relocation plan to Bhashan Char.

"We urge Bangladesh to postpone any refugee relocations to Bhashan Char until independent experts can determine it is a suitable location," said Alice G Wells, US acting assistant secretary at the Bureau of South and Central Asia.

She made the call while delivering her statement at a hearing before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific on Tuesday, chaired by Congressman Brad Sherman.

Earlier on October 21, Bangladesh and the European Union discussed the Bhashan Char relocation plan and Bangladesh reassured the "voluntary nature" of such Rohingya relocation.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs M Shahriar Alam also tweeted a couple of days back saying Bhashan Char was ready to welcome Rohingya families.

"Newly-built shelters will offer educational and livelihood options and will decongest the present camps," his tweet read.

Shahriar mentioned that cluster comes with multistoried buildings, a typical model that is hugely successful in coastal belt.

Bangladesh is currently hosting over 1.1 million Rohingyas in congested camps of the country's tourist hub -- Cox's Bazar -- putting much burden on the country.

"Given Bangladesh's own development needs, the decision Prime Minister Hasina made to open the country's borders to over 700,000 Rohingya refugees since August 2017 deserves recognition from international partners, including the United States," Wells said.

The hosting of Rohingyas has come with genuine consequences for Bangladesh, which was already one of the most densely populated countries in the world, the US official said.

Wells also said the government estimates host communities in Cox's Bazar are outnumbered by Rohingyas two to one, and that these communities have endured economic disruptions, ecological damage, and uncertainty about their own future just as the Rohingya face uncertainty about theirs.

Hacker 'not precisely identified'

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had been identified.

"[No one] has been identified, but the process is on. We asked the Facebook authorities how the post was circulated on Facebook after the ID was hacked. But they have yet to give us any clear idea," the home boss said.

Earlier, police and government officials said they had identified two people and taken them into custody.

In this regard, the minister said, "Both of them have told us that they were not involved in the hacking. That is why we approached Facebook to be sure [of their involvement]."

"Facebook hasn't provided us specific details, but they have given us some idea. We are looking into those."

Anjuman Kamal, assistant inspector general of Lawful Interception Unit (LIC) of Police Headquarters, told The Daily Star yesterday that they were working with Facebook authorities and would need some more information regarding the Bhola incident.

Meanwhile, a Bhola court granted a three-day remand each to five people in two separate cases filed with Borhanuddin police station. One was a murder case and the other was filed under the Digital Security Act.

Biplob Chandra Baidya -- the man whose Facebook ID was allegedly hacked -- Rafsan Islam Sharif and Md Imon were placed on three-day remand over the case filed under the Digital Security Act for spreading hate speech hurting religious sentiments.

Biplob was arrested on October 19, after he had filed a GD stating that his ID was hacked and hate speech was being spread through it. Sharif was arrested from Pataukhali, while Imon was from Borhanuddin the same day.

Police arrested Sharif after he made a phone call to Biplob from Pataukhali and demanded Tk 2,000 for returning his Facebook account.

Imon was arrested as he had sold the SIM card, registered under another name, to Sharif which was used to make the call.

Earlier on Sunday, police claimed that they had "arrested the hackers", Rafsan Islam Sharif, along with Imon.

The investigators now think that

Sharif may not be the hacker, as he did not have the technical knowledge to hack an account.

The two arrested in the murder case -- Arif and Sajib -- were picked up from different places in the district on Wednesday night, said the inspector (investigation) of Borhanuddin police station, and also the investigation officer.

Police arrested the duo after they were identified from footages of the protest on Sunday.

ISLAMIC FRONTS CALL OFF PROGRAMMES

The Bhola district administration refused to give permission for holding any outdoor events today, resulting in two Islamic parties postponing their agitation programmes.

Earlier, Sharbadalia Muslim Oikya Parishad and Islami Adolon Bangladesh had announced holding separate programmes protesting the death of four people killed in Sunday's clash with police during the protest rally over hate speech spread through Facebook.

They announced the agitation after their six-point charter was not met within the 72-hour ultimatum they had given.

The Oikya Parishad had planned a special prayer session after the Jumma prayers at Bhola Government High School ground, while the Islami Adolon had chalked out an agitation programme and special prayer sessions at all of the 930 mosques in Bhola Sadar upazila.

Mizanur Rahman, the joint convener of the parishad, announced the postponement around 9:00pm after a meeting of the platform's high-ups. Mizanur said they had delayed the programmes after they were not given the permission to hold those.

Similarly, Islami Andolon, also withdrew their agitation programmes and special prayers.

Sirajul Islam, Islami Adolon Bangladesh, Bhola North unit president, told this newspaper, "We are withdrawing our programme as we could not secure the permission for it."

Sharbadaliya Muslim Oikya Parishad placed a six-point demand at a press conference at Bhola Press Club around noon on Monday.

Their demands included immediate withdrawal of the superintendent of

police in Bhola and the officer-in-charge of Borhanuddin police station, and capital punishment of the Hindu youth who they claimed was responsible for the spread of the hate speech.

Bhola Deputy Commissioner Mohammed Masud Alam Siddique earlier said that no permission would be given for any outdoor programmes and focus would be on beefing up security. "We will beef up security across the district in order to maintain law and order situation. Additional law enforcers will be deployed," he said.

"Law enforcers will guard important places of the town and other areas," he said.

Masud Alam said he also instructed law enforcing agencies to provide increased security to all the 100 temples in the district.

A large number of law enforcers from Border Guard Bangladesh, police and Rapid Action Battalion, have been deployed in the Bhola area to keep the situation under control.

PROBE COMMITTEE FAILS TO MEET DEADLINE

The probe committee formed to investigate Sunday's clashes was given two more working days to complete their probe.

The committee formed by the DC office asked for the additional time and was granted it, Bhola DC Masud Alam said.

Meanwhile, a parliamentary body yesterday said hate crimes like the recent one in Bhola were taking place due to carelessness of the cybercrime unit of the police department.

The parliamentary standing committee on home affairs at its meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban asked the cybercrime unit to intensify its monitoring activities, so that incidents like the one in Bhola could be avoided.

"Hate crime incidents like in Bhola are taking place due to carelessness of the respective department of police. That's why we have asked the cybercrime department to remain cautious so that such hate crime incidents cannot recur in the future," ruling Awami League MP Faridul Haque Khan, who was present at the meeting, told The Daily Star.

Freedom fighter buried without state honour

Family rejects the honour protesting his son's job loss

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A freedom fighter was buried without state honour in Dinajpur yesterday after his wife and children told officials that the 70-year-old had rejected the honour before his death.

Freedom fighter Ismail Hossain said he did not want the honour because his professional driver son was fired last month from his government no-work-no-pay job, his family members said.

They also handed reporters a printed letter, signed by Ismail and addressed to the local lawmaker, stating that he should not be buried in state honour.

Ismail was admitted to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital on October 21 with different complications.

He breathed his last on Wednesday.

Family members said Ismail wrote the letter on Tuesday addressing local lawmaker M Iqbalur Rahim, also whip of parliament.

Ismail was buried at Jogibari village in the morning. A team of police led by Magistrate Mohsin Uddin went to the village.

"We tried to convince them, but they didn't let us do the formalities," Mohsin told reporters.

According to the letter, Ismail's son Nur Islam was driver of a government official. But he had been unfairly treated and fired last month.

He also urged the MP to ensure justice.

60pc businesses find market

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Access to capital can be termed as another barrier (29.17 percent) for sectors to flourish as they cannot expand beyond a certain level.

Other obstacles such as weak institution and corruption, unskilled labour and lack of technology also have a negative impact on the market environment.

In terms of reforms, 45.99 percent of the survey respondents called for an inclusive financial system. The highest expectation is for low interest rates or easy terms and conditions for loans.

Next on the list of reforms would be strong institutions and justice (44.14 percent). The businesses called for incentive or subsidy, reduced tax rate or licence fee, and business-friendly administration and law enforcement agencies.

In order to function more efficiently, the survey respondents sought marketing assistance for manufactured goods and services, help with enhancing supply of local, quality raw materials and aid for eliminating raw material crisis.

The study also called for greater focus on small- and medium-sized enterprises, which have contributed significantly to economic growth and employment generation in East and Southeast Asian countries.

It also suggested giving SMEs access to the hundreds of economic zones that the government has planned, which can solve many of the problems they currently face, as well as creation of one-stop SME service where speedy solutions for the SME-related problems can be provided.

Correction

The news with the headline "Shela crowned first Miss Universe Bangladesh" published in The Daily Star yesterday erroneously mentioned actor-turned politician Akbar Hossain Pathan, known popularly as Farooque, as one of the judges of the Miss Universe Bangladesh. We regret the error.