

White US cops use guns more often than black cops: study

AFP, Washington

White police officers are more likely to use their firearms than their black colleagues, and even more so in majority-black neighbourhoods, according to a study.

The study, published Monday, reinforces a sentiment often expressed by minority communities in the US.

When called on emergency response operations, white officers "use gun force twice as often" on average as their non-white colleagues, wrote Mark Hoekstra and Carly Will Sloan, economists from Texas A&M University.

Additionally, "while white and black officers use gun force at similar rates in white and racially mixed neighborhoods, white officers are five times as likely to use gun force in predominantly black neighborhoods," they said in the study, which was submitted for discussion on the National Bureau of Economic Research website.

Criminal dies

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early morning. The security force members fired back in self-defence, the release said.

After 15 to 20 minutes, the armed criminals were forced to fall back and the security force members took control of the area, the release said, adding that later they conducted a search in the area and recovered the body of Arpon.

The team also recovered a foreign pistol, a locally-made weapon, several bullets and cartridges from the spot, the release added.

The ISPR release said Arpon and his associates were involved in extortion at Banaschhari for the last three to four months.

Sub-Inspector Al Amin of Rangamati Kotwali Police Station told this newspaper that policemen recovered the body after the incident.

The body had bullet holes in it, he said.

Shaktiman Chakma, 55, also a leader of Parbatya Chattogram Jana Sanghati Samity (MN Larma), was shot dead by unidentified criminals near Naniarchar upazila parishad complex on May 3, 2018.

Meanwhile, a suspected drug trader was killed in a reported gunfight with police in Kushtia's Doulatpur upazila early yesterday, reports UNB.

The deceased was identified as Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, 34, from Jamalpur village in the upazila. Police said he was wanted in 14 criminal cases.

SM Arifur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Doulatpur Police Station, said acting on a tip-off, they conducted a drive in the area around 3:00am.

As soon as the law enforcers reached the spot, criminals opened fire on them, forcing them to retaliate that triggered a gun battle.

At one point, Shahid had a gunshot wounds. Later, police took him to a local hospital where doctors pronounced him dead.

A firearm, two bullets and 50 bottles of Phensedyl were recovered from the spot, the UNB report says.

Four madrasa

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killed her, the mother alleged, adding that the four men, with the help of a managing committee member of the madrasa hung her body from a staircase with a scarf to convince people that she committed suicide.

Following the case, police arrested four of the accused and produced them before a court yesterday. The court then sent them to jail, said Ranajit Roy, officer-in-charge (OC) of Nabinagar Police Station.

Whether she was murdered or she died by suicide would be confirmed after autopsy, the OC said.

Meanwhile in Habiganj, a 14-year-old school girl was allegedly raped by her neighbour in Madhabpur upazila on Tuesday night.

Speaking to The Daily Star, the girl's father said the accused, Ripon Mia, 19, used to stalk the girl on her way to school. A few days ago, the girl complained about Ripon to his family.

On Tuesday evening, the girl was alone at her home as other her family members went to visit one of their relatives.

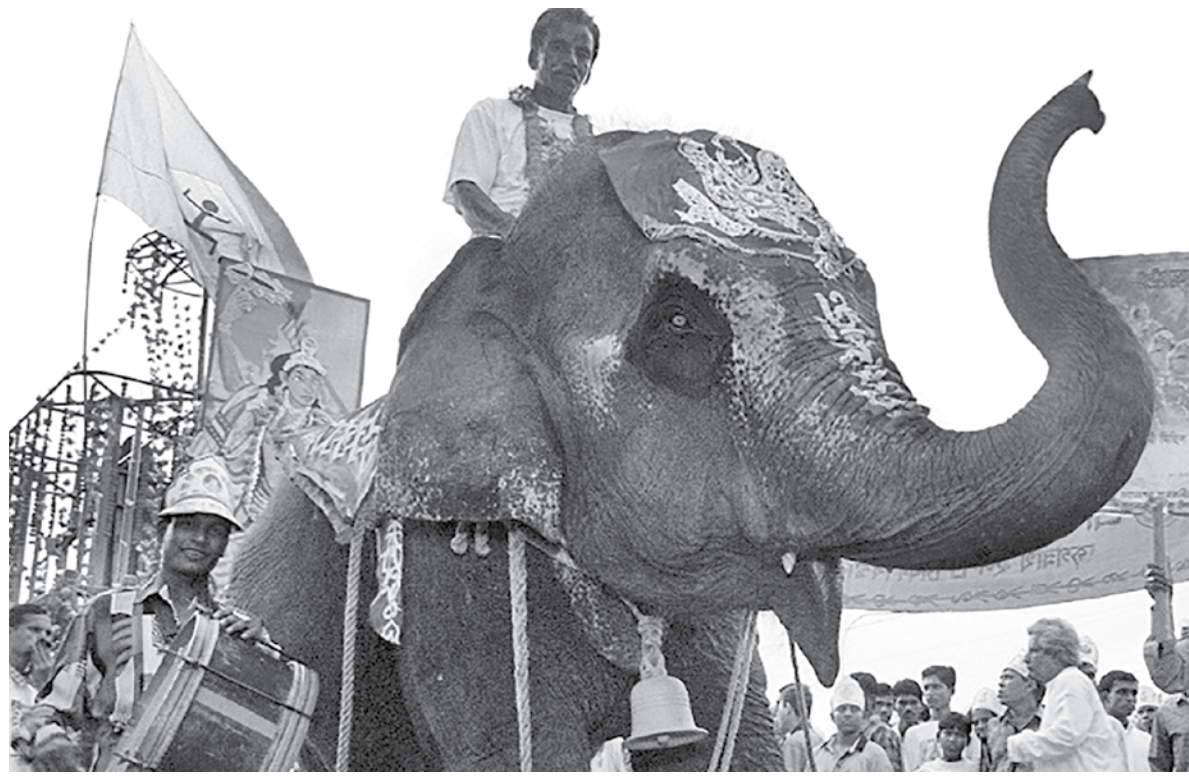
When the girl went out to use the bathroom situated outside the house, Ripon abducted her, forced her to a nearby bamboo garden and raped her, alleged the father.

When the girl started screaming, locals rushed there and rescued her. She was taken to a local hospital for treatment, he added.

The father said he would file a case against Ripon as soon as possible.

Contacted, Mohammad Iqbal Hossain, OC of Madhabpur Police Station, confirmed the incident and said the accused went into hiding and police were trying to arrest him.

(Our Brahmanbaria and Moulvibazar correspondents contributed to the story.)



Dhaka zoo suspends elephant rides

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The elephants had previously been made to give rides to up to 1,000 visitors a day, said Islam.

"The mahouts [elephant caretakers] are unhappy that we stopped a source of their income. But it was clear

that the animals were suffering," he added.

Rubaiya Ahmad of the Bangladesh Animal Welfare Foundation welcomed the news as "fantastic".

Dhaka zoo, the largest in and national zoo of Bangladesh, is

operated by the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock.

Located at the capital's Mirpur, it is home to more than 2,500 animals from 137 species, including five Asian elephants and eight endangered Bengal tigers.

World not ready to contain virus

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we were confined to a hotel after an Italian tourist was hospitalised as a suspected case.

Several governments are now advising people against travel to Italy, in particular to the regions worst affected in the north, as well as introducing checks for passengers arriving from the country.

Italian authorities have taken drastic measures to contain the outbreak which has seen 11 deaths and more than 320 cases within the country.

Eleven towns have been put in isolation and tens of millions people have been affected by school closures and the cancellation of cultural and sporting events.

Greece reported its first case yesterday, a woman who had recently travelled to northern Italy.

SIMPLY NOT READY

At World Health Organization headquarters in Geneva, Bruce Aylward, who headed an international expert mission to China, hailed the drastic quarantine and containment measures taken by Beijing.

But he told reporters on Tuesday that other nations were "simply not ready" to contain the outbreak.

"You have to be ready to manage this at a larger scale... and it has to be done fast," Aylward said.

The virus has killed 2,715 people and infected over 78,000 in China. There were 52 more deaths reported yesterday -- the lowest in three weeks -- with no fatalities outside the epicentre in central Hubei province.

The National Health Commission also reported a drop in new infections to 406, with only five outside Hubei -- a figure that will boost confidence that the rest of the country is at least containing the epidemic.

In the rest of the world, there have been more than 40 deaths and 2,700 cases.

The epidemic's disruption has also grown, with stock markets tumbling around the world, restrictions imposed on travellers and sporting events cancelled.

The WHO has called for countries to "prepare for a potential pandemic" -- a term used to describe an epidemic that spreads throughout the world.

Poor countries are particularly at risk, the WHO has warned.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urged Americans to prepare, saying that while the immediate risk there was low the global situation suggested a pandemic was likely, reports Reuters.

"It's not a question of if. It's a question of when and how many people will be infected," the CDC's principal deputy director, Anne Schuchat, said on Tuesday.

SOUTH KOREA SURGE

The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) reported 284 new infections yesterday -- its largest daily increase to date -- taking the overall national tally to 1,261, with the death toll rising to 12.

A 23-year-old US soldier stationed at Camp Carroll in Daegu was also infected. Some 28,500 American troops are deployed in South Korea.

Appointment based on merit

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already issued directives to the various government departments not to consider any application for a job or any other favour if it bears recommendations from any public leader.

Praising members of Mukti Bahini for their heroic role in liberating the country, Bangabandhu says that the entire nation is grateful to them. He asks members of Mukti Bahini to leave militia camps by February 29 with certificates of recognition.

Bangabandhu calls upon the people to form volunteer corps in different areas under the leadership of the Awami League for maintaining law and order.

21-MILLION DOLLAR US AID FOR BANGLADESH

The agency for international development is planning to contribute \$21 million worth of food grains to Bangladesh. The channel

of distribution will be the United Nations Relief Organisation in Bangladesh. Officials of the Agency have denied that the administration decided on the proposed shipment because of pressure from Senator Kennedy. Kennedy accused the US Administration of procrastination regarding food shipment to Bangladesh.

HIGH-POWERED TRIBUNAL DEMANDED

Families of the killed and missing intellectuals demand the immediate institution of a high-powered tribunal to punish the culprits directly responsible and involved in the killing of intellectuals, students, teachers, workers, peasants and general people of Bangladesh.

INDIAN ARMY TO PULL OUT MUCH AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

The pull-out of the Indian Army would be completed much ahead of the scheduled date of March 25,

Indian Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram informs today. He tells pressmen that only 20,000 Indian army personnel are now in Bangladesh and they will be brought back very soon.

GIVE DUE HONOUR TO WOMEN VICTIMS

Bangabandhu makes a fervent appeal to the people to give due honour and dignity to the women oppressed by the Pakistani army. He says that the oppressed women are his mothers, sisters and daughters and asks the people to set up inspiring examples of nobility of character by selecting from among them brides for the proud homes in Bangladesh. Bangabandhu directs the people to prepare a list of such candidates in each district who would choose brides from among the distressed women.

SOURCES: February 28, 1972 issues of Dainik Bangla, The Daily Ittefaq, Azad, Morning News, The Bangladesh Observer and Purbodesh.

'Noah's Ark' seed vault gets new crops

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Stefan Schmitz, who manages the reserve as head of the Crop Trust.

"The large scope of today's seed deposit reflects worldwide concern about the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss on food production."

The head of the genetic bank of the Nordic nations, Lise Lykke Steffensen, said every single seed in the vault "holds potential solutions for sustainable agriculture".

"Solutions that are vital for feeding a growing population and achieving a green transition," she added.

A total of 36 regional and international institutions have contributed to the 60,000 samples that were deposited on Tuesday.

The new arrivals include staple crops such as wheat and rice, as well

as wild varieties of European apple trees.

Also among the seeds are beans, squash and corn from the Cherokee Nation -- the first Native American group to send crops to the vault -- including their sacred White Eagle corn.

Britain's Prince Charles, who is known for his environmental advocacy, sent the seeds of 27 wild plants, including cowslips and orchids collected from the meadows of Highgrove, his country home.

"It has proved to be an exhausting and often demoralising task to persuade people of the utterly essential role played by all this diversity in maintaining vibrant, healthy ecosystems that sustain both people and our planet," the Prince of Wales said in a statement.

"It's more urgent than ever that we act now to protect this diversity before it really is too late," he added.

Five killed

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around 1:00am in Basherpool area, said Nasir Uddin, sub-inspector of Demra Police Station.

They were taken to DMCH where doctors declared one of the injured Akash dead. His pillion rider Ashique died later, police said.

A head-on collision between two motorbikes in Sabujbagh area of the capital around 5:30pm yesterday. The accident killed one person dead and injured another seriously.

The deceased was identified as Sagor Ahmed, 30. Injured Khadija Hossain Joy, 20, was admitted to DMCH.

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

Internet giants fight spread of untruths

AFP, San Francisco

As the new coronavirus spreads globally, the online battle to keep misinformation about the disease is also stepping up.

Google, Facebook and other platforms are struggling to keep ahead of scammers, trolls, and others with ill intent who routinely use major tragedies or disasters as opportunities to swindle or manipulate people.

"The public concern about coronavirus is being used as a vehicle to get people to transmit misinformation and disinformation," said University of Washington biology professor Carl Bergstrom.

Internet companies took part in a meeting with the World Health Organization last week at Facebook offices in Silicon Valley to discuss tactics such as promoting reliable information and fact-checking dubious claims about the coronavirus referred to as COVID-19.

"(We must) combat the spread of rumours and misinformation," WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told AFP recently.

"To that end, we have worked with Google to make sure people searching

for information about coronavirus see WHO information at the top of their search results."

Google search ranks authoritative sources higher when people are seeking information on health and labels results or news stories that have been fact-checked.

Ghebreyesus said that social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook, Tencent and TikTok have also taken steps to limit spread of misinformation about coronavirus.

Facebook said in a recent online post that it is focusing on claims which, if relied on, could increase the likelihood of someone getting sick or not getting proper treatment.

"This includes claims related to false cures or prevention methods - like drinking bleach cures the coronavirus - or claims that create confusion about health resources that are available," Facebook head of health Kang-Xing Jin said in the post.

"We will also block or restrict hashtags used to spread misinformation on Instagram, and are conducting proactive sweeps to find and remove as much of this content as we can."

ACC investigating

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parliament in Bangladesh."

According to the report, which cited Arabic-language newspaper Al-Qabas, the trio "occupied sensitive positions" in three major companies that brought more than 20,000 Bangladeshi workers to Kuwait in exchange for an amount believed to be more than Tk 1,391.6 crore.

On February 16, the ACC received a complaint in writing. A 174-page letter attached with "evidence" came to its chairman, said one of its officials, without disclosing who sent the documents.

In the letter, the ACC was requested to look into Shahid's "illegal wealth" and take measures for their confiscation, the official said.

The letter said Shahid, director of a private bank established mainly for non-resident Bangladeshis, laundered Tk 1,400 crore to different countries. He amassed the money illegally through human trafficking, the official said.

The official also said Sahid allegedly brought in Tk 280 crore through illegal hundi system and different bank accounts from Kuwait in 2016.

Of the Tk 280 crore, about Tk 132 crore was deposited with the account of the chairman of a private bank. The managing director of a leading lubricants company helped him bring another Tk 40 crore to Bangladesh, according to the letter.

Shahid allegedly transferred the rest of the money to Bangladesh through the accounts of one of his sisters-in-law and a ladies' garment shop. He also bought shares of a private bank for Tk 50 crore, while his wife bought shares of the same bank for Tk 30 crore, the letter further said.

Shahid has three flats in Gulshan in the name of his wife and daughters, an ACC official said, adding that the lawmaker bought land worth about Tk 91 crore in Cumilla's Meghna upazila.

The MP also bought Tk 70 crore wage earners bond of Sonali Bank for his wife and daughter, the official said.

ACC sources said Shahid took out a loan from the bank in which he is a director. With the loan money, he bought two vehicles -- one SUV and one Sedan car -- for his sister-in-law.

"But Shahid himself is the actual beneficiary and using the cars for his

own purposes," a source said. "Shahid has a fixed deposit worth about Tk 75 crore in the same private bank."

ACC sources also said the lawmaker allegedly took illegal bank guarantee facilities to supply stone to Rooppur Nuclear Power Project.

"In this connection, he laundered about \$20 million to the UAE from Kuwait," another ACC official said.

Contacted over the phone yesterday, the lawmaker denied the allegations. Shahid, who is now in Kuwait, told this correspondent that he has been in construction business for the last 30 years.

"About 26,000 people work in my Marafie Kuwaitia General Contracting Company. Of them, about 20,000 are from Bangladesh and the rest are from different other countries, including India and Nepal," he said.

"I don't have any businesses in Bangladesh. I have never made any illegal transaction and have always used proper banking channels," he added.

In an email last evening, Shahid also said, "We do not have any recruiting offices, licences or travel agencies in Bangladesh/ Kuwait or any other countries. In addition, we have internal and external auditors from some well reputed international organisations."

He also said he came to Bangladesh and went back to Kuwait on February 16.

The Arab Times report, which shed light on the alleged involvement of the three Bangladeshis in human trafficking, also said the Kuwait authorities nabbed a member of the racket.

The two other Bangladeshis have left the Gulf country after sensing trouble, the report said, but it did not mention when the workers were brought into that country.

According to the data of Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training in Bangladesh, 12,299 Bangladeshi workers went to Kuwait last year. The previous year, the number was 27,637.

According to the Arab Times report, Kuwait's Criminal Investigation Department has concluded through investigations that the three men have a large network of Bangladeshi employees working for them and are involved in trafficking.

Bangladeshis

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Meanwhile, health staffers in Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA), however, said they have been observing less passengers sometimes, while there is rush on other days like inbound passengers from other countries.

"The airlines are suffering from a shortage of passengers. It is tough to say exactly whether Bangladeshis are returning in bigger numbers than before. However, we see a rush [of passengers] on some days," Dr Shahriar Sajjat, assistant health director in HSIA, who supervises the screening process of the inbound passengers, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Singapore has reported 90 coronavirus cases, including five Bangladeshis who worked at the same construction site. One of the Bangladeshis is in a "very critical condition" and is undergoing treatment in a hospital ICU there, Bangladesh's foreign minister said earlier.

A Bangladeshi in the United Arab Emirates has also been infected.

The virus, SARS-CoV-2, has killed more than 2,600 people in China, where it first surfaced late last year.

Kakon Miyan, a 24-year-old construction worker in Singapore, said many of his friends had returned to Bangladesh, where there have been

no reported cases of the virus and will only come back when the situation in Singapore is better.

"We're staying for now, but if the situation worsens then we will go back too," he said.

Another Bangladeshi, Naushad said that many direct flights to Dhaka are full, and so he has to make transit in Bangkok or Kuala Lumpur.

Meanwhile, Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control, and research (IEDCR) director Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora yesterday cautioned fearful reactions towards any specific nationality would hamper the coronavirus patient identification and prevention process.

"Because, these foreigners would avoid local health authorities if they see a threat to their personal and social security," Flora said while speaking to journalists in a regular press conference in her office.

She urged that the hospitality of Bangladeshis to foreigners be maintained.

In the last 24 hours till 3:00pm, a total of 15,808 inbound passengers were screened in air, land and seaports across the country.

No passenger tested positive for coronavirus, according to IEDCR.

So far, IEDCR has tested 83 suspected samples and found all samples coronavirus negative.