

## CRACKDOWN AFTER SUFI SHRINE ATTACK

# Pakistan forces kill over 100 'militants'

REUTERS, Shwan Sharif

Pakistani security forces killed more than a hundred suspected militants yesterday, a day after Islamic State claimed a suicide bombing that killed more than 80 worshippers at a Sufi shrine, the biggest in a spate of attacks this week across the country.

The bombing at the famed Lal Shahbaz Qalandar shrine in southern Sindh province was Pakistan's deadliest attack for two years, killing at least 83 people and highlighting the threat of militant groups such as the Pakistani Taliban and Islamic State.

The nationwide crackdown was swift. "Over 100 terrorists have been killed since last night and sizeable apprehensions also made," the military said in an operations update yesterday evening.

With authorities facing angry criticism

for failing to tighten security before the shrine bomber struck, analysts warned that the wave of violence pointed to a major escalation in Islamist militants' attempts to destabilise the region.

"This is a virtual declaration of war against the state of Pakistan," said Imtiaz Gul, head of the independent Centre for Research and Security Studies in Islamabad.

With pressure growing for action, Pakistan demanded that neighbouring Afghanistan hand over 76 "terrorists" it said were sheltering over the border.

The bombings over five days have hit all four of Pakistan's provinces and two major cities, shaking a nascent sense that the worst of the country's militant violence may be in the past.

A series of military operations against

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What he is doing now is his daily routine. Abdul Samad Sheikh plants at least one tree a day and it has been his passion over the last 48 years. The 60-year-old rickshaw puller of Vagondanga village in Faridpur earns around Tk 100 every day, and with that he buys essentials for his family and at least a plant. PHOTO: STAR

# The guardian of nature

Faridpur rickshaw puller sets inspiring example by planting at least one tree every day for the last 48 years

SUZIT KUMAR DAS with ANDREW EAGLE

Insomnia is a curse with many potential causes. But if rickshaw puller Abdul Samad Sheikh, 60, from Vagondanga village in Faridpur sadar upazila's Aliabad union suffers from a restless night, the cause is likely obvious: he didn't plant a tree that day. For the last 48 years the man known as 'Tree Samad' has planted at least one tree per day. It's his passion.

"For the whole night I cannot sleep if I have not planted a tree," he says. "I've been doing that since I was twelve years old." A normal year has 365

days. In 48 years, with an extra 12 days added to account for leap years, there will be 17,532 days. At a minimum, that's how many trees Samad has nurtured.

"Mostly I plant them on government land so nobody can cut them down later," Samad says. Indeed the compounds of various mosques and government offices across Faridpur sadar, Charbhadrason and Sadorpur upazilas are particularly blessed with Samad's trees.

"I also water them," he says, "and if I see anyone cutting a tree I protest it and scold them. I love all creatures, animals too, but especially trees."

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# Teacher shortage hits pry schools

45,000 teachers' posts vacant; no headmaster in 17,615 schools

WASIM BIN HABIB

Academic activities at government primary schools across the country are being seriously disrupted due to shortage of teachers.

Some 45,000 posts of schoolteachers are now vacant -- 17,615 for headmasters and 27,388 for assistant teachers, Primary and Mass Education Minister Mostafizur Rahman told parliament on February 9.

Although assistant teachers are filling in for the headmasters, the overstretched teachers find it difficult to concentrate on the class. This eventually affects the quality of education, said teachers and leaders of primary teachers' associations.

There are around 63,000 state-run primary schools in the

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63,000 PRIMARY SCHOOLS
2.19 crore STUDENTS
3.22 lakh TEACHERS
27,388 MORE ASSISTANT TEACHERS NEEDED

# The Great Bowler Emon

His mysterious bowling tricks still make the toughest of batsmen go sleepless with worry. At the regional Cricket League that recently took place, Emon topped the game yet again by winning 40 wickets from 12 matches, and was also recognized as the Man of the Tournament for his astonishing bowling skills.

As a child, this astonishing bowler did not like to study at all, much to the disappointment of his parents. Little Emon's favorite past time was playing cricket with his best friend Zakir. What's more interesting is that, initially, he was more into batting than bowling!

One crazy game at the village changed it all for him. The best batsman from the opposing team was standing at the crease, hitting boundaries one after the other. Not a single bowler had succeeded in dropping his wicket. Zakir then passed the ball to Emon who bowled... and OUT! The first ball he ever bowled was enough to cause a stir and everyone knew right then that a new cricket star had just been born!

After Emon got admitted to high school, his family strictly asked him to turn his focus to studies. But the passion for cricket ran through his veins - how could he stay away from it? Emon started fleeing from his house to secretly attend practice sessions at the fields, and even signed up for the local Cricket Club. But no one noticed the shy boy in shabby clothes amidst the crowd of rich and confident players.

That is when a dismayed Emon poured out his heart to his family. Who finally realized that their son's true happiness only lies in pursuing this sport. "Listen son, it's all about

confidence. If you wear clean and bright clothes at the next selection round, you will definitely be noticed," his mother assured him. When the Cricket League called for a selection round, Emon showed up again at the club, this time dressed in clean, bright clothes and carrying a heart full of confidence. His smart outlook and bold strikes grabbed everyone's attention, and Emon got selected immediately. He never looked back after that day.

Born into a middle-class family at a small village of

# Shiuly's Handicraft in Singapore!

After successfully taking over the local market, Shiuly's handicrafts are about to be exported to Singapore. A few other multinational companies have also shown interest in her products, as stated by the excited Shiuly and her 'Bunonghor' team.

This achievement came to Shiuly after a long journey of struggles. She started off with a small shop for handicrafts in a well-known market. Every day, she would stand at the shop expecting customers, only to see them walking into other

south Rangpur, Emon's family had led a life of struggles and always wished their son would grow up to be a doctor or an engineer. Now, they are all happily rooting for the world's best cricketer in the making.

This local hero and the winner of the hearts of men and boys of all ages, is now practicing all day and night in the hopes of getting chosen for the National Cricket team. That day is not very far, when Emon will be bowling in front of a mass audience, facing thousands of voices cheering on him and chanting "Go, Emon, Go!"

Upon learning that Shiuly's top-quality products were not bringing in business, Farhana realized it was Shiuly's shabby and dull appearance. Farhana talked to her about the importance of presentation and self-confidence, and that is when Shiuly's story took a different turn.

Once she started dressing in clean, beautiful clothes, Shiuly's welcoming smile attracted customers in numbers. Soon enough, her shop was the most crowded in the area, her quality products winning praises from all over the city. From a small businesswoman to owning a large showroom to establishing a factory for production, Shiuly's 'Bunonghor' now has at least one branch in every major city of Bangladesh.

Last year, 'Bunonghor' won the best organization award at the handicrafts fair. Soon after that, they first exported their products to Singapore, bringing in foreign currency for the country. The proud entrepreneur wishes to

# Bidyashram for the children

While the rest of us keep wishing for wands that could magically solve all problems around us, the real changemakers are already working on creating a better us.

This busy city is full of many streets where children are deprived of the right to education. Long and hard days in the little moment before Shiuly's friends... "Bidyashram" is what you want!" said the now Captain Faria, with confidence.

...pursuing the path towards her goal was not for Faria. From the society's comments to opposing dreams to her own moments of Faria had to combat battles on a daily basis. "I can do it" - she found herself consoling

To further reach underprivileged children in other villages near Shujon, Ovika set up a library called 'Dishari' where was welcome and educated free. Over including such

"Ratul-er Raat", "Mayar Kajal" are currently serving the 300 regular readers at the library. This is how both 'Bidyashram' and 'Pother Dishari' has given shape to the future dreams of many children.

# Dreams that fly: Faria's story

Being a small town girl never stopped Faria from dreaming big. The little girl had always aimed to reach the skies, and fly around the vast blue world she called home. It all started the day her father first made her a plane out of paper. As she chased after the paper plane flying in the air, her fluttering little heart told her to become a pilot when she grows up. In a society where girls are not even allowed to work outdoors, dreamers like Faria have time and again proved these closed doors wrong with their strength. Yesterday, Faria flew her first flight as a young female pilot from the Dhaka-Chittagong-Dhaka route.

"You don't know the value of appearance till you have it. Take it from me, confidence can take you where you want!" said the now Captain Faria, with confidence.

...pursuing the path towards her goal was not for Faria. From the society's comments to opposing dreams to her own moments of Faria had to combat battles on a daily basis. "I can do it" - she found herself consoling

## IN FOCUS

### WOMEN IN SCIENCE

Is Bangladesh ahead of the West?

AMITAVA KAR

If you are worried about the dearth of women in science in Bangladesh, think again. There are more girls studying science than you may be aware of. For instance, in Dhaka University, about 30-40 percent students in physics and chemistry are female. In the biological sciences and medical education, the number is an

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MORE ON IN FOCUS

# Threat came from ex-US high official

PM about withdrawal of Padma bridge fund

UNB, Munich, Germany

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the then US secretary of state, assistant secretary and US ambassador in Dhaka had threatened several times that the funding for the Padma bridge project would be withdrawn if Dr Muhammad Yunus was removed as the Grameen Bank managing director.

Her son Sajeeb Wazed Joy also came under pressure

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Photograph: Staff Reporter

stores. Her poor business background and low capital only made matters worse, as she could never figure out what she was doing wrong.

One day, Farhana, an employee of a creative agency, stopped by her shop after spotting the beautiful designs on display.

continue representing the authentic products of Bangladesh at a global level, while changing the lives of every person related to this venture.

New Rin makes both your colored and white clothes shine bright like new



Keep Shining, Always

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