



JOURNALISM IS NOT A CRIME

After the arrest of Prothom Alo's investigative reporter Rozina Islam, journalists across the country yesterday stood in solidarity with her, protesting her harassment and arrest. Prothom Alo journalists and staff formed a human chain in front of their office at Dhaka's Karwan Bazar, as did The Daily Star employees in front of their office premises, demanding immediate release of Rozina. Members of Dhaka Reporters' Unity also formed a human chain in the capital, while electronic media journalists of Sylhet formed one in front of Sylhet Shaheed Minar. Chattogram Journalists' Union demonstrated in front of Ctg Press Club. Left-leaning student organisations staged a demonstration at the base of Raju Memorial Sculpture in the capital, lamenting the muzzling of the press. Protests were also staged in Narayanganj, Rangpur, Tangail, Pabna, and Patuakhali, among other places.

PHOTO: STAR



Chinese national stabbed dead by compatriot in Sylhet

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A Chinese man was stabbed by his flatmate after an altercation at their apartment in Sylhet city's Pathantula area yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Wentao Wei (48), hailing from Shanxi of China. He was an employee of the power plant at Kumargaon area in Sylhet.

His flatmate, a Chinese national, is also an employee of the power plant, and was injured after being stabbed by Wentao.

The flatmate was detained by police and is undergoing treatment at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital.

SM Abu Farhad, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said, "Along with several other Chinese employees of the power plant, the two used to stay in a rented flat at Pathantula area. In the morning, all others left for work while the duo stayed back."

"At around 8am, they got into an altercation and ended up stabbing each other. One of them died while the other is

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HOLIDAYMAKERS SCRAMBLING TO DHAKA

Gloomy weather adds to their woes

STAR REPORT

Amid the gloomy weather, holidaymakers were struggling to return to the capital yesterday following the Eid vacation, due to the transport crisis caused by the suspension of long-distance bus service.

Over the last three days, hundreds were seen entering the city as many offices and factories have already reopened after the holidays.

Many were seen flouting health guidelines -- not wearing masks or maintaining physical distancing -- raising the risk of Covid-19 transmission.

While people from high-income groups are returning either in private cars, flights, or rented vehicles, middle-class and low-income people are using cheaper means.

But they're also facing all kinds of difficulties as they have to pay two to three times more than the usual fare due to the transport crisis, report our correspondents.

Yesterday, their hassle increased following rains in the late hour of the day.

According to data released by Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), around 1.06-crore mobile phone users left Dhaka from May 4 to May 15, despite the movement restrictions.

Health experts have expressed concerns that the cross-country travelling en masse may cause a sharp spike in the number of new Covid-19 cases.

Yesterday, over 100 passenger buses were halted at Kazipur upazila in Sirajganj when buses from different northern districts tried to go through the area to dodge law enforcers on highways.

Kazipur police, however, said vehicles carrying passengers to Dhaka were sent back from Sonamukhi area of the upazila.

Additional police were deployed at Sonamukhi and other important

places of the inter-district road in Kazipur to stop the buses, Panchanand Sarkar, officer-in-charge of Kazipur Police Station, told the Daily Star.

Passengers and bus staffers demonstrated on the spot due to that, said witnesses.

"I have to reach Dhaka to rejoin my workplace tomorrow [today]. If I don't do that, I might lose my job," said Abdur Rahim, a Dhaka-bound passenger.

Rahim claimed that he did not want to go back home amid the pandemic, but he had no choice due to the sudden demise of his father.

officer-in-charge of Bangabandhu Bridge (west zone) Police Station Mosaddek Hossain said more than 29,000 vehicles moved across the bridge in the 24 hours till 6am on Tuesday.

Most of them were motorbikes, cars, minibuses and trucks, he added.

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11 killed by lightning strikes in three districts

STAR REPORT

At least 11 people were killed in lightning strikes in Netrakona, Faridpur and Manikganj yesterday.

In Netrakona, seven persons were killed and eight others injured as thunderbolts struck them in separate incidents.

The deceased were identified as Bayezid Khan (42), Fazlu Mia (55), Maulana Md Atabur Rahman (21), Md Sharif Mia (8), Oshek Mia (30), Bipul Mia (32), and Monir Hossain (30).

Of them, Bayezid and Fazlu were farmers while Oshek, Bipul and Monir were fishermen, said police.

Quoting locals, Madan Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Ferdous Alam said Atabur and Sharif were killed on the spot and five others injured as they were struck by thunderbolts while playing in a field of Pachim Fatehpur in Madan upazila around 2:30pm.

The injured were admitted to Kendua Upazila Health Complex. Kendua Police Station OC Kazi Shah Newaz said farmers Bayezid and Fazlu died instantly as thunderbolts struck them while they were working on their field in Kendua around 3pm.

Three fishermen -- Oshek, Bipul and Monir -- died on the spot and three other fishermen sustained injuries while they were catching fish in a waterbody in Gazipur area of Khaliyajury around 2:30pm, Khaliyajury Police Station OC Md Mujibur Rahman quoted locals as saying.

The injured were given first aid, said the OC. On information, police recovered the bodies and handed them over to the families.

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MAYHEM IN SUNAMGANJ

Jhumon Das, sued under DSA, still in jail

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

Jhumon Das Apon, accused in a Digital Security Act (DSA) case filed over criticising Hefajat-e-Islam leader Mamunul Haque on Facebook, has been in jail for over two months.

Sunamganj District Judge Court, after hearing a bail prayer filed by Jhumon's lawyer yesterday, did not give any order and postponed proceedings for two months.

The Facebook post allegedly led to the mayhem in Noagaon village of Sunamganj's Shalla upazila on March 17, which saw about 90 Hindu houses vandalised and looted.

No lawyer was initially willing to defend Jhumon in the case for security reasons, and that is why filing of a bail prayer was delayed, said his family.

Lawyer Debangshu Sekhar Das, who later agreed to defend Jhumon, said securing bail in a case filed under DSA is tough for an accused.

After the hearing, the lawyer is planning to file an application on Sunday to know whether they will get an order. "The court postponed proceedings without giving an order. If we get an order, we can make appeals," he said.

Police, with help of locals, detained Jhumon on March 16 to pacify agitated Hefajat supporters and avoid a possible attack on the village, but in vain. They showed Jhumon (25) arrested under section 54 of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) and produced him before a Sunamganj court on March 17. The court later sent him to jail.

On March 22, police filed the case against the youth and 20-30 unnamed persons under DSA. In the case statement, they attached Jhumon's Facebook post and mentioned that he intentionally spread information

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Despite all the health guidelines in effect on paper, buses in the capital can be seen taking in passengers without face-masks and leaving no space for maintaining social distancing. This photo was taken yesterday from Malibagh area.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Woman run over by truck in Natore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

A woman died on the spot after a truck ran her over at Garmati area of Natore-Pabna highway in Baraigram upazila of Natore around 7am yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Nurjahan Begum (32).

Her husband Milon Uddin and their two children were accompanying Nurjahan while they were attempting to cross the highway.

Milon and his son Mohin were able to cross the road but Nurjahan and their daughter, Jannatul, couldn't pass through with them, so the two were waiting on the other side.

"Suddenly, a truck carrying potatoes crashed into Nurjahan. She managed to save Jannatul by pushing her away," said Milon.

Khandaker Shafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Bonpara Highway Police Station confirmed the matter to this correspondent.

The truck was on its way to Pabna, he said.

Police seized the vehicle but its driver and helper managed to flee, the police official said.

KILLING OF 26 MIGRANTS IN LIBYA IN 2019

CID to press charges for trafficking, not murder

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Nearly two years after investigating the cases filed for trafficking and killing of 26 Bangladeshi migrants in Libya, the CID is mulling to submit charge sheet only for the human trafficking charges in a month, keeping the murder charges pending.

Investigators said since except for one, all Bangladeshi trafficking syndicate godfathers and members who had direct link to the killings could not be brought back home for interrogation; they made little progress in the probe into charges of murder and grievous injuries to the victims.

"We will submit supplementary charge sheets when we will be able to complete investigation into charges of murder and grievous injuries," Criminal Investigation

Department Additional Superintendent THB (trafficking in human being) AKM Akteruzzaman told The Daily Star recently.

The officer said they are expecting to submit charge sheet on human trafficking charges before the second anniversary of the gruesome murders of Bangladeshi migrants.

On May 27 in 2019, alleged human traffickers killed 30 migrant workers, including 26 Bangladeshis in Libya. The incident caused a huge public outcry at home and abroad.

The killing took place at a warehouse in the city of Mizdah near Tripoli. Twelve more Bangladeshis were also injured in the attack.

Twenty-six cases were filed by victims and

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Hefajat's Mamunul brought to N'ganj for interrogation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Police yesterday brought Hefajat-e-Islam leader Mamunul Haque to Narayanganj from Dhaka to interrogate him centring three cases which contain rape and violence charges.

Mamunul, former joint general secretary of Hefajat, was firstly taken to the office of district detective branch (DB) of police around 9am. Then, police started interrogating over the rape case.

"We have brought Mamunul on a total remand of nine days for three cases. Firstly, we started interrogation centring the rape case, in which he has been remanded for three days. He will be interrogated for six days more for two other violence cases," said Mostafizur Rahman, additional superintendent of police in Narayanganj.

Earlier on April 3, some ruling Awami League (AL) men kept Mamunul confined in a room, where he went with a woman. When the chaos was going on, Mamunul claimed

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EC mulls by-polls to Papul's constituency

Discussion on postponed UP, municipal polls today

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission is considering to hold by-election to the Laxmipur-2 constituency -- of Mohammad Shahid Islam, also known as Kazi Papul -- amid Covid-19 pandemic for constitutional obligation.

The election commissioners will sit in a meeting today to discuss the issue of by-elections to three others constituencies, polls to 371 union parishads (UPs) in the first phase and voting to 11 municipalities in the sixth phase of the staggered elections.

"The commission will hold a meeting on Wednesday on by-polls and union parishad elections that were postponed due to a steep rise in coronavirus infections," EC additional secretary Ashok Kumar Debnath told The Daily Star.

According to the constitution, by-

elections to fill the vacant seat of a member of parliament should be held within 90 days. Provided that in a case where, in the opinion of the chief election commissioner, it is not possible, for reasons of an act of God, to hold such election within 90 days period, such election shall be held within ninety days following next after the last day of such period, reads the constitution.

On February 22, parliament secretariat issued a gazette notification announcing that Laxmipur-2 constituency fell vacant because of Kazi Papul's moral turpitude. The gazette has been in effect since January 28 when Papul was sentenced to four years of rigorous imprisonment by a Kuwait court.

"So in that account, elections to Laxmipur-2 constituency shall be held within July. We are thinking about holding

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