

He killed

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from the house on Friday morning. Rapid Action Battalion on Sunday afternoon arrested Sagar in connection with the killings and informed journalists of the matter at night. Lt Col Khairul Islam, commander of Rab-12, told The Daily Star that Rab members arrested Sagar from his Brahmanbari house.

As per his statement, Rab members later recovered the knife, used in the killings, and valuables, including cash and gold ornaments, looted from Gani's house, from his possession.

Sagar confessed to the law enforcers that he had planned the killings with his associate and bought the chloroform from a local market for it.

As per the plan, they went to Gani's house around 10:00pm. At that time, Gani did not go to bed, but his wife and two children were sleeping. They first made Gani unconscious and killed him, said the Rab official, quoting Sagar as saying.

They then made unconscious and murdered his wife Tajron, 38, son Tajel, 18, and daughter Sadia, 9. They used a knife and an axe, which was at Gani's house, to kill them.

Locking the gate from outside, they left the house with the looted valuables. The Rab commander added that as per Sagar's statement, an accomplice helped him commit the crime.

But investigators after probe could say whether one or more was with Sagar.

Sagar was handed over to Madhupur police yesterday morning. Police arrested his accomplice Joad Ali, 30, on Sunday before Sagar was held, Tarik Kamal, officer-in-charge of Madhupur Police Station, told The Daily Star.

Joad was produced before a Tangail court yesterday, seeking a 10-day remand for him. But the court placed him on a three-day remand, said the OC.

Sagar was being interrogated at the station for verifying the information he gave and he will be produced before the court today, he added.

A murder case was filed with the station against unidentified criminals on Friday night.

3 suspects killed

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said Chandan Debnath, assistant director of Rab-14, Bhairab camp. Acting on a tip-off, a Rab team conducted a drive to arrest Mamun, of the same area, but sensing the team's presence, the accused opened fire at the law enforcers, forcing them to fire back that triggered the gunfight, he claimed.

Mamun was shot while his cohorts managed to flee the scene. He was later rushed to Brahmanbaria General Hospital, where doctors declared him dead, claimed the officer.

The Rab official also claimed to have recovered a foreign pistol, four bullets, and a knife from the scene. The body has been sent to Brahmanbaria General Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

Mamun was accused in four cases, including for murder of the ASI, robbery, and arms possession, filed with Brahmanbaria Sadar Model Police Station.

Md Rajib, 32, a suspected drug peddler accused in at least 25 cases, was killed in another "gunfight" with Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said DB.

The "gunfight" took place around 2:30am when a team of detectives carried out a raid in Nagdarpar area of Khilgaon, acting on a tip-off that a group of drug peddlers gathered there, said Md Asaduzzaman, deputy commissioner of DB (Motijheel Division).

Sensing police presence, the criminals opened fire at them who retaliated for self-defence, resulting in an exchange of fire. Rajib was caught in the line of fire and injured severely while other peddlers fled, the DB official claimed.

He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead, he added.

Detectives claimed to have recovered a firearm and 500 yaba pills from the scene.

In Cox's Bazar, Mizanur Rahman Mizan, 32, a suspected yaba dealer, was killed in a "shootout" with police in Khurushkul bridge area of the district town.

Benapole Immigration Police had arrested Mizan on Friday while he was entering Bangladesh from India, said Abu Md Shahjahan Kabir, officer-in-charge of Cox's Bazar Sadar Model Police Station.

On Sunday, a team of Cox's Bazar police took him to Cox's Bazar.

During interrogation, Mizan admitted to his involvement in yaba smuggling and gave information about consignments, claimed the OC.

Based on information, police, taking Mizan with them, launched a drive in Khurushkul bridge area early yesterday to recover yaba pills and firearms.

The OC claimed that Mizan's accomplices, realising police presence, opened fire which forced police to fire back in self-defence, resulting in a gun battle.

During the incident, Mizan was caught in the line of fire and rushed to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital, where doctors declared him dead, the OC claimed.

He claimed they recovered 10,000 yaba pills, a locally made rifle and one bullet from the scene of the gunfight.

[Our Brahmanbaria and Cox's Bazar correspondents contributed to this report]



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson holds up a painting of a ladybird he painted during his visit to The Discovery School in Kings Hill, south east England yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Guard against conspiracies

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Speaking at the first national conference of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) at the Suhrawardy Udyan today Bangabandhu explains to students four guiding principles of the state and calls upon them to concentrate all their efforts on implementing these principles.

The prime minister calls upon the students to devote their energy to studies so that they can build their character and become worthy citizens of Bangladesh. He urges them to go to villages and take the leadership in building a new society free from

exploitation. The student community should take up the task of nation-building with a missionary zeal, he adds.

He further asks the students to learn manners and show respect to the elders. Because, he says, the future generation would behave with them the same way they would be doing now.

WORKERS MUST EXERCISE TOLERANCE
Tajuddin Ahmad, minister for finance and planning, today fervently calls upon the workers and employees of Bangladesh Bank in Dhaka to exercise utmost tolerance and dismiss

the charge that democracy forbids socialism. Democracy comprises harmony and tolerance proceeded by consent of all to arrive at a decision. The decision should conform to the welfare of all, he adds.

3 NEW BSC COASTERS
Bangladesh Shipping Corporation with its newly acquired three Russian coasters, each with 1,600-tonne cargo carrying capacity, will begin three promotional routes from Chattogram soon. These three vessels were provided by the Soviet Union to Bangladesh as a gift in pursuance of the agreement signed by the prime ministers of the

two countries in March, 1972. The new routes to be served by these coasters are between Chattogram and Ceylonese ports, between Chattogram and ports in east coast of India and between Chattogram and the ports in Myanmar, Malaysia and Singapore. In the past, these routes were not adequately served by the national carrier and the lack of it had adversely affected the trade of Bangladesh with the countries of South and South-East Asia.

SOURCES: July 22, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Dainik Ittefaq.

Pregnant women in a pickle

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She expressed worries that her health might deteriorate as she did not have enough food.

Another flood-victim Shamsunnahar Begum, a nine-and-a-half-month pregnant woman, said she needed to talk to a doctor about her health problems, but she didn't find any health worker there.

Dr Nazrul said government health workers have been asked to visit the flood shelters and provide healthcare services to the victims.

According to the statistics of the district administration, around 400 villages of Kurigram's all nine upazilas have been hit by flood which has affected about 2.5 lakh people till Sunday.

In Munshiganj, some 73 villages have gone under water and another 15 are at risk of being flooded as the Padma was flowing 72cm above the danger mark at Bhagyakul point yesterday.

Meanwhile, Flood Forecasting and

Warning Centre (FFWC) said the water level in almost all the rivers of the country remained stable yesterday.

But the Jamuna, Brahmaputra, Dharala, Teesta and Meghna rivers may rise slightly today due to heavy rainfall, it added.

Besides, there was a rising trend in the water level in the rivers adjacent to the capital and this may continue till tomorrow.

The overall flood situation in the country's northern and north-eastern regions will improve today, while the situation may remain stable in the districts adjacent to the capital, the FFWC said in a bulletin.

Some 15 rivers were still flowing above the danger level yesterday, it said.

About 24,140 square kilometre area has been inundated by flood, according to a report of National Disaster Response Co-ordination Centre (NDRCC).

Over 26 lakh people from 90 upazilas of 18 districts have been

affected by the flood which has caused at least 21 deaths, said the report.

A total of 1,443 flood shelters have been opened and 212 medical teams are carrying out activities to provide healthcare services to the victims.

CROPS WORTH TK 349 CR DAMAGED

The ongoing flood has so far caused crop losses amounting to at least Tk 349 crore of 3.44 lakh farmers mainly from the country's northern and central regions, according to an estimate of the agriculture ministry.

The ministry in a press statement yesterday said flooding has affected crops on 76,210 hectares of land in Rangpur, Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Bogura, Sirajganj, Sylhet, Sunamganj, Jamalpur, Netrakona, Rajshahi, Manikganj and Tangail between June 25 and July 9.

Of the 76,210 hectares, crops on 41,918 hectares have been damaged completely.

The ministry also said crops on 83,000 hectares of land in Manikganj,

Bogura, Tangail, Natore, Naogaon, Kurigram, Jamalpur, Kishoreganj, Netrakona, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Faridpur, Madaripur, Rajbari and others districts have been damaged by flood between July 9 and 19. However, the financial loss from the damage was yet to be calculated, said the statement.

Officials placed the information at a meeting, chaired by Agriculture Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque.

The minister said it would be possible to overcome the shock from the flood if the situation did not worsen further.

Razzaque asked all to prepare alternative places for seedbeds for Aman paddy as many were damaged due to the flood.

"We have enough seeds in our stock and it should be distributed among the farmers," he said.

[Our Lalmonirhat correspondent contributed to this report.]

UAE launches first Arab mission to Mars

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southern Japan right on schedule at 6:58 am local time.

The launch of the probe, known as "Al-Amal" in Arabic, had twice been delayed because of bad weather, but yesterday's liftoff appeared smooth and successful.

An hour later, a live feed showed people applauding in the Japanese control room as the probe successfully detached.

In Dubai, the launch was met with rapturous excitement and blanket media coverage, with the Burj Khalifa

-- the world's tallest skyscraper -- lit up hours before liftoff with a symbolic 10-second countdown in anticipation.

"We proudly announce the successful launch of the Hope probe," Dubai's ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum said in a tweet.

"The ground control station in Dubai has received the first signal from the probe after its solar panels were successfully deployed to charge its batteries. Our 493 million km journey to the Red Planet starts here."

Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan said the country watched the launch with "pride and joy" as the nation embarked on a "new chapter in space".

Only the United States, India, the former Soviet Union, and the European Space Agency have successfully sent missions to orbit the fourth planet from the sun, while China is preparing to launch its first Mars rover later this month.

The Emirati project is one of three racing to Mars, including Tianwen-1 from China and Mars 2020 from the United States, taking advantage of a period when the Earth and Mars are

nearest.

In October, Mars will be a comparatively close 38.6 million miles (62.07 million kilometres) from Earth, according to Nasa.

"Hope" is expected to enter Mars orbit by February 2021, marking the year of the 50th anniversary of the unification of the UAE, an alliance of seven emirates.

Unlike the two other Mars ventures scheduled for this year, it will not land on the Red Planet, but instead orbit it for a whole Martian year, or 687 days.

Nations struggle to stem flare-up

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French authorities reported 400 to 500 active outbreak clusters but there are no signs of an imminent "second wave," Health Minister Olivier Veran said yesterday.

Many of the current virus clusters involve abattoirs or other contained professional settings such as old age homes, he said.

The United States - the worst-affected country by far - has recorded almost 3.7 million infections and 140,000 deaths. Florida and Texas reported over 19,000 new cases on Sunday even as President Donald Trump pledged that "it's going to be under control."

In Europe, talks aimed at reaching an agreement on a huge post-coronavirus recovery fund have stretched into a fourth day yesterday. But EU leaders are bitterly divided on how to help its worst-hit -- and most indebted -- members such as Italy and Spain.

"Are the 27 leaders, responsible for the people of Europe, capable of building European unity and trust?" EU Council President Charles

Michel asked the attending leaders, reminding them of the human cost of the crisis.

A handful of EU countries led by the Netherlands are reluctant to hand over such vast sums -- 750 billion euros -- to nations they regard as profligate, particularly Spain and Italy. The summit was set to resume at 1400 GMT yesterday.

Many countries in the continent had largely brought their outbreaks under control and were considering further easing of restrictions before fresh clusters were detected.

Governments are struggling to balance public health concerns over spreading infections against the need to open up economies battered by months of shutdown measures.

Hundreds of cinemas reopened yesterday in scores of Chinese cities after a six-month nationwide shutdown, with online-only ticket sales, shuttered snack bars, and social-distancing at a third of capacity.

France has made face masks compulsory in public indoor spaces, Spain asked millions to stay at home again, while the German state of

Bavaria said it would soon offer free virus tests at airports.

But an anti-mask demonstration in London on Sunday highlighted the challenge still facing authorities and health experts despite the mounting Covid-19 toll.

Dozens gathered to protest the face mask requirement in England's shops and supermarkets, many of them holding banners with widely discredited conspiracy theories -- such as coronavirus prevention measures being used for "mind control".

DEADLY US SURGE

The devastation has left tens of millions jobless in US, and the poorest have been hit hardest by the economic downturn, reports AFP.

To help the less privileged and the homeless, one charity in Los Angeles has started a "community fridges" programme. It involves seven colourful, clean and well-stocked refrigerators for anyone to access.

"If you need to empty the fridge, no one will judge you. If you need to take one tomato, or you only put one tomato in there, do it," said Marina Vergara, an organiser for LA

Community Fridges.

Despite the vocal and stubborn opposition to lockdowns and face masks in some parts of the world, they remain among the few options for authorities to control new outbreaks in the absence of a vaccine.

Hong Kong reported 73 new cases yesterday, including 66 that were locally transmitted, as new restrictions took effect and authorities warned there was no indication that the situation was coming under control.

Australia's acting chief medical officer said a surge in cases in the country's second-biggest city could take weeks to subside despite a lockdown and orders to wear masks.

Authorities in the state of Victoria, whose capital Melbourne is in partial lockdown amid a new outbreak, reported 275 new cases yesterday, down from a daily record of 438 three days earlier.

In India, 40,425 new cases and 681 deaths were recorded in the last 24 hours, in the biggest single-day jump, government data showed yesterday.

Daily deaths

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general (administration) of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said during a briefing yesterday.

A total of 13,362 samples were tested in 70 Covid-19 testing labs across the country in the past 24 hours till 8:30am yesterday.

In the same period, 1,914 Covid-19 patients have recovered, which takes the total number of recoveries 1,13,556 -- 54.74 percent of all confirmed cases.

Of those who died yesterday, 35 were males and 15 were females, while 42 of them died in hospitals and eight died in their homes.

Division-wise, 21 were from Dhaka, seven from Chattogram, three from Sylhet, two from Barishal, two from Rangpur, five from Rajshahi and 10 were from Khulna.

One of the dead was aged under 10, one between 21 and 30, one between 31 and 40, 11 within 41 and 50, nine between 51 and 60, 20 between 61 and 70, four between 71 and 80, two were 81 and 90, and another was above 90 years old, the DGHS official said.

In the same 24 hours, a total of 823 people were put into isolation while 801 patients were released from isolation.

As of yesterday, a total of 18,612 are in isolation.

HC fines Sikder

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Alarm said there was no legal bar to arrest accused Ron and Dipu following the HC order.

He also said during the hearing on the bail petition, the court expressed dissatisfaction at the lawyers of the two brothers for supporting them in filing petition from abroad.

During hearing, the attorney general vehemently opposed the bail petition stating that the accused cannot seek anticipatory bail from the virtual HC bench while staying abroad.

The accused must surrender before the subordinate court concerned for securing bail, he said, adding that only the trial proceedings, including recording statements of witnesses, can be run virtually without their physical presence.

Barrister Ajmalul Hossain QC, senior counsel for the accused siblings, told the HC bench that his clients filed the bail petition using the virtual system under the Usage of Information Technology in Court Act, 2020.

The law has permitted virtual filing of any petition, he said, adding that an accused can file such a bail petition in a particular situation involving his fundamental rights.

Deputy Attorney General Bashir Ahmed, who also represented the state during the hearing, told this newspaper that the HC fined accused Ron and Dipu as they filed the bail petition illegally and wasted the court's time.

He said Barrister Ajmalul argued that the accused filed the petition virtually from abroad, but they did not virtually appear before the HC during the hearing on the petition yesterday.

DAG Bashir said the details of the court's observation and grounds on which it passed the order would be known once it releases the full text of the order.

Advocate Muhammad Saifullah Mamun, who filed the petition on behalf of the accused, instantly could not say in detail about the HC order and proceedings.

The two brothers had jointly filed the petition on July 2 through Advocate Saifullah seeking anticipatory bail in the case.

Exim Bank Director Lt Col (retired) Sirajul Islam had lodged the case with the capital's Gulshan Police Station on May 19 against Ron and Dipu for allegedly torturing two top officials of the bank and opening fire at them over a Tk 500 crore loan.

The accused reportedly left the country by air on May 25.

Deadly virus spreading in Egypt prisons: rights group

AFP, Beirut

At least 14 prisoners have died from likely Covid-19 complications in scantily-monitored outbreaks of the disease at Egyptian detention centres, Human Rights Watch said yesterday.

"At least 14 prisoners and detainees have died, most likely from Covid-19 complications, in 10 detention facilities as of July 15," the rights groups said in a statement.

HRW based its report on witness accounts, leaked letters from prisons and reports by local rights groups. "Prisons had insufficient medical care and virtually no access to testing for the virus or symptom screening," it said.

Information about the health situation in Egyptian prisons is strictly controlled by the authorities.

HRW noted that Egypt had released some 13,000 prisoners since February, but this was "insufficient to ease overcrowding in congested prisons and jails".