

An accident, a life turned upside down

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The day was to be worry-free for Tapoti Saha with her caring husband by her side, overseeing her treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

But fate had other plans. In a cruel turn of events, it was Tapoti herself who had to spend the day by her husband, performing his cremation rituals. Her world had turned upside down.

"A great misfortune has befallen me. I have become a wretched widow," wailed the grieving wife of Bibhash Chandra Saha over and over again at a crematorium in the capital.

Bibhash, chief crime reporter of The Independent, was killed in the capital's Dhanmondi on Friday afternoon. A bus had run him over.

Tapoti was scheduled to be admitted to DMCH for an operation over some health complications yesterday, said Bibhash's cousin Sujit Kumar Saha.

"Bibhash had completed the necessary preparations to admit Tapoti to the hospital. He had even booked a cabin for Tapoti.

"But the accident changed everything," he said.

Another cousin, Shipra Bhakta said, "The couple did not have any children in their 16-year married life. It was very painful for them.

"Now with her husband gone, what will she live with? What consolation can we offer?"

The couple was preparing to go to the US, she said, adding that Tapoti will continue her medication and her operation will be held after the shradha (after 15 days).

Bibhash's body was brought to be cremated at Sree Sree Baradeswari Mohashoshan at the capital's Rajarbagh in the afternoon where a heart-wrenching scene met these correspondents.

Relatives and friends were weeping, tears silently running down their cheeks while Tapoti continued to wail and choke on her tears, drowning the silence of the crematorium.

It was only after relatives took her away when the funeral rites could be initiated. Sujit demanded proper investigation into the accident and exemplary punishment to the bus driver.

Homage and protest

Bibhash's body was brought to Dhaka Reporters Unity on a pick-up van having a

freezer unit at 10:00am. Different organisations, journalist leaders and his colleagues arrived to pay their last respects.

Placing a wreath on the coffin on behalf of the newspaper, The Independent Editor Mahbubul Alam termed the accident "a murder" and demanded punishment of the responsible driver.

Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists President Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury said the journalist community has been repeatedly demanding precautionary measures to stop road accidents but such deaths continue to occur.

Later, different journalists' organisations brought out a procession and formed a human chain before Jatiya Press Club demanding arrest and exemplary punishment of the driver. They also criticised the shipping minister for his alleged unconditional support for bus drivers.

They issued a 24-hour ultimatum over two demands and threatened to go for tougher movements otherwise.

One was on the authorities concerned to withdraw Dhanmondi Police Station Officer-in-Charge Moniruzzaman for firing shots in the air and charging baton on the crowd at the accident spot.

The other was on the bus company, Moitree Paribahan, to provide assurance of adequate compensation for the affected family.

During the programmes, the road on both sides from Purana Paltan intersection to the press club intersection was blocked from 11:00am to 1:30pm.

Dhaka Reporters Unity announced a three-day programme protesting the death.

Meanwhile, the inspector general of police expressed deep shock yesterday at the death and expressed his sympathy to the bereaved family.

Bibhash's cousin Rathindranath Saha filed a case with Dhanmondi Police Station on Friday night accusing the driver and helper.

Titu laid to rest

Shahiduzzaman Titu, senior photojournalist of local Daily Matabad of Barisal, was laid to rest at Barisal Muslim graveyard of the city yesterday noon, reports our Barisal correspondent.

Shahiduzzaman died when a bus reared his rickshaw near Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in the capital on Friday afternoon and then ran him over.

Journalists of Barisal held protest programmes demanding punishment of the



PHOTO: STAR, FOCUS BANGLA

Journalists demonstrate before Jatiya Press Club yesterday protesting the death of their colleague Bibhash Chandra Saha in a road accident in the capital a day ago. Inset, Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU), Crime Reporters Association of Bangladesh (CRAB), CRAB Bahumukhi Samity and journalists laying wreaths on his coffin at DRU premises.



PM blames BNP, Jamaat for Operation Clean Heart

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday bashed the BNP-Jamaat coalition government for conducting 'Operation Clean Heart' with military personnel to kill people during its rule.

Resurrecting the issue of 2002, she said, "They (BNP-Jamaat) killed people in the name of Operation Clean Heart...they later enacted a law in this connection to award indemnity. Such indemnity was also given for the killers of Bangabandhu."

Hasina said failing to control the deteriorating law and order, they later formed Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in June 2004 to improve the situation. But, again they used Rab to kill people, especially the leaders and activists of Awami League, the then opposition party, she claimed.

She was addressing a discussion with the

party's grassroots leaders from Satkhira district as part of her ongoing view exchange meetings at the prime minister's official residence Gono Bhavan.

"They [BNP-Jamaat] killed several thousand people -- there was no union where the BNP-Jamaat terrorists didn't kill people. They not only killed the minority community people, but also killed progressive-minded Muslims and Awami Leaguers," she said.

About terrorism, corruption and militancy, she said the stance of her government in this connection is clear and firm. "This will continue alongside the drive to eliminate militancy," she said.

Hasina mentioned that the government amended the constitution to make sure no undemocratic force could usurp power. "From now on, no one would be able to play with the fate of people."

'Hunting, habitat destruction threaten guest bird numbers'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With migratory birds dwindling in numbers across the globe, the situation is especially dire in Bangladesh, said speakers at a programme yesterday.

The migratory bird situation has worsened in the country over the last two decades due to indiscriminate hunting and destruction of their habitat, they added.

The speakers were addressing the World Migratory Bird Festival at North South University (NSU) in the capital.

NSU, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Bangladesh Bird Club and Prokritee O Jibon Foundation jointly organised the programme in observance of the World Migratory Bird Day 2012 yesterday.

Celebrated on the second weekend of May, the annual event is a global campaign to raise awareness and highlight the need for the protection of migratory birds and their habitats.

Journeying from their home countries, the migratory birds come to Bangladesh and settle in haors, canals and other water bodies which are being spoiled and destroyed in various ways, said IUCN Country Representative Ishtiaq Uddin Ahmed.

Indiscriminate hunting and the increase in the use of pesticides in crop fields add to the cause behind the dwindling numbers of the birds in the country, he added.

It was stated in the festival that 320 out of 700 species of birds in the country are migratory. Of them, some 290 birds visit during the winter season while the rest arrive throughout the year.

Acting Vice Chancellor of NSU Prof Dr Abdus Sattar said protection and preservation of the environment is of utmost importance to attract and provide shelter to these birds.

This is something the government cannot achieve by itself and needs the assistance of the masses, the speakers added.

Bangladesh Bird Club President Inam Al Haq and Prokritee O Jibon Foundation Chairman Mukit Majumder Babu also spoke at the programme.

MURDER OF SUJATA CHAKMA 'Punish killer'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders and activists of several indigenous organisations yesterday urged the authorities concerned to punish the alleged rapist and killer of 11-year-old indigenous schoolgirl Sujata Chakma.

They also demanded proper investigation into previous incidents, including the abduction of Kalpana Chakma, a Hill Women's Federation leader, allegedly by army personnel from her New Lalya Ghona residence of Baghaichhari upazila of Rangamati district on June 12, 1996.

The demands were made at a rally jointly organised by Adivasi Nagorik Samaj, Hill Women's Federation, Pahari Chhatra Parishad and Bangladesh Adivasi Chhatra Sangram Parishad before Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

Sujata was killed after being violated on May 9 allegedly by Md Ibrahim, son of Santosh Kumar Biswas of Uttar Yarengchhari village in Atharakhkhara union under Longudu upazila of Rangamati district.

Santosh hails from Bolondi in Jessore district.

Demanding implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord, the leaders said indigenous people have been deprived of justice as the culprits who commit such heinous acts in the hill areas usually escape unpunished.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina speaks at a discussion with the party's grassroots leaders from Satkhira district as part of her ongoing view exchange meetings at the prime minister's official residence Gono Bhavan yesterday.

PHOTO: PMO



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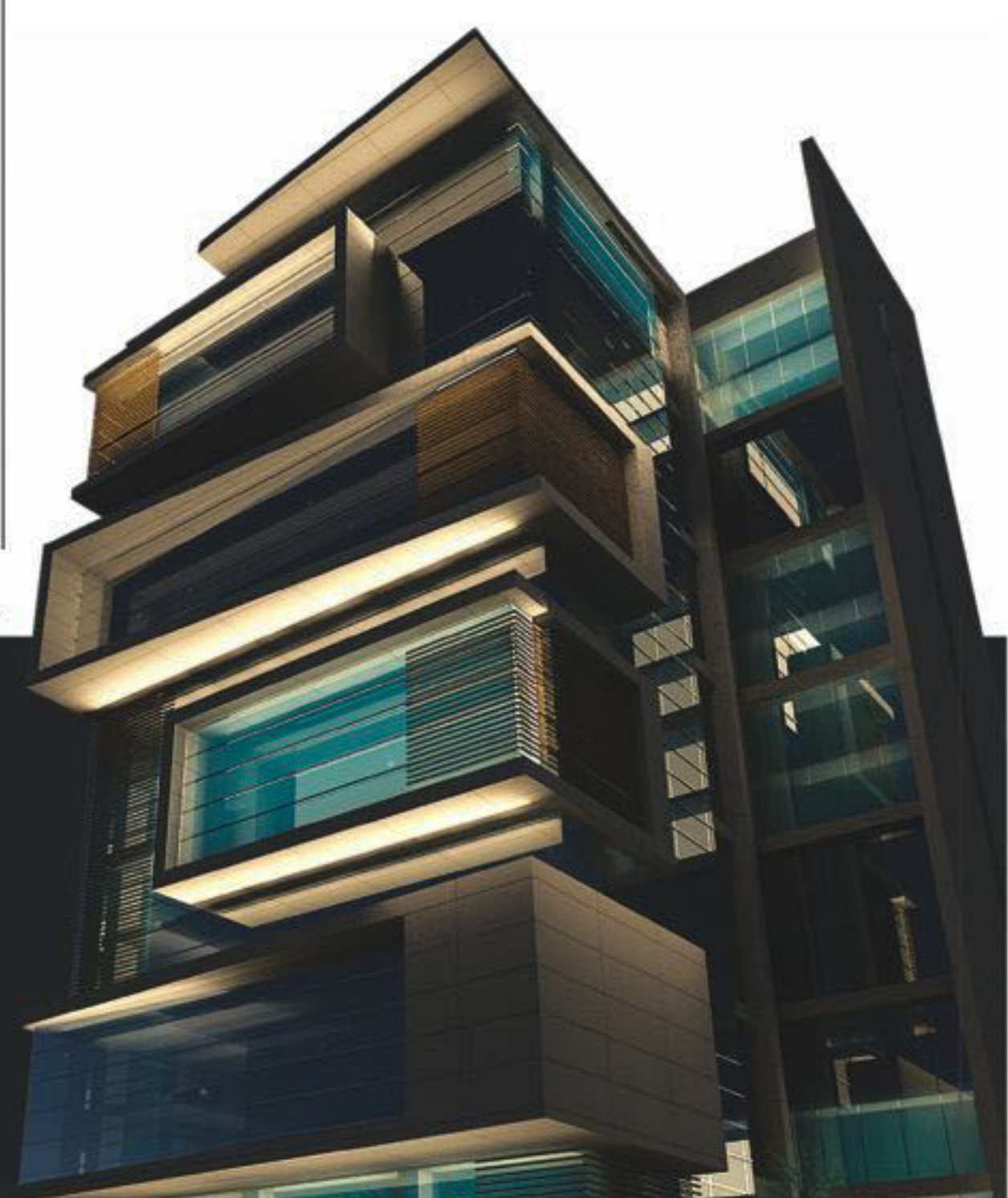
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