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Newcastle, Great Britain

Over 55,000 runners raised \$38 million for charity through the 2013 Bupa Great North Run. The world's second largest half-marathon today, the run was first staged in 1981 with 12,000 runners. This year, a thrilling finish by two legendary distance runners saw Ethiopia's Kenenisa Bekele edging Olympic champion Mo Farah by less than a second.

Paju, South Korea

On Sept. 17, South Korean soldiers fired hundreds of shots, killing a man who attempted to swim across the Imjin River to North Korea. According to Brig. Gen. Cho Jong-sul, the man ignored repeated warnings to turn back, traversed a barbed wire fence and entered the river. "It is a regulation to shoot anyone who does not respond to the command and tries to escape in the controlled area," Cho told CNN.

Washington, D.C., USA

Violence broke out shortly after 8 a.m. on Sept. 16, when military contractor Aaron Alexis opened fire at the Washington Navy Yard. After passing security clearance to the headquarters for Naval Sea Systems Command, Alexis killed 12 and severely wounded more than a dozen others, before being shot and killed by Metropolitan Police. In the wake of another horrific shooting, lawmakers argue that a thorough background check on Alexis would have revealed a history including a discharge from the Navy, thereby preventing his security clearance.

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabians selected the country's first-ever entry for Oscar nomination: "Wadjda," also the first Saudi film directed by a female. In a nation where religious conservatives have outlawed movie theaters since the 1980s, filmmaker Haifaa Mansour is seen as a pioneer in both the film industry and the struggle for women's civil rights.

Eighteen years after fleeing country, Indian activist murdered in Afghanistan

BY LEK SIU AND CHRISTIANNA VAN DALSEN
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The Taliban is the leading suspect in the investigation into the murder of Indian author and activist Sushmita Banerjee.

Banerjee's husband and family members were tied up by attackers as Banerjee was dragged out of her house on the night of Sept. 4 in Kharana, Afghanistan. Police report that Banerjee, 49, was shot over 20 times.

"Our investigation ... indicated that the militants had grievances against her for something she has written or said in the past," provincial police chief Dawlat Khan Zadran told Agence France-Presse.

In 1998, Banerjee published "A Kabuliwala's Bengali Wife," a bestselling novel later adapted into the Bollywood film, "Escape from Taliban." In the novel, Banerjee, who was Hindu at the time, describes her experience of marrying an Afghan Muslim in 1988 and suffering under Taliban rule in Afghanistan.

Banerjee eventually fled the country and returned to India, where she proceeded to write a series of novels detailing the Taliban's oppression of women.

Last month, Banerjee moved back to Afghanistan to reunite with her husband and open a local health clinic. Despite having abandoned the country for over 18 years, Banerjee failed to slip under the Taliban's radar.

"The fact that she wrote a book against the Taliban as a woman in a major Taliban holding place makes her an even bigger target," said Early College senior Rabab Husain. "If they're saying Taliban wasn't involved, that's ridiculous."

Initially, the Taliban rejected all accusations of their involvement in the shooting.

Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid told AFP, "(The accusations are) a propaganda by government officials to defame the Mujahideen (a term closely associated with radical Islamist militant groups)."

Following Mujahid's assertion, The Daily Beast reported on Sept. 14 that "a brutal renegade Taliban militia says they interrogated, then killed, the Indian author, bizarrely claiming she was a spy."

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Julie Winterich, associate professor of sociology

The Embassy of Afghanistan provided no comment on the matter, as the investigation is ongoing.

However, suspicion continues against the Taliban due to its recent killings of prominent Afghan women, most recently a female police officer in Afghanistan's Helmand province.

"You've got so many different groups out and about," said Director of the Friends Center and Campus Ministry Coordinator Max Carter. "You always have factions and

subfactions. There could be an extremist group within the Taliban."

An eminent Taliban presence poses a harsh environment for Afghan women, limiting their access to opportunities in health care and education.

"Before, women were in medicine and held government positions, but when the Taliban came in, it tore down a lot of schools and decimated a lot of services," said Visiting Assistant Professor of Political Science Robert Duncan. "(The Taliban) presents a threat to women specifically, and its approach is selfish, mean-spirited, male-chauvinist domination."

According to part-time student Ahmad Tejan-Sie, "The Taliban (leaders) profess that they're Muslim, so it would be nice if they could learn more about Islam and its policies regarding females. (Muslim women) are encouraged to go to school and get an education."

Its religious vision may not be universally accepted within Islam, but the Taliban's practices of retribution and jihad remain a dire threat to those who like Banerjee oppose their faith.

"Banerjee's killing is a dreadful tragedy and likely meant to be a cautionary tale to others planning to speak out against the dreadful oppression and violence they're suffering," said Associate Professor of Sociology Julie Winterich.

Despite the Taliban's endeavor to eliminate influential women, the fight for women's rights in Afghanistan persists today.

"They choose violent obliteration, but that doesn't work anymore," said Early College senior Anjali Kapil. "It never did. People are always going to rally around her cause, even more so now that she's dead."