



Rebel fighters ride a tank on the outskirts of Syria Democratic Forces (SDF) controlled Tell Rifaat town, northern Aleppo province, Syria, on Saturday. PHOTO: REUTERS

## Locals attack cops, snatch arrestee

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Three policemen were injured by local people who also snatched an arrestee from law enforcers in Kutubdia upazila of Cox's Bazar last night, police said.

The injured are Assistant Sub-inspector (ASI) Mangchai Marma, ASI Sanjit Das and constable Shahjahan.

Aung Sai Toay, officer-in-charge of Kutubdia Police Station, said police arrested Noor Mohammad, 32, of Muralia village, around 8:00pm as an arrest warrant was issued for him in a case two years ago.

After the arrest, some 15 men of the village, led by Towhidul Islam and Nazrul Islam, attacked the police and snatched Noor from them.

ASI Mangchai filed a case with the police station in this connection.

Police later detained around 15 people, including Saber Ahmed, uncle of Noor.

Locals said the policemen who arrested the accused were in civil dress.

OC Aung Sai Toay, however, denied the allegation.

## S'pore deports

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When the Singapore police learnt about their activities, they detained and deported the six Bangladeshis, telling them that they would never be allowed to enter Singapore again.

After coming back, instead of going to their village homes, they stayed in Dhaka and reorganised to continue their covert activities to establish a sharia-based state in Bangladesh.

On April 29, Singapore deported five Bangladeshis for their suspected militant links.

Back then, the Singapore authorities had said the five were investigated as part of a crackdown on the so-called Islamic State of Bangladesh (ISB), and it was found that "they possessed and/or proliferated jihadi-related materials, or supported the use of armed violence in pursuit of a religious cause".

However, their involvement in the ISB was not found, according to Singapore's home affairs ministry.

On May 3, law enforcers arrested them from the capital's Banasree area over their suspected militant links, and filed a case against them under the anti-terrorism act.

Between November 16 and December 1 last year, the Singapore authorities arrested 27 Bangladeshi construction workers for "supporting armed jihad ideology of terrorist groups such as Islamic State (IS) and al-Qaeda".

Of them, 26 were deported to Bangladesh. On December 21, police arrested 14 of them finding their links with militancy and kept the rest under surveillance.

Officials of the Detective Branch of police then said the deportees had no links to the IS or al-Qaeda, but 14 of them had ties with banned local militant outfit Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) and its detained spiritual leader Jasim Uddin Rahmani.

On July 12, a Singapore court jailed four Bangladeshi workers for two to five years for financing terrorism.

Meanwhile, amid arrest and expulsion of several expatriate Bangladeshis from Singapore on militancy connection, Singapore's Senior Minister of State of Ministry of Defence and Foreign Affairs Dr Mohamad Maliki will arrive in Dhaka today to discuss security and militancy.

## Remarkable achievement

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mutation responsible for Parkinson's disease, according to a press release put up on the university website.

"I am absolutely delighted to be joining the EMBO YIP programme and interacting with researchers from all across Europe that will bring new ideas to enhance our research efforts," said Dr Muqit.

A Welcome Trust Clinical Investigator in the MRC Protein Phosphorylation and Ubiquitylation Unit, part of the university's School of Life Sciences, Dr Muqit has been using his cutting edge research to better understand the causes of the disease.

A consultant neurologist at Ninewells Hospital, he treats patients with the disabling conditions.

Muqit was born in Glasgow, Scotland on October 12, 1973. His father Abdul Muqit, a general practitioner, and his mother Mamataz Begum, a psychiatrist, are now living in Dhaka.

Muqit completed MBChB from the University of Edinburgh in 1997. He did his MD in Harvard University and Phd in the University of London. He was also awarded Kenedy scholarship.

Married and father of three children, he is now serving as a Scottish clinical neurologist and scientist at the University of Dundee Medical Research Council.

At this moment of pride, Muqit's mother told The Daily Star, "As a parent we are both delighted by his success. We also pray to Allah that he succeeds in his research and people get benefited.

In 2004, he was a key member of the London-based team that discovered that mutations in a gene known as PINK1 can cause Parkinson's.

Four years later, Dr Muqit began working at the University of Dundee to find out how disruption to the gene's activity leads to Parkinson's.

His work revealed a remarkable process of how PINK1, together with another gene called Parkin, plays a crucial role in keeping cells healthy by ensuring that the energy-producing centers of cells, mitochondria, are rapidly broken down and removed when damaged.

The EMBO YIP awards are among the most prestigious ones given to young researchers every year. Through this programme, EMBO strives to identify the brightest young Life Science researchers working in Europe, Israel, Turkey and Singapore.

In addition to the prestige, the prize provides awardees with significant academic, practical and financial support to help them realise their potential as future world-class researchers.

## Exams to start

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for the exams. The JSC and JDC exams will be held on time, and the results will also be published on time," he told journalists at a press briefing at the secretariat yesterday.

Nahid said the education ministry finalised the decision of holding the tests after receiving a letter from the Primary and Mass Education Ministry on October 20 requesting them to hold the exams.

In July, Primary and Mass Education Minister Mostafizur Rahman said the Primary School Certificate (PSC) and JSC, JDC exams would be held under his ministry for this year.

Over 24 lakh students will participate in the JSC and JDC tests.

The education minister said as the primary and mass education ministry requested them to hold the examinations, the education ministry would do it. "We hope that there will be no problem."

Nahid, however, said, "Our ministry is ready to hold the tests, but it is true

that we have to take extra pressure."

When he was asked why the primary and mass education ministry expressed their unwillingness to hold the exams at the last moment and there was any lack of coordination between the two ministries, the minister said, "They [primary and mass education ministry] can say the reasons. We take it normally. There is no lack of coordination."

Issuing a note of warning, the minister said if anyone tried to leak question papers, they would have to face the music.

He said no cheating in the tests would be allowed.

Nahid said like the previous years, the ministry would keep a close watch on the social media, including Facebook, as vested quarters spread false information and various sorts of propaganda via it to mislead the examinees and tarnish the image of the ministry during the exams.

## New hope for fruit growers

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can also realise such potential.

According to the centre's director Prof Md Abdur Rahim, these new fruit varieties can also fill a gap in the domestic market, since they are harvested from May right through to November, covering later months when local fruit production is low.

"Most of our fruit, about 54 percent," he says, "is harvested in the five months of the year around summer. From summer's end there is a crisis of fresh fruit in the marketplace which drives fruit prices upwards for consumers and adversely impacts the nutrition of ordinary Bangladeshis as a result."

"If foreign, nutritional varieties are cultivated as well," he continues, "fruit can be available to meet nutritional and customer demand year-round."

The demand for foreign fruit varieties to be grown domestically, to ease pressure on demands for pricey imports, is also increasing, he adds, with conditions often proving suitable for cultivation.

The centre first collected four of these varieties: santol, rambutan, dragonfruit and persimmon, in 1999 and conducted research that reached the stage of sapling production in 2007. To date, the centre has produced 15,000 saplings of these

four species, most of which have already been distributed to farmers through government and non-government organisations.

The dragonfruit has proved to be particularly popular with farmers in Chittagong and Mongla due to its ability to thrive in saline soils.

The Vietnamese malta, meanwhile, was released last year with the avocado soon to follow, centre officials said.

Worldwide, the Germplasm Centre in Mymensingh, which started with 74 fruit trees of 10 varieties in 1991, is currently the second largest fruit repository behind a similar institution in Miami, in the United States. As a result, international scientists of repute from home and abroad often visit, as do more and more regular people, curious to know about the centre's activities.

The centre, which now features more than 14,500 fruit trees of 851 varieties including 58 foreign varieties from 44 countries, is also working to save 63 domestic fruit varieties threatened with extinction, including boichi, dumur, dewa, paniwala, betul, gab, chalta and arboroi. Since 2007, it has also trained some 12,000 farmers in various districts on cultivation of domestic and international varieties.

## Rejoinder

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University admission test held at the college.

She claimed that the test invigilator, who was from the college, had allowed her to use cell phone inside the exam hall.

The rejoinder said, "The claim is absolutely baseless as the test invigilator did not permit her to do so. He asked all examinees to submit the electronic devices to him. But Sanchita Rani Das did not respond to his call. Later, the invigilator caught her red-handed with a mobile phone set."

**Our reply**  
The Daily Star published the story based on the statement Sanchita made before journalists at the Dhaka University proctor's office.

## AL forms

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candidates, he or she will be expelled from the party and its front organisation following investigation.

The first day of the AL council was held at Suhrawardy Udyan in the capital.

## 6 of 7 'JMB men'

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One of the arrestees, Jewel Sarker alias Sohrab, who was also arrested with the six during a raid at a Mohakhali residence on October 17, did not give any confessional statement.

One of the arrestees, Nazmul Hasan alias Nayan alias Noreh, said he entered a Tejgaon house with seven to eight others and committed the robbery under the instructions of JMB high command, court sources said.

He, however, claimed that he does not know the high command.

Meanwhile, the six alleged JMB members were taken on a five-day fresh remand in two cases one over robbery and the other over arms filed in June and October respectively with Banani Police Station.

After their arrest, police claimed that while trying to regroup under a new leader, the "mainstream" JMB is gathering funds through robbery, abduction and mugging to get top leaders released either on bail using renowned lawyers or through ambushes using firearms and explosives.

Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CITC) unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police arrested the seven and seized 67 tolas of gold, Tk 6 lakh, four pistols, 10 bullets, nine machetes, 10 cellphones and two computers and some other things.

Death row convict Salauddin Ahmed alias Salehin, who escaped following a JMB ambush on a police van in Mymensingh's Trishal on February 23, 2014, is operating JMB as its acting Ameer for nearly three months from India, claimed police.

## RU protests

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he was killed, but police could not submit the charge sheet yet.

"We have learnt militants were involved in the murder, but we don't understand why the police are delaying the charge sheet submission," he added.

Prof Rezaul's daughter Rizwana Hasin Shotovi claimed to have learnt the prime suspect in the murder is a RU student, who fled to India.

What steps were taken to arrest him? she asked.

Rezaus Sadik, a sub-inspector of Detective Branch of police, who is probing the murder, said they made a significant headway in the investigation. He added that 12 suspects have so far been arrested, and four of them gave judicial confession.

AFM Rezaul Karim Siddiquee, a professor of English at the university, was killed in Rajshahi city's Shalbagan area on April 23.

## Farmland

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"It is not merely land; it is our way of life," said Enayt Ullah Mollah, who is organising the affected locals to protect their ancestral agricultural land. "The government should consider economic zone on barren land, not destroying fertile agricultural land."

Over 12,000 inhabitants of 10 villages in the six moujas are dependent on their land, he said, adding that of the total 2,350 bighas of arable land in the six moujas, 1,500 bighas are under IRRRI cultivation schemes of the government.

But two IRRRI schemes in Char Bhabanathpur and Bhatibandha have already been destroyed due to the sand filling while four have been damaged, he said.

The local community is solely dependent on agriculture like paddy, jute, chillies and oil seeds while during monsoon fish are caught from the same land, he said.

The Department of Environment (DoE) in late October 2011 penalised the company with Tk 50 lakh in fines for causing what it termed a colossal damage to agriculture, environment and marine ecology on a part of the Meghna, its bank and floodplains.

The company paid the penalty.

The High Court in March 2014 gave an order against such destruction of ecologically-sensitive land in the said moujas and put an injunction on causing any further damage to the villagers so largely dependent on agriculture.

The developer stalled the move only to come back within a couple of years with one of its sister concerns -- Unique Hotel and Resorts Ltd -- to develop a private economic zone styled Sonargaon Economic Zone at the same site.

With a pre-qualification issued by Bangladesh Economic Zone Authority (BEZA) for the said private economic zone in late August, Unique Hotel and Resorts Ltd resumed the filling of the same land in late September this year while the act was still expressly forbidden by the HC order.

A private economic zone, if implemented destroying a vast swathe of fertile agricultural wetland, would simply deprive the locals of their livelihoods, the villagers said.

"We will turn into just street beggars if we lose our agricultural land," said Raza Miah of Kandargaon village, who said he has lost eight bighas of ancestral agricultural land to the sand filling.

They want to forcibly take the locals' agricultural land at low prices, he said.

"We don't want to sell our ancestral land we live on; we have so much childhood memories of growing crops and catching fish from the Meghna river during the monsoon and have lived a happy life but now it has been eight years we cannot enter our land," he said.

Mostafa Kamal, of east Kandargaon, said, "My family has been dependent on our ancestral agricultural land for 45 years and my next generation too is dependent on it. Our locality is predominantly dependent on agricultural land, as it lacks other employment."

Md Yusuf Ali of Kandargaon echoed the same.

Mohammad Noor Ali, managing director of Unique Hotel and Resorts Ltd and Unique Property Development Ltd, said, "I don't think there is any opposition by the locals anymore. Locals are now very much in favour of our scheme."

## Iraqi forces

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Islamic State has staged attacks apparently aimed at distracting the advancing forces.

They hit the city of Kirkuk on Friday and yesterday they attacked Rutba, a town 360 km (225 miles) west of Baghdad, where they killed at least seven policemen, according to a police source.

The mayor, Imad al-Dulaimi, said the insurgents attacked during the night and gained entry to the town by coordinating with sleeper cells there. About 30 insurgents skirmished with tribal fighters and security forces before vanishing.

Townsend said Islamic State had staged what he called a complex attack in Rutba, which was being dealt with by Iraqi forces. The attack was intended "to try to draw our attention from Mosul", he said.

In another attempt to repel the offensive against Mosul, Islamic State also set fire to a sulphur plant near the city. Up to 1,000 people were treated in hospital after inhaling toxic fumes.

Kirkuk, a major oil-producing centre, was under curfew and there were reports of continuing sporadic clashes yesterday.

Bashiq's capture, if confirmed, would mark the removal of one more obstacle on the road to the northern Iraqi city.

The offensive that started on Monday to capture Mosul is backed by a US-led coalition. It is expected to become the biggest battle in Iraq since the US-led invasion in 2003.

An Iraqi force, joined by US special forces and under American, French and British air cover, is ready to push into Mosul after recapturing Falluja and Ramadi, west of Baghdad, and seizing the Sunni stronghold of Tikrit in central Iraq.

Coalition officials have said the offensive is going well, but that it will take a long time to recapture Mosul, which has a civilian population of 1.5 million.

Between 4,000 and 8,000 Islamic State

As to why they embarked on earth filling again despite the HC injunction, he said, "We just lined up earth filling equipment in late September but halted doing anything, as the upazila administration forbade it."

The economic zone would create employment with an energy hub, LPG depot, motorbike manufacturing, 400MW power plant and petrochemical industries, he claimed.

Responding to another question, he said that it was natural that the adjoining lands would be covered with sand when a particular piece of land was being filled.

"I cannot deny, in some cases, that others' land were filled while filling up our own land," he said.

He said they have so far procured 350 acres with a target to buy 450 acres for the economic zone.

"If two economic zones on two sides [on the North and South of his site] were not problems, why should the newly proposed one be a problem?" he said.

Bela Chief Executive Syeda Rizwana Hasan, who filed a writ petition for the HC injunction on land filling, said problem lies with the fact that the entire proposed site is on a part of the Meghna river, wetland and canals and fertile agricultural land, which are covered under government's IRRRI rice cultivation scheme.

The way they were going ahead only implies that the aim of filling up the agricultural and wetland remains the same with just another company of the same group, she said, it was also important to look at how a company styled Unique Hotel and Resorts can establish an economic zone.

Meanwhile, the BEZA secretary in late September this year requested the Deputy Commissioner of Narayanganj to facilitate the sand filling of land for the economic zone.

The deputy commissioner in a letter on October 9 said they had already informed the BEZA executive chairman that there was no scope for allowing the filling of agricultural land for an economic zone in the said moujas.

The DC also mobilised the upazila administration and local police to stop the illegal sand filling in violation of the HC injunction.

It was surprising that the BEZA official made such a formal request with the HC injunction still in effect and before granting final licence for the economic zone, said Rizwana.

Granting pre-qualification for economic zone on land of such characters was grossly inappropriate in the light of the HC injunction, DoE penalty and BIWTA report, she said.

BEZA Secretary Mohammad Ayub said, "We were not aware of the HC embargo, as the applicant did not declare it."

As to the site selection, he said the final licence would depend on environmental clearances.

According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics findings, the country is losing agricultural land at a rate of around 1 percent every year and is apprehended to lose a third of its agricultural land in next 25 years unless the trend is halted.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in April this year at Krishibid Institution said the government would not allow indiscriminate industrialisation destroying cultivable land and forests.

She also said industries would be accommodated in 100 special economic zones to be built across the country.

fighters have rigged the city with explosives, built oil-filled moats, dug tunnels, and trenches and are feared to be ready to use civilians as human shields.

However, Karim Sinjari, the interior minister of the Kurdish regional government, told Reuters in an interview that Islamic State fighters will put up a fierce fight because of Mosul's symbolic value for the headline Sunni jihadis.

"If they resist in the city, especially in old Mosul, it will be a big fight ... The roads are very thin, very narrow. You can't have vehicles, you can't have tanks. So it will be a fight, person by person," he said.

Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared a caliphate and himself the leader of the world's Muslims at a Mosul mosque after seizing Iraq's second largest city in 2014.

"If Mosul is finished the caliphate they announced is finished. If they lose in Mosul, they will have no place, just Raqqa," Sinjari told Reuters in an interview.

The Syrian city of Raqqa is Islamic State's other major stronghold.

So far, Kurdish forces have seized 20 villages and the Iraqi army have taken 10, he said.

It is not clear whether Baghdadi will risk death or capture and join his fighters in the battle for predominantly Sunni Muslim Mosul.

"According to unconfirmed reports Abu Bakr was in Mosul three days ago. People saw him visiting fighters and encouraging them. We are not sure he was present, this is information," said Sinjari.

He said the jihadi group, which comprises former Sunni officers from Saddam Hussein's army, have built underground tunnels and dug a trench around Mosul which they filled with oil to set on fire when the offensive gets closer to the city.

"I think it (the fight for Mosul) will be longer than Falluja and Tikrit, Mosul is a big city," he added.