POLITICIAN MURDER

German neo-Nazi on trial admits to killing

AFP, *Frankfurt am Main*

A German neo-Nazi on trial over the murder of pro-refugee politician Walter Luebcke yesterday admitted to the killing that has shocked the nation and highlighted the growing threat of right-wing extremism.

"I fired the shot," Stephan Ernst, 46, told the court of the killing in a statement read out by his defence.

Federal prosecutors have said Ernst was motivated by "racism and xenophobia" when he allegedly shot Luebcke in the head on June 1, 2019.

Luebcke's killing is believed to be Germany's first far-right political assassination since World War II.

Apologising to the victim's family, Ernst said he had carried out a "cowardly and cruel" act.

Fun trip turns into tragedy

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In Manikganj, the divers of fire service recovered bodies of two children from Mandatta Beel in Daulatpur Upazila of Manikganj yesterday morning, 18 hours after a boat capsized there.

Previously, three bodies were recovered from the spot.

Rezaul Karim, officer-in-charge of Daulatpur Police Station, said no one else remained missing in the boat capsize incident after the two children's bodies were recovered.

In Habiganj, the death toll rose to three in the boat capsized incident in Rahmatpur Panchkari Haor. The dead are of the same family.

Baniachang Upazila Nirbahi Officer Masud Rana said police recovered the bodies as soon as the news broke out.

A murder in cold blood

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record the case. She also ordered the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) to investigate the incident and submit a report on the progress of investigation within seven days.

Sinha, who served in the Special Security Force (SSF) and took voluntary retirement from the army two years ago, was killed in police firing at the checkpost, triggering an uproar across the country.

Thirty-six-year-old Sinha had been making travel documentaries for a YouTube channel called "Just Go". He had been staying at Nilima Resort in Himchhari of Cox's Bazar along with Shifat and two other students of a private university for around a month to film a travel documentary.

On the fateful night, he was returning to Cox's Bazar from Teknaf along with Shifat in his car after a shoot.

But the police claimed in the FIR that Sinha had aimed his pistol at them after obstructing a search of his vehicle and they shot back in self-defence. They also claimed that they seized drugs from the vehicle.

Two cases have been initiated over the incident. But the police account raised many questions, prompting the government to form a committee to investigate the incident.

"PREMEDIATED MURDER"

In the case, Sharmen alleged that it was a premeditated murder and inspector Liaqat shot his brother in cold blood after being instigated and instructed by Pradeep over the phone.

The case statement said Sinha fell to the ground in a pool of blood and when he attempted to stand up to flee for his life, accused Safanur Kabir and Constable Mostofa pinned him down on the ground again.

Liaqat then fired one more bullet at Sinha to make sure he is dead, said the case document.

After a while, OC Pradeep appeared at the scene. He kicked Sinha's face and body to find out whether he was dead.

Pradeep also tried to mutilate Sinha's face by rubbing his boots on it, the statement said.

The plaintiff of the case alleged that the accused policemen then drove away the eye-witnesses and locals by flaunting guns.

Sinha was brought to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital at 11:45pm and the duty doctor declared him dead, the statement said.

The statement said to hush up the killing, a false and baseless allegation that Sinha tried to fire at police was made up by the cops and two separate cases were filed against Sinha and Shifat. Even after such a cruel murder, the accused were out to hatch conspiracy with their seniors to divert the incident to a different direction, it added.

After coming out of the courtroom, Sharmen said, "I demand justice for my brother's killing. My brother was a warrior."

Lawyer Md Mostafa, who represented her in court, said they expect to get justice.

WHERE IS OC PRADEEP?

The officer-in-charge left his police station on Tuesday saying he was sick, said Cox's Bazar Superintendent of Police ABM Masud Hossain.

A high official of district police said that Pradeep would be withdrawn soon.

A recent video message from the OC has been doing the rounds on social media where he says yaba traders from every neighborhood in Teknaf would be arrested. Those who cannot be found; their houses, shops and vehicles would be "uprooted".

"Those homes will be ghostly attacked. Some houses will ghostly catch fire. Some vehicles may catch fire ghostly," he adds.

The OC also said they would declare Teknaf as a drug free zone by December 16.

The video message had created a stir in Cox's Bazar with many questioning how a responsible law enforcement officer could publicly threaten to attack and set fire to houses, shops and other establishments.

Many locals said houses and boats of drug traffickers were being attacked, vandalised or set on fire after "all efforts" by law enforcers to eradicate drugs have failed.

According to police sources, more than 100 houses were attacked before the country was hit by Covid-19 in March and people in the area are in panic following the OC's public announcement.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina holding the copy of a new book titled Shaheed Sheikh Kamal Alomukhi Ek Pran while addressing a discussion from the Gono Bhaban yesterday, the 71st birthday of Kamal. PHOTO: PMO

Four Bangladeshis among the dead

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American University of Beirut Medical Centre, while others were taken to Hamoud Hospital by air ambulance following primary treatment under the supervision of UNIFIL. They are currently out of danger, said the ISPR.

The Bangladesh Navy warship "Bijoy", which had been participating in UN Peacekeeping Missions since 2010, remains deployed in the Mediterranean as a member of Multinational Maritime Taskforce to establish peace.

The ISPR said the ship works to prevent illegal arms and ammunition from entering Lebanese land, monitors suspicious ships and aircrafts, rescues ships in trouble and provides training to the Lebanese Navy.

The damages sustained by the Bangladesh Navy ship is being assessed. Bangladesh Navy Headquarters are in constant communication with the ship, UNIFIL headquarters and Bangladesh Embassy in Lebanon.

Major General Jahangir Al Mustahidur Rahman, Bangladesh ambassador to Beirut, visited the ship following the incident.

"Within half an hour, we rushed to the ship. We are looking after them [the injured officials] and the other Bangladeshis," said Abdullah Al Mamun.

He said the embassy has information that about 10 Bangladeshi migrants were under treatment at two hospitals and that most others were given primary treatment and released. All of those injured did not need hospitalisation, he said.

"We are asking all to contact us if they need medical assistance," Mamun said.

Babu Saha, a Bangladeshi working in Lebanon for over a decade, said the explosion has rocked the already vulnerable migrants in Lebanon, home to some 160,000 Bangladeshis.

Many Bangladeshis there have been facing joblessness because of months of political unrest and economic downturn. Those with jobs were facing troubles due to the high prices of dollars, which has raised the living cost, while their savings have gone down.

"Meanwhile, the coronavirus pandemic has forced most of the Bangladeshis to remain indoors," he told this correspondent by phone yesterday.

With the situation worsening due to the explosion, the migrants are feeling that it would be difficult for them to stay, he added.

Another migrant Rana Ahmed said he lives around 10km away from the explosion site.

"So many people, including Bangladeshis, were injured. It's a very difficult time here for all of us. We have been trying to go home for many months, but failed because of flight suspension. I would request the Bangladesh government to arrange flights for us at the soonest," he said.

Meanwhile, Lebanese rescue workers dug through the mangled wreckage of the buildings yesterday, looking for survivors after the massive warehouse explosion sent a devastating blast wave across Beirut.

Officials said the toll was expected to rise after the blast at port warehouses that stored highly explosive material. Officials estimated that up to 300,000 Beirut residents will be left homeless. The blast was the most powerful ever to rip through Beirut, a city still scarred by civil war three decades ago.

It sent a mushroom cloud into the sky and rattled windows on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, about 100 miles (160 km) away.

President Michel Aoun said 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate, used in fertilisers and bombs, had been stored for six years at the port without safety measures. He told the nation the government was "determined to investigate and expose what happened as soon as possible, to hold the responsible and the negligent accountable, and to sanction them with the most severe punishment."

An official source familiar with preliminary investigations blamed the incident on "inaction and negligence", saying nothing was done by committees and judges to order the removal of hazardous material.

Death of ex-major

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each other. It will not deteriorate because of this incident, he added, some quarters are trying to fish in troubled water, but they will not succeed.

General Aziz said the two forces held two meetings with high-ups. Both sides are shocked over the death of Major (retd) Sinha.

"A joint team has been formed at the directive of the prime minister and the team started its investigation over the incident," he said.

"If any person is found responsible for the incident, then the force will not take his responsibility."

Police and army will be very careful in future so that no such incident repeats, he further said.

"We unequivocally want to say that nothing that may cause rift in the relationship of the two forces will happen."

Sinha, who served in the Special Security Force (SSF), was shot by police at Baharchhara police check post.

It triggered widespread criticisms on the social media and Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) in a statement yesterday said that there was no alternative to ensuring accountability by conducting credible investigations into the killing.

"There are contradictions between primary investigations by the Bangladesh Army and case papers of Bangladesh Police. After an acceptable investigation, countrymen should be informed whether police fired bullets in defence…" TIB said.

The incident cannot be considered an isolated one, said the rights body and added that the anti-constitutional and extrajudicial killings should stop.

As of July 30, 287 people died in "gunfights" with law enforcers in Cox's Bazar since the anti-narcotic drive began in 2018.

It also called for legal protection of three university students who were with the retired army officer during the incident.

Ain o Salish Kendra demanded fair and impartial investigations and justice for every "extrajudicial or gunfight killing".

It also announced that it will provide legal assistance to the three students.

Teknaf, the valley of 'gunfight'

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Bangladesh battalions-2 and 34, Rab-15, Rab-7, Cox's Bazar Model Police Station and Ukhiya Police Station were involved in those "shootouts".

The Rapid Action Battalion, which has been tasked with the investigation of Maj (retd) Sinha Rashed Khan's killing, was involved in 21 incidents of "shootout" between August 2018 to 2020 as per the coverage of this newspaper. At least 38 people were killed in those incidents.

At least 52 people were killed in "gunfights" with the BGB. No law enforcer was killed in any of these incidents. As per what the statements put out by the BGB to this newspaper, a majority of these incidences happened when alleged criminals were crossing the border or the Naf river with drugs.

Marine Drive, the 80-kilometre long road linking Cox's Bazar with Teknaf, is one spot where at least nine incidents of "shootout" happened, with most of them occurring in Shamlapur area. Maj (retd) Sinha Rashed Khan was also killed in an incident there.

But there are other areas where "gunfights" commonly occurred. The areas include Baharchhara Nayapara, Whykhong, Hnila union, Dargapara and Jadimura Hill.

In most of the cases, the law enforcers claimed that those killed in "shootouts" were drug traders. Besides, there were "robbers" and "murderers" also. The Daily Star could not independently verify the claims in most of the cases.

There were two major story lines for all the "gunfights". One is that those killed would be meeting at a spot, the law enforcers would reach there, and they would come under attack from "criminals". A "shootout" would ensue and one or more of the alleged criminals would be killed.

The other story is that an alleged criminal is arrested, and the law enforcers take him to a spot to recover drugs or arms. The alleged criminal's gang members would be lying in wait. A "shootout" would follow, and only the person leading the law enforcers to the spot would be killed.

No cases against the law enforcers were reported to have been filed by the families of the deceased in connection with any of the "gunfight" incidents covered by this newspaper.

The last "shootout" incident on Marine Drive happened at 4:00am on June 24 this year. Imam Hossen, a 30-year-old resident of Hnila union, who the Teknaf police claimed to be a drug peddler, was killed in a "gunfight" with police. Law enforcers claimed to have recovered a gun, three bullets and 20,000 yaba pills from the spot. The Daily Star, however, could not independently verify the law enforcers' claims.

On March 11 this year, two Rohingya men were killed in a "gunfight" with Rab-15 on Marine Drive. The deceased are Saiful Islam, 38, and Nur Kamal, 34.

The company commander of Rab-15, Shahed Mahtab, had told this newspaper that they had a tip-off that a group of "robbers" were preparing to commit a robbery at 1:00am, so they raided the spot. The robbers opened fire, forcing the Rab men to fire back.

1MDB scandal fugitives hiding in China

Say Malaysian police

AFP, KUALA LUMPUR

The alleged 1MDB mastermind and other suspects in the scandal are believed to be hiding out in China, Malaysia's police chief said yesterday, urging authorities there to help hunt down the fugitives.

Billions of dollars were stolen from sovereign wealth fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad and bankrolled a global spending spree, with looted cash used to buy everything from pricey art to real estate.

Former Malaysian leader Najib Razak lost power in 2018 over his involvement in the fraud and was last week convicted in a 1MDB-linked trial, but several other suspects remain at large.

The most prominent is Low Taek Jho, a bespectacled, chubby financier known for partying with Hollywood A-listers and accused of being the scandal's mastermind.

He could've given a lot to society had he been alive

Says Hasina at a discussion marking 71st birth anniversary of Sheikh Kamal

UNB, *Dhaka*

Describing Sheikh Kamal as a versatile person, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said he could have contributed a lot to society had he been alive today.

"This multifaceted talent in one person is really rare … had Kamal been alive now, he could have given many things to this society. He could have contributed [more] to all sectors of the country ... . He had contributed, too," she said.

The premier was addressing a virtual discussion marking the 71st birth anniversary of Kamal, the eldest son of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Hasina joined the programme, organised by youth and sports ministry, from the Gono Bhaban. It was telecast live from Jatiya Krira Parishad Bhaban.

The PM said Kamal was two years younger than her, but he was mature in the case of knowledge, wisdom and many other things. "His talents were multifaceted. He was a sports organiser on one hand and he had potentials in the cultural arena on the other."

She said Kamal had set up "Spondon Shilpi Gosthi" and contributed towards founding Dhaka Theatre. "He used to act, sing songs and play the Sitar."

Kamal had great passion for Abahani and he made it stronger, she said.

Hasina recalled when she and her younger sister Sheikh Rehana were set to go to Germany on June 30, 1975 after Kamal's marriage, he asked her to bring Adidas boots for the players of his football team.

Hasina, in her emotion-choked voice, said her brother Kamal never sought anything for him.

Talking about his contributions to politics, the PM said his role in politics was also enormous.

She said Kamal, a valiant freedom fighter, had played an active and bold role in every movement and struggle after the Six-Point Programme, particularly the 1969 Mass Upsurge after the arrest of the Father of the Nation in the "Agartola conspiracy" case.

The premier said Kamal had actively participated in the Liberation War after having proper training.

She said it was a strange matter that the birthdays of Kamal and her mother Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib are on the 5th and 8th of August respectively and in this very month she lost most of her family members.

Mentioning that her brothers Kamal and Jamal were commissioned officers of Bangladesh Army, Hasina said they along with other family members were killed brutally by those with whom he worked.

PM's Private Industry and Investment Adviser Salman F Rahman and State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid spoke at the function, presided over by State Minister for Youth and Sports Zahid Ahsan Russel.

Hasina seeks

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the Covid-19 pandemic, bilateral economic cooperation, and the projects being implemented with Japanese assistance, said PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim.

Japan has pledged to provide $329 million (equivalent to 35 billion yen) to Bangladesh as loan for combating coronavirus in Bangladesh.

The PM's press secretary said Abe informed Hasina that their parliament already approved the loan.

Hasina apprised Abe of the current Rohingya situation. In reply, the Japanese PM said he would talk to the Myanmar leadership to solve the Rohingya crisis, the press secretary said.

She thanked Abe for providing protective equipment like PPE, masks, and goggles to Bangladesh to contain coronavirus transmission.

Hasina hoped that the 2020 Summer Olympics, which was scheduled to be held this year in Tokyo but postponed due to the pandemic, would be held in 2021 in Japan on time.

Several cities

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million were infected. The second highest rate is in Chattogram with 1,609 infected per million.

At yesterday's briefing, Nasima Sultana, additional director general (administration) of the Directorate General of Health Services, said 11,160 samples were tested in 83 labs across the country in the 24 hours since August 4 morning.

Of them, 2,654 tested positive for coronavirus, which is 23.78 percent of the samples tested.

According to data, 20.35 percent of all tests done so far turned out to be positive.

The total number of positive cases in the country now stands at 2,46,674 and the officially acknowledged death toll at 3,267.

In the said 24 hours, 33 people died from coronavirus, Prof Nasima added.

Among the 33 reported dead yesterday, 25 were male. Two were aged between 31 and 40 years; four between 41 and 50; eight between 51 and 60; 10 between 61 and 70; six between 71 and 80; one between 81 and 90; and two between 91 and 100, she said.

At least 1,890 Covid-19 patients recovered in the said 24 hours taking the total number of recoveries to 1,41,750.

A total of 758 people were put in isolation during the period, she added.

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