

BANGLADESH UPDATE

243
New cases in 24hrs

15,66,907
Total cases

27,801
Deaths

15,30,083
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

4,941,183
Deaths

243,051,583
Total cases

'DEFAMING' BANGABANDHU Complaint filed against Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A complaint has been filed with a Chattogram court accusing Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury of Dhaka University and two others of defaming Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in an article.

The other accused are Rashed Rouf, associate editor of Chattogram-based daily Dainik Azadi, and one Nesar Ahmed, according to the complaint.

Rashed is the advisory editor of the book and Nesar its editor.

Nazim Uddin Sujon, 50, a resident of Anwara upazila, complained to Court of Metropolitan Magistrate Hossain Mohammad Reza on Tuesday and the court set a date for hearing on the complaint, said court sources.

But the exact date of the hearing could not be known immediately as Nazim's lawyer Shahida Nur could not confirm it.

According to the complaint, Nazim claimed himself as a "pro-liberation and progressive politician".

He alleged that Bangabandhu was defamed in an article titled "Sheikh Mujibur Gopon Shatru" (The Secret Enemies of Sheikh Mujib) by DU Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury in a book titled "Jatir Pita", published by Chattogram Academy on March 17 last year, marking the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation.

Lawyer Shahida told The Daily Star, "A complaint was lodged with a court but the court did not pass any order."

Meanwhile, the left-leaning parties of Chattogram condemned the filing of the complaint against Prof Choudhury, an acclaimed educationalist and writer.

In a statement yesterday, they said the complaint was lodged as per of choking the freedom of speech.

Network of hate

FROM PAGE 1

videos that were being posted at an increasingly faster pace and the impacts of which continue to grow long afterwards.

A YouTube channel called "Mojumder Islamic Media", run by one Shoriful Islam from Cumilla, was the first to upload a video with the title "Bangladesh rages after finding Quran beneath idol".

The thumbnail was cleverly edited with photos of protesting men in religious garb.

"I got the video and I thought people should know what happened, so I shared it," Shoriful told The Daily Star yesterday.

One of the most watched video titled "Quran demeaned at Cumilla Puja Mondop, Quran rescued Nauzubillah", has over 1.2 lakh views, and was uploaded at 5:00pm on the day of the attack by a channel named Pirojpur Islamic Media alias Torun Waz.

The channel is run by the aide of one M Zakaria Hossain, a preacher (khatib) of Baitun Nazat Masjid in Khulna. Since the incident, the channel has produced six videos on the topic. Zakaria confirmed that his aide, in fact, runs the channel to promote his preaching.

In the comments of the videos, the channel encouraged viewers to be prepared for Islamic warfare.

A channel called Rose TV News -- which has no contact information of its operators -- uploaded 27 videos on this topic within 72 hours of the Cumilla incident. Some of the videos have a lakh views. All of the videos describe at length how religious sentiments and values are under attack.

Another popular YouTube channel regularly churning out videos on this topic is News BD. They produced 18 videos specifically on this topic in the four days following the Cumilla incident. The channel released as many as 10 such videos within the first day.

The channel is run by one Md Komor Uddin, from Konabari, Gazipur. When contacted, Komor said he is a student of a qawmi madrasa in the area. "I made this video because I want the truth to be exposed. I don't have any original content. I usually make videos based on news," he said.

The titles of the videos included phrasing like "Cumilla under siege, many martyred" and "BGB deployed in Cumilla. Strict measures taken to obstruct the Alem community".

Among other videos of his, one -- which has garnered 75,000 views -- was reported by the government and subsequently blocked in Bangladesh by YouTube, according to a notice on the link stating, "This content is not available in this country domain due to a legal complaint from the government".

However, the video can still be accessed via a VPN.

The power of such multimedia content can be perceived from the comments below these videos.

Many commenters, hiding behind cyber profiles, call for outright violence that threaten communal harmony. The Daily Star is refraining

from quoting the violent suggestions verbatim.

Prof Din Md Sumon Rahman, the editor of Factwatch -- a fact-checking outlet run by University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh's mass communication and journalism department -- said the challenge lies in debunking a rumour before it gets shared and that it can get out of control within a very short period of time.

Factwatch operates as a third-party fact-checker for Facebook.

Historically speaking, the content of the original post or the identity of the original poster has rarely mattered. The fallout of the post, the inciteful content that mushrooms afterwards has often caused the most damage.

Police in Sunamganj's Shalla upazila had to pre-emptively arrest Jhomon Das for posting a status against Hafajate-Islam leader Mamunul Haque, so as to prevent any violence from happening.

It did not work -- within a day, as news of Jhomon's "hurting religious sentiment" spread all over social media, the village of Noagaon was attacked by extremists. As many as 90 households of the Hindu community were vandalised, Jhomon's own house being one of them.

Jhomon was then charged under the Digital Security Act for the violence -- even though he was in police custody at the time of the attack. He subsequently spent five months in prison.

During the 2016 violence of Nasirnagar in Brahmanbaria, a similar thing happened. It took the investigators several months to even identify the original poster of the image that went viral on social media in various formats. Meanwhile, a scapegoat was found, who spent months in jail.

The original poster was Jahangir Alam, owner of Al-Amin Cyber Point and Studio, who shared an anti-Islamic post alleging a local Hindu fisherman named Rasraj Das had posted it on Facebook. Rasraj Das was thrown in jail.

Jahangir confessed his involvement to the police, saying during interrogation that he had done it as per instruction of Haripur Union Parishad Chairman Dewan Atiqur Rahman Akhi.

As social media produces hate, the original incident which happened in Cumilla is starting to take a back seat, and communal fault-lines are beginning to appear.

Professor Rahman, editor of Factwatch, said, "We published five-seven articles debunking rumours just in the first 24 hours [after the Cumilla incident]. During the first phase, people were mostly sharing news of the Holy Quran being demeaned, but slowly the rumours crept in."

He said since the day after the Cumilla incident, people have been sharing content speculating about the main culprit, and inflating casualty numbers on Facebook.

"The video of one person not involved with the Cumilla incident at all was shared widely, citing him to be the culprit. The situation became dangerous to the point where people close to him started posting saying they fear for his life."

Panama, and closed them after former leftist president Rafael Correa (2007-17) barred presidential hopefuls from owning firms in tax havens.

Out of 137 lawmakers, 105 had voted in favor of an investigation to "clarify" whether or not Lasso had broken Ecuadoran law or committed an "ethical" offense.

Lasso issued a statement saying he would not go to parliament but was available to speak to lawmakers at the seat of government "once all the programed testimonies have been given." The president claimed he had "every right" to know what other evidence has been given before testifying himself.



Candle-lit air balloons made of coloured paper, called fanush in Bangla, released from Nandan Kanon Buddhist temple in Chattogram city on Wednesday night marking Prabarana Purnima, the second largest religious festival of the Buddhist community.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Suspect Iqbal arrested

FROM PAGE 1

shrine -- around 500 yards off the mandap -- at 2:10am. There is a mosque right next to the shrine.

Iqbal first took a copy of the Holy Quran kept on the donation box of the shrine premises and left keeping the holy book on the floor.

Minutes later, he returned, picked the Holy Quran and left again.

At least 10 pieces of CCTV footage showed him roaming on the main road of the area pressing the Quran against his chest between 2:10am and 3:10am. One collected from the eastern side of the mandap showed him loitering in the same area, holding a mace, at 3:12am. He then walked into a narrow alley.

Later that morning, on October 13, Iqbal was seen talking to a group of people in an agitated manner near the mandap, said SP Faruk, adding that this was recorded on a mobile phone camera and the footage was in police possession.

The police official also said Ekram Hossen, who informed police about the alleged defamation of the Holy Quran by dialing 999 around 7:00am on October 13, was also seen on CCTV footage roaming in the area that night.

Ekram is now behind bars. Anwarul Azim, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Model Police Station, yesterday

said police kept the Holy Quran in their possession as an important piece of evidence.

At a briefing earlier in the day, the home minister said Iqbal might have been prompted by "someone" to do what he did. He also said Iqbal had no cell phone.

He also said it was possible that Iqbal was hiding with the help of those who might have sent him for the "job". He said in video footage Iqbal was seen entering the mosque three times around 3:00am that night and talking to two people there.

Replying to a query, Asaduzzaman said the OC concerned went to the spot immediately after someone dialed the national helpline 999 and informed police about the matter.

"No government car was available at that time... the OC rushed to the spot on a scooter. Showing proper respect to the Quran and holding it against his chest, he came out of the mandap."

"I do not know whether he noticed who was filming him at that time. If he had noticed that, he must have taken steps to stop the filming," the minister said.

"We have also detained the person who recorded the video and interrogated him."

In response to another query, the home boss claimed that there was no panic anywhere. Terming the attacks

on the mandaps isolated incidents, he said those were carried out with a purpose and all happened quickly.

"Now everything is completely calm. Everyone has gone to work," the minister added.

After the Cumilla incident, Hindu mandaps and homes came under communal attack in at least 14 districts.

Even yesterday, three haystacks belonging to Hindu families were set ablaze at Bhimsi village of Sreemangal upazila in Moulvibazar.

WHO IS IQBAL HOSSAIN?

Son of Noor Ahmed Alam and Bibi Amena of Pathuria para in Cumilla's Sujannagar, Iqbal lives in Laskar Para area of Muradpur in the city along with his grandmother.

Iqbal's mother Amena and grandmother Rahima identified him in the CCTV footage.

Elders among five siblings, Iqbal has been on drugs for long. He is also mentally unstable, Amena told The Daily Star.

Sometimes he would work as a painter and sometimes as a helper of bus drivers, she said. "Due to his mental state, he could hardly complete his daily jobs. He would come back home right in the middle of the job," she said.

Iqbal has married twice. He divorced his first wife and they have a five-year-old son, she said, adding that he also

Rampant Tigers

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh came out with positive intent, knowing the questionable batting approach from the previous games needed to be resolved.

Although Naim Sheikh fell without troubling the scorers after Mahmudullah Riyad elected to bat, Shakib and Liton Das reached a healthy 45 for 1 in the Powerplay.

However, Liton departed after scoring 29 off 23 balls while Mushfiqur Rahim, coming in at number four, continued his poor run and departed for five runs. Shakib and Mahmudullah then ensured the tempo would stay high.

A tired Shakib later departed after a 37-ball 46 which included three sixes, but Mahmudullah led from the front to score the fastest fifty in the ongoing round, taking just 27 balls.

Aff Hossain also scored a handy 14-ball 21 before Saifuddin conjured the late blitz the Tigers had been missing in the previous two games as the last over yielded 20 and the final five led to 68 runs.

Initiatives not implemented even in years

FROM PAGE 1

The country witnessed a steep increase in road accidents and deaths this year, even though the operation of public transport remained suspended for a long time to contain the spread of Covid-19.

A total of 3,095 people were killed in 3,259 road crashes in the first seven months of this year, over 40 percent higher than that of the same period last year, according to a police report.

Experts blamed the operation of a huge number of small vehicles on highways for this.

However, the government's initiative to bring small vehicles under regulations remained unimplemented for years.

In August 2015, the government imposed a ban on three-wheelers like Nasimon and Karimon on 22 major highways, but failed to execute the ban and the country saw an increase of such vehicles in the last several years.

The Road Transport and Highways Division formed a 12-member committee in September 2019 to prepare a guideline for bringing small vehicles under regulations and the committee submitted a draft guideline in December last year.

The committee recommended bringing three-wheelers under registration and such vehicles and their drivers must have documents like other motor vehicles.

In February this year, the National Road Safety Council formed another committee, led by the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) chairman,

to work on how to implement the recommendations to regulate small vehicles.

The committee submitted a report in June this year.

"The division already held a meeting last month [in this regard] and will finalise it soon," Nazrul Islam, secretary of Road Transport and Highways Division, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Experts and transport leaders consider drug addiction of drivers as one of the major reasons behind road accidents. To ensure road safety, dope testing is important so that no one under the influence of narcotics or alcohol can be behind the steering wheel, they added.

In September 2019, transport leaders announced that they would start random drug tests on motor vehicle drivers at different points across Dhaka city from December 1 that year, but the move did not any progress.

Speaking at an event marking the National Road Safety Day last year, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina directed the authorities to bring drivers under the dope testing system.

To implement the decision, a committee, led by a BRTA director, was formed in November last year, which gave five recommendations, including issuing or updating licence of professional drivers upon dope test.

Following the directives of the Road Transport and Highways Division, the BRTA, as preliminary step, wanted to start dope testing at its three circle offices

in Dhaka. The BRTA on September 9 this year wrote to the Directorate General of Health Services to provide names of its listed labs for conducting the test.

Asked whether they got any response from DGHS, Mahub-E-Rabbani, director (road safety) of BRTA, yesterday replied positively.

"Talk to me over the issue [dope test] after October 22," he said when this correspondent wanted to know details.

Secretary Nazrul said they could not make expected progress regarding dope test due to the Covid-19 situation as transport owners and workers faced a lot of challenges during this time.

Currently, there is no fixed economic service life for commercial vehicles in the country. Taking advantage of this, owners of decades-old buses and trucks are running their rickety vehicles, which is considered as one of the major reasons behind road crashes.

Though the transport authority in 2010 banned over 20-year-old buses and over 25-year-old goods-carrying vehicles in the capital, many such run-down vehicles operating on district and inter-district highways are still posing a serious risk of road crashes and causing environmental pollution.

In April 2019, a high-powered committee, led by Awami League lawmaker and transport leader Shajahan Khan, suggested setting an economic lifetime of commercial vehicles to reduce road crashes.

After more than two years, the BRTA

in June this year formed a committee for fixing economic service life. But there has been no progress in this regard so far, a BRTA official said.

Secretary Nazrul said they have already talked to experts and transport leaders, but nothing has been finalised yet.

Unhealthy competition between bus drivers, who hire buses from owners on a daily contract basis, to take more passengers and faulty routes are considered as other major reasons behind road crashes and traffic congestion in Dhaka city.

To get rid of this situation, the Strategic Transport Plan-2005 for Dhaka recommended introducing bus route franchising system where all buses operated in Dhaka city would run under some particular companies, instead of several hundred companies.

Anisul Huq, former mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation, started implementing the idea, but it did not move further after his death in 2017.

Now a committee, led Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, is working on it. After missing several deadlines, December 1 is set to start operating 120 buses on Ghatarchar to Kanchpur road under a company on a pilot basis.

Asked about the delay, Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority's Executive Director Khandakar Rakibur Rahman, also the member secretary of Taposh-led committee, told this correspondent last month, "Background work is taking time."

Stay vigilant

FROM PAGE 1

"Islam never allows disgracing others' religions. One has to respect others' religions alongside respecting their own."

The PM said if the religions of other communities are vilified, it ultimately demeans one's own religion. "If we analyse the Cumilla incident, we would see our Holy Quran was desecrated while trying to defame others' religion, which is very unfortunate."

Hasina urged people not to take law into their own hands. "If anyone commits an offence, the perpetrators would have to face justice, no matter who the persons might be. Our government would try them."

She said Prophet Muhammad (SM) asked not to do excesses over religion. "Everyone must know it, keep it in mind and follow it."

The premier said people from all religions had sacrificed their lives during the Liberation War. "So, we all will have to keep it in mind that Bangladesh is of the people of all religions and castes."

Referring to the recent incidents of breaking communal harmony, including in Cumilla and Pirganj of Rangpur, she said the government made all sorts of arrangements for the victims, including providing them with dry and cooked food, clothes and treatment.

The government would build houses for all the victims, Hasina said, adding that her party has always been with victims.

The PM said there is a section of people who cannot tolerate the country's progress. They, particularly BNP-Jamaat and Khaleda Zia, do not want Bangladesh to move ahead because of their love for Pakistan, she added.

LGRD Minister Tazul Islam, AL Organising Secretary Abu Sayeed Al Mahmood Swapon and local AL MP AKM Bahauddin, among others, joined the function from the new office building.

Ecuador president refuses to testify over Pandora Papers leaks

AFP, Quito

Ecuador's President Guillermo Lasso on Wednesday refused to testify to a parliamentary committee that is investigating revelations about the 65-year-old in the Pandora Papers leaks.

The committee was convened by the opposition-dominated congress to investigate ex-banker Lasso's activities in tax havens. Earlier this month, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) leaked a trove of documents exposing the secret offshore accounts of a host of world leaders, including Lasso.

The leaks claimed Lasso, who assumed office in May, controlled 14 offshore companies, mostly in



NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY
Center of Excellence in Higher Education

Tender Notice

Tender No. NSU/21-22-05

North South University is inviting sealed offer from bona fide/ reputed organization/ tailoring house for making and supplying liveries; supplying shoes, socks and sandals.

Detail of the items are mentioned below:

Lot: 1- Making and supplying of liveries
Lot: 2- Supplying of shoes, socks and sandals

Interested bidders may collect a schedule of tender from Southeast Bank Ltd. Bashundhara Branch, Dhaka from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on all working days till **October 27, 2021** by paying non-refundable amount of Taka 1,000.00 (One Thousand) in cash for each schedule.

The bidders must submit **earnest money @ 2.5%** of the quoted price in the form of Pay Order issued with their offer. The sealed offer must be submitted on **October 28, 2021** by 2.15 p.m. at the office of the undersigned. The offers will be opened at 2:30 p.m. on the same day. Representatives of the participating bidders may remain present at the time of opening the bids. NSU authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without showing any reason.

Director, Internal Affairs
NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY
Bashundhara, Dhaka-1229

Phone : +88-02-55668200, Ext. 1204, Fax: +88-02-55668202
E-mail to: procurement@northsouth.edu, www.northsouth.edu