

'An appalling incident'

Organisations, eminent citizens demand immediate arrest, punishment of culprits over attack on Hindu homes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different platforms and noted citizens yesterday condemned the recent attack on Hindu community houses in Sunamganj's Shalla upazila, demanding immediate arrest and punishment of the real culprits.

Noagaon village was allegedly attacked by Hefajat-e-Islam supporters two days after a rally of the Qawmi madrasa-based Islamist organisation in nearby Derai upazila on Monday in presence of Hefajat amir Junayed Babunagari and joint secretary general Mamunul Haque.

The attack was carried out over an alleged Facebook post criticising a Hefajat-e-Islam leader's statement.

In a joint statement, 10 eminent citizens yesterday protested the incident of launching attack, vandalising and looting at least 75 Hindu houses and said they are "appalled by the incident".

Demanding immediate arrest of Hefajat leader Mamunul and other culprits involved in the incident, they alleged that local administration and law enforcement agencies did not take any steps despite having information about a possible attack.

They said Hefajat and Jamaat dared to carry out attacks at different places in the past after being sheltered by different quarters.

They urged Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission to take due steps in this connection, expressing concern that the incident may tarnish the country's image abroad.

The eminent citizens further expressed concern that the trial process

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The first weekends of the Boimela saw a steady increase in visitors' numbers throughout the day. They said they were glad to have this opportunity to come here with their friends and families, something they've been unable to do as much due to the pandemic.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

'How long must we wait for justice?'

Dr Syed Anwar Husain asks why charges yet to be framed in Taqi murder case after eight years

DU CORRESPONDENT

Why no charges have been framed in Taqi murder case, even though eight years have already passed?

This question was raised by eminent academician Dr Syed Anwar Husain yesterday at an event marking the 25th birth anniversary of Tanwir Muhammad Taqi at the capital's National Museum.

"Charges in Taqi murder case have not been framed in eight years. I want to know what role police, Rab and the judiciary have played... The accused in the case have been identified and the offence is specified. However, charges are yet to be framed. This is my direct question to the prime minister," he said.

"Is this the model of an ideal state that we're seeing now? I urge you [prime minister] to ensure trial of all killings," he said.

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A dangerous 'SOLUTION'

Residents of Rupganj use hazardous 'balloon' technique to deposit gas from illegal lines

SANAD SAHA, NARAYANGANJ

Across 15 villages of Narayanganj's Rupganj upazila, a bizarre scene of several hundred giant balloons floating around households can be seen. Some are on rooftops, some on corridors inside, while some tied to trees adjacent to the houses.

The balloons contain methane gas, mostly used for cooking. It may look and feel like a convenient solution for the hassle of obtaining proper gas connection, but the practice poses tremendous risk of fire hazard, said fire service and Titas Gas personnel.

Each of the balloons has two leakage points connected to two tubes on each side. On one side, the tube connects the balloon with a nearby gas pipeline, while the other connects it with a cooking stove.

Md Shah Alam, in-charge of Kanchan Fire Service Station at Rupganj, said, "The entire process is extremely dangerous and may cause fire accident anytime."

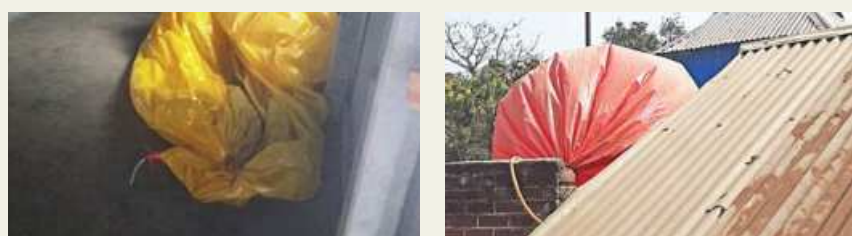
Villagers have been using this dangerous technique to preserve gas for around six months. Locals say they are constantly faced with low gas pressure during daytime, which is why they've chosen to preserve gas at night this way.

This correspondent recently visited Khamarpara, Talashpur, Nagarpara and adjacent villages of Rupganj upazila and talked to dozens of people in this regard.

The issue goes back to 2015, when some influential people of the area arranged for illegal gas connections in exchange of bribes ranging from Tk 12,000 to 15,000, they said. Locals have been consuming gas illegally this way since then, all without paying their bills.

"We face low pressure during the day. But as our connections are illegal, we cannot file any application with government authorities dealing with this," said Ali Mohammad Shaon of Khamarpara village. "The gas balloon technique is a natural consequence to our problems."

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Polythene bags used as 'gas balloons' to collect methane for cooking purposes is a common sight in a number of villages at Rupganj upazila of Narayanganj. The photos were taken last week.

PHOTO: STAR

Hospital staffer dies after setting himself on fire in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A physically challenged staffer, who set himself on fire at Sheikh Hasina National Burn and Plastic Surgery Institute, died at the hospital yesterday morning.

Azizul Islam Milon (30), an employee at the information centre of the hospital, passed away around 8am, said Dr Samanta Lal Sen, coordinator of the burn institute.

He suffered 95 percent burn injuries, said Dr Sen. Milon set himself on fire inside a toilet of the hospital around 1am yesterday, said Inspector Bachchu Mia, in-charge of DMCH police outpost.

His co-workers and hospital doctors said Milon was appointed as an outsourced employee around two years back.

He was going through some emotional distress as he was burdened with debts, said Mir Jahirul Islam, a ward master of the hospital, adding that Milon borrowed Tk 70,000 from a private bank last month.

Syedunnesa Akhi, elder sister of the deceased, said Milon was crippled by polio when he was around 2 years

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BNP Vice Chair Ruhul Alam dies of Covid-19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP vice-chairperson Major General (Retd) Ruhul Alam Chowdhury died of Covid-19 infection at a city hospital yesterday morning.

He breathed his last around 11:15am at the intensive care unit of Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka, Emran Saleh prince, an organising secretary of BNP confirmed.

Ruhul Alam, a former advisor to the caretaker government, was earlier admitted to the hospital with the infection.

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Skill-building important for country's development

Say speakers at Jaago dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Young politicians yesterday stressed on the importance of skill-building and vocational studies to foster the country's development.

While talking at a dialogue organised by Jaago Foundation in association with Asia Foundation on occasion of 50 years of Bangladesh's independence, they said young people should be encouraged to become entrepreneurs so that they can employ others.

Speaking at the event, Awami League lawmaker Nahim Razaq said the job market today is very competitive. He stressed on the importance of skill-building and vocational studies.

BNP lawmaker Rumeen Farhana said a working woman in this society needs to do two jobs -- one at work and another at home, taking care of the family, and most

females face various barriers.

She said more jobs would not be created, if investment were not increased.

Jatiya Party lawmaker Ahsan Adelur Rahman said the education sector should be developed so that the population is imbued with the proper skill-set, in a segmented manner where both high- and low-skill training is provided.

Jubo Mohila League President Nazma Akther said young people should be encouraged to become entrepreneurs so that they can employ others.

BNP National Executive Committee Member Tabitha Awal said it is important to increase and enhance the skill-set of the labour force. For that, more training programmes should be arranged.

Korvi Rakshand, founder and executive director of Jaago Foundation, also spoke at the programme.

Judge shortage slows down Supreme Court divisions

No new appointments to fill vacant positions; case backlog rising

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Although the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court faces a shortage of judges, there is apparently no move from the authorities concerned for appointing new judges anytime soon.

Five judges have retired at different times in the last several years, but the appointment of judges to the top court was not made in accordance with the vacancies, leading to the crisis, said court sources.

The apex court now has six sitting judges. Of them, Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Justice Abu Bakar Siddique will retire on December 31 and July 29 this year respectively.

The crisis is causing a backlog of cases at the apex court as the rate of case disposal decreased recently, said the court sources.

The president gave the last

appointment on September 2, 2020 when two High Court judges -- Justice Tariq ul Hakim and Justice Obaidul Hassan -- were promoted to the Appellate Division. However, Justice Tariq retired 12 days after his promotion.

The High Court Division has also been facing a similar shortage of judges.

With an inadequate number of appointments against the number of those retiring, the HC has now 92 judges. The number was 101 in June 2012.

Despite such a crisis, the government has no plan to appoint new judges to the Appellate and High Court Divisions right now.

"I know that a few judges have retired. But, there is no plan to appoint new judges at this moment. Let's see what happens," Law Minister Anisul

Huq told The Daily Star last week. He did not elaborate any further.

If new judges are not appointed to the apex court soon, the number of pending cases may go up further, said court sources.

Some 23,617 cases were pending with the Appellate Division after 6,303 were disposed of from January 1 till December 31, 2019 whereas 20,442 were pending with this court after 6,695 were disposed of during the same period of time from January 1 to December 31, 2018, according to an annual SC report.

The SC has not yet prepared the report on pending cases for the year 2020, said SC spokesman Mohammad Saifur Rahman.

The Appellate Division disposed of around 8,000 cases through virtual hearings during the Covid-19

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Four lives lost as two buses collide head-on in Bogura

Truck hits bus in Dinajpur, 30 hurt

STAR REPORT

Four people were killed and 39 injured in road accidents in two districts yesterday, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Bogura, four people were killed and nine injured as two buses collided head-on on Dhaka-Rangpur highway in Sherpur upazila in the early hours.

The incident happened in front of Rural Development Academy in Doshmile area around 2am, said Ratan Hossain, station officer of Sherpur Fire Service and Civil Defence.

Among the four deceased, two died on the spot. They were identified as Rawshan Habib, driver of one of the bus of Sristy Paribahan; and Masud (32), its supervisor, said Baniul Anam, traffic inspector.

Babul Mia (50) was declared dead at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital, said police, adding that another died while undergoing treatment there.

"When we rushed to the spot, we found several people unconscious on the ground and two passengers stuck inside the bus," he said.

Ratan Hossain said, "We sent the injured to the hospital."

The fire official said they did not find anyone in the other bus, belonging to Nabil Paribahan.

The accident occurred due to speeding and reckless driving, said Baniul Anam, traffic inspector of Sherpur Highway Police Camp.

Among the injured, condition of two people are critical, said Abdul Wadud, deputy director of the hospital.

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