

## ALEPOO IS DYING

Syrian forces had swept into the last-remaining neighbourhoods of Aleppo on Monday, 12th December, in what they call, the "final phase" to reclaim the city. "The battle of Aleppo has reached its end. It is just a matter of a small period of time, no more, no less... it's a total collapse," said Rami Abdel Rahman, director of the UK-based monitor Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Russia claimed pro-government forces had retaken 98 per cent, the Syrian government claimed 95 per cent. Whatever the real figure was, it was clear the revolution was in its dying hours. More than 100,000 residents have so far been evacuated, and some 3,000 rebels have surrendered or been captured. The social media has been in a constant dilemma as users read horrifying news' about the countless deaths of the inhabitants of Aleppo, mainly targeting women and children. With finding no way to help, social media users have been sending prayers and donations as well as they can.

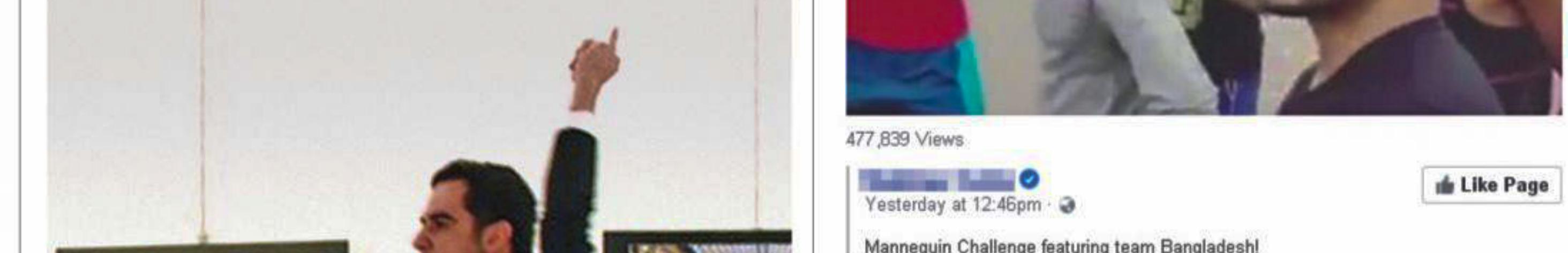
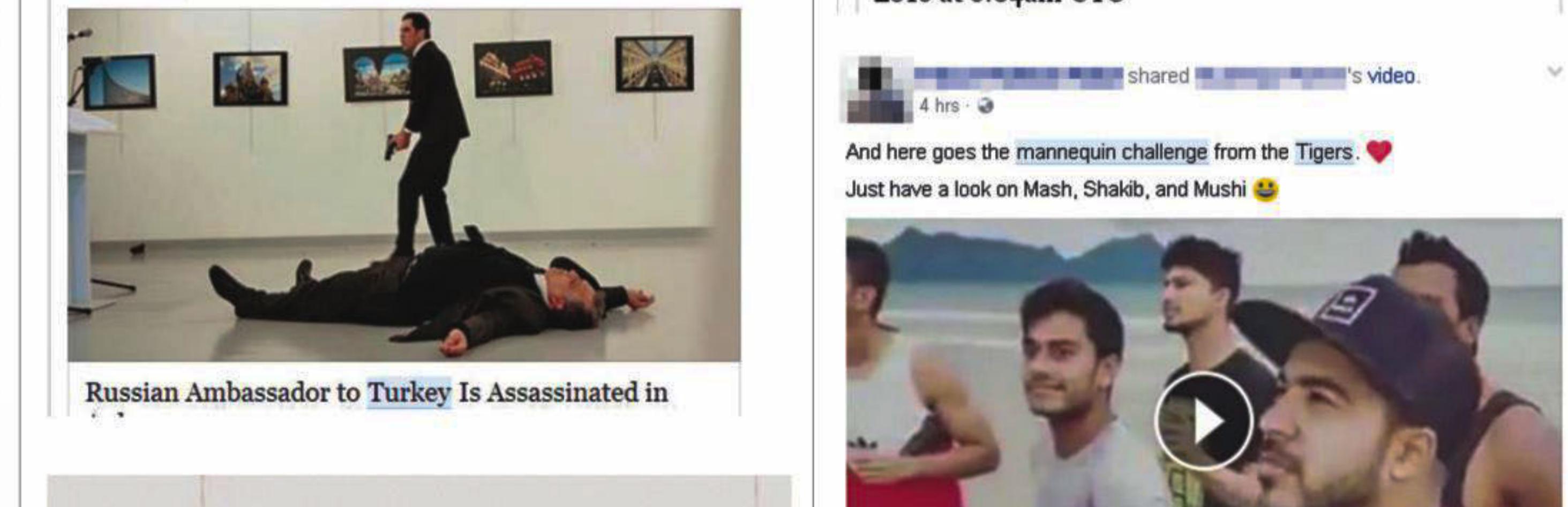
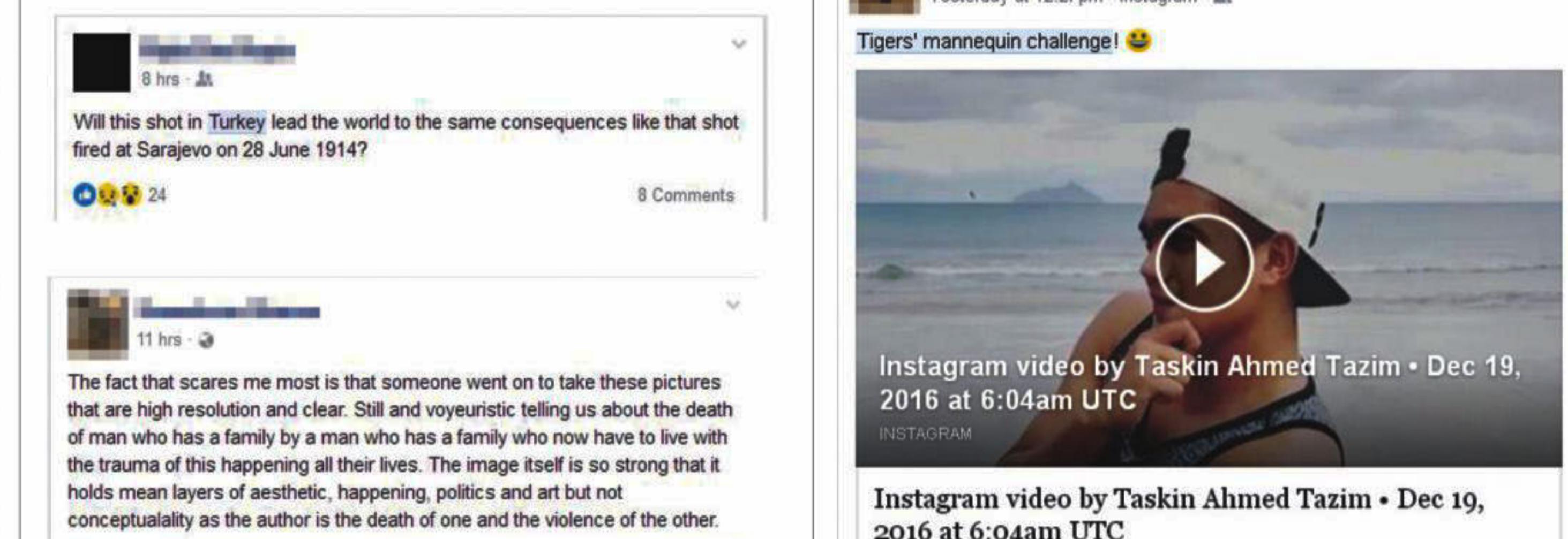
Source: The Telegraph, UK



## SHOOTOUT AT ANKARA

A gunman shouting "Do not forget Aleppo!" assassinated Russia's ambassador to Turkey at an Ankara art gallery on Monday, 19th December, in what leaders of Russia and Turkey called a provocative terror attack. Ambassador Andrey Karlov's shooting was captured in real time in photos and video that quickly spread through the Internet worldwide. Leaders of both countries vowed to not let the assassination cast a shadow over that friendship. It also comes during a pivotal moment in Syria, where Russia has been instrumental in President Bashar al-Assad's push to retake rebel-held parts of Syria. Social Media users went into utter shock ever since the incident, especially after witnessing the photo of the killer standing next to the victim with a gun in the air.

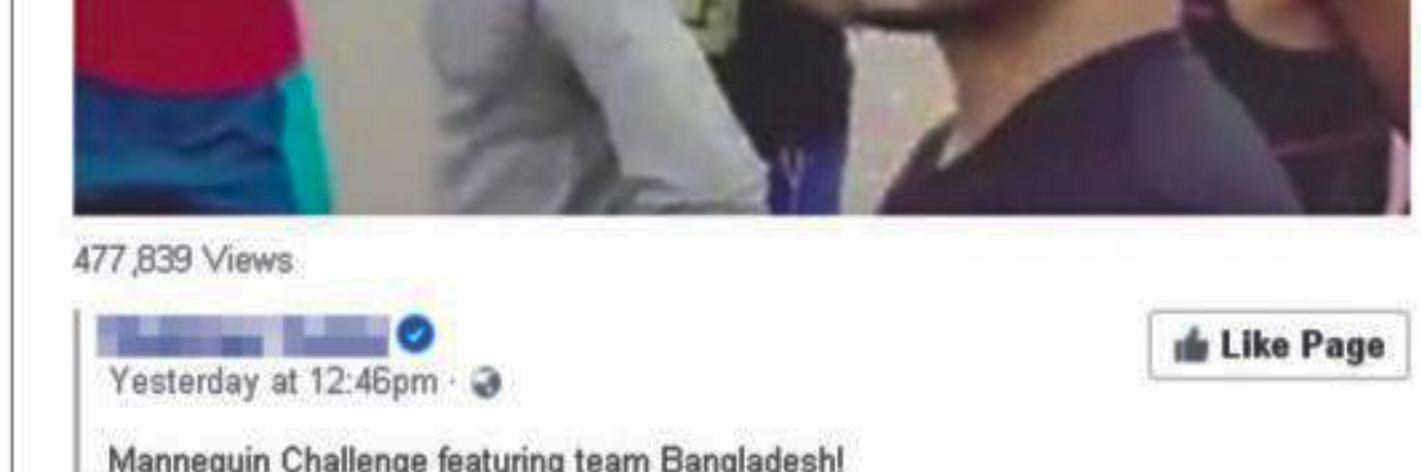
Source: CNN



## TRENDING THIS WEEK

### TIGER'S MANNEQUIN CHALLENGE

While the Mannequin challenge took the country by storm, it, inevitably, caught the attention of our beloved National Cricket Team. During their visit to New Zealand for the upcoming series, on a relaxing day at the beach, the boys struck their poses and made a video that was circulated all around the internet. The Tigers' Mannequin challenge may have been the most viewed and most loved so far!



### STRIKING A CHORD



## THE OFFICIAL IDENTITY

ELITA KARIM

PHOTOS: PRABIR DAS

"I prefer to identify as a hijra, because that's what I am – a hijra," announced a bold voice across the hall room, where more than 50 people were seated, listening to Choiti voicing out. In front of her, writers, reporters, academicians and members of the media were marking her every word and recording her expressions. "I was born a boy, but as I grew up, I realised that I was different," she said. "All my papers and certificates would identify me as a male – starting from my birth certificate, my education certification to my identity cards. And I had decided to change all of them, even if it took me a long time!"

Choiti was speaking at the Media Fellowship 2016, prize giving ceremony last week, which was organised by Bondhu Social. This non-profit organisation works towards the betterment of the sexual minority and also creates awareness for their rights to be recognised by society.

Ten fellowship awards were given to journalists and media personals for featuring stories on transgenders via

print media, online platforms, TV and the radio.

The stories spoke of how the society at large, in Bangladesh, practically refuses to accept the transgenders and the hijras, only because they are different than the 'normal'. The community, sadly enough, gets tagged as the 'other' and remains so almost permanently.

"It took me a long time to change all my certifications and papers," said Choiti. "It was not only a very difficult process to change the gender on official papers, but also an expensive one." Surely enough, where changes as simple as correcting names, fixing spellings or birth dates on officials papers take months, cause stress and waste extra money – the concept of accepting a change in



gender and then implementing the changes in the case of the authorities and the society as a large – is definitely near to impossible.

A few years ago, when the government officially identified the hijras as the third gender, the authorities should have also made strong policies on providing education and employment to the hijra community as well – instead of letting them fend for themselves. After all, being identified by the government is simply not enough. What the community needs right now is the general acceptance from society, from parents, from leaders, thinkers and also from the youth. Only then can we dream of being united and moving forward as one nation. ■

# ABOUT TOWN

**YOUTH - AN EXHIBITION BY NOBO KUMAR BHADRA**  
Date and Time: December 15-28, 2016, from 9.30 am to 8 pm  
Venue: EMK Center, Midas Center Building (9th Floor) House#5, Road 16, Dhanmondi  
Hosted by: EMK Center  
For query, visit: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1356813604331667/>

**PAPER MACHE WORKSHOP WITH ALIA KAMAL**  
Date and Time: December 23-24, 2016, from 11 am to 3.30 pm  
Venue: Jatra Biroti, 60 Kemal Ataturk Ave, 1213 Dhaka  
Hosted By: Jatra Biroti  
For queries, visit: <https://www.facebook.com/events/902754546526813/>  
Ticket can be found at: [Ticketchai.com](http://Ticketchai.com)  
For more information, visit: <https://www.facebook.com/events/123535173152528/>

**SHAKUNTALA-BHABNA'S DANCE DRAMA**  
Date and Time: December 31, 2016, from 6.30 pm to 8:30 pm  
Venue: Jatiyo Natyashala, Bangladesh Shilpkala Academy  
Hosted by: Samina Husain Prema  
Ticket can be found at: [Ticketchai.com](http://Ticketchai.com)  
For more information, visit: <https://www.facebook.com/events/123535173152528/>