

They saw death closely

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"At one stage, the traffickers started torturing the jobseekers for ransom. Every day, they beat some of us up. When I understood that my life was at stake, I made a call to my home to pay them Tk 2.5 lakh through a bKash account," Shamsul mentioned.

However, he lost all hopes when the traffickers intensified tortures on the jobseekers. "I lost my physical and mental strength. My eyes were so dry that I could not even cry despite facing their brutalities," Shamsul added.

"If any of us wanted to know when the journey would end, they would make fun of us saying the ship would never anchor," he recalled.

Their nightmares did not end there. When the traffickers failed to anchor the ship near the Thai-Malaysia border, they abandoned the ship leaving the jobseekers on their own.

"I thought my life has finally come to its end. I cannot remember what happened to me for two to three days after the traffickers had abandoned us in the sea," he said.

Hazrat Ali, another returnee who hailed from Sadar upazila in Narsingdi, said the traffickers used barbaric methods to torture the jobseekers. "For more than two and a half months in the sea, they never allowed us to use the toilet. They



Rajib



Shamsul Alam



Mostafa Kamal

forced us to urinate where we had to stay together," he said.

If anybody ever tried to argue with them on any issue, he was taken to a room and beaten up brutally. "None of us dared to protest against their brutality. We had been their slaves, actually," Hazrat said.

He now believes it was a thousand times better to earn a living by pulling rickshaws at home than to illegally try for a job abroad.

Rajib and Mostafa Kamal, two youths under 18 from Maheshpur upazila of Jhenidah, were lured by a broker from Chowgachha upazila of Jessore to take the perilous journey to Malaysia. They along with two of their relatives left home in March without informing their parents.

"We were students of class nine at a

local madrasa. A broker convinced us that we could reach Malaysia by ship in exchange of a little amount," Kamal said.

They had no contacts with their families until the police had informed them last month. Finally they returned home and will be reunited with their parents.

The returnees alleged that the local brokers had close connection with the human traffickers and even the law enforcement agencies. Such human trafficking through the Bay of Bengal cannot be checked until the government shows determination in this regard, they said.

Bangladesh High Commissioner to Malaysia Md Shahidul Islam said they would send back the rest 614 rescued migrants before the Eid-ul-Fitr.

US lauds

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counterterrorism efforts have made it more difficult for transnational terrorists to operate in or use Bangladeshi territory, it said.

"The current government has demonstrated its strong interest in cooperating with India on counterterrorism," said the new report.

The report also said that in a September 2014 audio message, al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri included Bangladesh as one of the countries in which the newly-established al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent would seek to operate.

Expatriate Bangladeshis have been arrested for attempting to recruit Bangladeshis to join the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

While Bangladesh is not part of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, it is taking steps to address the threat. On September 29, police in Bangladesh arrested Samiun Rahman for allegedly recruiting militants for both ISIL and al-Nusra Front, the report mentioned.

On Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security, the report says Bangladesh's criminal justice system is in the process of fully implementing the Antiterrorism Act of 2009 (ATA) as amended in 2012 and 2013. Although Bangladesh's ATA does not outlaw recruitment and travel in furtherance of terrorism, the broad language of the ATA provides several mechanisms by which Bangladesh can implement UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2178, which requires nations to address the foreign terrorist fighter threat, it pointed out.

According to media reports, government forces arrested several members of domestic terrorist groups Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh, Harkatul Jihad al Islami-Bangladesh, and Ansarullah Bangla Team, the US report said.

According to the report, Bangladesh is a member of the Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering, a Financial Action Task Force (FATF)-style regional body. The Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) is a member of the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units. In 2014, Bangladesh graduated out of the FATF's grey list.

The terrorist finance provisions of the ATA outlaw the provision, receipt, and collection of money, service, and material support where "there are reasonable grounds to believe that ... the same has been used or may be used for any purpose by a terrorist entity."

Women's

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paving the way for women's education. Throughout her life, she worked for women's emancipation and establishment of a secular state.

Speakers made the comments at a commemorative meeting yesterday, about Sufia Kamal on the poet's 104th birth anniversary today.

Kendrio Kochi Kachar Mela, a cultural organisation for children, organised at its office in the capital.

Recounting her works, adviser of Kochi Kachar Mela Shamsul Huda said her bravery came to the forefront during the crisis between then east and west wings of Pakistan.

Once Gen Ayub Khan, then military ruler of Pakistan, commented at a meeting with social elites of Dhaka that the general people were like animals, he said, adding that Sufia Kamal stood right way and retorted, "...then you are president of the animals."

Huda said, "Her writing was not for any particular group rather than for all. She fought against repression of people."

The poet's daughter, Sultana Kamal, also executive director of Ain o Salish Kendra, called upon parents at Kochi Kachar Mela to inculcate Sufia Kamal's ideals into their children. "To become a good human being, one has to nurture good qualities from childhood," she said.

Journalist Abed Khan and former deputy governor of Bangladesh Bank Khondkar Ibrahim Khaled also addressed the discussion, followed by a cultural show put up by children.

DU staff, three traders held

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ideological link or similarities with any militant organisation or Ifiti," Monirul Islam, joint commissioner of DMP, told a press briefing at the DMP media centre yesterday.

On June 8, detectives arrested Ifiti and eight other operatives of Jihadist Forum, a unified platform of banned militant outfits including Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami and Ansarullah Bangla Team, in the city.

After gleaning information from the nine operatives of Jihadist Forum, a DB team conducted several drives in the capital on Thursday night and arrested the four, Monirul said.

The lab assistant of the Soil Science Department at DU was identified as Gazi Mohammad Babul.

The three others are Ripon Mollah, owner of Asia Scientific, Mohiuddin, manager of Western Scientific

Company, and Nasir Uddin, owner of FM Chemical & Sons.

All of them run chemical businesses in Tikatuli area.

In the capital, there are around 350 chemical shops. They sell chemicals to laboratories of different educational institutions following due legal procedures, the DB official said.

The traders need to verify some documents before supplying the chemicals. They even need to obtain confirmation from any institution's chief over phone before selling any stuff.

But the arrestees did not follow any procedure, Monirul said, adding that Babul used to collect chemicals from these three shops and supply them to Ifiti.

In the preliminary interrogation, the arrestees admitted to have sold the chemicals to Ifiti. But they did not know his real identity or purpose.

White suspect

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Dylann Roof was due to face a bail hearing later yesterday, where he will appear by video link and also face a charge of possession of a firearm during the commission of a violent crime, the Charleston Police Department said.

The charges come a day after his arrest in North Carolina, 220 miles north of the nearly 200-year-old Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church where he shot dead nine black worshippers.

US officials are investigating Roof's attack, in which four ministers were killed including a Democratic state senator, as a hate crime. It came in a year of turmoil in the United States, where police killings of several unarmed black men has provoked angry national debates about race relations, policing and the criminal justice system.

Roof confessed to the attack and said he intended to set off new racial confrontations with his attack, CNN reported, citing a law enforcement source.

Charleston Police spokesman Charles Francis declined to comment on the reports of a confession.

South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley told NBC's "Today" show on Friday that she would prefer to see Roof tried on state charges and believed state prosecutors should pursue a death sentence.

"This is an absolute hate crime," said Haley, a Republican. "We've been talking with the investigators because we've been going through the interviews, they said they looked pure evil in the eye."

South Carolina is one of just five US states that does not have a hate crime law, which typically imposes additional penalties on crimes committed because of a victim's race, gender or sexual orientation.

President Barack Obama said Thursday the attack stirred up "a dark part" of US history and illustrated the continuing dangers of the nation's liberal gun laws, which gun-rights supporters say are protected by the Second Amendment of the US Constitution.

"After a tragedy we all get to sing and hold hands, but the elephant in the room is guns. South Carolina and the country have gone gun-crazy," said state Representative Wendell Gilliard, a Democrat who represents Charleston.

"How many times do we need to come together? How many times do we need to unite?"

The church, known as "Mother Emanuel," was founded in the early 19th century by black worshippers who were limited in how they could practice their faith at white-dominated churches. Burned to the ground in the late 1820s when one of its founders drafted plans for a slave revolt, the church was later rebuilt.

Compounding anger over the incident, the South Carolina capital con-

tinues to fly the Confederate battle flag, that was the symbol of the pro-slavery South during the U.S. Civil War.

In addition to the church's leader and Democratic state Senator Clementa Pinckney, other victims included three pastors - DePayne Middleton Doctor, 49; Sharonda Coleman Singleton, 45; and Reverend Daniel Simmons, 74.

Also killed were Cynthia Hurd, 54, a public library employee; Susie Jackson, 87; Ethel Lance, 70; Tywanza Sanders, 26; and Myra Thompson 59, an associate pastor at the church, according to the county coroner.

Area residents, including a group of nuns, filed past the historic church early Friday that was the site of Wednesday's shooting. Many tearfully offered prayers and left flowers near the line of yellow police tape, behind which law enforcement agents continued to gather evidence.

Harvesting

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On the summit of a mountain named Boutmezguida, which looms over the villages at 1,225 metres, thick fog shrouds about 40 finely meshed panels designed to trap water and relay it to a network of pipes.

To have water running from a faucet at home is a "revolution" for inhabitants of the semi-arid mountains known as the Anti-Atlas, says Aissa Derhem, the chairman of an active regional association called Dar Si Hmad for Development, Education and Culture (DSH).

DSH prides itself on building "the world's largest fog-collection and distribution system" and helping locals in the Sidi Ifni region -- Derhem's birthplace -- to learn to operate it, after repeated droughts and scarce rain.

"Our rain here is the fog," Derhem adds.

Tiny droplets are caught on the mesh while fog wafts through panels. The harvesters mix all they catch with more water derived from drilling, then supply the villages on the lower slopes.

Derhem first heard about fog harvesting 20 years ago. A few years later on returning to Sidi Ifni, he realised that the local climate was similar to that of the Andes in South America.

DSH joined forces with Fog Quest, a Canadian charity whose volunteers work in a range of developing countries. North Africa's first pilot project became operational after almost a decade's work refining techniques.

The valves were opened at Sidi Ifni for the first time to mark World Water Day, March 22. Ever since, "92 households, or nearly 400 people," have enjoyed running water at home, says Mounir Abbar, the project's technical manager.

Paresh Barua uses 2 ex-Huji men from Bangladesh as bodyguards

Claims Hindustan Times

STAR DESK

Ulfa chief Paresh Barua does not trust his own cadres for protection and so he uses two Bangladeshis -- both former members of banned Islamist outfit Huji -- as his bodyguards, claims a report of the Hindustan Times.

Barua, wanted dead or alive by New Delhi, is paranoid about being guarded by the fighters of his separatist group, the report said citing intelligence inputs.

Instead, he depends on the two hired Bangladeshis for protection round the clock. He even has his meals cooked by the two to eliminate the threat of poisoning.

The two Bangladeshis are Alamgir Hossain and his cousin Gholam Nabi. They both hail from Karatkhal village of Noakhali district and are aged 29.

Alamgir and Nabi are the only ones who live with Barua in his Ruili hideout on the Sino-Myanmar border. They accompany him everywhere, the report read.

An Assam police officer said Barua hired the two Bangladeshis when he used to stay in Dhaka's upscale Gulshan locality, near the Egyptian embassy. Barua was forced to leave Bangladesh in 2011.

At least 70 killed in Burundi violence: rights group

AFP, Bujumbura

At least 70 people have been killed, 500 wounded and over 1,000 jailed in weeks of political violence in Burundi, a rights groups said late Thursday.

The troubled central African nation has been in crisis since late April over President Pierre Nkurunziza's controversial bid to stand for a third consecutive five-year term, a move branded by opponents as unconstitutional and a violation of a 2006 peace deal that ended 13 years of civil war.

Increase drive

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The sale of low quality and adulterated food and use of excessive amounts of pesticides on vegetables and of inedible colours in processed food was ongoing year round, he said.

Such food may cause cancer, cholera, jaundice, liver cirrhosis and different heart, kidney, skin and gastric diseases, he said.

A doctor, Md Abdus Sattar Mia, stressed the need to raise awareness on safe food, including through introducing relevant topics in school curriculums.

Outlaw killed

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officer-in-charge of Mirpur Police Station.

Sensing the law enforcers' presence, the criminals blasted two crude bombs targeting police that prompted the law enforcers to retaliate with fire, which triggered a gun battle.

At one stage, the criminals fled the scene and police found the body of Sagar lying on the spot, the police official added.

Police claimed that a gun, two bullets and two sharp weapons were recovered from the spot.

Sagar had been absconding to evade arrest after a case was filed in connection with Panjer murder. He was recently involved in other crimes, including highway robbery, according to the OC.

'GUNFIGHT' WITH ROBBERS

In another incident, four policemen and five members of a robber gang were injured in a "gunfight" between them on Jessore-Magura highway at Khajura around 3:00am yesterday.

Ariful Haque, additional superintendent of Jessore police, said the "gunfight" took place when the robbers opened fire after being challenged by a patrol police team of Khajura camp.

Police arrested five members of the gang with injuries while others fled, he added.

The arrestees were admitted to Jessore Medical College Hospital under police custody, said Dr Abdur Rashid, medical officer of the hospital.

The wounded policemen were also undergoing treatment at the same hospital, the police official said.

Three firearms, five jackets of DB, a walkie-talkie and several sharp weapons were seized from the possession of the arrestees, the police official claimed.

Our correspondents in Kushtia and Benapole contributed to this report.

Iftar delicacy

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an extra fervour as it was also the day of Juma prayers.

Extraordinary numbers of devotees performed their Juma prayers at different city mosques with long rows of people praying on the streets as they could not be accommodated.

The kitchen markets in the capital also saw a huge rush of people despite a rise in the prices of necessities and vegetables.

Like the previous years, Chawkbazar in the old part of the city witnessed a huge rush of consumers. Gourmands thronged there to buy some traditional special items which are rare in other areas of the capital.

Boro baper polay khai (a mixture of chickpeas, minced meat, potatoes, chira, eggs, chicken, 13 kinds of spices and ghee), a popular iftar delicacy sold

in Old Dhaka, giant mutton and chicken roasts, shuti kabab (marinated minced meat), shahi doi bora (fried and spiced lentil balls dipped in yoghurt), mutton and chicken cutlet, kima roll (a roll of chopped meat), different types of kebab, kima parata, hilsha eggs, borhani, matha and different sweet items are the Chawkbazar specialties.

Some of these items can be traced back to the Mughal era. They started selling the items since 3:00pm.

"I've come here as my family members wanted to break their fast on the first day of Ramadan with special items of this market," said Mohammad Selim, who came from Dhanmondi.

"I bought a few of those items like mutton leg, Shuti Kebab and Doi Bora," he said.

Bullet found

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Ballistic tests are done to determine if a particular bullet was fired from a particular gun.

The bullet that went through the body of the other victim was never found, Ramna Police Station Sub-inspector Saiful Islam said earlier.

The other accused Imran Fakir was the driver of the Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV) in which Bakhtiar along with his two friends -- Kamal Alias Tiger Kamal and Kamal Mahmood -- was travelling during the incident of April 14.

Court sources said the three in their statements before metropolitan magistrates said that Bakhtiar lowered the window of the SUV after it got stuck in a traffic jam at New Eskaton and fired four to five times around 1:30am, hitting Abdul Hakim, rickshaw-puller, and Yakub Ali, CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver. They died at hospital

later.

Bakhtiar was drunk and feeling "suffocated inside the vehicle", investigators had quoted Bakhtiar as saying.

Monirul said they might not name Fakir as an accused in the charge sheet as his involvement in the shooting could not be established during the investigation.

He said the investigation into the case was almost over and claimed that the evidence they had was enough to prove the charges against Bakhtiar, now in jail.

The DMP official said police would seek fresh remand for Bakhtiar who had already been placed on a four-day remand in the case.

Monirul reiterated that they would request the authorities to cancel the arms license of Bakhtiar.

Police arrested Bakhtiar and Fakir on 31 May and seized the pistol.

Myanmar yet to return

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"The Myanmar officials showed positive response in this regard. They said they were waiting for the top authorities' decision. That's why the process of returning Razzak is taking time," he told The Daily Star.

Myanmar border guards opened fire on a BGB patrol team near the Naf river of Cox's Bazar early Wednesday. They took Nayek Abdur Razzak along with his firearm and left sepoy Biplob Kumar with a bullet injury to his arm.

37 TRAFFICKING VICTIMS RETURN
Thirty seven more Bangladeshi trafficking victims, who were rescued by Myanmar navy on May 21, were brought back home from Myanmar yesterday.

The Bangladeshi nationals were handed over after the meeting with Myanmar officials.

The meeting took place around 10:30am, said Maj Aminul Islam. Maj Imran Ullah Sarker, deputy commander of BGB Battalion 17, led the Bangladesh delegation.

The Bangladeshis were brought back through Ghumdhum border in Naikkhangchhari upazila of Bandarban, he said. Later, they were handed over to police.

Cox's Bazar Superintendent of Police Shyamol Kumar Nath said the victims were taken to a temporary camp set up at a cultural centre in the town.

"We'll talk to each of them separately and record their statements. After scrutinising the details, we will hand them over to their relatives," he said.

Of them, 11 are from Habiganj, 8

from Kishoreganj, 7 from Bogra, 5 from Sirajganj, 4 from Sunamganj and one from Madaripur and Jamalpur each, the SP added.

On May 21, Myanmar navy rescued 208 boatpeople from the Bay of Bengal when they were being trafficked into Malaysia.

Initially, the Myanmar authorities maintained that all the victims were Bangladeshi. However, the Bangladesh high commission in Myanmar interviewed the self-claimed Bangladeshis for confirmation of their nationality.

After the high commission's verification, the first batch of 150 returned home on June 8 from the Southeast Asian country. Of them, three were identified as Rohingyas, according to police.

Among the rest 58, thirty seven more were later recognised as Bangladeshis.

On May 29, Myanmar's navy found 727 more people crammed on a fishing boat in its waters. The country's information ministry claimed that at least 608 of the rescued are Bangladeshis, according to an AFP report.

The repatriation is taking place amid a regional crisis of human trafficking through the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea. The crisis unfolded in the first week of last month when the Thai authorities found mass graves of "trafficking victims" in its southern Songkhla province.

Towards the end of that month, Malaysia also discovered over a hundred graves in Padang Besar, which has a border with southern Thailand.

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