

'Robber' killed in 'gunfight' in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

An alleged robber was killed in a "gunfight" with police in Kushtia's Khoksa upazila early yesterday.

The deceased, Motiur Rahman Mintu, 28, was from Pangsha upazila in Rajbari. Police claimed that he was a listed robber and a member of an inter-district robber gang.

The "gunfight" occurred at Shimulia Bazar on Kushtia-Rajbari highway around 3:30am when police went there after being informed that eight to nine robbers, including Mintu, were preparing to commit a robbery, said Nazmul Huda, officer-in-charge of Khoksa Police Station.

Sensing the presence of the law enforcers, the robbers opened fire on them, prompting police to retaliate, triggering the "gunfight", the OC said.

With bullet injuries, Mintu was taken to Khoksa Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared him dead, he added.

Police claimed to have recovered a homemade gun, a pistol and four bullets from the spot.

Mintu was accused in seven cases, including two for murder, four for robberies and one for abduction, filed with Rajbari's Pangsha, Kushtia's Khoksa and Jhenidah's Saikkupa police stations, they said.



Injured night guard Gilbert D'Costa of Mathurapur Catholic Church under treatment at the Pabna Medical College Hospital yesterday, hours after he came under attack from unidentified criminals at the church in Pabna's Chatmohar upazila.

Church guard

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attackers swooped on the night guard near the church's gate, said Father of the church, Uttom Rosario.

"The attackers forced him to give them the keys of the rooms of the Father and the Sister of the church. As he refused, the attackers hacked Gilbert mercilessly to kill him," Uttom told The Daily Star, quoting the victim.

Hearing his screams, they rushed to the spot. Sensing their presence, the attackers fled the spot, he said.

Ahsan Habib, officer-in-charge of Chatmohar Police Station, said based on Gilbert's information, police detained three people Rajib Hossain, 18, Murad Hossain, 17, and Farid Hossain, 18, of Lowtia village.

The police official added that the attackers had a "previous enmity" with the victim for protesting the stalking of his niece.

Talking to this correspondent, Bakul D'Costa, brother of the victim, contradicted the police claim. He said why the attackers would ask for the keys if they wanted to take revenge on his brother.

Bokul also demanded a proper investigation into the incident.

Uttom said Christians in Chatmohar were worried over such a criminal attack as the minority groups were under threats of militant attack.

Jihadul Kabir, superintendent of Pabna police, dismissed the allegation of militant attack. But police were investigating the incident, he said.

Additional police were deployed near the church.

PHOTO: STAR

3 more dens

FROM PAGE 1

Police couldn't arrest any militant suspect till yesterday morning. They, however, detained 76 people accused in cases for various offences.

"We have launched the drive based on some vital information," Rezaul Masud, additional superintendent of police (special branch) in Chittagong, and head of the district counterterrorism unit, said yesterday.

Seeking anonymity, one of the investigators said both Hasan and Omi are members of the "Neo JMB's killing squad". They were on their way to the capital to carry out "a massive terror attack".

Mohammad Shah Abid Hossain, superintendent of police in Comilla, told The Daily Star that the two are trained in the use of firearms and also bomb making. Omi has good knowledge of information technology.

"We have come to know that the outfit has special trainers for fresh recruits," he said.

Hasan told the interrogators that he had good relations with Maynul Islam Musa, who is believed to be leading "Neo JMB", and that Musa used to visit the outfit's Mirsharai den.

Investigators said they learnt from the two arrestees that "Neo JMB" recently changed its strategy for carrying out attacks, as many of its operatives were either arrested or killed in

pre-emptive strikes by law enforcers.

As part of the strategy, "Neo JMB" members move in small groups to carry out attacks in a more organised way. Each group has a maximum of five members, they added.

Over the last two days, police arrested four suspected militants in Mymensingh, Naogaon and Rajshahi, report our correspondents.

In separate drives in Mymensingh on Thursday, Billal Hossain, 44, and Abu Raihan Bin Sadek, 32, were arrested for their alleged militant links.

Billal, a member of Dapunia union parishad, is an accused in five criminal cases filed under the Anti-terrorism Act, the Explosive Substances Act, and the Special Powers Act, said Musfiqur Rahman, sub-inspector of Kotwali Police Station.

In Naogaon, fugitive JMB member Abdul Mannan, 45, was arrested at Tilabaduri of Atrai upazila on Friday afternoon, said police.

Mannan, a listed JMB member, is an accused in several cases, including one for extortion, said Mohammad Badruddoza, officer-in-charge of Atrai Police Station.

Besides, listed JMB member Abdur Rashid, 34, was arrested in Bagmara of Rajshahi. Rashid was an associate of executed JMB leader Siddiqul Islam alias Bangla Bhai, police said.

Unfit yet in operation

FROM PAGE 1

A recent government-supervised study found at least 64 people get killed in road crashes nationwide. It is likely that many such accidents involve unfit vehicles.

Amid frequent deadly crashes, the government set up the digital checking system, costing about Tk 24 crore, for vehicles in Mirpur in October last year.

The centre can inspect only 20 to 25 vehicles -- buses, minibuses, trucks, covered vans, pickups and human hauliers -- a day.

Before issuing or renewing fitness certificates, five things are checked -- emission, headlight, wheel alignment, brake and speedometer.

The vehicles that fail the test are required to return upon fixing the problems after a certain time. While many come for a second or a third time, some do not and they continue to operate.

Motor vehicle inspector Ruhul Amin at the centre said over 75 percent of the vehicles tested so far had problems in their brakes and headlights. The rest has problems with their emission, alignment and speedometer.

Asked about the manual checking

system, he said, "If you are ill, you usually go to a doctor and he gives you some pathological tests for accurate diagnosis. Similarly, fitness of vehicles should be checked with automated machines."



Ranjan Das with his vehicle at the BRTA in Mirpur for fitness test on March 1.

There is only one automated machine in Mirpur, he said, adding that they needed at least two more.

On March 1, this correspondent spent more than an hour at the VIC, during which time four vehicles,

including Ranjan's, underwent the test. All the four failed the test on grounds of faulty braking system.

Every day, more than a 100 vehicles queue up at the centre, but it can inspect about 25, said Faruk Talukder

cases against the owners and drivers in that case. Who is to blame for this?"

He declined to comment about the vehicles that are still in operation despite having faulty brakes and other problems. "I sent my vehicles for the test and they were found fit."

Ali Ahsan Milon, assistant director (engineering) of BRTA, admitted that they could not check all the vehicles that go there for the test. "That's why vehicle owners face problem."

Contacted, road safety activist Ilyas Kanchan demanded that all vehicles be tested digitally rather than manually.

In an urban setting, the problem of faulty brake and headlight is not that risky because the vehicles run slow. But they pose a greater risk on highway where vehicles run fast, said Dr Md Shamsul Haque of Buet.

"Overloading and over-speeding of commercial vehicles are among the major reasons for brake failure. So with vehicles with faulty brakes, the possibility of road crashes is high."

He also said it was not possible to inspect vehicles manually. That's why the system is not in place anywhere else in the world anymore. "It is a corrupt system."

PHOTO: MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA



A female green turtle, with a satellite transmitter installed on her shell, on the beach at Sonadia island of Cox's Bazar. Researchers of Marinelif Alliance fixed the transmitter to monitor the turtle's migration route and habitat. Green turtles are hardly seen in Bangladesh coast due to habitat loss. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MARINELIFE ALLIANCE

Researchers use tracking device on rare turtle

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Researchers of Marinelif Alliance have set a satellite transmitter on the hard shell of a female green turtle to observe its migration route and habitat.

The endangered green turtle, the second largest turtle species, is a remote nester and rarely seen in Bangladesh coast due to habitat loss.

In a press release yesterday, Marinelif Alliance, a platform working for the marine biodiversity conservation, said the green turtle was now travelling along Hatiya and Sandwip islands after it had been released at Sonadia Island in Cox's Bazar on March 5. Yesterday, it was found 30 kilometres southeast from Chittagong city.

The green turtle went to Sonadia Island on the night of March 4 and dug a hole in the sand for one and a half

hours before laying 131 eggs. The researchers of Marinelif Alliance have protected those eggs to ensure safe hatching.

They lay eggs every 2-4 years. The eggs need approximately 60 days to hatch.

In December 2016, a monitoring device was also fixed on a juvenile green turtle. The last signal from the monitoring device showed that the turtle was near Kuakata of Patuakhali.

Marinelif Alliance and the Bangladesh Forest Department have jointly been conducting sea turtle conservation and monitoring programme along entire Bangladesh coast since 2013.

In Bangladesh, green turtles are very rare now and have recently been spotted at Sonadia and some other spots of Teknaf peninsula and St Martin's Island.

Fifth-day challenge for Tigers

FROM PAGE 1

Sri Lanka against Pakistan in 2014. The highest fourth innings total was 300 by Pakistan, chasing 510 in 2012. Another sobering reminder is that in all of those three away Tests, Bangladesh lost the match on the fifth day.

The wicket however has held together well, perhaps because of the cloud cover over the last two days and the fact that it has spent some time under the covers because of rainfall on the third evening. The two openers seemed relatively untroubled, other than Tamim surviving a difficult chance in the third over of the innings when an edge off Suranga Lakmal was grassed by Dimuth Karunaratne diving low to his left.

Soumya was in attacking mood, scoring 53 runs off 47 balls -- his second 50 of the match and third in Tests -- with six fours and a six over midwicket off Lankan skipper Rangana Herath in the 14th over.

Earlier, when Sri Lanka started their innings with a lead of 182, Bangladesh's bowling started with the virtual wave of a white flag as Subashis Roy ran in to bowl the first ball of the innings with a deep point in place. Mehedi Hasan Miraz opened at the other end, and in the sixth over Karunaratne hit uppishly to Shakib Al Hasan at short cover, but the all-rounder could not hold on to the catch despite getting both hands to the ball

above his head.

The Sri Lanka openers were thereafter completely untroubled. The home batsmen seemed to be setting their stall to attack in the afternoon and played safe cricket in the morning, choosing to milk the unthreatening Bangladesh bowling for singles through the ample gaps available.

Against the run of play, a half-cock pull from Karunaratne in the 23rd over resulted in a catch to Mahmudullah Riyad at deep square leg for a 73-ball 32 after an opening partnership of 69. Unruffled, Tharanga and Kusal Mendis saw out the rest of the session to reach lunch at 87 for one in 33 overs.

Bangladesh's demeanour did not change much after the break, but Sri Lanka's did. There was a review off the second ball bowled by Shakib as the umpire had turned down an appeal for caught behind after Mendis attempted to whip a leg-side ball fine. Replays however showed that unlike Shakib's dismissal the previous day, the ball had missed the gloves on its way through to keeper Liton Das.

Once Tharanga reached his 50 off 109 balls, he hit successive boundaries off Mustafizur Rahman to cover and to the right of Tamim at deep backward point, closing out the 37th over in style.

In the 40th over, the lead swelled past 300 and Mendis celebrated the landmark with a slog-swept six over

deep midwicket off Shakib. The near double-centurion of the first innings could not plunder for too much longer however, holing out to Taskin at deep square leg off a flighted Shakib delivery for 19 in the 42nd over.

Chandimal, who struggled for a 54-ball five in the first innings, then joined Tharanga. Without a fifty in his last seven innings he got the break that he needed when, on 11, Soumya dropped a low catch to his right at slip in the 49th over, with Miraz again being the unlucky bowler.

Tharanga celebrated his third Test century with a single to midwicket off Shakib. His second 50 took just 54 balls and he hit a six over long on to signal his intentions off the very next ball he faced. Things were looking especially ominous for Bangladesh when he toyed with Miraz's first two balls in the next over, the 55th of the innings, hitting one inside-out over extra-cover for a four and reverse-sweeping the next through point. His next attempt at a boundary, a heave across the line, resulted in him being bowled for a potentially match-winning 171-ball 115 studded with 11 fours and two sixes.

Shakib then dismissed Asela Gunaratne in the next over from around the wicket with a ball that pitched on off stump and straightened to clip the right-hander's off stump. Bangladesh then lost their second

review when a leg-before appeal by Shakib against Niroshan Dickwella, with the ball drifting in and beating the left-hander's sweep, was turned down. Replays showed that the ball would have just clipped the top of leg, so the umpire's decision stood. In the 60th over, Chandimal brought up the 400 lead with a swept four to fine leg off Shakib.

Miraz then had his second wicket when Liton took the catch of the match in the next over. Dickwella went for a reverse paddle and, anticipating the deflection, Liton reacted brilliantly by sticking the left hand out and plucking it out of thin air.

That brilliance was short-lived as two balls later new batsman Dilruwan Perera's heave to midwicket was not only dropped by Riyad running to his left on the boundary, but parried over for six -- the third drop off Miraz's bowling.

To the befuddlement of many, Sri Lanka then continued batting till tea, which they reached on 247 for five and a lead of 429 after having scored 11 runs in the session off 31 overs. A flurry of boundaries followed from Perera and Chandimal, who notched his first 50 in eight innings in the 69th over. Two balls later, Mustafizur had Perera caught behind with an off-cutter, which brought on the declaration with the score on 274 for six in 69 overs.

Crocodile skin brings forex

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Asked how the crocodiles are fed, Abu Syem said they provide chicken, minced beef and small fish daily to crocodiles aged between one and three years.

For those aged between three and above, he said, they give the same fodder but once a week, as it takes time for a grown-up crocodile to digest food.

Mesbahul Hoque, chairman of the farm, said there are huge opportunities to export skins and other items to Japan and other European and Asian countries.

Crocodile meat is consumed

widely in Australia, Japan, Singapore, China and the Americas. One kilogram of crocodile meat is sold between \$20 and \$22 in international markets, he said.

"But we're exporting only skins and other by-products. We dump the meat as export of the item is not allowed in our country," he said.

Rajib Shome, the farm's managing director, said, "We're pleased with the overall activities here, and we have a target to export skins of 1,000 crocodiles a year."

Cost for rearing a crocodile for three years until its maturity is esti-

mated at Tk 25,000 and it is expected to bring in Tk 45,000 to Tk 50,000 in revenues from export of each skin, he said.

According to the farm officials, there are 25 types of crocodiles in the world, the saltwater one being the largest of the species. Saltwater crocodiles can also be reared in freshwater.

There are commercial crocodile rearing farms in some 40 countries, including China, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia and Vietnam, and Bangladesh has a bright future in this farming, they

said.

Farm officials said crocodile teeth, scrap hide and other by-products could be used for making fashionable commodities, garlands, ornaments, showpieces and purse.

Charcoal made from crocodile bones is used in manufacturing perfumes throughout the world, they said.

About 2,500 trees of 50 different varieties have been planted inside the farm to create familiar greenery for the animal, they said, adding, "The farm also has plans to start rearing other types of reptiles such as tortoise and snake."