

# Boy killed by 'classmates' in Kishoreganj

Three held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Police yesterday recovered a throat-slit body of a 16-year-old student in Kishoreganj's Bhairab upazila. He was allegedly abducted and murdered by his classmates.

The dead is Sardin Alam Rupak, son of Noore Alam Biplob, a cement trader in Bhairab municipality. He passed his Secondary School Certificate exams this year from Bhairab's KB Pilot High School.

Rupak's classmates abducted him with a motive of collecting ransom from his father. As Rupak learned about his abductors' plan, he strongly protested and said he would expose their plan publicly, said Baharul Alam Khan Bahar, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Bhairab Police Station.

Fearing arrest, the abductors killed Rupak, kept his body inside a sack and left it in a building, Bahar added. The victim's father filed a murder case against five with the police station.

Muklesur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Bhairab Police Station, said Rupak went out of his home around 8:00pm on Thursday as one of his friends called him over phone. But he did not return home at night.

Although his family members searched him here and there, they could not get any trace. Later, they informed Rab of the incident and lodged a general diary with the police station, the OC said.

On information, police raided a building in Bhairabpur Dakshinpara area of the municipality and recovered Rupak's body. The body was sent to Kishoreganj General Hospital morgue for an autopsy, the OC added.

Meanwhile, police detained three classmates of Rupak yesterday for interrogation.

Mashrur Rahman Khaled, superintendent of Kishoreganj police, visited the spot, met the victim's family members and instructed the law enforcers to swiftly take legal actions against the culprits.

# List to replace UK leader May grows to 12

AFP, London

Backbencher Mark Harper became the 12th Conservative MP to enter the contest to replace British Prime Minister Theresa May, the Daily Telegraph reported yesterday, as a shock poll highlighted the task facing her successor.

The former chief whip admitted he was an "underdog", but told the newspaper his low profile could work in his favour.

"We've seen basically the same faces saying the same things that they've been saying for the last three years," he said.

Brexit will dominate the battle to replace May, who was brought down by her failure to take Britain out of the European Union on March 29 as planned.

# PM in Saudi Arabia

FROM PAGE 1

Toshiko Abe saw her off. During her three-day stay in Saudi Arabia, Hasina will attend the 14th session of the OIC's Islamic Summit in Makkah and perform the holy Umrah today. She will offer Fateh at the Rawza Mubarak (grave) of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) tomorrow.

In the early hours of Monday morning, the PM will leave Saudi Arabia for Finland where she will be staying until June 7.

During her stay in Finland, Hasina will hold a meeting with Finnish President Sauli Niinisto on June 4. Saudi Arabia is hosting the 14th session of the OIC's Islamic Summit in Makkah. The summit, titled "Makkah Summit: Together for the Future", aims to develop a unified stance on events in the Islamic world.



Passengers wait for buses at an inter-district bus counter in the capital's Gabtoli yesterday. Many people have already left the city to celebrate the Eid with their families back home.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

# Trains late for up to 7 hours

FROM PAGE 1

One of them was Mohammad Sujan. He reached the station around noon to board Chapainawabganj-bound Rajshahi Express which was scheduled to begin its journey at 12:20pm.

The train left at 2:15pm. But while waiting there, Sujan said, "It's true that we are waiting, but once we reach home all our sufferings will be gone." Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan visited the railway station in the morning and apologised for the delays on the first day of the weekend ahead of Eid.

"We can't ensure hundred percent smooth journey for the holidaymakers, but we are trying our best," he told journalists at the railway station.

A total of 18 trains left Dhaka till 10:00am while the schedule of four trains were disrupted, he said. "I'm really sorry for this and it won't happen from tomorrow," he added.

The newspaper found that the Rangpur Express was delayed by more than seven hours, Chapainawabganj-

bound Rajshahi Express around two hours, Rajshahi-bound Dhumketu Express over two hours, Khulna-bound Sundarban Express one hour and 15 minutes, Nilphamari-bound Nilsagar Express one hour and 40 minutes and Sylhet-bound Chalanitika Express one hour and 40 minutes.

**BUS SERVICES**

Talking to The Daily Star, most of the holidaymakers who chose to travel by bus expressed satisfaction over their journey yesterday. They said almost all bus operators maintained schedule and the highways were largely congestion free.

We left our home in Dhaka's Gulshan Link Road around noon thinking of traffic congestion, but we reached here within an hour," said Nilufar Parvin, who was about to board a bus to Jhenidah, at the Gabtoli Bus Terminal.

"We are delighted that we are about to begin our journey on time. I hope the Eid journey is going to be hassle free this year," Parvin, a government employee, told this correspondent

around 3:00pm.

However, bus operators claimed they had to reduce the number of their usual trips due to a smaller number of passengers. They expected the Eid rush would intensify on June 3, two days before the festival.

Mohammad Dulal, a counter master of Hanif Paribahan, said, "Although our buses are operating on schedule, we are worried about the loss being incurred because of less than the expected number of passengers."

**FERRY SERVICES**

The major ferry routes -- Paturia-Daulatdia and Shimulia-Kathalbari -- started to witness the Eid rush yesterday morning.

Our Manikganj correspondent reported that more than 300 cars and minibuses and 150 buses and trucks were seen lined up near a jetty at Paturia Ferry Ghat around 3:30pm. Officials there said the services were usual ahead of Eid.

At Shimulia Ferry Ghat, the rush of passengers was high, but they

did not have to suffer as there was no traffic congestion or halt in ferry services, reports our correspondent in Munshiganj.

In Tangail, a tailback of several hundred vehicles was seen on the eastern link road of Bangabandhu Bridge on Thursday midnight. But it eased early yesterday.

Meanwhile, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said the journey of homebound people would be comfortable ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr as there was no possibility of traffic jam on highways.

"There is no concern of having traffic congestion on roads and highways ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr this year... If discipline is brought in transportation, I think there will be no traffic jam on the roads across the country, including the capital," he said, UNB reports.

Quader, also Awami League general secretary, made the remarks while speaking at a press briefing after his visit to Gabtoli Bus Terminal in the city.

# Lists of farmers raise questions

FROM PAGE 1

Boalia area, said he provided the food department with the list of farmers following directives from higher officials.

"A few of the farmers may have changed their profession that we missed to follow," he said, adding that he would look into the matter.

"The number of those wrongly identified as farmers will not be more than two or three," he further said.

Alam Khan, 56, is a shopkeeper but he is listed as a farmer of Dhaowakola village in Bogura Sadar upazila.

The villagers said Alam has not been cultivating his land for many years now; he has a stationery shop at Mahasthan Bazar.

Visiting his home on Saturday, one of these reporters found no sign of harvested paddy or straw like that in the houses of farmers in the village.

Shown the list, Alam said, "I stopped cultivating my land about 27-28 years ago after my father had died. I have land but I lease it to sharecroppers. I don't know how and who listed me for selling paddy to the local supply depot."

The list prepared on May 21 even says Alam's paddy production target was about five tonnes.

But he has only two bighas of cropland which can yield maximum 40 maunds (1.50 tonnes) of paddy in the Boro season.

Alam said he has no farmer's card, and the list does not carry his national

ID card number while it bears the ID card numbers of other listed farmers.

Contacted, Sub-Assistant Agriculture Officer Mokhesur Rahman, who listed Alam as a farmer, told The Daily Star that he had filed the names of 10.

Most probably, he said two of them were listed mistakenly. "I am not sure about the two farmers."

The list of Bogura Sadar upazila names 295 people.

Visiting eight farmers in Dhaowakola and Gokul villages under Bogura Sadar, seven farmers said they did not know that their names were on the list. Six farmers said they have already sold their surplus produce in the local market at lower prices.

"I did not know my name was on the list. So, I already sold my surplus five maunds of rice," said Emran Hossain, one of the listed farmers of Gokul village.

These correspondents interviewed four listed farmers of Shakharia village of Bogura on Sunday and all of them said they did not have enough paddy to sell.

"We have 72 decimals of cropland. We have received 25 maunds of paddy this year by leasing out that land. We are not able to sell paddy; we have to buy more for our six family members," said Ranjana, wife of Mostafizar Rahman, an ailing farmer who is on the list.

Of the 1.5 lakh tonnes of paddy the government planned to buy, 5,586 tonnes would be from Bogura district

with 295 tonnes from Sadar upazila, district food control office sources said.

And 2,012 tonnes would be from Rajshahi district with 48 tonnes from Sadar upazila, they added.

There are 7.5 lakh Boro farmers in Bogura who produced more than 7.5 lakh tonnes of paddy this season, and 93 percent of that has already been harvested, according to the Department of Agricultural Extension.

SM Saiful Islam, district controller of food, told The Daily Star, they bought 175 tonnes of paddy out of the 5,586 tonnes from Bogura.

Asked about the anomalies in the government list, Anamul Haque, an agriculture officer of Bogura Sadar, on Monday said they also found "some mistakes".

"We have found some mistakes in the list. So, we have decided to visit the houses of farmers and prepare a fresh list within a week," he said.

According to a senior official at the Department of Agricultural Extension in Dhaka, an agriculture officer depends on the names sent by the local union parishad chairman for preparing a list.

That's why many influential and political people are on the list, he added. "Mostly influential locals and farmers belonging to the ruling party and acquainted with the local representatives are the beneficiaries of the government initiatives," he said, preferring not to be named.

According to the domestic food grain procurement policy 2017, an upazila food grain procurement and monitoring committee is comprised of eight members with the UNO as its president and upazila food controller as member-secretary.

The members include the agriculture officer who is assigned to collect the names of farmers; two food officers; a farmer's representative and the president of the upazila rice millers' association.

The lawmaker of that constituency acts as an adviser.

Azizur Rahman, UNO of Bogura Sadar upazila, told The Daily Star yesterday, "The lists were prepared by sub-assistant agriculture officers. We have to depend on them because they have close relationship with ground-level farmers."

"After this newspaper's queries, we checked the lists and found some anomalies. We have already communicated with the alleged sub-assistant agriculture officers. And they felt guilty and promised to provide a fresh list of genuine farmers."

"We will take action against the officers who made the mistakes. There was no political pressure while preparing the list. It was just carelessness of the officers who made the lists."

Rajshahi-2 lawmaker Fazle Hossain Badsha said he didn't know whether any farmers' list was prepared in the city areas.

He said he would look into it.

# US-led coalition says 1,300 civilians killed in air war on IS

AFP, Beirut

The US-led coalition said yesterday it had unintentionally killed more than 1,300 civilians in air strikes during its fight against the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria since 2014.

The figure is far lower than the death tolls given by groups which have monitored the conflicts in the two countries.

"The coalition conducted 34,502 strikes between August 2014 and the end of April 2019," it said in a statement.

During this period, it "assesses" at least 1,302 civilians have been unintentionally killed by coalition strikes.

The coalition said it was still assessing 111 additional claims of civilians deaths, and was ready to receive new allegations or fresh evidence to review.

The coalition has repeatedly said it does all it can to avoid civilian deaths.

Airwars, an NGO which monitors civilian casualties from air strikes worldwide, estimates more than 7,900 civilians have been killed in coalition raids -- well in excess of the total acknowledged by the coalition.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based monitor, says coalition strikes have taken the lives of 3,800 civilians in Syria alone.

IS jihadists seized large swathes of Iraq and Syria in 2014, declaring a "caliphate" in areas they controlled.

But several offensives with coalition backing chipped away at the "caliphate" until it was declared eliminated on March 23.

# Dutchman held by IS-linked rebels killed in Philippines

AFP, Manila

A Dutch birdwatcher held by Islamic State-linked militants was killed yesterday during a firefight between his kidnappers and soldiers in the southern Philippines, according to the military, which said he was shot by his captors as he tried to escape.

Ewold Horn had been held since 2012 by the Abu Sayyaf kidnap-for-ransom group and was fatally wounded as soldiers fought a 90-minute gun battle with the jihadists on their stronghold, Jolo island.

The Dutch foreign ministry confirmed Horn died in an "exchange of fire", adding that it was "investigating the exact circumstances" of his death.

# Tigers faced

FROM PAGE 1

Saifuddin and Mustafizur Rahman are also nursing niggles, with the former's more serious as the all-rounder did not partake in practice yesterday.

Mustafizur, however, looked in better shape as he was bowling at the nets in his usual fashion. A lot will depend on how Mustafizur and Saifuddin turn up at today's practice.

Despite these concerns, Bangladesh's practice session was conducted in good spirits yesterday, which bowling coach Courtney Walsh commented upon, saying that the body language were good and that the team were in 'a good place'.

While Bangladesh were dealt a harsh hand by the eleventh-hour injury scares they may be in for some good fortune in the surface that they will play on tomorrow. It will be the same one used for the opening game between England and South Africa on Thursday, and while it was in no way a bad friend to willow wielders, it was a tough slow and offered a bit of turn.

With specialist spinners Shakib Al Hasan and Mehedi Hasan Miraz in the side and South Africa's well-known weakness against spin, the Tigers will fancy their chances of getting their campaign off to a winning start.

A slower than average surface will also aid their batsmen, as their natural game is to build towards a competitive total rather than be explosive throughout, which South Africa failed trying to do on Thursday when they left 61 deliveries unused in their innings of 2017 all out. If the pitch continues in the same fashion, it will be an unexpected favour conferred to the Tigers as the expectation was for true belters throughout the tournament, especially in the early stages.

# Yaba godfather killed hours after arrest

FROM PAGE 1

According to two government lists, Saiful is the number one yaba trader in the country.

After being on the run for about a year, he recently communicated with Cox's Bazar police from Myanmar to discuss his surrender after Eid, police sources said.

Soon after his Biman flight BG 0061 landed at the airport, police arrested him and took him to a police "safe home" in Cox's Bazar, according to police and his family members.

There, he gave investigators the names of his patrons, police sources said.

His death in the so-called gunfight comes a day after media reports said his patrons include some top police officials.

Contacted, Iqbal Hossain, additional superintendent of Cox's Bazar police, said he had no knowledge of Saiful's stay in their "safe home".

Police and locals said Saiful's ancestral home is in Myanmar. His father Md Hanif came to Bangladesh before the country's independence in 1971.

Saiful began his career as a day labourer in Chittagong in 1998-1999. At the time, he came in contact with yaba dealers from Myanmar's Maungdaw.

In 2001, he started a clearing and forwarding business but it was only a cover to smuggle in yaba from Myanmar, police sources said.

Since then, Saiful built a big network of the illegal trade in different parts of the country with backing from some influential politicians and law enforcers in exchange for money, sources said.

In a little over a decade he topped the list of taxpayers' in Cox's Bazar for three years in a row -- 2015, 2016 and 2017.

In 2017, he was also recognised as a Commercially Important Person

(CIP) by the National Board of Revenue.

The same year, his name came up in the media after police recovered a yaba manufacturing machine from a Pajero in the capital's Shajahanpur. Subsequent police investigation revealed Saiful was its owner.

Meanwhile, two suspected drug peddlers were killed in "gunfights" with Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) in Cox's Bazar and Dinajpur yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, a BGB team tried to stop a boat carrying a consignment of yaba through the Naf river around 2:00am, said Lt Col Faisal Hasan Khan, a BGB commander.

But the people on the boat opened fire, and the BGB members returned fire in self-defence, he said, adding that one person died in the gunfight while two BGB officials were injured.

The dead was identified as Md

Younus, 23.

BGB officials claimed to have recovered 1.10 lakh yaba pills from the boat.

In Dinajpur, a BGB team arrested Delwar, 45, from Nandipur village when he was coming to Bangladesh from India with 958 yaba pills, according to a BGB press release.

Later, the BGB team went to Chengram village near Mongla border with Delwar to recover more drugs. But his cohorts opened fire, leaving three BGB members injured.