

39 DEAD IN LORRY

UK trucker charged with manslaughter

AFP, London

British police investigating the deaths of 39 people in a refrigerated truck charged the driver yesterday with manslaughter and people trafficking, as families in Vietnam expressed fear their loved ones were among the dead.

Maurice Robinson was arrested shortly after the bodies of eight women and 31 men were discovered in the truck in an industrial zone in Grays in Essex, south-east England.

The 25-year-old from Northern Ireland was “charged with 39 counts of manslaughter, conspiracy to traffic people, conspiracy to assist unlawful immigration and money laundering”, Essex police said.

Three more people are in custody in Britain over the investigation, the country’s largest murder probe since

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YOUNG SCIENTIST AWARD

Bangladeshi first non-Japanese in 61 years to win

UNB, Rajshahi

Arif Hossain, a Bangladeshi national doing his PhD in Japan, has been recognised as the best young scientist of the far-eastern country.

Japanese Society for Inherited Metabolic Diseases (JISMD) has awarded Arif with the Best Young Scientist Award on Thursday for his innovation of mechanism and treatment of Lysosomal diseases.

He is the first non-Japanese in JISMD’s 61 years’ history to receive the award.

Born at Bhatipara in Kashiani upazila of Gopalganj district, Arif is the youngest of his eleven siblings.

On completion of his HSC from Government Bangla College in the capital’s Mirpur area, he obtained his MBBS degree from Rajshahi Medical College Hospital and did post-graduation from the same institution.

He then went to Osaka University in Japan for his PhD. He currently works as a senior researcher of neurometabolic diseases in Japan.



Finalise it

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of the BBIN agreement for movement of goods and passengers between the member countries who are willing and ready; or to work towards an India-Bangladesh motor vehicles agreement.

PALESTINE FM MEETS HASINA

Palestine has decided to name a road in Hebron after Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad Malki said this when he met Hasina at the Baku Congress Centre.

He also invited the PM to formally unveil the name plaque of the road.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, Foreign Secretary Shahidul said the Palestinian minister urged the PM to strengthen the trade and diplomatic relations between the two countries.

He thanked Hasina for strongly raising the Palestine issue in various international fora.

DHAKA, BAKU INK DEAL

Bangladesh yesterday signed an agreement with Azerbaijan to boost cultural ties between the two countries.

The deal was signed after a bilateral meeting between Hasina and Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev at the Presidential Palace in Baku.

Bangladesh State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid and Azerbaijan Cultural and Tourism Minister Abulfas Garayev inked the deal on behalf of their respective sides. Hasina and Ilham Aliyev witnessed the deal-signing ceremony.

During the bilateral meeting, Bangladesh and Azerbaijan agreed to strengthen their relations in future.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, Ambassador concurrent of Bangladesh to Azerbaijan Allama Siddiki said the two leaders discussed the historical and cultural ties between the two countries.

Hasina recalled with profound respect the support of Azerbaijan, as part of the then Soviet Union, to Bangladesh’s Liberation War in 1971.

The Azerbaijan president remembered Bangladesh’s support to his country as a new state in 1992.

The PM thanked Azerbaijan for extending its support to Bangladesh over the Rohingya issue.

The two leaders hoped that export of Bangladeshi manpower to Azerbaijan would be expanded further.

Hasina invited Ilham Aliyev to visit Bangladesh and the invitation was accepted.

PM JOINS GENERAL DEBATE

Hasina joined the general debate of the 18th NAM Summit at the Baku Congress Centre on the second day of the summit yesterday, reports BSS.

The heads of the states and governments as well as representatives of the NAM member countries will adopt Baku declaration.

Meanwhile, the PM is expected to return home today, wrapping up her four-day official visit to Azerbaijan.



LUCKY SAVE: The family was having a good time on Kuakata beach yesterday. But a moment’s distraction for the parents could have easily resulted in a tragedy. Thankfully though, the parents noticed on time that the toddler had fallen facedown into the water. No harm done. The child was shaken but alright.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Shipbuilder making wooden bench!

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offered, there is a legal binding to procure from locals for their poverty alleviation, goods are bought from state-run industry on special occasion, or there is an urgent necessity of goods to face natural disaster and emergency.

However, none of the above criteria applies to the university and internal office documents show that BSMRSTU chose DPM following a verbal instruction from Nasiruddin.

An internal office memo, dated May 30, reads, “It is urgent to procure lab equipment under the university’s Further Development Project. To get supply of lab equipment, upon the verbal instruction of vice-chancellor, two work orders worth Tk 18.52 crore have been issued to Khulna Shipyard.”

The note sheet was undersigned by BSMRSTU’s Deputy Project Director Tuhin Mahmud and former project director Prof MA Sattar, also a contractual teacher and chairman of the university’s agriculture department.

It was then produced before Nasiruddin for approval, which was given that very day.

Another memo, dated June 30, reveals that the KSY demanded Tk 28 crore in advance for supply of the goods.

“Khulna Shipyard has sent a letter (memo no Project- 439/1672), demanding advance against the work orders. Taking the letter into cognisance, the note is produced as per the verbal instruction of the vice-chancellor to take necessary action to give Khulna Shipyard Tk 28 crore in advance,” reads the memo.

Sattar resigned as the project director even before the advance payment could be made. Contacted, he told The Daily Star earlier this month, “I could sense that something was not right. I’ll be blamed in the end.

“I resigned from the post of PD. If they had not accepted my resignation, I would have resigned from professorship as well.”

The project should have been developed after a discussion with the engineering department. “But, here, that did not happen. Things were run by Tuhin.”

He added, “I asked Tuhin several times about the legality of the project, but he kept telling me that there were instances of giving direct contract.”

After his resignation, Nasiruddin appointed Proctor Mohammad Ashikuzzaman Bhuiyan as the project director. On July 24, Ashikuzzaman

recommended giving Tk 26.25 crore in advance to KSY.

Following his recommendation, the accounts office prepared three cheques approved by Nasiruddin. After deducting the vat, income tax and security money, KSY was given about Tk 19.44 crore.

University rules make it clear that all projects must be passed by the Board of Regents, an independent government body that oversees a state’s public colleges and universities.

But no meeting of the board has been held this year, its members told The Daily Star recently.

Dr Syed Shamsul Alam, a member of the Board of Regents, and also a professor at the chemistry department of Shahjalal University of Science



Excess classroom benches piled up inside a building of Gopalganj university. The photo was taken on September 26.

PHOTO: STAR

and Technology, said, “As far as I can recall, no meeting of the board of regents took place this year.”

A meeting was scheduled for September 27 but it was later postponed, he added. “I don’t know how the projects got approval.”

Another member of the board, Prof Abdur Rahim Khan, also the dean of the science faculty at BSMRSTU, said, “Many development projects have been undertaken at the university. But none of those were discussed at any board of regents meeting in the last two or three years.”

The university did not have any urgent need for these materials either. Under the project, it ordered about 2,000 six-feet long benches made of Mahogany wood. The unit price of each bench was fixed at Tk 11,100.

of unused benches lying over a drain and at the entrance of the new academic building and garage.

“There is no space to place the benches. Yet, they ordered more,” said a student of the computer science and engineering department.

The Daily Star could not talk to Nasiruddin over phone. The correspondent sent him a text message, saying he wished to speak to him regarding the allegations.

In response, he texted back, “You can talk to Tuhin Mahmud, DD, Planning responsible for DPM. He has all the details.”

Contacted, Tuhin said Khulna Shipyard showed them their experience in supplying these items to other organisations. “We gave the contract cent percent legally.”

Bullying goes unreported, ignored

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suffer mental problem because of this.”

She said, “We will ensure an educational atmosphere where no students face any form of repression.”

BULLYING AND IMPACT

Bullying can often lead to devastating consequences for the victim, which include trouble concentrating on study, truancy, or even dropout, said educationists.

In January, Unesco published a report titled, “Behind the numbers: Ending school violence and bullying”. According to it, children who are frequently bullied are nearly three times more likely to feel like an outsider at school, and twice more likely to miss school compared to those who are not frequently bullied.

Children bullied also have worse educational outcomes. It can have a significant impact on their mental health, quality of life and behaviour. Bully-victims are also almost twice as likely to feel lonely, to be unable to sleep at night, and to have contemplated suicide, the report says.

Muhammad Kamruzzaman Mozumder, an associate professor of clinical psychology at Dhaka

University, endorses the findings.

He said bullying affects the mental growth of children because on many occasions they cannot concentrate on study and skip classes. “Victims can develop low self-esteem and suffer lifelong,” he added.

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

“School bullying usually goes unnoticed and unaddressed. A policy is required to address the matter,” said Unicef Senior Education Advisor Chowdhury Mufad Ahmed.

Recently, the government is preparing an anti-bullying policy, keeping provisions of punishment for offenders.

Secondary and Higher Education Division Additional Secretary Javed Ahmed told The Daily Star, “We have prepared a draft and will try to finalise it soon.”

The initiative came after the High Court asked them to prepare such a policy following the suicide of Arity Adhikary, a ninth grader of Vigarunnisa Noon School and College, in December 2018, the official said.

Arity died by suicide after teachers insulted her parents in front of her because she had cheated in an exam,

said family members and police.

According to the draft policy, a bullying tendency is being noticed in school. Because of bullying, victims do not want to go to school, which affects teaching-learning. A school should be a safe place without any fear. There should be a zero tolerance policy against bullying, and schools should issue transfer certificates (TCs) to bullies.

The policy also recommends monitoring of school premises. There should be CCTV cameras at hallways and classrooms as well as the compound. In addition, both bullies and victims should be given counselling to change their behaviour.

The draft policy also sheds light on issues like bullying through the digital media. “Cyber-bullying, which means sending indecent text messages, circulating secret things on social media, and threatening online, has become a new problem.”

The authorities should ban carrying and using of digital devices, taking of pictures and videos at schools, and discourage students from using social media, the policy states.

A section of the education ministry

officials, however, criticised the policy because there is no mention of bullying by schoolteachers or staff.

Psychology teacher Kamruzzaman Mozumder said that in Bangladesh many teachers bully students most often to control the class. “The government should incorporate the role of teachers in the policy after looking into a few cases.”

A member of the drafting committee and director of Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education Director, Abdul Mannan, said the role of teachers was included in the policy.

At the moment, there are no directives for schools on what to do about bullying, he said. “The policy will give them a guideline for tackling bullying.”

Ideal School and College Principal Shahan Ara Begum said the incidents of school bullying are on the rise. “Students’ increasing access to internet and social media could be a reason,” she said.

“We usually talk to students, and if necessary, discuss the matter with parents, whenever we get any complaints.”

Fire in flat

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her to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared her dead around 11:00am, said Bachchu Mia, in-charge of the hospital police outpost.

Two others -- Selina Begum, 70, and Shaheda, 12 -- fell sick following the incident.

Selina, mother of Dhaka University Professor Mesbah Kamal, lives on the seventh floor and Shaheda works as a house help on the second-floor flat, where the fire started.

The fire gutted almost everything of the 4000-square feet flat owned by Hemayet Ullah, chief executive officer of a life insurance company, the building’s manager Shamim Uddin told The Daily Star.

Hemayet’s son Rafsan and two of their house helps, including Shaheda, was in the apartment during the incident, the manager said, adding that the two others escaped without injury.

No other flats were damaged in the incident, he added.

Dwellers of some upper floors took shelter in the rooftop while many climbed down to safety using the fire exits, said Abdul Jabbar, a security guard of the building.

Three fire engines doused the flames after an hour, said Mohammad Rasel, duty officer at the Fire Service and Civil Defense headquarters.

Firefighters are suspecting that the fire started from an electric short circuit as the investigation is underway.

Mrittika, a resident of a seventh-floor flat, told this newspaper that their flat caught fire due to electric short circuits twice before -- once in two years back and again in January this year.

She suspected that the faulty electrical wiring of the building was causing the recurrence of fire incidents.

Bhola to celebrate

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A huge number of Border Guard Bangladesh, police and Rapid Action Battalion members have been deployed to maintain law and order, he added.

PROBE REPORT FILED

The committee formed to investigate the Bhola mayhem submitted its report to the DC yesterday.

But Masud, who received the report at his office in the morning, did not disclose the findings.

He said he forwarded the report to the Divisional Commissioner of Barishal.

On the day of the clash, the local administration had formed the three-member committee, led by Deputy Director (local government office) Mahmudur Rahman, to investigate the incident.

The committee was asked to submit its report in 72 hours, but it failed to meet the deadline and got an extension on Wednesday.

COMPENSATION

Ali Azam, the local lawmaker, has distributed Tk 5 lakh each to the families of the four killed in the clash.

At a press conference in the district, he said the money was given on behalf of Tofail Ahmed, Awami League MP in Bhola-1.

Earlier at another press conference on October 21, Sharbadaliya Muslim Oikya Parishad placed a six-point demand, including providing compensations to the victims.

Their other demands included immediate withdrawal of the superintendent of police in Bhola and the officer-in-charge of Borhanuddin police station, and capital punishment of the Hindu youth who they claimed was responsible for the spread of the hate speech.

BCB, Shakib

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Hassan also rubbished any insinuations that the board would cut the premier all-rounder some slack in this regard.

Earlier in the day, Shakib met with Nizamuddin at the BCB office in Mirpur regarding the matter, but the 32-year-old came out of the meeting in a rather relaxed mood at noon before joining the national team on their second day of the training camp in preparation of the tour of India next month.