

Fatal curiosity Man dies for poking crocodile

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhalakathi

A tourist was killed by a crocodile at Tangargiri Eco-Park in Barguna's Taltoli upazila yesterday.

The dead, Asaduzzaman Ronny, 29, was from Pirojpur's Mathbaria upazila. He returned from Malaysia around six months ago after completing his MBA.

Kamolesh Halder, officer-in-charge of Taltoli Police Station, said Asaduzzaman along with four of his friends went to the Eco-Park around noon.

After about an hour, the five reached near the enclosure of a pond where two crocodiles, Giri and Sakina, lived. The tourist group didn't spot the crocodiles there, added the OC quoting one of the victim's friends Abu Saleh.

At one stage, Asaduzzaman scaled the enclosure wall and put his hand in the pond, used by the forest department for breeding crocodiles, to find out if there was any crocodile there.

All of a sudden, a crocodile bit Asaduzzaman on the hand and dragged him underwater. Holding him in his mouth, the animal swam

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

ATIA MAHAL RAID AT A GLANCE

- March 25**
- 2:05pm:** An onlooker suffers splinter injuries
- 2:18pm:** A big explosion heard
- 2:25pm:** Two injured army members taken to hospital
- 2:40pm:** An ambulance comes in and leaves after a while
- 2:50pm to 3:25pm:** Sporadic gunshots heard again
- 4:57pm:** Three explosions take place
- 5:02pm:** Firing starts again and lasts several minutes
- 6:30pm:** Army briefs the media about latest development
- 7:00pm:** First bomb blast at Sylhet-Fenchuganj Road, about 400 metres from the militant hideout
- 8:00pm:** Another bomb explodes near Atia Mahal



The shocked family members of the murdered indigenous couple in their home in remote Yangcha Chhoto area of Lama upazila in Bandarban yesterday. Inset, police and army personnel in front of the house. PHOTO: SANJOY KUMAR BARUA

Indigenous couple killed in home

FROM PAGE 1

65, of Yangcha Chhoto Para area were living a peaceful life, said family members and neighbours.

Their daughter-in-law Maydu Marma, 30, who live some 100 yards from the couple's house, found them dead with their throats slit around 6:30am when she went to wake them up for breakfast, said police and family members.

There were several injury marks in their bodies, she said.

"Like other days, I went to my father-in-law's house in the morning,

but saw their dead bodies," Maydu added.

The victims got married about five decades ago. Kya Hla, a former Fashiakhali union parishad member, was the father of three sons and three daughters.

Police were yet to find the motive behind the killing which resembles recent murders of people belonging to different faiths and ideologies.

On July 1 last year, indigenous farmer Mong Shwe Lung Marma, 55, was hacked to death in Baishari area in Naikkhangchhari upazila of the dis-

trict. On May 14, Buddhist monk U Damma Oaing Cha Bhikkhu, 73, was found dead with his throat slit in his temple in the same area.

Law enforcers are yet to make any headway in the murder cases.

Sanjith Kumar Roy, superintendent of police in Bandarban, said police were investigating yesterday's incident keeping in mind possible militant links, among other things.

Law enforcers collected evidence from the crime scene, he added.

The victims' son Mong Kya Hla Marma, 33, said his father had no

enmity with anyone in the area.

"My parents were very pious," he said, adding that he had seen some strangers in the area a few days ago.

Aung Shwe Prue Marma, karbari (village chief) of Yangcha Chhoto Para, said the elderly couple used to pray for most part of the day.

"They were very kind-hearted. It is hard to believe that they were brutally killed," he said.

Panic spread among locals following the incident. Members of police and the army were deployed there to beef up security.

Of valour and bravery

FROM PAGE 1

"In the month of May (1971), some 45 young girls, got together at Leububari Primary School for war training. That school compound in Gopalganj's Kotalipara turned out to be our camp for the rest of the war days and we fought from there," recalled Ashalata.

The group of women guerrillas that Ashalata commanded was part of famous Hemayet Bahini, a fierce guerrilla force named after its leader and organiser Mohammad Hemayet Uddin, Bir Bikrom.

Hemayet Uddin was a Havildar, a non-commissioned officer equivalent to a sergeant, of the then East Bengal Regiment of Pakistan Army, but he managed to build his force mostly with local youths.

It took a lot of courage for Ashalata, then a 15-year-old girl and an SSC candidate (the exam that could never take place in 1971), to organise other young women in Kotalipara and inspire them for guerrilla training.

Ashalata explained how it all started for her.

"After coming out of jail in 1969, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman came to Gopalganj to address a huge rally. A ninth grader in Narikelbari High School, I was the only woman who got on the platform and addressed the rally in Bangabandhu's presence in response to a call from the dais that any woman can say something. That event gave me enormous fame and I became known in the whole of Gopalganj."

"When the war broke out and Hemayet bhai started scouting for freedom fighters," Ashalata continued, "he asked me one day to look for

women willing to take armed training."

Now in her early 60s, never married Ashalata, went down memory lane, to recollect that "those were challenging times. I went door-to-door to look up my fellow female students from my school and managed to convince some to join the Leububari guerrilla training camp."

Ashalata still remembers all 45 names of her comrades, which include two of her siblings--Shantilata Baidya and Usharani Baidya, and also, among others, Minotirani Biswas, Shulekha Roy, Dolyrani Baroi, Tahmina Khatun, Rekha Rani Gun and Fatema Rahman.

Fatema Rahman, who retired as a Bangladesh Betar director a few years back, had just completed her Masters in Bangla literature from Dhaka University in 1971 and went back home in Gopalganj. Fatema told The Daily Star how Hemayet Bahini opened a camp at Johorerkandi and how a few male guerrillas from that camp used to visit them at Leububari and trained them to operate the WWII vintage 303 rifles, and to charge grenades.

Fatema, who had later moved to India and served in Kallyani in Sector 8 under the leadership of then Major Abul Manzoor, recalled the courage of Ashalata and her female freedom fighters' team that had a successful battle at Ramshil-Poisarhat. Fatema's husband Motiur Rahman is a valiant freedom fighter too, who fought alongside Major Jalil in Sector 9.

Both Ashalata and Fatema recalled the names of Hemayet Uddin, Babul Akhter and Kamalesh Bedoggo as their armed trainers, Dr Phillips and Dr Shyamacharan Baidya as first aid



trainers and Dolyrani Baroi as nursing trainer.

Swamalata Folia, another fighter of the Ashalata force, was a ninth grader at Narikelbari High School. She recalled with fond memories how they threw explosives from a strategic place by the river and overpowered Pak

forces and their local collaborators.

Now staying at her son's Gazipur residence, Swarnalata said, "We were all in all then. We could operate the 303 (rifle), throw grenades and homemade bombs, remove bullets lodged in our comrades' bodies, treat and nurse them applying both indigenous knowledge and whatever scanty modern medical facilities we could find, and managed food for ourselves at the Leububari camp."

Majority of the coverage of women's role in the 1971 war has centered on women as victims. Or alternatively, as carers -- for example they collected and distributed food, clothes in the refugee camps, helped freedom fighters to hide or treat and nurse the wounded ones.

But Ashalata, Swarnalata and Fatema's experiences and heroics show, women fought in the war in so many different ways in the face of great odds and personal danger.

Women were guerrilla fighters, mothers, nurses, wives, informants, daughters, spies and so much more. They fought, spied, smuggled weapons, and trained -- actions traditionally attributed to men. Their sufferings may have been manifold, but so were their achievements and contributions.

War heroes include those women who have supported the valiant freedom fighters with food, shelter, funds; who have nursed the wounded and hid weapons risking their own lives. They also include those who have willingly given their sons to war, who have lost their loved ones and even worse, been subjected to sexual abuse and survived to tell their stories.

Ashalata, daughter of her homemaker mother, Sharalamoyee, and a local landlord and schoolteacher

Largest

FROM PAGE 18

lamps used for cinema projectors, instead put to work simulating sunlight.

If it points all of those lights at one single, small spot, it can create about 10,000 times the amount of solar radiation that would normally fall there.

Such light is in rare supply in Germany at this time of year. So scientists are able to simulate it -- and hence test new ways of making hydrogen and exploring cleaner energy sources.

Creating such furnace-like conditions - with temperatures of up to 3,000 degrees Celsius - is key to testing novel ways of making hydrogen, according to Bernhard Hoffschmidt, the director of DLR's institute for solar research.

Many consider hydrogen to be the fuel of the future because it produces no carbon emissions when burned, meaning it does not add to global warming.

Hydrogen is the most common element in the universe, but free, uncombined hydrogen gas is relatively rare on earth. One way to manufacture hydrogen is to split water into its two components - the other being oxygen - using electricity in a process called electrolysis.

Researchers hope to bypass the electricity stage by tapping into the enormous amount of energy that reaches Earth in the form of light from the sun.

Hoffschmidt said the dazzling display is designed to take experiments done in smaller labs to the next level, adding that once researchers have mastered hydrogen-making techniques with Synlight's 350-kilowatt array, the process could be scaled up tenfold on the way to reaching a level fit for industry in about a decade.

The goal is to eventually use actual sunlight rather than the artificial light produced at the Juelich experiment, which cost £3 million to build and requires as much electricity in four hours as a four-person household would use in a year.

Hoffschmidt conceded that hydrogen is not without its problems - for one thing, it is incredibly volatile - but by combining it with carbon monoxide produced from renewable sources, scientists would, for example, be able to make eco-friendly fuel for the aviation industry.

Trump tastes bitter defeat

FROM PAGE 18

Rebellion by Republican moderates and the party's most conservative lawmakers left them short of votes, ensuring that Trump's first major legislative initiative since taking office on Jan 20 ended in failure. Democrats were unified against it.

House Republicans had planned a vote on the measure after Trump late on Thursday cut off negotiations with Republicans who had balked at the plan and issued an ultimatum to vote on Friday, win or lose. But desperate lobbying by the White House and Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan was unable to round up the 216 votes needed for passage.

"We learned a lot about loyalty. We learned a lot about the vote-getting process," Trump told reporters at the White House, although he sought to shift the blame to the Democrats even though his party controls the White House, the House and the Senate.

The healthcare failure called into question not only Trump's ability to get other key parts of his agenda, including tax cuts and a boost in infrastructure spending, through Congress, but the Republican Party's capacity to govern effectively.

Neither Trump nor Ryan indicated any plans to try to tackle healthcare legislation again anytime soon.

The White House made undoing

Obamacare its top priority when Trump took office two months ago.

But the White House and House leaders were unable to come up with a plan that satisfied the clashing interests of moderates and conservatives, despite Trump's vaunted image as a deal maker.

Amid a chaotic scramble for votes, Ryan, who championed the bill, met with Trump at the White House. Ryan said he recommended that it be withdrawn from the House floor because he did not have the votes to pass it, and Trump agreed.

"We were just probably anywhere from 10 to 15 votes short," Trump said. "With no Democrat support we couldn't quite get there."

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said the bill failed "because of two traits that have plagued the Trump presidency since he took office: incompetence and broken promises."

Democrats said the bill would take away medical insurance from millions of Americans and leave the more-than-\$3 trillion US healthcare system in disarray.

And some moderate Republicans opposed the bill because of worries that millions of Americans would be hurt.

"There were things in this bill that I didn't particularly like," Trump added, without specifying what those were, but expressed confidence in Ryan's leadership.

"Perhaps the best thing that could happen is exactly what happened today, because we'll end up with a truly great healthcare bill in the future after this mess known as Obamacare explodes," said Trump.

"I will not sugarcoat this. This is a disappointing day for us. Doing big things is hard," Ryan said at a news conference, adding that his fellow Republicans are experiencing what he called "growing pains" transitioning from an opposition party to a governing party.

"Obamacare's the law of the land," Ryan added. "We're going to be living with Obamacare for the foreseeable future."

Members of the Freedom Caucus, the House's most conservative members, were instrumental in the bill's failure, opposing it among other reasons because they considered parts too similar to Obamacare.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said under the Republican legislation 14 million people would lose medical coverage by next year and more than 24 million would be uninsured in 2026.

Obamacare boosted the number of Americans with health insurance through mandates on individuals and employers, and income-based subsidies. About 20 million Americans gained insurance coverage through the law.