

2 'robbers' killed in 2 'gunfights'

STAR REPORT

Two alleged robbers were killed in "gunfights" with police in Kushtia and Narayanganj early yesterday.

A police team went to Mahisdanga in Kushtia Sadar on information that seven to eight criminals were preparing to commit a robbery on Kushtia-Khulna highway, said Ratan Ali Sheikh, officer-in-charge of Islamic University Police Station.

The "robbers" blocked the road by placing logs on it, reports our Kushtia correspondent, quoting the police official.

When the law enforcers reached the spot around 3:30am, the criminals opened fire. Police returned fire, triggering a "gunfight", the OC said.

After the "gun battle", police found the bullet-hit body of Towhidul Islam, 40, on the spot.

He was declared dead when he was taken to Kushtia General Hospital, the OC said.

Towhidul, from Kadamdi village in Jhenidah's Shaikupa upazila, was a member of a robber gang, which commits robbery on highways, police claimed.

Police also claimed to have recovered a pistol, four bullets and a saw from the spot.

In Narayanganj, a suspected robber was killed in what police said in a "shootout" in Fuldee village of Sonargaon upazila, reports our district correspondent.

The deceased is Nazrul Islam, 36, of Dudkhatha village in the upazila.

A police team was patrolling Fuldee area where a local had announced through a mosque loudspeaker that 10-12 robbers inside a bush were preparing for committing a robbery, said Morshed Alam, officer-in-charge of Sonargaon Police Station.

When the team went there around 4:00am, the criminals opened fire. The law enforcers retaliated, triggering the "gunfight", the OC said.

After the "gun battle", police found the bullet-riddled body of Nazrul on the scene, while others fled.

The body was sent to Narayanganj General Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

Police claimed to have recovered a foreign pistol, one bullet and five sharp weapons from the spot.

Nazrul was convicted in a murder case, the OC said, adding that he also stood accused in at least 10 robbery cases filed with different police stations in Narayanganj and Munshiganj.

Force Myanmar

FROM PAGE 2
UN Security Council following her visit to the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar.

She said she was really impressed seeing the empowerment of women and the government's measures implemented in this regard under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina.

Public safety

FROM PAGE 2
legal boundaries.

Identifying militancy and narcotics as the two main challenges for the force, the IGP said the spread of militancy and drugs are two big problems and the force would do everything possible to curb the menaces.

Regarding militancy, he said they have had many successes in the past. "Our drives against militancy will continue and they will be more intensified using intelligence-led policing. We will not spare militancy," he said.

On narcotics, the head of police, said, "Our position is that of zero tolerance against drug abuse and trade. The prime minister also instructed us to attach highest priority to control the menace."

About the reason behind the narcotics problem, he said as long as there is a demand for narcotics, supply will remain. He urged people from all strata of life to extend support to curb the menace. Mentioning the involvement of some policemen in corruption, Patwary said the police force remains embarrassed about such actions by some individual policemen.

"We will not shoulder the responsibility of any individual's misdeed. A criminal will be treated according to the law," the IGP warned.

The police chief further said his priorities also included boosting police's capacity to fight cybercrimes and improve service quality in police stations.

Mukhlesur Rahman, additional IGP (admin), Rapid Action Battalion chief Benazir Ahmed, DMP Commissioner Asaduzzaman Miah and Anti Terrorism Unit chief Shafiqul Islam, among others, were also present at the briefing.

Prior to meeting the media for his first briefing, the police chief paid his respects to the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum.

Trump squares

FROM PAGE 20

Although White House press secretary Sarah Sanders said on Wednesday that Trump had not yet read the document, the president told lawmakers after his State of the Union address to Congress on Tuesday night that there was a "100 percent" chance the memo would be released.

A White House official said the four-page document was delivered to the White House on Monday after the Republican-dominated committee voted to release it.

Administration lawyers were working against a Friday deadline to determine if any of it should be redacted to protect national security, the official said.

Late on Wednesday, Representative Adam Schiff, the intelligence committee's ranking Democrat, said he had discovered Nunes had sent a version of the Republican memo to the White House that was "materially altered" and thus was not what was approved for release by the committee's vote.

A spokesman for Nunes called it an "increasingly strange attempt to thwart publication," and described the changes as minor, including two edits requested by the FBI and committee Democrats.

An aide to Schiff did not immediately respond when asked how Schiff had obtained the information.

Republicans, who blocked an effort to release a counterpoint memo by the panel's Democrats, say their document exposes anti-Trump bias by the FBI and the Justice Department in seeking a warrant to conduct an eavesdropping operation.

Democrats say the memo selectively uses highly classified materials in a misleading effort to discredit Special Counsel Robert Mueller, who is leading the Justice Department's Russia probe, and Deputy US Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who hired him.

In an opinion piece published on Wednesday in the Washington Post, Adam Schiff, the intelligence committee's senior Democrat, said the Republican memo was intended to set the stage for Trump to fire Mueller or Rosenstein.

Four sources familiar with the memo told Reuters it accused the FBI and Justice Department of misleading a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court judge in seeking an extension in March 2017 of a warrant for a secret eavesdropping operation against Carter Page, an adviser to Trump's 2016 campaign.

Testifying in November before the House of Representatives Intelligence Committee, Page said he met with Russian government officials during a July 2016 trip he took to Moscow while he was a foreign policy adviser to Trump's campaign. He said he made the "benign" visit as a private citizen, according to the interview transcript.

The memo contends that the FBI and Justice failed to tell the judge that the request was based on a dossier compiled by a former British spy hired by a research firm partially financed by the Democratic National Committee and Democrat Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign, the sources said.

The sources said the memo was misleading because all the dossier excerpts used in the application had been confirmed by US or allied intelligence and law enforcement agencies. Moreover, said the sources, the application was based largely on material collected and verified by US intelligence.

Under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, the government must report to the court every 90 days to show that a warrant was producing valuable foreign intelligence information to justify continuing an overseas eavesdropping operation on an American citizen.

PM lays stress on respect

FROM PAGE 20

mentality is actually different to some extent."

Mentioning that the Bangalee nation got a lot of admiration and recognition from the international arena, she underscored the need for continuation of the trend.

She said her government wanted to build the country in the spirit of Liberation War.

"Bangladesh will be a non-communal and peaceful country where people, irrespective of their religions and creed, will perform their respective religious rituals independently."

Hasina said the *Amar Ekushey Boi Mela* is not only a place to sell and buy books, but also to increase the number of readers and writers, and enhance the study of literature.

She said the fair created an opportunity for fresh writers to publish and publicise their books. "It also creates a scope for many readers to explore unknown knowledge. It opens the door to knowledge."

Cultural Affairs Minister Asaduzzaman Noor attended the programme as a special guest while Bangla Academy Director General Shamsuzzaman delivered the welcome speech with its President Anisuzzaman, professor emeritus at the Dhaka University, in the chair.

UK poet Agnes Meadows, Cameroonian poet Joyce Ashuntantang, Egyptian writer and journalist Ibrahim El Masry, and Swedish poet and critic Orne Johnson spoke as distinguished foreign guests.

The PM distributed the Bangla Academy Shahitya Puraskar while academy presented two books titled *Alokkhite Bangla Academir Iitahash* and *Banghabandhur Sath e Marcher Bhashon: Bohumtrik Bishleshon* to her.

Twelve personalities received the Bangla Academy Award. They are Mohammad Sadik and Maruful Islam

Russia election probe circles back to Trump Tower meeting: NYT

AFP, Washington

Robert Mueller, the special counsel overseeing the Russia election meddling probe, is zeroing in on the initial response given by the US president's son over a controversial meeting with a Russian lawyer, the New York Times reported Wednesday.

Donald Trump Jr issued an initial statement last July saying the meeting, held in Trump Tower in 2016, was set up to discuss a Russian adoption policy.

The statement was reportedly crafted with direct input from President Donald Trump.

But Trump Jr later released a set of pre-meeting emails in which he expressed interest in meeting with the lawyer, Natalia Veselnitskaya, in order to obtain what he was told would be damaging information on Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton.

(poetry), Mamun Hossain (fiction), Mahbubul Haque (essay), Rafiqullah Khan (research), Aminur Rahman Bhuiyan (translation), Kamrul Hasan Bhuiyan and Surma Jahid (literature on Liberation War), Shakur Majid (biography and travelogue), Maloy Bhoumik (drama), Moshak Ahmed (science, technology and environment) and Jharna Dash Purokhashto (juvenile literature).

Later, Hasina went round different stalls at the book fair.

Bangla Academy will organise the International Literature Conference on February 22-23 to build a good bonding among the local and foreign writers, poets, novelists as well as to create a platform to exchange their literary works.

The authorities allotted a total of 719 units -- 136 at the Bangla Academy ground to 92 organisations and 583 at the Suhrawardy Udyan to 363 organisations.

The fair will remain open from 3:00pm to 8:30pm every day, except for holidays. It will be open on holidays from 11:00am to 8:00pm and will run from 8:00am to 9:00pm on February 21 -- the International Mother Language Day.

Question leak

FROM PAGE 1

A reporter showed him a copy of "leaked" MCQ question set around 10:30am, saying there was a "rumour" that it was leaked.

The minister along with some officials then went inside the school to check.

Later, Nahid told reporters that though the copy looked like a question paper, they found that none of the questions in it matched any of those in the real question paper.

"We have done everything humanly possible to prevent question paper leak and hold the exams in a peaceful manner. We have left no stone unturned," he added.

However, some guardians alleged that the question paper was leaked on the social media.

"We have seen images of a question set in a messenger group before the test began. We got puzzled and concerned," said a guardian seeking anonymity.

More than 20 lakh students got registered for the SSC and equivalent exams.

The education ministry took several measures to check question leak that marred last year's SSC, HSC and JSC exams.

As part of its efforts, the ministry this year made it mandatory for all candidates to enter and take seat at their respective centres 30 minutes before the exams start.

The ministry also shut all the coaching centres a week before the exams. It even considered blocking Facebook for a "short time" during the exam hours.

On the first day of the test yesterday, 26 students were expelled for resorting to unfair means while 9,742 candidates remained absent.

Rohingya mass

FROM PAGE 20

"The AP's report that [soldiers] brought along to Gu Dyar Pin village containers of acid to disfigure the bodies and make identification more difficult is particularly damning because it shows a degree of pre-planning of these atrocities," Robertson said.

"It's time for EU and the US to get serious about identifying and leveling targeted sanctions against the Burmese military commanders and soldiers responsible for these rights crimes."

Myanmar has previously admitted responsibility for one mass grave containing 10 bodies in the village of Inn Din.

The killings happened in September last year, but the authorities acknowledged them only after the discovery of the mass grave in December, claiming those who had died were "terrorists".

Amnesty International described the December discovery as just the "tip of the iceberg".

Since August 2017, more than 688,000 Rohingyas have crossed into Bangladesh fleeing what the UN describes as "textbook genocide".

Bangladesh and Myanmar have agreed a deal to send Rohingya refugees back.

JAPANESE ARTIST IN COX'S BAZAR Japanese artist and UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador Miyavi yesterday arrived in Cox's Bazar where he would meet refugees and see the assistance that the UNHCR has been providing to Bangladesh to address the crisis, reports UNB.

Born in 1981, Takamasa Ishihara, better known by his stage name Miyavi, is a singer-songwriter, guitarist, record producer and actor. He also plans to perform music for the refugee children.

Teenager

FROM PAGE 20

floor of two-storey Bhagibalapara mosque, next to the madrasa, yesterday afternoon when they went there to offer prayers.

On information, family members rushed to the scene and identified the body as Talha's.

Police sent the body to Rangpur Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Babul Mia, officer-in-charge of Rangpur Sadar Police Station, said they already started working to unearth the killing mystery.

Senior police and army officials of Rangpur cantonment visited the spot, he added.

Draft law

FROM PAGE 20

Finally, it will go to parliament and may be passed, Tofail told a press conference at his ministry.

The minister also binned reports by some media outlets on January 30 that the Digital Security Act was formulated to protect lawmakers from being humiliated.

"The media reports, quoting me, are wrong," Tofail said and advised journalists to do factual and investigating reporting, not misquote people.

He said, "We remain alert as you write both good and bad reports about us. Earlier, you wrote against someone in my ministry ... of his taking bribe. You did it accurately. Based on that, we investigated and then sacked him after the allegation was found true."

The minister said it was not possible to bring the rice price below Tk 40 a kg. It would also not be practical because farmers too must get a fair price.

He said rice price was now normal.

"We also have to pay attention to the farmers. When rice price was low, you wrote that the farmers were being affected. If the farmers don't get the fair price, they lose interest in rice production. This consequently affects us all."

EC seeks stay

FROM PAGE 1

Syed Mahmud Hussain, the chamber judge, did not hear it yesterday when the petition was moved before him.

Advocate Towhidul Islam, a lawyer for the EC, told The Daily Star that his client said in the prayers that the writ petitions on which the HC has stayed the election process is not acceptable, and the HC's stay order is misconceived.

The lawyer, however, refused to name the grounds on which the EC sought a stay on the HC orders.

Following two separate writ petitions, the HC on January 17 stayed for six months the process of DNCC polls that was scheduled to take place on February 26.

The HC also questioned the legality of the schedule of the DNCC mayoral by-polls and the elections to 18 new wards under the city corporation on February 26.

It issued two rules asking the authorities concerned of the EC and the government to explain in four weeks why this schedule should not be declared illegal.

De Silva, Mendis lead

FROM PAGE 1

brilliant form as he struck his third Test century and was unbeaten at the close with Kusal Mendis, who was also approaching his century as Sri Lanka ended the second day on a high after posting 187 for one at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

Despite losing the first wicket of Dimuth Karunaratne without troubling the scorers when he edged off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz at slip in the third over of the innings, the home side were unable to hold on to the momentum. Interestingly, Mehedi was immediately taken out of the attack as stand-in captain Mahmudullah -- captaining his first Test in place of the injured Shakib Al Hasan -- introduced left-arm spinners Taijul Islam and Sunzamul Islam from both ends for the two right-handers, a move that raised eyebrows.

After producing some turn and variable bounce initially at the beginning of the day, there was nothing much for the spinners or even for Mustafizur Rahman to test the two batsmen at the crease.

The unresponsive pitch aside, the home side did make a few mistakes that made things even easier for the Lankans.

In the early overs of the Sri Lanka innings, Mustafizur bent his back with the new ball in an effort to induce a mistake from the batsmen and a chance was offered when in the fifth over a struggling Mendis, on four, edged a delivery on off stump to at second slip where Mehedi went for the low chance to his left but was unable to hold on to it. Mendis was handed another life in the 31st over when, on 57, a well-disguised arm-ball from Mehedi caught the edge and flew towards the left of slip but Imrul Kayes was moving the other way and could not react in time to hold on to the catch.

De Silva at the other end looked rock solid, with some confidence in the bank with a Test century in his last innings against India in December 2017, and he remained the aggressor among the two batsmen and he struck Taijul for three fours just before tea, which Sri Lanka reached on 50 for one after 15 overs.

The Sri Lankan duo controlled the remainder of the day and soon De Silva struck a beautiful back-foot punch off Taijul to register his second consecutive hundred and remained unbeaten on 104 off 127 balls with 15 fours. Mendis was not out on a 152-ball 83.

The Bangladesh fielders and skipper Mahmudullah were overly optimistic in the last hour of the day and in the process wasted both their reviews.

It was a disappointing start to the day for Bangladesh when all eyes were on Mominul, but in just the third over of the day he was dismissed for the addition of only one run to his overnight score. The left-hander clipped Herath in the air and short-leg fielder

Mendis managed to hold on after it hit his shoulder.

The veteran left-arm spinner came to the party and went on to pick two more Bangladesh wickets in the forms of Mosaddek Hossain and Taijul Islam. Mosaddek, back in the side for the first time since the two-Tests series against Sri Lanka in March 2016, was frustrated by Herath's accuracy and charged the bowler, but his attempted lofted drive only reached mid on and gifted Herath his 500th international wicket.

Mahmudullah, meanwhile, was the lone fighter and kept hopes of going past 500 alive. When on 69, he became the seventh Bangladesh batsman to score 2,000 Test runs. But the home side kept losing wickets.

Mehedi was run out for 20 going to a needless third run. The Tigers skipper then added 58 for the eighth wicket with Sunzamul Islam, who was stumped down the leg side off Lakshan Sandakan for 24. Mahmudullah kept his trust on the tail-enders as Bangladesh had already gone past the 500 mark before Mustafizur, who struck a six off Herath, was eventually dismissed awkwardly fending a Suranga Lakmal bouncer to give the pacer his third wicket.

Padma banks

FROM PAGE 20

Storks are, however, large scavenging birds needing substantial areas of wetland for survival. When the vast swamps of Bangladesh fragmented and dwindled, so did the populations of storks.

Today only two species called Asian Openbill and Lesser Adjutant live here round the year; and four species named Painted Stork, Asian Woollyneck, Black-necked Stork and Black Stork have all become very rare winter visitors. With the exception of the Asian Openbill, all species of storks in Bangladesh are threatened with extinction in not so distant future. The largest of our storks, Greater Adjutant, has already gone extinct in Bangladesh. "Red List of Bangladesh" published by IUCN in 2015 has painted this depressing picture of the storks in this country.

Except for the three South American species termed Wood Stork, Jabiru, and Maguari, the storks are mostly Afro-Asian birds. Australia has a single species of stork, namely Black-necked Stork; and North America has no stork at all. Of the 17 species of storks of the two conjoined continents of Africa and Asia, only two species named White Stork and Black Stork visit Europe seasonally. People of Europe have always valued the visitations of those storks and eagerly played their part as very appreciative hosts. With two resident species and four species of visiting storks, Bangladesh is wealthier in stork diversity compared to any country in Europe. To these great storks could we not be worthy hosts like the Europeans and check degradation of a few wetlands the storks consider their winter home!

Other side of a JU teacher

FROM PAGE 1

their first child in 2016, the professor forced her to abort the child, saying that doctors told him the child would be physically challenged, she wrote in her complaint.

When she conceived again in 2017, Afsar stopped communicating with her. And once again, he asked her to abort the child, and threatened her with consequences if she did not oblige, she claimed.

"He threatened that he would not let me give birth to the second child. Even if I do DNA test to prove that it was his child, he will use his influence to prove it wrong," according to her complaint.

"In fear for life, I was compelled to go into hiding and gave birth to my son in an insecure environment." At this, she filed a general diary with Trishal Police Station in Mymensingh, where their marriage was registered, on August 24 last year. She was eighth months' pregnant then.

Afsar sent her a divorce notice on September 25, three days after the child was born.

Talking to this newspaper, she said Afsar is not giving any financial support for the child.

Afsar termed the whole episode a family matter and claimed that he broke no rules.

VC Prof Farzana Islam said they would investigate the allegations. "Steps will be taken after investigation."

In the complaint, the woman alleged that during her student years at JU, Afsar wooed her and tried to win her sympathy by sharing his family issues, giving an indication that he had an unhappy family life.

Asked why she married him knowing that he was married, she said she too became weak towards him at one stage. "He emotionally blackmailed me ... and married me without taking permission of his first wife," she claimed, adding that Afsar persuaded her to marry him, saying he would divorce his first wife.

Afsar also requested her to keep

their marriage a secret, which she did, considering their career and social status.

In the written complaint, she said Afsar and his relatives were now threatening her with death and were keeping an eye on her movement.

Asked, Afsar said everything was done in a proper way.

"I did not break any rules. I married her and sent the divorce notice by following all the procedures. Her allegations are illogical," he said.

According to the notice, obtained by The Daily Star, he divorced her because she disobeys him, she is of a bad character and she does not wear veils, among other things.

"I never said I will not take responsibility of the child," he said, when asked about the allegation that he does not provide financial support for the boy.

Afsar declined to comment on the allegation that he forced the victim to abort their first child. He also refused to comment whether he threatened her.

Meanwhile, the woman alleged the university authorities were making delay in probing the matter.

She said she herself submitted the complaint to the VC's office on January 17. But the authorities on January 23 sent her a letter, saying they received her complaint via email, and that it was not signed.

The Anti-Sexual Harassment Cell of the JU also asked her to produce evidence of her PhD studentship within 10 working days, she alleged.

Rahima Kaniz, a member-secretary of the Cell, said, "There was a miscommunication. We did not receive the signed copy of the complaint letter first. Later, we received it from the personal secretary of the VC."

Besides, the authorities need to know some basic facts before investigations. "As soon as we get her reply, we will start our probe," she added.

The woman said she sent her reply and it may reach the university authorities by Sunday.