

'Robber' killed in Laxmipur 'gunfight'

Police say he was sentenced to life

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Police recovered the bullet-hit body of a suspected robber in Laxmipur yesterday. Thirty-five-year-old Mainuddin alias Manu was killed in a "gunfight" between two groups of robbers in Kadira char area of Kamalnagar, police claimed.

Alamgir Hossain, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Kamalnagar Police Station, said Manu was one of the top listed robbers and was accused in five robbery cases. He added that he was facing life term in one of the cases.

Police claimed that the two groups of robbers got into a fight over establishing supremacy in the area early yesterday. At one point, the "gunfight" began.

When the law enforcers, upon information, went to the area, the robbers fled, OC Alamgir said.

Manu was found bullet-hit at the spot. Police took him to Kamalnagar Health Complex, where doctors declared him dead, he added.

A gun and two bullets were also recovered from the spot, he claimed.

Airbus pulls plug on costly A380

AFP, Paris

European aerospace giant Airbus said yesterday that it would stop building its A380 superjumbo, the double-decker jet which earned plaudits from passengers but failed to win over enough airlines to justify its massive costs.

The final two double-deckers will be delivered in 2021, just 14 years after the first A380 went into service, after the Dubai-based Emirates decided to reduce its total orders by 39 planes, Airbus said.

It marks a disappointing end to a bold bet on how millions of people would travel in the future, as airlines struggled to fill a plane capable of carrying anywhere from 500 to 850 people.

"Without Emirates, Airbus has no substantial order backlog and no basis to sustain A380 production after 2021," Guillaume Faure, who is taking over as Airbus CEO from Tom Enders this spring, said in a conference call.

Airbus had at one point chalked up over 320 orders for the superjumbo, which has a list price of \$446 million — though the company often had to offer



substantial discounts.

Analysts had warned that Airbus wouldn't start to recover the roughly 25 billion euros in investment and production costs unless at least 400 planes were sold, and possibly up to 600.

Airbus itself never disclosed how many planes it needed to sell to break even, a growing concern among analysts as technical problems and delivery delays piled up.

With the reduced orders from Emirates, the A380's biggest client, Airbus said its order book now stood at just 274 planes.

Dhaka, Riyadh sign MoU

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Under the MoU, the two countries will engage in cooperation in a wide range of areas, including military training, exercise and higher studies at defence institutions, exchange of intelligence information, exchange of military visits, enhancement of skill, maritime security, and curbing piracy in the sea.

The MoU was signed on the basis of the friendship and in line with the foreign policy of the two countries for enhancing international peace and stability, said a press release of Bangladesh embassy in Riyadh.

Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division Lt Gen Md Mahfuzur Rahman and Deputy Chief of Staff of Saudi Armed Forces Lt Gen Mutlaq bin Salim inked the deal on behalf of their respective governments at a ceremony at the Ministry of Defence in Riyadh.

Bangladesh Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Golam Moshi, Deputy Chief of Mission Nazrul Islam and Defence Attaché Brig Gen Mohammad Shah Alam Chowdhury were present there.

"It's basically the starting point for each country in case of cooperation and in future the two countries will expand their cooperation," said a diplomat in Riyadh, adding that the agreement was scheduled to be inked during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to the Kingdom on October 17 last year, but it was deferred as both sides agreed to discuss some adjustments.

Asked whether Bangladesh would deploy 1,800 troops for defusing or removing mines along the border of war-torn Yemen, the diplomat, wishing not be named, said it was not a mine sweeping deal.

"This MoU is an outcome of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's farsightedness and dynamic leadership and effective diplomatic efforts," according to the press release.

Officials said the signing of the MoU was finalised during the visit of

Chief of Army Staff Gen Aziz Ahmed early this month when he held high-level meetings with Saudi Assistant Minister for Defence Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Ayash and Saudi Chief of Joint Forces Gen Fayyad bin Hamed Al-Ruwaili.

On Wednesday, Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque told a press conference that under the defence deal, Bangladeshi troops would not be involved in any war on behalf of Saudi Arabia.

Dismissing various speculations, he said Bangladesh had been following the policy, laid out by the prime minister, of only deploying troops outside the country's border under the UN peacekeeping missions.

Dhaka earlier conveyed Bangladesh's position to send troops to Saudi Arabia if the country's sovereignty and the security of its two holy mosques were threatened.

Meanwhile, two senior lawmakers — Rashed Khan Menon and Fakhru Imam — yesterday in parliament demanded a statement from the foreign minister whether the signing of a "defence pact" between Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia was not contradictory to the constitution, reported UNB.

Menon, former minister and Workers Party president, raised the issue taking floor on the point of order in the House.

He demanded the foreign minister make a statement under the section 300 of the rules of procedure in parliament over the "agreement" and urged the speaker to pass a ruling on the issue from the constitutional aspect.

Referring to a BBC report, Menon said Bangladesh was to sign a "defence deal" with Saudi Arabia under which Bangladesh would deploy 1,800 troops along the Yemen border.

"The foreign ministry neither admitted it nor denied it... but we've come to know that the signing of the

deal is now at the final stage, and we must examine whether the article 25 of our constitution is being violated."

Menon said the state shall base its international relations on the principles of respect for national sovereignty and equality, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, peaceful settlement of international disputes, and respect for international law and the principles enunciated in the United Nations Charter as per article 25 of the constitution.

"We must review the deal from two aspects — whether the deployment of troops (under the deal) is related to the UN and pertinent to its charter and what will be the political image of having the presence of our army aboard?" he said.

Mentioning that the Saudi-led coalition along with the USA is regularly carrying out attacks on Yemen to suppress Houthi rebels for its own interest, the Workers Party chief said the UN Secretary General has described the Yemen situation as the worst humanitarian disaster in the world.

"Under such a situation, our army will remove mines from there. For whose interest our army will sacrifice their lives in the name of clearing mines which Bangladesh constitution doesn't allow?" he said.

Menon also feared that this will lead to conflicting relations (with some countries) when Bangladeshi troops will be deployed along the Yemen border. "Our Constitution says Bangladesh won't be part of any conflicting matter."

Supporting Menon, Jatiya Party MP Imam questioned the justification of "signing the deal bypassing parliament", UNB wrote.

Stating that parliament is the main centre for discussing any issue, he said, "What will be problem if it was discussed here?"

1,200 patients evacuated

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Panicked relatives, attendants and nurses were seen wheeling other patients out of the hospital on stretchers or carrying them out on their shoulders.

Apart from the hospital staffers, students from the Suhrawardy medical college and the nearby Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University rushed in to help.

Doctors were seen attending the patients.

Some relatives said they hurriedly came out of the hospital, without taking the patients' medical files.

As the news of the fire spread, relatives of many patients rushed to the hospital.

Talking to reporters, the hospital's director Prof Uttam Kumar Barua claimed the fire originated at the children's ward on the second floor of the new building of the hospital and spread to the store room on the ground floor.

Fire officials, however, suspected the fire broke out at the store room.

A seven-member committee was formed to investigate the incident and was asked to submit its report in three days.

Brig Gen Ali Ahmed Khan, director general of the Fire Service and Civil Defence, claimed all patients were evacuated safely.

Prof Uttam Kumar Barua said the patients were evacuated and sent to different government hospitals, including the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and Mitford hospital.

"The patients who were at the ICU

have been sent to ICUs of other hospitals. We will admit all our patients again once the situation improves," he said.

THE RELOCATION

Around 8:45pm, the hospital authorities asked the patients and their attendants to go to nearby hospitals for treatment.

Many of the patients, especially those in critical condition, were whisked away in ambulances to different government and private hospitals. The ambulances left blaring sirens.

More than 100 private ambulances carried patients for free, said the owners of the vehicles.

Around 200 patients were shifted to the DMCH until 11:00pm.

Initially, the emergency unit of the hospital was struggling to handle the sudden rush of the patients. Doctors from other units and off-duty came to help as well.

One patient was admitted to the hospital's ICU.

While briefing journalists last night at Suhrawardy hospital, GM Saleh Uddin, secretary to the health education and family welfare division, said, "Smoke engulfed the children's ward first. There were a total of 70 patients and all of them were evacuated to safety immediately.

"The electricity supply was also snapped."

The emergency ward was reopened at night, he added.

"The other units, except for those wards in the affected areas, will be reopened soon."

Health and Family Welfare Minister Zahid Malik visited the hospital and

enquired about the evacuated patients.

Nasa bids

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contact during a dust storm in June last year and was declared officially dead Wednesday, ending one of the most fruitful missions in the history of space exploration.

Unable to recharge its batteries, Opportunity left hundreds of messages from Earth unanswered over the months, and Nasa said it made its last attempt at contact Tuesday evening.

"I declare the Opportunity mission as complete," Thomas Zurbuchen, associate administrator of Nasa's Science Mission Directorate told a news conference at mission headquarters in Pasadena, California.

The community of researchers and engineers involved in the program were in mourning over the passing of the rover, known affectionately as Oppy.

"It is a hard day," said John Callas, manager of the Mars Exploration Rover project.

"Even though it is a machine and we're saying goodbye, it's very hard and it's very poignant."

"Don't be sad it's over, be proud it taught us so much," former president Barack Obama tweeted later yesterday.

"Congrats to all the men and women of @Nasa on a @MarsRovers mission that beat all expectations, inspired a new generation of Americans, and demands we keep investing in science that pushes the boundaries of human knowledge."

The nostalgia extended across the generations of scientists who handled the plucky little adventurer.

Again, envoy

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Bangladesh had lodged a formal protest on the issue on October 6, 2018. In reply, Myanmar affirmed through a note verbale on October 21, 2018 that "...the organisation has also removed all links which falsely mentioned about Saint Martin's Island."

However, with great concern, Bangladeshi officials noticed that the advanced interactive map on the website of the Department of Population under the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population of Myanmar (www.dop.gov.mm), continues to show the similar data gradients (population, land type, etc) for the Saint Martin's Island of Bangladesh as those of Myanmar.

Moreover, websites of Myanmar Statistical Information Services (www.mmsis.gov.mm) shows the Saint Martin's island with the same colour as that of Rakhine state, while a different colour has been used for other parts of Bangladesh.

"Continuation of such misrepresentation, despite the assurance on the part of Myanmar for effective measures to permanently redress the issue, could therefore be construed as a deliberate attempt of Myanmar," the foreign ministry said in yesterday's protest note.

The note also pointed out that all entities, particularly the government organisations, are supposed to publish only authentic information on their websites and official documents. Owners of the websites/documents have to assume all responsibilities of any contents related therein, regardless of its preliminary sources.

"Myanmar cannot deny her responsibilities of this utter misrepresentation just adding a disclaimer. This is absolutely unacceptable," the note reads.

Petition

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border area, not to seize smuggled cattle and shooting locals, Tonoy told The Daily Star.

The constitutional right of the people, who were killed and injured in the clash, has been curbed, he said, adding that the HC may hear the petition next week.

Following the incident on Tuesday, Moniruzzaman, superintendent of police in Thakurgaon, said a patrol team of the BGB went to a village in Haripur upazila by a locally made three-wheeler in the morning to seize smuggled cattle.

At one stage, the BGB personnel got into an altercation with villagers, who encircled them. The BGB men failed to calm the villagers, and opened fire, the SP told this newspaper over the phone.

Asked whether home ministry would investigate the incident, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday said, "No one is above the law."

He did not make any further comments.

56 candidates

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Chowdhury of Chattogram-15, Saiful Islam Firoj of Jhenidah-4, Abul Kalam Azad Siddiqui of Tangail-7, Zainul Abedin of Barishal-3, Rumana Mahmud of Sirajganj-2, Jahiruddin Swapan of Barishal-1, Shah Riazzul Hannan of Gazipur-4, Naser Rahman of Moulvibazar-3, Abdul Hai of Munshiganj-3.

The Jatiya Oikyafront, an alliance led by BNP and some other political parties, had rejected the polls results alleging irregularities in the election.

The Awami League-led grand alliance secured 289 seats while Oikyafront got only eight.

The Oikyafront MP-elects are yet to take oath in the parliament.

ASM Abdur Rob, president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, earlier said that the Oikyafront would hold a public hearing on February 24 to present the "picture of vote rigging" in the last parliamentary election.

There will be a court in the public hearing and Dr Kamal Hossain will be the "judge". The government's misdeeds and pictures of vote rigging will be unmasked, Rob added.

Ijtema

FROM PAGE 2

scheduled to attend the Friday prayers.

The followers of Zubair are supposed to leave the Ijtema ground after Maghrib prayers on Saturday.

Earlier on February 5, State Minister for Religious Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah extended the duration from three days to four days after holding a meeting with two feuding groups.

Initially, the Ijtema was scheduled to be held in two phases, with the first one from January 11 to 13 and the second one from January 18 to 20.

On December 1 last year, one person was killed and over 200 were injured in a series of clashes between two factions of Tabligh Jamaat for establishing control over Ijtema Maidan.

The government then postponed the congregation after the two factions announced separate schedules.

Tabligh Jamaat has been organising Biswa Ijtema every year since 1946.

Everybody should take

FROM PAGE 1

In an exclusive interview early last week with Deutsche Welle (DW), Germany's public international broadcaster, Hasina gave such hints around a month after she assumed office for the fourth time and the third consecutive term as the country's prime minister.

In the recently held general election, the ruling Awami League and its allies secured 96 percent of the seats in parliament.

Speaking to DW, she said, "I don't want to continue for more [time]. I think that everybody should take a break so we can accommodate the younger generation."

The interview was conducted by DW's editor-in-chief Ines Pohl and the head of DW's Asia department, Debarati Guha, in Dhaka on February 9.

Over the past several years, Bangladesh, under Hasina's leadership, has made rapid economic progress and is now moving toward being classified from a lower- to middle-income country. The economy has been growing at an average of six to seven percent annually, the trade volume has multiplied and foreign investment too has gone up.

But despite increasing prosperity, one in every four Bangladeshi remains poor, according to the World Bank. Hasina said the fight against poverty would continue to be her first priority during the rest of her tenure. "Food security, housing, education, healthcare, job opportunities; these are basic needs," she said. "Definitely, every human being wants a better life... We have to ensure that," she added.

Burgeoning growth and development have not silenced Hasina's critics, who say she has not done much to ease restrictions on freedom of expression and prevent attacks on liberal thinkers in Bangladesh.

Hasina, however, said she supported free thought in the country and criticism was only natural. "If you work more, you will hear more criticism," she argued, adding, "You should ask my people whether they are satisfied or not, what they think, whether they are getting all they need, whether I can provide this."

Hasina and the Awami League have also been accused of stifling political discourse and trying to establish a one-party rule, a charge the prime minister denied. "This time, the Awami League candidates were elected in 260 constituencies [out of 300]. So, other parties are also in parliament. How can it be a one-party rule?" she said.

According to her, the opposition parties were weak.

"If any particular party can't reach the peoples' minds, can't get their trust and doesn't get votes, then whose responsibility is this? This actually portrays their weakness," she told DW.

The full content of the interview can be read: https://www.dw.com/en/top-stories/s-9097.

PM IN GERMANY

Shortly after her interview with the German international broadcaster DW, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina flew to Germany and arrived there on yesterday to attend the Munich Security Conference (MSC) 2019 which begins today, reports UNB.

Bangladesh Ambassador to Germany Imtiaz Ahmed received the Prime Minister at the airport.

On her way back from Germany, she will visit the UAE to attend the International Defence Exhibition (IDEX-2019) to be held in Abu Dhabi on February 17.

During her stay in Germany, she will attend a community reception at Hotel Sheraton in Munich Arabella Park, to be hosted by the European Awami League on Thursday.

Today, she will attend the health security roundtable titled "Health in Crisis - WHO Cares?" to be jointly hosted by MSC, Centre for Strategies and International Studies, and WHO at Hotel Bayerischer Hof.

Executive Director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons Beatrice Fihn and Chief Prosecutor of the ICC Dr Bensouda will call on her separately after the event.

In the afternoon, Hasina will attend the opening ceremony of the MSC at the Conference Hall of Hotel Bayerischer Hof, reports UNB.

Afterwards, President and CEO of the Siemens AG Joe Kaeser and CEO of the Veridos Hans Wolfgang Kunz will meet her separately.

Later, the PM will attend a dinner to be hosted by President of the World Economic Forum and Jigsaw CEO Borge Brende Jared Cohen at Galerie Schüller of the Hotel Bayerischer Hof.

On Saturday afternoon, she will join a panel discussion on "Climate Change as a Security Threat" at the conference hall of the Bayerischer Hof hotel.

On the same day, Hasina will depart from Munich International Airport for Abu Dhabi on a flight of Etihad Airlines.

On Wednesday, the PM will fly from Abu Dhabi International Airport for Dhaka on a VVIP flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines.

Serving jail

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In the court, Mansur confessed to making the "arrangement" with Saifu and was sent to jail.

The court yesterday also asked lawyer Sabir to explain his conduct by next Tuesday.

Two Bangladeshis killed

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Police didn't disclose the names of the slain suspects or the victim who was rescued.

Jahirul Islam, labour counsellor at the Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur, said they learnt about the matter from some local newspapers and Bangladeshi journalists there.

"However, Malaysian police have not informed us about it. We are looking into the matter," he told The Daily Star over the phone on Wednesday.

According to police, the victim was kidnapped on February 8 along a road in Kuala Lumpur and held captive at a house in Kajang district outside the city. The syndicate had demanded 200,000 ringgit (Tk 41 lakh) in ransom from the victim's family back in Bangladesh, he said.

Tipped off, investigators determined that the two suspects were linked to the killings of two Bangladeshi workers whose bodies were found near a garbage dump in Kuala Lumpur and a river in Selangor on January 13, Mazlan said.

Further investigation of Kuala Lumpur police determined the suspects were believed to be responsible for the killings, he added.

Following the shootings, police arrested two suspected Malaysian members of the syndicate and seized a mini multipurpose vehicle.

Police revealed that the syndicate was responsible for at least 13 kidnappings involving Bangladeshi workers in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor since 2017. The syndicate had collected 2.5 million ringgit (Tk 5.10 crore) in ransom, officials said.

The kidnappings were a cause for concern, said Naheedul Huq, executive member of the Kuala Lumpur-based Malaysia Bangladesh Forum Association, an NGO that reaches out to Bangladeshi expatriates in the Southeast Asian country.

"The ransom could amount to hundreds of thousands of ringgit as reported in the news, but that doesn't make sense because migrant Bangladeshi workers earn very little, somewhere between 1,000-plus and 2,000-plus ringgit. Furthermore, they need to settle their loans they took out while migrating to Malaysia and pay annual levies," he said.

"Their families at home are not rich either. So I'm not sure why kidnappers would want to target our nationals."

He also asked the governments of Bangladesh and Malaysia to work together to ensure security of Bangladeshi migrants there.

Clorene Das, executive director of human rights group, Tenaganita, said

these cases had an element of human trafficking and must be handled accordingly by the police.

"We hope that the syndicate members are prosecuted and convicted. We also hope the victims get justice and not be criminalised because of their undocumented status," she added.

Finding home

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adding that the vast areas of Rajshahi and Chapainawabganj along the river had become the country's number one habitat for birds for its abundance of diverse species.

"There is no other place in Bangladesh other than the chars in Padma where birds of so many varieties are found in big numbers," eminent ornithologist Onu Tareq told The Daily Star.

While the globally rare Eurasian spoonbill had never earlier found a habitat in Bangladesh, over the last two years ornithologists saw flocks of Eurasian Spoonbills walking around the Padma or in low crop fields in Chapainawabganj's Barind region in the winters. One of those flocks has around 16 spoonbills.

All six kinds of storks that are found across the globe can also be found on these chars.

The Asian-Woollynecked stork, which was considered to have disappeared for over a hundred years, was found nesting and breeding in Rajshahi's Premtoli in 2016.

Five species of eagle are also found in the chars.

All five kinds of Harriers are found in the chars. The Pied Harrier can also be found nowhere else in Bangladesh but there.

The Sykes's Nighthawk was a bird limited to Iran until it flew to Rajshahi three years ago. Some birds fly over the Everest to come here.

For proper conservation, Bangladesh Bird Club last year proposed declaring the areas as sanctuaries for birds. Officials of the forest department have begun studying its prospects, said Tareq, vice president of the club.

As these chars are submerged in the monsoon and reappear when floods are over, the lands generate enough insects with the grass. The birds' fodder does not exhaust even after the farmers ploughs the lands for agriculture. Experts, however, expressed their concern over farming and use of pesticides.