

## Kurd woman leading Kobane battle against ISIS jihadists

AFP, Beirut

A Kurdish woman fighter is leading the battle against Islamic State jihadists in the Syrian battleground town of Kobane, a monitoring group and activists said yesterday. "Mayssa Abdo, known by the nom-de-guerre of Narin Afrin, is commanding the YPG in Kobane along with Mahmud Barkhodan," Syrian Observatory for Human Rights head Rami Abdel Rahman told AFP. The secular and left-leaning Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) group has been defending Kobane, on the border with Turkey, since Islamic State (IS) fighters launched an assault on September 16.

The group, the de facto army of the Kurdish regions of north and northeast Syria, is the armed wing of the powerful Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD). As is the custom for Kurdish fighters, Mayssa, 40, uses a pseudonym, with hers coming from the Afrin region where she was born that is located like Kobane in Aleppo province.

"Those who know her say she is cultivated, intelligent and phlegmatic," said Mustefa Ebdî, a Kurdish activist from Kobane.

"She cares for the mental state of the fighters and takes interest in their problems," he said.

Women traditionally form a major part of Kurdish fighting forces, and they are well represented among Kurdish forces in neighbouring Turkey and Iraq.

On October 5, young Kurdish woman fighter Dilar Gencxemis, identified by the YPG by the nom-de-guerre of Arin Mirkan, blew herself up outside Kobane in an attack which reportedly killed dozens of IS militants.

She became the first Kurdish woman suicide bomber since the 2011 start of Syria's conflict.

Since the withdrawal of government forces from Kurdish areas of Syria in mid-2012, the PYD has set up local councils for Kurds to run their own affairs, with women filling 40 percent of seats.

## Woman held

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hospital around 4:00am on Saturday and gave birth to a son by cesarean section soon after. She was at Ward 212 on the first floor of the hospital, Deputy Director Mushfiquur Rahman of the DMCH said.

Around 1:30am yesterday, Sumi and Asma were caught by security personnel of the hospital while the duo were trying to walk away with the baby without informing the authorities or collecting the discharge papers.

As they were leaving the hospital without permission and did not have any valid documents with them, the authorities took it as a case of baby-stealing, he added.

Sumi admitted to police that they were taking the baby out to sell it, claimed Officer-in-Charge Sirajul Islam of Shahbagh Police Station.

However, mother of the newborn, Asma, spoke otherwise.

"We were fleeing the hospital to evade paying the bill of a bag of blood given to me during the surgery ... I am a garment worker. I don't have enough money to pay the bills," she claimed.

Asked about the police's claim, Asma said her sister-in-law Lipi earlier had promised that if they handed the baby to her, she would exempt them of a Tk 14,000 they owed to Lipi and would give them more money.

"But we had no intention to sell the baby," Asma said.

### Defence's

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Placing arguments on behalf of Akram and Abdul Latif, junior defence counsel Gazi MH Tamim yesterday sought their discharge, stating that the charges were "vague" and "not specific".

He said senior defence counsel M Sarwar Hossain intended to place arguments but could not be present for "personal difficulties".

Among the eight charges, four are against Sirajul for the killing of about 666 people, two against the three for the killing of 47 people and two against Akram and Abdul Latif for the forced conversion of 200 Hindus to Islam and killing of a person.

The trio joined the Razakar Bahini, an auxiliary force of the Pakistani occupation army, in 1971 and committed killings, mass killings, rape, looting, arson and forced conversions, states the prosecution.

# Latif sacked, finally

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However, there has been no statement from the PMO bearing out his claim.

Latif's remarks on hajj and the Prophet (PBUH), made in the media presence on September 28, touched off an uproar, and a clamour for his removal rose even within his party.

Adding to the controversy, the minister on September 30 told the BBC Bangla that he stood by his remarks.

At a press conference on October 3, a day after returning from the US, the prime minister said she would not keep Latif in her cabinet and a file to that end would be sent to the president after Eid-ul-Azha holidays.

A five-time lawmaker from Tangail-4 constituency, Latif was textiles and jute minister in the AL government's previous term. He was elected a presidium member in the party's 2009 council.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, he said he would accept whatever situation he finds himself in. And he would accept any decision taken by Sheikh Hasina, as "she is the most

# Algerian national

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also a homosexual." He has been living in Bangladesh illegally for nearly a decade.

He added Kadir, a bachelor, used to get acquainted with teen boys in the name of training them football. He would eventually ask them to get involved in physical relationship with him.

"There is evidence of his homosexuality in his Facebook page and cell phone," said DC Nazmul, adding that he killed Zubair after he failed to impress the boy.

During investigation, detectives learned that Kadir sent indecent messages to several boys, mostly from English medium schools, while chatting on Facebook over the last few months.

The body of Zubair Ahmed, an O-level student, was found in a pond at the capital's Uttara sector-4, a day after he had gone missing on October 4. Divers from the fire brigade recovered his body following information from Kadir.

Later, police also nabbed Bangladeshi national Ismail Hossain, who witnessed the whole incident, according to DB officials.

Zubair's mother Dilara Begum on

capable person in the country".

"When the prime minister appoints us we feel happy. Then why should we feel bad when she fires us?" he said over the phone from Delhi airport on his way to Kolkata around noon.

"Maybe there will be corruption cases filed against me ... maybe I will be jailed ... In my youth I spent many days in jail. And I have no problem going to jail again."

About his New York comments, he again said he spoke from his beliefs and would not budge an inch from his stance. If necessary, he added, he would make even "tougher" comments.

He, however, said his only regret is those remarks embarrassed Hasina, caused the AL trouble and made party leaders unhappy.

"I haven't talked to my leader Sheikh Hasina yet and I am ashamed to talk to her as she was embarrassed because of me."

Latif added he doesn't want to embarrass the PM further.

October 5 filed a case with Uttara Purbo Police Station, accusing Kadir and Ismail for killing her son.

The duo went into hiding after Zubair's drowning. Earlier, Kadir asked Ismail not to disclose the matter and also offered him money to keep silent, according to DB officials.

During primary interrogation, Ismail told the DB that after the football game ended, all the boys except Zubair left the ground. Kadir and Zubair along with him then sat beside the pond. At one point Zubair jumped into the water and Kadir followed him.

When the family members failed to trace Zubair till midnight, they started calling his friends from his cell phone that he left at home, DB officials added.

They found Ismail's cell phone switched-off while Kadir did not answer the call. Kadir called back on Zubair's cell phone the next morning and said he knew where the boy was.

"He also started talking irrelevantly," said DC Nazmul, quoting family members.

Kadir, however, told police that he tried to save Zubair from drowning while the boy was trying to retrieve a football from the pond.

## Germany regrets 'mistakes' in Afghanistan mission

AFP, Berlin

Germany's foreign minister said Sunday that Berlin had made serious mistakes in its military engagement in Afghanistan since 2001 and warned against a hasty withdrawal.

Ahead of the end of US-led NATO combat operations in the war-ravaged country this year, Frank-Walter Steinmeier offered a sobering assessment of the 13-year mission.

"There is a lot to indicate that our biggest mistake was to create expectations that were too high," he wrote in a column for the weekly Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung.

"We not only wanted to snuff out the security threat that Afghanistan represented but also lead the country at high speed into a future according to our own vision."

He said that despite progress in Afghanistan, the country was still plagued by a thriving drug trade and rampant corruption.

Warlords hold power in several provinces and violence abounds, Steinmeier added, lamenting that the extremist Taliban had been "long been underestimated as a political player".

But he said the deployment should not be seen as a failure, noting that compared to the situation in Syria or Iraq "the results in Afghanistan are fairly respectable".

## Don't isolate Africa over Ebola: IMF

AFP, Washington

IMF chief Christine Lagarde on Saturday pleaded with people to remember that all of Africa has not been hit with the deadly Ebola epidemic, which remains relatively isolated in three countries.

With those three West African nations -- Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia -- already seeing their economies crumble because of the disease, Lagarde emphasized: "We should very be very careful not to terrify the planet in respect of the whole of Africa."

"These three countries are severely hit. We are going to try to give them as much support as we can; the big urgency is to stop it, contain it."

"But it's not the whole of Africa," she stressed. "Businesses have to continue, the economies of all the others countries have to keep on working and creating jobs."

To underscore the message, Lagarde was wearing a large button on her lapel declaring "Isolate Ebola, Not Countries", which was given to her by Guinea's President Alpha Conde.

### War criminal

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The 92-year-old convict had been kept at the BSMMU prison cell since January 11, 2012, the day he was arrested. From September 2, he had been kept at Coronary Care Unit for about 10-12 days after complaining of respiratory complications.

On July 15 last year, the International Crimes Tribunal-1 handed down the sentence for masterminding crimes committed during the Liberation War. The court said Azam deserved the gallows, but he was given prison terms due to his old age.

Both the government and the convict challenged the tribunal verdict, which is now pending with the Supreme Court.

## Women

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When the artist was characterised as authentic, participants had a much more favourable impression of both the artist and the artwork.

Participants indicated they were more willing to buy that artist's painting and to pay a higher price for it.

Men were much more likely to use the artist's brand as a deciding factor when evaluating art.

The Michigan State University study, which appears in the journal Psychology & Marketing, is the first to investigate how important an artist's 'brand' is to average consumers when they appraise art.

"All consumers in the study, but especially men, evaluated art with a strong emphasis on how motivated and passionate the artist was," said Stephanie Mangus, who led the research.

Mangus and her fellow researchers had 518 people look at two unfamiliar paintings with made-up biographies of the artist.

The research could have major implications for the \$64 billion art market and other product industries such as food and fashion.

# Deja vu as Malaysia's Anwar faces threat of jail

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim says "he's prepared for the worst" as he stares at the prospect of imprisonment once again on a controversial sodomy charge, but has vowed never to give up his struggle.

The opposition leader, whose forces won a majority of the popular vote in polls last year, faces a late-October final ruling on his appeal against a much-criticised sodomy conviction and five-year jail sentence he denounces as a long-running government smear campaign.

Opinion in Malaysia seems split on whether a regime known for its rough political tactics will risk a domestic and international backlash by throwing Anwar -- infamously jailed on previous disputed sodomy charges 15 years ago -- into prison again.

But the charismatic campaigner said "it doesn't look good," citing an accelerating government crack-down on civil liberties aimed at throttling the opposition threat.

"There is certainly concern that they would then use the courts to secure a (sodomy) conviction, which is really unfortunate in terms of rule of law in this country," he said in an interview at his modest Kuala Lumpur office.

Malaysia's highest court hears the appeal October 28-29.

Anwar says he is "prepared for the worst" but flashes his trademark sense of humour in speculating on the quality of the prison tea, medical care and books.

"I am thinking now of what classics to start with," he said with a laugh.

"But I am still hopeful sanity will prevail and the highest court in the land will subscribe fully to the facts and the law."

- Political deja vu -

It's a case of deja vu for 67-year-old Anwar, once a rising star in the ruling United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) and its presumed future leader.

He was ousted in a 1998 power struggle and jailed for six years on earlier charges of sodomy -- later overturned -- and corruption, which were widely seen as trumped-up.

The episode triggered huge anti-government protests and a tec-

tonic political shift that now has the formerly invincible UMNO reeling.

Anwar has led a once-hapless opposition to increasing electoral gains, seizing 52 percent of the popular vote in May 2013 polls by campaigning against UMNO corruption and heavy-handed rule.

UMNO, in control since 1957, retained power due to a parliamentary system skewed in its favour, prompting Anwar to decry a "stolen" election.

The latest charge that Anwar sodomised a young male aide emerged in 2008. Sodomy is illegal in Muslim-majority Malaysia.

Anwar was acquitted in 2012, but in March a higher court overturned that, sparking allegations of UMNO interference. The United States government said the decision raised concerns over rule of law.

Analysts believe UMNO deeply fears an opposition win will open the lid on decades of corruption, while influential Islamic conservatives fear the opposition alliance's pluralist promises.

Prime Minister Najib Razak's government, which denies manipulating the case, runs the risk of street protests and spooking investors if Anwar is jailed again.

"He may be found guilty, but they let him avoid jail somehow," said James Chin, a Malaysia researcher at Singapore's Institute for Southeast Asian Studies.

"The international price would be too high to pay and he would become a martyr, a big symbol for the opposition. I think they want to just keep harassing him."

The government may be content to let the opposition destroy itself.

The multi-ethnic Pakatan Rakyat ("People's Pact") opposition alliance includes Anwar's diverse party, a Chinese-dominated one, and a conservative Islamic party. Festering disputes exploded this year in a bitter row over control of a key state.

Pakatan nearly unravelled, and Anwar's image as all-important unifier was diminished.

He admits "great challenges" ahead in mending fences and breaking UMNO's hold on its king-maker vote bank: the Muslim ethnic Malay majority.

Pakatan also is under mounting pressure from Najib's regime.

# Nepalese FM in Dhaka

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Earlier, Pandey handed over the letter of invitation to Maldivian President Abdulla Yameen and Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

This is the third time Nepal will host the SAARC summit after 1997 and 2002.

The 17th SAARC Summit was held at Addu City in the Maldives on November 10-11, 2011.

The 18th SAARC Summit will be preceded by SAARC programming committee meeting at the joint-secretary level on November 22 and the foreign secretary-level standing committee meeting on November 23-

24.

Meeting of the SAARC Council of Ministers, which is comprised of the foreign ministers, is set for November 25, while November 26-27 is the summit.

According to schedule, the summit will be inaugurated on November 26. The Summit Declarations would be announced the next day followed by a retreat for the regional leaders.

More than 300 VIPs and VIPs from member states -- Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka -- and nine observer countries are expected to attend the summit.

# Bhashantek culprits

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Hospital in the wee hours of Saturday after Mamun, 27, along with his gang members reportedly beat up and indiscriminately stabbed him.

Mamun is also the prime accused in a case for barbaric torture on a pregnant woman and 10 others of her family in Bhashantek slum area in February.

Mamun along with four of his cohorts -- Bablu, "Kana" Alam, Khokon and Chukka -- verbally abused Laboni, 15, in Bhashantek on Friday afternoon, Nasir's brother Mosharraf said in the statement of the case he filed with Bhashantek Police Station on Saturday. Seven named, including Mamun, and four to five unnamed people were accused in the case.

"These criminals are moving freely. They do not have any permanent address. They disappear after committing crimes every time," said Sub-Inspector Anisur Rahman of Bhashantek Police Station, also the investigation officer of the case.

"We are trying to arrest them," he said, adding that some of the gang members were arrested following the February incident but were released on bail later.

Mamun's wife Nasima Akhter said, "My husband was in Gazipur after the February incident. He returned home [in Bhashantek slum] a week before the Eid [Eid-ul-Azha] and was here till Saturday evening."

"My husband is a drug addict. If he indeed is such a notorious criminal then why police are not arresting him?" she said.

Their neighbours alleged Mamun recently committed several crimes in the area in collusion with police.

Though many slum-dwellers wit-

nessed the incident, none of them was ready to say anything on record fearing backlashes from the gang members who, according to locals, have established a reign of terror in the area.

"Everyone wants to keep mum as they are afraid of the gang," said Nasir's paternal cousin Abdul Aziz, who saw the criminals taking away the victim on Friday night.

Laboni's mother Hena Akhter too was scared of talking about the goons.

"I don't want to talk about this incident anymore. I have two more daughters," she said, underscoring her fears of further harassment by Mamun's gang.

The victims of the horrific February incident too feel unsafe.

Four female victims told this correspondent that they were still living in fear as they had received death threats several times after a case against the gang was filed.

The gang members even went to their houses and threatened to kill them if they did not withdraw the case, one of them alleged.

Mamun and his gang allegedly forced nine members, including six women, of the poor family in Bhashantek slum in a room, undressed them all and assaulted them for about 15 hours since the morning of February 11. Two other male members of the family were beaten up outside the room.

It all happened for six tolas of gold that too was alleged to have been stolen by a member of the family.

The culprits even took photos and videos of the victims and threatened to circulate those if the gold ornaments were not given to them, despite their insistence that they did not know anything about the gold.