

'Authorities' negligence facilitated attacks'

ASK on communal violence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The police in charge of security at the vandalised temples in Noakhali's Begumganj left the site as soon as the immersion ceremony of the idols were completed, and did not appear again till the attack was almost over.

The attackers arrived and started vandalising the temples right after police left. In the violence that ensued, one Jatan Saha was beaten to death. The immersion took place before the Juma prayers on Friday at the insistence of the authorities before the tenth day of the Durga Puja was over.

A fact-finding team from Ain o Salish Kendra that had visited Begumganj made these observations. They presented their findings at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity yesterday. "The actual attack went on for over an hour and a half but police arrived only towards the end," said Abu Ahmed Faijul Kabir, senior coordinator of advocacy and networking at ASK.

Many victims told ASK that they were unable to reach the police officers in charge of the area.

"Most of those conducting the attacks were young adults or teenagers," said Kabir. "They were chanting and carrying different types of homemade weapons."

During their visit to Chandpur's Hajiganj and Cumilla, ASK team found that victims had repeatedly made complaints using national helpline "999" but to no avail.

"It was due to negligence of the authorities and law enforcement agencies that the attack happened. Though the situation was tense from morning, the law enforcers played a questionable role in preventing the violence," said Kabir. The organisation listed a total of 18 districts where

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At Dhaka University's TSC field, a group of students of the Department of Fine Arts hosted a programme yesterday to protest the recent spate of communal attacks. On empty canvases, students and some guest artists poured their paint and moved their brush, with equal measures of sorrow and spirit, all to depict the sheer horror of these tragic incidents. PHOTO: COURTESY

Communalism has spread its tentacles

Say speakers, highlighting failure of ruling party to uphold secularism

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Though the Awami League government introduces itself as a secular force, many of its leaders and activists are slowly turning into communal agents, speakers said at a webinar yesterday.

They also said AL does not conduct training to spread secular consciousness at the grassroots level.

The issue was raised at an online "consultation meeting" of the Parliamentary Caucus on Indigenous Peoples and Minorities, in the backdrop of recent communal violence in a number of districts.

At the programme, Rana Dasgupta, general secretary of Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Oikya Parishad, said, "The minorities of Bangladesh do not trust any political party or any of the political leaders anymore. It seems like all of them have become the same."

"Radicalism is rising among Hindu youths. They're even terming us [the Parishad] 'agents

The minorities of Bangladesh do not trust any political party or any of the political leaders anymore. It seems like all of them have become the same.

RANA DASGUPTA

We are in such a situation that we don't dare talk about secularism anymore... What's worse is that the state also has no sense of accountability.

SERAJUL ISLAM CHOUDHURY

of the government' as we've always supported the AL government," he said.

Mentioning that no political leader kept their promise, he said,

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'Women worse off than men during disasters'

Says Saber Hossain Chowdhury at event marking Rural Women's Day

- ▶ Women 14 times more affected than men during natural disasters
- ▶ 35,100 shelters not safe, women-friendly
- ▶ Women help mitigate climate change effects via climate tolerance strategies, seed conservation
- ▶ Identifying effective roles of women, girls imperative
- ▶ 'National Adaptation Plan' to be finalised by June next year



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladeshi women are 14 times more likely to be adversely affected during natural disasters than men, said lawmaker Saber Hossain Chowdhury.

"To uphold women's contribution in the fight against climate change, environment, forest and climate change ministry will

finalise the National Adaptation Plan by June next year," said Saber, also chairperson of the parliamentary watchdog on the ministry. He made the comments at a webinar titled "Rural Women as Climate Actors", organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) yesterday, as part of celebrating Rural Women's Day 2021.

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'Explain yourselves'

JS body asks ex-Biman officials to submit written statements on Tk 1,223cr loss over leasing of planes

RASHIDUL HASAN

Two former officials of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, Air Marshal (ret'd) Jamal Uddin Ahmed and Mosaddique Ahmed, were asked by a parliamentary body yesterday to submit written statements over their involvement in taking lease of two Boeing 777 aircrafts, which resulted in huge losses for Biman.

Jamal was chairperson of Biman's board of directors and Mosaddique was managing director and CEO.

The parliamentary standing committee on civil aviation and tourism ministry asked the two to submit their statements before the committee within the next 10 days, sources said.

The parliamentary watchdog's meeting was held at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, with RAM Obaidul Muktar Chowdhury, a ruling Awami League lawmaker, in the chair. Earlier on September 29, Jamal and Mosaddique gave their verbal statements on taking lease of the aircrafts before the Jatiya Sangsad committee's meeting.

"But the committee yesterday said the former officials will have to submit their statements in writing within ten days before the committee," sources in the meeting said.

After getting the statements, the committee will examine them through an expert team, which will take necessary measures for the next course of action.

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JU reopens, but not for all

Left out, first-year students stage demo on campus



First-year students of Jahangirnagar University formed a human chain on the campus yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

JU CORRESPONDENT

Even though in-person classes and examinations finally resumed in Jahangirnagar University yesterday, frustration is gathering among first-year students, as they are yet to be allowed in the reopened residential halls.

As the university authorities have not been able to accommodate the first-year students in the halls, many departments or institutes are holding their classes virtually, alongside in-person academic activities.

In light of this, the students staged a demonstration on the campus yesterday, demanding resumption of full in-person academic activities and their accommodation in the halls without further delay.

Under the banner of "Students of the 49th batch (freshers)", over a hundred students from different departments formed a human chain at the university's central Shaheed Minar premises at noon.

The demonstrators demanded the eviction of non-students from the halls to accommodate freshers. They also warned for tougher movement if their demands are not met.

Contacted, JU treasurer Professor Rasheda Akhter said it will be impossible to accommodate freshers into the dorms immediately.

"Most of the departments have already completed formal classes of the session. They [first year students] will be allowed to resume in-person academic activities once they have

completed their exams virtually. Meanwhile, we're working on arranging their accommodation," she added.

Contacted, Professor Md Muzibur Rahman, president of the provost committee, said, "It depends on the availability of vacant seats."

"We've served a notice to those already done with their degrees to vacate the halls within a week," he added.

PROTEST AGAINST COMMUNAL ATTACKS

Yesterday also saw JU Teachers' Association (JUTA) hold a human chain at the central Shaheed Minar premises, protesting the recent communal attacks. Addressing the programme, eminent economist Professor Anu Muhammad said communalism is a "tool for the opportunists".

"The trial of the previous communal attacks is still pending. The result has been a culture of impunity. This lack of justice is fuelling such attacks," he said.

"The state has to take responsibility. If it does not, such violence will happen again," he added.

Among others, JUTA president Prof AA Mamun and general secretary Prof Amzad Hossain also spoke at the event.

In another programme at the same venue, organised by JU 'Bangabandhu Sikkhak Parishad', JU Vice-Chancellor Professor Farzana Islam spoke virtually and said, "Everyone must stand united against this."

Two other programmes were also organised at the campus protesting the recent communal attacks, by the Bengali and Drama and Dramatics departments.

Dengue cases cross 22,000 mark

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of dengue patients crossed the 22,000 mark yesterday.

In the last 24 hours till 8am yesterday, at least one dengue patient died while 170 were hospitalised, of which 31 are from outside Dhaka, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

With the new cases, a total of 3,810 patients were diagnosed during the running month out of a total 22,007 infected.

According to the DGHS, 84 people have died of dengue infection in the country this year.

Twelve people died in July while 34 have died in August and 23 in September and 15 in October so far, the DGHS data shows.

Focus on helping vulnerable groups

Speakers urge govt at webinar on reducing country's poverty level

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government needs to look at different vulnerable groups, including the pandemic-induced urban poor, to reduce the country's poverty level significantly, speakers said at a webinar yesterday.

They said the pandemic drove many poor people into further poverty. Reaching this group through special social protection programmes and effectively addressing their challenges are imperative.

Brac, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bangladesh and The Daily Star jointly organised the webinar on "Fast Changing Poverty Dynamics: Issues and Priorities".

In Bangladesh, the vulnerable non-poor segment, people who are just above the poverty line, is very high -- about 38 percent -- said Dr Binayak Sen, director general of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).

If the poverty line is just slightly raised, many households will descend into poverty, he said.



COUNTRY'S SITUATION	
○ Vulnerable non-poor segment about 38pc of population	
○ As per World Bank reports, 12.5pc below poverty line	
○ Rate of female labour force participation lower than other countries	
RECOMMENDATIONS	
○ Create special social protection programmes	
○ Raise female labour force participation rate	
○ Subsidies for extreme poor	

Mentioning that the rates of female labour force participation in Malaysia and China are 55 and 60 percent, respectively, Dr Sen said Bangladesh has room to grow in that respect.

"If we can take our rate to 55 percent, definitely, in the next decade, we will achieve many wonders, not only in the field of poverty reduction, but in gender-sensitive health and education indicators," he said.

In his presentation, Palash K Das, director of Brac's Ultra-Poor Graduation Programme, said based on World Bank reports, 12.5 percent of Bangladesh's population are below the poverty line (USD 1.9 per day).

If there were no pandemic, the country would have been expecting 9.4 percent to be under the poverty line, he said.

Brac Executive Director Asif Saleh said Bangladesh has made tremendous progress in terms of reducing poverty. However, now it is time to be "super razor focused", if the country wants to go the last mile and ensure "zero poverty", he said.

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10 injured in Mugda hospital fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ten persons were injured after a fire broke out at Mugda Medical College Hospital in Dhaka yesterday.

The victims were rushed to Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery and Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Among the injured were seven hospital staffers and one Covid vaccine-seeker. They sustained from six percent to 30 percent burns, with one ward assistant sustaining injuries in his respiratory tracks.



The fire originated at the hospital's ICU around noon. Seven firefighting units doused the blaze around 2:15pm. PHOTO: STAR

College student stabbed to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A student of Sylhet's Dakshin Surma Government College was stabbed dead during an altercation on campus yesterday afternoon.

The deceased is 11th-grader Md Ariful Islam Rahat (17) of Dakshin Surma upazila's Dhoradhorpur village.

Police identified the attacker as former student Shamsuddoha Sadi. He is on the run, said OC Kamrul Hasan Talukder of Dakshin Surma Police Station.

He said the attacker stabbed Rahat's leg during an altercation. After being taken to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, the on-duty doctor declared him dead due to excessive blood loss.

College Principal Mohammad Shamsul Islam said as CCTV cameras at the college gate was not functional, the attacker's identity could not be confirmed initially.

College authorities formed a three-member probe body and asked it to file a report within three working days. All classes will remain suspended till October 26.

Meanwhile, locals and students blocked the Sylhet-Dhaka highway at Chandipul area from 3:30pm to 4pm, demanding the attacker's arrest.



With the ongoing spike in food prices, Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) trucks are being thronged by those seeking to buy at TCB's subsidised rates. Tensed over the possibility of rainfall -- given the last few days' showers -- customers lined up with umbrellas in hand yesterday, some with their children in tow. These photos were taken from Rampura's Hazipara area in the capital. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN