

Widow of ship-breaking worker to sue UK-based firm

THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION, Dhaka

A Bangladeshi woman whose husband died while dismantling an oil tanker at a ship-breaking yard in 2018 can file a negligence claim against a British company involved in the vessel's sale, London's High Court ruled last week.

Khalil Mollah, 32, fell to his death while working on a tanker called the EKTA in the port city of Chattogram in southeastern Bangladesh, where scores of end-of-life ships are sent to be scrapped each year.

British lawyers representing his widow, Hamida Begum, took her case to court in April 2019, arguing that Maran (UK) Ltd was responsible for the ship ending up in Bangladesh, where working conditions in ship-breaking yards were known to be dangerous.

Maran was not immediately available to comment on last Monday's High Court judgement, which said Begum had "a real prospect of succeeding in relation to her claim in negligence".

"The proximate cause of the accident was the deceased's fall from a height, but on a broader, purposive approach the accident resulted from a chain of events which led to the vessel being grounded at Chattogram," the court's judgement read.

The ruling denied an application filed by Maran earlier this year to have Begum's claim struck out.

The EKTA, which was formerly called the Maran Centaurus, had been owned and managed by companies belonging to the Angelicoussis Shipping Group, which included Maran (UK) Limited, according to details from the judgement.

Rather than deal directly with ship-breakers it has been standard practice for decades for ship-owners to act through brokers or intermediaries, the ruling said.

The Maran Centaurus was sold for demolition in an August 2017 deal worth more than \$16 million.

Bangladesh is one of the most popular destinations for breaking end-of-life ships with at least 230 ships out of about 670 broken on its beaches last year, according to NGO Shipbreaking Platform.

Thousands of Bangladeshis depend on the sector for survival, but rights groups have been sounding the alarm about hazardous working conditions in the industry for years.

At least 24 ship-breaking workers were killed last year and another 34 were seriously injured at the scrap yards, the highest toll in almost a decade, according to Bangladeshi non-profit Young Power in Social Action.

Most companies sell ships to scrap dealers, better known as cash buyers, who pay the highest price for ships and are closely linked to beach yards where unsafe working practices are common, Shipbreaking Platform said in a recent report.

Oliver Holland, a partner at the Leigh Day law firm representing Begum, said that trend could change if Maran (UK) is made to accept that it owed Begum's husband a duty of care.

"Maybe that will go some way to making UK shipping companies think twice about accepting greater financial reward for their end-of-life vessels at the cost of the environment and the lives of South Asian workers," he said.



People watch a movie as they sit separately for social distancing at a cinema in Hangzhou in China's eastern Zhejiang province yesterday, on the first day the cinemas reopened after closure caused by the coronavirus outbreak.

PHOTO: AFP

Dedicated booth for migrant workers

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Abdur Rahim Medical College in Dinajpur; Rangpur Medical College; and Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College.

The government has fixed Tk 3,500 for each test at the laboratories and Tk 4,500 in case a sample is collected from anyone's home. The passengers must stay in home isolation until leaving for catching their flights.

The move comes after Italy, Japan, China and South Korea suspended flights from Bangladesh following identification of some Covid-19 patients.

Additional Secretary Khalilur said some countries, including South

Korea, China, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, already require Covid-19 certificates while some other countries may also ask for them in future.

Asked what would happen if a passenger got infected after giving samples, he said that's why they have been advised to remain in home quarantine. Besides, the countries requiring the certificates also said the samples have to be collected within 72 hours of the flight. It is because the virus takes at least three days to infect anyone, he said.

"If anyone is found Covid-19 positive after landing in any country, the authorities in that country would

take their measures. But we are doing our part here in Bangladesh. The passengers also need to take the best care of themselves so they don't get infected and maintain quarantine rules of the countries they visit," Khalilur said.

Asked if the testing fees for the migrant workers were high, the additional secretary said they have already thought of the matter and talked to the expatriates' welfare ministry about setting up a dedicated booth for the migrants going abroad with the emigration cards of the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training. Fees for them could also be lowered, he added.

Money down the drain

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of improvement when it comes to water-logging.

"They make the budget for their own benefits. Not for us, not for public interest," said Habibullah Manik, a resident of Shantinagar area.

To mark the fourth anniversary of his taking office, on May 17, 2019, former DSCC mayor Mohammad Sayeed Khokon claimed he had solved the water-logging problem in Shantinagar, Nazimuddin Road, Ganaktuli and Bangshal areas.

But these areas, including Razarbag, Kakrail, Malibag, Mouchak, Mogbazar, Karwanbazar, Tejkunipara and Greenroad, were reportedly submerged by the rainwater.

Meanwhile, DNCC allocated about Tk 1025.86 crore in last fiscal year for the "development" of road infrastructure and drainage.

Sulaiman Hossain, a bus driver of Shikhor Paribahan, yesterday told this correspondent that he found roads in Greenroad, Karwanbazar, Shewrapar, Kazipara, Agargaon were inundated.

"Water level was so high in the morning that we had to drive slow which created a long tailback," he said.

Manager of an IT firm Shourav Rahman said, "It took me about 45 minutes to cross about 1.5 kilometer," he said.

The Daily Star yesterday tried several times to contact the two mayors for their comments on Dhaka's waterlogging, but to no avail.

According to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, 63mm of rainfall was recorded in the capital from 6:00am to 9:00am yesterday.

Besides, 19mm of rain was recorded in the previous 24 hours, reports UNB.

Cops sat on his warrants

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remaining absent from the court without any information.

Contacted, officer-in-charge (OC) of Uttara Purba Police Station Nur-e-Alam told The Daily Star that he did not know about the arrest warrants as he was not posted at the station during that time.

According to the prosecution, Shahed, proprietor of RS Shipping and Trading located at Sector-6 in Uttara, bought electronic equipment from Md Mojibur Rahman, proprietor of Green Connection International located on Babur Road in Mohammadpur, at a cost of Tk 50 lakh in 2007.

Shahed issued two cheques totalling Tk 50 lakh against the dues on November 29, 2007.

The cheques were dishonoured on January 29, 2008 as there enough funds in Shahed's bank account, according to the case documents.

Mojibur informed Shahed about it Shahed, but to no avail.

Left with no choice, Mojibur served a legal notice on February 28 that year, asking Shahed to pay the due amount within 30 days from the day of receiving the notice.

On March 1 the same year, Mojibur

published an advertisement in the Daily Manabzamin asking Shahed to pay the money, but he did not respond.

Later, on August 24, 2008, Mojibur filed a cheque dishonour case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka.

After the hearing, the court asked Shahed to appear before it to narrate his explanation.

The court granted him bail after he surrendered before it and sought bail on June 2, 2009.

The case was then transferred to the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka for its disposal.

The court framed charges against Shahed on October 26.

On July 22, 2010, the complainant gave his deposition before the court against Shahed.

Shahed was arrested on July 15 this year from Satkhira while he was trying to flee the country on a boat.

He was later placed on a 10-day remand in connection with a case filed with Uttara West Police Station over issuing fake Covid-19 results and charging patients for the reports and treatment.

About 100 schools

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about my students. But what can I do? I need about Tk 1 lakh a month to run this school. I am not getting any tuition fees."

Another school, Rajdhani Ideal High School in Basila area, was put on sale by its Director Faruk Hossain Ripon.

Founded in 2015, the school has 170 students and 15 teachers.

"I have to pay dues of around Tk 3.5 lakh in house rent and salaries of teachers and staffers," Faruk said.

With 250 students and 12 teachers, Phoolkuri Kindergarten and High School in the capital's Mohammadpur has also been put up for sale. Established in 2003, its monthly expenditure is about Tk 1 lakh.

In April, school Director Takbir Ahmed gave advertisement for selling it. "No one has yet made any offer..." he said.

As the owners move to sell their schools in the middle of the academic year, the students of class V and VIII of these institutions may find themselves in a difficult situation. They are expected to take public exams in November this year.

Iqbal Bahar Chowdhury, chairman of Bangladesh Kindergarten School and College Oikya Parishad, said almost every day they get news that schools have been put up for sale.

"As far as we know, about 100 schools

have been put on sale.

"If the government doesn't provide any assistance and the Covid crisis lingers, many of the estimated 60,000 kindergartens across the country will be closed," he noted.

Iqbal demanded financial assistance for teachers, soft loans for owners of kindergartens and waiver of utility bills of the hard-hit schools.

Asked, Primary and Mass Education Secretary Akram-Al-Hossain said, "The authorities of the kindergartens did not seek any financial assistance from us. I am not in a position to comment on this."

"If any kindergarten closes down, primary schools should enrol the students of those institutions even in the middle of the academic year," he added.

Manzoor Ahmed, professor emeritus of Brac University, said 100 percent enrolment of students at the primary level will be at risk as a consequence of permanent closure and sale of kindergartens.

"Besides, the number of dropouts will also increase.

"The government should assess how many kindergartens are in crisis and give them financial assistance if needed," added Manzoor, also former senior adviser at the university's Institute of Educational Development.

Treated Covid-19 patients though no deal with govt

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But the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) declined to pay anything because the doctors and nurses were provided by the government and support staff by the local lawmaker.

Even the drugs needed for the treatment were supplied by the civil surgeon office.

As officials started talking about the hefty bill submitted to the DGHS, the hospital withdrew the Tk 5.41 crore bill on Sunday.

"We visited the hospital and found it perfect for treating Covid-19 patients. Then we sent the letter asking them to take preparation. We asked it to its existing ICU. We did not ask for setting up a new one," Civil Surgeon Niatuzzaman told The Daily Star yesterday.

Since there was no deal between the government and AFC Health Fortis Heart Institute, nothing will be paid, said Aminul Hasan, director of hospitals at the DGHS.

"I have asked the civil surgeon to take action against the hospital because it does not have a licence since 2018," he said.

The civil surgeon said, "The hospital has applied for registration.

So, I cannot take any action against the hospital until the DGHS gives any directives."

The license of the hospital expired in 2018.

With questionable roles from the DGHS, the scams of fake coronavirus tests played by Regent Hospital and JKG health care made headlines at home and abroad in recent weeks.

Rapid action battalion on Sunday raided Shahabuddin Medical College Hospital in the capital's Gulshan and arrested two officials on charges of making coronavirus test certificates without conducting any tests.

Taufiq Hasan, General Manager Operations of AFC Health Ltd, the owning company of AFC Fortis, said, "Through a letter, we have been asked to prepare an ICU to serve Covid-19 patients in Cumilla. The authorities repeatedly asked us to start working."

He added, "But we replied every time saying that we do not have an ICU. Then we had to prepare the ICU. The bill we submitted was basically for the establishment of the ICU which was to be used by the government for an extended period."

Asked when and why his office

and doctors.

"They [doctors, nurses and owners] may be discouraged from giving treatment and then the general public will be deprived from health care during the pandemic," he said.

"We do not oppose taking action against a hospital that has faults. But the action should be taken by the health ministry or Directorate General of Health Services, following proper investigation."

"We are facing a media trial, which tarnishes the image of the hospitals, doctors and authorities concerned. We sought his intervention in this regard."

The minister listened to their points and assured them of taking necessary steps, he added.

Meanwhile, the authorities of Shahabuddin Medical College yesterday held a press conference and claimed that Rab was misinformed about the hospital.

A doctor could have conducted antibody tests on their own. The

that we will get a vaccine this year or indeed next year is, alas, just an exaggeration."

"It may be that the vaccine is going to come riding over the hill like the cavalry, but we just can't count on it right now," he said in a televised interview.

Britain has been one of the worst affected countries in the world since the outbreak began, suffering more than 45,000 deaths.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said an effective vaccine was "our best hope of defeating coronavirus and returning to life as normal."

"I urge everyone who can to back the national effort and sign up to the NHS Covid-19 vaccine research registry to help find a vaccine as soon as possible."

Stop raids amid the pandemic

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meeting with the minister, the delegation members alleged that such raids covered live by the media are like "media trials".

They told the minister that showing handcuffed doctors in the media may instigate healthcare providers to abstain from work, meeting sources said.

An association member said the infamous Regent Hospital and Shahbuddin Medical College Hospital should not be treated alike.

Two people, including an assistant director of the latter hospital, were detained during Sunday's raid.

Rab said they found expired medical and surgery equipment at an operation theatre and unauthorised drugs during.

Talking to The Daily Star after the meeting with the minister, the president of the private medical association, Mubin Khan said he told the minister that such raids have spread fear among hospital owners

reports in question were not prepared in the hospital's lab and did not have the lab number that the hospital provides on every report. There was no signature of the lab official either, Prof Md Jafarullah, of the medical college, told reporters.

"The hospital will not take the responsibility for an individual's fault," he said, adding that nothing illegal happened in the hospital's lab.

He admitted that their licence expired on June 30, 2019. They have submitted renewal fees and the process of licence renewal is underway, he said.

Prof Md Jafarullah said so far 220 Covid-19 patients got admitted there, and of them 192 recovered. Most of them tested positive elsewhere and then got admitted to the hospital.

He also admitted that the DGHS recently suspended their Covid-19 tests.

He claimed that his officials have no idea how the expired drugs got into the hospital.

FAHIM SALEH KILLING Haspil pleads 'not guilty' to murder

AGENCIES

Tyrese Devon Haspil, 21, the prime suspect in the gruesome murder of tech entrepreneur Fahim Saleh, has pleaded "not guilty" to second-degree murder, reports CNN.

Haspil, a native New Yorker, has had no prior contact with the criminal justice system before his alleged involvement in the grisly murder, said Sam Roberts and Neville Mitchell, Legal Aid Society attorneys with the Homicide Defense Task Force.

"We are in the very earliest stages of ferreting out the truth. The life of this case promises to be long and complex. As the attorneys for Mr Haspil, we urge the public to keep an open mind," they said in a statement.

Haspil is charged with the murder of Saleh, 33, who was co-founder of ride-sharing venture Pathao in Bangladesh and Nepal and also the CEO of Nigeria-based ride-hailing firm Kokoda.

Saleh was found dead in his Lower East Side apartment last Tuesday. Haspil allegedly assaulted Saleh with a Taser before killing him and dismembering his body.

Police said Haspil handled Saleh's finances and personal matters, and he owed Saleh tens of thousands of dollars and was on a repayment plan.

When Saleh's cousin rang the doorbell to his condo, the assistant was allegedly dismembering his body with an electrical saw and fled, according to a law enforcement official. The cousin found that Saleh's head, arms and legs had been severed in the living room of the condo, NYPD Chief of Detectives Rodney Harrison said.

According to the complaint, video surveillance shows a male, identified as Haspil, following Saleh up the elevator into his apartment on Monday and shooting him with a Taser.

The next morning, video surveillance allegedly shows Haspil went to a hardware store to purchase cleaning supplies and an electric saw, according to the complaint. The electric saw and cleaning supplies were observed in the apartment next to the dismembered and decapitated torso of Saleh, the complaint states.

Saleh, according to the medical examiner, was stabbed five times in his neck and torso, had multiple incise wounds to his arms and left hand and a contusion to his left forehead, the criminal complaint said.

Haspil's next court date is scheduled for August 17, according to the District Attorney's office.

Pakistan resumes polio campaign after virus pause

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan resumed its polio vaccination campaign yesterday after a four-month pause due to the coronavirus outbreak, which health authorities feared would cause a surge in cases of the crippling disease.

The country is one of only two in the world where polio is still a serious problem.

Vaccination teams in the southern port city of Karachi went door to door, flanked by armed police, administering polio drops into children's mouths without touching them, in line with new coronavirus safety guidelines.

"Right now we can't say what impact the four-month suspension will have on our fight against polio, but one thing is sure -- that the current year is going to be worse than the previous years in regard to the number of new cases," Zulfikar Babakher, a spokesman for the country's vaccination authority, told AFP.

As well as the pause to the campaign, a further 2.8 million newborns also missed out on polio vaccinations, he said.

Muhammad Nadeem, a 63-year-old shopkeeper from Karachi, said his family had been waiting anxiously for their two-year-old son to be vaccinated against the highly infectious disease.

"It is a matter of our son's future, and today we are finally feeling relieved after four months of fear and impatience," he said.

3 college teachers

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education minister Dipu Moni, Sadar upazila UNO Kaniz Fatima, headmaster of Farakkabad High School Md Hannan Miji and some Awami League leaders.

Hannan filed a case in this regard with Chandpur Model Police Station on June 27.

The court issued an arrest warrant after Sub-Inspector Rezaul Karim brought charges against them after investigation.

Hannan said the arrested teachers are also involved with local AL, adding that, among them, Anisur and Noman are siblings.

Principal of Farakkabad Degree College Hasan Khan said, "I don't know what charges were brought against them, but I heard that police have arrested them."

The trio will be produced before a court today and will be shown arrested under the ICT Act, said Monasim Uddin, officer-in-charge of Chandpur Model Police Station.

AFP, Tehran

Iran arrests 'perpetrators' of last week's protests

Iranian police said yesterday they had arrested people behind protests that broke out last week in the southwest of the country, state news agency IRNA reported.

"All the perpetrators of an illegal and norm-breaking gathering in Behbahan (city) were identified and arrested," Khuzestan province's police chief Heydar Abbas Zadeh was quoted as saying.

He did not say how many people were detained or identify them.

The protests occurred on Thursday "with a limited number of Behbahan residents gathering and shouting norm-breaking chants," he said, a term usually used by Iranian authorities to refer to anti-system slogans.