

## Housewife

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paternal uncle of Khairul and one of the accused, said Khandaker Rezaul Hasan Reza, officer-in-charge of the police station.

"We are trying to arrest the others," the OC added.

Annie's father Mojibor said Annie was married to Khairul, son of Habib Ullah Master of the same area, nearly four years ago. The couple has a baby girl aged around one and a half years.

Khairul's family was not happy with the marriage as Annie's family was not well off. After the marriage, Khairul's mother Rehana Begum and elder brother Monju started putting pressure on him to get a divorce, Mojibor said.

In the face of pressure from his family, Khairul divorced Annie.

However, he again married Annie a few days later with a denmohor (the amount to be paid to the bride) of Tk 7 lakh, he said.

A few days later, Khairul moved to Gazipur's Kaliakoir with his wife and started living in a rented house there.

Around one and a half months ago, Khairul disappeared, leaving his wife and daughter behind, Mojibor added.

Khairul's family members filed a complaint with police, accusing Annie and her family of abduction.

However, Annie's family with the help of police found Khairul in one of his relative's house in Savar Palli Bidyut area. Khairul's mother was with him at that time.

Police arrested Khairul and sent him to jail but he was released from jail on bail later on.

On August 25, a village arbitration was organised in the presence of the local ward councillor. There, it was decided that Khairul and Annie would file for divorce and both the families agreed.

Khairul's family was asked to pay Tk 8 lakh to Annie. They, however, agreed to give two decimal of land instead of the money.

On Monday, Annie was asked to come to Khairul's house for the handover of the documents of the property. As she went there, Khairul and his family members beat up Annie mercilessly, leaving her critically injured.

At one stage, Annie lost consciousness. Thinking her dead, Khairul's family fled.

Being informed by the locals, Annie's father and relatives rescued her from the yard of the house and took her to the hospital.

Pronoy Das, resident medical officer of the hospital, said Annie's body bore several injury marks.

## Can president

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sentence passed by any court, tribunal or other authority.

On his own, he can not exercise this power. He needs advice of the Prime Minister to exercise it.

So, if the Jamaat leader applies to the President, fate of his application will be determined by the Prime Minister as the President will just act on the advice.

But, the crucial question is: can the President, even if advised by the Prime Minister, pardon Mir Quasem Ali for committing crimes against humanity during the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971?

According to international laws and practices the President cannot exercise his prerogative of mercy to pardon any war criminal.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights report of 2009 titled "International Law and United Nations Policy on Amnesty" said:

"Under various sources of international law and UN international policy, amnesties are impermissible if they prevent prosecution of individuals who may be criminally responsible for war crimes and genocide.

An amnesty for genocide would violate the Genocide Convention and Customary international law, it said.

"Amnesties that prevent the prosecution of war crimes... are inconsistent with the State's obligations under the widely ratified Geneva Convention of 1949 and their 1977 Protocols, the UN said.

Countries which have signed the Geneva Convention are obliged to search out such criminals and try them. Bangladesh is a signatory of the convention.

The European Court of Human Rights also made similar observations during the trial of Fred Margus, a Croatian army commander accused of killing Croatian-Serb civilians during the war in the early 1990s.

The Court found that there was a growing tendency in international law to view granting of amnesties in respect of grave breaches of human rights as unacceptable.

So, it can be said that fate of Quasem has been sealed yesterday after rejection of his review petition.

## Toxins in nine food

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And in most of the cases, there was presence of excessive pesticide residues.

Referring to a World Health Organization (WHO) estimate, the IPH report said there are three million global cases of acute and severe pesticide poisoning with some 220,000 deaths every year. The majority of these cases occur in the developing countries, it added, but could not offer any country-specific statistics on Bangladesh.

Presence of excessive formaldehyde have been found in 100 percent samples of date while harmful level of formaldehyde was also there in 73 percent of grape samples (in 27 out of 37 samples tested).

Of all other food items, brinjal turned out to be most susceptible as excessive pesticide residues have been found in 12 (44 percent) out of the 27 samples. Excess pesticide residues were also there in nine samples each of bean, green chili and grape, in eight samples of cauliflower, and three samples each of tomato and amaranth.

It came as a welcome relief as there has been no presence of formaldehyde or pesticide beyond MRL in any of the 27 mango samples tested. Further, on the positive side, no pesticide beyond MRL was traced in any of 45 dried fish samples tested and no urea was found in any of the 27 parched rice samples.

As many as 22 out of 27 red chili powder samples tested were found to be having excessive aflatoxin and three of these samples also had banned colouring agent Sudan Red.

Experts involved with the testing process showed one example to project the gravity of the food safety concern. They told The Daily Star that MRL of Quinalphos, a pesticide, is 10 part-per-billion (ppb) but, up to 128 ppb Quinalphos has been found in tested brinjal samples.

IPH Director AKM Zafarullah told The Daily Star that the eight-month survey was undertaken to analyse the concentration of pesticide residues, aflatoxin, formaldehyde and detection of colouring agents in selected vegetables, fruits, dry fish, and parched rice collected directly from farmers' fields as well as from wholesale and retail markets in Dhaka.

The samples collected from farmers were from Dohar, Keraniganj, Savar, Dhamrai, Kaliakoir, Gazipur, Kapasia, Ashulia, Narshingdi and Rugganj areas.

Samples at wholesale level were collected from Jatrabari, Karwan Bazar, Aminbazar, Tongi Bazar, Khilkhet Bazar, Mirpur-1 and Shyam Bazar while retailer-level samples were collected from New Market, Rajanigandha Bazar, Mirpur-6, Banani Bazar, Gulshan-1 Market, Uttara Rajuk Bazar, Mohakhali Bazar, Malibagh Bazar, Ashulia Bazar and Nakhhalpara Bazar.

With supports rendered by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the National Food Safety Laboratory (NFSL) was established and subsequently declared as the national reference laboratory by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare against a backdrop of parlia-

ment passing the Food Safety Act, 2013 on October 10, 2013.

The act came into being hard on the heels of a nationwide outcry against unbridled food adulteration. Long after the law enactment, the government formed Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BSFA) in February last year with a promise to give consumers relief from toxin and adulterated foods.

But over a year and a half after the formation of the BSFA, its Chairman Mustak Hassan Md Iftekar said they are still trying their best to play their mandated role but largely handicapped by non-sanction of required manpower.

The IPH report cautioned that "Long term accumulation of pesticide residues, aflatoxin and colouring agent in human body via dietary intake of vegetables and other food commodities is an alarming problem."

According to the WHO, pesticides are potentially toxic to humans and they may induce adverse health effects, including cancer, effects on reproduction, immune or nervous systems.

Aflatoxin is poisonous and children are particularly affected by aflatoxin exposure, which leads to stunted growth and delayed development. Formaldehyde can cause irritation of the skin, eyes, nose, and throat. High levels of exposure may cause some types of cancer, according to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). And according to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), Sudan Red is carcinogenic, meaning it has the potential to cause cancer.

## S Asia

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Geoscience.

"The two main concerns are salinity and arsenic," the authors of the study wrote.

Up to a depth of 200 metres (650 feet), some 23 percent of the groundwater stored in the basin is too salty, and about 37 percent "is affected by arsenic at toxic concentrations," they said.

The Indo-Gangetic basin accounts for about a quarter of the global extraction of groundwater -- freshwater which is stored underground in crevices and spaces in soil or rock, fed by rivers and rainfall.

Fifteen-to-twenty million wells extract water from the basin every year amid growing concerns about depletion.

The new study -- based on local records of groundwater levels and quality from 2000 to 2012 -- found that the water table was in fact stable or rising across about 70 percent of the aquifer.

It was found to be falling in the other 30 percent, mainly near highly populated areas.

Groundwater can become salty through natural and manmade causes, including inefficient farmland irrigation and poor drainage.

Arsenic, too, is naturally present, but levels are exacerbated by use of fertilisers and mining.

Arsenic poisoning of drinking water is a major problem in the region.

## Survey shows

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Shameem Ahsan Khan told The Daily Star.

He said the survey results show the students are doing better.

The survey set five bands of competence in each of the three subjects. Every band demonstrates a certain level of competence and current standard of learning.

Band-4 and Band-5 show the national average scale score or the desired level of competence achieved by class VI and class VIII students in Bangla, while Band-3 and Band-4 reflect the expected level of competence in English and Mathematics in both the classes.

Band-6 shows the higher than the expected level, while Band-2 shows subsequent low levels of competence.

There has been a debate over the quality of education for several years although the pass rates in public examinations are getting higher every year.

Educationalists on different occasions pointed out that a number of students fail to gain the desired level of competence due to flawed teaching systems, lack of skilled teachers, inadequate teaching and infrastructural facilities, and insufficient budget allocations.

According to the survey, girls lag behind in terms of gaining competence in mathematics in both class VI and class VIII. However, the competence level of boys and girls is almost equal in English in both the classes and the class VI girls have rather done slightly better in Bangla.

The survey also points out students of which divisions gained adequate competence.

Both class VI and VIII students in

Rajshahi are ahead of others in the three subjects. In Rajshahi, around 81 percent of class VI students have adequate competence in English against 68 percent of eighth graders.

Students of Sylhet are at the bottom of the chart, as 56 percent of sixth graders achieved the desired level of competence in English, while only 42 percent of eighth graders have proficiency in the same subject.

The report observes that there are a number of students whose competence level are below the level they achieved in previous grades. On the other side, some students have gained competence more than expected.

"Students in the rural areas showed poor performance compared to those in the cities," it says, suggesting supplying more educational apparatus and increasing more facilities to the rural areas.

Students' age also puts an effect in their learning process, as those who are older than the general ones are found to have performed poorly, it adds.

Speaking at yesterday's programme, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said the survey report revealed both good and bad sides and will help find out the problems in the education system.

"We will take adequate measures to solve the problems, he said, asking the education officials to keep regular supervision of the education institutions.

He also said there were allegations that many college teachers prefer coaching rather than taking regular classes.

"Students and teachers are not seen at many colleges after 11:00am, coaching is going on but no classes," he observed.

## Family won't take militant suspect's body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Family members of a militant suspect, killed in a "gunfight" with police in Bogra on Monday, have refused to take his body.

The mother and the sister of the suspect, Ripon alias Golam Tareque alias Abu Ibrahim, 29, told Rajshahi police that they did not want to bury him as that would be "an insult to the state", reports our correspondent there.

Ripon's sister Samina Ferdous told The Daily Star, "I can't take his body as he was involved in militancy. If I do that, it will undermine my country."

The body was with Bogra police. She also said Ripon lived alone on the ground floor of his three-storey building at Pathanpara area of Rajshahi city.

Inspector Rezaus Sadik of Detective Branch of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police, also the investigation officer of the Rajshahi University Prof AFM Rezaul Karim Siddiquee murder case, said several militant suspects stayed in Ripon's house and planned Rezaul's killing.

Ripon, who police said founded a small group of militants called "Ansar Rajshahi", was killed in a "gunfight" with police early Monday at Bogra's Sherpur upazila.

## Saudi job

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lifted a seven-year restriction on recruitment of Bangladeshi male workers. The Arab country also announced the decision to hire Bangladeshis in all sectors.

According to BMET statistics, some 13 lakh Bangladeshi workers are now employed in Saudi Arabia. Early in 2008 the Kingdom had imposed the restriction on hiring Bangladeshis alleging that there were malpractices in the recruitment process.

Many Bangladeshi workers alleged that they had to spend between Tk 5 lakh and Tk 10 lakh each to get a work visa through relatives or recruiting agencies in Saudi Arabia.

Expatriates Welfare Minister Nurul Islam yesterday said his ministry will take legal action if any private recruiting agent received additional money from workers.

"The cost fixed by us is logical. The government will take action against any individual or institution if any allegation of charging workers an additional amount was proved," he said.

The minister was talking to reporters after inaugurating a three-day training workshop for 41 government officials posted in 27 labour wings of Bangladesh in 24 countries at the Probashi Kalyan Bhaban.

He also warned the recruiting agents of revoking their licences if they violated the government's decision.

Bangladesh Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Golam Moshir yesterday said the fixed migration cost of Tk 1.65 lakh is much better as it is significantly lower from Tk 10 lakh for each worker.

"I think the government has considered some necessary marketing costs to ensure jobs for our workers," he told this correspondent over the phone from Riyadh.

On August 11, he told The Daily Star that Bangladeshi workers would not need to pay money to recruiting agencies as their Saudi employers would bear the total migration costs, including airfare and service charges.

About Riyadh's decision to open its labour market to Bangladeshis in all sectors, the ambassador said the Saudi authorities would follow the same recruitment process for Bangladeshis as it does for workers from Sri Lanka, India and Nepal.

BAIRA Secretary General Ruhul Amin said they will abide by the fixed migration cost.

A total of 1.32 lakh Bangladeshis had migrated to the oil-rich country in 2008, but the number drastically dropped to 14,666 in the following year, show BMET data.

Since then Saudi jobs had largely been beyond the reach of Bangladeshi male workers. Only a few male workers secured visas through their relatives or recruiting agencies.

More than 60,000 female domestic workers landed jobs in Saudi Arabia from April last year till yesterday, said BMET sources.

According to recent media reports, the Saudi economy is now hit by falling oil prices. Many Saudi companies have suspended construction projects, resulting in job losses for foreign workers, including Bangladeshis.

## Mad rush

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Mobile courts should be regularly run from September 3 at all districts to take unfit vehicles off roads,

demanding the National Committee to Protect Shipping, Roads and Railways at a press conference at Mukti Bhaban.

It also demanded strengthening patrols by law enforcers, including Bangladesh Coast Guard, to check extortion and criminal activities on highways and waterways.

## Singapore jails

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Lawyers Noor Marican and Ramesh Tiwary represented both Mamun and Zaman without any fees.

Addressing the court, Marican said both men were deeply apologetic to the people of Singapore for causing fear and harm through their actions.

Pleading for a more lenient sentence, Marican added that both men had committed their crimes in a moment of foolishness, and were now deeply ashamed of bringing down the reputation of Islam and other Muslims.

Speaking for both men, Marican said: "He is a Muslim, he believes in Islam, and he realises that these are not teachings of his religion... It is not the way of Islam."

The group called themselves the Islamic State in Bangladesh (ISB) and were collecting or providing money to fund terrorist attacks back home, according to The Straits Times report.

Their goal was to topple their government, set up an Islamic state and bring it under the self-declared caliphate of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Two other ISB men were also detained in April. They have been given two-year detention orders under the Internal Security Act of Singapore (ISA) and have not faced formal charges in court yet.

Court documents show the men had clearly defined roles.

Mamun was the group's deputy leader, while Zaman was in the group's security council.

On April 29 this year, Singapore deported five Bangladeshis for their suspected militancy links.

Back then, the Singapore authorities had said the five were investigated as part of a crackdown on the so-called

## Teacher held

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Hossain and Mohammad Jakir.

Police arrested Alauddin from Bagra Bazar around 3:00pm.

Abdus Sabur Mandal, deputy commissioner of Chandpur, and Shamsunahar, superintendent of Chandpur police, met the victim's parents at their house in Bagdi village and assured them of justice.

Later, the DC formed a three member committee, headed by Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer Udayan Dewan, to investigate the incident, and the committee was asked to submit its report within three working days.

Sathi, 14, a student of class-VIII, allegedly hanged herself from a wooden beam with a piece of cloth in her room after evidently being punished by Alauddin for failing to pay an exam fee of Tk 80 on Monday.

On Sunday, Alauddin allegedly punished Sathi and a few others by compelling them to stay standing for about an hour in the sun on the school playground.

Sathi was buried yesterday on completion of her autopsy. The local administration gave the victim's family Tk 10,000 for burial purpose.

Sub-inspector of Chandpur Model Police Station Mahbub Mandal is the investigation officer of the case.

## US, India sign

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complicated without the signing of the logistics agreement as well as two other pacts that would allow for secure communications and the exchange of nautical and other data. The agreements are considered routine between the United States and its other defence partners.

But India has had concerns such an agreement would commit it to hosting US troops at its bases, or draw it into a military alliance with the United States and undermine its traditional autonomy. Carter and Parrikar reached an agreement "in principle" in April, but had yet to finalise the details.

Carter has made closer military ties with India a priority, and established a special unit within the Pentagon last year to promote cooperation with that country. Parrikar's visit to Washington this week marks the sixth interaction between the two top defence officials.

Both Carter and Parrikar went to pains on Monday to make clear that the logistics agreement did not allow for basing of US troops in India.

"It's not a basing agreement of any kind," Carter said. Without naming China, both Carter and Parrikar mentioned the importance of the free flow of trade to both countries.

"India and the United States have a shared interest in freedom of navigation and overflight and unimpeded commerce as part of rule-based order in (the) Indo-Pacific," Parrikar said.

China hoped cooperation between India and the United States would be "constructive and positive" for the region's peace and stability and development, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told reporters at a regular briefing yesterday.

"So, we look favourably on this sort

of normal relationship between India and the United States," Hua said.

TENSIONS WITH PAKISTAN

Kerry and India's Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker yesterday began two days of talks to boost business ties, and to encourage dialogue with Pakistan over the disputed region of Kashmir.

The situation in Indian-ruled Kashmir and concerns over Afghanistan will be raised in talks with National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, and with Modi, a senior US official said.

Kashmir is at the centre of a decades-old rivalry between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan, which also rules its northern part, and backed an insurgency in the late 1980s and 1990s that Indian security forces largely crushed.

Dozens of people have been killed in violent protests in Kashmir since July 8, when security forces killed a field commander of Pakistan-based Islamist militant group who enjoyed widespread support in the Muslim-majority region.

A senior State Department official said Kerry will encourage dialogue between Pakistan and India during the discussions.

"We have a long-standing policy of encouraging and advocating for great dialogue between the two countries on addressing areas of difference, and that continues to be our position," a senior State Department official said.

"But we have also underscored that combating terrorism is a high priority for the United States in its bilateral relations with all of the countries in the region," the official added.

The situation in Afghanistan will also be discussed, the official said, amid closer ties between India and Afghanistan, which is likely to aggravate fears in Pakistan of being wedged between two hostile neighbours.

## Fresh violence overshadows Myanmar peace talks

AFP, Naypyidaw

Fresh fighting between ethnic minority rebels and Myanmar's military is overshadowing an upcoming peace conference led by Aung San Suu Kyi's new civilian government, people involved in the talks said yesterday.

The five-day gathering, which officially opens on Wednesday, is Suu Kyi's first big drive to end multiple insurgencies that have raged in Myanmar's borderlands since independence in 1948.

Organisers have been pushing for a unilateral ceasefire before the UN-backed talks.

But those hopes have been shattered by renewed outbreaks of fighting, negotiators from both the rebels and the government told AFP.

Several rebel groups have failed to down their weapons -- a precondition demanded by the military for them to attend.

Troops also remain locked in combat with ethnic fighters hours before UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, who will attend the conference, is due to give a press conference later Tuesday.