

## Concern over Khaleda's health grows as jail authorities cancel planned family visit

The jail authorities have cancelled a planned meeting of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia with her family members citing illness, the party says.

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Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir says they are worried about her health. Khaleda's sister Selina Islam, son Tarique Rahman's mother-in-law Iqbal Mand Banu and Tarique's sister-in-law Shahina Khan Zaman Bindu, and several other relatives went to visit her at the old jailhouse on Nazimuddin Road in Dhaka on Friday afternoon.

Mirza Fakhrul said they had permission to visit her, but the jail authorities did not allow them to see her. He said the authorities told Khaleda's relatives that she was "unable to come downstairs".

"It seems her condition has deteriorated a lot. We (BNP leaders) have also been denied an appointment," he added. Mirza Fakhrul and two other BNP leaders went to visit the former prime minister in jail on Thursday, but the jail authorities did not let them in.

"Her family members have expressed concern after hearing about her condition from the jail authorities. We are also concerned," the BNP secretary general said. Senior Superintendent of Dhaka jail Jahangir Kabir neither took bdnews24.com calls nor did he answer text queries on the issue. Khaleda has been in the prison since Feb 8 when a court sentenced her to five years in prison for corruption in Zia Orphanage Trust case.

Mirza Fakhrul met her in jail for the last time on Apr 6. The BNP chief underwent a medical checkup at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University the following day. On Mar 29, the jail authorities cancelled her meeting with Mirza Fakhrul, citing her illness.

The authorities also formed a team of doctors for Khaleda's treatment. After a checkup, the doctors said Khaleda's condition was 'nothing serious'.

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## 36 accused in biggest blasphemy lawsuit of recent times



In what is potentially one of the most significant blasphemy lawsuits of recent times, 35 individuals have been accused of having “offenses against religion” in Bangladesh. In accordance with Bangladesh Penal Code 295, C. R. case number 273/18 was filed with the Judicial Magistrate Court this past 16<sup>th</sup> of April 2018.

The plaintiff, one Mr. Shamim, has named 36 individuals in this lawsuit, and accused them of writing abusively about religion, in particular, Islam. The other accused are Nazmul Hossain Ghatok as the main accused, Editor Arifur Rahman, Roosevelt Halder, Adnan Saqib, Suranjoy Sarker, Sharmin Khan, Tahera Sultana, Syed Sunvy Anick Hossain, Syed Mohammad Sajeeb Abed, Saiful Islam, Faysal Hossain Onik, Pinaki Deb Apu, Miltan Kumar Dey, Sujan Chandra Dey, Abu Taher Muhammad Mustafa, Enyetul Huda, Husni Mubarak, Syed Isteak Hossain Shawon, Tofail Hossain, Naymul Hossain, Ashef Abrar Titu, MD Abdullah Al Hasan, Tamzid Hussain, Siddikur Rahman, Reana Trina, Hussain Muhammad Parvez, Shahadat Hosain, Syed Samun Ali, Abdul Ahad Shanto, Saiful Islam, Shipon Ahmed, Zubayer Ahmed and Kamrunnaher Shahana.

The primary defendant, one [Mr. Nazmul Hossain A.K.A “Ghatok”](#), and a magazine called “Atheist In Bangladesh”, who published an article he wrote, seem to be at the center of this lawsuit.

Our court correspondent reports that the plaintiff Mr. Shamim came across Mr. Hossain’s article first in this particular magazine. The abusive content he found in the said article, prompted him to go through the entire magazine which he found to be inundated with crude, offensive and vehemently demeaning words towards religion as a whole.

We launched a small investigation in an attempt to uncover the history of this magazine. It appears “Atheist in Bangladesh” have been publishing such obscene content about religion, Islam in particular, for a good while now. Alongside that, it has also been endorsing and facilitating several individuals, particularly those accused in the lawsuit, who devote themselves towards producing such obscene, rude content.

This lawsuit comes of course on the back what is currently rather a fragile environment in

Bangladesh. On one side we have a society readily embracing and accepting fundamentalism. And on the other, we have a government and law enforcement authorities currently engaged in an almighty tussle with bouts of terrorism, militancy that have plagued the nation in recent times.



Nevertheless, we were unable to get in touch with Mr. Shamim. Unsurprisingly our correspondent was not able to get in touch with any of the accused. However, he did manage to track down Mr. Nazmul Hossain's house in his hometown of Kalkini, Madaripur but found it to be devoid of living souls. When he queried some of the neighbors they revealed that the house has been empty for some time now and no one knows the whereabouts of its previous inhabitants.



Reactions towards the lawsuit have been generally mixed. Social media platforms which have been rife ever since news of the lawsuit broke in, are a perfect indicator of that. There were several users on Facebook for instance who claimed that "justice had been served". Some stated that 'Kafir's Munafiks and Indian agents like that' should be hanged till death. Some claimed that the accused should be grateful that they are even getting a chance at

fair trial, instead of being shot dead.

Meanwhile, several writers, bloggers, and online activists have firmly criticised Mr. Shamim for his actions. They described the Bangladesh Penal code 295 as the nation's excuse for stifling freedom of speech. Some claimed that it encourages individuals like Mr. Shamim, who do not even have the required depth to understand religion and its roots, to take up arms against free-thinking souls at will.

We spoke to Mufti Babunagari, spokesperson of Hefajat E Islami Bangladesh, He condemned the accused for their actions, lauding Mr. Shamim meanwhile as a true Muslim. He claimed that Kafirs, Munafiks like that should either be stripped of their rights or deported to India.

The Police Bureau of Instigations (PBI) meanwhile has taken charge of this incident. One of their spokespersons, who wished to remain anonymous, revealed that the PBI is hard at work on investigating the claims made in this lawsuit. With time he promised all the details will be revealed, but for now, there is nothing to report.

## Bangladeshi gay couple marriage goes viral online, prompts incessant abuse



In breaking news, a Bangladeshi Muslim gay couple tied the knot in London, United Kingdom this past 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2017.

Mr Shahadat Hosain and his long-term partner Mr Masud Rana decided to tie the knot.

The union, which is a rather rare occurrence in its own right, in light of the fact that Mr Shahadat Hosain and his partner are both are reported atheist gathered even more attention when the news of its occurrence spread across social media platforms like wildfire. The couple tried desperately to keep the marriage as low-key as possible, leaving Walthamstow council (where they tied the knot) as soon as they had gone through the formalities, and inviting no-one apart from their best friend Mr Sujana Chandra Dev to the wedding, according to our sources.

Meanwhile, it is unclear as to how or when social media hawks caught wind of the couple's union. But it created a domino effect which spread endlessly across popular social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, generating quite a bit of attention.

The vast majority, sadly, condemned the news and the couple's 'illicit relationship'. Some cited the rules of Islam that prohibit such relationships in order to vilify the couple, while some resorted to downright foul language and verbal abuse of all kinds. Indeed most of the write-ups and links shared or uploaded across the aforementioned platforms, regarding the couple's marriage of course, were inundated with dozens of comments. While some did offer them their sympathies, the number of users actually congratulating them, were next to non-existent.

Some of those shared links and articles referred to above are given below,

<https://www.facebook.com/boysloveworld71/posts/1684269248357985>

<https://www.facebook.com/BengaliFaizlamis/posts/2018045411788769>

<https://www.facebook.com/Almostidiot/posts/1004539943051865>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/MairalaGroup.Net/permalink/1740828042678468/>

[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=1819143381719194&id=100008706493453](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1819143381719194&id=100008706493453)

Our readers are advised to exercise caution whilst going through the abovementioned links, as they contain some strong and explicit language. Worryingly enough some of the comments appeared to be rather extreme in nature, with some users threatening to kill the couple if they 'ever get wind' of them. There are some comments which we suspect to have stemmed from religiously extremists. The comments vary in nature, but have elements of religious extremism ingrained into them. A few links to those specific comments can of course be seen below. Please bear in mind again that the images contain strong language and are inappropriate for some of our readers. Proceed with caution.

It is hard to gauge what sort of effect it has had in Bangladesh, the newly wed couple's country of origin of course, but it cannot have been a good one. Bangladesh as a nation, has a reputation for harbouring core fundamentalist ideals, and as such its society strictly abhors anything to do with homosexuality. Of course, it has devised a legalized method of punishing those who practice homosexuality, namely via the Bangladesh Penal Code 377. For now, our correspondent reports that it is strictly limited to social media now but 'will not be long' before it reaches Bangladesh's national media and indeed other news local media outlets.

Our correspondent managed to round up a few of the local residents of Naraynganj (where Mr Hosain was born). The majority of them expressed great disdain over their union. A select few offered pity and sympathy rather than congratulations. There were few people who expressed their anger to the higher extent and told our correspondent that this entire act was nothing but a sin and a disgraceful act.

It is also worth mentioning that the same-sex marriage is perfectly legal in Britain. Legislation to allow same-sex marriage in England and Wales was passed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom in July 2013 and came into force on 13 March 2014.

We did manage to track down Mr Hosain's parents in his hometown of Naraynganj in Bangladesh. They however flatly refused to speak to our correspondent regarding the incident, and instead stated that Mr Hosain is 'no longer a part of the family'.

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### **Dhaka Blasphemy Lawsuit: 28 Named This Time As "Enemies Of Islam"**

In what is becoming a recurring theme now in Bangladesh these days, the capital Dhaka experienced a bit rude awakening today, as news of yet another blasphemy lawsuit slowly filtered through this morning.

The blasphemy lawsuit in question, was failed against 28 people (yes that is more than 2 dozen) of various professions and backgrounds. This past 12<sup>th</sup> of February saw one Mr Habibur Rahman, the plaintiff here, file a blasphemy lawsuit with the Dhaka Judicial Magistrate Court-1, Amoli court, accusing the creators and contributors of a magazine called 'Atheist in Bangladesh' of 'writing, publishing crude and blasphemous content against Islam'. The lawsuit has been filed in accordance with the much debated Bangladesh Penal code 295.

According to reports the plaintiff Mr Habibur Rahman an active member of the infamous religious political group Hefazat-E-Islami Bangladesh. He alleges that the above named magazine had been indulging itself in berating, insulting and lewdly criticising religion, especially Islam, for quite some time now. As a result Mr Habibur Rahman 'felt compelled' to take action against these 'enemies of Islam' and 'spawn of atheists' as he referred to them.

Our court correspondent did manage to get a hold of him and when questioned with regards to the lawsuit Mr Rahman replied, "These writers make crude comments, belittle Islam as they see fit and the government or Foreign Ministry does nothing about it. There is no place for the spawn of atheists in this pure land of Allah." Mr Habibur Rahman also demanded that the government establish 'Shariyah Rule' in Bangladesh otherwise they will not be able to 'last long' in this country.

Our court correspondent did try and get in touch with the Foreign Ministry but no one was available for a comment.

It is worth mentioning that the primary defendant in this lawsuit is one Mr Yeaz Kawsar, a blogger and online activist. It was later discovered that Mr Kawsar is actually facing several previous charges where he has allegedly belittled and had been blasphemous towards religion. Moreover he also happens to be one of the bloggers, writers, free thinking spirits named in the kill-list published a few years ago by the notorious (and still at large) extremist group, Ansarullah Bangla Team.

Along with Mr Kawsar the other notable names accused in this lawsuit are – Mr Arifur Rahman who is the editor of this magazine, 'Secular publishers' (who published it), Pinaki Deb Apu, Apurbo Kumar Rai, Hosni Mubarak, Shahadat Hossain, Syed Ishtiaq Hossain, Md. Tofayel Hossain, Adnan Sakib, Roosevelt Haldar, Abu Hanif, Syed Mohammad Shojib Abed, Md Mehedi Hossain, Syed Sunvy Anick Hossain, Enayetul Huda, Naymul Islam, Md Abdullah Al Hasan, Kazi Md Saiful Haque, Ashef Abrar Titu, Hussain Mohammad Parvez, Riana Trina, Miltan Kumar Dey, Tamzid Hossain, Abu Taher Md Mustafa, Siddikur Rahman, Sharmin Khan, Kazi Mohammad Abu Bokkor Siddiki.

Meanwhile several members of Hefazat-E-Islami, seemingly encouraged by the initiative shown by their peer Mr Habibur Rahman, overwhelmed the court premises that day before heatedly protesting against 'Atheist in Bangladesh' and its contributors. According to reports they later formed into a protest rally and marched towards Gulistan, the capital's chief commercial town. During that time there are scattered reports of violence and destruction of property carried out by the Hefazat protestors.

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**Shock across social media as lawyer Imtiaz Mahmood emerges as sexual predator**



Bangladesh's social media was rattled yesterday as allegations of sexual harassment and exploitation surfaced against a lawyer, Mr. Imtiaz Mahmood, 60. Mr. Mahmood who represents one of the law firms in the country, namely Abdul Jabbar and Associates, is also a familiar name amongst feminist writers, media personalities, online activists and the like. He is also a regular contributor in social media outlets, known for his uncensored coverage of topics such as woman's rights.

On 23rd January several screenshots of a private conversation Mr Imtiaz Mahmood held with Bangladesh Microsoft's brand ambassador Ms Jannatul Naim Prity, were uploaded on to FaceBook. The contents of screenshots revealed Mr Mahmood, who is married and the father of two no less, having a lewd and inappropriate conversation with Ms Prity. Ms Prity who has claimed that Mr Mahmood is a sexual predator by character and that he preys on women by claiming to love them. He would achieve this feat by lying to women that he is unhappy in his marriage, by belittling his wife and also by stating that he is 'alone and helpless'. Ms Prity took to Facebook on the 23rd January and uploaded a short post detailing her relationship with Mr Mahmood.

She stated that she admits it was 'her fault', as she led herself be oblivious to the fact that Mr Mahmood was married. She also stated that all he had done is 'deceive' her and that she just wants to 'identify' this man for what he is, in hope that no one else falls victim to him like she did.

Meanwhile social media channels were rife with discussion and debate as details of the allegations of sexual exploitation emerged against Mr Mahmood. Activists and writers who update their social media pages regularly, know Mr Mahmood as a sagacious and adept writer and activist, particularly because of his work on women's rights. As such were left befuddled and embarrassed by these charges against him. It is understood that Mr Mahmood wrote most of his posts and articles from Dhaka.

We contacted a few people for comments and response on the allegations made againts Mr Mahmood including his current wife Mrs Jennifa Jabbar but were unable to reach her on her cell. We also contacted Mr Mahmood's employers, Abdul Jobbar, and Associates, but they squarely declined to make any comments on this matter. It was later revealed that the firm is actually under the ownership of Mr Mahmood's father-in-law. Mr Mahmood actually claims on his Facebook profile that he works as an advocate on this law firm.

Mr Mahmud was recently the subject of a lawsuit filed against him in accordance S.57 of ICT Act. He was accused of spreading 'fake news' and generate unrest, on issues affecting the hilly regions of Chittagong. The lawsuit in question is still in effect and is making routine progress.



## Modhukhali Besieged: Minority households looted, demolished



The Modhukali upazila Faridpur district was the scene of utter devastation this past 16<sup>th</sup> of January 2018 as around 50 households, all belonging to minority inhabitants were destroyed, leaving at least 2 people with major injuries.

The attack was carried out by Mr. Babu, the Chairman of Dumain, a village right next to Modhukhali. Mr. Babu and his gang of hooligans unleashed their fury upon the innocent families of Modhukhali after learning that one of Modhukhali's own, one Mr. Suranjoy Sarker, a resident of New Zealand currently, has been writing blasphemous content against Islam and its constituencies in his personal blog ([www.suranjoysarker.wordpress.com](http://www.suranjoysarker.wordpress.com))

Mr. Suranjoy Sarker, son of Modhukhali local Kamol Chandra Sarker, was accused of publishing blasphemous articles about Islam on his blog and across other media channels. Mr. Babu and his goons reportedly invaded Mr. Suranjoy Sarker's and demanded to speak to his father. It is reported that he verbally abused his father, Mr. Kamol Chandra of afterward Babu constantly berated Mr. Kamol Chandra Sarker by telling him that his son has been posting crude, abhorrent and lewd articles about Islam and its "Beloved Prophet (PBUH)" on the internet and his personal blog.

Later on, our correspondent queried some of the locals about the incident. They stated that Babu demanded a public apology from Mr. Kamol Chandra over his son's antics and he was being very aggressive. His goons were armed with machetes, small to large knives and thick wooden bats and had surrounded the place.

That upset some of the younger local inhabitants of Modhukhali and they stepped in to help Mr. Kamol Chandra Sarker. Chairman Babu and his goons did not take very well to that and it prompted them to launch an all-out assault on Mr. Sarker and his family (those who were present in the house at that time) along the young men who showed their support for Mr. Kamol Chandra Sarker. The goons managed to gravely injure two young men in the process, one Arunavh Bishwas, and Bikash Ronjon. They have been taken to Faridpur Medical ever since and are receiving treatment.

Unfortunately, that began at Mr. Kamol Chandra's house, quickly spilled over to other minority households in the area as the goons demolished everything within their arm's length. There are



several reports of looting and property destruction from more than 4 dozen or so minority households.

Meanwhile, there is an air of apprehension amongst the majority of the inhabitants of Modhukhali as they live in constant fear of another small-scale attack. We can confirm that representatives of the Faridpur Kotowali Police Station have inspected the scene of devastation. One of their spokespersons who was initially reluctant to speak to our correspondent at first did manage to inform us that the police has completed preliminary inspections of the crime scene.

However, he denied that a formal complaint has been lodged as told us that the matter needs “proper investigations” before being pushed up to the next stage. He declined to comment on when that will take place.

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### Concern over blogger murders and hit list

Perhaps the most hotly debated topic in Bangladesh at the moment is the recent serial blogger murders. One by one blogger is being killed because of the rose above religious teachings and disagreed with its notions, something which has, in turn, plunged the country’s current situation in terms of law and order, into further turmoil. The bloody and gory pattern began with the murder of one Rajib Haidar, aka ‘Thaba Baba’ on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2013, during the Shahbag Movement of course. Later on, extremists murdered an American citizen and writer Dr. Abhijit Rai by hacking him to death with machetes in the open vicinity, quite near to the then ongoing Ekushey February Bookfair. His wife, Rafida Ahmed Bonna, was grievously injured during the incident.

The death of Abhijit Rai was followed by that of blogger Washiqur Rahman Babu on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March, who was murdered in similar fashion at the front of his own house, even though a couple of the perpetrators were caught at the scene of the crime. Not even a month had passed since that incident and the death of blogger Ananta Bijoy Das followed. He was also murdered right inside his own house. Later on, Islamic fundamentalist terrorists infiltrated the home of blogger Niladri Chottopoddhay Nil and murdered him as well.

Even before these effects of these events had diluted, just this past 31<sup>st</sup> of October one Arefin Dipon, who was the publisher of Dr. Abhjit Rai’s book, was brutally murdered in his office. On the very same day publisher Ahmedur Rashid Tutul, poet Tarek Rahim, and writer Ronodipom Basu were brutally hacked to death with machetes in their Dhaka based Lalmatia offices. It is worth mentioning that publisher and blogger Ahmedur Rashid Tutul, who survived the barbaric attack was the caretaker for Shuuddhoshor Publications. The rest of the victims were all active bloggers who regularly wrote and published content online.

Every single one of the individuals who was murdered, were all free-thinking spirits, bloggers or writers. These incidents are being treated as the biggest assault on the freedom of speech rights, freedom of expression and writing in Bangladesh, since after independence.

It is with quite concerning to report that these murders are being committed in the name of one Ansarullah Bangla Team, with the intent of committing these grisly acts being openly expressed

online, or by sending letters to various national daily newspapers. According to Bdnews and the Daily Prothom Alo, this mysterious Ansarullah Bangla Team has now published a new 15 man hit list which contains the names of Bangladeshi citizens residing at both at home and abroad.



There are quite a few well-known and prominent bloggers on the list Ansarullah has compiled, with the group threatening that they will kill each and every one of them wherever they may be.

The following names are on the aforementioned list, blogger Asif Mohiuddin, Arifur Rahman, Omi Rahman Pial, Md Shariful Islam, Suranjay Sarker, Rasel Parvez, Subroto Shubho, Syed Sunvy Anick Hossain, Omar Faruk Lux, Md Abdur Rahman, Imran H Sarkar, Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury, Taslima Nasrin, Daud Haidar, Roosevelt Halder, Nurun Nabi, Abdul Ahad Shanto, Turin Afroz, Shammi Haque and others.

We spoke to blogger Omi Rahman Pial, who is currently in Bangladesh, regarding the incident. He informed us that he has received such death threats on various occasions and that it is nothing new. Bangladesh government has appointed a gunman for his security and that law enforcement agencies are always in touch with him.

When we contacted the chief administrator for Bangladesh police, Mr. Benazir Ahmed, he informed us that the police has already taken all appropriate measures to tackle the situation and will continue to do so. Religious fundamentalism has no space in Bangladesh. He declined to comment when we asked him whether IS has any influence here in Bangladesh.

In these desperately anxious times here in Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Bloggers Association BOAN feel that the Bangladeshi government has to be much more proactive and in order to reduce the volume of such crimes, the fast track tribunals must do their jobs and punish the criminals to ensure swift justice.

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The Rooppur plant is expected to add 2,400MW of electricity to the national grid by 2024  
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has inaugurated the main construction work of the much-awaited Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, the maiden nuclear plant of Bangladesh.

She formally launched the main construction work of the plant by pouring concrete at the plant site at Rooppur in Ishwardi of northern Pabna district Thursday morning.

Science and Technology Minister Architect Yeafesh Osman, PM's Economic Affairs Adviser Dr Moshir Rahman, Energy Adviser Dr Towfique-e-Elahi Chowdhury, Security Adviser Major General (retd) Tariq Ahmed Siddiq, Chief of Army Staff General Abu Belal Muhammad Shafiul Huq, PM's Principal Secretary Dr Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury, Press Secretary

Ihsanul Karim, Russian Ambassador to Bangladesh Alexander Ignatov, Russia's state-run atomic energy body Rosatom's Director General Alexey Likhachev, Chief Engineer of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission Md Abdur Razzak and project director of the plant and senior officials of Bangladesh and Russia were present on the occasion.

The Rooppur plant is expected to add 2,400MW of electricity to the national grid by 2024, helping Bangladesh meet its increasing demand for electricity.

The mega project is being implemented by the state-run Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC) under the Science and Technology Ministry, with financial, technical and technological support by Russia through its state nuclear agency, Rosatom.

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**Also Read- [Bangladesh all set to join nuclear club](#)**

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The Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC) and Russian company, JSC Atomstroyexport, signed a general contract for construction of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant (RNPP) on December 25 in 2015.

BAEC Chairman Md Monirul Islam and Vice President of Atomstroyexport Vladimir N Savushkin signed the contract on behalf of their respective organisations.

Atomstroyexport, the contractor appointed by Russia's state-owned atomic power body, Rosatom, will construct the RNPP at a cost of \$12.65 billion, out of which, \$10.1 billion has been fixed as base price, \$1 billion for soil stabilisation and further cost, and the remaining \$1.65 billion for price escalation.

On December 15 in 2015, the government finalised the amount for the biggest-ever investment project in the country's history by inking an initial agreement with Russia.

Earlier in January 2013, an inter-governmental agreement was signed for the provision of a \$500 million Russian loan to finance engineering design, site development and personnel training.

On November 2, 2011, Bangladesh signed a deal with Russia's state-owned nuclear giant Rosatom to construct the nuclear plant.

Russia will provide all assistance under the agreement for setting up the plant, including providing the fuel and taking back the used fuel.

A total of 262 acres of land have been acquired to set up two units of the plant with a capacity of 2,400-MW.

On October 2, 2013, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina laid the foundation stone of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant at Ishwardi in Pabna.

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### Francis is the second pope to visit Bangladesh

Bangladesh rolled out the red carpet as Pope Francis, the leader of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics, arrived at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka on a three-day state visit.

A 21-gun salute heralded the arrival of the 80-year-old Pope Francis when he alighted from a VVIP flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines Thursday afternoon, wrapping up his three-day Myanmar visit, at around at 3:05pm.

President M Abdul Hamid received the Pope near the VVIP Tarmac of the airport, while two tiny tots presented him a bouquet.

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**Also Read- [Pope to meet 15 Rohingyas during his Bangladesh trip](#)**

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A smartly turned out contingent drawn from Bangladesh Army, Navy and Air Force gave a guard of honour and state salute to the highest catholic priest while accompanied by the president Pope Francis he took the salute from a makeshift "Saluting Dais" after inspecting the guard.

Francis is the second pope to visit Bangladesh. Pope John Paul II visited Bangladesh back in 1986.

Pope Francis arrived in Dhaka at the invitation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Catholic Bishop's Conference of Bangladesh.

Thereafter, Abdul Hamid introduced cabinet members and other dignitaries to Pope Francis at the presentation line.

Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith, Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed, Agriculture Minister Begum Matia Chowdhury, Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali, and Law Minister Anisul Haque, were also present at the airport to welcome the Pope.

Besides, Cabinet Secretary M Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, the chiefs of three services, PM's senior secretary Suriya Begum, Vatican City Ambassador to Bangladesh George Kocherry and Inspector General of Police (IGP) M Sohikul Haque were, among others, present.

From the airport, Pope is scheduled to visit National Martyr's Memorial at Savar to pay his rich tribute to the memories of the 1971 martyrs at 4pm and also Farther of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by placing wreaths at his portrait at the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at 32 Dhanmondi.

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**Also Read- [What would Jesus do?](#)**

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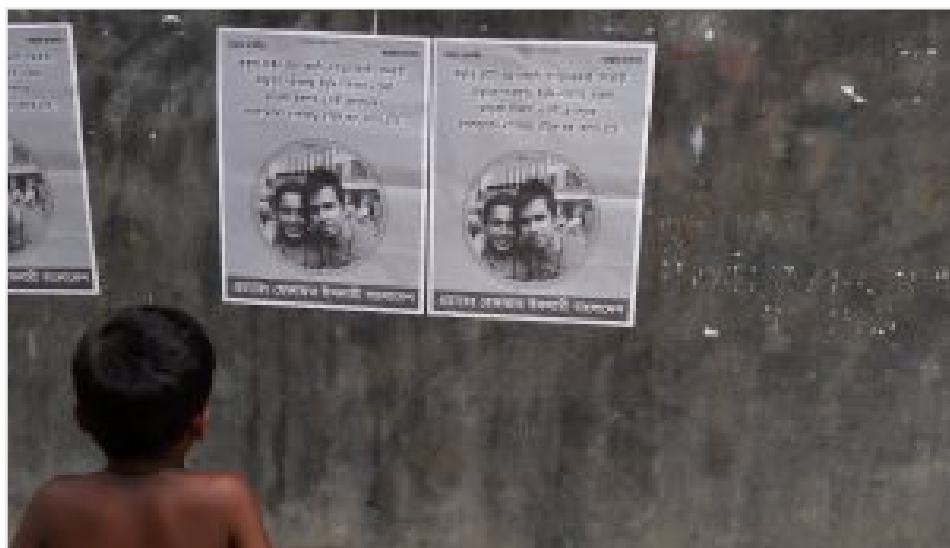
In the evening, Pope will meet with President Hamid at Bangabhaban where he will join a meeting with Speaker, Chief Justice, ministers, politicians, civil society members and diplomats at Darbar Hall.

He will also sign a visitor's Book at the Credential Hall in the President's palace. Meanwhile, an intensified security measures were taken centering the visit of the Catholic priest to Bangladesh.

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### Unrest and protest demonstrations In Kapasia over same sex marriage

In breaking news a Bangladeshi gay couple tied [the knot in London, United Kingdom this past 14<sup>th</sup> of September 2017](#). Mr Nobi Hossain and Zahirul Islam decided to get married after being together for reportedly 3 years.



However the news of Mr Zahirul's union reached his hometown of Kapasia, causing general unrest amongst its residents. Some local acted out, venting their anger by gluing derisory posters of Mr Zahirul Islam all across Kapasia. There was also a protest demonstration organized against him, in which he was declared a 'kafir' and a 'murtad' by the Imam of Kapasia Jam-E-Mosque. During the mass demonstration the local police

station deployed extra law enforcement units on to the streets in order to maintain peace and order.

We managed to speak to some of the locals regarding the incident and nearly all of them expressed their distaste and repulsion at the incident. Some of them said that there should be tougher sanctions against such individuals. Some remarked that Islam strictly prohibits such lewdness and that the wrath of Allah will soon consume them.

It is worth mentioning that maintaining or wishing to form same sex relationships is a punishable offence here in Bangladesh, in accordance with the Bangladesh Penal code 377. It is also worth mentioning that the couple are perfectly within their rights to get married in Britain. Legislation to allow same-sex marriage in England and Wales was passed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom in July 2013 and came into force on 13 March 2014.

We did managed to track down Mr Zahirul's family Kapasia. However they flatly refused to speak to our correspondent regarding the incident and instead stated that Mr Zahirul Islam has been disowned by them.

Some of the locals also informed us that this is not the first time there have been complaints

made against Zahirul.

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