

Monkey couple parenting a kitten

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

In a rare example of care, a monkey has been mothering an abandoned kitten for about a month in the district's Sreemangal upazila.

Sometimes the monkey breast-feeds the baby cat and shares her food with it.

Locals have been visiting the Bird Breeding Centre on Jalalia Road in Sreemangal to see the animals.

They were taken by surprise to see the monkey having fun with the kitten.

If any visitor tried to come closer, the monkey would cuddle the baby cat against her chest. The scene touched the hearts of many visitors, said Monib Rahman, a visitor from Dhaka.

Abdul Ahad Mia, director at the Breeding Centre, said they had a pet monkey couple with no babies. A month ago, the male monkey found the newborn cat and took it to the female monkey.

Since then, the female monkey has been looking after the kitten like a mother, he added.

He said although these monkeys are omnivorous, they didn't eat the kitten.



A monkey cuddles a kitten at a birds' breeding centre in Moulvibazar's Sreemangal upazila. The primate has set a unique example of motherhood, as it breast-feeds and shares her food with the abandoned kitten. The photo was taken three days ago.

PHOTO: STAR



'IS VIDEO' Narrator is Safi: DMP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The narrator of the recent video purportedly by Islamic State featuring the five Dhaka attackers is Tahmid Rahman Safi, a Bangladeshi man now reportedly in IS stronghold Syria, police said.

Investigators came to the conclusion through matching the voice on the video with voice recognition software, Monirul Islam, chief of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said yesterday.

Safi is the son of former election commissioner and home secretary late Safiur Rahman.

The 32-year-old was a singer and made it to the top 15 in the first season of the country's popular talent hunt show Close Up 1, his friends earlier said.

He was also the first man seen in a video released soon after the July 1 Gulshan attack praising the attackers.

Tahmid left the country on April 23 last year, saying he was going on a honeymoon, his family members said at the time.

On September 23, the SITE Intelligence Group, a US-based organisation that monitors terrorist activities, said that the IS released a video from Bangladesh for the first time about the Holy Artisan attackers.

"IS Releases First Video from Bangladesh, Focuses on Dhaka Attackers," the group tweeted.

The five attackers -- Nibras Islam, Rohan Imtiaz, Meer Mubasheer, Khairul Islam Payel and Shafiqul Islam Uzzal -- stormed the Holy Artisan restaurant and killed 20 hostages, 17 of them foreigners. They were later killed in an army operation.

In the video, in which they appear to have spoken before the attack, they are heard threatening that they would target anyone who they call the "enemies of Islam".

Pope likely

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appearitions next year. Francis's predecessor Benedict XVI was the third pope to make the pilgrimage to Fatima in 2010, after Paul VI in 1967 and John Paul II who visited Fatima three times in 1982, 1991 and 2000.

Francis also said he would "almost certainly" visit India and Bangladesh, though he did not specify a date.

He then said he intended to visit an African nation, though he did not specify which it would be, adding that the choice would depend on the political climate.

The pontiff, who took the papal name Francis in homage to the famous Christian friar and his devotion to the downtrodden, has already visited a record 16 nations since March 2013, favouring nations outside the world's more typical centres of attention.

"One understands reality better and sees oneself more clearly from the periphery than in the centre. But that doesn't mean I wouldn't visit big countries like Portugal or France, I don't know," he said.

'Criminal' killed in 'gunfight' with Rab

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

An alleged criminal was killed in a "gunfight" with members of Rapid Action Battalion in Tangail last night.

The deceased is Nurun Nabi alias Munshi, 35, of Thanapara area in the town.

Nurun Nabi and his two accomplices snatched a motorcycle in Siraiganj and were on their way to Dhaka, claimed Mohiuddin Faruque, commander of the crime prevention company (CPC)-3 of Rab-12.

Acting on a tip-off, a Rab team took position in Dorun area by the Dhaka-Tangail highway around 9:00pm to arrest the criminals, he said.

Sensing the presence of the Rab team, the criminals opened fire on them, forcing the Rab men to fire back that triggered a "gunfight", Mohiuddin told The Daily Star.

Nurun Nabi was injured in the gun battle. His two associates, however, managed to flee.

He was taken to Tangail Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

The Rab members recovered a foreign-made pistol, three bullets, a magazine, a machete and a motorcycle from the spot.

Nurun Nabi was the leader of a robber gang called "Munshi" group and accused in about two dozen criminal cases, including nine for murder and 12 for robbery and snatching, filed with different police stations in Tangail, Gazipur and Mymensingh, the Rab commander claimed.

The Daily Star could not independently verify the claim.

Should innocent

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It is sad that it took police three months to find out his innocence. And all this while he was kept behind bars on the infamous clause of the law called Section 54. Under this section anybody can be arrested by way of simple suspicion. And this piece of law is so recklessly applied by our law enforcing agencies that the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court has made a ruling that it be judiciously applied.

The Gulshan attack was so shocking in nature that it is natural to suspect anyone in random, especially when someone was seen talking and walking with the militants. But was it needed to put the boy in jail after they quizzed him? Could the investigation not go on while he was on bail and under surveillance?

Sadder is the way a media trial was thrust upon this boy. Some agencies reportedly leaked some pictures of Tahmid holding a gun in presence of a terrorist and voila! The media splashed the pictures and crying Gotcha! Media made him a terrorist and spread such vilification that Tahmid and his family must have cringed in disgust and despair. Our media ethics have a long way to go.

This episode shows how we the innocent people can be vulnerable to the whims of the powerful. And who will return Tahmid his lost days of agony and despair? What does justice say here?

But in the end we all hope Tahmid can get back to his studies where his friends are eagerly waiting. We hope that the scar that has blemished his mind will heal. We hope he will come out from the nightmare.

Critical area at a stake

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The industries in operation within the ECA zone in Mongla include four cement factories, one soybean oil refinery, one crude oil refinery, four cylinder gas companies, and one cigarette factory in the Mongla EPZ area," said Hossain.

However, he said, "The department would discourage people from setting up harmful industries within the ECA zone."

"But if somebody established a garments industry, there was no point in stopping that even if it was in the ECA zone as that would not hurt the forest," he said.

But the department would not allow any leather, dyeing, and washing industry.

When asked about some environmentally harmful industries like ship breaking yards there, the director said, their licenses would not be renewed.

Director Hossain said some environmentally harmful industries were in operation in the Mongla export processing zone (EPZ) and the Mongla industrial area. These were set up in 1998 and in 2000 respectively. The industries were set up before the areas were marked as ECA in 2015.

The industries in operation within the ECA zone in Mongla include four cement factories, one soybean oil refinery, one crude oil refinery, four cylinder gas companies, and one cigarette factory in the Mongla EPZ area," said Hossain.

The government would have to take decisions about these industries, he said.

The ministry of law is currently vetting rules for the ECA area around the Sundarbans. Once the rules are passed, the department would swing into action regarding the polluting industries.

The draft ECA rules prohibit setting up any industry or conduct any activities that pollute the land, air or water and also cause sound pollution.

The Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act of 2010 also prohibits anyone from setting up industries or construct other establishments in the buffer zone, an area within 10 kilometres of the forest.

There are dozens of existing conventions, policies, rules, guidelines, treaties, and protocols that restrict such activities close to the reserve

forest, also a UN natural heritage site. Some of these legal barriers have been erected by the present government.

Environment experts think all these activities in the buffer zone of the Sundarbans are posing serious threats to the already vulnerable mangrove forest that acts as a natural barrier against cyclones.

In contravention to its own laws, the government has constructed a silo just a few hundred meters away from the Sundarbans wildlife sanctuary. The Rampal thermal power company site is also under development in the same area.

Soon after, private investors have also started to rush there.

The industrial area stretches from Sapmari in Rampal, where the government is constructing a coal-based power plant, to Jaymunir gol, the last human settlement before the Sundarbans in Mongla, just a few hundred metres away from the forest.

Some of those investors are influential politicians or their kin who manage clearances for industry and are buying land like homesteads, wetland and crop fields. Already over 100

business groups and individuals have bought land in the ECA zone.

"If somebody does not want to sell his or her land, a group of goons would make life difficult," said a local from the area who did not want to identify himself.

When asked whether the government was doing enough to protect the Sundarbans from land grabbers at the ECA zone, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, a leading environmental attorney and chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (BELA) said, the Sundarbans was not safe even with the government agencies.

"The government was not doing enough to protect the forest," she said.

When asked, Anwar Hossain Manju, the minister for environment and forest said, currently the department was not renewing any license and permission for that area.

"It is a matter of government policy whether the government would allow those industries in the ECA zone or not. We are waiting for that decision of the government," the minister told The Daily Star.

AL embarks on a lavish council

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They said the AL party instructed its lawmakers in the capital to bear the cost of billboards and illuminations in their areas.

The Awami League will illuminate selected public places across the country with colourful lights. Many intersections of the capital will also get this treatment along with neon billboards.

The party has written to presidents and general secretaries of district and upazila units to have their offices illuminated with colourful lights, and public places at the union level.

"This time the Awami League council will be held in a different manner. There is a lot of anticipation

about the council among people and we will not disappoint," AL Joint General Secretary Mahbul Alam Hanif told The Daily Star.

The party has been in power for seven and half years, he said, adding, "We would like to celebrate the success with the countrymen through this council."

Party top leaders, foreign delegates and invited guests of political parties would be on the stage.

The space for the 50,000 councillors would have a bamboo structure covered by tarpaulin.

Former students of the Faculty of Fine Arts, Dhaka University, would prepare the stage, while several event management companies would do the rest.

Next to the stage, there would be sand art depicting past political events of the country, including the Language Movement, Liberation War, the assassination of Bangabandhu and his family members. Artists will be brought in from India.

The Awami League wants to ensure presence of delegates from foreign political parties.

It is trying to have Indian ruling BJP President Amit Shah, delegates from Chinese Communist Party and the British opposition Labour Party. The party invited Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of India, Indian National Congress, Communist Party of India and Trinamool Congress.

The AL has a plan to invite political parties of the Saarc countries and make

a call for forging unity against terrorism and militancy.

"We want the participation of several political parties. We already sent invitation to some of them and the process is going on," said AL's International Affairs Secretary Faruk Khan.

"We will confirm who will come and who will not in the first week of October," he said.

The AL will arrange their trips and Tk 2 crore has been earmarked for the purpose, said sources.

Besides, AL has been making arrangements for food for around 25,000 councillors and delegates for two days and the party will be spending about Tk 2 crore that, said a member of the food sub-committee.

Tahmid didn't cooperate in probe

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Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit and give written statement about his experience of the incident.

But he did not communicate with them even though he was sent two notices, added the petition, submitted to the general recording section of the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka on September 28.

It read that police probe did not find Tahmid's links to the terrorist attack. However, the investigation officer (IO) of the Gulshan attack case appealed to the court to start proceedings against Tahmid for hiding information and not cooperating with the investigators.

According to a provision under Section 176 of the Penal Code, anyone shall face maximum one month's jail term or Tk 500 fine, or both, for hiding information to government official.

In the petition, the IO said they brought charges against Tahmid of violating the provision.

Police also prayed for relieving Tahmid of the accusation that he was involved in the terror attack.

On Sunday, the court granted bail to Tahmid and fixed Wednesday for hearing on the police prayer. He was released at night.

It was widely reported earlier that Tahmid, a Canadian university stu-

dent, and Hasnat Karim, a former private university teacher in Bangladesh, were taken in by detectives for interrogation immediately after the 11-hour bloody siege ended on July 2.

Police then kept claiming they had released Hasnat and Tahmid after questioning, but their families insisted that the two never returned home and could not be reached by any means.

Over a month later, police came up with a claim that the two were arrested on August 3 under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC). Section 54 says police can arrest any person on suspicion without any warrant.

Law enforcers told the media about the arrests the next day, August 4, when the two were produced before a court for the first time.

Monirul Islam, chief of CTTC, at a briefing yesterday said police needed Tahmid's cooperation to verify some information. He was sent notices more than once but he didn't show up.

The official added Tahmid was arrested under Section 54 for withholding information and not cooperating with the police in investigating the July 1 Gulshan attack.

"It seemed to us that Tahmid was not involved in the Gulshan café

attack," Monirul told the briefing at the DMP Media Centre.

If the investigation comes across any evidence or witness statement proving his involvement in the crime, police will arrest him and he will be named as an accused in the case, he added.

On August 4, police produced Tahmid and Hasnat before a Dhaka court and sought 10 days' remand for each, but the court granted eight days'.

After the remand ended, police produced Hasnat before the court as an accused in the case on August 13.

Though Hasnat was shown arrested in the case that day, Tahmid was kept detained under Section 54.

After their eight days' remand ended, the duo was put on a fresh remand on August 13 as police claimed to have gleaned vital information during the previous remand.

This time, the court placed Tahmid on a six-day remand against a police prayer for seven days' while Hasnat was placed on an eight-day remand.

While Tahmid and Hasnat were on the first-round remand, some media outlets published several photos of the two with one of the Gulshan attackers, apparently Rohan Imtiaz.

Rohan and four other militants were killed in the commando opera-

tion, launched on the morning of July 2 to end the siege.

In the photographs, "collected from unknown sources", the trio was seen on the rooftop of the bakery. Tahmid was seen holding a small firearm.

Asked about those pictures, Monirul said, "Investigation works on the basis of evidence and witness accounts. We analysed and are still analysing the information we have. There is no room for speculation."

Tahmid, according to the IO, witnessed the crimes committed by the militants at the café.

He is traumatised and now undergoing treatment at a hospital. However, he is speaking normally and he was not tortured under detention by the cops, said his close relatives.

"We knew that he would be released sooner or later as he was not the kind of boy to be involved in unlawful activities," said a family friend wishing anonymity.

On July 1, five militants stormed the bakery and held diners hostage at gunpoint. They murdered 20 hostages -- nine Italian, seven Japanese, two Bangladeshis, one Indian and one Bangladesh-born US citizen -- and two police officers who tried to end the standoff soon after it began around 8:40pm.

HASNAT'S LINK?

Police are yet to be sure about the involvement of Hasnat Karim in the Dhaka attack.

"Hasnat was sent to TFI [Task Force for Interrogation] cell. We are yet to get the report of the interrogation," said Monirul.

After getting the report and verifying it with what the counterterrorism unit officials extracted from him during previous remands, police will be able to reach a conclusion, he added.

HUNT FOR KEY SUSPECTS

"We are looking for Nurul Islam Marzan, Zahangir alias Rajib, and Basharuzzaman who is known in militant circles as Chocolate," Monirul said.

"They are some of the key persons. If they are arrested, we would be able to completely solve the mystery behind the Gulshan attack."

Rajib's three recruits were involved in the Gulshan and Sholakia attacks. His involvement was found in 23-24 incidents of militancy including targeted attacks and robbery.

The funds for organising the attack came through India from a country, which is one of the key hubs of global money laundering. The money came in two phases and was received by Basharuzzaman.