

Killer had personality disorder

AGENCIES

Adam Lanza, the 20-year-old who killed 20 children and six adults at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut this morning, was "obviously not well," a relative told ABC News.

The 20-year-old may have suffered from a personality disorder, law enforcement officials said.

Family friends in Newtown also described the young man as troubled and described his mother Nancy as very rigid.

As part of the investigation authorities searched the New Jersey apartment of Adam's older brother Ryan in Hoboken, New Jersey.

Police had initially identified Ryan as the killer, until he sent out a series of Facebook posts saying it wasn't him and that he was at work all day.

Officials were interviewing Ryan and his father, but neither person was under any suspicion, multiple sources said.

Adam Lanza was an honours student who lived in a prosperous neighbourhood with his mother.

Lanza killed his mother at their home before driving her car to Sandy Hook Elementary School and — armed with at least two handguns — carried out the massacre, officials said.

So far, authorities have not spoken publicly of any possible motive.



US SCHOOL MASSACRE

Anti-clockwise from top, a woman pays tribute to the victims of the Connecticut elementary school shooting in Connecticut, USA yesterday. A flag at the US Capitol flies at half staff to honour the victims. People gather for a prayer vigil at St Rose Church following the shooting and a Brazilian man places a bouquet to pay tribute to the victims in Rio de Janeiro.

PHOTO: AFP



Obama mourns 'beautiful kids'

AFP, Washington

A grieving President Barack Obama wiped away tears and struggled to compose himself Friday as he mourned the dead in the Connecticut school shooting, and promised "meaningful" action to stop gun tragedies.

The attacker, identified by law enforcement sources as Adam Lanza, opened fire on Friday morning at Sandy Hook Elementary School, which teaches children aged five to 10. He ultimately killed at least 26 people, before turning the gun on himself.

"The majority of those who died today were children, beautiful little kids between the ages of five and ten years old," Obama said. "They had their entire lives ahead of them, birthdays, graduations, weddings, kids of their own."

Obama paused for several seconds, and breathed heavily, several times wiping a tear from the corner of his eye, as he gave his first reaction to the killing of 26 people including 20 children, in the White House briefing room. The shooter also died.

"Among the fallen, were also teachers, men and women who devoted their lives to helping our children fulfill their dreams," Obama said, noting that he was reacting "not as a president, but as anybody else would, as a parent."

"Our hearts are broken today, for the parents and grandparents, sisters and brothers of these little children and for the families of those who are lost."

"As a country we have been through this too many times," Obama said, mentioning earlier shooting massacres, in Colorado, Oregon and Wisconsin.

"We are going to have to come together and take meaningful action to prevent more tragedies like this regardless of the politics," said Obama, the father of two young girls.

"May God bless the memory of the victims and in the words of scripture, heal the broken-hearted and bind up their wounds."

Earlier, the president ordered US flags on the White House, official buildings and at military facilities to half staff to honor the victims of the school shooting rampage, which he called a "heinous" crime.

Obama was informed about the shooting in the middle of Friday morning by his top anti-terror and homeland security advisor John Brennan in the Oval Office.



Barack Obama

Killings put pressure on Obama to act on gun laws

PTI, New York

The shooting spree in a Connecticut school that left 20 small children and six adults dead capped a tragic year for the US, which saw similar massacres in a Colorado theatre and Wisconsin gurdwara, putting pressure on the Obama administration to take action on the country's gun laws.

After the massacre, an online petition addressed to the White House, which calls for addressing the issue of gun control immediately through legislation in US Congress, secured over 43,000 signatures in the aftermath of the tragic shooting at the elementary school.

The shooting drew sharp criticism from New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

"We need immediate action. We have heard all the rhetoric before. What we have not seen is leadership - not from the White House and not from Congress. That must end today. This is a national tragedy and it demands a national response."

But officials said it was too early to plunge into an immediate debate about whether Obama would back more stringent gun control legislation -- a bitterly contested issue in Washington.

India, Pakistan enter into new visa regime

TNN, New Delhi

Travel between India and Pakistan will become easier with the operationalisation of a new visa regime on Friday that allows multi-city visas for up to five cities, visitor visas for two years for senior citizens and children below 12 years, visa on arrival for senior citizens, and group tourist visa, besides exempting specified categories of businessmen from police reporting.

The visa agreement was operationalised by home minister Sushil Kumar Shinde and visiting Pakistani interior minister Rehman Malik, both of whom agreed that it would promote people-to-people contact between the two countries.

The visa agreement was signed by the two sides on September 8. Malik said the new visa agreement was not only historic but a step forward for peace.

Outlining the key features of the new visa regime, Shinde said visas can now be granted for five places as against the earlier restriction of three cities. Visitor visas can be

issued for up to two years where the applicant is above 65 years of age, where a national of one country is married to a national of the other country and children below 12 years accompanying their parents.

Senior citizens (above 65 years of age) can now avail of visa on arrival, to be issued at Attari/Wagah post for 45 days with a single entry. This will, however, take effect only from January 15, 2013.

In a move aimed at promoting economic ties between the neighbours, business visa norms have been eased, with businessmen with income above 5 million Pakistani rupees or having an annual turnover above 30 million Pakistani rupees now exempt from police reporting.

Indians and Pakistanis can travel to each other's country in groups comprising 10-50 members. The groups, organized by approved tour operators and travel agents, will be issued group tourist visas for 30 days. Group visas will, however, be issued from March 15, 2013.

Mandela successfully treated for gall stones

AFP, Pretoria

South African anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela yesterday underwent a successful procedure to remove gall stones, a week after he was admitted to hospital for a lung infection, the office of the president said.

"This morning, 15 December 2012, the former president underwent a procedure via endoscopy to have the gall stones removed," it said in a statement.

"The procedure was successful and Madiba is recovering," it added, using the clan name by which Mandela is affectionately known.

The 94-year-old is being treated at a private hospital in the capital Pretoria. Initial tests revealed that he was suffering from a recurring lung infection.

"The medical team decided to attend to a lung infection before determining when to attend to the gall stones", the statement from the presidency said.

He was previously hospitalised for an acute respiratory infection in January 2011, when he was kept for two nights.

Mandela has a long history of lung problems dating back decades to when he contracted tuberculosis while in prison.



PHOTO: AFP

Israel's FM resigns

CNN ONLINE

Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman announced Friday he would resign, a day after the country's Ministry of Justice said he would be charged with breach of trust and fraud.

He said in a statement that he must resign from his government position "in light of the circumstances of the case and details of the indictment."

Liberman maintains his innocence.

Immediately following the announcement of the charges, Liberman said he would fight to stay in office. However, less than 24 hours later he had changed his mind.

His resignation comes five weeks ahead of parliamentary elections scheduled for January 22.

'Musharraf wanted to eliminate Bhutto'

ANI, Islamabad

Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has told Interpol that of former President Pervez Musharraf wanted to eliminate Benazir Bhutto considering her a threat to his rule, it has emerged.

The statement was apparently made after the world police rejected Pakistan authorities' request to arrest Musharraf, who is currently in exile in London.

According to the Dawn, in September this year, the FIA sent the request to Interpol for the arrest of Musharraf, but the latter rejected it, stating it was moved under political pressure.

The FIA recently dispatched another letter to Interpol, requesting them to arrest Musharraf, a prime accused in the Bhutto murder case.

FIA attached arrest warrants for Musharraf as well as some pieces of evidence, with the letter.

The evidence dispatched with the letter on Thursday included a statement by US Journalist Mark Siegel and records of emails sent by Musharraf to former premier Benazir Bhutto.



Hillary suffers concussion

Says aide; Recovering at home

AFP, Washington

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is recovering at home after suffering a concussion and plans to stay off work for the next week, a spokesman said yesterday.

"While suffering from a stomach virus, Secretary Clinton became dehydrated and fainted, sustaining a concussion," Hillary's top aide Philippe Reines said in a statement.

"She has been recovering at home and will continue to be monitored regularly by her doctors," he added.

At the recommendation of her doctors, she "will continue to work from home next week, staying in regular contact with Department and other officials," Reines said.

The news came just as Hillary, 65, had been expected to testify on Thursday to US lawmakers about the findings of a highly-anticipated investigation into the militant attack on the US consulate in Benghazi, Libya.

The normally tireless top US diplomat was forced to cancel a trip to North Africa last week after she contracted the stomach virus on her return from a five-day visit to Europe.

Hillary, former first lady and wife of ex-president Bill Clinton, is the most popular member of President Barack Obama's cabinet, with approval ratings of over 60 percent.

she is planning to step down as secretary of state early next year. Many believe that she will also take a second shot at being elected America's first woman president in the 2016 White House race.

Rocket attack kills 4 at Pak airport

AFP, Peshawar

Militants fired rockets into the airport of Pakistan's northwestern city Peshawar late on Saturday, killing four people, wounding dozens more and forcing the airport to close, officials said.

Volleys of gunfire erupted around the airport, attached to a Pakistan Air Force base, after the initial attack and the military sealed off the area to launch a search operation, witnesses and civilian officials said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility but the Pakistani Taliban and other Islamist militia have claimed responsibility for past attacks on military air bases and routinely carry out attacks in Peshawar.

It was not clear where in the airport the rockets landed and the extent of the damage.

Peshawar is the main Taliban and al-Qaeda-linked groups stronghold in Pakistan.

Egypt votes on divisive charter

Opposition cries fraud, accuses Islamists of vote rigging

AGENCIES

Egyptians queued to vote yesterday on a constitution promoted by its Islamist backers as the way out of a prolonged political crisis and rejected by opponents as a recipe for further divisions in the Arab world's biggest nation.

However, the opposition cried fraud in the first round of the divisive referendum, accusing President Mohamed Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood of rigging votes to adopt the Islamist-backed text.

But the National Salvation Front opposition coalition did not immediately make good on a threat to call a boycott if it perceived violations, instead stepping up an appeal to Egypt's 51 million voters to reject the draft charter.

The Front's allegations, which included unsealed ballot envelopes and a judge preventing Christians from voting at one Cairo polling station, underlined the highly charged conditions in which the two-stage referendum was taking place.

Three weeks of anti-Morsi protests and clashes in Cairo last week that killed eight people and injured hundreds failed to prevent the referendum going ahead on the draft,



An Egyptian woman looks at a soldier as she waits to vote during a referendum on the new Egyptian constitution at a polling station near Cairo yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

largely shaped by Morsi's Islamist allies.

To ensure security, some 120,000 troops were reinforcing 130,000 police.

Voting was being staggered across the country yesterday and a week later because many judges were not willing to oversee polling.

The situation in major cities were calm yesterday, Khaled al-Azazi, spokesman for the regional security

authorities, told AFP.

International watchdogs have expressed reservations about the draft because of loopholes that could be used to weaken human rights, including those of women, and the independence of the judiciary.

Analysts said it was likely -- but not certain -- the draft constitution would be adopted.

18 migrants die in Greece boat tragedy

AFP, Athens

Eighteen migrants have died and nine are missing after their makeshift boat sank off the coast of Greece in the Aegean Sea, police said yesterday.

"Only one person was plucked out of the water and hospitalised," a ports police spokeswoman told AFP, saying 18 other bodies had been found so far -- most on a beach near the town of Mytilene on the island of Lesbos.

The lone survivor rescued so far, a 20-year-old man who had been taken to hospital in Mytilene, told authorities the boat was carrying 28 people, including children.

Three port police boats resumed the search in the hope of finding more survivors.

The victims set sail from the western coast of Turkey on Thursday but ran into bad weather that sank their boat. Authorities have not yet released the victims' nationalities.