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Maija killing report Police fail to prove charges

By Shaikh Nazrul Islam

Police have submitted the final report in connection with the death of Majibur Rahman Maija, a resident of city's Bashabo area, allegedly due to police torture on March 14.

Final report of a case is submitted when police fails to prove charges against the accused, which normally leads to disposal of the case.

Maija was nabbed from his Bashabo residence along with four other persons on March 14 on a complaint from his neighbour Fazlul Haq, a local Awami League leader, press reports had said earlier. Police were taking them to Sabujbagh thana on a boat.

In a bid to escape, Maija jumped into the Bashabo lake. Police continued to beat him with bamboo sticks and rifle butt and Maija eventually disappeared in the water, the press reports had said quoting witnesses who had gathered in hundreds on the lakeside during the incident. The body was later recovered from the lake on March 18.

Maija, a technician, by profession, was planning to go to Japan, members of his family said.

Sabujbagh Police had refused to register a FIR and so the victim's family recorded a general diary (GD), the earlier press reports said.

The autopsy report available from the Dhaka Medical College Hospital had said that marks of injury were found on the head and other parts of the body and that the death was not caused by drowning.

After the incident, it was recorded with the thana that police had nabbed Maija on a complaint from the local AL

leader Fazlul Haq, but it was later dropped.

Sub-inspector I Nazrul Islam who had led the police team in the action was later transferred to Motijheel thana but no departmental inquiry was done on the incident, police sources said.

Maija's family members later complained that SI Nazrul threatened them not to proceed with the matter.

"We don't have the courage to go to the court to seek justice," one of the family members told this correspondent yesterday requesting anonymity.

The copy of the autopsy report was also not given to the family, he complained. "How can we go for legal action in the absence of such a vital document?"

Copies of Maija's autopsy report were handed over to Sabujbagh police from the DMCH, but police denied it, the family members said.

They also alleged that police did not return the goods seized during Maija's arrest.

Sabujbagh police, meantime, said they submitted the final report on the case due to shortage of evidence in connection with the killing.

Police usually fails to find out the accused when they are alleged to be involved in the killing of the victim, human rights activists observed.

Such cases end in a final report as police do not show interest to find out the culprits, they added.

In the particular case the Maija Sabujbagh police refused to cooperate with the human rights activists in conducting an inquiry, they said.



Bandar thana police recovered huge quantum of arms and ammunitions from the hermitage of Peer Shaheb of Dewanbagh at Narayanaganj yesterday. Police also arrested 42 persons from the spot in this connection. —Star photo

City officials defend malaria programme

By Staff Correspondent

Dhaka's malaria control programmes are effective, despite two recent deaths and residents' concerns about spraying, says the Dhaka City Corporation's chief health officer.

"Our regular activities are quite satisfactory," said Dr. Mohammad Ashraf Uddin. "If our sweepers and other workers in respective wards abstain from work for one day, you will notice that it makes a big difference (in the number of mosquitoes)."

Ashraf Uddin said the mosquito species that transmit malaria are not found in the city. However, experts contradicted this claim. They said the species are found in urban areas, such as Dhaka, but are not widespread.

Cerebral malaria, the disease's most dangerous form, has killed two city residents in the last month. Symptoms include abnormal behaviour, diarrhoea, vomiting, anaemia and unconsciousness.

Yasmin Rahman, the wife of former finance minister Saifur Rahman's younger brother, died in the Ibrahim Memorial Hospital on Dec. 3 after battling a fever and internal bleeding for nearly five days.

Tanveer Ashraf Ahmed, a 20-year-old student, became Dhaka's second malaria victim when he succumbed to convul-

sions and respiratory failure on Dec. 8.

Blood tests confirmed the presence of cerebral malaria in both cases.

A Mirpur resident said she has read about the recent deaths and is very worried. "We've netted the windows and doors but we still fear mosquito bites that may cause malaria or dengue fever," said a Mirpur housewife.

Other residents complained spraying in their area was irregular and not properly monitored.

Residents in Moghbazar, Gulshan, Manda, Rayabazar, Shaymoli and Laibagh made similar complaints.

Bird hunters clash with villagers: One shot dead

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, Dec 25: One person was shot dead and 25 people, including a Bangladeshi teacher at Arkansas University in US were injured when villagers clashed with bird hunters, mistaking them as robbers today.

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Wheat looks brighter

By Staff Correspondent

Wheat prospects look bright this year, despite reports that many farmers planted their crop late because the fields were too wet.

Experts said successive bumper crops of boro and aman rice mean farmers have the cash they need to buy seed and fertiliser for wheat, the second most important cereal crop produced in Bangladesh.

However, a bulletin published by Novartis' crop protection wing predicted a 20 percent drop in acreage, since many fields were still too wet for wheat cultivation. It also re-

ported poor wheat seed sales.

But the International Centre for Improvement of Maize and Wheat reported the BADC seed was not in demand because farmers had stored more wheat seed than previous years.

According to sources, the price of wheat seed favoured farmers. However, there was a rumour that Indian seed had appeared on the domestic market, pushing the price down.

Craig A. Meisner, a wheat specialist, dismissed the rumour. "We've not heard or seen Indian wheat seed during our

travels," said Meisner, who visited wheat growing regions in late November and early December.

Despite the prospect of better yields, experts predicted a rise in the price of wheat in the coming months, since there will be a drop in the volume of wheat provided by food aid programmes in the first half of 2000.

A bumper price crop will probably push prices of that staple down, making consumption of rice more affordable than wheat, they said.

Siddique visits Bangabandhu Museum

By Staff Correspondent

Kader Siddique Bir Uttam, former Awami League MP and president of the newly launched Bangladesh Krishak Samik Janata League, visited the Bangabandhu Museum in the city yesterday and placed wreath at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Fazlur Rahman, general secretary of the party and other leaders accompanied him, a party press release said.

The party will hold a rally soon to protest Friday's attack on the convention, called by Siddique at the Institution of Engineers in the city to launch the party, the release said.

Gunmen allegedly belonging to ruling Awami League's student wing foiled the convention.

Meanwhile, Ramna police said they are yet to identify the gunmen. No case was lodged in connection with the incident, the OC of Ramna thana said yesterday.

Two persons were however arrested on charge of damaging vehicles and assaulting police at the venue on Friday, he said. A case was also registered in this regard, he added.

Two MiGs arrive

From page 1

both low speed handling and also possess capability as a ground attack fighter-bomber. Defence analysts say that the aircraft is extremely maneuverable and can match any combat fighter in use today.

The MiG-29s have the latest avionics and gunnery equipment. The higher speed is actually advantageous both for the purpose of engagement and disengagement.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Chief of Air Staff Air Vice Marshal Jamal Uddin said that the induction of the MiG-29s was a moment of glory for the Bangladesh Air Force and it would enable the BAF to overcome its deficiency to a large extent.

The Air Chief said that it would not take much time to get the MiGs fully 'assembled and air-worthy' since they have already been pre-inspected by a six-member specialist Bangladesh team in Russia before their shipment. However, each of the MiGs, he said, would be flight-tested by Russian specialists and then handed over to the BAF. A 13-member Russian air force team has already flown into Bangladesh for the purpose.

The MiG-29s would be assembled at the BAF hanger in Dhaka.

The agreement for purchase of MiG-29s was made as a state-to-state deal and the Bangladesh government is purchasing the entire hardware through cash payment. However, the deal is on easy financial terms considering the fact that the payment is spread over a nine-year period. The total package at a cost of 124 million US dollars is inclusive of aircraft hardware, primary armaments and ammunition, training transportation and technical services.

Ten pilots and 70 technicians are in Russia for getting 'familiarization training' for handling the new aircraft. It was learnt that the Bangladesh technicians are due to return by the first week of January. However, the return of the ten pilots who were sent for training and each of whom would have to log 20 hours on the new machines, would be delayed by a few weeks. They are now expected to return by end of January. The delay has been caused due to bad weather at the designated place of training in Russia, it was learnt.

An induction ceremony is expected to be held in March to display the new aircraft in the Bangladesh skies.

Police raid 42 held, arms recovered from Dewanbagh Darbar Sharif

NARAYANGANJ, Dec 25: Police with the help of BDR raided Dewanbagh Darbar Sharif today and arrested 42 people, reports UNB.

Arms and ammunition were also recovered from the Darbar Sharif.

The recovered arms and ammunition included 50 bullets, 27 bombs, 60 ramdaos and 200 sticks.

The police raid came two days ahead of the planned meetings called by both groups at the same venue on Monday.

Three cases were filed with Narayanganj thana.

Injured JCD man dies

By Staff Correspondent

A JCD leader who sustained assault injury by a gang of extortionists at Karwanbazar on December 18, died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday.

The dead identified as Mahbubur Rahman, publicity secretary of Karwanbazar Unit of JCD, Mahbub was a vegetable vendor of the area.

Millennium fever grips city's business

By Mustak Hossain

Traders and retailers in the city are taking advantage of the 'millennium fever' in promoting their business activities and sales of their goods and services ahead of the arrival of the year 2000.

Only 6 days are left for the advent of the new year.

Businesses have taken up special programmes like sales, fashion shows, concert and many other promotional activities.

Different multinational and local big companies dealing with electronics, clothing and consumers' durables in general have offered attractive price reductions and special 'millennium package'.

The special offers range between 5 per cent and 25 per cent discount on some specific items, according to market sources.

Hundreds of people attracted by the lucrative offers thronged shops and show rooms in the capital to buy products of their choice.

The shops are now open on all days including weekends in a bid to make the most out of the Eid-market and to make up for the losses incurred during the frequent general strikes called by opposition political parties over the last few months.

Middle class people usually

buy expensive household electronics during the Eid festival with the money saved round the year for the purpose.

The companies which have extended millennium sale offers include Limo, dealer of Braun, Kenwood, Transcom, dealer of Philips, Nicole dealer of Panasonic, Rangs Group dealer of Toshiba and Pioneer, Singer and Butterfly, dealer of LG Electronics.

Sellers of electronics have offered special discount and instalment facilities for their consumers on various types of electronic items such as television, refrigerators, air conditioners, microwave ovens and the like.

Computer dealers have also offered special discounts for personal computers (PCs) and computer accessories just before the transition to the new year.

A ten-day long 'millennium festival' organised by a group of businessmen has begun at the Tennis Court of Dhaka Sheraton Hotel on December 23, where all types of consumers' products including handicrafts and clothing are available.

Different boutique shop owners and designers have also planned to organise fashion shows and cloth exhibitions to mark the advent of the new millennium.

Christmas celebrated

The Christian Community of the country as elsewhere in the world yesterday celebrated the Merry Christmas (X-Mas) amid fun and religious fervour, reports BSS.

The Christian community shared the joy with the members of their families, friends and neighbours and wished their bright future on the holy occasion of the Merry Christmas, the birthday of Jesus Christ.

The salient features of the day, the biggest religious festival of Christian Community, included decoration of Christmas trees, cutting Christmas cakes, presenting lucrative gifts by the Santa Claus to the children, signing Christmas carols, illumination and decoration of Christmas trees at the houses of Christian community and offering special prayers in all Churches across the country.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed hosted a reception for the members of the Christian Community on the occasion of Merry Christmas at Gangebhaban. The President greeted the members of the community and exchanged greetings with them.

Members of the Cabinet and the Parliament, leaders belonging to Christian Community, diplomats and high civil and military officials attended the reception.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also exchanged greetings with the members of Christian community at Ganobhaban.

Besides, St Mary's Cathedral at Kakrail, the Holy Cross at Luxmi Bazar and Churches at Tejgaon, Banani, Asad Gate and Kafur also organised special prayers on the occasion. St Paul's Church at Narayanganj, Churches in Chittagong and the community across the country also observed the day with religious fervour and gaiety.

Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Betar yesterday aired special programmes while national dailies brought out special supplements highlighting the significance of the day. The day was a national holiday.

Hartal observed in Narail

NARAIL, Dec 25: A six-hour hartal was observed by district BNP peacefully here today, reports UNB.

The BNP called hartal demanding withdrawal of case against its vice-president Tariqul Islam who was charged with Jessore Udichi murder.

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Flight of terror

From page 1

"We do not want them to stay here and we have told the United Nations this. They should intervene," he said.

The hijackers — reportedly armed with grenades, pistols and knives — seized the plane about 40 minutes after it took off from Nepal heading for New Delhi on Friday. It stopped in India, Pakistan, and the UAE and was refused landing at several airports before making its latest stop — in Kandahar, the headquarters of Afghanistan's ruling Taliban.

A group called the Islamic Salvation Front had earlier taken responsibility for the hijacking and had reportedly asked for the release of two imprisoned Kashmiris, involved in a bloody secessionist movement in Indian-ruled Kashmir. The prisoners are said to be members of the militant Muslim group Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, headquartered in Pakistan.

But a Lashkar-e-Tayyaba spokesman Abdullah Mutazir denied any involvement in the hijacking and said "if anyone of the hijackers say they are members of our group it is a lie. We condemn this hijacking and accuse India of propaganda against us."

The plane was carrying 189 passengers when it took off. While the plane was refueling in the Emirates, the hijackers released 27 hostages and the dead

body.

Hong Kong-based Star TV identified the slain man as a 25-year-old who was on his honeymoon in Katmandu. His wife reportedly remained on board. The Times of India said many of the passengers were honeymooners returning from Nepal.

One of the women freed in Dubai, Pooja Tyagi, said the hijackers ordered passengers to cover their eyes with their clothes, according to her brother-in-law. Tyagi said the slain man was knifed to death after looking twice at the hijackers, said the brother-in-law, a Delhi University professor, VK Tyagi.

Tyagi also said the hijackers spoke Hindi, but he could not make out their nationality. Two men who were among those freed at the Al Minhad military base in UAE said the hijackers carried knives, hand grenades and pistols.

It was unclear if there were further deaths among the passengers. The two freed men told reporters that at least two passengers were killed with knives. Indian Civil Aviation official Ravinder Gupta said one person was killed and two injured. Earlier, the hijackers told the pilot they had killed four people on board and wounded five more. Indian officials said, but the claims could not be confirmed.

The A300 Airbus was hijacked after leaving the Nepalese capital of Katmandu en route to the Indian capital, New Delhi. The plane first tried to land in Lahore, but was denied permission by the government of Pakistan. The hijackers then forced the aircraft to land in the western Indian city of Amritsar, where it spent 40 minutes on the ground.

The plane returned to Lahore, where it made an emergency landing. The Pakistani government gave the hijackers food and allowed the aircraft to refuel and take off after Pakistani authorities negotiated with the captors.

Upon leaving Lahore, the plane headed toward Kabul. However, Afghan authorities told the pilot it was impossible to land safely in the country during the night, according to a Taliban official.

The aircraft then tried to land in Muscat, the capital of the Gulf country of Oman, but was refused permission, according to authorities there. It then headed for the UAE.

Originally, there were 178 passengers and 11 crew members on board.

The passengers included 150 Indians, eight Nepalese, one Canadian, one American, four Swiss, four Spaniards, one Belgian, one Japanese, one Austrian, two French and one Italian. Four passengers were not listed by nationality.

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