



Eight-year-old Towhid and a pony in Bagri of Jhalakathi's Rajapur upazila. Many children like him who are supposed to be in school become jockeys in the district, mainly due to poverty. There is not even any safety gear for them during the races. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

# Children used as horse jockeys

M JAHIRUL ISLAM JEWEL, Jhalakathi

Although the inhuman use of children as camel jockeys is being banned in the Middle East, a similarly cruel practice is going on in Jhalakathi and its neighbouring districts.

Children as minor as six are being used as jockeys in horse races. More dangerously, the organisers do not feel the necessity of using any safety gears for them.

"I fell from the horse several times and got hurt," said eight-year-old Towhid, a horse jockey, who studies in class-IV at Putiakhal Primary School of Putiakhal village in Rajapur upazila.

Towhid said he could not afford treatment every time he fell. "My father is a rickshaw-puller. It is hard to find passengers here," he said.

Poverty forced Towhid to contribute to his father's income by working as a horse jockey. He has been engaged in the dangerous job in May-December, the race season, three to four times a week, for Tk 100 a day.

"When there is a race, I have to take part about four times," he said. Sometimes he has to race six times a day if there is more than one race.

"I know the risks but I do not know any other means of earning money," said Towhid, who wishes he could buy

books and a bicycle by his earning. "Small horses used in the race can easily carry young children because of their low weight," explains Lal Mia, a manager and owner of horses, who hailed from Dogona village in Kathalia upazila.

Children have been used as horse jockeys in the area for around 12 years, he adds.

The children are sometimes so small that adults need to mount them on the horses.

"If we hire an adult, we have to pay him Tk 400 to Tk 500. But a child is available at only Tk 100 a day," says Lal Mia.

He earns Tk 600-1,000 from a horse and a jockey from each single race. Lal Mia alleges that the main purpose behind the horse race is gambling, as spectators often put bets on horses, making the event an illicit but lucrative one for the organisers.

Three to five horse races are organised in Jhalakathi every week during the season. Horses are also sent to race in other neighbouring districts.

Horse jockey is not included on the list of hazardous jobs published by the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

However, the Children Act, 2013, which defines anyone under 18 as a

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## Terrorism

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justified; killing people during prayers is a heinous and severe crime; whoever kills a believer intentionally, he will end in eternal hell in recompense; and suicide and suicide killings are strictly forbidden in Islam. Even attending janazas of those who committed suicide has been forbidden in the religion.

As Islam forbids terrorism and spreading of panic, it could never be the way to go to heaven. This will absolutely lead terrorists to hell.

Those who have been involved in terrorism thinking that it would take them to heaven should apologise to the Almighty and return to the path of Islam. Allah doesn't like those who create chaos and violence, the edicts add.

The fatwas would come up in the sermons in mosques. The Islamic scholars have planned to hold councils in districts, Masoud said, urging all to spread the message through social media.

The Jamiatul Ulama will assess the reaction of the society after a month, he added.

If one crore copies of the edicts can be distributed across the country, the society and the country would be benefitted, he observed.

Masoud called upon the rich people to come forward to contribute in this regard. He said copies of the edicts would be sent to President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the United Nations and the OIC.

All the imams were with the move, except for those "siding with militancy". Hefajat-e-Islam Secretary General Junaid Babunagari was among the signatories to the call, Masoud added.

**HEFAJAT CONDEMNNS KILLINGS**  
Hefajat leader Babunagari at a press conference at Chittagong Press Club yesterday condemned the recent targeted killings, saying such activities go against the spirit of Islam, reports our correspondent.

Citing a Hadith, he said the person who oppresses and kills innocent people from religious minorities cannot even smell the fragrance of Jannah.

"Those who have been instigating communal activities are against the country's independence and sovereignty," Babunagari said.

He demanded the government arrest the "real culprits" and mete out punishment to them after proper investigation.

The Hefajat secretary general also pressed for repeal of the Education Policy 2010 and Education Act 2016, terming those "anti-Islamic".

The Qawmi madrasa-based Islamist organisation in 2013 had raised 13-point demands, which included scrapping of "anti-Islam" women and education policies and making Islamic education mandatory from primary to higher secondary levels.

## 'Robber' killed

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Moghirdhal area on the highway. He was alleged to be a leader of an inter-district gang of robbers.

One locally made rifle, one machete and a saw were also recovered from the spot, the police official said.

With the latest one, three robbers have been killed in gunfights with police in the district since January, the OC added.

# One 'crossfire' death, too many questions

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ground with bullet wounds. Taken to Madaripur Sadar Hospital, he was pronounced dead."

The SP also said Miarchar is a quiet place where Faizullah's accomplices used to gather from different areas after Fazr prayers.

After the exchange of fire, he added, police recovered firearms and ammunition from the spot.

The "miscreants managed to flee" as is said in all such incidents.

A Madaripur correspondent reports that Faizullah lying dead on the spot was still in handcuffs, according to locals and journalists who saw the body.

Visiting the spot later, the correspondent also reported that it is about 15km from the sadar upazila headquarters, beside a link road with paddy and jute fields around. There is no house within half a km.

The body of Faizullah was handed over to his father Golam Faruk in Mostafapur area around 7:00pm yesterday.

Police said they filed three cases over Faizullah's death, a cop being

murder has been committed to hide some truths which could embarrass those who are ruling Bangladesh," a reader wrote.

Another comment read, "He died in a shootout. Now his godfathers will create a new Fahim, but will people catch militants again?"

Locals captured the youth while he along with two others was trying to flee after hacking Ripon Chakraborty, a lecturer at Government Nazimuddin University College, on June 14.

He was placed on a 10-day remand in an attempted murder case filed by police on Friday.

Sub-Inspector of Madaripur Sadar Police Ayub Ali filed the case against Faizullah and five named and several unnamed persons.

The five are Taksin Salman alias Samil, 20, Shahrier Hossain Palash, 20, Mejbah, 19, Raihan, 20, and Jahin, 20. Their identities could not be known.

Earlier on Thursday, the Madaripur police chief said that during interrogation Faizullah claimed to be a member of Hizb-ut Tahrir, an outfit banned in

special crackdown against militants on June 10, days after the murder of a top police officer's wife in Chittagong.

According to police, five out of the six suspected militants were involved in the killing of Rajshahi University teacher Prof Rezaul Karim Siddiquee and attacks on Bogra Shia Mosque, Ahmadiyya mosque at Bagmara in Rajshahi and Kantaji Temple in Dinajpur.

About Faizullah's death, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said the youth was killed by his accomplices so that he could not disclose their names, reports UNB.

Claiming that the weeklong combing operation was successful, the minister said they might launch another such drive, if necessary.

"Special drive is a continuous process of law enforcers. We conduct it whenever it is necessary. So, it can't be said the drive is on or off. We'll again carry out the drive, if needed," he told reporters after attending an iftar party arranged by Bangladesh Ain Samity in the capital.

A student of Uttara High School and

"He [Faizullah] could have provided police with a lead to track down militant dens and the persons behind the series of killings," he said.

He, however, added it is also possible that police had nothing more to glean from Faizullah.

Nur Khan Liton, acting executive director of Ain o Salish Kendra, said, "We hoped that investigators, through interrogating him following due procedures, would reveal information [about recent killings]. But the hope was shattered with his death in crossfire."

He added, "His death gave rise to a question in the public mind whether he was killed to cover up something or to avoid something."

The rights activist believes that the recent Supreme Court guidelines regarding police remand were not followed in case of Faizullah.

"The apprehension can't be ruled out that law enforcement agencies are killing detainees in the name of gunfights, going beyond the law just as militants are showing utter disregard for law and committing murder one



Policemen sitting on chairs near the "shootout" scene in Madaripur, top right, where Golam Faizullah Fahim was killed yesterday morning. Bottom right, bullets and a bullet shell recovered from the scene.



PHOTO: COURTESY

injured in shooting and the arms recovery.

After the news broke, many in social media termed the death a cold-blooded murder and the police statement one of those "fairytale" law enforcers have been telling people for years.

Social media users suspect that Faizullah was killed either to hide some truths or destroy proofs regarding the ongoing attacks and killings by suspected Islamist militants.

"Ten days' remand. But crossfire on the very first night! Not acceptable. Maybe some information was gleaned from him through interrogation. But was this enough? Much more was yet to be known. There is no public sympathy for criminals. But if anything happens before time, it creates suspicion," said a Facebook post.

Readers' comments in the websites of leading media outlets also came down heavily on police and the government. Many questioned why Faizullah was not in bullet-proof jacket and helmet during the drive unlike when he was taken to court.

"I wonder if this cold-blooded

October 2009 for public security.

A Madaripur court placed Faizullah on a 10-day remand after he was produced before it on Friday afternoon.

Over the last three years, suspected militants have attacked and killed university professors, writers, publishers, secular bloggers, gay rights activists, foreigners, policemen and members of religious minorities, including Shia and Sufi Muslims, Christians and Hindus.

About 50 people have become victims of such targeted killings since February 2013.

Responsibility for most of the murders was reportedly claimed by either Islamic State or Ansar al Islam (Bangladesh Chapter of al-Qaeda in Indian Sub-continent).

This was the first time the name of Hizb-ut Tahrir came up following such an attack. The government banned all activities of this radical Islamist outfit, saying it had been carrying out anti-state, anti-government, anti-people and anti-democratic activities for long.

With Faizullah, at least 19, including six suspected militants, were killed in "crossfire" since police launched a

College, Faizullah went missing in the middle of his exams on June 11. His father Golam Faruk, desperately looking for him, filed a general diary with Dakkhinkhan Police Station the same day.

Quoting Golam Faruk, police said Fahim sent him a text message one hour after leaving home. "I am going abroad. See you again if I am alive," Sub-Inspector Abul Kalam Azad, who is investigating the GD, told this newspaper.

His teachers and friends said Faizullah was a quiet type of person and nobody knew about his joining militancy.

**'EVERYBODY KNOWS'**  
Addressing an iftar programme yesterday evening, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia said, "Though a very few are being arrested in connection with the secret killings, they too are being killed in the name of crossfire as the government fears if they remain alive, it will be exposed that the government is behind those attacks."

A police official, who retired recently, said yesterday's "crossfire" was simply a murder.

after another."

One of Fahim's uncles, on condition of anonymity, said, "Everybody knows how he has been killed."

## UN chief urges end of migrant 'detentions'

AFF, Lesbos

UN chief Ban Ki-Moon yesterday said that the "detention" of migrants who have arrived in Greece since March should cease immediately, as he visited the frontline of the migration crisis engulfing Europe.

He made the comments after visiting two camps on the Greek island of Lesbos, where some 3,400 migrants are being held while officials assess whether they can legitimately claim asylum.

"Detention is not the answer, it should end immediately," said Ban, who held talks with Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras in Athens earlier in the day.

## Hunt on

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The Indian High Commission in Dhaka took up the issue with Bangladesh's foreign ministry and police, said Vikas Swarup, spokesperson of the Indian external affairs ministry, on Friday.

India's response to the threat was largely due to the intervention of the Indian Prime Minister's Office as PM Narendra Modi is a follower of RK Mission, reports our New Delhi correspondent. The RK Mission in Dhaka was one of the few non-government institutions that Modi visited during his two-day Bangladesh tour in June last year.

Sources said the Indian PMO had instructed its Ministry of External Affairs to take the threat issue seriously and act.

Swami Suhitananda, general secretary of the RK Mission headquarters, met senior officials at the Indian PMO on Friday and discussed the threat issued to the mission's branch in Bangladesh, said mission sources.

A police official in Dhaka on Thursday said the priest received the letter on a IS letterhead, with the perpetrator identifying himself as one AB Siddiqui.

"Bangladesh is an Islamic state. You can't preach your religion here. If you continue preaching, you'll be hacked to death with machetes between the 20th and 30th," the officer quoted the letter as saying.

The development comes at a time when suspected militants have killed a number of secular activists, Hindus and other religious minorities across Bangladesh in recent months.

## Three lions

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prompting protests by villagers who demanded authorities hunt down the man-eaters.

Gujarat's chief conservator, AP Singh, said wildlife officials identified the three lions by analysing the lions' faeces and paw prints. Human remains were found in the faeces of the three lions.

The behaviour of the animals was also observed - cats which have targeted humans often act more aggressively towards people.

It is believed the male had attacked and killed the humans, while the females had eaten the leftovers.

The male lion has been moved to an enclosure at the nearby Junagadh zoo, while the two females will be held in cages at a rescue centre, a zoo official said.

After having found no evidence the other 14 lions had eaten humans, they were released back into the wild by investigators.

Gir sanctuary, one of the world's last refuges for wild Asiatic lions, has become overcrowded beyond its 270 lion capacity. While some of India's remaining 500 or so wild lions have migrated to surrounding wildlife parks in search of territory, other prides have settled near riverbeds or farmlands on the sanctuary's borders, leading to conflict with nearby villagers.

In 2013, the Supreme Court ordered Gujarat to relocate some lions to other states to prevent the population from being hit all at once by a natural disaster or disease. But Gujarat has resisted moving any of the lions, saying it does not trust other Indian states to protect the big cats.