



A mob blocks the Dinajpur-Dhaka highway in Birampur upazila of Dinajpur yesterday after BGB members opened fire on smugglers, killing two people.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

Israel says Syria's Assad may be left with rump state

REUTERS, Tel Aviv

A senior Israeli defense official said President Bashar al-Assad controlled just a fifth of Syria and may end up in charge of a rump state dominated by his minority Alawite sect.

Israel and its neighbor Syria are long-term enemies, but the remarks by Amos Gilad, strategic adviser to Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon, reflect concerns by states across the region that Syria is undergoing a de facto partition after four years of civil war.

"Syria is gone. Syria is dying. The funeral will be declared in due time. This Bashar Assad, he will be remembered in history textbooks as the one who lost Syria," Gilad told an intelligence conference organized by the Israel Defense journal on Monday.

"Until now he has lost 75 percent of Syria ... He is, practically, governor of 20 percent of Syria. And his future, if I may predict it, is shrinking all of the time. And maybe we will have him as the president of 'Alawistan'," Gilad added.

Since March, Assad has steadily lost territory in the northwest, south and central Syria to an array of groups including Islamic State, the al Qaeda-linked Nusra Front, and rebels who profess a more moderate vision for Syria.

Indonesia plane crash

FROM PAGE 16

The local search and rescue agency also said that three people were killed on the ground when the 51-year-old plane went down near a newly built residential area, hitting a massage parlour and a small hotel.

Police said rescuers were still trying to get into the ruined massage parlour, a three-storey building, and they did not know whether there were people inside.

A rescue operation swung into action following the crash, with ambulances ferrying bodies from the site, and crowds of anxious people gathering around a police cordon to view the smouldering wreckage.

Residents described the terrifying moment just after midday when the plane came down.

"It was very scary," said Novi, an employee of an international school who goes by one name, describing how she heard the plane and saw it flying very low before the crash.

Another local resident Januar, 26, said the aircraft appeared to be in trouble just before the accident: "I saw the plane from the direction of the airport and it was tilting already, then I saw smoke billowing."

Medan's police chief said the bodies had been "crushed" under the wreckage of the plane and buildings.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo expressed sorrow at the accident, tweeting: "May the families be given patience and strength... May we remain protected from disaster."

The disaster once again shone a harsh

light on Indonesia's poor aviation safety record. It came just six months after an AirAsia plane crashed into the Java Sea, killing all 162 people on board.

It also raised questions about the Indonesian military's aircraft -- it was the sixth fatal crash involving an Indonesian air force plane in the past decade, according to the Aviation Safety Network.

Following the crash, Supriatna said the military was grounding some of its Hercules planes.

The last fatal air force crash was in June 2012. Eleven people were killed when a Fokker-27 military jet crashed into a housing complex in the capital Jakarta.

The plane involved in yesterday's accident took off at 12:08 pm (0508 GMT) from the airbase and crashed in the city about two minutes later, about five kilometres (three miles) from the base, according to the military.

Shortly after take-off, the pilot had asked to return to base, Supriatna said, adding the aircraft might have suffered engine trouble.

But he added the plane was in "very good condition" and had made several stops before arriving in Medan.

It was the second time in a decade that Medan had suffered a fatal plane accident. A Mandala Airlines domestic flight crashed shortly after take-off in 2005 into a densely populated suburb, killing at least 150 including passengers, crew and people on the ground.

Medan is the biggest Indonesian city outside the main island of Java and a major economic centre.

2 killed

FROM PAGE 16

Quoting witnesses, Mohammad Amiruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Birampur Police Station, said a team of Phulbari BGB 29 battalion raided Saidpur-bound "Rupsha Express" after it reached Birampur station around 5:00pm.

Later, illegally imported saris were found inside the train.

At the platform, a scuffle broke out between the smugglers and BGB men when they tried to seize the saris and detain the criminals.

At one point, the smugglers attacked the BGB team and tried to pick up one of its members, prompting the team to open fire, said Korban Ali, commanding officer of the BGB battalion.

He, however, could not say whether anyone was killed in the firing.

Witnesses said the shooting left the two dead on the spot and injured three others who are being treated at Birampur Upazila Health Complex.

The smugglers fled.

Police said the road blockade was withdrawn around 10:35pm.

\$705m deal

FROM PAGE 16

transportation industry in Bangladesh and improving the state highway network, says the study.

The tunnel will improve the Dhaka-Chittagong-Cox's Bazar highway network. It can later be linked to the planned Asian Highway Network, enabling road connections with Myanmar and India.

It would also attract downtown population in the east side and promote "One City and Two Towns" development model adopted by Shanghai, the largest city in China.

The tunnel is also necessary because heavy siltation on the Karnaphuli riverbed is a major threat for proper functioning of Chittagong Port and also for building new bridges. The existing two bridges are inadequate to accommodate the rapidly increasing traffic flow.

The eastern side of Chittagong, across the Karnaphuli, has many heavy industries. If the planned deep-sea port is built in Sonadia, the cargo traffic through Chittagong is likely to increase significantly.

In his speech, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, who witnessed the signing ceremony, said China has emerged as a big development partner of Bangladesh.

"Apart from cultural and religious relationship, China has been an active contributor to both technology transfer and financial assistance in achieving our development targets to become a middle income country by 2021," he said.

China has a great role in every sphere of development activities in Bangladesh including roads and bridges, power plants, agriculture and defence, he added.

A memorandum of understanding on the construction of the tunnel was signed between Bangladesh and China during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to Beijing in June last year.

The prime ministers of Bangladesh and China are expected to be present in the ceremony for the construction work inauguration.

Babblers speak

FROM PAGE 16

are meaningless but when combined convey a certain message to other members of the species.

Although bird songs are known to have different meanings, scientists have not been able to show until now that individual messages can be made by using different combinations of the same repertoire of sounds, much like the phonemes or individual sounds that make up human words, the researchers said.

"This is the first time that the capacity to generate new meaning from rearranging meaningless elements has been shown to exist outside of humans," said Simon Townsend of the University of Zurich, a co-author of the study published in the on-line journal Plos Biology.

"Although the two babbler bird calls are structurally very similar, they are produced in totally different behavioural contexts and listening birds are capable of picking up on this," Dr Townsend said.

The researchers showed in experiments with babblers that the birds use two sounds, "A" and "B", in different arrangements. When they are emitting a flight call they use "AB", and when they are feeding chicks they use "BAB".

Recordings where the two sounds are artificially spliced together show that the behaviour of the listening birds can be affected by whether they hear "AB" or "BAB", no matter which original call was used as a source for the spliced sounds.

"In contrast to most songbirds, chestnut-crowned babblers do not sing. Instead its extensive vocal repertoire is characterised by discrete calls made up of smaller acoustically distinct individual sounds," said Sabrina Engesser of Zurich, the lead author of the study.

'Mugger' shot by cops dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An alleged mugger died hours after he was shot by police in the capital's Hatirjheel area early yesterday.

Yousuf, 28, an alleged ringleader of a gang of muggers, was shot as he along with his accomplices was trying to flee after firing shots at police around 3:00am yesterday. He died at Pongu Hospital around 3:30pm, said Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Tejgaon Industrial Police Station.

Riding on a car, the criminals were moving suspiciously at Hatirjheel area. As police tried to stop them, they came out of the car and fired shots, prompting the law enforcers to retaliate with gunshots, he said.

At one stage, the criminals fled the scene, leaving Yousuf on the spot. He received bullet injuries to his leg.

Yesterday, the body was sent to Dhaka Medical College Morgue from Pongu Hospital for an autopsy.

Yousuf's wife Roksana Akhter Lipa claimed that her husband was picked up by unknown men from near their house around 11:00pm Sunday.

She said she found her husband's mobile phone switched off after he last called her on Sunday night. As he did

not return home, Lipa went to nearby police stations to inquire about Yousuf the next day.

Lipa claimed that she got a call on Monday afternoon from an unknown person who told her that Yousuf was at Tejgaon Industrial Police Station. She rushed to the police station and found him there.

Yesterday morning, police informed her that her husband was injured and admitted to Pongu Hospital. At the hospital, she said Yousuf told her that police had blindfolded and taken him to a place.

She, however, said her husband could not tell her who shot him.

Meanwhile, no one came to claim the body of Shamim, another suspected mugger who was shot dead by the police in Paltan area on Monday night, at the DMC morgue till yesterday evening.

One Karim, who was injured in Monday's incident, claimed that he was passing by the area to catch a Badda-bound bus. Following a noise there, police picked him up and shot him in the leg, he added.

Karim said he was on his way home after finishing work at Eastern Mollika Shopping Complex.

Obama, Rouseff visit Martin Luther King memorial

AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama and Brazil's Dilma Rouseff paid a surprise joint visit Monday to Washington's Martin Luther King Memorial, part of efforts to mend fences after a spying row.

Obama hosted the Brazilian president at the memorial to the civil rights icon -- one of his personal heroes -- after a "turbulent patch" between the two countries caused by revelations that US spies had listened in on Rouseff's phone calls.

The White House said the visit "underscores the many shared values and strong bonds that exist between the American and Brazilian peoples".

Both countries have large minorities descended from West African slaves and continue to have problems resulting from racial inequality.

Later, Obama welcomed Rouseff at a small dinner at the White House with about 20 guests. She was joined by Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira and Defense Minister Jacques Wagner.

The US president was accompanied by Vice President Joe Biden and National Security Adviser Susan Rice.

Obama has often taken allies on symbolic trips in and around Washington.

He also took India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the MLK memorial and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the Lincoln memorial.

Rouseff was first expected in Washington in October 2013, but suspended the trip after it emerged US intelligence had tapped her telephone calls and those of millions of other Brazilians.

Pilot Tahmid still missing

FROM PAGE 16

Patenga sea beach on Monday morning.

Search and rescue operations for the missing pilot continued for the second day yesterday.

The family members are now anxiously waiting for his safe return.

His parents and three siblings rushed to Chittagong after being informed of the accident by the BAF and were staying in the BAF base Zahurul Hoque yesterday evening.

Tahmid, elder son of retired banker Abdul Kader Chowdhury, hailed from Haildhar of Anwara upazila in Chittagong.

Sajid also said all his three cousins had a fascination for defence jobs after Tahmid joined the BAF in 2010.

His younger brother Salman Tamjid, a former trainee of Bangladesh Army and currently studying chartered accountant in Malaysia, arrived home only three days before the accident.

Tamjid had to leave the force due to his physical problems.

The youngest brother Adnan Towfiq is also a trainee of the army and their

eldest sister Lamia Samin recently passed SSC examination.

Rescue operation is underway for Flight Lieutenant Rumman Tahmid, Noor Islam, assistant director of Inter Service Public Relations (ISPR), said yesterday.

The joint teams are also searching for the remains of the jet, the official said. However, no major progress was reported in this connection as of yesterday afternoon.

The F-7MB lost contact with the control room of Zahurul Haque 42 minutes after it took off from the base in Patenga at 10:28am on a training mission, said Noor Islam.

Local boatmen saw parts of the plane floating on the water and the pieces were recovered around 2:00pm on Monday about 6 nautical miles from the base.

The fuselage and the engine of the aircraft could not be located. The BAF has formed a three-member committee to probe the accident.

The aircraft was bought from China three to four years ago.

2 top Shibir leaders

FROM PAGE 16

organisation, to be more careful and respectful while making comments over judicial proceedings in future.

On January 1, the prosecution brought contempt charges against five leaders of Jamaat and Shibir including the duo and a lawyer for their separate statements following death sentence awarded to Azharul Islam on December 30 last year.

They all submitted their individual reply following an order of the tribunal issued on January 12.

Tajul Islam, who defended Jamaat leaders facing war crimes cases, was exonerated from the charge and given an opportunity to "rectify himself" as he apologised unconditionally for his comment.

Jamaat acting ameer Maqbul Ahmad, acting secretary general Shafiqur Rahman and naye-e-ameer Mujibur Rahman were exempted from the charges as their statements did not attack the tribunal "directly".

But the tribunal on May 4 began contempt proceedings against the Shibir leaders as their joint statement, which was published in Daily Sangram on December 31 last year, "prima facie appears to be extremely derogatory to the independence

and image of the tribunal".

The statement said: "... Inconsistency was everywhere in the case [against Azhar]. That judgement was not given on the basis of fair justice but on the reflection of speeches by the Awami League and their alliance, destructive agitators of Shabbagh.

"... If such trial continues as a weapon of an interested quarter to execute their political revenge, the public would have no other way to giving proper reply against such injustice," it added.

But during contempt proceedings, the Shibir leaders sought unconditional apology and said they would not repeat the offence in future.

The three-member tribunal led by Justice M Enayetur Rahim yesterday said their statement was contemptuous and therefore they had committed contempt of court.

But the accused committed the offence for first time and sought unconditional apology, said the court. They were exonerated from the charge as they were given an opportunity to "rectify" themselves, it added.

Justice Anwarul Haque read out the order. Justice Jahangir Hossain was the other member of the tribunal.

Complainant goes missing

FROM PAGE 16

SUV -- a Toyota Land Cruiser Prado [Dhaka Metro Gha -11-1610] -- from Rahim, Tahmina said.

As he was preparing to testify before the police in this connection, those DB men on June 25 again kidnapped him, she alleged, adding that since then, she had no clue to her husband's whereabouts.

Police, however, outright denied all the allegations made by Tahmina.

"THE FIRST KIDNAP"

On February 28 around 2:45pm, Rahim was picked up from behind Samarita Hospital on Pathpath Road by the DB team led by Alim and Nazrul, according to a complaint submitted to the police headquarters by the victim.

He was blindfolded and taken to the DB office on Minto Road where he was tortured, reads the letter, a copy of which has been obtained by this paper.

They demanded Tk 1 crore and threatened to kill him in staged crossfire otherwise.

The next day, Tahmina gave Tk 10

lakh to Nazrul and Alim.

The DB officials forced him to surrender his SUV to them and to sign on papers handing over two of his apartments to one Azizullah and a Fazlul Haque, stated Rahim, owner of Milky Properties Ltd, in the letter.

On March 4, Rahim was shown arrested in an arson case filed on February 2 and was taken on a remand where he was threatened with death to keep mum on this incident.

Finally on April 20, Rahim got bail from the High Court.

Four days later, Rahim's wife Tahmina went to the investigation officer of the arson case at the DB office and requested him to give their SUV back. However, the IO, according to the victim, sought Tk 20 lakh for this. As she couldn't pay the sum, the car was not returned yet.

Rahim on June 15 wrote to the police headquarters, seeking justice.

On June 24, Additional Deputy Inspector General (Discipline) Alamgir Alam of police issued a letter

asking Rahim and his wife to testify before an assistant superintendent of police on June 29.

KIDNAPPED AGAIN

A day after the letter was issued, some people, identifying themselves as DB men, picked up Rahim from Pallabi in a microbus around 4:00pm, alleged Tahmina.

"We believe those DB men, who had kidnapped him earlier, picked him up again," she said.

She said she had filed a general diary with Pallabi Police Station the day after her husband's disappearance.

Dadon Fakir, officer-in-charge of the police station, said they were investigating the matter.

Contacted, Sahzzadur Rahman, deputy commissioner of the DB (West) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said they were not aware of Rahim's disappearance.

"Since he [Rahim] was arrested earlier, his family is now making such allegations against police to evade punishment and harass the police," he

3 more held

FROM PAGE 16

to Uruguay from where it was loaded on a ship," said Moinul.

Acting on a tip off, a team of Customs Intelligence picked up Atiqur from his office in the capital's Uttara around 10:00am. The arrestee is a commercial manager at a private firm.

The intelligence team later detained Mostafa from Gulshan.

Another arrestee Azad is a manager of Cosco (Bangladesh) Shipping Lines Ltd. He was detained in Chittagong city in the evening.

On June 6, detectives in Chittagong detained Golam Mostafa Sohel, a manager of Khan Jahan Ali Ltd. The barrel of cocaine was seized the following day.

Sohel was placed on five-day remand by a Chittagong court yesterday in a case filed with Bandar Police Station in connection with the seizure of cocaine, said Tanvir Arafat, additional

deputy commissioner of Detective Branch of police in Chittagong.

The liquid cocaine was found in a barrel that arrived at Chittagong Port on May 8 along with 106 more barrels of sunflower oil from Bolivia via Uruguay, said police and Customs Intelligence sources.

According to the cargo manifest recorded at the National Board of Revenue (NBR), a Bolivian company - Import Export Vaiven SRL -- shipped the consignment from Montevideo Port in Uruguay.

Responding to a query from a journalist, Moinul Khan said they sent a letter to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime seeking help to determine the quantity of seized liquid cocaine.

The letter was sent on behalf of the NBR to the UNODC's regional office in India, he added.

Muntassir Mamoon

FROM PAGE 5

"19 Shotoke Bangladesher Sangbadh Shamayik Patra".

Prof Muntassir said he was delighted to win the award, which is an acknowledgment of his work.

Born in 1951, Prof Muntassir has been a teacher in Dhaka University's history department.

He received many awards, including Ekushey Padak and Bangla Academy Award.

Cops 'torture'

FROM PAGE 5

investigate the torture, said Proctor Prof Tarikul Hasan.

Meanwhile, Lingcon refuted police's allegations, saying he, his girlfriend, and another girl were visiting the mass graveyard, leaving their shoes at the bottom of the stairway.

But one shoe was missing when they came back, he said. "He asked the duty police about his shoe but police replied 'are we here to guard your shoe?'" Lingcon said.

At one stage of altercation, they