

BANGLADESH UPDATE



293

New cases in 24hrs



15,65,174

Total cases



27,752

Deaths



15,27,333

Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE



49,06,592

Deaths



240,020,462

Total cases

Rape victim's family members beaten up

They refused offer of marriage and Tk 70,000 to settle issue

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

Family members of the RS Jute Processing Mill rape victim were allegedly beaten up on Friday for refusing Tk 70,000 from the perpetrator and her hand in marriage to settle the issue.

The victim, aged about 15, was on her night shift duty at the jute factory when three teenage boys, who were also employees of RS Jute Processing Mill, picked her up and took her to one of the rooms in the factory, according to the victim's family and police sources.

One of the teens violated her while the other two filmed the incident, according to the victim, who is also physically challenged.

The victim, a resident of ward 7 of Haragachh Municipality area in Kaunia upazila of Rangpur, left the factory before her shift ended on Wednesday morning and informed her mother of the incident.

Her mother relayed the event to their relatives, who informed the matter to Zahidul Islam Biplob, the factory manager, that day.

Biplob accosted the teenagers, who acknowledged the incident.

In the meantime, the accused rapist's family made a proposal for marriage to the victim, who recently lost her father. The victim's family turned down the proposal.

Afterwards, Nazrul Islam, a former councillor of the ward, had arranged

an arbitration, which took place at the factory on Friday evening in the presence of the relatives of both the victim and the accused rapist as well as officials of RS Jute Processing Mill.

Islam offered Tk 70,000 to the victim's family to settle the matter. But, her sister and maternal uncle refused to take the amount.

This prompted Islam and his goons to beat them up on the spot.

The victim's family members made a call to the national helpline 999 for help. The person on the helpline advised them to go to the local police station to file the case.

Accordingly, they filed the case against four persons with the Haragachh police station later in the evening.

Islam told local journalists he arranged the arbitration after the rape victim's family came to him for help. He admitted he slapped the victim's relatives several times as they were not heeding the judgement of the arbitration.

Contacted, Biplob acknowledged that an incident was taken place at the factory in the early hours of Wednesday, but he denied arranging any arbitration.

The arbitration took place outside of the factory premises, he said.

A forensic test of the victim would be conducted, said Shawkat Ali, the officer-in-charge of the Haragachh police station. Besides, the police are trying to arrest the accused.



People protest the attacks on Hindu temples and the murder of a devotee by extremists in Chowmuhoni area of Noakhali yesterday, defying section 144 of the CrPC that prohibit gatherings. They took to the street demanding the punishment to the killers and attackers.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Hate spiral must end

FROM PAGE 1

Idols were vandalised in Munshiganj and Kishoreganj even on Friday and early yesterday.

AFP news agency reported quoting a Hindu community leader, Gobinda Chandra Pramanik, that at least 80 makeshift temples had been attacked. The authorities, however, did not confirm the figures.

Bangladesh Hindu-Udjan Parishad President Milon Kanti Datta said at a rally in the capital that this violence continued as those who carried out the earlier attacks on the minorities were not punished.

The government should take the responsibility for its failure to take proper steps, he added.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader reiterated that the government was determined to identify and punish those behind the communal attacks that were launched to disturb the country's religious harmony.

Quader, also general secretary of the ruling Awami League, said the culprits would be brought to book through an impartial investigation.

The attacks were pre-planned and evil communal forces are behind them," he said while addressing the triennial council of Rajbari AL yesterday.

Dhaka city unit of Workers Party of Bangladesh, at a rally in the capital, demanded the attackers be held right away while senior BNP leader Mirza Abbas blamed police for failing to ensure safety of the minority people.

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust and Awami League-backed Blue Panel teachers' association of Dhaka University in separate statements yesterday condemned the recent incidents of vandalism and attack on Durga Puja mandaps across the country.

Noted filmmaker Mostofa Sarwar Farooki on his verified Facebook page wrote: "Efforts should be taken to punish all involved in the attacks."

He also said steps should be taken to stop recurrence of such incidents. "What is needed the most now is that all should condemn the incidents. All should tell their Hindu friends and neighbours that you are not alone..."

PROTESTS
Defying section 144, several thousand people demonstrated in Chowmuhoni area of Noakhali yesterday, protesting attacks on temples and people of the Hindu community in the district.

Hindu devotees brought out a procession carrying the body of Pranta Das, which they said was found in a pond next to an Iskon temple in Chowmuhoni. They later staged a sit-in blocking the Chowmuhoni-Feni Road, reported our Noakhali correspondent.

The demonstrators demanded punishment of the killers and those who attacked Hindu temples. They also sought removal of the district's deputy commissioner, superintendent of police, Chowmuhoni upazila nirbahi officer and the officer-in-charge of Begumganj Police Station for their failure to stop the attacks.

They left around 4:30pm after Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Chattogram Range Anwar Hossain, in presence of local politicians, assured them of looking into the matter.

"We will hold a fair investigation. If we find anyone's negligence, we will take action against them following consultation with our higher officials," Anwar told the protesters.

Noakhali district member secretary of Bangladesh Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad, Pappu Chowdhury, said, "We gave the authorities two days' time to meet our demands. We will announce a shutdown for an indefinite period if those are not met within the deadline."

On Friday night, the authorities had imposed section 144 in Chowmuhoni area for an indefinite period following an attack on the Bijoya Durga Temple on College Road in Begumganj area. The attack left Jatan Kumar Saha, a member of the temple management committee, dead.

Yesterday's protests began after devotees of the Iskon temple found the body of Pranta Das floating in an adjacent pond.

The devotees said Pranta had been missing since Friday when zealots attacked a temple, vandalised idols and shops of the local Hindu community.

"We were not able to trace him anywhere. We thought he had escaped to save his life. After we spotted his body, we informed police," a devotee of the temple told The Daily Star over phone.

Pranta was last seen before the attack meditating by the pond, he said.

Md Shah Imran, additional superintendent of police (Begumganj Circle), said police recovered the body from the pond. "He was a devotee of the temple," he said.

Meanwhile, the district administration formed a three-member committee to investigate the attacks and asked the committee to submit its report within seven working days.

Noakhali Deputy Commissioner Mohammed Khurshed Alam Khan said he was not aware why the protesters were seeking his or any other's removal from their posts.

In Chattogram, Bangladesh Hindu-Bouddha and Christian Oikya Parishad yesterday enforced a half-day hartal protesting the attacks.

A rally was held in the Anderkilla intersection area and the demonstrators marched to Chattogram Press Club after the end of the hartal around noon.

Around 1:00pm, the Oikya Parishad held a press conference at Chattogram Press Club where the platform's General Secretary Rana Dasgupta announced a countrywide protest programme, including mass fasting and mass congregation, on October 23.

Bangladesh Puja Udjan Parishad organised a protest rally in the capital's Shabbagh condemning the attacks. It was participated in by hundreds of people.

The organisers said a team of leaders

from the minority communities would visit Noakhali today.

A group of Iskon members, who attended the rally, blocked the intersection for 15 minutes.

In Tangail, the district unit of Bangladesh Puja Udjan Parishad yesterday afternoon staged a demonstration on Central Kalibari premises in the town.

In Pataukhali, two organisations of Hindu community members demonstrated and held a rally on the town's Sarbajani Puja Mandir premises.

Bangladesh Jatiya Hindu Mahajote formed a human chain in front of Bagerhat Press Club yesterday morning.

In Feni, at least 30 people, including a police member, were injured in a clash yesterday.

The incident happened after a group of Hindu people brought out a procession from a temple on Trunk Road in the town in the afternoon. At that time, they came face to face with some youths who were inside a nearby mosque, reports our correspondent quoting locals.

The two groups hurled bricks at each other. On information, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control. The Hindu people left.

Later, a group of pro-AL men went there and clashed with those inside the mosque. The groups threw bricks at each other.

Police fire shots in the air to calm the situation.

The clashes took place for around three hours in phases from 5:00pm to 8:00pm, the witnesses added.

Contacted, Feni's superintendent of police Khandaker Nurunabi said the situation was under control. Additional members of law enforcers were deployed to avoid any further untoward situation, he said.

IDOLS VANDALISED IN 2 DISTRICTS

Criminals vandalised six idols at Daniapara Maha Shoshan Kali Mandir in Sirajdikhan upazila of Munshiganj yesterday, reported our district correspondent.

The temple's caretaker, Ram Nair, lodged a case with Sirajdikhan Police Station, said OC (investigation) Ajgar Hossain.

Assistant Superintendent of Police (Sirajdikhan Circle) Rashedul Islam said that the idols were vandalised between 3:00am and 4:00am.

"The criminals went in by cutting the fence of the tin-shed temple," he said.

Bigots vandalised idols at a Kali Mandir in Karimganj upazila of Kishoreganj on Friday.

Police arrested four, including imam of a local mosque Mamunur Rashid, yesterday in connection with the incident, Karimganj Police Station Md Shamsul Alam Siddiquee said, reported our Kishoreganj correspondent.

Birendra Chandra Bormon, the vice-president of the temple, lodged a case naming eight persons and some 35 unnamed persons on Friday night.

Tigers ready for Scottish hurdle

FROM PAGE 1

The return of star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who joined the Tigers after finishing his Indian Premier League commitments on Friday night, will surely boost morale. After making the journey to Muscat from Dubai by road on Saturday, Shakib was seen batting in the nets.

Mahmudullah is also expected back after being rested in the warm-ups due to a back injury.

However, there are few areas to be ironed out such as finding a settled opening pair and a way to best utilise the Powerplay overs. Liton Das and Naim Sheikh are expected to open while Soumya Sarkar is also expected to feature at some point.

Mushfiqur Rahim will also be under the scanner after some off-color displays in the home series against New Zealand. The experienced cricketer also missed out in the practice games, scoring 13 and 4 against Sri Lanka and Ireland respectively.

The pace-bowling department will be led by Mustafizur Rahman, who had a good outing in the IPL for Rajasthan Royals, and the team management will rely heavily on his four overs. Mohammad Saifuddin and Taskin Ahmed are the other seamers that will likely form the three-man pace attack.

Meanwhile, Shakib will spearhead the spin department alongside left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed, with off-spinner Mahedi Hasan another option.

The pitch is expected to be sporting, with average first-innings totals in the last five matches at 167 runs.

Bangladesh played Scotland just once in T20Is, taking them on in 2012 in Ireland and falling to a 34-run defeat in chase of 163. And the Scots will look to surprise the Tigers yet again, with coach Shane Burger stating that they will treat Bangladesh the same way as Oman and Papua New Guinea.

Please don't waste food

FROM PAGE 1

food and conduct research in this regard.

She asked all to remain vigilant so that Bangladesh never runs into a food crisis and no one can conspire to push the country into a famine. "All need to be watchful. Inshallah, we'll fulfil the demand for food and ensure food security."

Hasina added that there will be no food scarcity in the country as the government has taken numerous programmes and projects in this regard.

Underlining the importance of research, she said, "Research works need to be carried forward as this is a continuous process."

Talking about various types of research-driven inventions that the Bangladeshi scientists achieved, including drought resilience and flood resilience rice for ensuring food security in the country, she said, "I think the scientists of Bangladesh are the best in the world."

The prime minister said the

government has introduced a land zoning system to protect the arable lands of the country. "We'll surely go for development but by preserving the arable land."

Hasina mentioned that the government is taking various types of preparations so that the country does not lag behind in food production during the upcoming fourth industrial revolution.

"Our aim is to ensure food security along with nutrition. For that, we've given importance to protein production," Hasina said.

Briefly describing the remarkable success in Bangladesh's food production in the last 12 years, Hasina said Bangladesh will export food items to earn foreign exchange after fulfilling the local demand.

Food Minister Sadhan Chandra Majumder, Agriculture Minister Muhammad Abdur Razaque, Fisheries and Livestock Minister SM Rezaul Karim and Senior Secretary of Agriculture Minister Md Mesbahul Islam also spoke at the event.

Attacks on minorities

FROM PAGE 1

based on religion in 1971, are now out to achieve their goals, he said.

"They are active to create communal unrest and instigating religious sentiment of common people by spreading propaganda via different media."

"It is unfortunate that a majority of the grassroots leaders of the ruling Awami League are also seen joining them in conducting the attacks," he observed.

Rana also said, "Awami League chief and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is sincere to maintain religious harmony in the country. But for mysterious reasons, it does not reach the grassroots activists of the party."

Queried, Rana said there must have been a political motive behind the mayhems.

"The ratio of Hindu people has decreased to 10 percent from 29.7 percent of the total population in the country. If the members of the religious minority groups can be put under pressure and tension round

the clock through these attacks, they would feel unsafe and think of leaving the country on one stage.

"If the ratio of the Hindus could be decreased to four to three percent, they would be no longer a factor in the electoral politics," he said, adding, "In that case, all the political parties would be put on a religious veil to win the polls."

For example, a secular party like the Awami League will turn into "Awami Muslim League" and this way, the ideology of the fundamentalists will be achieved, he added.

In that case, whichever party wants to go to power has to take religion as the main weapon, he further added.

Rana said the unity of all democratic forces in the country is required to resist the fundamentalist evil forces.

"We have to form a greater alliance with all the democratic forces if we want the country to remain a state for all citizens irrespective of religious and ethnic identities," he said, adding, "There is no alternative to it."



MASUD SADIQUE CHULLU (1945-2017)

Remembering a Crack Platoon hero

STAR REPORT

He was a member of the special squad that shook the confidence of the Pakistan occupation army and unnerved them using clandestine commando attacks during the 1971 Liberation War.

"Crack Platoon", as the squad was known, conducted extremely

SEE PAGE 5 COL 2

Cultural vacuum

SERAJUL ISLAM CHOWDHURY

FROM PAGE 1

groups use communal strife to hold power.

In Bangladesh, the ones who do these are the young, with no employment. Madrassah education is widespread -- this population is frustrated because they are discontent. Their discontent is economic but they make another community the enemy to empower themselves. They can scare others using this power. This is because they are vulnerable themselves. Capitalism has gone to the level of fascism in the world.

They are in an identity crisis and alienated -- they want to be connected as a part of a bigger collective and they use religion for that.

If there were political movements in the country, this would not have happened. Where there are no politics, religious identity takes over. When one group monopolises power, the others become powerless.

Another reason is that Bangladesh has seen a decline in cultural activities. People are not socially entertained, so they seek individual entertainment from social media. This isolation has led the society to this state.

SALIMULLAH KHAN

FROM PAGE 1

the situation. Instead, there should be a civil society approach. In 1964, a riot happened because a relic was stolen from a mosque but the whole country stood as one.

But today, the civil society has no unity even on a fundamental issue like this. Everybody is saying the country is improving in per capita terms -- but this is misleading because this divides society. The fire can spread from any angle when the hay is dry. There is no political consensus on the strategy to be followed.

We cannot go back to the 1960's. Any conflagration within the country is sure to bring in international repercussions.

SYED MANZOORUL ISLAM

FROM PAGE 1

creating an additional ripple. There is a sense of resignation -- that this is going to happen.

This is a symptom of a society becoming passive, losing the energy to react. Over the last several years we have become quiet as we are consciously engaging in economic development. Every time we gave up, this phenomenon grew.

We have a history of communal harmony and inclusivity. A huge population of the young generation are going the direction of violence. The four institutions in charge of teaching history have failed.

Firstly, families are not reading anymore, children are not gifted books anymore. Reading has become a long-forgotten exercise.

Secondly, schools are focusing on rote learning and passing exams and getting a job. No deviation is allowed. So schools do not have any scope to include additional material. In the scheme of teaching and learning, if there is no space for books, absolutely nothing will be done.

Thirdly, the guardians of civil society in charge of imparting this education -- the cultural organisations -- have no connection with the schools. Village theaters are gone. Musical performances are not given permission. We have always had religious performances -- but they never incited violence. The ones listening to a waaz one night would attend a jatra the next.

The government is the fourth factor and they too have failed. The government does not listen to people across social strata. It does what it thinks it fits. There is no instance in our country of the government taking into account public reaction.

A cultural vacuum is created and this is filled with social media. We are living in the age of hyperreality and things becoming viral in a short time. Constructive ideas are slow to move but destructive ideas are quick.

Children are learning honesty is the best policy in a country that is rife with corruption, so the disconnect is very strong. We are investing in economic development but this is a bad investment. If we can turn the schools, in phases, into centres of excellence, then one day we can have a robust education system. We are really missing the bus -- and if this continues we will see the worst.

Fight steeper due to food price hike

FROM PAGE 1

Food prices have been on an upward trend all year and have accelerated in recent weeks.

In the last year, the prices of soybean and palm oil have soared more than 50, while that of lentil, a widely-consumed item, as much as 29.6 percent, according to the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh. The broiler chicken is now 36 percent dearer.

The price of onion has shot up as much as 49 percent in the last month. For vegetables, most of the items are selling at upwards of Tk 40 per kilogram.

Even the price of peanut that Akkas sells has escalated: a kilogram now costs Tk 110, up from Tk 80 before the pandemic.

The rising peanut price coupled with lower sales means there is little left for Akkas to take home at the end of the day.

Before the pandemic, he used to earn Tk 600 to Tk 650 a day by selling peanuts to lower-middle-income people passing by his stall at a busy intersection. Now, he struggles to register sales of even Tk 400.

"How can you take care of a family of four with so little income? And then the food prices are racing every day -- we are surviving by barely eating," a crestfallen Akkas told the correspondent yesterday. If the ongoing trend continues,

people like Akkas and Arju would hit destitution.

"A process of recovery began in July last year but that has been hampered by two new blows," said Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive chairman of the PPRC.

One is the second wave that took place earlier this year and the other is the soaring price of essentials due to disruptions in the global supply chain and lack of effective management.

"This price hike is likely to sustain longer and this will impact the poverty recovery and the condition of the poor."

The PPRC and BIGD would soon be unveiling the findings of their latest round of survey on the condition of poverty and economic recovery carried out during August and September.

He suggested direct support to the affected ones.

Besides, he came up with two types of policy intervention: one is anti-poverty policy and the other is poverty eradicating macro policy.

"It will take time for the situation to normalise," said Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

Although the lower-income people are finding employment again, those jobs are inferior and lower paid than before.

"This is making it difficult for them

to buy essentials," he said, while calling for the expansion of the open-market sales of commodities and direct cash support.

Biggest haul

FROM PAGE 1

Uttara, Banani, Gulshan, Dhanmondi and Mohammadpur areas."

Khokon, the suspected ringleader, has been smuggling in yaba for five years and recently started trafficking ice, the Rab official said, adding that there are at least seven cases against him.

Rafique, the other arrestee, often carried drugs in the guise of an autorickshaw puller, the official said.

Crystal meth is a powerful drug that affects the central nervous system. Users are at high risks of stroke, heart attack, teeth decay, permanent hallucinations, and other short and long-term health effects, according to the US National Institute on Drug Abuse.

The first haul of ice was seized in the capital's Mohammadpur in February 2019, officials said.

This year alone, law enforcers recovered at least 15 kg of ice in several raids in Dhaka, Chattogram and Cox's Bazar.