

Six journalists face trial in UK

Accused of 'plotting with govt officials' to get exclusive stories

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

Six former and current journalists from the Sun newspaper are going on trial on Monday accused of plotting with public officials in pursuit of exclusive stories over nine years.

The group are variously charged with conspiring to commit misconduct with police officers, members of the armed forces, prison officials and staff at Broadmoor hospital between March 2002 and January 2011.

On a charge sheet containing nine separate counts, news editor Chris Pharo faces a total of six charges of conspiring to commit misconduct in a public office while ex-managing editor Graham

Dudman and ex-Sun deputy news editor Ben O'Driscoll are accused of four.

Reporter Jamie Pyatt and picture editor John Edwards face three counts each and ex-Sun reporter John Troup is accused of two counts of conspiring to commit the same offence.

They are in the dock at Kingston crown court alongside former Surrey police officer Simon Quinn, who is charged with committing misconduct in a public office by selling information about celebrities as well as high profile criminal investigations between 2000 and 2011.

The charge states that Quinn, 37, of Littlehampton, sold information to the Sun about Mick Hucknall, Chris

Tarrant and Dane Bowers as well as details of the Milly Dowler murder hunt and the M25 rapist Tony Imiela case. He denies the charge.

Pharo, 45, of Sandhurst; Pyatt, 51, of Windsor; O'Driscoll, 38, of Windsor; Edwards, 50, of Brentwood; Dudman, 51, of Brentwood; and Troup, 49, of Saffron Walden have denied the charges against them.

A jury is expected to be sworn in on Monday before prosecutor Peter Wright QC opens the case on Tuesday at Kingston Crown Court.

The trial being heard by judge Richard Marks QC could go on until Christmas. The defendants are on bail.

Belgian minister's wartime collaboration remarks spark uproar

AFP, Brussels

Belgium's new interior minister sparked uproar yesterday after saying that Flemish collaborators with the Nazi occupiers in World War II "had their reasons", touching a raw nerve in a sharply divided country.

Jan Jambon is the right-hand man of Bart De Wever, whose nationalist New Flemish Alliance (N-VA), based in Belgium's north, dominates the centre-right coalition led by Prime Minister Charles Michel from the French-speaking south.

"The people who collaborated with the Germans had their reasons," Jambon told La Libre Belgique daily,

noting that he was not alive at the time to judge.

The new coalition was sworn in on Saturday.

Jambon made his comments in an interview during which he was asked about a speech he made to a 2001 meeting organised by the Saint-Maartensfonds, an association for Flemish fighters who fought for Germany against Russia on the eastern front.

"I defy anyone to find a phrase, a text where I defend collaboration. Collaboration was a mistake," Jambon told La Libre Belgique.

He said he had already explained his presence at the meeting where he spoke for the VVB Flemish populist

movement, of which he remains a member.

"The VVB brings together people with a single objective -- independence for Flanders," he said.

Belgium's wartime history is a divisive chapter in an already sharply divided country, where the split between the Flemish and French-speaking communities led to a five-month delay in forming the new government.

Benoit Lutgen, head of the Francophone opposition Humanist Democratic Centre (CDH) party, condemned the appointment of Jambon, calling him "a divisive personality who thinks turning up to right-wing meetings counts for nothing."

Woman's death at DMCH

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died of "several physical complications".

Wishing not to be named, an attendant of the ward said Asma was tied up as she resisted the nurses while transfusing saline in her body.

Wife of a destitute rickshaw-van puller of Tongi, Asma gave birth to a son by caesarean section soon after she was admitted to the hospital in the early hours of Saturday.

Around 1:30am on Sunday, hospital security personnel caught Asma and

her sister Sumi while they were trying to sneak away with the baby without informing the authorities or collecting the discharge papers.

The DMCH authorities sued Sumi under the anti-human trafficking law for trying to steal the baby. She is now in prison.

Shahbagh police on Sunday alleged Sumi admitted to taking the baby out for selling.

Asma, however, contradicted police, saying that they had been trying to

evade paying some bills they could not afford.

Asma's parents, who attended her at the hospital yesterday, told The Daily Star that their daughter at times evinced signs of mental illness.

They said Asma's husband Jahirul fled off the hospital following Sumi's detention and did not return in fear of police harassment.

Meanwhile, the hospital authority handed over Asma's body to her parents without conducting an autopsy.

Waiting for party signal

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Latif, who was also expelled from the AL Presidium following his comments on hajj and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), said, "I want to return home because I worked for the independence and development of the country.

"But I do not understand what to do now. I am in a deep mental crisis thinking whether my leader [PM Sheikh Hasina] feels more embarrassed if I enter the country."

He, however, said he would come home at the first opportunity and appear before the court.

Talking to The Daily Star on Sunday, Latif said he wanted to return to the country within four to five days.

Replying to a query by the BBC last night, he said he was worried whether his party and his leader would be harmed further. "But I am not worried about myself."

Asked where he would stay if he

could not return home in the near future, he said he was yet to decide on it.

"I have come to Kolkata, as I cannot live in Europe and America. I want to live on the soil [of Bangladesh]," said Latif, who was posts and telecommunications minister.

Asked if he got any signal from the Indian government to stay in Kolkata, he said he did not want to discuss it. "Time will say."

On removal from the cabinet and party posts, he said he took it positively as the party chief made the decision at the party forum through discussions. "It is not a crime to drop me."

He said he accepted the decision. "Majority's decision is my decision."

Asked if he thought injustice was done to him, Latif said, "No, no. I regret that I put my party and my leader in an embarrassing situation and caused her [Hasina] pain."

Other than this, he said, he had no

compunction.

Asked whether his situation would be like that of Taslima Nasrin and Daud Haider, who could not return home for decades, he said, "No... My speech has been distorted. If one listens to my full speech, one will see what I have done is an academic discussion."

He said it made him angry that no one bothered to listen to his full speech, which he gave at a discussion in New York on September 28.

He said parts of the speech were distorted. "I spoke for one and a half hours. I own my full speech. If I am hanged for this, I will accept it."

Latif also criticised his younger brother, Kader Siddique, for offering an apology on his behalf on Saturday.

"I did not give him the responsibility to offer an apology," Latif said, adding that Kader was his political opponent.

to end marriage for girls under age 15 and reduce by more than one-third the number of girls who marry between 15 and 18 years by 2021, the rights watchdog opined that Bangladesh should learn from the countries that have successfully tackled the child marriage issue.

Quoting Unicef, HRW says Bangladesh has the second highest rate of child marriage in the world after Niger.

"The government should consult closely at every stage with the groups, who have a wealth of knowledge about protecting women and girls, to develop a new law and a national plan of action," Gertholtz said.

Do not lower age

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reports indicating that the Bangladesh cabinet is considering a revision to the law to make 16 the minimum age of marriage for girls.

In a statement yesterday, Liesl Gertholtz, director, women's rights of HRW, said, "Setting the age of marriage for girls in Bangladesh at 16 would be a terrible step in the wrong direction."

"The rate of child marriage in Bangladesh is already off the charts. The new law should set the minimum age of marriage at 18 for both women and men and put the best interests of children at the centre of all of its provisions," said Gertholtz.

The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 made it a criminal offense to marry, or facilitate the marriage of a girl under 18 or a man or boy under 21, but the law has rarely been enforced, the HRW observed.

"The Bangladeshi government should pass a new Child Marriage Restraint Act that empowers girls to delay marriage, resist unwanted marriage, and be recognised in society for their value as individuals, not just as brides," the rights body said in the statement.

Pointing out Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's speech at the 2014 Girl Summit in London where she pledged

minister said, he would be arrested and put in jail as the government is left with no other choice.

AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif said the former minister will have to face cases on his return home as law will take its own course. Neither the government nor the party will intervene.

Latif is now on his own, he added.

Besides sacking him from the presidium, the party suspended Latif's primary membership on Sunday.

And yesterday, AL General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam signed the show-cause notice asking Latif to explain why he would not be expelled perma-

nently.

As one of the oldest traditional parties in Southeast Asia, the AL just cannot take responsibility for Latif's comments, which hurt religious sentiment of people, the notice read.

"Your statements go against the party policy and principles and clearly violate the party's declaration and constitution. So explain in seven working days why you won't be expelled from the party permanently for acting against the party charter."

The notice would be sent to Latif's addresses in Dhaka and Tangail today, said AL Deputy Office Secretary Mrinal Kanti Das.

Korean firm

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evaluation, according to the Bridges Division proposal.

As per the initial plan, one supervision consultant was to be appointed for the whole project, but now the work has been split into two parts and so two consultants have been appointed.

Bangladesh Army last year was awarded the job of supervising Jazira approach road, Mawa approach road and the service area with the assistance of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology. The costs of the approach roads, service area and the supervision work of these components will amount to Tk 1,642 crore, of which the army will receive around Tk 206 crore.

As per the Bridges Division proposal, 25 percent progress has been made in these job segments. China Major Bridge Engineering Construction Co in June last year got the main bridge construction work for Tk 12,133 crore.

The Bridges Division has paid 15 percent of the amount to the company as mobilisation advance, and the bidder has started preparatory work, officials at the Bridges Division said.

Another Chinese company Sinohydro Corporation Ltd has bagged the river training job that will cost Tk 8,778 crore.

Though the expense of the Padma Bridge project has been estimated at Tk 20,507 crore, the costs of the job segments add up to Tk 23,142 crore.

Besides, if the costs of land acquisition, resettlement of the displaced people and others are counted, the total expense will be more than Tk 25,000 crore, the officials said.

When the project was approved in 2008, the estimated cost was Tk 10,161 crore, which was revised in the end of 2011.

Arrest order

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questions over the security of the highly protected tribunals.

Following a case, detectives on August 28 pressed charges against seven persons including Salauddin's wife Farhat Quader Chowdhury and son Humam Quader Chowdhury for allegedly leaking the verdict. Of the seven, Farhat, Humam and Mehedi Hasan, assistant to Salauddin's lawyer Fakhru Islam, were shown fugitive in the charge sheet.

Four other accused -- Salauddin's manager Mahbubul Ahsan, Fakhru Islam, the tribunal's office assistant Faruk Hossain and janitor Nayan Ali -- are now in jail.

After receiving the charge sheet, Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court of Dhaka on September 23 transferred the case to the cyber tribunal, as the case falls under its purview.

If found guilty, the accused may face highest 14 years' imprisonment or up to Tk 1 crore in fine or both.

Nepalese FM

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PM's Press Secretary AKM Shameem Chowdhury told reporters that Sheikh Hasina and Pandey also discussed some important bilateral issues relating to connectivity between Bangladesh and Nepal.

She also underscored the need for signing of a tripartite agreement involving Bangladesh, India and Nepal for physical connectivity with Kathmandu.

The Nepalese foreign minister agreed with the Bangladesh prime minister on sharing resources of the region for balanced growth and development, said BSS.

Earlier, the Nepalese foreign minister had a meeting with his Bangladesh counterpart AH Mahmood Ali.

Pandey, who arrived in Dhaka on Sunday afternoon, also invited Ali to attend the 36th Meeting of Saarc Council of Ministers on November 25 in Kathmandu.

Ebola modern

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by government health officials and private sector representatives, warning that the Southeast Asian country was vulnerable due to the large number of Filipinos working abroad.

While bracing for Ebola, health officials should continue to focus on major health threats, including non-communicable diseases, she said.

Last month, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged leaders in the most affected countries to establish special centres that aim to isolate infected people from non-infected relatives in an effort to stem the spread of Ebola.

Ban has also appealed for international airlines and shipping companies not to suspend services to countries affected by Ebola. Doing so, he said, hinders delivery of humanitarian and medical assistance.

The Ebola epidemic has killed more than 4,000 people, mostly in the West African countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, according to WHO figures published last week.

Workers clean up

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cyclone arrival had helped avert a far bigger toll.

The storm struck just before midday Sunday, triggering torrential rain and packing winds of nearly 200 kilometres (125 miles) an hour before weakening as it barrelled inland.

Authorities in Andhra Pradesh and Orissa evacuated around 350,000 people, mostly fishermen and farmers, before the cyclone hit.

"The government was able to reduce loss of life due to precautionary measures," Andhra Pradesh chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu said.

PK Mohapatra, Odisha state's Special Relief Commissioner, said his state was "better prepared this time" after cyclone Phailin killed at least 18 people in the state last year.

"People followed our cyclone warning -- there was hardly any traffic on the roads," Mohapatra said.

Mohapatra said 200,000 people had been evacuated from areas at risk of flooding in Orissa by late Sunday.

"No one was killed in Orissa by Hudhud," he added, although two children and a fisherman died at the

weekend when their boat capsized as they were being evacuated.

In Visakhapatnam, which bore the brunt of the storm, roofs of many homes were blown away and hundreds of fallen trees and power pylons blocked roads.

Disaster management officials said clearing roads was their priority to ensure people could have access to relief centres set up in schools, hospitals and government offices.

Communication lines were snapped, water and power supplies were cut off, the city's airport was water-logged and bus and railway services were halted.

National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) teams began restoring power to affected areas as evacuees started trickling home from cyclone shelters.

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted he would visit storm-afflicted Visakhapatnam on Tuesday.

Some rivers were still flowing above danger levels in Orissa due to incessant rainfall that accompanied the cyclone, Anil Shekhawat, the disaster agency spokesman, said.

Tide turned

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others as auto mechanic.

Of the 20 trainees under this programme, 13 are divorced, looking to stand on their own feet.

Her fellow trainees, therefore, are equally enthused about their future.

"I want to show the world that women too can have a career," said Rajena Begum, 29, another divorcee who trained as an auto mechanic.

Their training was provided by Shariakandi Ma Fatema Training and Development Complex in the Dhap area under Shariakandi upazila, an institute under the Ministry of Women and Children affairs.

The complex trains underprivileged women in various technical skills such as tailoring, basic computer skills, embroidery, dairy and poultry prod-

ucts, etc. so as to enable them to find employment side by side with men.

UCEP, a local NGO, provides the complex with necessary technical support to carry out these programmes.

Shahidul Islam, district women affairs officer (DWAO) and also the administrator of the complex, said 110 more women will be trained under this programme by next year.

Bangladesh Bank has already asked all banks to provide easy-term loan to the trainees so that they can start a garage or buy a CNG-run auto-rickshaw, added Shahidul.

The 10 auto mechanics will be provided jobs soon by Pran Group at a reasonable salary while Runner Group, Atlas Group and a few others have already showed interest to hire them, said Prottoy Hasan, the UNO of Shariakandi.

Bangladeshi

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"extremely alarming" in two, Burundi and Eritrea.

According to the study, several Southeast Asian and South Asian countries showed dramatically improved scores since 1990, including Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, and Bangladesh. Comparing the 1990 GHI and the 2014 GHI, Angola, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Chad, Ghana, Malawi, Niger, Rwanda, Thailand, and

Vietnam saw the largest improvements, with decreases in their scores ranging between 14 and 24 points.

An active NGO sector and public transfer programmes helped Bangladesh reduce child under-nutrition among the poorest and improve the GHI score. The country regularly monitors children's nutritional status and has cut back underweight in children from 62 percent in 1990 to 37 percent in 2011, added the study.

Bodi challenges

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on Sunday and sent him to jail.

BAIL OF MANNAN EXTENDED

A Dhaka court yesterday extended bail of former state minister for housing and public works Abdul Mannan Khan till December nine on his surrender in a corruption case.

Earlier on August 24, Mannan got an ad-interim bail till yesterday on consideration of his illness and status as a former state minister.

Raped, girl kills herself

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Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

Family sources said the trio had been stalking the girl for long. On Friday they forced her into a CNG-run auto-rickshaw around 4:00pm. They raped her after taking to a hotel at Station Road and confined her.

Next day, on charge of prostitution police arrested Belal with the girl from the hotel but the rest fled. Later they were freed on bail in the afternoon.

However, police are yet to find whether the girl deliberately went to the hotel or forcefully taken there.

Meanwhile in Bandarban, a gang of stalkers allegedly raped a 15-year-old schoolgirl in Alikadom upazila of the district on Friday night, reports our Bandarban correspondent.

The victim was admitted to Upazila Health Complex Sunday morning as her condition deteriorated. Initially, her family did not take her to hospital

as they wanted to keep the matter a secret.

She was sent to Bandarban Sadar Hospital for medical examination yesterday.

According to family members, Shahidul Islam along with his friends used to stalk her on her way to school. On Friday night, Shahidul and his friends Abdullah al Mamun, Minhaj, and Rony picked up the girl from her home at Sabur Ghona para in the upazila.

At around 11:30pm, the criminals left her at a forest near her home in an unconscious condition. Later, her family members rescued her.

Her parents had to stop her education two months ago when she was a student of class eight due to the stalking, said Jamal Uddin, a union parishad member of the upazila.

A case was filled in this connection on Sunday afternoon said, Mohammad Hossain, officer-in-charge of Alikadom Police Station.

Police arrested Shahidul and Mamun in a drive yesterday, he added.

19 cops suspended

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Being apprised of the incident, Nasir warned the gang members of legal action for harassing his cousin further. The gang members then beat him dead.

Mosharrar accused seven named, including the five, and four to five unnamed people in the murder case.

The killers have been roaming freely in the area but the police are not arresting them, said one of the witnesses to the incident, wishing not to be named in fear of reprisals.

Mamun, who is also accused in five other cases, was detained on Friday afternoon and then released minutes later, an inhabitant of the Bhashantek

slum said, adding that within hours of his release he and his gang committed the murder.

He is the prime accused in a case filed over the barbaric torture of a pregnant woman and 10 others of her family in the slum in February.

Mamun's wife Nasima Akhter said he had stayed in Gazipur after the incident and returned to the area a week before Eid-ul-Azha.

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

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