

15-yr-old

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Duranpur.

Family members discovered her body hanging by her own scurf from her home ceiling around 10:00am yesterday.

Ten-year-old brother of Shanchita, Mohammad Rabbi, said his sister and he went to the school after the headmaster called her over telephone yesterday morning around 7:30 to ask her to come in for sometime.

He said they were surprised at him calling since it was the summer vacation. He said his sister told him that the teacher would give her stipend money that day.

"Asking me to stay outside, the headmaster took her inside his office. About an hour later my sister came out looking very upset," the boy said.

"Let's go home, I'll tell you later," he quoted her sister as saying.

Shanchita's uncle Afaz Uddin, 52, a farmer, alleged that an influential quarter was trying to cover up the matter. "We strongly suspect that the headmaster has done something very wrong to her... We can't find any reason for the suicide... She was so smiling, meritorious and a nice girl."

"We want proper investigation," he said.

Contacted over mobile phone, headmaster Makhlesur Rahman denied any wrongdoing.

He said he indeed had called Shanchita to his office to inform her that she was selected for stipend and to have her fill in some forms. "She stayed at my office for 20-25 minutes. Nothing happened that can offend her. There were other school staffs during her stay as well," he claimed.

When asked if Shanchita had filled those forms, the headmaster replied in the negative.

He said, "She used to hamper the school environment by helping other students have love affairs. She was given a good lesson for that."

The headmaster continued to question her character. And at one stage he hung up on The Daily Star correspondent.

Officer-in-Charge Azizul Haque Sarker of Tanore Police Station said police recovered the body and were making arrangements to send it for autopsy.

"None so far made any complaint in this regard. We prepared the inquest report and nothing mentionable other than suicide signs were found in the report."

KSA restricts

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Zafar Ahmed Khan, expatriates' welfare secretary, said a few lakh Bangladeshis might have to return home, but observed this will have a positive impact on Bangladesh.

"A worker staying for six years abroad should return home. Living far from families for long time costs them socially," he said, adding, once the old ones return, new ones can go.

Saudi businesses criticised the policy, saying it is very expensive to hire the Saudis whose minimum wage is 3000 Saudi Riyals, while there is no minimum wage for the foreign workers.

Around 50,000 small businesses are run by the Bangladeshis in the Middle East country. An estimated 1.5 lakh Bangladeshis are involved in such businesses.

These firms do not have the capacity to employ the Saudis, which means all these Bangladeshis will have to return home, said Masum, who has been working there for several years.

Saudi Labour Minister Adel Fakeih said nearly 50 percent of the foreigners working in the companies that did not comply with the law can be offered employment by the companies that are following it.

He added that companies in the Kingdom will have until September 7 to implement the policy and that the expatriate workers should not worry.

Plant trees

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At the function, Hasina handed over the Bangabandhu Award for Wildlife Conservation to Dr Reza Khan, a renowned wildlife expert, and Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh (WTB).

Also the head of Dubai Zoo in the United Arab Emirates, Dr Reza is the advisory editor of Bangladesh Nature Quest, a publication of The Daily Star.

His book, 'Wildlife of Bangladesh', has been widely followed by researchers and students in the field as well as nature lovers.

A member on the world advisory board of the IUCN, Dr Khan has been working to create awareness about wildlife in Bangladesh for a long time.

Meanwhile, Dr Anwarul Islam received the award on behalf of the WTB.

The WTB has been working since 2003 to conserve critically endangered species like tigers, gibbons, elephant and bear in the Sundarbans.

The organisation also assisted the government in preparing Tiger Action Plan for 2009-17, Dr Anwarul told The Daily Star.

It is also engaged with the department of forest in forming village tiger response teams in 29 villages near the Sundarbans. The WTB has a boat-based tiger response team that works round the clock to rush to attend any emergency call to save endangered tigers or people attacked by tigers.

Voicing strong concern that unplanned urbanisation and industrialisation, unchecked felling of trees, and pollution are threatening nature and environment, Hasina said country's forest area is quite insufficient for maintaining the ecological balance.

"There must be at least 25

percent forests for a balanced environment, but we have only around 10-12 percent," she said. "So, every person in the society has the responsibility to plant more trees for greater interest of the nature and the environment."

Bangladesh is the worst victim of natural calamities being caused due to the climate change though it is not responsible for global warming, the PM said.

Saying that it is possible to reclaim lands by creating forests in the coastal belts and on the bank of the rivers, Hasina informed that forest department has reclaimed some 4.70 lakh acres of land in the coastal belts by creating forests.

"I have already asked the authorities concerned to hand over some 1,10,000 acres of land to the Ministry of Land, which will be used for agriculture purposes," she said.

The PM said the government is going to undertake a project to create forests on the Cox's Bazar sea beach and thus preserve the wildlife in that area.

Hasina further directed the Environment and Forest Department to take special measures to protect the breeding grounds of the Royal Bengal Tigers in the Sundarbans.

Sixteen institutions and individuals were given Prime Minister's Award for their contribution to tree plantation while six persons were given their share of the government-sponsored social forestation program.

Chaired by State Minister for Environment and Forests Dr Hasan Mahmud, the inaugural function was also addressed by Environment and Forests Secretary Mesbah Ul Alam and Chief Conservator of Forests Ishtiaque Uddin Ahmad.

Man behind

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challenging the legality of the seventh amendment.

The HC in its judgment on August 26 last year declared illegal HM Ershad's military regime (1982-1986) and all martial law courts and trials during that period.

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court in a verdict on May 15 upheld the HC judgement and also voided the trial and conviction against Siddique. It ordered his release on bail.

The apex court, however, said trial of the murder case would continue in the Sessions Judge's Court.

Due to the SC verdict, Siddique would get the chance to face a full-length trial in the murder case, his lawyer Rananga Bikash Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

Limon

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time at his hospital bed yesterday.

Additional Divisional Commissioner (ADC) of Barisal Mohammad Shawkat Akbar quizzed the teenager for about 15 minutes, Limon's father Tofazzal Hossain told this correspondent.

The ADC also sought a medical certificate of his treatment from the doctors.

Limon, 16, has been undergoing treatment at National Institute of Trauma and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (Nitor) after his release on bail on May 9.

On May 24, ADC Shawkat Akbar had questioned Limon for the first time.

Director of Nitor Prof Dr Kh. Abdul Awal (Rizvi) told The Daily Star the ADC Shawkat Akbar came to the hospital at about 9:30am and talked with the doctors on Limon's treatment.

He also sought a medical certificate of Limon's treatment from the doctors, Prof Awal said.

Dr Kamal Uddin Ahmed, joint secretary (Political) of the home ministry, said the deadline for the ministry's investigator has been extended by 7 days.

Earlier, the home ministry had asked the ADC to submit the investigation report on May 29.

Our Barisal correspondent reports, ADC Shawkat Akbar was scheduled to submit the report on Sunday but he will place it by Monday.

LEFT PARTIES DEMAND NEW PROBE BODY
Ganotantrik Bam Morcha, an alliance of left-leaning political parties, yesterday demanded formation of a new probe committee comprising persons acceptable to all for a neutral investigation into the Limon incident.

The alliance leaders apprehended that the government probe will not be fair as some government high-ups have termed Limon and his family members criminals before completion of investigation.

The observation came at a press conference at Ganotantrik Bam Morcha's office in the capital.

Earlier, BNP went for hartal on June 27, November 14 and 30 last year, and February 7 this year for realising its various demands.

Meanwhile, ruling Awami League said the BNP-Jamaat alliance called for the hartal after failing to topple the government through conspiracy.

"Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia went to London and the USA to resort to conspiracy for unseating the government with international support. But failing to get the support, she has become frustrated and called for the hartal only to gear up her party activities," Awami League Joint General Secretary Mahabubul Alam Hanif told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the ruling party would not take to the street to face the opposition workers since every political party has the right to carry out their political programmes peacefully.

"If the opposition parties resort to vandalism or anarchy in the name of hartal, the law will take its own course," said Hanif, who is also a special assistant to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

An interesting
without any explanation by the news agency.

But the story, which instantly generated a lot of interest in the media as it was released against a backdrop of conflicting government versions on Limon's innocence, remained on the BSS website till filing of this report at 12:00am.

Police recovered a firearm, a machete and seized a motorbike from the spot.

Mahbubur filed a case in this regard with Jatrabari Police Station yesterday.

The gunfight ensued when a nearby police patrol rushed to the spot hearing the victim screaming and retaliated against the muggers' attack.

The muggers managed to flee the spot by spraying bullets and hurling Molotov cocktails, police said adding, but another patrol team joined forces and shot Ali, though Zahir managed to escape.

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Black money beckons

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the next fiscal year and scope may be given for whitening money through investment in the fund till June 2013.

However, a decision to remove scope for whitening money from the next fiscal year was made in a meeting between finance ministry high-ups and the prime minister in April, said a National Board of Revenue (NBR) official, requesting anonymity.

The finance minister told reporters in Sylhet last month that the government would not allow whitening money from next fiscal year. But some vested quarters recently mounted pressure on the finance ministry to give scope for whitening money in different sectors, especially the stockmarket, said the official.

Pressure from vested groups on the government continues to grow as the budget day approaches, he said.

The present government allowed whitening money in four sectors where 1,923 people whitened Tk 923 crore, including Tk 427 crore in the stockmarket by 296 people, in the last fiscal year.

All governments -- both political and military

regimes -- have given scope for whitening money almost every fiscal year since 1975.

During the tenure of the BNP-led government between 2001 and 2006, the then finance minister Saifur Rahman in a TV interview on the night before the budget day said no scope for whitening money will be given under any circumstances. But he placed the budget in parliament the next day keeping scope for whitening money.

Mirza Azizul Islam, finance and planning adviser to the last caretaker government, said he does not morally support scope for whitening money.

Many say scope for whitening money will help increase liquidity in the stockmarket but nobody can tell for sure how much money will come to the market.

The former adviser said if black money holders are given the opportunity repeatedly, they will think they can earn black money and whiten those easily paying low tax.

Mentioning that such an offer was made during his stint as finance adviser to the last caretaker government, he said, "The scope given

during my tenure and the one to be offered are completely different."

During his term, the scope was given for undisclosed but legally-earned money with a mention of the source of income, and on condition that the money holder pays tax and a fine, the former adviser said.

Yawer Sayeed, managing director of asset management company AIMS Bangladesh, said if the scope is given in the share market, black money holders will invest in the market and eventually leave it after making a huge profit.

Shares worth Tk 750 crore, more than double the money whitened last year, were traded on Tuesday in the sharemarket, he said.

The government must consider how logical it is for the state to support an unethical act for such a small amount of money, said Yawer.

The stockmarket should be allowed to grow on its own, he said.

"Money or liquidity is not a problem in the capital market. The problem is lack of confidence. If the investors' confidence can be won back, the market will be stable."

Shut sewerage, waste lines

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programmes every month.

The HC bench castigated the negligence and indolence of BIWTA in taking effective measures to protect the river from pollution.

It said appropriate actions will be taken against the authorities concerned if they fail to comply with the court directives.

Petitioner's counsel Manzill Murshed told The Daily Star that the authorities have to set up sufficient waste treatment plants to keep up with the increasing volume of sewage and industrial waste.

Asaduzzaman Siddiki,

secretary of Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh, had filed the writ petition on May 4, 2010 seeking immediate steps to prevent water pollution in the Buriganga.

An HC bench on the same day issued a rule upon authorities concerned to explain why they should not be directed to seal off the sewage outlets into the Buriganga and why their "inaction" to stop polluting the river should not be declared illegal.

During the hearing on the rule yesterday, Manzill told the court that a disaster is not far away if measures to

improve the city's sewerage management are not taken. Millions of people depend on the Buriganga River for supply of water. But hundreds of tonnes of untreated waste including chemical effluents from Hazaribagh tanneries are dumped here every day.

He argued that the level of pollution has been so alarming that the water of the river has lost its colour and quality posing serious health threat.

Mafizur Rahman yesterday appeared in the court for BIWTA while Tofailur Rahman for DCC.

Interim govt row

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instability.

"The only way to overcome the crisis is sincere and constructive dialogue among the political parties," he said, adding that the SC has kept a room for the system for two terms, while AL also admitted the necessity of the system to the parliamentary special committee for constitutional amendment.

Sultana Kamal finds a problem in the SC verdict on the caretaker government as it allows holding two more general elections under the system after declaring it illegal.

"Now, if the next general election is held under the caretaker government, the defeated side may claim that the poll was held under an illegal system and may not accept people's verdict," she observed.

She emphasised political parties' discussion to find a solution to overcome the present crisis.

"The most appropriate place for discussing this issue is parliament. The opposition should join the parliament session and raise their voice there in this regard," Sultana said.

She urged the political parties not to create any situation that will make the people suffer and snatch their voting authority.

M Hafiz Uddin Khan observed that scrapping caretaker government system would not bring any solution and elections would not be acceptable if held under a political government.

"The situation that led to introduction of the caretaker government has not changed yet; rather conflicts and divisions have increased many times," he observed.

Empowering the Election Commission would not help much as the ruling party would politicise the administration and enjoy their loyalty during the elections, he added.

"If the government wants a peaceful solution, they can appeal to the Supreme Court for a review of the judgement on the ground of safety of the

country and people," said Hafiz Uddin.

He added discussion can certainly be held among the political parties if they possess the mentality to reach a peaceful solution.

In his reaction, ASM Shahjahan said a national consensus can solve the debate over the survival of the caretaker system.

"There may be disagreement and differences of opinions, but solution must come through discussion that has to be held in parliament. If it goes up to the streets that would be destructive for the country and democracy," he said, adding, both the ruling and main opposition parties have to come forward to bring out a peaceful solution.

"Both the party leaders showed their wisdom at critical junctures of the country and we hope they would again show their wisdom this time," Shahjahan added.

He said the ruling party should be more liberal, while the opposition must be aware where they are leading the country through their programmes.

"The people don't want to see any uncertainty over the next elections as uncertainty always encourages a third force to take over power," he said.

Dr Mirza Azizul Islam finds no alternative to "mutual understanding" among the political parties to overcome the crisis.

"An unstable situation will be created in the country leading to loss in the sectors of economics and industries if the main political parties take opposite position over the caretaker government issue," commented Azizul.

Shafi Sami said after the SC judgement on the caretaker government, the issue has become the "property" of parliament.

The House with its wisdom will have to decide whether to adopt or discard it as parliament is the exclusive authority for legalisation and constitutional enactment in the democratic society, he observed.

"Most political parties

have representation in parliament and they will have to find political settlement on the basis of mutual compromise and tolerance of each other's views and accommodation," Sami added.

Businesses

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"We urge all the political parties to reach a consensus on holding national polls under an independent, impartial and strong Election Commission, instead of a caretaker government, which is practiced in all democratic countries," noted the release.

The country will face deeper political and economic crises in future, mentioned the statement, if the constitution is not amended properly for forming a democratic government.

The businesses also feared the country might slide into anarchy, while the economy and inflow of foreign investment would face trouble.

They apprehended an electoral stalemate might be created if the next caretaker government is formed headed by the immediate past chief justice, as he has been criticised bitterly.

Given the situation, holding the next national election under an independent, impartial and strong Election Commission is the only constitution-warranted option, insisted the statement.

BSF kills 1

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upazila of the district, reports our Benapole correspondent.

Locals said BSF of Bashghata Camp shot at a group of cattle traders when they were returning from India, killing Alim on the spot.

BSF then sent the body to Bongaon Hospital morgue, in their territory, said Mosarraf Hossain, commander of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) of Dhanyakhola camp.

BGB sent a letter to BSF protesting the killing and called a flag meeting for tomorrow, he said.

Bahrain halts demos despite end of emergency rule

AFP, Dubai

Bahraini security forces were accused of using violence yesterday to halt an attempt by pro-reform protesters to stage new demonstrations, even as a state of emergency was lifted.

The crackdown came one day after King Hamad had called for a national dialogue, and followed appeals for the authorities in the Gulf state to allow people to demonstrate peacefully.

"People are trying to gather... and they are attacking them," one activist told AFP by telephone, referring to protests in villages around the capital Manama including Diraz, Bani Jamrah and Karzakan.

"They have already started using birdshot (and) tear gas" against the demonstrators, she said, adding that an unknown number of people had suffered injuries.

5 acquitted

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Syed Yusuf Hossain, Air Commodore (ret'd) Mirza Akhter Maruf, former joint secretary Mohammad Hossain Serniabat and Unique Group Managing Director Nur Ali.

Special Public Prosecutor (PP) Shaheen Ahmed Khan told reporters the accused were discharged, as the process of charge framing and case filing was flawed.

Anti-Corruption Commission Assistant Director Kazi Shamsul Islam, also the investigation officer, did not seize any of the eight MiG-29 jet fighters as evidence to prove the charge.

He also showed serious negligence in investigating the case, the PP added.

Asked about the verdict, Jamal Uddin said the case was filed to harass them.

"The case was meant to harass us but we got justice from the court," said Nur Ali, another acquitted.

An official of the now-defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption filed the case against Sheikh Hasina and six others in 2001.

According to the case statement, Hasina while in power, in collaboration with the other accused, purchased eight MiG-29 jet fighters from Russia in 1999, causing a Tk 700-crore loss to the state exchequer.

A special court framed charges against Awami League chief Hasina and five others in 2008.

The High Court quashed the proceedings against Prime Minister Hasina last year.

Boro rice

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After the meeting, Razzaque told reporters that the government has a stock of 10 lakh tonnes of rice and wheat and is in a better position to import from the international market.

"We will buy as much as we can from the local market," he said, adding that the price will be fixed in a day or two.

The government proposed to buy 11 lakh tonnes food grains in the next fiscal year.

Agriculture ministry in its assessment said this year the production cost of Boro paddy is around Tk 14 a kilogram, while the cost of milled rice is around Tk 24 per kilogram.

Last Boro season, the government initially bought rice at Tk 25 a kilogram and later it increased the price to Tk 28 following negotiations with millers and rise in paddy prices.

The government usually starts procuring Boro rice in mid-April, but it delayed the procurement this year considering the high price of rice.

However, this decision was criticised by some economists and agricultural activists, who said the delay would deprive the farmers of just price.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, Finance Minister AMA Muhith, Commerce Minister Faruk Khan and Prime Minister's Finance Adviser Mashiur Rahman also attended the meeting.