# Alif's killing an attack on press freedom

## Says Editors' Council; one suspect held

STAR REPORT

The Editors' Council has strongly condemned the killing of journalist Lutfuzzaman Fakir Alif, calling it a grave attack on press freedom, freedom of expression, and the public's right to information.

"Ensuring the safety of journalists is one of the foremost responsibilities of a democratic country. Acts of brutality such as attacks on and the killing of journalists are in no way acceptable," said the council in a statement signed by its President Nurul Kabir and General Secretary Dewan Hanif Mahmud yesterday.

The organisation extended its condolences to the bereaved family and expressed solidarity with the victim's colleagues.

It also urged investigators to

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An auto-van driver talks on his mobile phone while driving along the Dhaka-Aricha Highway in Savar, carrying a heavy load of goods yesterday. Despite being banned from highways, three-wheelers continue to ply the busy road, raising concerns over road safety and the risk of accidents.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

# Mob kills man after alleged knife attack on BNP leader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barishal*

A man died while undergoing treatment after a mob beat him following an alleged knife attack on a local BNP leader in Rajapur union of Bhola.

Deceased Md Asif, 25, was the son of Md Dhalu Howlader of Medua in Rajapur.

According to eyewitnesses and locals, Asif, a BNP activist, had an altercation with Md Hossain Majhi, president of the BNP's Ward-7 unit, during a local arbitration at Ananda Bazar in Rajapur on Saturday evening.

At one stage, Asif stabbed Hossain and fled the scene.

Injured Hossain was rushed to Bhola Sadar Hospital. Following primary treatment there, he was referred first to Barishal and later to Dhaka for advanced treatment.

Following the alleged attack, rumours spread in the area that Hossain had died. Locals then beat Asif at Janata Bazar before police rescued him and admitted him to Bhola Sadar Hospital.

Asif was admitted to the hospital around 8:45pm on Saturday and later died, said on-duty police official Mohammad Mamun.

The president of Rajapur Union BNP Md Shajahan Bepari said he had learned that locals had beaten up Asif.

No case had been filed in connection with the incident, Bhola Model Police Station Officer-in-Charge Monirul Islam said.

# Ex-air force chief Hannan held in Qatar

## ACC seeks to bring him back

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former air force chief Sheikh Abdul Hannan, who faces corruption and money laundering charges, was arrested in Doha, Qatar, on October 15, the Anti-Corruption Commission said yesterday.

Steps will be taken to bring him back to face the country's law, ACC Secretary Saidur Rahman Khan told reporters at the graft watchdog's headquarters.

He said the ACC received informal information about the arrest of Air Chief Marshal (retd) Hannan on Saturday and officially confirmed it yesterday through Interpol via the National Central Bureau (NCB) of Bangladesh Police.

Asked about efforts to bring Hannan back, Saidur said the authorities concerned already sought information from the ACC, and the commission was taking steps to provide it. He expressed hope that Hannan could be brought back home and held accountable with the necessary cooperation.

According to the ACC, an inquiry into Hannan began over allegations of abuse of power, losses to the state exchequer, bribery, recruitment irregularities, embezzlement, and money laundering abroad. Allegations of acquiring assets beyond his known sources of income in his name and those of family members were also investigated.

On February 6, 2025, the anti-graft body formed a three-member inquiry committee. The inquiry found evidence that Hannan had acquired assets worth Tk 3.28 crore beyond his known sources of income. It also uncovered suspicious transactions worth Tk 14.08 crore through various bank accounts and evidence of money laundering, the commission said.

On July 27 that year, the ACC filed



a case against him with its Integrated District Office-1 in Dhaka.

ACC Assistant Director Mahmudul Hasan has been assigned to investigate.

ACC Secretary Saidur said they wrote to the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit on May 23 this year, seeking information about Hannan's assets in Qatar, Canada, and other countries.

On June 21, the commission also wrote to the NCB of Bangladesh Police seeking information on his overseas assets. With the court approval, movable and immovable assets held in the names of Hannan and his wife were attached or frozen. A receiver was also appointed to oversee the assets, he said.

A travel ban has been imposed on Hannan and that the investigation is underway, he added.

Hannan joined the air force in 1984 and became its 16th chief on June 12, 2021. He retired on June 11, 2024.

At the briefing, reporters also asked about progress in repatriating other accused living abroad, including former land minister Saifuzzaman Chowdhury and former IGP Benazir Ahmed.

Saidur said the ACC was working with the ministries and other agencies to bring them back. The commission was providing information requested by the authorities concerned, he added.

The ACC secretary said letters were being sent to the relevant authorities in Qatar, Switzerland, and other countries based on information gathered during probes.

Regarding the repatriation of the accused individuals staying in India, he said he could not provide an update at that moment and would comment on the matter later.

# 'They perished while trying to save a child'

## Fireman recounts finding charred bodies of woman clutching child, man apparently shielding them at Inani resort

MOKAMMEL SHUVO

A woman was found clutching a child in her arms, while a man appeared to have tried to shield them with his own body. The three were among the charred bodies recovered after a devastating fire swept through Tuptup Resort in Cox's Bazar's Ukhiya.

Dolon Acharya, senior station officer at the Cox's Bazar fire service, described the heartbreaking scenes firefighters encountered during the rescue. The identities of the deceased have yet to be confirmed through DNA testing.

"We had brought the fire under control by around 8:30am on Saturday. Only then did some people inform us that several people might still be inside the resort," he said.

Dolon said they found five charred bodies inside a room on the resort's first floor.

They later found the charred body of a man inside a bathroom in an adjacent room. On the second floor, they recovered four bodies from a bathroom.

**Only the bathrooms were made of concrete and fitted with tiles. Dolon believes some of the victims took shelter there to escape the flames.**

"One of the women appeared to have been holding a child close to her. A man appeared to have shielded them both with his body. All three were burnt almost beyond recognition. The charred body of another woman was found beside them," he said.

Dolon said the building's construction posed serious fire safety risks. The columns were made of concrete, while the beams were constructed using wood. The walls and staircases were also made of wood and bamboo, he said.

Only bathrooms were made of concrete and fitted with tiles. Dolon believes some of the victims took shelter there to escape flames.

Jahidur Rahman Prince, elder brother of Tuhin who likely perished in the flames, told The Daily Star they suspect the couple and child was their family members.

The missing family members are Nahidur Rahman Tuhin, 41, his wife Afsana Matin Tanji, 36, and their daughters Rujaina Inaya, 7, and Sunaina Ihana, 3.

# Resorts 'built to burn' dot Marine Drive

FROM PAGE 1

Engineer Mohammad Jasim Uddin, chairman of the Cox's Bazar Development Authority (CoxDA), estimated that around 2,500 temporary and permanent structures stood along the 80-kilometre long Marine Drive, including 200-250 permanent ones.

A 2013 master plan prohibits construction within 300 metres of the shoreline inside the municipality and 500 metres outside it.

Consequently, no hotels or resorts have been approved along Marine Drive, Jasim said, although many have been built.

Eco-resorts must have adequate open space, firefighting systems compliant with fire service regulations, and a pond or other water source connected to a hydrant line, he said.

Building materials must also meet fire safety standards, and approval from CoxDA alone is insufficient; clearances from other relevant agencies are required.

Jasim said the authority would soon take action against illegal structures built along Marine Drive in the name of eco-resorts.

The fire service has issued notices to around 500 hotels and other residential establishments to improve fire safety, Shafiqul said, though he could not specify how many were hotels or resorts, or how many eco-resorts along Marine Drive had received notices.

Of the 53 hotels and resorts that applied for fire safety licences this year, 23 received them, while around 30 applications were being processed, he said.

Fire service's Dolon said establishments that fail to comply after receiving notices can be fined through mobile courts. But enforcement has weakened in recent years, with only a few establishments fined over the past two years.

In Tup Tup's case, only a warning notice was served and no further action was taken, a fire station official said.

Mokim Khan, general secretary of the Cox's Bazar Hotel Owners Association and the Marine Drive Hotel Owners Association, said at least 40 establishments used the eco-resort label, many built on purchased or rented land with bamboo, timber or a mix of wood and concrete, often without the necessary approvals.

His association requires members to have trade licences, fire safety certificates and land ownership documents.

Owners of many of the eco-resorts did not seek membership, and the others had no affiliation, he said.

At the site of Saturday's fire, the search for victims resumed yesterday as families reported 11 people missing against 10 unidentified bodies recovered.

Families initially reported 13 people missing, said Ukhiya UNO Panna Akter, but locals said two young men, Jihad Hawladar and Abedul Islam, might have escaped. Their whereabouts have not been confirmed. Additional Deputy Commissioner Tasnim Jahan, who is heading a district administration probe team, said the authorities were using information technology and would resolve the discrepancy after DNA tests. DNA samples from the recovered bodies have been sent to Dhaka for matching with relatives, said police.

Cox's Bazar Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Abdul Mannan said the administration was collecting lists of missing relatives from families. The bodies would be handed over after DNA tests confirmed their identities.

Six members of one extended family remain missing: Mithila Mehzabin Alvi; her maternal cousins Lalia Jahan Nabila and Israt Jahan Maliha; another maternal cousin, Fariha Kabir Sabrin; Fariha's brother, Nafis Tehami Zafri; and Fariha's son, Faizan Nur.

Four members of another family are also unaccounted for: Nahidur Rahman Tuhin, an official of Grand Power Limited in Dhaka's Shyamoli; his wife, Afsana; and their daughters, seven-year-old Rubaina and three-year-old Sonaina.

Nasrin Akter Mukta, wife of Faisal, a former joint secretary of the Dhaka district unit of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, is the 11th person on the list.

During its visit yesterday, the five-member probe committee questioned eyewitnesses and inspected the damaged structure.

The committee is investigating the cause of the fire, possible negligence by the resort authorities, the resort's registrations and other required documents, and whether structural defects contributed to the deaths.

The district administration formed it on Saturday and gave it five days to submit its findings.

Police filed a case on Saturday night against 23 people over the fire, naming resort owner Mohammad Tanvir as the prime accused. Three other people were named, including co-owner Newaz Morshed, said Ukhiya Police Station Officer-in-Charge Atikur Rahman.

Resort manager Zahidul Islam Sumon was detained at the scene on Saturday afternoon and later shown arrested in the case, the OC said.

Six people were injured and taken to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital on Saturday: Shihab Uddin, 31, a physician at Dhaka's Mugda Medical College Hospital; his wife, Dr Nafiza Newaz Khan, 29; Mannan, 34; Meherunnesa, 30; Masud, 30; and Samida, 32. Four were flown to Dhaka for advanced treatment that afternoon.

The other two returned to Dhaka after initial treatment, obtaining discharge voluntarily.

# Mine explosion kills eight Nigerian troops

AFP, *Kano*

A Nigerian army patrol vehicle hit a landmine planted by Islamic State group-aligned jihadists near the border with Cameroon, killing eight soldiers, defence sources told AFP yesterday.

The attack happened in the northeastern state of Borno on Saturday, the same day the Nigerian army chief, Lieutenant General Waidi Shaibu, was visiting the state capital, Maiduguri, over an attack on a base days earlier that killed 15 soldiers and five anti-jihadist militia members.

Jihadist violence in Nigeria which erupted in 2009 has eased since its peak a decade ago, but violence has been on the rise in the last two years.

In the latest attack, troops were inspecting anti-jihadist militia members who were clearing thickets along the highway outside the town of Gamboru when their vehicle rolled over the mine and exploded, killing all eight on board, the sources said.

The sources blamed the attack on Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), which is active in the area.

Jihadists use thickets along the highway as cover to ambush troops and motorists.

"All eight soldiers in the vehicle were killed in the explosion," which happened in Kinuba village, 25 kilometres (15.5 miles) from Gamboru, a military officer in the region said.

Ibrahim Liman, an anti-jihadist militia member assisting the military against jihadists, gave the same toll.

"The explosive was planted on the dusty road and remotely detonated by a detonating cord," Liman said.

A militia member supervising the thicket clearing was injured by shrapnel, said Liman.

ISWAP and rival jihadist group Boko Haram have increasingly resorted to planting mines on highways against military and civilian targets.

# Migrants under trial abroad, what's Bangladesh's duty?

FROM PAGE 1

Section 29 refers specifically to migrant workers who are detained, stranded or distressed abroad and provides for assistance from Bangladesh missions. However, the section mainly concerns their right to return home. It does not entitle someone facing criminal proceedings to leave the country where they are being prosecuted.

The Act also provides for Labour Welfare Wings at Bangladesh missions to look after workers' rights and welfare.

Under Section 8(6) of the Wage Earners' Welfare Board Act, 2018, the board's responsibilities include rescuing and repatriating workers facing abuse, illness, injury or other difficulties, as well as providing legal and medical assistance where necessary.

Section 9 provides for special assistance to female migrant workers in specified circumstances. Section 11 allows the Board's chairperson to take reasonable decisions in emergencies, subject to subsequent approval.

The Legal Aid Services Act, 2000, amended in 2026, assigns the Bangladesh Legal Aid Directorate responsibility under Section 7(1)(e) for taking necessary measures to provide legal assistance, according to need, to expatriate citizens or migrant workers overseas.

Section 7(1)(c) also concerns emergency legal support and advice, while Section 5(4) provides for recommendations on posting legal aid officers at Bangladesh missions.

These provisions cover expatriate citizens as well as migrant workers.

The Wage Earners' Welfare Board allows applications for legal assistance through district expatriate-welfare offices, District Employment and Manpower Offices or directly to the board. Requests are forwarded to Bangladesh missions or local authorities.

The government's myGov platform also offers a free application service, with a stated processing time of 20 working days.

But a prisoner may have no way to apply. Families may not know where their relative is detained, or even that an arrest has taken place.

There is also the question of responsibility.

The foreign ministry handles consular matters through Bangladesh missions. The expatriates' welfare ministry oversees the Welfare Board and Labour Welfare Wings. The Legal Aid Directorate falls under the law ministry.

In this backdrop, who decides whether a prisoner qualifies for legal assistance? Who pays for it? Does a possible death sentence trigger any special procedure?

The publicly available procedures do not provide clear answers.

Article 36 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations requires a country to inform detained foreign nationals without delay of their right to consular notification.

If a detainee requests it, the authorities must notify the relevant consulate without delay. Consular officers have rights to communicate with and visit detained nationals and arrange legal representation, subject to the Convention's conditions.

But the Convention does not expressly require advance notification of every death sentence or execution.

A mission may know that someone is imprisoned without knowing that the person faces capital punishment.

Indonesia restricted the deployment of domestic workers to Saudi Arabia after the execution of Ruyati binti Satubi in 2011. In 2015, following two further executions, it imposed wider restrictions on sending domestic and informal-sector workers to 21 Middle Eastern and North African countries.

After Saudi Arabia executed domestic worker Rizana Nafeek in 2013, Sri Lanka raised the minimum age for women seeking domestic employment there from 21 to 25 and announced plans to gradually phase out such placements.

Before her execution, Sri Lanka had arranged an appeal, sought clemency and sent ministerial delegations to Saudi Arabia.

More recently, Saudi Arabia's Supreme Court overturned the death sentence of Sri Lankan migrant worker Anojan Sivarasa on October 13, although the case was returned for further proceedings.

Sri Lanka had sent a legal delegation to assist with the appeal. Its foreign minister also told Parliament that the government would bear the legal expenses.

In the two recent Saudi executions, whether the Bangladesh Jeddah consulate had sufficient information or opportunity to intervene remains a separate question.

But the legal question raised by Shama's remarks is broader than these two executions.

The state minister's warning about respecting foreign laws addresses the conduct expected of Bangladeshis abroad, but it fails to address the responsibilities Bangladesh has undertaken towards them.

If there is a lesson to be drawn from this case, it is for the government about their legal obligations to the protection of migrant workers as stipulated by given laws.