

Press Release

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Bangladesh Government's position on the attacks on Hindu religious sites

When the people of Bangladesh were celebrating the Durga Puja, one of the biggest festivities in Bangladesh, in a joyous mood, there emerged reports of attacks on Hindu religious sites and idols in six districts of the country. The Government of Bangladesh unequivocally condemned those incidents and took serious note of the reactions from within and outside the Hindu community. As an immediate response and also a precautionary measure, the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) forces were deployed in 37 districts of the country in aid of the civilian administration.

The perpetrators have been arrested and they are now in custody undergoing legal processes. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina urged all concerned to exercise restraint under any provocation and to refrain from spreading or acting on unfounded rumours. She called upon all to maintain communal harmony at any cost. Senior government leaders visited affected sites, and assured the Hindu community members of adequate protection and compensation for the damages incurred. In many cases, compensation has already been given. Cases have been filed in connection with all incidents.

The Government of Bangladesh is concerned over the flurry of misinformation being propagated in different international media and blatant lies floating on social media concerning alleged death and cases of rapes involving the Hindu community in Bangladesh. This is sheer travesty of truth and must not be entertained by any quarters at home and abroad for any political or otherwise expediency. Two persons from Hindu community died, one from natural causes and one from drowning. No temple or mondir was destroyed nor anyone from the Hindu community was raped. Later on it was known that the arsons targeting some poor households were actually carried out due to local political rivalries. However, the Government promptly acted to rebuild more than 20 houses and offered compensation to all those who were affected. The compensation included cash assistance, food, cloths, other essential commodities as well as construction materials. Law enforcement forces were dispatched immediately on the first information.

In this context, the Government would like to reiterate that communal harmony and peaceful co-existence are cornerstones of our democratic polity. For centuries, people from different faiths, ethnicities and religions have been living in this land in peace and harmony with full understanding of each other's faiths.

Our long-standing commitment to tolerance and inclusion is safeguarded by our Constitutional provisions. While the supreme law of the land guarantees protection of all its citizens from any kind of discrimination and intolerance, the democratic governance of the country also ensures enjoyment of fundamental rights by its citizens irrespective of their religions, beliefs and ethnicity. The Government of Bangladesh strongly upholds that every religious community has the right to establish, maintain and manage its own religious institutions and to perform religious rituals.

The Government of Bangladesh, led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has set an example by advocating the motto, "Religions are for individuals, festivals are for all." Bangladesh is perhaps the only country where the major religious festivals of all religions are observed as public holidays. The government has also been supporting different religious groups by setting up special trust funds for their well-being. This year, on the occasion of Durga Puja, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina handed out Tk.30.00 million to the Hindu Kalyan Trust for the smooth observance of the festival.

Under the current circumstances, the Government urges all concerned to uphold the spirit of tolerance, inclusiveness, peace and pluralism and to stand guard against further efforts to malign the state institutions and tarnish the image of the country. The Government remains committed to prevent the recurrence of such untoward incidents and would expect that further complication or misunderstanding would be averted through responsible and fact-based reporting by all media platforms. Rule of Law shall prevail and none associated with or contributing to destabilising the inter-religion and inter-communal harmony will be spared.
