

UNGA resolution condemns abuses against Rohingyas

Urges urgent action to stop racial hatred against them in Myanmar

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

The UN General Assembly (UNGA) approved a resolution on Friday strongly condemning human rights abuses against Myanmar's Rohingyas and other minorities, including arbitrary arrests, torture, rape and deaths in detention.

The 193-member body voted 134-9 with 28 abstentions in favour of the resolution, which also calls on Myanmar's government to take urgent measures to combat incitement of hatred against the Rohingyas and other minorities in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan states.

UNGA resolutions are not legally binding but they reflect world opinion.

Buddhist-majority Myanmar has long considered the Rohingyas to be "Bengalis" from Bangladesh, in spite of their families having lived in the country for generations.

Nearly all have been denied citizenship since 1982, effectively rendering them stateless; they are also denied freedom of movement and other basic rights.

The long-simmering Rohingya crisis exploded on August 25, 2017, when Myanmar's military launched what it called a clearance campaign in Rakhine in response to an attack by a Rohingya armed group.

The campaign led to a mass exodus of Rohingyas to Bangladesh, and accusations that security forces committed mass rapes and killings and burned thousands of homes.

Myanmar's ambassador to the UN, Hau Do Suan called the

resolution "another classic example of double-standards (and) selective and discriminatory application of human rights norms" designed "to exert unwanted political pressure on Myanmar."

He said the resolution did not attempt to find a solution to the complex situation in Rakhine state and refused to recognise government efforts to address the challenges.

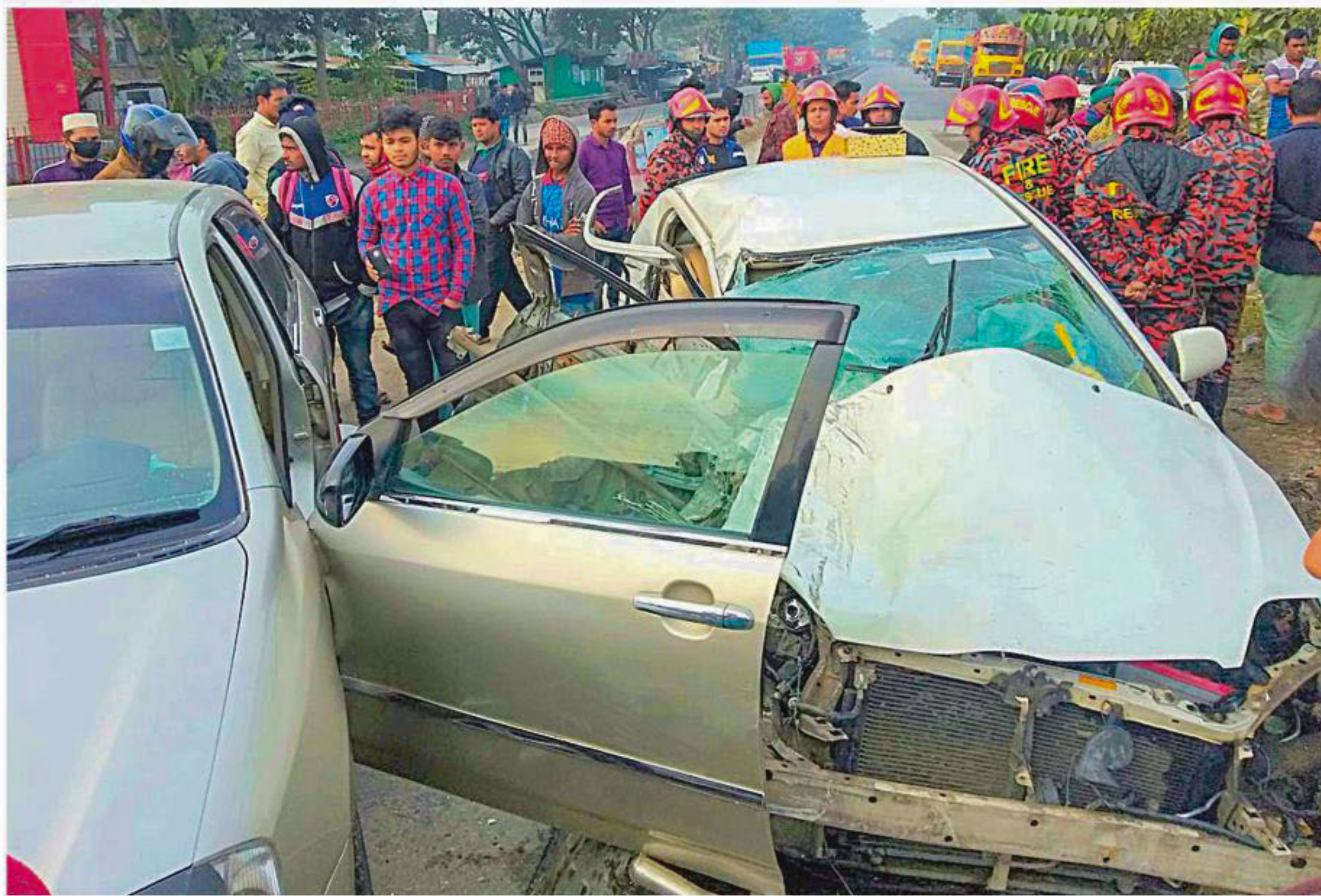
The resolution, the ambassador said, "will sow seeds of distrust and will create further polarisation of different communities in the region."

The resolution expresses alarm at the continuing influx of Rohingyas to neighbouring Bangladesh over the last four decades, now numbering 1.1 million including 744,000 who arrived since August 2017, "in the aftermath of atrocities committed by the security and armed forces of Myanmar."

The UNGA also expressed alarm at an independent international fact-finding mission's findings "of gross human rights violations and abuses suffered by Rohingyas Muslims and other minorities" by the security forces, which the mission said "undoubtedly amount to the gravest crimes under international law."

The resolution called for an immediate cessation of fighting and hostilities.

Myanmar's leader Aung San Su-kyi has defended the military action in Rakhine state during her appearance at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, while denying the "genocidal intent" of the state against the Rohingyas.



Two damaged cars after a lorry lost control and T-boned one of them and tossed it on to the other on Dhaka-Chattogram highway in Faujdarhat area of Sitakunda upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Tragedy rips apart a family

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area of Sitakunda upazila. Mintu, Tasfia and her younger sister Monti were killed while Mintu's son Tasnim and wife Konika were critically injured.

The crash happened around 8:30am in foggy weather, highway police said.

The girls died at the scene, said Abdul Awal, officer-in-charge of Barowalia Highway Police Station.

"Fire fighters and police rushed to the spot and sent the banker, his wife and son to Chattogram Medical College Hospital," the OC added.

Police seized the lorry, but its driver fled the scene, he added.

Mintu died around 12:30pm at the hospital. His wife and son are undergoing treatment in neurosurgery



A family photo of the victims. The father and two daughters were killed in the accident.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

ward of the hospital.

Mintu's brother ZI Mizanur Rahaman Khan said, "Taking my niece Tasfia from her hostel in Feni, he and

his family went to Bandarban on December 23. He used to drive the car.

"They were a happy family. I don't know how I will convey the news to my 90-year-old mother."

Family sources said Tasnim was in class III and Monti in class II.

Mintu's friend Mozammel Hossain told the Daily Star: "After the crash, his wife Konika woke up in the hospital and asked about her daughters. She does not know that her husband and daughters are dead."

Doctors said the condition of the mother and the boy were critical as both of them suffered critical injuries to the head.

Born in Chandpur's Haziganj, Mintu was the fourth of 11 siblings.

He joined Bangladesh Bank in 2005 as assistant director.

Customs recover 64kg gold at HISA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs yesterday recovered at least 64kg gold from the cargo section of the capital's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

Following a tip-off, a team of customs searched the cargo section around 5:30pm and recovered the gold in four crates, Moazzam Hossain, commissioner of the Customs House told The Daily Star.

"We recovered around 64kg gold ..."

he added. The market price of the 640 gold bars is estimated to be around Tk 32 crore, said Assistant Commissioner of

Customs Sulaiman Hossain.

He said one of the four crates arrived from Singapore on Friday while the rest three arrived yesterday.

The crates were brought in on Biman flights.

National Board of Revenue Chairman Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan during a press conference at the airport last night said it was a matter of concern that Bangladesh was being used as a route for smuggling gold.

"We are recovering gold on secret information. But we cannot say that the gold is not being smuggled in other ways without our knowledge," he said.

Hong Kong police arrest 15 in fresh shopping mall protests

AFP, Hong Kong

Hong Kong riot police yesterday arrested at least 15 people in clashes with dozens of pro-democracy protesters who targeted a mall near the border with China to demonstrate against mainland tourists and shoppers.

The fresh unrest ended a brief calm after protesters had battled riot police in shopping malls and streets of commercial districts across the city for three days over the Christmas period.

On Saturday afternoon, masked plain-clothed officers wielding batons arrested 14 people, including a 14-year-old girl, who were protesting inside the mall in Sheung Shui district, forcing shops to shut and harassing shoppers, an AFP reporter at the scene said.

Riot police charged into the mall to reinforce the officers and used pepper spray to disperse a crowd of residents who gathered to protest against the arrests.

After the police left, some protesters stayed on a footbridge linking the mall to an MTR metro station and harassed passers-by they thought were mainland Chinese tourists.

Another man was arrested by riot police in a later incident inside the mall, his head covered in blood.

Similar protests and clashes also took place in a mall in Kowloon Bay district, where a number of people were arrested Saturday evening.

Blood and a black mask were seen by an AFP reporter on the floor where plain-clothed police subdued protesters in the mall.

In recent years Sheung Shui has been swamped by a huge influx of mainlanders and parallel traders seeking to circumvent Chinese taxes, angering many residents who have seen their local shops transformed to cater to the visitors.

Hong Kong's many malls have become regular protest venues as protesters try to cause economic disruption in their push for greater democratic freedoms and police accountability.

The last month had seen a relative drop-off in violence and protests after

pro-democracy candidates won a landslide at local elections.

But with Beijing and city leaders refusing further concessions, rallies and clashes reignited over the Christmas period.

The protests were initially sparked by a now-abandoned attempt to allow extraditions to the authoritarian mainland.

They have since morphed into a popular revolt against Beijing's rule, with spiralling fears that the city is losing some of its unique liberties.

Mehedi Khulna's

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in Mirpur.

In chase of the modest 157 for four posted by Sylhet, Khulna got off to a flying start with surprise opener Mehedi pairing up with Nazmul to strike together a boundary-filled 115-run stand. Although Nazmul fell after a 31-ball 41 in the 13th over, Mehedi remained unbeaten on a 62-ball 87 to help guide his team to a comfortable victory with 13 balls to spare. Mehedi, who laced his innings with nine boundaries and three sixes, looked exquisite from the beginning.

Earlier, after being asked to back, Sylhet began their innings in decent fashion. Opener Andre Fletcher was looking good before he ultimately fell prey to Robbie Frylinck in the ninth over after scoring a 24-ball 37, featuring four boundaries and two maximums. Rubel Mia had partnered with Fletcher at the top for a 62-run opening stand before being sent back to the dressing room in the 14th over after a 44-ball 39. However, two unbeaten knocks -- a 20-ball 26 from Sherfane Rutherford and 18-ball 23 from skipper Mosaddek Hossain -- helped Sylhet post their modest total.

While local players were awarded for their deeds in the night game, it was quite the opposite in the day match yesterday. An all-round performance from Rajshahi Royals' foreigner recruit Shoab Malik trumped Soumya Sarkar's unbeaten 48-ball 88 as Rajshahi defeated Cumilla Warriors by 15 runs at the same venue.

Fine not enough, jail them too

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Speaking there, the NRCC chief said there were 49,162 river encroachers across the country.

In its report, the commission said it surveyed 47 canals in Dhaka over the last one year and found all of them illegally encroached upon. Eleven of the waterbodies were grabbed to build high-rises.

It said Bhatara, Dumni-Kathaldiya and Jowar Sahara-Kathaldiya canals were filled up with sand by a real estate company.

The water flow of Dholai Khal canal was being blocked by a culvert in Gendaria, while untreated sewage was being discharged directly into the Kalyanpur, Hazaribagh and Kalunagar canals.

The commission also said it carried out surveys on five rivers -- the Balu, the Dhaleshwari, the Madhumati, the Arial Kha, and the Kumar -- and compiled its findings in the report. It would eventually survey a total of 48 rivers across the country.

The report said the Water Development Board was yet to identify all the floodplains in the country, and because of this, land was being illegally handed over for the construction of factories and power plants.

Besides, the commission should be empowered to carry out drives to remove illegal structures from grabbed parts of rivers and to run mobile courts under it, the report said.

BALU

The list of Balu's occupiers is full of names.

For example, a major food manufacturer set up a garments factory by grabbing the river in the capital's Gulshan area. Many other structures also encroach on the river there, while in Demra, the river is being filled up illegally, says the report.

In Tongi's Pagar area, the river is being occupied by four garments factories, a chemical factory, an LED bulb-making factory and a steel factory. In Rugganj, three residential projects and a brick field encroach upon the river.

In Nagri union of Gazipur, the

Balu river is occupied at five places by poultry farms, saw mills, and even the boundary wall of a government training centre.

Effluents are pumped into the river in Tongi and Rugganj by occupiers. In the capital's Rampura, a sewage pipe empties out directly into the river, the report stated.

In Gazipur's Kaliganj, the colour of the river has changed due to unabated dumping of waste by locals.

"The colour of the water is not normal, it emits stench and there is no presence of fish or aquatic biodiversity," the report noted.

DHALESHWARI

KEY FINDINGS

- 405 rivers in the country
- 49,162 river encroachers listed
- 48 rivers being surveyed by the commission
- All 47 canals in Dhaka encroached upon
- None of 152 recommendations implemented

Factories located at 10 places around the Dhaleshwari directly discharge solid wastes into the river. The areas are in Manikganj's Shingair and Dhaka's Dhamrai upazilas.

The level of pollution in the Dhaleshwari and the Balu is so high that people using the water were contracting different skin and gastrointestinal diseases, the report said.

Encroachers of Dhaleshwari are plenty as well. In Talebpur union of Madaripur's Shibchar, a steel mill was built by grabbing the river.

Brick yards in Bayra and Dholla unions of Shingair encroach upon over a thousand decimals of the river, the report said.

MADHUMATI

Discharge from a furnace-oil based power plant was polluting the Madhumati river in Gopalganj's Haridashpur. The power plant is also illegally occupying the river there, the report said.

In Narail's Kalia upazila, 28 brick kilns dump their effluents in the river.

Meanwhile, during the dry months, the pollution in the rivers causes the water salinity to rise, preventing locals from being able to use the water.

The Madhumati is occupied at 38 places. "The district commission is building a market at the source of Pachuria canal, and this is happening right under the nose of Gopalganj's administration and police," the report said.

It added that when there should be a bridge, a section of the river has filled up to build a road, cutting off the river's connections to its Baor. Similarly, the river's links with its tributaries and distributaries have been cut at 34 places.

The river is illegally occupied by a barrack for law enforcers in Boulitoli union in Gopalganj Sadar upazila. In Jolipar union, much of the river is taken up by rice mills, the report said.

ARIAL KHA

A government textile institute was set up in Madaripur sadar upazila by illegally occupying land in the middle of the Arial Kha, the survey found.

A government body also encroached on the river to build a maritime institute.

Within the municipality area, the river is also grabbed by saw mills and people's homes.

In Shibchar upazila of the district, a local government authority built a bridge in such a way that a portion of the river had to be filled up, the report said, adding that the river was grabbed in areas in Madaripur sadar, Shibchar and Kalkini upazilas by 10 brick kilns.

Arial Kha's tributary Beel Padma is occupied by structures, including a water treatment plant, a home of a local mayor, and offices of law enforcers, and fire service, the report added.

GUNFIGHT WITH RAB 'Drug dealer' killed in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A suspected drug dealer was killed in a "gunfight" with Rab members in the city's Badda area early yesterday.

Rony Miah, 32, was accused in 18 drug-related cases filed with different police stations, said Md Kamruzzaman, assistant director at Rab-1.

Being tipped off that a group of narcos was gathering in Badda Satarkul area for drug trade, a team of Rab-1 raided the area around 12:40am, Kamruzzaman said.

Sensing their presence, the drug traffickers opened fire on them, he said, adding that the "shootout" ensued when the law enforcers fired back in self-defence.

Rony got shot during the incident as his accomplices ran away, the Rab official said.

Rony was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead, Kamruzzaman said.

A Rab men sustained minor injuries during the incident, he said, adding that they had recovered three firearms and 1,970 yaba pills from the spot.

Rab officials said Rony had long been a supplier of drugs in the capital's Bhatara and the adjacent areas.

BNP picks

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and would announce their names today.

A total of 12 Dhaka North City Corporation mayor hopefuls had bought AL nomination forms.

Besides, eight had bought the party's nomination forms for the mayoral polls to Dhaka South City Corporation. They include DSCC Mayor Sayeed Khokon, lawmakers Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh and Haji Md Salim, and Nazibullah Hiru.

Party sources said DNCC Mayor M Atiqul Islam is likely to get the AL ticket. However, the party is likely to pick a new mayor candidate for DSCC.

FAKHRUL NAMES CANDIDATES

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir announced the mayoral candidates at the party chairperson's Gulshan office yesterday.

The announcement followed a meeting of the party standing committee. Earlier, the BNP interviewed the nomination seekers for selecting its candidates.

"In Dhaka south, one mayoral aspirant collected party nomination form. He is Ishraq Hossain. He is educated and acceptable [to people]. Many people like him," Fakhrul said.

Ishraq, 32, is going to contest an election for the first time.

Son of late Dhaka mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Ishraq had collected nomination form for contesting the December 30 parliamentary election last year from Dhaka-6. But he backed out on his decision as the BNP supported a leader of Jatiya Oikyafront in the constituency.

Apart from Tabith, BNP Special Secretary Asaduzzaman Ripon had collected party nomination form for contesting the January 30 mayoral polls.

Fakhrul said, "Asaduzzaman Ripon is a tested leader. He has been with us from the very beginning of the party. Tabith Awan's acceptability to the young generation is huge. We think Tabith can play a crucial role in development activities of the city corporation."

Mentioning that the upcoming city polls would "not be free and fair", Fakhrul said, "Even after that, we are participating in the election as we believe in democracy."

Tabith, son of BNP leader Abdul Awal Mintoo, ran for DNCC mayor in 2015. The party boycotted that election halfway through election day, raising allegations of widespread vote rigging and ballot stuffing.

The 40-year-old BNP nominee holds a post-graduate degree from George Washington University.

Speaking to The Daily Star after winning the BNP ticket, Tabith said, "I am thankful to BNP for keeping faith in me once again. I will continue to be a part of the struggle for restoring democracy in the country."

He said, "Unfortunately, Dhaka is one of the worst cities in the world. Time has come to be united for making the city liveable for us and our children."

Talking to this correspondent, Ishraq said, "I would have been happy had my father seen me contesting the election and if I could receive the nomination form from party Chairperson Khaleda Zia."

He said he would follow the footsteps of his late father to make the city liveable.

The January 30 polls to two mayoral posts will be held on partisan lines while the elections to councillor posts will be non-partisan.

The BNP had boycotted the January 5, 2014, general election, but it took part in the Dhaka city polls the following year.

The party rejected the results of last year's general election, alleging vote rigging. It stayed away from the DNCC mayoral by-election in March this year.

Kazakhstan observes day of mourning after fatal jet crash

AFP, Almaty

Kazakhstan observed a national day of mourning yesterday a day after 12 people died when an airliner crashed shortly after takeoff and slammed into a house.

The jet carrying nearly 100 passengers operated by budget carrier Bek Air was torn apart and its nose crushed on impact with a building in the country's biggest city Almaty, but many on board managed to walk away without serious injury.

In the capital Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan's largest flag was at half-mast while officials made urgent appeals for blood donations to help injured survivors.

Neighbouring Russia and China were among the countries to join the Vatican and the European Union in expressing condolences to the former Soviet Central Asian republic.

Officials say the Fokker 100 plane's tail hit the tarmac twice on Friday during take-off before it came down and crashed into the concrete building, splitting into two.

According to Kazakh emergency authorities, the 12 dead included the pilot. Another 47 passengers out of the 98 people onboard were still in hospital on Saturday. Nine of them were children, officials said.

An investigation has been opened into "violation of security regulations and air transport

operating rules". But the interior ministry is still examining possible causes for the accident.

According to the authorities, an inquiry should announce its first conclusions next month. But a dozen other Bek Air aircraft will be grounded in the meantime.

According to the industry ministry, the low-cost airline operates nine Fokker-100 type aircraft, a medium-haul model built by the Dutch aircraft manufacturer Fokker.

In March 2016, a Bek Air Fokker 100 with 116 passengers on board had to make an emergency landing at Nur-Sultan International Airport due to a landing gear problem, without causing injuries.