

Dutch police

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year announced they were putting into operation a flock of the birds of prey to take down drones believed to be posing a danger to the public, such as near airports.

But now the feathered force has been grounded, with police realising that demand for their services was not very high, and their upkeep was more expensive than first thought.

The birds had been purchased as chicks and trained by a specialist company Guard From Above, which advertises itself as "the first company in the world to use birds of prey to intercept hostile drones".

Videos of a Dutch police presentation of the birds taking to the air to take down drones by grabbing them with their claws and bringing them to the ground went viral last year.

But in practice, it was found the proud eagles did not always do what they had been trained to do, the Dutch broadcaster NOS said.

That raised concerns the birds of prey might not behave properly outside their training zones, the police said, quoted by Dutch media.

The feathered force had two public outings at events in Rotterdam and Brussels, but was never mobilised for real.

Police said they had also been obliged to get rid of their rat "detectives" used to sniff out illegal fire-works, human remains and contraband cigarettes.

It had not been possible to make these animals "operational," police said, adding both the rats and eagles had been re-housed in proper shelters.

Farmer kills

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Family members and locals said Bachchu Kazi was well known and respected by everyone in the area.

On Wednesday evening his family members got concerned after he did not return home till 10:00pm. Locals then searched for him but couldn't find him. The next morning villagers found his body hanging from a tree.

Alamgir and his brother Jahangir run a small business of flexi loading. They run a shop called Bhai Bhai Telecom at Bathaimuri market. Abdul Kader Alamgir, the local chairman, said the two brothers also run a business lending money on high interest rates which they inherited from their father Qudrat Sarker.

This correspondent found Alamgir's shop closed yesterday. His whole family, including his elderly parents, were found to be away from home. They could not be contacted as both brothers' mobile phones were found switched off.

of Ghior Police Station Rabiul Islam said the body was recovered and sent to Manikganj Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy. Police is investigating the matter, the OC said.

Pangolins

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According to an expert, these animals do not harm the people. They live deep in the forests of Sylhet, Sundarbans and Chittagong Hill Tracts. Pangolins have been declared as protected under the Wildlife Act of 1974.

Monzur Kader Chowdhury, former president of student organisation Pradhikar of Sylhet Agriculture University told this correspondent that people are killing the creatures indiscriminately, threatening their existence.

Parts of the creature are used for making traditional medicine or totka.

Animesh Ghose Ayon, wildlife biologist at Creative Conservation Alliance, told this correspondent that while studying a total of eleven forests in Bangladesh including Lawacherra, Rema-Kalenga and Rajkandi forest, he found that as a defence mechanism, these animals coil their body and tuck their face in under the tail.

He said there are eight species of pangolins in the world. Three pangolin species are reported to occur in Bangladesh, but currently only one species is present, the China pangolin.

Pangolins are also reportedly the most trafficked animal in the world.

Dr. M Monirul H. Khan, professor of Zoology Department at Jahangirnagar University told this correspondent, "The wild animals are nocturnal animals. During the night, they roam the forests. They dig the soil from one to one and a half meters with the help of their sharp nails and eat insects, aphids and ant. But ants are their favourite food."

However, the prevailing superstition does not let them live. The traditional medicines they are used for are not backed by any scientific fact. These are actually a technique to prey on people who may not know the facts, he added.

The animal is currently listed as vulnerable by the International Nature and Natural Resources Conservation Association.

Founder of 'Neo JMB'

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Samad, who joined militant activities in 2010, got acquainted with Tamim at a hideout in Rajshahi in 2014. The two formed a militant platform "Junud at-Tawheed Wal Khilafah" and Samad was its second-in-command, Monirul said.

The platform, which initially followed the ideologies and strategies of several international terror groups, was later renamed "Neo JMB".

But the "Neo JMB" follows only the ideology and strategy of global terror outfit Islamic State, CTC officials said.

Responding to Samad's call, around 40 of his associates and followers in mainstream JMB joined the new terror outfit. They included Rashed, Delwar Mistri, and Tarik Hossain Milu who was later killed in a shootout on June 7 last year.

Samad also inspired two key leaders of mainstream JMB -- Mamunur Rashid Ripon and Sarwar Jahan -- to join "Neo JMB", they added.

Ripon fled to India while Sarwar died from his wounds after he jumped off a five-storey building to escape arrest during a Rab raid in Savar on October 8 last year.

Samad, who is fluent in Arabic with Fazil and Dawra-e-Hadith degrees, used to give sermons to motivate fellow militants while visiting different militant hideouts with Bangladeshi-Canadian Tamim who entered Bangladesh on October 5, 2013.

Tamim was killed with his two accomplices in a raid in Narayanganj on August 27 last year.

Talking to our Dinajpur Correspondent, Samad's father Moulana Abdul Toab, a retired high school teacher, said his son stopped communicating with them after he married Jannati Khatun, daughter of detained militant leader Ziadul, three years ago.

The family didn't accept the marriage, he said, adding that Samad is second among his 12 children.

"We thought he was dead... my son got derailed somehow," he said.

Slain JMB militant Abdullah was a close friend and neighbour of Samad, said locals at Ballavpur village in Nawabganj Upazila.

Abdullah along with eight other militants was killed in the Kalyanpur raid on July 26 last year.

Samad's wife Jannati told our Chapainawabganj Correspondent that since July this year, she could not communicate with her husband who was staying in Naogaon.

Jannati's mother Bibiara Begum said her husband Ziadul went to Comilla to find work in early July and maintained communication with her over the phone.

"The communication stopped a week before the Eid-ul-Azha this year. Several workers, who returned to Chapainawabganj from Comilla just before the Eid, told us that some people on a microbus picked up my husband in Comilla. There was no trace of him since then," she said.

At the briefing, Monirul said Samad was given the task of recruiting members for "Neo JMB" and ensuring supply of arms in the northern region.

Samad used to collect arms and ammunition in bordering areas. He hid those at fish farms in Chapainawabganj and sent those to other militants.

Later, the responsibility of supplying arms was transferred to "Neo JMB" militants Soheli Mahfuz and Chhoto Mizan who supplied grenades for the Gulshan café attack, Monirul said.

Sohel was arrested by CTC members on July 8 this year while Chhoto Mizan was killed in a police raid in Chapainawabganj on April 27.

The third arrestee, Azizul, joined the outfit through Samad and left home two years ago to join militant activities.

"In primary interrogation, Azizul said he didn't take part in any of the outfit's killing operations but he was ready for it," Monirul said.

Talking to our Chapainawabganj correspondent, Azizul's mother Azanur Begum said her son, student of a madrasa in Chapainawabganj, left home more than two years ago for work in India as the family could not bear his educational expenses.

He told his family members that he found work at a pesticide shop but never informed them about his location. Azizul used to talk to them over the phone occasionally. He called them for the last time four months ago, she said.

Asked whether the arrestees were planning any act of sabotage, Monirul said they came to the capital to hand over the detonators to someone in the outfit. "Militant leaders of Samad's level usually do not take part in operations," he added.

According to the CTC unit chief, Samad's pseudonym "Mamu" first came up during the investigation into the Hossaini Dalan blast that killed two devotees and left over a hundred people injured on October 23, 2015.

Replying to a query on the number of "Neo JMB" operatives, Monirul said the outfit didn't have a large number of operatives but they were motivated and desperate.

Some 200 of its leaders and operatives have been arrested and around 80 were killed in raids or shootouts. Some are still at large, he added.

China angered as US considers navy visits to Taiwan

REUTERS, Beijing

China yesterday accused the United States of interfering in its internal affairs and said it had lodged a complaint after US President Donald Trump signed into law an act laying the groundwork for possible US navy visits to self-ruled Taiwan.

Tensions have risen in recent days after a senior Chinese diplomat threatened China would invade Taiwan if any US warships made port visits to the island which China claims as its own territory.

On Monday, Chinese jets carried out "island encirclement patrols" around Taiwan, with state media showing pictures of bombers with cruise missiles slung under their wings as they carried out the exercise.

On Tuesday, Trump signed into law the National Defense Authorization Act for the 2018 fiscal year, which authorises the possibility of mutual visits by navy vessels between Taiwan and the United States. Such visits would be the first since the United States ended formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan in 1979 and established ties with Beijing.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said while the Taiwan sections of the law were not legally binding, they seriously violate the "One China" policy and "constitute an interference in China's internal affairs".

"China is resolutely opposed to this, and we have already lodged stern representations with the US government," Lu told a daily news briefing.

China is firmly opposed to any official exchanges, military contact, or arms sales between Taiwan and the United States, he added.

Proudly democratic Taiwan has become increasingly concerned with the ramped up Chinese military presence, that has included several rounds of Chinese air force drills around the

island in recent months.

Taiwan is confident of its defences and responded quickly to the Chinese air force drills this week, its government said, denouncing the rise in China's military deployments as irresponsible.

Taiwan presidential spokesman Alex Huang, speaking to Taiwan media in comments reported late on Wednesday, said the defence ministry had kept a close watch on the patrols and responded immediately and properly.

Taiwan "can ensure there are no concerns at all about national security, and people can rest assured", Huang said.

Both sides of the narrow Taiwan Strait, which separates Taiwan from its giant neighbour, have a responsibility to protect peace and stability, he added.

"Such a raised military posture that may impact upon and harm regional peace and stability and cross-strait ties does not give a feeling of responsibility, and the international community does not look favourably upon this," Huang was quoted as saying.

Relations have soured considerably since Tsai Ing-wen, who leads Taiwan's independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party, won presidential elections last year.

China suspects Tsai wants to declare the island's formal independence, a red line for Beijing. Tsai says she wants to maintain peace with China but will defend Taiwan's security.

Taiwan is well equipped with mostly U.S. weapons but has been pressing for more advanced equipment to deal with what it sees as a rising threat from China. The United States is bound by law to provide the island with the means to defend itself.

China has never renounced the use of force to bring Taiwan under its control.

999 service used to stop child marriage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A person used the newly introduced toll-free national emergency helpline 999 service to stop a child marriage in Chittagong's Rangunia early yesterday.

One Kamal Uddin, of Dakkhin Nischintapur in the upazila, arranged the marriage of his 12-year-old daughter Ankhil Akhter to brick kiln worker Nurul Absar of the same area.

Imtiaz Bhuiyan, officer-in-charge of Rangunia Police Station, said around 1:30am, he got a phone call through 999 service from a person who informed him about the marriage.

Then he along with a team rushed to the spot when the gaye holud programme of the girl was going on at her house. The wedding was scheduled for yesterday. But police foiled the marriage attempt and rescued the victim, the OC said.

After the incident, they took a written undertaking from the girl's father so that he could not take further steps to marry off his daughter before she reached the marriage age of 18.

Two days ago, the 999 service was launched for emergency services.

No honking

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He said the bench of Justice Quazi Reza-Ul Hoque and Justice Mohammad Ullah directed the home secretary and inspector general of police (IGP) to take necessary steps to implement the directives.

The bench also fixed February 2 next for passing further orders on this issue, he said.

Citing a police report, Manzill said law enforcers stop people using the sound-polluting horns but those could be bought at a cheap price.

Following the same writ petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh, the HC on November 5, directed the government to stop the use of pneumatic horns in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country.

It said the authorities have to form a surveillance team to keep sound pollution within limits at different places including Gulshan, Dhanmondi and Officers' Club area in the capital.

On October 8, the HC directed vehicle owners and drivers all over the country to handover pneumatic horns to the police stations concerned within 15 days and also asked the police to destroy the pneumatic horns after receiving them.

The HRPB had submitted the petition challenging the legality of the use of pneumatic horns and sought necessary orders to stop noise pollution in Dhaka city.

Manzill at that time had told the court that trucks and buses had been using such horns and other devices creating noise pollution at an alarming level. Even, people in residential areas like Dhanmondi, Motijheel, Gulshan and Banani cannot sleep at night due to the noise.

As per the Motor Vehicles Rules 1940, every transport vehicle shall be fitted with a bulb horn, he added.

Punish those

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Myanmar authorities and security services to end the violence and discrimination perpetrated against the Rohingyas.

They also renewed their call to the Myanmar military and security forces to immediately stop the killings, harassment, rape and the destruction of Rohingya homes.

Since August this year, more than 646,000 Rohingyas have fled to Bangladesh to escape persecution in Myanmar's Rakhine State.

The total number of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh is expected to exceed one million by this year end, says the resolution adopted by show of hands, according to a document the UNB obtained from the EU.

The resolution also called upon the Myanmar government to condemn unequivocally all incitement to racial or religious hatred and combat social discriminations and hostilities against the Rohingya minority.

The European Parliament urged the Myanmar government to work with international aid agencies, the EU and the UN to allow immediate, unhindered humanitarian access to Rakhine, end the segregation of the Rohingya population and immediately cease its use of landmines and remove all mines.

Cultural events

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The space altogether is about 5.2 acres and can accommodate over 1,500 spectators. The entire place was renovated in 2015.

There are also open stages in Chittagong Railway Building (CRB) area and on the District Shilpakala Academy premises. But, people are usually afraid of joining any evening event in CRB area as the place is a bit isolated while the other spot mostly attracts students, said Akbar.

So, the only good option that remains is the DC Hill premises.

Ahmed Iqbal Haider, convener of Chattagram Pahela Baishakh Uddjapan Parishad, said the district administration cannot take such a decision as the government did not make the open stage for celebrating only three programmes.

"We will wage tougher programmes, if the decision is not cancelled," he added.

Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong Zillur Rahman Chowdhury said, "The premises mostly remain dirty, neither the residents can use the walkways. Moreover, use of loudspeakers create nuisance during programmes for the residents around the area."

On the other hand, the bungalows of the divisional commissioner and deputy commissioner of Chittagong are also situated at the top of the hill.

"Considering all these, we have taken the decision. Besides, the minister was dissatisfied with the dirty premises during his recent visit and took the decision to restrict the number of programmes to three," he said, adding, "We cannot defy the instruction."

Contacted, the minister said, "There

are a lot of venues, including Theatre Institute Chittagong, District Shilpakala Academy Auditorium and Muslim Institute in the city, to hold cultural programmes. But, we do not have too many walkways."

Besides, organisers do not clean the area after holding programmes. Neither the Chittagong City Corporation (CCC), nor the Chittagong Development Authority, not even the DC, takes the responsibility of cleaning the place," he added.

Reacting to the decision, Prof Dr Serajul Islam Chowdhury, president of Chittagong city unit Khelaghor, said the DC Hill is a well-known cultural arena.

Restricting programme celebration to protect walkways would hamper smooth cultural practice. There are walkways in Chittagong College Field, Laldighi Par and also in DC Hill.

"It is the CCC's responsibility to keep the place clean. You do not cut your head for mitigating headache," he said.

Rashed Hasan, organising secretary of Bangladesh Abritti Samonnoy Parishad, said the DC Hill premises has been used for cultural activities for 30 years. "If there is any problem, we can sit with police and CCC officials for ensuring security and other solutions," he said.

"But, imposing a ban on programmes is not acceptable," he added.

Contacted, CCC's Chief Conservancy Officer Shafiqul Mannan Siddique did not make any comment rather than saying the CCC workers clean DC Hill premises regularly.

NY attack our worst

FROM PAGE 1

Haider's family had been worried when his son-in-law, Akayed Ullah, 27, missed a regular call to his wife on Monday. Their worry only worsened when his wife screamed as she found online pictures of Akayed, down on the ground with apparent injuries to his stomach after the bomb ignited but failed to detonate.

"Even in our worst nightmares, we could not have foreseen this," Haider, 62, told Reuters on Wednesday evening, following two days of questioning by Bangladesh's counterterrorism police.

Haider, a jewellery showroom accountant in Dhaka, said his family was stunned by the news that Akayed had been charged by the United States with terrorism offenses after he tried to detonate a bomb strapped to his waist in a pedestrian tunnel leading to Times Square, injuring himself and three others.

"There was never any indication he would do this. I think it's a conspiracy. A person who keeps roza (religious fasting in Islam), reads the Koran and goes to mosque five times a day can't do such a heinous act," Haider said.

He recalled being elated when Akayed's family called from the United States in December 2015 asking for the hand of his daughter, Jannatul Ferdous Jui, now 25. The couple wed in Bangladesh the following month. Jui continued to live in Bangladesh while she finished her studies and gave birth to their son, who is now 6 months old.

"We were very excited. I hoped my daughter would go to the United States, and my son-in-law would then help get my son over there," Haider said, meeting Reuters after evening prayers in the mosque by his house in a middle-class neighbourhood in central Dhaka. "What else do parents want?"

ONLY GOD KNOWS

The white-bearded Haider said he could not understand how Akayed, who had lived in the United States since 2011, could have committed the attack.

"Only God knows what happened to him in America," Haider said.

US President Donald Trump reiterated his call for tougher immigration rules following Monday's attack, which came less than two months after an Uzbek immigrant killed eight people by speeding a rental truck down a New York City bike path.

Islamic State claimed responsibility for the October attack, while Akayed claimed allegiance to the militant group, according to US federal prosecutors.

Haider said he feared Monday's incident could lead to a backlash against Bangladeshis living in the United States.

Jui finished her bachelor of arts

Cease violence

FROM PAGE 2

State without addressing the main drivers and the roots of this conflict, the statement said.

The signatories also called on Myanmar military to comply with relevant international human rights and humanitarian law standards and norms, particularly with regards to the protection of civilians in conflict, and protection of children, women and minorities.

It urged the Myanmar civilian government to publicly call on the military to protect civilians and abide by international law in its military engagements, and hold accountable any soldiers and civilians who have committed crimes in the conduct of military operations.

degree in accounting from a Dhaka college in March. When Akayed last came visiting in September after their son was born, they planned to get a passport for her to possibly join him in the United States sometime in 2018.

"He spent most of the time with his 6-month-old son when he came down," said Haider. "He is not much of a social person. He does not really have friends, not into gossiping. He has never brought any friend to our house."

Haider's family has not been able to talk to Akayed since the failed bombing.

Bangladesh police, meanwhile, have questioned Haider as well as his wife, daughter and his 22-year-old son. Their phone call records have been scanned.

Bangladesh's counterterrorism chief, Monirul Islam, told Reuters they have found no links of Akayed with any militant group in his home country. But the chief added that investigations were continuing and the family was under surveillance.

"I no longer want my daughter to go to America," Haider said. "I just want our son-in-law back."

Disney to buy

FROM PAGE 20

Geographic into Disney's portfolio.

"The acquisition of this stellar collection of businesses from 21st Century Fox reflects the increasing consumer demand for a rich diversity of entertainment experiences that are more compelling, accessible and convenient than ever before," said Disney's chief executive Robert Iger in a statement.

Iger, who was previously expected to step down in 2019, will now stay on through 2021.

Disney has been seen as trying to bolster its Hollywood and television positions by getting the Fox library of content to strengthen its arsenal against Netflix and other rivals.

The rise of streaming services and the so-called cord-cutting movement against cable television, together with declining advertising revenue, have contributed to a rapidly changing landscape for media companies.

Disney, which owns the ABC television network, ESPN and has major studios in Hollywood, is set to launch its own streaming services aimed at competing against Netflix and Amazon.

The deal also gives it a controlling interest in Hulu, another popular streaming service.

Analysts have said the deal could face considerable scrutiny by antitrust regulators because of the tie-up between two of the largest film and television groups.

The news comes as another major media deal, between AT&T and Time Warner, has been challenged in an antitrust filing by the US Justice Department.

Prior to the deal going through, 21st Century Fox will transfer the Fox Broadcasting network and stations, Fox News Channel, Fox Business Network, FS1, FS2 and Big Ten Network into a newly listed company that will be spun off to its shareholders.

Rupert Murdoch said in the statement issued by the companies: "We are extremely proud of all that we have built at 21st Century Fox, and I firmly believe that this combination with Disney will unlock even more value for shareholders as the new Disney continues to set the pace in what is an exciting and dynamic industry."

21st Century Fox shareholders will receive 0.2745 Disney shares for each 21st Century Fox share they hold under the deal.