

US plane forced to land as man aboard tries to ignite explosives

AFP, Washington

An American Airlines plane en route from Paris to Miami was forced to land on Saturday in Boston, Massachusetts, after a small quantity of explosives was found in a passenger's shoe, airport officials said.

The man tried to set off an explosive device before members of the crew subdued him with the help of some passengers, Logan Airport director Tom Kinton said.

The suspect, apparently travelling on a false British passport in the name of Richard Reid, was arrested by Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents, Kinton said.

MSNBC television reported he was of Middle Eastern origin.

American Airlines Flight 63 -- which took off from Charles de Gaulle Airport and was expected in Miami at 3:15pm (2015 GMT) -- landed at about 1:00pm (1800 GMT) after a flight attendant sensed a strong odour coming from the passenger's shoe and saw a wire sticking out of it, Kinton said.

Crew members and passengers of the Boeing 767 subdued the individual and held him until the plane landed and an FBI team entered the cabin. All 185 passengers and 12 crew members were evacuated safely, authorities said.



SEE PAGE 11 COL 1 The detained suspect (R) is being escorted out of the Logan airport by FBI agents.

Human chain for release of Shahriar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent citizens including intellectuals, university teachers, politicians and cultural activists yesterday formed a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the city demanding withdrawal of the 'false case' against writer and columnist Shahriar Kabir and his immediate release.

The human chain was formed at around 11:00 in the morning and continued for about an hour. Participants carried posters and placards. The family members of Shahriar Kabir also took part in the programme.

Shahriar Kabir's 10-year old boy Arpan Kabir held a placard that read, "Shahriar Kabir is my father, I want him back."



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PGR member killed in road accident

UNB, Barisal

A member of President's Guard Regiment (PGR) was killed and three others were injured when a lorry of PGR convoy hit a roadside tree at Bhairabpasha on Barisal-Jhalakati road yesterday morning.

The dead was identified as Shahjahan. He hailed from Dinajpur district.

Shahjahan, along with his colleagues, was returning to the capital after discharging their duty of providing security to the prime minister during the inauguration of Gabkhan Bridge in Jhalakati on Saturday.

Police said one vehicle of the PGR convoy hit a tree when its driver lost control over steering. Shahjahan and three other members of the regiment fell down and were injured critically.

Shahjahan was rushed to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital where he died at about 9 am. His body was sent to the capital.

Three injured guards -- Anwar with both his hands broken, and Ferdous and Ahsan with serious head injuries -- were taken to Dhaka by an Army helicopter.

Govt takes move to set up Human Rights Commission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After repeated failure by the two past governments, the BNP-led coalition has initiated a move to constitute an independent Human Rights Commission (HRC) to monitor and improve the state of the country's human rights.

The law, justice and parliamentary affairs ministry is now busy finalising a draft which will also fix the terms of reference of the proposed commission. According to the draft, the commission would investigate the allegations of human rights violation and take necessary actions as per the existing provisions of law.

The ministry would place the draft proposal shortly before a high-powered cabinet committee, formed at a cabinet meeting on December 10, for its consider-

ation, well placed sources in the ministry said.

The proposed commission would be a five-member one and headed by its chairman to be appointed by the government at the status of a judge of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court. The legislature will appoint four other members of the proposed HRC, a law ministry official told The Daily Star quoting the draft proposal.

The draft would primarily be vetted by the cabinet committee and then sent to the cabinet for its approval, he said. "Once the cabinet approves the draft, the government would place a bill in parliament for its passage preferably in the winter session of the Jatiya Sangsad," the official said requesting anonymity.

After assumption of power in

1991, the then BNP government had initiated a move to set up a human rights commission but could not form it. Similarly, the immediate past Awami League government also prepared a draft for setting up of an independent HRC and it was approved in principle by the then cabinet. But finally it did not see the day light.

The present cabinet at its regular meeting on December 10 formed the committee headed by law minister Barrister Moudud Ahmed to examine the prospect of setting up of the commission. Communications Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda, Post and Telecommunication Minister Barrister Aminul Haque and Information Minister Dr. Abdul Moysen Khan are the other members of the committee.

Khatib's remarks protested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 11-party and Bangladesh Trade Union Kendra (BTUK) yesterday protested the remarks of Obaidul Haq, Khatib of Baitul Mukarram, during Eid prayers at the National Eidgah Maidan.

The 11-Party strongly protested the Khatib's remarks and demanded his removal from the post.

At a meeting, chaired by Gano Forum president Dr Kamal Hossain,

Transport workers barricade Sayedabad intersection after arrest of their leader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Demra police last night arrested a transport leader, accused in more than dozen cases, from Mir Hazaribagh in the city.

The arrested man, identified as Habibur Rahman Habu, is wanted in cases of murder, extortion, public safety act and other criminal activities.

Following Rahman's arrest transport workers put up barricades on the highway at Sayedabad intersection demanding his release. The agitating workers clashed with

Slow procurement leads to cash crunch for boro farmers

REAZ AHMAD

Farmers are facing cash crisis in Boro cultivation this season due to government's sluggish food procurement and the "static price" offered for the Aman crop.

They are already hard pressed as they had to go for supplementary irrigation for the otherwise rain-fed Aman crop due to an early season drought in June-August.

In northern and western districts, this enhanced the cost by at least 10 percent and left about 20 per cent of lands without Aman cultivation, according to field reports available from Syngenta Bangladesh Limited, a joint venture agro-science company with government participation.

Farmers incurred loss in Aman production, particularly in the northern and western districts, the reports said.

On the other hand, the procurement so far is

so "insignificant" compared to the target that any countrywide figure has not been compiled and the procurement price has been fixed at last year's Tk 8 per kilogram of paddy and Tk 12.50 for rice.

Officials however attribute the slow procurement to the Eid vacation.

The Aman procurement drive was launched on December 7 with a target of 1.5 lakh MT of rice and 1.45 Mt of paddy. It will continue till February 28.

Experts are of the view that a speedy procurement could give the farmers some monetary relief and facilitate timely investment in Boro crop.

Aman accounts for about 45 percent of the country's annual rice production. Sixty-two per cent of the Aman crop is produced in the northern and western districts.

Officials of the Department of Agriculture Extension put the

drought-caused loss in Aman at five percent but field reports suggest it is higher.

The highly cost-intensive Boro is the main among the three crops (Aus, Aman and Boro) a year.

Adequate rainfall in October could not fully offset the late start in Aman cultivation which affected over 50 percent of Aman crop lands.

The Syngenta said Aman production was at least 0.8 million MT less due to the early season drought.

Aman was grown in over five million hectares, two percent up from this year's target but two percent less than last year's acreage.

Despite all these odds, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) forecast this year's total rice production in the country at around 24.4 million MT against last year's record production of 25 million MT.

Saifur launches industrial finance co

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman has lauded launching of an industrial and infrastructure development finance company, saying it will help meet the need for long term capital for investment.

"It's a commendable effort and I strongly support this initiative because the country's industries and infrastructure development need long term capital for investment," he said.

The finance minister was speaking as chief guest at a reception to mark launching of the Industrial and Infrastructure Development Finance Company (IIDFC) Limited, held at BRAC Inn the city yesterday.

M Matlul Islam, Chairman, and AKM Mozmul Haque, Managing Director of IIDFC, also spoke on the occasion.

Matlul Islam said the poor performances of Bangladesh Shilpa Bank and Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha (BSRS) have prompted the sponsors to launch the company.

The immediate past government had decided to privatise BSRS but the plan was not implemented, he said.

He said IIDFC has adequate expertise and manpower to meet the need of its clients.

IIDFC is a development finance company, promoted by ten banks from both the public and private sectors, three insurance companies and the Investment Corporation of Bangladesh (ICB).

The objective of IIDFC is to provide "high quality" financial services including medium to long



Seismic shock...any earthquake with high magnitude may knock down many old rundown buildings like this (in the picture), which dot the cityscape of Old Dhaka.

Two murdered in city, body found

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two people were murdered and the body of a third person was recovered in separate incidents in the city yesterday and on Saturday.

Unidentified people shot dead a video cassette shop owner, who also worked as a police source, at Aga Sadek Lane in the city's Kotwali area in the afternoon.

The deceased, identified as Parvez Alam alias Pharma Jahangir, 45, was a residence of Beharam Deowri in Kotwali area. He was allegedly involved trading of narcotics.

Alam was waiting near his shop, JH Haq Music World, at about 3.30pm when a gang of seven appeared on the scene. They shot him in his chest, stomach and legs

and fled.

The victim was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the attending doctors declared him dead.

Police and local people said that his rivals may have killed Alam over control of drug trading in and around the Bangladesh Math in the locality.

Another source said that the victim had a rivalry with the local ward commissioner, Mosharrar Hossain alias Kala Khoton of Shahinagar and may have been killed in connection with the conflict, the source said.

The victim is an accused in several cases including one of murder.

He had three wives, three daughters and three sons.

Technical fault Biman flight from London delayed by 24 hrs

UNB, Dhaka

A Dhaka-bound flight of Bangladesh Biman was delayed by 24 hours after its takeoff was cancelled for technical fault at the last moment in London on Friday night.

The fault was detected just before the aircraft (BG-018) was preparing to fly from the Heathrow Airport with 214 passengers aboard. The plane was then driven back to terminal from the runway.

The passengers either stayed at hotel at the expenses of Biman or at the residences of their relatives in London to spend night.

A technical team of Royal Dutch airlines KLM repaired the fault.

The London-Dubai-Dhaka-Sylhet flight at last departed at 9:30 pm on Saturday and landed in Dhaka at 4.54 pm yesterday. Its original arrival time in Dhaka was 3:30 pm on Saturday.

According to latest information, the flight was preparing to take off for Sylhet.

Terrorist attack Arahazar thana OC suspended, six arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Police on Saturday night arrested six people from two villages of Arahazar upazila in connection with the terrorist attack on Friday.

The arrested people are Habibur Rahman, son of Abdul Barek, Idris Ali, son of Sonu Mia, Nurul Islam, son of Sonu Mia; Monjurul Islam, son of Shamsul Huq, Nurul Islam, son of Ramizuddin and Firoz Mia, son of Abdul Karim.

All the arrested are known as BNP supporters.

Meanwhile BNP MP Ataur Rahman Angur called a press conference in N'ganj Press Club on Sunday morning.

Police sources said officer-in-charge (OC) of Arahazar thana was suspended yesterday on charge of negligence of duty.

Meanwhile, BNP MP Ataur Rahman Angur yesterday condemned Friday's incident at Agundi village.

He denied his involvement in the incident as reported in a section of newspapers.



Akhtar made envoy to Spain

BSS, Dhaka

The government has appointed Shahed Akhtar, Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as ambassador to Spain, an official handout said Saturday.

Akhtar, a career diplomat, has served in different capacities in various diplomatic missions abroad and the permanent mission to the UN.

He served as the first and second secretaries in the permanent mission to the UN, New York and as first secretary and Counsellor in Bangkok.

Akhtar also served the Bangladesh High Commissions in London and Kuala Lumpur as minister and deputy high commissioner. He also held different positions in the Foreign Ministry, including Director General for West Asia and Central Asia and for Europe.

He represented Bangladesh in a number of United Nations Conferences in New York, Geneva and Paris. He was a member of the delegation to the UN, ESCAP, IPU, APDC, Human Rights and also attended conference on Law of the Sea.

Akhtar, who did his graduation in Economics and Masters in Political Science, was a research associate at the Georgetown University, Washington, DC. He is the first foreign service officer to have graduated from the National Defence College of Bangladesh.

AL to reinstate FF officials if back to power: Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Former prime minister Sheikh Hasina has said if it returns to power, Awami League would reinstate the freedom fighter officials and employees terminated illegally by the present government.

Hasina said after 30 years of independence, the Jamaat-BNP clique is now engaged in a conspiracy to destroy spirit of the Liberation War. She urged the people to build resistance against rape, murder and repression under the present government.

Hasina, now in the United States, made the remarks while addressing

a function marking the Victory Day and Eid-ul-Fitr, which was organised by the Florida Awami League and Bangladesh community at Hotel Hilton in Miami on Saturday.

She condemned the "distortion" of the history of the Liberation War through a drama on BTN on December 16 and Inqilab newspaper's demand for declaring August 14 as a national day.

The Awami League president also condemned "illegal" termination of pro-liberation officials and employees and said they would be reinstated with seniority if her party was in office.

Presided over by Victory Day

Celebration Committee Convenor Fazlur Rahman, the meeting was also addressed by MA Samad, Showkat Hossain, Md Imran, Ayub Khan, Shahid Newaz Chowdhury and Sarkar Harun.

A message from Congressman Hestin was read out by this private secretary Don Liftman on the occasion, paying respect to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and praising Sheikh Hasina for her struggle for democracy.

A news release from the US city said the Congressman also expressed solidarity with her move

News Analysis

Political front: Lull before storm!

NAZMUL ASHRAF

If the latest developments are any indication to go by, the politics is bound to gather much of storm once the brief lull caused by the Eid-ul-Fitr vacation is over.

In fact, a number of contentious issues had already warmed the politics to some extent even in the usually dull days of Ramadan.

As the government is toughening its attitude towards a defying opposition, the Awami League is churning out a flurry of issues to give the BNP-led ruling alliance a tough time in the post-Eid politics.

Concerned by the ever-worsening law and order coupled with growing discontents within, the government, by all indications, is readying to suppress any effective street agitation against it. The government's recent actions are nothing short of this proposition, which is pushing its relation with the opposition from bad to worse and slimming down the AL's prospect of joining the next parliamentary session.

Moreover, the political volatility is now poised to hit a new low with both the ruling coalition and the main opposition party decided to face each other on the burning issue of human rights violation now and during the AL rule.

Systematic attacks on the religious minorities and the defeated AL activists since the October 1 general

election have so far been dictating the terms of national politics. Blamed for the post-election atrocities, the ruling alliance first refused to accept that there had been any attack on the minorities. Until recently, it has dismissed press reports as designed to embarrass the new government.

Of late, the coalition government had acknowledged "some stray incidents" of violence against the Hindus, blaming the AL for those only after the donors and India a large number of victims fled to were

critical of its role.

As the issue of repression on the Hindus has drawn the attention of international community, the government is increasingly becoming annoyed with the media as well as those in protest campaign over the post-election brutalities. Police had meantime arrested noted journalist Shahriar Kabir, who was making a documentary on the repressed Hindus, and charged him with sedition.

The government does not seem