

Nobel figure quits after Swedish body's #MeToo scandal

AFP, Stockholm

Sara Danius yesterday resigned from the Swedish Academy that selects the Nobel Prize in Literature, almost a year after she was forced out as permanent secretary by a #MeToo scandal.

The Swedish academic's resignation is the latest development in a scandal that emerged from the #MeToo movement to halt sexual abuse, and forced the Academy to postpone awarding the literature prize in 2018.

"I have decided to give up my seat... once occupied by the first woman elected to the Academy, Selma Lagerloef," Danius, 56, said in a statement.

"It has been an honour," she added, without giving a reason for her decision.

In April 2018, Danius was forced to step down as the Academy's permanent secretary, the first woman to hold that position, amid a scandal sparked by Jean-Claude Arnault, an influential figure on Stockholm's cultural scene.

He was convicted of raping a young woman in October and December 2011 and the academy was caught up in the scandal because Arnault was married to one of its members, Katarina Frostenson.

Arnault, who is French, was accused by 18 women in all, and has appealed his conviction to Sweden's supreme court.

The Swedish Academy had also funded Arnault's Forum club, which was popular among aspiring young authors hoping to make contact with publishers and writers.

Danius, a literary scholar, joined the Academy in 2013 and became its permanent secretary two years later.

Top Pope aide convicted of child sex crimes

AFP, Melbourne

Australian Cardinal George Pell, one of Pope Francis' closest advisors, has been found guilty of sexually assaulting two choirboys, becoming the most senior Catholic cleric ever convicted of child sex crimes.

An Australian jury unanimously found Pell guilty in December on one count of sexual abuse and four counts of indecent assault against two boys at Saint Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne in the 1990s.

Pell, now aged 77, was accused of cornering the boys -- then aged 12 and 13 -- in the cathedral's sacristy following Sunday mass and forcing them to perform a sex act on him.

The cleric, who has remained free on bail, denied all the charges and an initial trial ended with a hung jury in September, but he was convicted on retrial on December 11.

A wide-ranging suppression order from the presiding judge had prevented the media from reporting even the existence of court proceedings and the ensuing trials since May.

The order was lifted during a court hearing yesterday when prosecutors decided against proceeding with a second trial for separate allegations against Pell dating from the 1970s.

Man held

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Police sources said the incident happened on Friday night when there was no one else in home.

The arrestee also beat the girl when she tried to inform the matter to other family members when they returned, the sources added.

The employer called the victim's parents from their village yesterday and gave them Tk 60,000 in "settlement" money.

The victim's mother filed a case with Tejgaon Police Station in the evening, said Sentu Mia, inspector (investigation) of the police station.

Probe bodies

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BGB at the conference room of Thakurgaon circuit house.

On the same afternoon, the probe committees visited Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital, BGB Hospital and M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital to talk with injured victims who were admitted to different hospitals.

Mohosin Chowdhury, head of home ministry's probe committee, said, "We are still at an initial stage of the investigation. The government has provided us with 15-day time-frame to submit the report and we are trying to do so as soon as possible."

On Sunday, three separate complaints were lodged against seven BGB men for allegedly killing the three villagers and injuring at least 18.

On February 14, BGB also filed two cases against some 275 villagers of Baharampur village, including two dead.

'It was a toy gun'

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He further said the probe body, formed by the civil aviation ministry early Monday, after talking to several passengers presumed that alleged hijacker Polish Ahmed was "mentally imbalanced".

The committee is determined to complete its investigation within the stipulated five working days and make the report public, said the official, who is a member of the probe body.

The Boeing 737-800 aircraft made an emergency landing at the Chattogram airport at 5:41pm on Sunday after Polish allegedly attempted to hijack the plane. He was killed later in an eight-minute operation by the members of army para commando unit.

The question remains how he boarded the plane at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka carrying a toy gun with no red flags raised at the security checkpoints.

Nothing suspicious was noticed when he made his way through metal detectors and his luggage passed through X-ray scanners at the entrance to the terminal and at the boarding gate, claimed officials on Monday.

Asked about it, the probe body member said it will come out in investigation whether there was any security lapse or the suspect got the toy gun from any source during the bus ride between the boarding gate and the aircraft.

Meanwhile, the case in this connection has been handed over to Counter Terrorism (CT) unit of Chattogram Metropolitan Police soon after it was filed on Monday night with Patenga Police Station.

Police sources said those who conducted the commando operation handed over 15 pieces of evidence, including a toy gun, to investigators. It

could not be known anything about the rest of the evidence.

Contacted, Md Shahidullah, deputy commissioner of the CT unit, said they would send the evidence to the offices concerned for examination.

Debabrata Sarker, technology assistant at the Shah Amanat International Airport in Chattogram, filed the case in which he said the suspect was seen carrying objects looking like bomb and firearm during the hijack bid 15 minutes after the plane took off from Dhaka.

Meanwhile, Polish was buried in his village under Sonargaon upazila in Narayanjang yesterday morning. The body, earlier kept at Chattogram Medical College morgue, was handed over to his father Piyar Jahan Sarder after identification.

PASSENGER'S PHOTO ID MANDATORY

Passengers will have to carry photo IDs while travelling to local destinations by air, according to an instruction issued by the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (Caab) last night.

Valid passports, NID cards, driving licences, or office IDs will have to be shown while collecting boarding cards, Biman also said in a statement.

Students will have to show their ID cards issued by their educational institutions.

Biman requested the passengers to keep their photo IDs for domestic flights. "Otherwise, they'll be restricted from travelling."

"Earlier we issued such a notice but it was not enforced strictly. This time passengers will not be allowed to fly if they fail to show their photo IDs," said a CAAB official.

[Amir Hasan Shahriar, FM Mizanur Rahman and Sanad Saha contributed to this report]

Confusion over 24-hr

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He also said movement of private vehicles had been "smooth" during the December 30 national election.

Around half an hour ago, Returning Officer Abul Kashem had told this newspaper that no private car without a sticker provided by the EC would be allowed to run in the DNCC area on the polling day.

He said they imposed a restriction on the movement of all types of vehicles from midnight tonight to midnight tomorrow as part of security measures for the election.

Earlier on February 19, Road Transport and Highways Division had issued a circular imposing the ban.

The restriction will be applicable to motor-run three-wheelers, autorickshaws, motorcycles, taxi cabs, minibuses, SUVs, pickups, cars, buses, trucks, easy bikes and locally made vehicles.

The circular, however, said highways and important roads and side alleys connecting highways to the DNCC area were exempted from the ban.

Also, the ban will be relaxed for the candidates, their agents, local and foreign election observers having approvals from the returning officers and ID cards.

Besides, ambulance, vehicles of polls officials, law enforcement agencies, fire service, electricity, gas and telecom service providers will remain out of the purview of the ban.

Restriction on movement of motorcycles came into force from midnight last night and would continue till Friday midnight.

CAMPAIGN ENDS

Electioneering for the DNCC mayoral by-election and polls to 36 ward councillor posts of Dhaka north and south city corporations ended midnight last night.

Returning Officer Kashem said campaigning had been peaceful and no untoward incident was reported.

Voting will open at 8:00am tomorrow.

row. The polls to councillor posts in 36 new wards, 18 each under the north and south city corporations, will also be held on the same day.

Voters in DNCC area said Awami League mayoral candidate Atiqul Islam conducted electioneering, but the contenders from other political parties hardly carried out any campaign.

Yesterday, Atiqul along with his supporters made door-to-door visits, held meetings and distributed leaflets among voters in Turag, Kawla and Uttara areas seeking votes.

Locals said councillor aspirants were also carrying out campaigns in 36 wards, but those didn't get momentum and the overall polls atmosphere was not festive as the elections were boycotted by the BNP as well as most left-leaning and Islamist parties.

The post of DNCC mayor fell vacant following the death of Annisul Haq on November 30, 2017. He was elected mayor on April 28, 2015.

'USE POWER FOR FAIR POLLS' Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda yesterday instructed all election officials to use their power to ensure free and fair upazila polls, due next month.

"Hold a free and fair election. All the power is in your hands. And with that power, you can do a lot of things," he said at a training programme of returning and assistant returning officers of the fourth phase of upazila polls.

The training was held at the Nirbachan Bhaban in the capital's Agargaon.

"Don't relax while carrying out your election duties. You can even postpone the polls. You can take actions against candidates for breaching the electoral code of conduct," the CEC said.

He said it would be regarded as the officials' failure if they could not enforce their power for holding free and fair polls.

The first phase of the upazila polls will be held on March 10.

The good doctors

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Asked, Das said he could have passed his time staying at home to heal.

"But the pain of the patients is bigger than any other thing. That's why I did not take any leave."

Sultana's response was similar.

"It would be an injustice if a person returns without treatment", she told this correspondent.

Visiting the hospital on Sunday, Das, with a sling strapped around his left shoulder, was seen attending to visiting patients at the health complex. The sight had become a common one.

Kalipada Roy, a patient, said he was moved seeing the doctors treating hundreds of visiting patients, although they were not fully fit themselves.

"Such a bond between doctors and patients can hardly be seen in other hospitals or health complexes in the country," he said.

"They [the two doctors] made the hospital proud."

For now, every day is a long day for the two doctors. They attend the outdoor patients of the populous upazila that has about four lakh people in 17 unions. The duo also takes care of the admitted patients and is present even during late night emergency calls.

"On Monday, around 300 patients visited the health complex. Of them, 50 were admitted," said Dr Zahangir Kabir, the other physician at the health

complex, but one holding an administrative post. He also acts as the Family Planning Officer of Birganj upazila.

Kabir said they were left with only two attending physicians after the resident medical officer was transferred three months ago.

"Both the doctors desperately need rest. But they come to the health complex every morning and attend the visiting patients till afternoon."

Sultana needs urgent leave to take care of her unborn baby, he said.

"We now have three doctors against 30 posts. These two doctors are not enough to treat the large number of patients every day. Besides, doctors are humans and they too can fall ill."

The civil surgeon is aware of the lack of doctors here, he added.

Contacted, Abdul Kuddus, civil surgeon of Dinajpur, told this correspondent on Tuesday that his office had informed the issue to the director general of health and a doctor was posted there on deputation, who was yet to join.

Mohammad Ali Khan, director of Directorate General of Health Services, told The Daily Star that in every upazila hospital there must be six doctors --- three RMOs and three medical officers.

"In Birganj, we have already posted three more doctors. They will join soon," he said.

Syria force screens and treats 'caliphate' survivors

AFP, Near Baghouz

US-backed forces in eastern Syria yesterday screened and treated truckloads of suspected jihadists and relatives who left a village where the Islamic State group's "caliphate" is making its last stand.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) struggled to cope with the flow of people exiting the very last shred of a once-sprawling proto-state that claimed dominion over millions of people.

Several thousand of them are believed to remain in a last redoubt which has been shrunk to about half a square kilometre on the edge of Baghouz, a hamlet by the Euphrates river.

Hundreds of them, mostly women and children, arrived yesterday from Baghouz to a desert screening centre in a convoy of 11 huge double-trailer trucks.

The women formed a queue to be searched before heading to a distribution point where baby formula, diapers and bread were being handed out.

Overwhelmed fighters from the Kurdish-led SDF were still treating some of the more than 2,000 people who were trucked in the previous day.

An AFP reporter saw an 11-year-old girl who had lost her leg, a small child with a broken hand and his pregnant mother as well as others who had suffered wounds from landmine explosions and bombardment.

Kurdish fighters there said 30 people, mostly women, had already been sent on to other facilities for treatment, and that a total of 300 had received emergency care.

Their accounts of the makeshift camp in Baghouz where the SDF says around 5,000 people remain describe a death trap of disease and starvation.

Many of the women told AFP they were not able to leave earlier for lack of funds to pay the smugglers who spirit groups out of the besieged area. "Inside, there is nothing but hunger," said one of them.

Two killed

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When the criminals fled, police found the body of Emdad, who stood accused in two narcotics cases filed with Islamic University Police Station, on the spot.

Police claimed to have recovered a pistol, four bullets and 100 yaba pills from the spot.

In Barishal, an alleged robber, Mamun Sarker, 27, of Khunna Gobinapur village under Hijla upazila, was killed in a similar incident.

Abdul Khalek, OC (investigation) of Kazirhat Police Station in Mehendiganj upazila, said Mamun was a robber and accused in at least 26 cases, including murder, rape and robbery, with different police stations.

Kazirhat police arrested Rasel, another robber of the same gang, on February 5 and got information about Mamun, the OC said.

Police arrested Mamun on Monday night in Muladi Bailey Bridge area and went to a brick kiln in Kazirhat lake area to recover firearms around 2:00am, he added.

Mamun's associates opened fire on the police team, triggering a "gunfight", the OC said.

He said Mamun was injured during the "gunfight" and taken to the local upazila health complex where doctors declared him dead.

Police claimed that they recovered two firearms, five bullets, two sharp weapons and a mobile phone from the spot.

Saiful Islam, superintendent of Barishal police, said Mamun was infamous for committing rape during robbery.

In another incident, police shot a murder case accused in his right hand and right leg when he allegedly attacked police to escape arrest early yesterday.

Sohel Kamar, 28, of Chaparkona village in Jamalpur's Sarishabari upazila, was undergoing treatment at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

Majeder Rahman, OC of Sarishabari Police Station, said Soheli was accused in a case filed in connection with stabbing to death an eight-year-old boy and injuring his seven-year-old sister over a family feud on Monday afternoon.

The victims are children of Soheli's cousin Monsur Ali.

Their father filed a case on Monday night.

The OC said a police team raided Doail zero point area around 2:30am to arrest Soheli, who attacked the law enforcers with a sharp weapon to escape.

In self-defence, police shot him twice, leaving him injured, the OC added.

Our correspondents in Kushtia, Barishal and Jamalpur contributed to this report.

Trump, Kim



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they will each be accompanied by two guests and interpreters, White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders told reporters.

They will meet again tomorrow, she said.

Their talks come eight months after the historic summit in Singapore, the first between a sitting US president and a North Korean leader.

While the first meeting was all about breaking the ice after decades of war and bitter animosity between their countries, this time there will be pressure on both to move beyond the vaguely worded commitment they made in Singapore to work toward the complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

Trump's critics at home have warned him against cutting a deal that would do little to curb North Korea's nuclear ambitions, urging specific, verifiable North Korean action to abandon the nuclear weapons that threaten the United States.

In return, Kim would expect significant US concessions such as relief from punishing sanctions and a declaration that the 1950-53 Korean War is at last formally over.

Vietnamese officials were on hand to greet Kim at the station in Dong Dang town after he crossed the border from China. He got a red-carpet welcome with honour guard, military band and fluttering North Korean and Vietnamese flags.

Kim's sister, Kim Yo Jong, who has emerged as an important aide, arrived with him.

About a dozen bodyguards briefly ran alongside Kim's car as he set off for the two-hour journey to Hanoi, smiling and waving to children lining the route from his limousine.

Roads were closed with Vietnamese security forces in armoured-personnel carriers guarding the route to the city's Melia hotel where he is staying.

Vietnamese authorities have been tight-lipped about the summit and have yet to announce where the two will meet.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also arrived yesterday and met Vietnamese Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh for talks. "TREMENDOUS"

BSTI acts

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making the water unsafe for consumption.

The drive was conducted from January 1 to February 11 to check the water quality of the licensed companies, only to find the grim picture.

More than 300 companies supply jar waters in Dhaka, although the BSTI has issued only 175 licences.

Quality of the water supplied by unlicensed companies would obviously be worse, said a BSTI official.

BSTI's surveillance team found abnormalities in 10 out of the 22 samples collected for testing from across Dhaka. Two of the samples had 26 times more "plate count", the standard for measuring the presence of microorganisms. One sample showed extremely low PH level, which means the water was too acidic. Another sample had E Coli, a germ found in faeces that causes diarrhoea and other diseases, said SM Ishaque Ali, a director at BSTI.

During the drive, the BSTI destroyed more than 26,000 unsafe jars and filed cases against 76 suppliers.

In order to produce and sell drinking water, a company needs to have licences from the BSTI, Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (WASA) of Dhaka, the commerce, environment and labour ministries, and the city corporation.

But to meet the high demand, many companies are producing, bottling and openly selling jarred and bottled drinking water without any of these certifications.

"It is alarming to see the high number of plate count in portable water samples," said Mohiud Samad Khan, associate professor at the chemical engineering department of Buet.

"It is important to analyse the types of microorganisms present in the sample to fully understand the short and long-term effects on the human body, especially on children," he told The Daily Star.

Different microorganisms affect the human body in different ways; therefore, affected patients should consult a doctor to take proper medication, he added.

Nowadays, most offices and restaurants in Dhaka rely on jar suppliers for drinking water. Many new buildings and housing projects in and around the city that have no gas connection

Trump told reporters before he left and Kim would have "a very tremendous summit".

Tweeting on Monday, he stressed the benefits to North Korea if it gave up its nuclear weapons. "With complete denuclearisation, North Korea will rapidly become an Economic Powerhouse. Without it, just more of the same. Chairman Kim will make a wise decision!" Trump said.

In a speech late on Sunday, Trump, however, appeared to play down the possibility of a major breakthrough, saying he would be happy as long as North Korea maintained its pause on weapons testing.

"I'm not in a rush," he said. "I just don't want testing. As long as there's no testing, we're happy."

North Korea conducted its last nuclear test in September 2017 and its last intercontinental ballistic missile test in November 2017.

Analysts say the two leaders have to move beyond summit symbolism.

"The most basic yet urgent task is to come to a shared understanding of what denuclearisation would entail," said Gi-Wook Shin, director of Stanford's Asia-Pacific Research Center.

"The ambiguity and obscurity of the term 'denuclearisation' only exacerbates the scepticism about both the US and North Korean commitments to denuclearisation."

While the United States is demanding North Korea give up all of its nuclear and missile programmes, North Korea wants to see the removal of the US nuclear umbrella for South Korea.

A South Korean presidential spokesman told reporters in Seoul the two sides might be able to agree to a formal end of the Korean War, which was concluded with an armistice not a peace treaty, a move North Korea has long sought.

Protesters in Seoul tore up photographs of Kim and threw them to the ground to highlight their dismay that North Korea's grim human rights record was not expected to figure in talks.

Amnesty International said Trump had disregarded human rights to gain favour with Kim.

"His silence in the face of relentless and grave human rights violations has been deafening," it said.

also depend on jar and bottled water, but their quality has always been a big concern.

Only last year, a study by Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) found that 98 percent of the water jars sold in Dhaka had E. Coli in them.

For that study, the government body had collected 35 kinds of water bottles and 250 kinds of jars manufactured by 150 companies -- both BSTI-certified and non-certified -- from 24 points in Dhaka.

The samples, collected during April-October, were later tested by SGS Bangladesh Ltd, a globally accredited inspection, verification, testing and certification company.

In May last year, a public interest petition was filed with the High Court based on newspaper reports about the quality of water. On December 3, the court heard the petition, filed by High Court lawyer Shammie Akhter, and ordered the removal of illegal and unsafe jar and bottled water from the market.

The court also ordered the BSTI to submit a report on the quality of bottled and jar water available on the market in a week.

The watchdog responded partially on January 21, saying water supplied by five companies was unsafe to drink.

2 minor girls

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upazila of Moulvibazar on Monday.

The girl was going to a nearby vegetable garden with her cousins when their drug-addict neighbour Mannan Miah, 23, took the girl to a nearby jungle luring her with chocolates, said the girl's father.

Mannan then raped the girl and fled the scene, leaving her unconscious, he alleged.

Chandan Kumar Chakrabarty, officer-in-charge of Madhabpur Police Station, said the girl's father filed a case with the police station on Monday night and the accused was arrested on the same night.

The girl was sent to Habiganj Sadar Hospital, he added.

Rajib Chowdhury, duty doctor of the hospital, said the victim was out of danger.

Locally influential people threatened the girl's family and asked them not to disclose the matter publicly, promising them a solution through local arbitration, alleged the girl's father.