

# 'Food poisoning' kills woman, three children

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Three children and a woman died of "food poisoning" and four other women fell sick after taking breakfast in Badamia village of Trishal upazila yesterday.

The dead are Najma Begum, 15, daughter of Abul Kalam alias Kalu Miah of the village and Kalu's mother-in-law Hazera Begum, 50, and Bithi Akhtar, 12, and her niece Dilruba Akhtar, 8, of Dhanikhola Dakkhin Bhatipara village.

Physicians primarily suspected the four died of severe food poisoning, but it would be confirmed only after the autopsy, said Dr Tanimul Haque Rizvy of Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH).

Talking to this correspondent, Dilruba's mother Rahima Khatun said her mother-in-law Ambia Khatun went to the house of one of their relatives, Kalu Miah, who is a hawker, in Badamia village along with Dilruba and Bithi on Wednesday afternoon.

"Last evening [Wednesday], Kalu Miah bought some flour and sweet potato for them from a nearby Bazar," said Rahima, whose uncle is

Kalu.

The eight, including the deceased and the sick, had handmade flour bread with the sweet potato for breakfast yesterday morning. After taking the meal, all of them became sick, she added.

Dilruba and Bithi were pronounced dead on arrival at MMCH while Najma and Hazera died later.

Kalu was away from home in the morning.

The sick, all relatives of Kalu, are undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Mymensingh Civil Surgeon AKM Mustafa Kamal visited the spot in the afternoon. He said they collected the bread, flour, sweet potato and some cooked dried fish from the spot as samples.

Earlier, a five-member medical team, led by Dr Moshihur Rahman, Trishal upazila health and family planning officer, also visited the spot.

For interrogation, police detained Saiful Islam, the shopkeeper who had sold the flour to Kalu, said Moniruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Trishal Police Station.

Police were investigating the incident, he added.



Workers take the wreckage of the Cessna-152 to a hanger from the runway at Rajshahi airport yesterday. The plane crashed yesterday killing trainee pilot Tamanna Rahman Rhidi and seriously injuring her instructor Lt Col (ret'd) Sayeed Kamal.

PHOTO: STAR

## Pension for pvt service holders

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Tier two -- Private Sector Pension Programme -- is meant for employees in formal private sector. Under it, employers and employees will both contribute a certain amount to a fund every month. After retirement, the employees will get the money as monthly pension.

The third tier is designed for both formal and informal private sector. Under this tier -- Private Voluntary Pensions -- any citizen can deposit a certain sum every month or at a regular interval for his or her future benefit.

All the three programmes will be implemented under the National Social Security Strategy of Bangladesh.

The concept paper to be presented in Monday's cabinet meet was prepared by the General Economics Division (GED) of the Planning Commission.

### PRIVATE SECTOR PENSION PROGRAMME

Prof Shamsul Alam, a member of the GED, told this correspondent that implementation of the programme in the private sector would be mandatory. The programme aims to provide the private sector employees with some financial benefits after retirement.

As planned, the government will take immediate steps to design a mandatory National Social Insurance Scheme based on the "principle of employers and employees jointly paying contribution to a national social insurance fund".

At the start, the fund will be managed by the newly formed Insurance

Development and Regulatory Authority of Bangladesh (IDRA) under the finance ministry.

After consulting private businesses, the IDRA will send a proposal to the cabinet regarding the amount of contributions.

To be eligible for pension, one will have to contribute to the fund for at least 10 years.

"This will ensure that the first pensions can be delivered by 2032," says the concept paper, a copy of which this newspaper has obtained.

Asked about the pension scheme, Kazi Akram Uddin Ahmed, president of the FBCCI, said, "As I don't know about the issue, I will not say anything now."

Aftab-ul Islam, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh, said, "It is a very good initiative. I hope the private sector will come forward to implement it."

He added many people in Bangladesh feel helpless at the fag end of their lives. "If such a scheme is introduced, it would be a great help to them."

### CITIZENS' PENSION

Under the Citizens' Pension programme, all the poor people aged above 60 will receive Tk 800 per month and those 90 years and above will get Tk 3,000 from the public coffers.

Implementation of this programme will start next year and all the eligible people will be brought under the scheme by fiscal 2017-18.

The government plans to bring 50 percent of all the eligible people in the 60-90 years age group by next fiscal

year. It will require Tk 3,100 crore.

In the FY17-18, when all the eligible people are covered, it will cost the government Tk 6,300 crore.

Those 90 and above will get Tk 3,000 a month. At present, the number of such recipients is around 16,000. To provide pension to 50 percent of this age group in the next FY, the government will need Tk 30 crore.

Presently, poor women aged above 63 and men above 65 get Tk 300 in monthly pension from the government. But some 70 percent of the eligible elderly people do not get the benefit. On the other hand, many below 60 and also rich people have been enjoying the benefit.

Prof Shamsul Alam, a member of the GED, said 33 percent of the total beneficiaries of the scheme are below 60, while 27 percent are affluent.

The government is now preparing a poverty database to be used for providing the benefit. This will also check misuse of public fund and help bring all the eligible people under the scheme, he added.

### VOLUNTARY PENSION SCHEME

By December this year, the Bank and Financial Institutions Division of the finance ministry will conduct a study on how the voluntary pension system can be introduced in the formal and informal private sector.

The document said, "The study will examine the viability of establishing a Pension Regulatory Authority that will be responsible for supervising private pensions, thereby ensuring their integrity, fairness and financial sustainability."

## BCB does not share

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completely an issue of the ICC and they should handle it. This is not something that should worry either the BCCI or the BCB or even India and Bangladesh.

"I don't know why many seem to think that this is a problem between India and Bangladesh. There is nothing against India. Even the umpires weren't Indian. Following the game the BCB sent an official observer on certain issues to the ICC because there were doubts about some of the aspect of the game and the ICC responded appropriately. The matter ended there," said Papon.

The controversial decisions during the Bangladesh-India quarterfinal, combined with Kamal's comments—that the umpires might have had 'an agenda' during the game—caused uproar amongst the fans in Bangladesh.

Papon, however, through examples stated how Srinivasan in the capacity as BCCI president had in fact supported the BCB on a number of occasions.

"Ever since I took over as president I have received all the support I could from the ICC. For instance, there was uncertainty with regards to Bangladesh hosting the Asia Cup in 2014 due to the political scenario. Some of the cricketing boards were two-minded about coming here.

"That's when we got support from Srinivasan and that actually helped us. Eventually we managed to host the ICC World Twenty20 as well. Even with regards to the Test status issue that was brought up last year, he ensured

that a decision went for us. He played a pivotal role on that. Until now the decisions we received from the ICC have worked well for us," explained Papon.

The BCB boss described Kamal's resignation as unfortunate and this is where he wanted to put a full stop.

"The fact that he wasn't able to give the trophy is unfortunate since that's what the constitution states. What he has done is right from his perspective," said Papon.

With Kamal resigning three months before the end of his tenure, there is now a vacancy for the post of the ICC president. According to the BCB president, the ICC has asked the board to recommend someone from BCB for the position.

"The ICC has communicated with us regarding the issue. They have asked us propose a name from the board. Since this is a complex scenario we will have to go through the pros and cons before taking a decision with regards to this issue," said Papon, adding that the issue would be discussed on April 6 board meeting.

Papon, while lamenting the uneasy scenario, said that they could not even find some breathing space to celebrate Bangladesh's outstanding performance in the World Cup.

"We were supposed to hold a grand reception so that hundreds of fans who turned up at the airport to have a glimpse of their heroes, but were deprived, could enjoy the success with the Bangladesh cricket team," said Papon, adding that such reception would definitely take place before mid-April.

## Dhaka sends 2 officials to Yemen today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka is sending a two-member team to Yemen today to assist in the repatriation of Bangladesh nationals trapped in war-torn Yemen.

The team comprises Counsellor of the Bangladesh Embassy in Kuwait SM Mahbulul Alam and an embassy staff.

Foreign ministry officials said the team was expected to depart from Kuwait last evening and would reach Aden city early today depending on availability of a flight.

They said the two officials would help verify and identify Bangladesh nationals in Yemen. The officials, if needed, will help Bangladesh nationals get on board a ship for safe passage out of Yemen.

Some 1,500 -3,000 Bangladesh nationals are known to be working in Yemen.

Meanwhile, Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Khandker Mosharraf Hossain told reporters that the government would repatriate Bangladeshi citizens trapped in Yemen through Indian ships already in the region.

Replying to a query about Saudi Arabia's assistance in repatriating Bangladeshis, he said the Saudi government had not still responded to the matter.

Talking to reporters at his office, the minister further said Bangladeshis in Yemen should not take any risk and try to remain in safe areas in the country.

## Somali Islamists

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with all four terrorists killed."

The attack was claimed by al-Qaeda-linked Shebab fighters, the same insurgents who carried out the Westgate shopping mall massacre in Nairobi in September 2013, when four gunmen killed at least 67 people in a four-day siege.

Shebab spokesman Sheikh Ali Mohamud Rage told AFP the gunmen had taken non-Muslims hostage, and that their mission had been "to kill those who are against the Shebab."

The university siege marks the worst attack on Kenyan soil since the 1998 bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi by al-Qaeda, when 213 people were killed by a huge truck bomb.

The United States condemned the attack in the "strongest terms", while UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for those responsible to "be swiftly brought to justice."

British Minister for Africa James Duddridge called the killings "senseless" and "barbaric", while the French presidency said it stood "ready to work" with Kenya in its fight against terrorism.

It was not clear if any of the students the Shebab said they had held were alive at the time of the final assault by troops. However, officials said over 500 students had been rescued from the fighting.

"Kenya is at war with Somalia," Rage said, referring to the thousands of Kenyan troops in Somalia as part of an African Union military mission.

Soldiers with tanks were deployed around the campus.

A \$215,000 bounty was offered for the capture of alleged Shebab commander Mohamed Mohamud, a former Kenyan teacher believed to now be in Somalia and said to be the mastermind behind the Garissa attack.

## Dangerous desensitisation

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Commission being vocal but no satisfactory conclusions. That however is not the focus of this write up.

Today we want to write on what the killing of Oyasiqur Rahman, the young man murdered last Monday, really means. Simply put, it is a spine-chilling warning to us all that we all can be targets. All that needs to happen for any of us to be killed is that some fanatic somewhere in the country, decides that someone or anyone, needs to be killed. He shows his "disciples" a photograph of the "target" and orders his elimination. A name is mentioned, a photograph shown, an address given, a particular house identified, a work habit described and a murder process is set in motion.

As was shown in Oyasiqur's case, the killers neither knew him personally, nor did they care. As we learnt later, there was no need for such information. Just a couple of sentences that this person had insulted our religion were sufficient for a group of young people to agree to take a person's life.

Someone's interpretation of reality was different than mine. Someone's method of worship was contrary to

what I think it should be. Someone's belief about life, creation, sense of good and bad, method of veneration, dress code, food habit, in fact someone's whole lifestyle was different than mine was "reason" enough. The perpetrators had no personal reason or motive to kill Oyasiqur. They worked like mafia-style "contract killers".

The only difference -- and it is of crucial importance -- is that, no money was paid or favours exchanged. It was all because of "belief". Someone did not believe what I believe. Someone insulted what I hold in highest respect.

It was just like a task that had to be carried out even though it meant taking someone's life. That nobody has the right to take one's life without the due process of law didn't matter.

We believe that diversity, tolerance and freedom of conscience -- fundamental to our existence -- are being challenged here. These are enshrined in our Constitution. These are glorious aspects of our heritage and constitute the fundamental elements of our ethos. What is being destroyed is an integral part of the values of our freedom struggle and the democratic struggle that we have waged so far.

Equally important is the fact that something that constitutes a core value of our religion that we love and respect is being grossly distorted here.

Even if numerically a small number, the murders of three bloggers merit a serious response. It is our view that there has been, within some circles, a malevolent growth of extremist ideology with very committed followers. We do not seem to know much about their depth or extent. There are a large number of religious organisations that remain outside the purview of the government. The answers to many questions like what is being taught there, how these are funded, who the teachers are, where do they come from, are not known to the authorities. We do not know if there is adequate surveillance in place to find any possible domestic links with global terrorist networks that are becoming more aggressively militant in the recent days.

Given all the above, there can be no more urgent task than to strengthen the counterterrorism capacity of our law enforcement bodies. We do not know how technologically capable these departments are; nor do we

know how well-trained their personnel are. In the past we had seen some effective counterterrorism work by Rab personnel who were mainly responsible for the unearthing of some of the major extremist groups. However, they appear to have spoilt their image and effectiveness by being associated with extra-judicial killings.

It is clear now that over the years the extremist groups have become better organised. It is suspected that they even might have established some sort of coordinating mechanism among them for terrorist activities. Murdering individual bloggers may have been adopted as a deliberate strategy which serves the purpose of spreading a feeling of fear and intimidation and giving the impression that they are very active and yet keeping a very low profile.

So far the government's main thrust of fighting the extremist threat has been the so called "hard option", --using the law enforcement agencies. This option is of course necessary but it can only be effective if accompanied by the "soft option" -- namely an effective motivational campaign that explains to our religious population the real meaning of our religion and

how these are being distorted. We cannot underestimate the power of "motivation," a fact the extremists seem to have learnt very well and appear to be using most effectively. The young boys who killed Oyasiqur without knowing anything about him, an act that may lead to a death sentence for them both, aptly exemplifies the effect of "motivation".

We urgently need to counter it in a most effective manner. Not doing so would be a fatal mistake, in fact, a suicidal one. The government's current attention is fully focused on neutralising the opposition, especially the BNP and its leadership. The extremists are taking full advantage of the tussle between these two major political parties and the preoccupation of the law enforcement bodies in containing the violence. Everything considered, the present political situation is preventing us from focusing fully and adequately on the activities of the extremist groups whose efficiency and international links both appear to be on the rise. Therefore, a well-planned and concerted action to first contain and then eliminate extremism is of utmost urgency.

## Two Savar kids killed in blast

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ground, said Mohammad Russell Sheikh, senior assistant superintendent of police at Savar Model Police Station.

Locals said children play in the unfenced ground every afternoon. An army training session ended there around 4:00pm yesterday.

While playing there, Shuvo found a

ball-shaped object and put it in his pocket, said Salman, the injured boy.

When they were returning home, Hridoy and Shuvo were walking hand in hand and Salman was a little ahead. All of a sudden, the object went off.

One of the kids died on the spot and the other on way to a local hospital.

Law enforcers recovered the bodies and sent those to Dhaka Medical

College for autopsies.

The ASP said they were not sure if it was a grenade or a bomb. The cause of the explosion could be known after the autopsies.

Contacted last night, Major General Waker-Uz-Zaman, general officer commanding (GOC) of the Ninth Infantry Division in Savar, said there is a training ground in the area. A team

from Savar Cantonment went there for training yesterday and exploded grenades.

But as per rules, a team of engineers scanned the whole area for explosives before and after the training session, he added. "It's very unlikely that our grenades caused any casualty there."

A notice was put up in the area, restricting civilians' access to the field,

but the army was not aware how people entered there, said the GOC.

The army was probing the incident. Mohammad Kamrul Hasan Mollah, upazila nirbahi officer of Savar, said he, on behalf of the Dhaka DC, gave Tk 20,000 each to the families of the deceased.

Police were preparing to file a case in this regard last night.