

Two passports, one number

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migrant worker who returned from Jordan last year. She is now facing difficulties in getting her Machine Readable Passport (MRP), because the fake Josna already took one bearing the same number.

"I came to know about the incident on January 5 when officials at Munshiganj [her home town] passport office told me. I was utterly shocked and couldn't understand how another woman can use my information and have a duplicate of my passport," she told The Daily Star recently at the Argagao passport office.

"I couldn't believe how it was possible since I was in Jordan at that time and had my hand-written passport with me," said Josna, a mother of two.

As The Daily Star dug deeper into the story, it found a syndicate of brokers, recruiting agents and a section of officials at passport offices across the country is involved in such forgery, which takes place quite often.

Last year, the Department of Immigration and Passport's (DIP) internal probe found that one such syndicate issued at least 170 official passports to civilians between November 2014 and April 2015. The DIP then suspended a director, an assistant director and two employees for their involvement in the scam.

Last month, the Anti-Corruption Commission arrested two suspended officials of the DIP for issuing official passports to private citizens.

"All this proves that officials at the DIP either didn't check it [the documents] properly or they did the job in collusion with travel agents or brokers," a senior official at the DIP told The Daily Star, asking not to be named.

HOW IT HAPPENED
In Josna's case, documents show that the MRP (BA 0306506) was given to that woman on January 29, 2014.

A group of brokers and officials at the DIP forged the data and picture of Josna from her hand-written passport. All her information had been copied onto the MRP of the fake Josna.

There was one inconsistency, however, although it is not clear if that was intentional.

The name of Josna's husband is Tara



Josna Begum

Miah. But on the forged passport, Tara Mia is shown as the passport holder's father.

Sirajul Islam Patwary of the DIP received the woman's application, according to documents obtained by The Daily Star.

Asked why he received the application and processed it without verifying the documents, he said he had no idea of this fraudulence.

"I cannot say how this fraudulence occurred. But sometimes, we receive applications hurriedly due to huge work pressure," said Sirajul, now posted in Narayanganj passport office as a deputy assistant director.

The phone number on the documents submitted by the woman was found switched off.

NO TRACE
The papers the woman submitted for getting clearance from the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training shows that she would go to Qatar to work as a domestic help.

M/S Nemira Overseas, a recruiting agency in the capital's Kakrail, completed the process on February 3, 2014, on behalf of the woman.

Documents show that one Salem Obaid SS Alouz was her employer in Qatar.

Contacted, Rabiul Islam and Nasir Khan, owners of two recruiting agencies that helped her get visas to travel to Qatar twice, said they just processed her visa application.

"We had nothing to do with the passport," said Nasir.

The Bangladesh embassy in Qatar said the woman entered the Gulf country

in February 2014, but her visa was cancelled on May 30 that year.

"Since her visa was cancelled, we can assume that she is not staying in Qatar anymore," said Sirajul Islam, a counsellor at the embassy.

The Special Branch of Police in Dhaka said the passport was used for the last time in 2014 to travel to Malaysia. So it is likely that the woman is there.

But the Bangladesh mission in Kuala Lumpur said they had no information about her.

FAKE BIRTH CERTIFICATE
The birth certificate was issued on June 15, 2011, by Narayanganj City Corporation.

That's puzzling because the permanent address used in the passport is in another district, Munshiganj.

Dr Hasib Mahmud, who signed the birth certificate as a medical officer of the city corporation, said he had done his routine job after the ward councillor concerned gave his approval to issue the certificate.

The birth certificate bears the signature of Md Yunus Miah whose designation is mentioned as councillor of ward-2.

The website of the city corporation does not list any Yunus Miah as its councillor.

Asked about this, Hasib said he could not remember any name now.

JOSNA IN TROUBLE
Josna is facing problems in getting her passport now.

Having worked for two years as a housemaid since November 2013 in Jordan, she returned home in October last year.

In December, she completed all necessary procedure for the MRP. When she went to collect her digital passport, she came to know about the fraudulence.

For the last eight months, whenever she went to the Munshiganj office, officials told her to contact the Dhaka office.

Officials at the DIP said they were still investigating the forgery, and would give Josna the passport only after cancelling the one issued to the women.

"I don't know when the problem would be over. I need to go abroad again for work, but I'm helpless as I am yet to get my passport," she said yesterday.

Bangladeshi expat imam

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might that he thinks his father was a victim of "planned killing".

Tara Mia of Gopalganj in Sylhet, along with his wife and children, went to the US four and a half years back to settle there.

According to a Reuters report, a lone gunman approached the two from behind and shot both in the head at close range around 1:50pm (local time) when they were walking together following afternoon prayers at a mosque in Ozone Park neighbourhood in the New York City borough of Queens.

They were transported to Jamaica Hospital Medical Center and they died "while life-saving procedures were being performed," said Andrew Rubin, a hospital spokesman.

Bangladesh's State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahriar Alam condemned the killing, and termed it "a cowardly act on peace-loving people".

On her Twitter page, US Ambassador in Dhaka Marcia Bernicat condemned the murders, and said Imam Alauddin Akonjee "stood for peace".

"We join Bangladeshis to condemn this killing and honor what he stood for," she wrote.

"Violence can never be the solution," added the US diplomat.

Police were yet to make any arrests or learn the motive behind the shooting.

The New York City police last night released a sketch of the suspect.

No evidence has been uncovered that

the two men were targeted because of their faith, but police didn't rule out any possibility, said Tiffany Phillips, a spokeswoman for the NY City Police Department.

Both the victims were wearing religious garb at the time of shooting.

Police sources said they have witnessed who saw the killer holding a gun, as well as security video of the shooter following the imam and his friend. The footage then captures the man sprinting back, this time with a gun in his hand.

A police source told the New York Daily News that the NYPD Hate Crimes Task Force would investigate, but it was "too early to say" what the motive was behind the shooting.

A second source said the investigators were looking into the possibility of a botched robbery because one of the men was found carrying several hundred dollars.

"We are currently conducting an extensive canvass of the area for video and additional witnesses," Deputy Inspector Henry Sautner said in a statement.

"The perpetrator of these senseless killings must be swiftly apprehended and face the full force of the law," Afaf Nasser, executive director of the Muslim advocacy group's New York chapter, said in a statement.

MUSLIM COMMUNITY HOLDS RALLY
According to AP, more than a hundred

people attended a rally at the shooting site on Saturday night and shouted, "We want justice."

"We feel really insecure and unsafe in a moment like this," Millat Uddin, an Ozone Park resident told CBS New York.

"It's really threatening to us, threatening to our future, threatening to our mobility in our neighborhood, and we're looking for justice."

According to an AP report, Sarah Sayeed, who serves as a liaison to Muslim communities, said, "I understand the fear because I feel it myself. I understand the anger. But it's very important to mount a thorough investigation."

Millat Uddin, who offers prayers at the mosque, said Akonjee had led the mosque for about two years and was a very pious man.

"The community's heart is totally broken," added Millat.

Local resident Khairul Islam, 33, said, "That's not what America is about."

In the US, there has been an average of 12.6 suspected anti-Muslim hate crimes a month in recent years, according to an analysis of FBI statistics, but that number appeared to spike late last year, The New York Times reported.

Our correspondent from Sylhet reports, locals in Habiganj town yesterday brought out a procession after Asr prayers, demanding justice for the two slain Bangladeshis.

Khaleda not celebrating

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reason for celebrating her birthday at this age," he added.

Leaders and activists of different fronts and associate bodies of the party have also been asked not to gather in front of her Gulshan office on this occasion, said sources at the office.

Even after that, some BNP leaders and activists went there with flowers to wish Khaleda last night. They were allowed in but not with flowers, said insiders at the party.

Contacted, BNP standing committee member Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman said, "I welcome the decision of Khaleda Zia to cancel her birthday celebration on this day [August 15] when Bangabandhu and most of his family members were killed [in 1975]."

In his reaction to the decision, ruling Awami League presidium member Kazi Zafarullah said it showed that good sense has finally prevailed on Khaleda Zia.

"The nation knows that it is not her real birthday. She just celebrates the fake birthday on this day as a part of her politics of vengeance," he said.

Party insiders said though the BNP mentioned the present situation of the country for cancelling the celebrations of her 71st birthday, she has taken the decision as the pro-BNP intellectuals and some other politicians told her that her recent initiative for forging national unity against militancy would be questioned if she celebrates her birthday this year.

to see the reaction after cancelling the programme and she believed that she would be benefited in future.

On October 26, 2013, in a telephone conversation with Khaleda Zia about the 10th parliamentary polls issue, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also raised question about observing the birthday on August 15.

Recently, in a meeting with Khaleda over the forging of unity against militancy, Krishak Sramik Janata League President Kader Siddique also urged Khaleda not to observe her birthday on the day.

Amid controversies over the authenticity of her date of birth, different quarters questioned the "taste" of someone who would celebrate her birthday on the National Mourning Day "just to mock her political rival".

The BNP has been claiming that it was not Khaleda Zia, but the party leaders and activists who celebrate the day.

Hours before the announcement of cancelling the birthday celebration, Bangladesh Chhatra League, pro-AL student body, at a human chain programme announced that they would protest any move for celebrating the birthday and urged the countrymen to hand over to police anyone who would prepare her birthday cakes.

In 1993, the BNP started observing Khaleda's birthday on August 15 on a limited scale, but becoming opposition party in 1996, it started observing the programme on a large scale.

Khaleda usually cuts cakes around

12:01am this day every year.

However, she cut cakes around 9:15pm last year, despite calls from different quarters not to celebrate the birthday on August 15 as the day is observed as the National Mourning Day.

According to media reports, the former PM has mentioned three separate dates of birth in various documents -- September 5, 1946 in her matriculation exam form; August 5, 1944 in her marriage certificate; and August 19, 1947 in the record of her prime ministerial oath.

Yemen school

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camp, killing militia fighters including a leader identified as Yehya Munassar Abu Rabua.

"The site that was bombed... is a major training camp for militia," he told AFP. "Why would children be at a training camp?"

Yemen's government had confirmed to the coalition that "there is no school in this area," he said.

Assiri said MSF's toll "confirms the Huthis' practice of recruiting and subjecting children to terror."

"They... use them as scouts, guards, messengers and fighters," Assiri said, noting previous reports from Human Rights Watch on the rebels' use of underage recruits.

"When jets target training camps, they cannot distinguish between ages," he added.

Rescued elephant tranquillised again

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

The rescued wild elephant which yesterday broke its shackles tied to a mango tree in Koyra village in Sarishabari upazila was again tranquillised.

After the animal was tranquillised, he was now chained to a log piled into the ground in a field, which is around half a kilometre away from the earlier place, said Ashim Kumar Mallick, wildlife inspector of the forest department.

The elephant, which has been named as Bangabhadur, broke the shackles around 5:00am and took a dip in a nearby pond. Then the elephant wandered around half a kilometre.

As the animal started roaming without chains, the elephant rescue team again decided to tranquillise him so that they could bring it under control, said the forest official.

Mostafizur Rahman, assistant veterinary surgeon of Bangabandhu Safari Park in Cox's Bazar, tranquillised the elephant around 8:00am with a metal dart.

They administered a low dose to the animal so that it could stand after being tranquillised, Ashim said.

Bangabhadur was being given light food like sugarcane, banana and banana plants, he added.

They were planning to take the elephant today to the road, which is over one kilometre away from the field, to lift it onto a truck to carry it to Bangabandhu Safari Park in Gazipur, said Tapon Kumar Dey, chief executive director of Nature Conservation Society, who is leading the 17-member rescue team of the forest department.

The elephant was first tranquillised on August 11.

Bangabhadur got separated from its herd in Assam of India and entered Bangladesh territory on June 27 through Chilmari upazila of Kurigram, floating with the currents of the Brahmaputra river.

Woman set afire by ex-husband

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A college student in Atrai upazila of Naogaon is struggling for life as she suffered 40 percent burn injuries after her ex-husband set fire to her yesterday.

Locals caught the former husband -- Sadequul Alam Khan Sazzad, 25, son of Abdus Salam -- from the spot and handed him over to police.

The victim has been identified as Shahnaz Khatun, 22, daughter of Sokhin Mondal of Dighipara village in the upazila.

Shahnaz -- now a 2nd year HSC student at Mollah Azad Memorial College -- resumed her studies after her year-long marriage with Sazzad ended in divorce last year.

Sazzad, although married again, continued to approach Shahnaz, asking her to remarry him, locals said. The former husband became infuriated as Shahnaz persistently turned down his proposals, they said adding that he finally stopped her at around 2:30pm yesterday at Tinmatha area on the bypass road near the Atrai River, poured petrol on her and set her on fire.

Soon after the incident Shahnaz dived into the river to put out the fire. Locals rushed to her rescue and sent her to Atrai Upazila Health Complex.

Dr Ashish Kumar, acting residential medical officer of the hospital, said they transferred the critically injured woman -- with 40 percent burn on her body -- to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital yesterday afternoon.

Shahnaz's father has filed a case with Atrai Police Station, accusing Sazzad -- now under arrest -- for the attack on his daughter's life, said Shamsul Alam, inspector (investigation) at Atrai Police Station.

A Naogaon court has sent Sazzad to the district jail after police produced him before it yesterday.

15 feared

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Local fishermen rescued him while he was floating with a drum in the Bay in Kuakata area yesterday morning.

Bangladesh Navy, Coast Guard and a ship of Indian Coast Guard have been conducting a rescue operation in the area but could not advance smoothly because of rough weather.

A helicopter of Bangladesh Navy, rescue ships BNS Sangu, BNS Birshrestha Ruhul Amin, Coast Guard, four high-speed boats and a patrol boat of the Indian Coast Guard have joined the rescue operation.

FV Mahagouri sank after being caught in the rough sea about 30 nautical miles off Hiron Point near the Sundarbans in the Bay, said an official of the Naval Base BNS Titumir asking not to be identified.

The Indian mission on Saturday afternoon informed Bangladesh Navy that two Indian fishing trawlers were missing at the point.

Rescue operation was going on as of last night.

Safety on their mind

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initiatives, including sending of family members to home countries.

Western countries continue to arrange financial support for the departure of diplomats' families from Bangladesh amid serious security concerns after the July 1 café attack in Gulshan's diplomatic zone, highly placed diplomatic sources said.

The terror incident left 22 people dead, 17 of them foreigners.

The United States, Australia, Germany and European Union authorised the voluntary departure of family members of their government personnel posted to respective embassies/high commissions in Dhaka.

Canada has made it mandatory for the families of diplomats at its high commission in Dhaka to leave Bangladesh.

Effective from July 10, the Department of State authorised the voluntary departure of family members of US government personnel posted to the US Embassy in Dhaka.

The sources yesterday told The Daily Star that more countries are likely to initiate voluntary or mandatory departure of families soon because further attacks cannot be ruled out.

As part of security initiative, the Japan government has asked all its diplomats in Dhaka to move to Baridhara, which to them is a bit secured area.

The Japan Embassy has asked all its diplomats to vacate their rented houses in Gulshan and other areas and rent house in Baridhara immediately.

Meanwhile, the American Citizen Services (ACS) Section of the US Embassy

has invited US citizens to a Town Hall Meeting inside the embassy in Dhaka at 3:00pm tomorrow for a discussion on issues that affect Americans in Bangladesh.

Ambassador Marcia Stephens Bloom Bernicat and Consul General Elizabeth Gourlay will attend the meeting to respond to questions or concerns in general.

The US government, which assesses that the terrorist threat is real and credible, has asked its citizens to take stringent security measures, remain vigilant, and be alert to local security developments.

The US government officials and their families are now not permitted to visit public establishments or places in Bangladesh, travel on foot, motorcycle, bicycle, rickshaw, or other uncovered means on public thoroughfares and sidewalks and attend large gatherings in Bangladesh.

The UK's updated travel advice said there is a heightened threat of further terrorist attacks and foreigners, in particular westerners, may be directly targeted; crowded areas where westerners are known to gather may be at higher risk of attack.

Canada in its updated advice till August 14 said further attacks cannot be ruled out and could be indiscriminate.

The Australian government advised its citizens to "reconsider their need to travel" to Bangladesh due to an increase in terrorist attacks, including against Westerners. Australian officials continue to adopt heightened security precautions in Dhaka, and are limiting their movements in public places.

Thompson

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10,000m crown after a dramatic fall early in his race. The 33-year-old produced a magnificent final lap to become the first British runner to win three Olympic titles.

With 16 laps to go, Farah was accidentally tripped by America's Galen Rupp but he picked himself up and surged through the field to claim victory in 27min 5.17 seconds.

"At one moment I was thinking my race is over, my dream is over. I managed to dig deep. I promised my little daughter Rihanna a medal, my mind was on that. 'You can't let her down, you can't let her down'," an emotional Farah later told reporters.

Phelps takes one last dive to glory
Michael Phelps brought an end to his illustrious career with a 23rd gold medal -- his fifth of these Games -- after anchoring his 4X100m medley relay team as the swimming competition was wrapped up on Saturday night amid USA's absolute dominance.

Putting the perfect end to a career which spanned five Olympics and brought 28 medals, Phelps produced a blistering leg of butterfly to restore his team's lead after USA had fallen off the pace.

The 31-year-old Baltimore native was visibly overwhelmed with emotion as he let the applause from the crowd sink in, with his family members in tears.

"Getting off the bus and walking to the pool tonight, I pretty much felt myself starting to crack," Phelps later

said regarding his decision to retire from the pool at the end of these Games.

"Last warm-up, last time putting on a suit, last time walking out in front of people, representing my country -- it's insane, a lot better than it was four years ago," added Phelps.

Phelps's five gold medals helped USA top the tally with 16 gold, with nearest competitors Australia and Hungary grabbing only three golds each. The men's 4X100m medley relay brought USA its 1001st gold medal in its Olympic history following the 1000th won by the women's rally team some 15 minutes earlier.

"This is how I wanted to finish my career. I've lived a dream come true. Being able to cap it off with these Games is just the perfect way to finish," Phelps said.

However, the American star had said similar things after the London Olympics too, only to return two years later. This time he said he had 'unfinished business' -- avenging his loss against South Africa's Chad le Clos in his favourite 200m butterfly. He did win the event this time, but he lost another of his favourites, the 100m butterfly, to young Singaporean Joseph Schooling.

Who knows, this defeat is what might egg him back from retirement once again. The fans worldwide would really love it because without Phelps, swimming will never be the same again.

Boko Haram shows missing

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attention to Boko Haram and its bloody quest to create a fundamentalist state in northeastern Nigeria.

A man whose face was covered by a turban in the video called on the Nigerian government to release Boko Haram prisoners in exchange for the girls.

"They should know that their children are still in our hands," he said in the film posted on YouTube.

While President Muhammadu Buhari has said the group is "technically defeated", his government has struggled to find the girls, an enduring political embarrassment that highlights Boko Haram's continued presence in the region.

The video was attributed to the original Boko Haram name, not the new Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), suggesting it was released by Shekau's faction, although it is not known when it was filmed.

"There are a number of the girls,

about 40 of them, that have been married," said the man in the 11-minute video, which shows girls with veils sitting on the ground and standing in the background.

"Some of them have died as a result of aerial bombardment."

A girl speaking in the Chibok dialect chokes back tears as she describes an aerial attack by Nigerian armed forces.

In the background, several girls look visibly distressed and dab their eyes as she recounts the raids. One is holding a small baby.

"They should immediately release our brethren in their custody," the man said, threatening that if the prisoners are not released that the Nigerian government will never be able to rescue the girls.

'SENSE OF DESPERATION'
"This focuses on using the girls as a bargaining chip," Ryan Cummings, director at intelligence firm Signal Risk, told AFP.

Youths like Faraaz

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at a discussion at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) in the city.

The programme was organised to mark the 41st death anniversary of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Faraaz, grandson of Latifur Rahman and Shahnaz Rahman and son of Simeen Hossain and Waqer Hossain, was brutally killed along with 19 other hostages in the terrorist attack on the Holey Artisan Bakery on July 1.

Terrorists specifically targeted foreigners dining at the upscale Gulshan café. They were looking for "infidels," taking test as to who could recite verses from the holy Quran and who couldn't.

The student of Economics at Emory University in Atlanta, US, Faraaz was given the choice of walking free from the café under siege. But he chose to stay on with his friends -- Abinta Kabir, a Bangladesh-born US citizen and also a student at Emory University, and Tarishi Jain, an Indian student of the

University of California, Berkeley -- with whom he had gone to the café on the dreadful night.

Nasim, in his address, also said the parents of militants expressed solidarity with the national unity against terrorism.

"The peace-loving people of this country don't want any terror activity and that's why no one participated in the namaj-e-janaza of the militants. The parents also did not want to receive the bodies," he said.

He alleged that the evil forces of 1971 and 1975 were still hatching conspiracies against the country at a time when it was making progress.