

HERMAPHRODITE BEATEN TO DEATH IN HABIGANJ Lawmaker's brother accused of killing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A hermaphrodite died on Sunday, after brother of a lawmaker and his men had allegedly beaten the person up on suspicion of a mobile phone theft at Nabiganj upazila in Habiganj Saturday night.

The deceased was identified as Ador Kha, 24, child of Daulat Kha of Jahurpur village in the upazila.

The family of the deceased filed a murder case with Nabiganj Police Station against Belal Chowdhury, younger brother of lawmaker from Habiganj-1 Munim Chowdhury, and three to four unnamed others.

Locals said Belal's mobile phone had been stolen from his business place Amin Decorators on Saturday night. Belal and his men captured Ador on suspicion of the theft and took Ador to the decorator office in Aushkandi Bazar around 11:00pm. There they tortured the hermaphrodite.

At one point of the torture, Ador lost consciousness and was taken to a friend's house in nearby village of Durlavpur, they added.

Informed, Ador's family members rushed there and brought Ador home in the small hours of Sunday. Ador breathed the last around 1:00pm that day.

Ador's brother Dilu Kha, the complainant of the case, said that in critical condition, Ador had told him that Belal and three to four of his employees tortured Ador to make the hermaphrodite admit to the theft.

"As Ador tried to run for life, they chased Ador down beat her up until midnight," said Dilu quoting Ador as saying.

Belal told reporters that Ador had been beaten up by a mob for stealing the mobile phone. Later Ador was handed over to police. When police had taken Ador to look for the mobile phone, Ador fell sick and died, he added.

Jahangir Alam, officer-in-charge of Nabiganj police, said Ador had been tortured for stealing. Later Ador fell sick and died, he added.

Lawmaker Munim claimed that it was locals who had tortured Ador. "My brother was not involved in it," he said.

Ador's body was sent to Habiganj Sadar Hospital for autopsy. The hermaphrodite was buried yesterday morning in their Jahurpur village.

Meanwhile, the Hermaphrodite Samity yesterday staged demonstration on Dhaka-Sylhet highway protesting the brutal killing.

3 missing as launch sinks

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At least three people reportedly went missing when a launch capsized in the Lohalia river along Board Office area in the district's Sadar upazila yesterday evening.

The accident took place as a Dhaka-bound double-decker launch hit a single-decker launch at around 6:30pm when the double-decker was being loaded with fish from the single-decker in the river.

The passengers of the single-decker jumped into the river when the launch started sinking, police said quoting the surviving passengers.

Most of the passengers managed to swim ashore, but three went missing, the passengers said.

But they could not identify the three.

However, Monirul Islam, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station, said nobody was missing in the incident as all the passengers of the capsized launch had been able to swim ashore.

Badrul Alam, assistant director of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) in Patuakhali, said the BIWTA had asked for rescue ship Rustom to salvage the launch.

Pabna Jubo Dal

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Jahangir, Amanullah, 40, Nayan Hossain, 32, and Sumon, 30 suffered stab injuries, they said.

Jahangir died while being taken to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital around 10:00pm.

Jubo League men also allegedly vandalised Islamia Hospital and three shops owned by BNP-Jamaat men.

Biman Kumar, officer-in-charge of Ishwardi Police Station, said the situation was now under control. Previous enmity might be the reason behind the murder, he added.

The version of Jubo League, a pro-Awami League organisation, could not be known.

Shirin set

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Star, Returning Officer Farid Ahmed of Rangpur said, "If her candidature is found valid, we will unofficially declare her elected and we will send it to the Election Commission for official announcement."

If this be the case, Shirin could be at the front, ahead of lawmakers Abdul Matin Khasru and Ali Ashraf, to become the speaker for the 10th parliament, which goes into its first session on Wednesday, sources in the Awami League said.

The ruling Awami League Parliamentary Party would meet around 6:00pm today, in all likelihood after Shirin is declared unofficially elected, and it might select its candidates for speaker and deputy speaker posts.

The meeting would be held at the conference room of the ruling party at the parliament complex, said Chief Whip ASM Feroz.

Party sources say that Awami League lawmaker Fazley Rabbi Mia could become the deputy speaker.

Talking to reporters at the parliament complex yesterday, Feroz said eight to 10 Awami League lawmakers were qualified to be speaker and deputy speaker and the Awami League Parliamentary Party would assess them.

Responding to a query, Feroz said BNP made a mistake by not taking part in the January 5 elections. He suggested that Khaleda should wait 1,825 more days until the tenure of the 10th parliament ends.

"As BNP has realised its mistake, it has decided to contest the upazila polls," he added.

Targeted killings

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Three months ago, Mesbah had attacked and injured Chaitanya and his brother Kartik Mondol and a case was filed against him in this connection.

Mollah Khabir Uddin, officer-in-charge of Abhaynagar Police Station, told The Daily Star that Mesbah had also threatened to kill Chaitanya afterwards.

He said that police were hunting for Mesbah, who has at least 10 cases, including three for murder, filed against him.

HC clears

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On Thursday, nearly a decade after the recovery of the huge cache of arms and ammunition on April 2, 2004 at the jetty of Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd (CUFL). The arms were being loaded on trucks.

The arms and ammo were reportedly meant for Indian separatist outfit United Liberation Front of Asom (Ulfa).

The cases were filed with Karnaphuli Police Station the following day of the arms recovery.

Former BNP state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar, former industries minister and Jamaat-e-Islami chief Motiur Rahman Nizami and a few former top intelligence and government officials are accused in the cases.

The HC bench of Justice Naima Haider and Justice Zafar Ahmed yesterday came up with the order rejecting four petitions filed by three accused.

The court, however, did not mention any reason behind rejecting the petitions.

Petitioners' lawyer Shah Monjurul Hoque said his clients will file an appeal with the Supreme Court against the HC order.

In the petitions, the accused said they were not allowed to cross-examine Ahadur Rahman, the first investigation officer of the cases, as he was transferred to another police station.

The petitioners also claimed that Chittagong Metropolitan Special Tribunal-1 Judge SM Mojibur Rahman, who is set to deliver the verdict, had earlier passed "contradictory orders" in the cases.

DRIVE AGAINST ILLEGAL WORKERS

24 more Bangladeshis detained in KL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-four more Bangladeshi workers were detained in Malaysia in last two days as a nationwide crackdown on illegal migrants continued.

These detentions took the number of Bangladeshis rounded up in the crackdown to 297.

On January 21, Malaysian government launched the operation to streamline the country's labour market.

"A total of 8,642 expatriates were inspected and 2,134 were detained for not possessing valid documents, overstaying and possessing forged passes or permits," reported Malaysian National News Agency, Bernama, quoting Immigration Department Deputy Director Saravana Kumar Marimuthu.

Of the detainees, 870 are Indonesians, 306 are Myanmar, 148 are Indians, 113 are Cambodians and the rest 697 are other nationalities, it added.

The massive crackdown started after the expiry of a three-month grace period from

October 20 last year to January 20 this year given by the government to the employers to get their employees registered to rectify their visa status.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the crackdown will cover all the sectors hiring foreign workers.

It was not a seasonal enforcement and would be carried out without caring about public holidays, he told the Malaysian media.

Mantu Kumar Biswas, labour counsellor of Bangladesh high commission in Kuala Lumpur, told The Daily Star yesterday that they were issuing travel permits to the Bangladesh detainees to return home.

"We are contacting the Malaysian authorities to ensure our people's safe deportation home," he said.

The counsellor, however, blamed some dishonest travel agencies who provide tourist visa to people randomly.

Majority of the illegal migrants detained in Malaysia were on tourist visa, he added.

ABUSE OF BANGLADESHI MAID

HK housewife arrested

AFP, Hong Kong

A Hong Kong housewife was arrested for allegedly assaulting her Bangladeshi maid, police said yesterday.

The Bangladeshi helper, 27-year-old Akter Kalpona, accused Cheung Sau-ken of punching her in the head, pulling her hair, scratching her hands with a metal brush and confining her to a store room, The Standard newspaper reported.

The arrest of the 58-year-old mother-of-two comes just a week after thousands of domestic workers marched in the southern Chinese city to demand justice for an Indonesian maid allegedly assaulted by her employer.

Cheung was arrested on Sunday afternoon from her luxury apartment in the city's upmarket Mid-Levels neighbourhood for "assault occasioning actual bodily harm", police said in a statement.

She was released on bail later in the day.

The victim, who the police said was sent to hospital for treatment, claims her employer

also prevented her from using ointment to treat her injuries.

The allegations come after another Hong Kong mother-of-two was arrested last week for allegedly assaulting her Indonesian maid, in a case that prompted thousands of outraged domestic helpers to rally in the streets.

Law Wan-tung is accused of causing grievous bodily harm to Erwiana Sulistyaningsih with household items such as rulers, a clothes hanger and a mop, that she turned into "weapons".

Sulistyaningsih is currently undergoing hospital treatment in Indonesia after leaving the city this month.

Hong Kong is home to nearly 300,000 maids, mainly from Indonesia and the Philippines, and criticism from rights groups over their treatment is growing.

Amnesty International in November condemned the "slavery-like" conditions faced by thousands of Indonesian domestic helpers in Hong Kong and accused authorities of "inexcusable" inaction.

Wife waits, in vain still

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Police Station.

But the trial in the two cases has not begun even nine years after the filing of the cases.

Meherunnesa Parul, assistant superintendent of police of the Criminal Investigation Department, was appointed Investigation officer (IO) in the cases in January 2012, but she is yet to submit supplementary charge sheets.

Parul told journalists in January last year that she would submit those by March that year as the probe was at its final stage.

While visiting Sylhet on September 18 last year, immediate past home minister MK Alamgir said the charge sheets would be submitted soon with the names of the mastermind behind the Kibria killing.

During the BNP-led government's tenure in 2005, the home ministry assigned Munshi Atiqur Rahman of the CID as the IO in the two cases.

He submitted a charge sheet on March 20, 2005, accusing 10 people, including local BNP activists, of involvement in the attack.

Sylhet Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal Judge Biplab Goswami accepted the charge sheet but couldn't start trial as the complainant filed a no confidence petition with the court.

JCD leader killed

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Motiur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Tala Police Station.

The JCD leader had also been involved in the violence unleashed by the BNP-led 18-party alliance in recent months centring on war crimes verdicts and the 10th parliamentary election held on January 5, the OC added.

Police arrested Azharul along with two others at Chandpur of the upazila in the early hours of Sunday.

On information extracted from him, a joint force team raided different areas of the upazila from 1:00am to recover arms and arrest his cohorts, the OC said. When the law enforcers arrived at Magura Kheyaghat around 5:00am, associates of Azharul fired at them and exploded several bombs. A gunfight ensued as the joint force members fired back.

Azharul was injured critically in the firing that lasted for about 20 minutes, OC Motiur said.

BNP leaders stuck

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allegation against them.

The same court yesterday granted bail to Rizvi Ahmed for six months in four separate cases filed for vandalism and arson attacks.

Three HC benches passed the orders after the hearing on seven petitions filed by the accused BNP leaders.

Rizvi's lawyers Bodrudozza Badal and barrister Ragi Rouf Chowdhury told The Daily Star that there is no legal bar to their client's release from jail following the HC orders.

In November last year, police filed the cases against the leaders with Motijheel, Shahbagh and Ramna police stations on charges of vandalising vehicles, arson attacks and preventing police from discharging their duties during the anti-government movement of the BNP-led 18-party alliance in the capital, they added.

He was taken to Satkhira Sadar Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

However, the victim's wife, Champa Khatun, said Azharul had been kept at the police station after the arrest and that she had tried to meet her husband there but failed.

Contacted, Satkhira BNP General Secretary Shafikul Islam said he had heard that Azharul died of bullet injuries.

Sub-inspector Shakhawat Hossain and constables Tazimur Rahman and Mohammad Shahabuddin of the police station sustained minor injuries during the firing, police sources said.

A pine-gun, five bombs and two bullets were recovered from the spot.

Police filed a case accusing 60 unidentified people of trying to snatch Azharul from police custody.

Meanwhile, Tala upazila JCD through a press release called hartal from 6:00am to 2:00pm today in the upazila in protest at Azharul's death.

EU needs 'to clear the air' with Russia at summit: official

AFP, Brussels

The EU needs "to clear the air" with Russia at a summit today as sharp differences over the Ukraine crisis and eastern Europe test relations, a senior EU official said.

After Ukraine President Viktor Yanukovych ditched an EU accord in November under pressure from Russia, "there is a strong sense that we could not simply have a business-as-usual summit," the EU official said yesterday.

"It cannot be a matter of just ticking the boxes," said the official, who asked not to be named.

Stressing that the European Union and Russia were bound by "an extremely strong trading relationship," the official said Ukraine's decision in November to turn to Moscow rather than Brussels meant the two sides now needed "a strategic, fundamental discussion".

Russian President Vladimir Putin will be

hosted at today's summit by European Council president Herman Van Rompuy and European Commission head Jose Manuel Barroso.

They are to meet alone for the "strategic" talks with a minimum of aides at a summit shortened to less than three hours, with EU foreign affairs head Catherine Ashton and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov also sitting in.

They gather against a backdrop of sharpening differences over relations with eastern Europe -- highlighted by the Ukraine impasse -- as well as trade frictions plus a series of international issues such as Iran and Syria where Moscow and Brussels also do not see eye to eye.

In Ukraine yesterday, the government threatened to impose a state of emergency after demonstrators occupied the justice ministry and protests demanding Yanukovych's resignation spread wider despite his offer to share power.

PM unhappy for finalising

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should have taken her guidelines.

Hasina advised Inu that the policy had to protect interests of all stakeholders.

The policy contains a provision for an independent broadcast commission that will oversee programmes and recommend who should get broadcasting licences.

According to the draft, the broadcasters will have to air government-approved programmes of "national interests", and programmes of the president and the prime minister.

RATIFICATION OF TWO CONVENTIONS

Yesterday, the cabinet ratified the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 and Seafarers Identity Document Convention (Revised) 2003, proposed by International Labor Organization (ILO), for enhancing facilities for

marine officials and seamen.

A total of around 12,000 marine officials and seamen will get biometric identity cards, which will facilitate their travel, said Cabinet Secretary M Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan.

He said Bangladesh had around 68 sea-going ships now and about 12,000 Bangladeshi marine officials and seafarers worked in local and foreign companies, earning foreign exchange worth around Tk 5 billion annually.

Bangladeshi sailors face discrimination in some countries while changing ships and returning home, he said, adding that some foreign companies were not keen to hire Bangladeshi workers. "These discriminations will end if the government signs the conventions," he added.

651 to contest

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, also president of ruling Awami League, yesterday directed ministers and state ministers to help finalise one candidate each for the chairman and vice-chairman posts for every upazila in their constituencies.

At the weekly cabinet meeting, she advised them to engage presidents and general secretar-

ies of each district unit of AL with upazila unit leaders in choosing the chairman candidates.

On Sunday, Hasina wrote to her party's district and upazila presidents and general secretaries to this end.

In the meeting, she also warned of stern organisational actions against those party men who would contest the polls defying the decision of the grassroots, said meeting sources.

A hospital beset

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corruption. But he was forced to resign after the initiative.

After Mahbub, Dr Ajoy Ghosh became the superintendent of the hospital.

While preparing a salary sheet in July 2012, Ajoy also found huge dissimilarities between the salaries many employees received and the actual salaries they were entitled to.

During his stint, the review committee unearthed a number of financial anomalies in every sector of the hospital.

Following the report of the committee, Dr Ajoy Ghosh sent a letter to the Directorate General of Health Services office in Dhaka enclosing the report.

On receipt of the report in August 2012, the DG Health office in Dhaka formally asked the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to probe the anomalies, and initiated two departmental committees to probe the matter.

Following that move, Md Saidur Rahman Bhuiyan, director (finance) of the DG Health, visited the hospital on August 18-20 in 2013.

He said he did not get due cooperation from the Cox's Bazar district accounts office and Sonali Bank. He then said he would seek help from Bangladesh Bank and the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Md Khalilur Rahman Shikdar, in-charge of the ACC probe committee, also voiced the same complaints.

The district accounts officer, Md Nurul Huda, however, claimed he had provided all necessary documents to the probe committees.

"I issued cheques to the hospital superintendent upon receiving bills, and I had nothing to do with the corruption allegations," he added.

According to the report of the review committee, Abdul Samad was due to go on retirement on January 14, 2011 when he reached the age of 57, but he continued in his job until his death on April 6, 2012.

When asked why he did not take measures in this regard, Dr Kajal Kanti Barua, who was the income-expenditure officer and superintendent of the hospital from March 2010 to February 2011, declined to comment.

"As the health directorate and the ACC are probing the anomalies, facts will be revealed. So, I cannot talk," said Barua, who later became civil surgeon of Cox's Bazar and retired on December 31, 2013.

In the meantime, Dr Ajoy had been transferred to the Directorate General of Health Services office in Dhaka on December 4, 2013 as an officer on special duty (OSD).

Sources in the hospital said it was impossible for Samad to embezzle this huge amount alone.

They said influential quarters, who forced Dr Mahbub to resign, were also responsible for the transfer of Dr Ajoy.

They demanded that the culprits behind the scene be found.

Dr Ratan Chowdhury, present superintendent of the hospital, said the investigation was going on.

"I am ready to extend my help, if asked," he added. Additional Reporting by Morshed Ali Khan and Porimol Palma