

Hijra person killed in Narsingdi

Another critically injured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

A hijra person was killed by having their throat slit in Raipura upazila of Narsingdi and another was critically injured early yesterday.

The incident took place at a poultry farm in the Pirijkandi Railgate area, said Mujibur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Raipura Police Station, adding that police recovered the body from the spot.

The deceased was identified as Yamin, also known as Suman, 26, from Pirijkandi village of the upazila. The injured, Chandni, also known as Babu, 26, from the same area, was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

Multiple injury marks were found on the victim's body, police said.

"Primarily, it is suspected that the murder may have happened over previous enmity," the OC said, adding that police launched an investigation to identify those involved and determine the motive behind the killing.



A father carries his son on his shoulders as he arrives with his children at the crowded Sadarghat Launch Terminal in Dhaka ahead of Eid-ul-Azha yesterday. With bags in hand and little ones in tow, thousands are leaving the capital to celebrate the festival with their families in their hometowns.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

28 killed as illegal gold mine collapses in Angola

AFP, Luanda

A small artisanal gold mine collapsed in northern Angola at the weekend, claiming the lives of at least 28 miners, nearly half from one family, reports and officials said.

Angola's rich deposits of diamonds and other minerals, including gold, reportedly draw thousands of men, including from neighbouring countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, to illegal and uncontrolled mines, according to media reports.

Authorities recovered the bodies of 28 people aged between 18 and 45 years following the collapse early on Saturday at the mine in Bengo province, northeast of the capital, Luanda, a police official told the national broadcaster TPA.

"These young people were extracting strategic minerals, namely gold, in this area and at a certain point the mine collapsed," he said on Sunday.

He also added that authorities were searching for other bodies.

A rescue department official gave the same death toll to local media and said that 13 of the dead were from the same family.

Bengo officials estimated that there were around 7,000 illegal miners involved in gold extraction in the province, the Angola Press Agency reported.

First 100 days restored order, brought relief

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and effective steps to implement priority-based election pledges. "The government will work for the country and remain accountable to the people.

"If the country's 20 crore people work together and the youth and women are empowered, Bangladesh will surely become a dignified and self-reliant state."

Presenting the government's activities, Mahdi listed initiatives in social protection, agriculture, labour, education, health, infrastructure, employment, economy, sports, justice, administration, and state reform.

On social protection, he said the government has launched farmer and family cards, started honorariums for religious leaders, and withdrawn the extra monthly charge on prepaid electricity meters.

Under the food-friendly programme, 55 lakh low-income families are receiving 30kg rice a month at Tk 15 per kg. Subsidised LPG cards are also planned, he said.

In agriculture, the government has waived small farmers' agricultural loans of up to Tk 10,000, including interest.

It has also taken up a countrywide canal re-excavation programme and announced three months' financial and food support for farmers in the haor areas affected by heavy rain.

Mahdi said the government plans

to complete the Padma Barrage project and start work on the Teesta Barrage.

On labour and industry, he said that a Tk 60,000 crore fund has been announced to reopen long closed factories and bring fresh momentum to the economy.

Airfare for general Hajj pilgrims has also been reduced.

On infrastructure and urban development, the spokesperson said preparations have begun for a Teknaf-Tetulia economic corridor.

Work on the third terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport is moving ahead with a target to open it by December 16.

He also mentioned high-speed free Wi-Fi at airports and on trains, removal of illegal structures from footpaths with hawkler rehabilitation, and a Green and Clean Dhaka master plan.

The government has taken an initiative to introduce 250 environment-friendly electric buses to control air pollution in Dhaka.

Following the measles outbreak, Mahdi said almost all eligible children have been brought under the vaccination programme.

The process of acquiring 100 ambulances is underway, he said, adding that the government plans to gradually raise health allocation to 5 percent of GDP.

On education, he said bank guarantee facilities for higher

education abroad have been expanded. A model has been prepared to gradually distribute school uniforms, shoes, and jute schoolbags to students from the primary level.

A pilot project will begin in July in several schools in each upazila under a public-private partnership, he said.

Education for girls up to the honours level has been made free. Free Wi-Fi, smart classrooms, mid-day meals, transparent admission, technical education, industry-academia linkage, and labour market-based curricula are also being prioritised.

Mahdi said agreements have been signed with three of 10 countries to bring back laundered money, while the rest are at the final stage.

The government has repaid \$90.66 million in foreign loans. Fixed assets of S Alam Group worth Tk 4,264 crore have been seized, he said.

The government has set a target to make Bangladesh a trillion-dollar economy by 2034.

Other initiatives include planting 25 crore trees in five years, Sports and Notun Kuri programmes, sports cards and allowances for athletes, and sports villages with indoor facilities in 64 districts.

The spokesperson also mentioned the passage of 94 bills in parliament's first session and said the BNP remains firm in implementing the July charter with the "note of dissent".

Govt could've done better

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of May alone, while hospital admissions during this period exceeded those in the previous 45 days combined, according to DGHS data.

The sharp rise in deaths and hospitalisations in recent weeks indicates that the outbreak has entered a more dangerous phase, with experts saying better patient and crisis management by the government could have saved many lives.

Both experts and DGHS officials said deaths may continue for several more days, as around 4,000 children remain hospitalised.

One expert termed the high measles death toll "very unusual", saying no country in recent times has reported such a large number of fatalities from the vaccine-preventable disease.

Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Husain said authorities had tried their best, helping save the lives of many children. "Otherwise, the situation could have been worse," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

DEADLIEST MONTH

Although the number of measles cases began rising at the start of the year, infections surged sharply from March.

The DGHS started publishing measles data on April 2, compiling figures from March 15 onward.

According to DGHS data, of the total death toll of 545, 276 were recorded till April 30, while 269 deaths occurred in the first 25 days of May.

A total of 51,586 patients with measles or measles-like symptoms have been admitted to hospitals so far. Of them, 26,427 (51 percent) were admitted in the last 25 days.

According to the data, at least 73,659 cases – both confirmed and

suspected – have been detected in the country, of which 31,500 cases (43 percent) were recorded in May.

DEATHS MAY CONTINUE

The DGHS recorded more than 1,000 cases daily this month except on three days – May 9, 16 and 23.

However, the health minister, DGHS officials and an expert said the infection rate is easing, thanks to a vaccination drive covering 1.84 crore children.

"The infection rate has declined, and we hope it will fall further within the next two to three days," the health minister said, adding that he visited several hospitals in Cumilla yesterday.

Epidemiologist Prof Mahmudur Rahman, also chair of the National Verification Committee for Measles and Rubella Elimination, said many children develop post-measles complications such as pneumonia and other related conditions.

"So, a decline in infection does not necessarily lead to an immediate decline in hospitalisations. It would take some time," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said a large number of hospitalised patients, late admission of cases and malnutrition could lead to more deaths.

Prof Zahid Raihan, additional director general (administration) of the DGHS, agreed in a separate comment on Saturday.

Prof Mahmudur also termed the measles deaths "very unusual", saying no country in recent times has reported such a high number of fatalities from the disease.

'GOVERNMENT TO BLAME FOR HIGH DEATHS'

Public health expert Prof Be-Nazir Ahmed said the government's failure to ensure comprehensive crisis management led to the high death toll.

By comprehensive management, he meant developing a national guideline and providing proper orientation and training for the health workforce. "Without adequate training and orientation, even minor mistakes in handling severe or critical cases can become detrimental," he said.

Prof Be-Nazir, former director of disease control at the health directorate, said some paediatric specialists recommend management approaches that are difficult for general physicians to follow.

He said authorities could have introduced alternative measures, including nationwide orientation programmes and online guidelines, for a more uniform treatment regime across the country.

Referring to the bubble CPAP system introduced by icddr,b as an alternative to ventilators, he said the low-cost technology could have been supplied to all upazila hospitals, along with proper training for healthcare workers.

He added that if patients had received oxygen support from the initial stage, many might not have progressed to critical or irreversible conditions.

He said they had repeatedly urged the government to declare the situation an epidemic and treat it as a public health emergency requiring full-scale attention.

"The government has already had enough time. They can no longer say they were new and could not properly assess the situation," he said.

However, Health Minister Sakhawat Husain said the government had taken all possible steps, from launching a rapid vaccination campaign to supplying ventilators to hospitals, to save lives.

First 'holding centre' starts in West Bengal

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two days after the state Home and Hill Affairs Department's Foreigners' Branch directed all district administrations to establish "holding centres" for "apprehended foreigners" and "released foreign prisoners awaiting deportation or repatriation", giving institutional shape to one of the BJP's most politically resonant themes in West Bengal.

The decision has fuelled anxiety among the state's roughly 35 million Muslims, many of whom share linguistic and cultural ties with neighbouring Bangladesh.

On May 20, West Bengal Chief

Minister Suvendu Adhikari said communities covered under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) – Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians who fled alleged religious persecution in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan – would remain outside the ambit of the new mechanism.

Critics say the measure reflects the government's long-standing hardline stance on immigration, with top BJP leaders having referred to Bangladeshi migrants in the past as "termites" and "infiltrators".

The party has pursued similar

policies in neighbouring Assam, where it has overseen sweeping identification drives and large-scale detentions, AFP reported.

Rights activists say hundreds have been deported to Bangladesh from Assam without due legal process, often based on ethnic profiling.

Many have allegedly been pushed across the border at gunpoint, according to activists and lawyers who have challenged the measures in court.

They argue the policies disproportionately affect Muslims by conflating religious identity with illegal migration.

Bright start despite grim inheritance

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Referring to the ongoing measles crisis, he said the failure may have roots in the previous government, but the current administration must develop long-term plans for health, education and labour sectors, while ensuring swift justice in rape and sexual violence cases.

Al Masud Hasanuzzaman, a former professor of government and politics at Jahangirnagar University, said the government has taken some people-friendly measures, including the introduction of family cards, but major challenges such as maintaining law and order remain.

"The government is working, but no major structural changes are visible as of now. Administrative and institutional systems continue to operate with the same old weaknesses," he said, pointing out that parliament has not yet approved the key reforms discussed during the interim government's tenure.

Al Masud noted that the government should shun partisanship in the appointments of government employees as this directly affects its public image. "It must make sure that neutral and qualified people get appointed."

Several top BNP leaders and government officials said the vulnerabilities now being exposed are the result of years of economic mismanagement, rising public debt and weakened institutions during the tenure of the Awami League government.

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed, also a BNP Standing

Committee member, said a 180-day programme has been rolled out to fulfil scores of the ruling party's electoral pledges. Once it ends, the government will share the outcome.

Noting that there is no coordination problem within the government, he said the PM coordinates with ministers and gives necessary instructions at every cabinet meeting. Inter ministerial meetings are also held whenever needed.

He further said the government has started implementing programmes promised in the election manifesto, including card-based schemes. It is also taking steps to train people in technology.

The implementation of plans has begun across all sectors, but three months are insufficient for a meaningful assessment, he added.

LAW AND ORDER STILL A CONCERN

Despite being identified as a top priority, law and order remains a major concern.

During the interim government's tenure, the security situation was volatile, marked by mob violence and other crimes, with little sign of improvement so far.

There has been hardly any let-up in murders, extortion incidents, mob attacks, kidnappings and other crimes across the country, renewing public anxiety over safety.

Although the authorities carried out several anti-crime drives over the last three months, law enforcement agencies continue to struggle to contain criminal activities.

Professor Mojibur said the government should have prioritised public safety over other matters such as multiple welfare initiatives.

"Law and order should have come first. The situation remains fragile," he said.

When asked, Salahuddin said law enforcement agencies are trying their best to maintain law and order. They are responding quickly to complaints and arresting offenders.

He also said the government is working on police reform and on measures to ensure discipline within the force.

"I think law and order is now at a level that is in line with public expectations," he said.

Meanwhile, the measles outbreak among children has posed the biggest challenge to the administration.

More than 500 children are reported to have died from measles or measles-like symptoms across the country. UNICEF said that it had repeatedly warned the interim administration about looming vaccine shortages and the risk of a major outbreak. Those warnings, however, went largely unaddressed.

The current government responded with emergency vaccine procurement, immunisation drives and administrative reshuffles in parts of the health sector.

Both Mojibur and Al Masud said the coming months will determine whether the BNP government can transform its overwhelming electoral mandate into durable political credibility.



Asian Development Bank (ADB) President Masato Kanda at a meeting with Prime Minister Tarique Rahman at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.

PHOTO: PID