

ANTI-DRUG DRIVE 'Gunfight' claims another life

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj
An alleged drug trader was killed in a "gunfight" with Rab in Lohajang upazila of Munshiganj early yesterday. The dead is Makbul Hossain, 36, of Uttar Medenimondal area of the upazila. With Makbul, at least 213 alleged drug peddlers have been killed in "shootouts" since the nationwide anti-narcotics drive began on May 4. Most of the incidents involved Rab and police. Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Mahitul Islam of Rab-11 said acting on a tip-off, one of their teams carried out a raid in Purbakumarbhog area around 4:00am. Sensing the presence of the law enforcers, a group of drug peddlers opened fire on them. The Rab members retaliated by firing back, triggering a "gunfight", Mahitul claimed. After the "gunfight", the Rab team found Makbul's body on the scene, he claimed, adding that two Rab men were also injured. The Rab team also claimed to have recovered a pistol, two bullets, a magazine, 500 yaba tablets, and two mobile phones from the spot. Makbul was an accused in at least 12 cases, said Assistant Sub-inspector Harun of Lohajang Police Station.



As part of the countrywide anti-narcotics drive, police detain some alleged drug peddlers in a raid on the Karwan Bazar slum in May. PHOTO: FILE PHOTO

Three die from inhaling toxic gas in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg
A minor was among three people who died yesterday in Chittagong, after they inhaled toxic gas from an under-construction water tank of a mosque while playing football in the city's Jhaowtala area. The deceased are Md Sifat, 12; Md Imran Hossain Imu, 25, and his younger brother Rubel Hossain, 18, said Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Alauddin Talukdar of Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) Police Outpost. Assistant Commissioner (Kulshi Zone) of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) Sohul Rana said the incident took place at the playing ground of Diesel Colony area of Jhaowtala around 5:00pm. Police sources said Imran was van puller, and the area where he lived is surrounded by shanties. "A group of youths were playing football in the field while the football fell into an under-construction water tank of Diesel Colony Jame Masjid," said the AC, adding that Sifat first got down in the tank to collect the ball and fell unconscious. As Sifat did not return, Rubel went inside the tank to find him, and also

Nasa launches

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the Sun's surface, it also hurls powerful plasma and energetic particles that can unleash geomagnetic space storms and disrupt Earth's power grid. "The Parker Solar Probe will help us do a much better job of predicting when a disturbance in the solar wind could hit Earth," said Justin Kasper, one of the project scientists and a professor at the University of Michigan. The probe is protected by an ultra-powerful heat shield that is just 4.5 inches thick (11.43 centimetres). The shield should enable the spacecraft to survive its close shave with the centre of our solar system, coming within 3.83 million miles (6.16 million kilometres) of the Sun's surface. The heat shield is built to withstand radiation equivalent up to about 500 times the Sun's radiation here on Earth. Even in a region where temperatures can reach more than a million degrees Fahrenheit, the sunlight is expected to heat the shield to just around 2,500 degrees Fahrenheit (1,371 degrees Celsius).

Outcome not as expected

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sale of narcotics stopped because of the drives, but yaba and cannabis were still being sold through "mobile phone service". Officials add that the supply chains of narcotics have been cut. Reports from different districts suggest the sale of drugs is still going on -- from different low-key selling spots and mostly on a smaller scale. The dealers are selling drugs, particularly yaba, to trusted customers only, while the known places where addicts used to take drugs have been dismantled. Visiting some key spots like Mohamadpur Geneva Camp, Korail slum in Banani, Jheelpar slum in Mirpur and Karwan Bazar Railway slum in the capital, these correspondents found that the open sale of drugs reduced significantly while the prices

went up. A small pack (puria) of cannabis was selling for Tk 50 which was earlier Tk 20. The price of a yaba pill increased by Tk 50 and it was available at Tk 300. "If you have money in your pocket, getting drugs is not a problem," said a user, wishing anonymity. Drug dealers proving to be flexible and innovative are adjusting with the current situation and intensifying retail deal-making on social media. Facebook is being used for placing orders and mobile banking services for payments. In Chittagong, peddlers have changed their regular spots and become more secretive. Known dealers have fled but their cohorts are active, locals say. In Jhalakathi, some drug lords

have come out of hiding while some arrested peddlers are at it again after obtaining bail. In Dinajpur, most of the drug dealers are constantly on the move and doing business only with trusted addicts. In May, drugs were hard to come by but now they are available at high prices, said several users. In the district, cannabis prices shot up to Tk 100 per puria from Tk 20 of early May and a good quality yaba pill to Tk 500 from Tk 200. Our correspondent in Comilla reported that the illicit business never stopped in the district. Drug dealers who had fled have started returning to the city. Known drug dealers are also resurfacing in Narayanganj. Besides, recent interceptions of drug consignments indicate that dealers have become innovative in

shipping the contraband items. Yaba pills have been found inside the shock absorbers of bikes and hidden chambers of lorries, buses and fishing boats. Rab Director General Benazir Ahmed on July 22 sought two months' restrictions on mobile banking in Cox's Bazar, a district considered the gateway for yaba from Myanmar into Bangladesh. He claimed that a huge amount of money believed to be payments for drugs was being sent to the district via mobile banking. The Rab boss said they wanted to see the impact of the two-month restriction on drug trade. [Our correspondents in Chittagong, Rajshahi, Narayanganj, Dinajpur, Comilla, Jhalakathi, Nilphamari, Mymensingh, Kushtia, Bagerhat and Khulna contributed to this report]

Troublemakers

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following deaths of two students in a city road crash on July 29. College students Dia Khanam Mim and Abdul Karim Rajib were killed on the spot as a Jabal-e-Noor bus ploughed through a crowd while competing with another bus of the same company. The accident triggered fury among the students, mostly in their mid-teens, who defied pouring rain to take to the streets of the capital with slogans "We want justice", bringing traffic to a standstill. The movement turned violent as police and ruling party men swooped on the protesters triggering clashes. In the last two days of protests, the city saw brutal assaults on students who have been staging unprecedented demonstrations. Around 250 people, mostly protesters, were injured in incidents of clashes and attacks. At least 12 journalists were also assaulted on August 5 by alleged ruling party men. Strangely, police have made students accused in cases filed over the violence in the capital, leaving out the alleged ruling party men involved in the attacks on road safety demonstrators and journalists. Over the incidents of violence, 29 cases have been filed under the Penal Code and 41 people, including 22 students of private universities, were arrested. All the 22 private university students were denied bail and sent to jail on Thursday after being remanded for two days each. At least 20 people have been arrested under section 57 of the ICT Act. They were shown arrested in nine cases -- six with different police stations in Dhaka and one each in Chittagong, Sirajganj and Bogra. Noted photographer Shahidul Alam was arrested on Sunday night in a case filed under the controversial section 57 of the ICT Act on charges of spreading propaganda and false information against the government. Cybercrime unit officials said they were trying to arrest more of those responsible for propagating fake news and rumours. Those people are being identified using their social media IDs, they added. Besides, they have also written to Facebook authorities to remove some users' accounts.

Do your part

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48 governments and four international organisations -- including the UNHCR, IOM and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. In March 2016, the Bali Declaration was adopted, highlighting the need for a comprehensive collective approach to resolve statelessness, invest in inclusive development, and expand safe pathways so that refugees and migrants do not have legal alternatives to putting their lives at risk while on the move. Bangladesh has been hosting hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas since the 1980s as they fled persecutions in Myanmar where they are denied citizenship, higher education, healthcare, government job and freedom of movement since 1982. The massive influx over some 720,000 Rohingyas amid a brutal military campaign since August last

More talks, no timeframe yet

year added further burden on Bangladesh, a highly-populated country with its own challenges including poverty, climate change, scarcity of land and forest. According to Bangladesh government, some 300,000 other Rohingyas had been living in Bangladesh prior to the latest influx. "I urge you to consider what support your governments could pledge in solidarity with Bangladesh until solutions are found for refugees," said the UN Refugee Agency head. Grandi then urged the governments to move "from consultation to action on the commitments they made" in the declaration, asking them to consider how they could share Bangladesh's refugee burden. "Could your government support, for example, construction of hospitals in Bangladesh that will treat refugees but also improve the health care of

local people?" The real solution of the Rohingya issue lies in Myanmar, he said, urging regional support to address the root causes of displacement in Rakhine: for example, investing in infrastructure that connects communities instead of dividing them, and providing expertise on resolving statelessness and inter-communal conflict. MYANMAR APPROVES UN STAFF TRIP TO RAKHINE Myanmar government has approved the travel of the staff of UN agencies to conduct preliminary assessments in 23 villages -- 12 in Buthidaung and 11 villages in Maundaw in northern Rakhine -- Myanmar Times reported yesterday quoting a statement of the country's foreign ministry. "This information has been transmitted to the relevant departments to make necessary arrangements for the field assessments," the Foreign Affairs

Ministry said. An official of the UNHCR said they will continue to engage with Myanmar on moving forward the MoU. "We continue the discussions with the government on this matter and other matters related to the MoU," he said. Myanmar signed a tripartite MoU with UNHCR and UNDP on June 6 regarding preparation for the repatriation of the Rohingyas. In November last year, Myanmar and Bangladesh signed another MoU on repatriation, but the Rohingyas and UN said the conditions in Rakhine were not conducive for their return yet. On Wednesday, the two UN agencies said they had submitted request on June 14 for the staff to be based in Maungdaw and to start their work in the northern part of Rakhine State, but they were waiting for response from the government.

on the five transit camps; one is complete, another is under construction, and three are yet to be built, it mentioned. Both parties agreed that the repatriation of the Rohingyas will be done in a voluntary, safe and dignified manner, and verification forms are to be distributed among them. Signatures, fingerprints, and photo IDs are to be completed when the refugees fill out the forms by themselves. This needs to be done to indicate voluntary return and assist with Myanmar's verification process, it added.

Yields high

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Pineapple is cultivated mainly in Idilpur, Sholakuri, Dokhala, Beibaid, Kailakuri, Hagurikuri, Pigachha, Alokdia, Aushnara, Digor Baid, Arunkhola, Laofula, Raniaid, Moter Bazar, Jalchhatra, Garo Bazar and Rasulpur areas of the upazila. Visiting Madhupur's Jalchhatra, the largest pineapple market in the region, on Friday, this correspondent saw that wholesalers from across the country were gathered there. Ruhul Amin, a farmer from Jhatarbaid area, said that although the pineapple yield was good this season, the prices were lower than that of the previous one. "I have sold nearly 400 pineapples with large ones priced Tk 20 to 25 and the small ones priced Tk 8 to Tk 10. On an average, the price of each fruit has come down by Tk 5 to 10," he said. Several other growers echoed his view on the matter. Motaleb Miah, a trader from Dhaka, said he was hoping to have good profit by selling pineapples in the capital. "I hope to sell large size pineapple in Dhaka for Tk 40" he said. Several pineapple growers in Madhupur said they were not getting adequate prices for their produce as they lack proper marketing and preservation facilities. Asked about the issue, Upazila Agriculture Officer Mahmudul Hasan said process was underway to export pineapple to several European countries. "Local pineapple growers will get just prices if factories producing pineapple jam, jelly and juice are set up in Madhupur," he said. The agriculture officer also emphasised ensuring proper marketing and preservation facilities for the fruits. With saplings brought from Meghalaya of India, local Garo leader Jevier Chishim first cultivated pineapple at Idilpur village in Madhupur in 1942. The production of the fruit became popular in the upazila gradually.

Driver's drowsiness blamed for crash

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some recommendations on reducing accidents. In another accident yesterday, a man was killed and 25 students of Chittagong University were wounded as a bus turned turtle at Alutula in Khagrachhari Sadar. Police identified the deceased as Hafiz Ullah Khokon, 28, of Comilla's Nangalkot upazila. Hafiz was a fish trader and boarded the bus carrying the university students to Sajek in Rangamati, police said. Shahadat Hossain, officer-in-charge

of Khagrachhari Model Police Station, said a Sajek-bound bus carrying 45 CU students suddenly overturned when the vehicle was crossing Alutula's APBN camp area around 11:15am. Hafiz was on the roof of the bus when the accident took place, the OC added. Most of the injured was given primary treatment at Khagrachhari Adhunik Sadar Hospital, while four were sent to Chittagong Medical College Hospital for better treatment, said Nayanmoy Tripura, resident medical officer at Khagrachhari Adhunik Sadar Hospital. Police seized the bus, but its driver and helper managed to flee, the OC added. In Savar, a truck driver was killed and five others sustained injuries in a head-on collision between two trucks in Shalechpur area around 8:00am. The dead is Ashraf Gazi, 30, of Bagerhat, said police. The accident happened on Dhaka-Aricha highway when a Dhaka-bound truck carrying fish collided head-on with another truck, which was plying on the wrong side of the highway, said Mohshinul Kadir, officer-in-charge of Savar Model Police Station.

Both the vehicles were seized, the OC added. In another development, Shahina Aktar, 5, daughter of Idris Ali of Mirersarai in Munshiganj Sadar upazila, was wounded critically when a battery-run three-wheeler hit her around 1:30pm. It happened when she was crossing a road in Mirersarai area. The girl died on the way to hospital, said Alamgir Hossain, officer-in-charge of Munshiganj Police Station. Our correspondents in Gaibandha, CU, Savar and Munshiganj contributed to this report.

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Repolling

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For a mere margin of 161 votes, the final result was postponed by the Election Commission after declaring results of 132 out of total 134 centres. The posts of two general councillors and two reserved female councillors of the reserved Ward-8 (general 22, 23, 24) and Ward-9 (general 25, 26, 27) will also be determined through the polls today. Moreover, votes at 14 centres will be taken today for the reserved female councillor post of Ward-7 (general 19, 20, 21) which was tied between two candidates. Alimuzzaman, returning officer of Sylhet city polls, said they have taken all preparations and expressed the hope for peaceful voting. The BNP candidate on Thursday met the chief election commissioner at the EC in Dhaka to update him about the anomalies during the July 30 polls and requested him to keep a close watch on the two centres today. He said the number of deceased and expatriate voters at those two centres is more than 300. He claimed he would undoubtedly win if fake vote was not cast. On the other side, AL candidate Kamran claimed the EC should have retaken polls at 17 centres.