

Housewife hacked to death in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A housewife was hacked to death allegedly by her husband at a house in the capital's Kalabagan area yesterday.

The victim, Sajeda Akhter, 35, was a mother of two children, said Asadzuzzaman, inspector (investigation) of Kalabagan Police Station.

Police recovered the body from a tin-roofed house on North Circular Road around 8:25pm after being informed by their neighbours, the inspector said, adding that police detained her husband Ferdous Alam, 40, from the spot.

During primary investigation, Ferdous, a rickshaw puller, confessed to have killed her wife over a family dispute.

The body was sent to the morgue of Dhaka Medical College Hospital for an autopsy.

Jihadist attacks kill five Nigerian security personnel

AFP, Kano

Jihadists aligned with the Islamic State group have killed five security personnel, including two soldiers, in three separate attacks in northeast Nigeria's Borno state, sources said Wednesday.

In the first attack on Monday, fighters from the Islamic State West Africa (ISWAP) jihadist group aboard trucks attacked a military post in Tungushe village near the state capital Maiduguri, killing a soldier and injuring another, a military officer told AFP.

"The terrorists attacked around 6:00 pm (1700 GMT), leading to a gun battle in which a soldier was killed and another one was injured," said the officer, who asked not to be identified.

HC acquits

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Uddin filed a case with Shahjahanpur Police Station the next day.

On February 26, 2017, a Dhaka court sentenced the four to 10 years rigorous imprisonment in the case. The court found them guilty of "gross-negligence and reluctance in discharging their duties" that had led to the death of the boy.

Bangladesh Railway assistant engineers Zafar Ahmed and Nasir Uddin and Senior Sub-assistant Engineer Jahangir Alam were sentenced by the lower court. Abdus Salam alias Shafiqul Islam, proprietor of SR House, the contractor of a railway project in the area, was also sentenced.

Yesterday, Justice Md Ruhul Quddus and Justice ASM Abdul Mobin acquitted them from the charges after hearing four separate appeals challenging the lower court verdict.

Details of the grounds and observations on which the HC delivered the verdict remains to be seen as the full text of the verdict has not been released yet.

Deputy Attorney General Md Aminul Islam told The Daily Star that the HC bench acquitted the convicts because another HC bench had earlier directed Bangladesh Railway and Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence to pay Tk 20 lakh in compensation to Jihad's parents.

Besides, it is not clear in the job manual and discretion of the accused whether they are responsible to maintain and protect deep abandoned wells, he said.

Aminul also said the government would appeal before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court against the HC verdict.

Lawyer Abdul Halim, who moved the writ petition before the HC for compensating Jihad's parents, told this correspondent that the HC acquitted the four as the investigation of the lower court case was faulty and the state could not prove the allegation.

Jihad's parents received Tk 20 lakh from Bangladesh Railway and Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence as per the HC directive, he added.

Road of love, toil

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with fellow villagers, called on the local administration as well as the public representatives several times to pave the road but was yet to get any response.

Soinuddin's wife Lucky Begum said her husband worked alone till midnights for constructing the road as he had to work in the field during daytime.

"What Soinuddin has not done to build the road? He sold the paddy that we had stored for our family's consumption. He turned his cropland into a pond to supply soil for the road. He moved door to door to convince villagers so that they donate their land for the sake of the road.

"My husband has done almost everything that could be done on his part. Now the government should make the road a concrete one," she added.

Air pollution costs

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cigarettes a day, earlier research has shown.

"Air pollution from fossil fuels is a threat to our health and our economies that takes millions of lives and costs us trillions of dollars," said Minwoo Son, clean air campaigner at Greenpeace East Asia.

The global cost for 2018 was \$2.9 trillion, the report estimated.

"But this is a problem that we know how to solve: by transitioning to renewable energy sources, phasing out diesel and petrol cars, and building public transport."

The 44-page report breaks down the global burden of fossil fuel-driven air pollution -- measured in economic costs and premature deaths -- by type of pollutant and by country.

Each year the global economy takes a \$350 billion hit from nitrogen dioxide (NO2) -- a byproduct of fossil fuel combustion in vehicles and power plants -- and a further \$380 billion hit from ozone, according to middle-ground estimates.

By far the most costly pollutant is microscopic fine particulate matter (PM 2.5), which accounts for more than two trillion dollars per year in

damages, measured in health impacts, missed work days and years lost to premature death.

The global breakdown for premature deaths each year was 500,000 for NO2, one million for ozone, and three million for PM 2.5.

Some 40,000 children die every year before their fifth birthday due to PM 2.5, which also leads to two million preterm births annually and twice as many cases of asthma.

PM 2.5 particles penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream, causing cardiovascular respiratory problems. In 2013, the WHO classified it as a cancer-causing agent.

Middle-range estimates of the number of premature deaths stemming from fossil fuel pollution include 398,000 for the European Union, 230,000 for the United States, 96,000 for Bangladesh, and 44,000 for Indonesia.

Among countries taking the biggest economic hit each year are China (\$900 billion), the United States (\$610 bn), India (\$150 bn), Germany (\$140 bn), Japan (\$130 bn), Russia (\$68 bn) and Britain (\$66 bn).

Globally, air pollution accounts for

29 percent of all deaths and disease from lung cancer, 17 percent from acute lower respiratory infection, and a quarter from stroke and heart disease, according to the WHO.

Air pollution is a focal point of social discontent in some parts of the world, leading some experts to speculate that it could drive a more rapid drawdown of fossil fuel use.

"Are we approaching a tipping point where it will no longer be acceptable to shorten the lives of people with fossil fuel pollution?" Johan Rockstrom, head of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, told AFP.

The new report used global datasets for surface-level concentrations of the three main pollutants analysed, and then calculated health and cost impacts for 2018.

Estimates of PM 2.5 and NO2 concentrations were based on Earth observation instruments on two NASA satellites that monitor aerosols in the atmosphere.

Deaths, years of life lost and years lived with disability due to PM 2.5 exposure are drawn from the Global Burden of Disease, published in 2018 by PNAS.

Bangladesh not to accept liabilities

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months of Pakistan Army's occupation.

BID TO SHIFT PAK LOAN BURDEN ON BANGLADESH

Western countries that have large and practical unrecoverable outstanding loans with Pakistan are reported to attempting to persuade Bangladesh to accept some of these liabilities in return for aid. The Aid Consortium countries and the World Bank are suggesting talks between Dhaka and Rawalpindi with a view to a division of Pakistan's assets and liabilities.

CALL TO MUSLIM WORLD

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad declares in Dhaka that the 9 months of darkness which befell the Muslim world following the reign of repression on the democratic people of Bangladesh only be over when the Muslim countries recognise Bangladesh.

The foreign minister expresses

profound sorrow that none of the Muslim countries had been able to show even the least amount of sympathy not to speak of fellow feeling. He also deplores that Saudi Arabia with which Bangladesh has no enmity is showing an attitude of non-cooperation with regards to the pilgrimage for Hajj. He shares that his letters written to King Saud remain unanswered.

REFLECT SHORTCOMINGS OF GOVT.

The Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Kamal Hossain asks newsmen to reflect the mistakes and the shortcomings of the government through the press so that the government can ratify their wrongs and misdeeds.

The minister, deploring the pattern of news, says that in a democratic independent country the journalists can render no help to the government by only appreciating it. It

is mainly the journalists who can truly and impartially point out the wrongs of the government.

4,000 COLLABORATORS APPREHENDED IN DHAKA

About 4,000 Pakistan Army's collaborators including al-Badr, al-Shams and razakars have been apprehended in Dhaka in a combing operation during the past eight weeks. Most of them have been put in Dhaka Central Jail. The number of such arrests throughout Bangladesh has already exceeded 10,000. According to a spokesman, the government will shortly set up a committee for their screening before they are charge-sheeted. The charge-sheeted will be tried under the Bangladesh Collaborators Special Tribunal Order.

SOURCES: February 14, 1972 issues of Dainik Bangla, The Daily Ittefaq, Azad, Morning News, The Bangladesh Observer and Purbodesh.

UGC all set

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reservations about the new system. "Some universities, however, said they would need to follow their procedures before adopting it."

Asked what would the UGC do if the four leading universities decide to stay out of the new system, Shahidullah said, "We hope all will join...."

The commission will give all-out assistance to the universities in moving ahead with the central admission test, he said.

For holding the test, several committees will be formed incorporating teachers into those. "We will inform everyone about the outline and method of the exam in due time."

Seeking anonymity, an UGC member said they are determined to introduce the system even if any university doesn't want to join it.

Talking to reporters, DU VC Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman said, "We have discussed how a centralised entry test can take place. Those who were present at the meeting gave different opinions.

"Dhaka University informed the meeting that it will take its final decision on the matter after holding meetings at its academic council and general admission committee," he said.

Chittagong University VC Prof Shireen Akhter said the central admission test is a wonderful idea.

"None of the vice chancellors of the four universities running under the 1973 ordinance can make a final decision on his or her own. We have to sit with the academic councils," she pointed out.

Buet VC Prof Saiful Islam and JU VC Prof Farzana Islam said they will need to discuss the matter at their academic councils.

Earlier on January 23, the UGC announced that it would go for uniform admission test for the 2020-2021 academic year.

Bangladesh Bishwabidyalaya Parishad, an association of vice chancellors of the public universities, decided at a meeting on Tuesday that all public universities would have a uniform admission test this year. However, the VCs of the DU, Buet, and the JU did not attend the meeting.

For higher education, public universities remain students' top choice. But the number of seats is way smaller than the number of students seeking admission.

There are 39 public universities, which enrol around 65,000 students every year through separate admission tests. Last year, some 9.88 lakh students passed the HSC and its equivalent examinations under the 10 education boards.

UGC'S INITIAL PLAN

The UGC chairman said there will be three exams -- one each for science, humanities and commerce students -- based on HSC syllabus.

"Each exam could be for up to 100 marks," he said.

UGC Member Muhammed Alamgir said each of the universities will be able to fix a minimum score required for admission to that university and also set other conditions if necessary.

"But they [universities] will not be allowed to take further test."

The exams will be held immediately after the publication of the HSC results. "Our plan is to hold the three exams separately in three days."

The commission has not yet decided on the format of the exams.

"I think 50 percent questions could be MCQ [multiple choice questions] and the rest short questions," said Alamgir.

A committee will decide on who will conduct the test, he added.

WHY CENTRAL ADMISSION TEST? The idea of a centralised test has long been in discussion as admission seekers as well as their guardians face hassles every year when they prepare for separate admission tests at multiple universities in different parts of the country.

President Abdul Hamid on several occasions asked the VCs of all public universities to introduce a unified admission system to reduce such hassles.

The students' hassle begins after their HSC exams. Many of them turn to coaching centres to prepare for admissions tests. They buy admission forms for different units of multiple universities and spend a lot of time and money on travel and accommodation.

They often travel with parents or guardians, and sometimes have to check into hotels for overnight stay. There are cases when a candidate has to take separate tests for seats in separate faculties, even separate departments, in one university.

The UGC has long been suggesting modifying the existing admission process, saying it is too expensive and coaching-oriented.

In several annual reports, the commission said the public universities would have to take initiatives to introduce a unified admission system to reduce students' hassles and cut their expenses.

In 2010, the education ministry suggested introducing a uniform admission test, dubbed as "cluster system", for the public universities.

According to the system, universities of similar characteristics will be brought under a cluster for which a single admission test would be held. And admission seekers would be enrolled at public universities based on the merit list.

Last year, seven public agricultural universities introduced the cluster system.

Some top public universities had opposed the idea after it was floated around a decade ago.

Officials of the education ministry and the UGC said one of the reasons

behind their opposition was that the implementation of the cluster system would cut the income of the universities and also teachers from the sale of admission forms, invigilation and checking of answer scripts.

For example, Jahangirnagar University earned around Tk 20 crore from the sale of 3.60 lakh admission forms last year.

The universities also argued that a university would lose its distinction from the others if a uniform admission test is introduced. Besides, the quality of admission test will be compromised.

Asked whether some universities opposed the uniform system because it would slash their income from admission tests, JU VC Prof Farzana said, "No. This is not the only reason."

"There are some other reasons," she said without elaborating.

She, however, said 40 percent of the money, earned from the sale of admission forms, is spent on the university's development activities and the rest on conducting the test and teachers' remuneration.

Lighting the way

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Rashid said he wants to help the children with special needs and turn their dreams into a reality.

"I feel happy when the children read," he said, adding he will continue the school even he needs to sell his remaining assets.

The school provides education up to the fifth grade. Several of its past students are now studying at the tenth grade in other schools.

Seeing Rashid's noble work, some villagers came to support him and some of them are now voluntarily teaching at the school.

Rashid runs the school on his own and occasionally seeks support from neighbours and relatives for the cause.

A father of four daughters, Rashid is the lone bread-earner off his family. He grows crops and vegetables on some pieces of land.

Coast Guard

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The traffickers gathered the Rohingyaas at Noakhali Para of Teknaf on Monday night and boarded them on an engine boat to send them to Malaysia illegally.

Of the 19 named accused, 14 are residents of Teknaf, two are of Ramu, three are of Noakhali district, according to the case statement.

Bodies of the 15 Rohingyaas will be handed to their relatives after autopsies, police said.

The rescued Rohingyaas are in custody, said Pradip Kumar Das, officer-in-charge of Teknaf Police Station.

A Rohingya man was rescued yesterday morning on the St. Martin's beach, said Naim-Ul-Haque, Coast Guard commander on the island.

Radio signals bouncing

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a paper on arXiv, meaning the paper has been moderated but not fully peer reviewed. The authors of the paper are part of the CHIME/FRB collaboration, which has published a multitude of fast radio burst studies in recent years.

The signal is a known repeating fast radio burst, FRB 180916. J0158+65. Last year, the CHIME/FRB collaboration detected the sources of eight new repeating fast radio bursts, including this signal. The repeating signal was traced to a massive spiral galaxy around 500 million light-years away.

Researchers hope that by tracing the origin of these mysterious bursts, they can determine what caused them. So far, they have traced single and repeating fast radio bursts back to very different sources, which deepens the mystery.

The first repeating fast radio burst traced, FRB 121102, linked back to a small dwarf galaxy containing stars and metals. FRB 180916 was traced to one of the spiral arms of a Milky Way-esque galaxy. It was also within a star-forming region of the arm, the researchers said.

Now, the evidence of a pattern in the signal adds to the question of what could cause these bursts to emit the way that they do.

"The discovery of a 16.35-day periodicity in a repeating FRB source is an important clue to the nature of this object," the researchers wrote in their study.

In the paper, the researchers consider the possible causes, like the orbital motion of a star or an object that acts as a companion in the outskirts of the galaxy. The authors of another paper, who consulted with the researchers who discovered the pattern, suggest the cause could be coming from a neutron star and early OB-type star binary system.

Neutron stars are the smallest in the universe, the remnants of supernovae. Their diameters are comparable to the size of a city like Chicago or Atlanta, but they are incredibly dense, with masses bigger than that of our sun. OB-type stars are short-lived hot, massive stars. The interaction between these two, and the wind coming off of the OB-type star, could factor into the cause of the repeating FRB's pattern.

Understanding fast radio bursts

can also help astronomers learn more about the universe itself. The more bursts they can trace, the better they may be able to use the signals to map how matter is distributed across the universe.

The researchers believe that future observations could help them determine if other repeating fast radio bursts have a pattern. That way, they'll know if this kind of periodicity is the exception or routine behavior.

18 expelled

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of an expelled student, said he could not arrange the money to register his son's name for the picnic.

Another guardian said they joined a family picnic on Tuesday.

Yesterday, six of the 18 expelled students went to the school in Bashupara village, but returned home after receiving copies of the TC.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Head Teacher Jahangir Alam said the 18 students were expelled for "violating school discipline" by taking part in another picnic on Tuesday.

He claimed that the decision was made in a meeting of the school managing committee yesterday. Local lawmaker Mostafizur Rahman, president of the committee, was not present.

Some guardians said they filed a complaint with Upazila Nirbahi Officer Shahnaj Mithun Munni over the expulsions.

The UNO, however, said she was yet to receive any complaint in this regard.

Shariat Boyati

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January 9, accusing Shariat of making comments during a performance that hurt his "religious sentiment".

Mirzapur police in Tangail arrested Shariat, the 40-year-old folk singer, on January 11.

He was arrested in Mymensingh's Bhaluka upazila.

Shariat is a resident of Jamaruki area of Mirzapur upazila, police said.

Immediately after his arrest, police produced him before a judicial magistrate's court in Tangail with a 10-day remand prayer. The court of Senior Judicial Magistrate Akramul Islam placed him on a 3-day remand.

Rate of new cases drops

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placed under lockdown in the province.

The epidemic has threatened to harm the world's second-largest economy, with ANZ bank warning that China's first-quarter GDP growth would slow to 3.2-4.0 percent, down from a previous projection of 5.0 percent.

But in a positive development, the number of new cases has fallen in Hubei for two straight days, according to figures from the National Health Commission.

Outside the province, the number of new patients has declined for the past week.

"In general, the number of new cases is now slowly decreasing," Zhong Nanshan, a renowned scientist at China's National Health Commission, said in a video conference with medical staff in Wuhan on Tuesday.

"When does the turning point occur? I can't say. But I think it's at its peak in mid- to late-February," he said.

Australia's chief medical officer was more circumspect, however.

"I think we've just got to watch the data very closely over the coming weeks before we make any predictions," Brendan Murphy told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

In Geneva, the WHO is hosting a two-day international conference on combatting the virus during which it decided to name it COVID-19 -- in keeping with guidelines aimed at avoiding linking disease to an animal or a geographic location.

Warning it posed a "very grave threat" to the world, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said there was a "window of opportunity to hit hard and stand in unison to fight this virus in every corner".

"We are not defenceless," Tedros said, adding: "If we invest now... we have a realistic chance of stopping this outbreak."

In addition to locking down Hubei, authorities have restricted movements in several other cities far from the epicentre in its unprecedented effort to contain the virus.

Authorities have found a cluster in the northern port city of Tianjin, where 39 people were infected in one department store, according to the official Xinhua news agency. The first case was a salesperson who was diagnosed on January 31.

Several countries have banned arrivals from China, while major airlines have halted flights to and from the country, as hundreds of people have now been infected in some two-dozen countries.

The biggest cluster of cases outside China is on a cruise ship quarantined off Japan's coast.

An additional 39 people on board

the Diamond Princess have tested positive for COVID-19, raising the total of cases to 174, while thousands of passengers and crew face a second week in quarantine.

The case of a British man who passed on the virus to at least 11 other people -- without having been in China -- has raised fears of a new phase of contagion abroad.

The 53-year-old man caught the virus while attending a conference in Singapore and then passed it on to several compatriots while on holiday in the French Alps, before finally being diagnosed back in Britain.

Given China's economic heft and position at the nexus of global supply chains, the virus is affecting companies far and wide and across multiple sectors across the world.

International conferences are also being affected, with this week's Singapore Air Show -- Asia's biggest -- badly hit by exhibitors withdrawing and low attendance.

US chip giant Intel, Facebook, Chinese phone maker Vivo, and Cisco, meanwhile, have all withdrawn from the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona over coronavirus fears, joining other industry heavyweights pulling out of the world's top mobile fair.

Cameroon

separatists

kidnapped 100

people ahead of

vote: HRW

AFP, Yaoundé

Separatists in Cameroon's English-speaking regions kidnapped more than 100 people and torched property in the runup to elections last weekend, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said on Wednesday.

State security forces also committed "further abuses" in the two troubled regions, the watchdog said.

"Separatist leaders should issue clear instructions to their fighters to end their crimes against civilians," HRW's Central Africa director, Lewis Mudge, said in a statement.

"The government of Cameroon should ensure that its security forces put civilians first, by stopping their violations, prioritizing civilian protection, and holding abusers accountable."

The nationwide elections on Sunday were to elect a new legislature and local councils.

The vote should have been held in 2017 but was twice postponed.