

8 killed in attack on US nursing home

AFP, Washington

A heavily-armed gunman shot dead eight people, many elderly and infirm patients, in a North Carolina nursing home Sunday, authorities said, announcing that the shooter was in custody.

They identified the alleged gunman as 45-year-old Robert Stewart, but shed no light on why he went on a shooting spree at the Pine Lake nursing home in Carthage, North Carolina, a village of just 2,000 people.

"This morning a lone gunman came to the Pine Lake nursing home in Carthage and as a result of his actions today, he is facing eight counts of first degree murder," said Maureen Krueger, the Moore county district attorney.

She said the victims included a 98-year-old patient, four victims in their 80s, two in their 70s, and anurse.

The killings stunned tiny Carthage, the seat of a bucolic south central North Carolina county. Officials said at a press conference that the town has a police force of 18, just two of whom were on duty at the time of the violence.

Carthage police chief Chris McKenzie said he had never encountered anything like in 20 years as a police officer.

"I don't know that the emotion has entirely set in," McKenzie said. "This is a small community built on faith and faith will get us through."

He said the Red Cross and the county department of social services and mental health were providing help to families of the victims and the staff of the nursing home, and the town's First Baptist Church had opened its doors to those affected by the tragedy.

The first calls to the police emergency line came in at 10:03 am reporting that a shooting was underway at Pine Lake, a 90-bed rehabilitation, nursing and

Alzheimer's care facility.

Krueger said police responded and one of the officers, Justin Garner, acted "in nothing short of a heroic way today. But for his actions we certainly could have had a worse tragedy."

At least six people were taken to the First Health Moore Regional Hospital, where two died, a hospital spokeswoman said. Two of the injured were treated and released, two others were hospitalised, said Emily Sloan.

The carnage is the latest to rock small town America, which often has borne the brunt of outbursts of gun violence, but where many inhabitants fiercely advocate the right to own and carry guns.

Earlier this month, a 28-year-old out of work man killed 10 people, including his mother and a toddler, in a shooting rampage through two counties in the southern state of Alabama, the worst in the state's history.

In December, a man dressed in a Santa suit opened fire at a Christmas party being given by his ex-wife in Covina, California, killing nine people before shooting himself.

In October, an ex-convict opened fire with an assault rifle at a man and two children who had come to trick or treat at his home in Sumter, South Carolina on Halloween. A 12-year-old boy died of his wounds in that incident.

In September, a mentally ill man shot eight people, killing six, in Alger, Washington a month after being released from prison.

There are constant calls for US gun laws, tied to the second amendment of the US Constitution guaranteeing the right to bear arms, to be re-examined.

But they stumble in face of opposition from the powerful gun lobby, led by the National Rifle Association.

UAE keen to invest in tourism, telecoms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is eager to invest in hotel, tourism, oil and telecommunications sectors in Bangladesh, said State Minister for Foreign Affairs Hasan Mahmud yesterday.

He disclosed the fact during a press briefing at the ministry after his visit to the UAE and Geneva last week.

The state minister said he held an extensive discussion with the UAE Labour Minister Saqr Ghobash Saeed Ghobash and asked him for special care to Bangladeshi workers.

The gulf nation assured special heed to Bangladeshi workers to make sure they survive the economic meltdown, headed.

Hasan Mahmud requested the UAE leaders to set up a hospital and a nursing institute on the land in Chittagong that was offered to UAE former ruler Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan as a token of friendship.

Presently, the oil-rich UAE investment in Bangladesh is \$2.5 billion, he said.

"I requested him to ease residency visa transfer system, which is somewhat clumsy, and introduce online visa system to prevent forgery," he told newsmen.

As Mahmud requested the UAE labour minister to ensure workers' wages in due time, the latter said they would introduce a system by the end of the year so that all workers get wages through banks and employers cannot make any deductions.

The UAE is the second largest labour market for Bangladesh after Saudi Arabia. Around seven lakh workers send around \$1 billion remittance yearly from UAE.

The UAE state minister for foreign affairs said apart from labour issues, Bangladesh and UAE should diversify relations to work together in international arena, said Mahmud.

"It means they want collaboration in the Palestine issue and producing green energy," Hasan Mahmud elaborated.

The ministers also shared views on combating terrorism.

Myanmar

FROM PAGE 16

mainly in China, the minister said.

Myanmar had earlier mentioned two varied versions about location of border fencing, Bangladesh has 180 km border with Myanmar.

Government will ask the Myanmar ambassador (in Dhaka) for providing information about the border fencing officially, the state minister told reporters at a press conference at the foreign ministry.

He said as per the diplomatic norms, the fence can be constructed on 150 feet off the zero point inside Myanmar territory.

Replying to a query, Hasan Mahmud said, "Its purpose is just to check smuggling and drug trafficking. There is no reason to be worried about it."

Ctg arms haul

FROM PAGE 16

authorities through the ministry of home affairs, said Senior ASP Muniruzzaman Chowdhury, investigation officer (IO) of the case.

In response to the request, coast guard authorities will soon provide a list of its men who were on duty around CUFL, Chittagong Port and off shore islands of Teknaf and Kutubdia during the deadly consignment and offloading, said sources in CID.

"We are expecting the list shortly. Soon after we will issue notices to the coast guard men to appear for interrogation accordingly the names provided by the authorities," said Senior ASP Muniruzzaman.

The quizzing began with five CUFL officials and security personnel on March 9 and proceeded on with three policemen and five CUFL Collective Bargaining Agent (CBA) leaders.

Following the interrogation, the former CUFL managing director Mohsin Talukder and former general manager (Admin) Enamul Haq were arrested and questioned in a three-day remand.

The investigators started the interrogation following confessional statements of two prime suspects - Hafizur Rahman and Deen Mohammad - on March 2, 2009.

The confessional statements indicated that some high officials of CUFL authority, Bangladesh Coast Guard, Directorate of General Forces Intelligence (DGFI) and National Security Intelligence might have link with the consignment and offloading.

Aug 21 grenade

FROM PAGE 1

officials had implicated a number of innocent people in the case, filed in connection with the grenade attack on an Awami League rally on August 21, 2004, to hide facts and to let the actual criminals get away.

He said they destroyed evidence and did not record the confessional statements of the culprits, including outlawed Islamist militant outfit Harkatul Jihad al Islami (Huji) leader Mufti Hannan, who admitted his involvement.

The complainant said the officials forced petty criminal Joj Miah and two others to confess before a magistrate by torturing them, threatening them and buying them with money.

Talking to The Daily Star over phone yesterday, accused former CID official Abdur Rashid refuted the allegations and said, "I did not force or threaten anybody into confessing before the court."

"There were several authorities to justify that the accused persons were involved in the attack before they made confessional statements," said Abdur Rashid, adding, "It is not true that we tried to misdirect the case as we did not submit the chargesheet."

ASP Fazlul Kabir told The Daily Star, "Case-52 (filed Sunday night) was filed after investigation and following other legal procedures, including taking the opinion of the public prosecutor."

Talking to The Daily Star, Paltan Police Station Officer-in-charge Mohammad Majbar Rahman said the case was forwarded to the court in compliance with standard procedures.

According to the case statement, the CID took charge of the grenade attack case investigation on August 23, 2004, two days after the attack. The CID appointed ASP Abdur Rashid as the investigation officer and SS Ruhul Amin was made supervisor.

ASP Rashid arrested 20 people and forced Joj Miah, Abul Hasem Rana and Shafiqul Islam to confess before magistrates under Section-164 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) on June 26, December 12 and December 17 of 2005, the case statement read.

After Abdur Rashid retired, Munshi Atiqur Rahman was appointed investigation officer of the grenade attack case on December 24, 2005.

In the meantime, CID had arrested Huji leader Mufti Hannan in connection with the Ramna Batumul blast case. He is also accused in several other cases filed in connection with militancy.

During CID interrogation, Hannan confessed to his involvement in the grenade attack and disclosed names of 27 others who were directly and indirectly involved in the planning and execution of the attack on the Awami League (AL) rally.

The names include former BNP deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu.

Through multiple investigations, the BNP-led alliance government tried to establish that the AL itself killed its own leaders and activists to tarnish the image of the BNP-led government.

They also tried to prove that "foreign enemies" instigated the carnage and some listed criminals absconding in India had executed the attack.

A total of 24 people were killed and over 300 were maimed in the attack that was aimed to assassinate the then leader of the opposition and present Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Fifty months after the attack, a Dhaka court on October 29, 2008, framed charges against 22 people, including former BNP deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu.

Rest of the accused are leaders and operatives of Huji.

Eleven days after the attack, the then prime minister Khaleda Zia blamed the AL for the attack.

Days later, during a BNP parliamentary party meeting, Khaleda had said that no Islamist extremist groups existed in the country.

"We have to prove that we do not patronise extremists and that no such groups exist in the country," said Khaleda accusing

Public

FROM PAGE 16

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics would be strengthened further to help formulate right policies.

Finance Secretary Mohammad Tareq said wide gap between rural areas and urban areas in secondary education has to be closed down for implementing the government's politics of change.

NBR Chairman Mohammad Abdul Mazid and Planning Commission Member AKM Zafar Ullah Khan were among the high officials present.

the then main opposition AL of conspiring to tarnish the country's image.

BNP MPs, in Khaleda's presence in parliament, blamed the AL of attacking its own rally and endangering the life of the AL chief.

The BNP-led government's one-member judicial probe committee led by Justice Joydul Abedin never published its 162-page report, despite claiming to have identified a "foreign enemy" behind the attack.

The government had then asked for help from the United States' Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Interpol but their findings were also never made public.

CID officials say that Interpol's detailed report was attached to the charge sheet and submitted to the government while the FBI never submitted a report even though they collected pieces of evidence for running tests.

The BNP-led government's stance subsequently influenced the then investigators to weave a story involving Mokhlesur Rahman, a ward-level AL leader and former ward councillor of Moghbazar in the capital.

The investigators also tried to concoct another story through a dubious "confessional statement" made by Joj Miah, who named Mokhlesur as one of the planners of the grenade attack.

Joj Miah turned out to be a creation of the investigators when his sister revealed that the CID had been paying his family Tk 2,500 a month for upkeep since his arrest.

Joj and two others provided nearly identical and weakly woven statements, which were widely discredited by the media.

Apart from Mokhlesur and Joj, 18 others were arrested and were allegedly tortured. A Dhaka court later ordered their release saying the charges brought against them by the erstwhile investigators were baseless.

Last year, several serving and retired investigators involved at different stages of the probe, told The Daily Star that the masterminds of the attack remain undetected even though charges had been pressed in the two cases - one for the killings and one filed under Explosive Substances Act.

2 more bills

FROM PAGE 16

Meanwhile, a parliamentary body placed its report on scrutiny of a bill before the parliament recommending

passage of the bill for continuation of functions of two other public limited companies - Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd (BTCL) and Bangladesh Submarine Cable Company Ltd (BSCCL).

The immediate past caretaker government last year turned Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (Desa) and Biman Bangladesh Airlines into public limited companies through promulgation of ordinances in efforts to improve their functions.

It also formed two public limited companies - BTCL and BSCCL - by dividing Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTB) through promulgation of an ordinance.

But the ordinances ceased to have effect from February 25, as they were not ratified in parliament within the timeframe stipulated in the constitution.

Under such circumstances, the newly elected government later placed three separate bills in parliament seeking to enact laws for continuation of the public limited companies (PLCs).

Of them, two bills were passed amending the Desa act and Biman corporation ordinance for continuation of functions of DPDC and Biman.

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister GM Quader and State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Shamsul Haque Tuku separately proposed for passage of the two bills and the House gave nod to their proposals.

The bills passed by the House also gave legal coverage to their activities since the ordinances ceased to have effect from February 25.

Earlier, a number of BNP lawmakers proposed to send the bills to select committees for further scrutiny. But their proposals were rejected in voice vote.

Meanwhile, Hasanul Haque Inu, chief of the parliamentary standing committee on the post and telecommunications ministry, placed the report on scrutiny of the bill meant to amend the BTB ordinance to allow continuation of the two PLCs.

Kuwait-based

FROM PAGE 16

bureau for reconsidering cancellation of its registration, but a senior official at the bureau said there is no scope for reconsidering the registration.

According to RIHS staff, the NGO spends Tk 1 lakh for its office rented at House-40, Lake Drive Road, in Sector-7 of Uttara in the capital and pays over Tk 60,000 in monthly salaries to 11 staffs.

But a few contractors of RIHS alleged that the organisation is not paying them some arrears bills on grounds of its fund having been stopped. "How can they spend for running office?" said a contractor.

RIHS Deputy Director General Abbas Bao, a Sudanese national, is currently serving as its country director, said a contractor, alleging that Bao is frantic to get Bangladesh citizenship and married a Bangladeshi woman for that purpose.

After the government banned al-Qaeda donor-suspect Al Haramain Foundation (now banned worldwide) in 2003, many Haramain staffs including five foreign nationals joined the RIHS. Four of the foreign nationals were later withdrawn from the country following the August 17 serial blasts.

A Bangladeshi Haramain staff Mojibor Rahman still works as a receptionist of RIHS. The other nine staffs of RIHS are chief accountant Abdulwadud, office secretary Fazlur Rahman, public relations officer Ataur Rahman, two officers for its orphanage section and four peons and guards.

There are allegations that RIHS used to provide funds to the Islamist militants of Ahab, Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and other organisations, investigators said earlier.

Executed JMB chief Abdur Rahman himself told the media in 2004 that he used to get funds from the RIHS and Saudi Arabian NGO Rabbat-e-Alam al Islami, which is run by Jamaat-e-Islami men.

The RIHS has so far erected 1,000 mosques, madrasas and orphanages across the country, many of which were used by JMB militants, said investigators.

A senior official of the NGO Affairs Bureau said the bureau has also nothing to do with the RIHS properties and its foreign staffs living in the country.

Abbas Bao could not be contacted while other RIHS officials declined to talk to this correspondent.

When contacted over mobile phone posing to be a job-seeker, chief accountant Abdulwadud said, "We were considering recruitment a few months ago, but now it depends on the government whether it lets us operate."

He confirmed that RIHS is running its office. However, when asked about the sources of its fund, he hung up.

While visiting the RIHS office at House-40, Lake Drive Road, in Sector-7 of Uttara around 1:30pm yesterday, The Daily Star correspondent found all doors and windows of the four-storey building shut.

A bearded young man approached this correspondent and wanted to know the reason of visit. Asked about the office in the building, he suspiciously looked at the correspondent and said there is no office and that it is a residential building and only tenants reside there.

Ershad cleared

FROM PAGE 16

Dal (JSD), filed the sedition case on March 9 of 1991, accusing Ershad of committing the offence.

After scrutinising the case docket and other relevant documents, Metropolitan Magistrate Syeda Minhaz Um Munira accepted the final report (FRT) and discharged Ershad from the charges.

Police Inspector Matiur Rahman of Criminal Investigation Department (CID), also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the final report to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka on February 2 this year.

In the probe report, the IO mentioned that the case was filed against Ershad on factual error. So, he prayed that Ershad be cleared of the charges.

Ershad resigned on December 6, 1990, after ruling the country for nine years, and handed over charge to the then Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed.

Later, over 21 criminal cases were filed against Ershad for different charges and he was also convicted for different terms of punishment. He was earlier discharged and acquitted in several cases.

12 die in bloody

FROM PAGE 1

that US President Barack Obama has called a "cancer" that risks killing Pakistan.

Armed with grenades and guns, the attackers shot their way into the camp, not far from the border with arch-rival India, in what one wounded survivor called an attempt to kill as many people as possible.

Officials said the assailants were masked and some were in police uniform, with others in civilian clothes and carrying sports bags.

"I've never heard such a firing in my life. We were some 18-20 boys. We literally crawled into a place to hide," recruit Fazal Fareed told AFP.

"I heard them hurling grenades and the deafening sound of window panes cracking. We were trapped in the building until the operation was concluded, and army and police forces pulled us out from the building," he said.

Military spokesman Major General Athar Abbas said: "Eight police trainees were confirmed killed in the academy."

The interior ministry's Malik said 95 policemen were wounded, in addition to two civilians.

"Three terrorists blew themselves up, one suicide jacket and a number of hand grenades and sophisticated arms were recovered," he added.

It was not clear how a fourth attacker died.

Malik suggested home-grown terror movements were to blame.

He said, "Some foreign hands may be involved."

"Terrorists are coming from FATA (Federally Administered

Gas supply

FROM PAGE 16

of the pipeline was completed as per schedule to help the authorities start additional gas supply.

Petrobangla Chairman Jalal Ahmed told the news agency yesterday the pipeline would enhance gas supply by 40 mcmcf to the national gas network which would finally lead to an additional supply to gas hungry power plants and other industries.

Apart from this pipeline commissioning, he said, Petrobangla has already enhanced the gas supply to power plants. "Last week, we supplied about 700 mcmcf to power plants. Now we are supplying about 747 mcmcf... this is a big enhancement."

However, the country's electricity generation has not increased as expected after the enhancement of gas supply to the power plants.

Jalal, however, alleged that despite the increase in gas supply, sometimes power plants cannot receive this additional supply for their own limitations. "Many power plants often remain out of operation because of technical faults although gas is available there."

According to the officials, the spur line will finally boost the gas supply by 70 mcmcf by the year end.

The gas pipeline was built as "spur-line" to increase the gas supply from Chevron's Jalalabad gas field, which is now producing about 143 mcmcf gas to supply to the national gas grid.

The Power Development Board (PDB) generated about 3,700 megawatt (MW) Sunday while it was expected to generate about 3,735 MW yesterday against the demand for about 5,000 MW.

However, the PDB claimed that the demand would be below 4300 MW.

Bangabandhu

FROM PAGE 1

This decision was taken at a regular cabinet meeting held at the cabinet division's conference room with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Portrait of Bangabandhu was also hung after Awami League (AL) formed government in 1996. But the subsequent BNP-Jamaat government hung the photo of then head of the government removing the portrait of Bangabandhu after assuming power in 2001.

While briefing newsmen about the outcome of the meeting, Press Secretary to the Prime Minister Abul Kalam Azad said the cabinet also approved National Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Policy 2009, the proposed Insurance Control Authority Act 2009 and the proposed National Insurance Act 2009.

The ICT policy envisages elevating Bangladesh to a middle-income country within 10 years while the developed country status within 30 years through using

Tribal Areas). They get help from across the border. Where do they get weapons and new vehicles?" he said, adding that one of those arrested is an Afghan.

The attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team also involved multiple gunmen armed with grenades and assault rifles.

Eight Pakistanis were killed and seven Sri Lankan squad members were injured but their assailants walked away.

Officials said it also bore the hallmarks of the November 2008 siege in India's financial capital Mumbai, blamed on Pakistani militants, which killed 165 people.

Indian officials condemned yesterday's attack, saying it threatened security across the region and its military was on alert for any "spill over."

Obama has put Pakistan at the heart of the fight against Al-Qaeda, tripling US aid to the nuclear-armed nation in a new strategy that commits billions of dollars and thousands more troops to the war in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Thai PM avoids office on 5th day of protests

AP, Bangkok

Thailand's prime minister avoided his office Monday as thousands of protesters calling for his resignation and allied with deposed leader Thaksin Shinawatra surrounded the seat of government for a fifth day.

Protesters ignored police warnings to stop blocking entrances to Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva's office, where they have gathered since Thursday in the largest protests since his administration arrived in December.

The demonstrators say Abhisit's government came to power through illegal means and should step down. Abhisit has rejected their calls.

Abhisit said last week he would enter his office at Government House on Monday. But he revised the plan Monday morning, saying the situation remained under control, but he would not be going to his office before travelling to London on Tuesday for the G-20 summit.

PM asks

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh. "I call upon the people to remain alert," said Hasina.

She said the attempt to distort Bangladesh's history began after the killing of Bangabandhu in 1975. "The attempt is still being made. Efforts are on to play down the contributions of Bangabandhu," she said.

"None can erase true history since the truth can never be covered up," said Hasina. Paying rich tribute to Bangabandhu, she said the Father of the Nation struggled throughout his life to establish democracy and people's rights.

She said the three-part book would be a great help to those who are willing to learn or conduct research on the Liberation War.

National Prof Kabir Chowdhury presided over the ceremony. Journalist Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury, educationist Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui and Vice-chancellor of Dhaka University Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique also spoke on the occasion.

M Nazrul Islam, who edited and published the book, also addressed the ceremony.

potentials of ICT sector.

The other objectives of the policy are to improve ICT, establish social equality, increase productivity and export, generate employment opportunities and improve environment, climate and disaster management system.

Under the policy, the government would take short- and long-term planning to attain the development goals.

The cabinet approved the two proposed acts on insurance sector with an aim to make newer provisions for the insurance industry. The Insurance Control Authority Act aims to bring fair regulation and supervision in insurance sector and "to protect the interest of insurance clients."

A new governing body will be formed to expand insurance service to remote areas and to ensure public welfare through investing the money collected for insurance fund. Members of the cabinet attended the meeting