

135 arrested so far over attacks on Ahmadiyyas

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Thakurgaon*

Some 135 people have so far been arrested in Panchagarh in connection with the attacks on the Ahmadiyya community there.

Police, however, did not reveal the identities of the arrestees.

Thirteen cases -- 11 with Panchagarh Police Station and two with Boda Police Station -- have been filed over the attacks, said police.

The Daily Star could confirm the identities of at least seven arrestees after talking to locals and police sources.

The list includes Fazle Rabbi, 30, joint convener of Panchagarh municipal unit Jubo Dal, and Rahimul Islam, 43, a leader of the local BNP and former chairman of Sonahar union parishad.

Mohammad Nasiruddin, 30, president of Tentulia upazila unit of Chhatra Shibir, Rabbi Emon, 26, activist of Chhatra Shibir in Satmera area, and Sofiul Alam Shwapan, 24, activist of Chhatra Shibir in Bhajanpur area, said police sources.

The rest two are Ismail Hossain, 25, of South Rajnagar area, and Mohammad Rasel, 28, of Tulardanga area in Panchagarh town.

In primary interrogation, Ismail and Rasel admitted their involvement with the attacks, said police sources.

Jamaat Shibir men were the masterminds of the attacks and many of them wore face masks to hide their identities during the attack, said SM Sirajul Huda, superintendent of Panchagarh police.

"The law enforcers have been conducting raids to arrest the culprits. We are identifying the attackers by scrutinising the footage. No innocent person will be harassed," said Huda.

"As all the members of law enforcement agencies in our district are under huge workload right now, we could not provide you [journalists] the names of the arrestees," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 2



Bangabandhu's grandson Radwan Mujib Siddiq places a wreath at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the capital's Dhanmondi-32 on Tuesday, marking the historic March 7.

PHOTO: PID

Women first to suffer, last to be heard

UNSC hears on the eve of Int'l Women's Day

AFP, *United Nations*

Women are the primary victims of wars and conflict, yet they remain severely underrepresented at diplomatic negotiations, officials told the United Nations Security Council on Tuesday.

On the eve of International Women's Day yesterday, Sima Bahous, executive director of UN Women, called on the international community to do more to protect the lives, health and rights of women around the world.

"We must recall that we have neither significantly changed the composition of peace tables, nor the impunity enjoyed by those who commit atrocities against women and girls," Bahous told a UN Security Council debate on women, peace and security.

Bahous called out what she said was a "gender apartheid" in Afghanistan, where women have effectively been squeezed out of public life since the Taliban swept

back into power in August 2021, banning women from attending universities, going to parks and removing them from many jobs.

"Afghanistan is one of the most extreme examples of regression in women's rights, but it is far from being the only one," Bahous said.

Turning to Russia's war against Ukraine, which is now into its second year, Bahous said that women and their children represent about 90 percent of the 8 million Ukrainians who have had to flee the country, while women and girls constitute nearly 70 percent of the millions displaced within Ukraine.

"Peace is the only answer, with women's engagement in the process," Bahous said as she urged world leaders to do right by the landmark UN Security Council Resolution passed in 2000, which highlighted the role of women in preventing and resolving conflicts.

US Ambassador Linda Thomas-

Greenfield echoed that sentiment.

"I will call attention to the violence and oppression of women and girls around the world and what they are facing -- in Iran, in Afghanistan, in areas of Ukraine occupied by Russia, and in so many other places around the world," she said.

French official Marlene Schiappa, who formerly served as her country's equality minister, said women pay the highest price in wars and crises.

"In all conflict and crisis situations, and, to take current examples, in Ukraine, Yemen and Somalia, women are particularly affected, even deliberately targeted, by sexual and gender-based violence," Schiappa said. "Those responsible must answer for their actions."

Meanwhile, about 20 women held a rare demonstration in a Kabul street yesterday, calling on the international community to protect Afghans, AFP journalists witnessed.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 6

US announces \$26m in new aid for Rohingyas

AFP, *Washington*

The United States announced on Tuesday \$26 million in new humanitarian aid for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and elsewhere in that region of Asia.

Around one million members of the mostly Muslim Rohingya community live in squalid relief camps in Bangladesh, many after fleeing a 2017 military crackdown in neighboring Myanmar.

"This new funding allows our humanitarian partners to continue providing life saving assistance to affected communities on both sides of the Burma-Bangladesh border," State Department spokesman Ned Price said, using the old name for Myanmar.

He said the new money raises to \$2.1 billion the total of US aid provided to the Rohingya people since August 2017.

1 killed in bus accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, MYMENSINGH

A madrasa student was killed and 50 others were injured in a bus accident at Laxmipur Bazar area in Netrakona's Durgapur upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Himel Sheikh, 10, of Tangail's Bhuanpur upazila and a student of Nandibari Baitul Kuba Jame Mosque and Madrasa in Muktagacha of Mymensingh, police said.

Quoting locals, Shibirul Islam, officer-in-charge of Durgapur Police Station, said the bus, headed for a picnic in Durgapur, skidded off the road and fell into a roadside ditch, killing Himel on the spot and injuring some 50, including other students and their teachers, around 11:30am.

Man held over question paper leak

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

Police have arrested a man for his alleged involvement in leaking question papers and faking admit cards for various recruitment and admission tests.

Immigration Police in Benapole arrested Nayan Islam, 25, on Monday, said police at a press conference at Rajshahi Metropolitan Police (RMP) headquarters yesterday afternoon.

The Detective Branch of RMP started investigating into a case in February last year and identified a fraud gang who were operating from the city.

Police issued a red alert against Nayan and several others across the country in late February.

Nayan, however, managed to flee to India before issuing of the alert on February 26, police said.

On Monday, when Nayan tried to enter Bangladesh from India, police arrested him and brought to Rajshahi.

UK cyber security firm warns over ChatGPT

AFP, *London*

British cyber security firm Darktrace yesterday warned that artificial intelligence bot ChatGPT may have increased the sophistication of phishing scams.

Content creation bot ChatGPT, Silicon Valley's latest app sensation, was launched by Microsoft-backed start-up OpenAI in November.

"Darktrace does not believe that ChatGPT has yet lowered barriers to entry for threat actors significantly," the firm said in a results statement.

"But it does believe that it may have helped increase the sophistication of phishing emails, enabling adversaries to create more targeted, personalised, and ultimately, successful attacks."

Generative AI, of which ChatGPT is an example, can upon request wade through reams of data to conjure up original content -- an image, a poem, a thousand-word essay -- in seconds.

ChatGPT had "ignited a conversation about the implications of generative AI for cyber security", Darktrace noted yesterday.

It added however that email attacks on its customers were "steady" despite the release of ChatGPT, with a decline in the number of those containing malicious links.

Yet it warned that the "linguistic complexity" of those emails -- including punctuation, sentence length and text volume -- had increased.

"This indicates that cyber-

criminals may be redirecting their focus to crafting more sophisticated social engineering scams that exploit user trust."

Darktrace also revealed yesterday that its net profit sank 86 percent to \$581 million in the first half of its financial year, or six months to December.

Its performance was slammed by surging costs and tax charges.

Darktrace shares rose 1.2 percent to 267.10 pence in London midday deals, but the stock is down 40 percent compared with the same stage last year.

The company, which uses cutting-edge artificial intelligence technology to combat cyber attacks, floated on the London stock market in 2021.

Stepping up in the hour of need

FROM PAGE 1

a while. I immediately informed the Rapid Response Team and the hospital director about the arriving patients. They reached the emergency ward in about five minutes," Riaz Uddin told The Daily Star yesterday.

With many of the injured unidentified, the ward master had to give his phone number for tickets to be issued to them.

The 60-member Rapid Response Team and other staffers at the emergency ward made heroic efforts on Tuesday to serve the injured.

The team, comprised of 25 doctors, 20 nurses, and 15 ward boys, is responsible for handling emergency situations in the event of any disaster.

After the explosion at a building in the capital's Siddikbazar, at least 120 injured were brought to the DMCH for treatment.

"The Rapid Response Team successfully managed the situation by providing primary treatment and moving them to the departments concerned for further care," DMCH Director Brig Gen Md Nazmul Haque told The Daily Star.

Nazmul as the head of the Rapid Response Team was also present at the emergency ward.

He said the team is connected via a WhatsApp group. It is alerted immediately after an emergency occurs, and the members respond as fast as possible.

Other physicians at the emergency ward also provided treatment to the injured, said Reaz Uddin.

"As a result, every patient received



The crowd gathered in front of DMCH on Tuesday night.

treatment on an urgent basis."

The ward master, who is himself a member of the Rapid Response Team, said the team has its own fund and stock of medical supplies, including medicines, blood, and equipment.

During an emergency, most of the injured brought to the hospital remain unidentified primarily and they don't have money either. The Rapid Response Team takes the responsibility of their treatment and pays for all necessary care, added Reaz Uddin.

The team transfers patients to other departments after providing primary care. For instance, if an injured needs ICU care, the patient would be sent to the ICU, and if another needs to undergo an operation, the patient would be moved to the OT, said

hospital officials.

"There was no shortage of human resources or other logistics on Tuesday. We were instructed to use necessary resources as per our needs," the ward master said.

The Rapid Response Team has received a special training on handling patients during crisis situations and carrying out duties under time constraints. They also receive training once a month, and hold frequent meetings to discuss how to improve services.

At least 20 people were killed and more than 100 injured in Tuesday's explosion at a building in the capital's Siddikbazar.

About 150 doctors and staffers worked at the DMCH emergency ward, said Reaz Uddin.

It all points to accumulated gas

FROM PAGE 1

were three sanitaryware shops on the first floor and one in the basement.

The blast destroyed almost everything on the first three floors and debris covered part of the street in front.

Glass windows and fittings of a five-storey building next to it were also damaged.

Safayet Hossain, a storekeeper in the area, said the explosion felt like an earthquake.

"I saw 20-25 people lying on the road. Most of them were bleeding. They were crying for help. Some people were running around in panic," he told The Daily Star.

This is the second such incident in the capital within a week. On Sunday, three people were killed in a blast at a building near the Science Lab intersection.

Law enforcers and army personnel ruled out the possibility of any subversive act as they did not find any evidence of explosives at the scenes.

The bodies of 16 were handed over to the families early yesterday.

On Tuesday, the authorities said 17 people had died in the explosion. Yesterday, firefighters recovered two more bodies from the basement and another person died of injuries at a hospital.

Ten of the injured were admitted to Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery in critical condition. Twenty others are being treated at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Two people are reported missing.

The rods inside a column of the damaged building were seen sticking out.

Firefighter suspended rescue operations at 8:00pm on Tuesday after noticing cracks in the

loadbearing columns. They resumed it on a small scale yesterday morning by removing debris and pumping out water from the basement as the blast caused a leak in a reservoir. They suspended operations around 7:15pm declaring the building highly risky.

Officials of the Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha also labelled it highly risky.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police

Commissioner Khandker Golam Faruq said experts from the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit (CTTC), Criminal Investigation Department, and the army visited the spot and found no evidence of explosives.

POSSIBLE REASONS

CTTC experts said gas might have accumulated in the underground water tank resulting in the explosion. Besides, too much biogas in the septic tank could also cause a blast, they added.

A leaky gas pipe could have created a channel underground and gas might have accumulated gradually. It was somehow ignited, causing the blast, they added.

There is also the likelihood that a leaky sewer pipe turned part of the building into a gas chamber, they said.

Rahmat Ullah Chowdhury, the in-charge of CTTC bomb disposal team, said, "The gas chamber exploded following a spark [that ignited it]."

He added, "No traces of explosives or fragments of IED circuits were found."

Besides, the smoke was not black or of any colour that would suggest an explosive attack, and the bodies recovered bore no splinter wounds, he added.

Rab Bomb Disposal Unit chief Maj Moshir Rahman also said gas was

the most likely cause.

"But we don't rule out other possibilities. It could be triggered by something else," he said.

Mohammad Harun Or Rashid, additional commissioner of the Detective Branch, said the building was constructed in 1992. But the top floors were built years later.

"The garage is no longer a garage. Even the owner cannot say where the septic tank is," he told a press briefing.

He did not give a direct answer when asked whether the caretaker of the building was picked up.

The detectives are interrogating the owner, shop keepers, and others as they are conducting a shadow investigation, he said.

Family members of Abdul Motaleb Mintu, owner of a sanitaryware shop at the building, said DB officers picked him up from the Dhaka Medical College Hospital around 3:00am yesterday. He was at the hospital looking for a missing employee.

Mintu's cousin Anwar Hossain told The Daily Star that he was with Mintu when detectives took him.

But Mashiur Rahman, deputy commissioner (Lalbagh) of DB, said no one was picked up.

THE DECEASED

The deceased include: Mominul Islam, 38; Nodi Begum, 36; Mainuddin 50; Ismail, 42; Abdul Hasim, 34; Ishaq Mridha, 35; Rahat, 18; Al Amin, 23; Nazmul Hossain, 25; Obaidul Hossain Babul, 55; Abu Zafar Siddique, 34; Monsur Hossain, 40; Akriti Begum, 70; Idris Mir, 60; Hridoy, 20; Nurul Islam, 45; Momin Uddin Sumon, 48; Robin Hossain, 20; and Hafez Musa Haider, 46.

Police filed an unnatural death case with Bangshal Police Station, said Inspector Kamrul Hasan Kamal.

FROM PAGE 1

explosion in Gulistan area on Tuesday, which has so far claimed 20 lives.

"Almost all of them are man-made disasters and could have been averted. But it seems we are careless and that's why we are paying the price."

Experts said the greed of building owners is a key reason for such disasters.

Many of them take advantage of poor monitoring by the authorities concerned and often change the approved design to make profits. Some even turn a residential building into a commercial one without following the necessary safety measures, they said.

Town planner Khandaker Niaz Rahman, who was the deputy team leader of the newly approved Detailed Area Plan, said different zones of the capital have exceeded the population density threshold, considering the infrastructure and social services available there.