

Pirojpur youths organise to give blood, the gift of life

HABIBUR RAHMAN WITH ANDREW EAGLE

Five years ago, when three-wheeler auto driver Farid Hossain of Pirojpur town first saw his newborn son Samrat he was as ecstatic as any father could be. But two months later, his son was diagnosed with severe thalassemia disease. In order to manage Samrat's condition, the father would need to spend up to 1500 taka every 20 days to secure a bag of A+ blood. That's not easy for any auto driver, for whom every taka counts.

But in more recent times, Hossain and his son have found themselves fortunate to call Pirojpur home. In 2013 eight local youths co-founded Pranphota, an organisation dedicated to saving lives by coordinating blood donation supplies, which has meant that Samrat's monthly blood requirements are now available free of cost.

"It was very difficult to buy blood every month as well as meeting my family's living expenses," says Hossain, "I can't earn a lot as an auto driver. Although I can't say how long my son will live, I am really grateful to Pranphota."

No money, no freezing and no parcels: these are Pranphota's three principles. "Our donors always present themselves to give blood," says Abir Hasan, a first year Honours student and Pranphota co-founder. "If anybody needs blood," explains M Shahidullah, a student of Suhrawardy Government College and fellow co-founder, "they can call us on 0179 022 5555 and give the hospital or clinic address. A donor will reach them in time."

In the past two years Pranphota has signed up 1,000 local blood donors, aged between 18 and 38, all ready to roll up their sleeves to help others.

"We have been able to donate about 1,500 bags of blood so far," says service holder Sujan Dhali, another co-founder.

"Almost every day we get a call for blood," adds his Pranphota colleague, Honours second year stu-



PHOTO: STAR

Voluntary organisation Pranphota arranges free blood group testing at Masimpur in Pirojpur district town yesterday as part of their motivation programme to inspire people to donate blood for saving patients in need. Inset, a youth donating blood, inspired by the organisation.

dent Protap. "It's not difficult to help," says local businessman and group member Moshir Rahman, "It only requires good intentions."

Around ten days ago Nasima Akter, 32, the wife of Abdus Sattar, a mason of Bhandaria upazila benefited from such good intentions. In the midst of a miscarriage, she found herself at Pirojpur Sadar Hospital in urgent need of four bags of blood.

Initially her husband did not know where to turn for help. "It was very difficult for me to organise the blood," says Sattar, explaining that at first the hospital was set to release his wife because without the extra blood they were unable to offer her the further assistance she needed. But then somebody mentioned Pranphota and Sattar found

that within a short time the blood for his wife had been arranged. "I'm really grateful to them," he says.

Meanwhile Ashraf Ali Fakir, 75, of Zilbuniya village in Morrelgonj upazila in neighbouring Bagerhat, relies on Pranphota for the bimonthly blood supplies he needs in the course of his cancer treatment. While Pirojpur lacks facilities and specialists for critical operations, with emergency patients referred to Khulna, Barisal or Dhaka, chronically ill patients like Fakir determine that supplies of all blood groups are needed with regularity.

"For rare blood groups we sometimes need to arrange the donation from distant areas," says second year HSC student Naeem Mahmud, another co-founder. "Our members

carry blood group cards and we have a Facebook page to help coordinate activities," he adds.

Yet despite the sincere efforts and hard work of its members, the organisation faces funding dilemmas. "For patients the service is free, but we have no income source except our own pockets," says Shahidullah. With most of the group's members being students, those pockets aren't exactly brimming with taka.

"Some patients' families are insolvent and cannot buy the blood bag, in which case we supply it," says Hasan, "and sometimes the donor has no money to reach the hospital, so we arrange their transport costs too."

Nonetheless, Pranphota's founders are happy with their efforts. "I see it as my duty to help

those in need," says Arnab Mistry, co-founder and final year Honours student.

"I feel proud to belong to this group," says co-founder Meem Rahman, a first year HSC student. "In helping others, every person should stand up and be counted."

Meanwhile Hossain continues to drive his auto as he always has. Passengers come and go, some generous, others more precise. In the course of their transport, no passenger can imagine he is the father of a chronically ill son. They don't know he has quite enough to worry about in addition to the usual tensions of daily life, nor how important Pranphota's efforts have been in subtracting from his life, and the life of his family, one big stress.

2 kids meet tragic death

Father confesses to drowning them in pond

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Two siblings met tragic death as their father allegedly threw them into a pond at Suhila village in Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The victims -- five-year-old Oishi and five-month-old Rohan Babu, were daughter and son of Mohammad Waliullah, a rickshaw van-puller of Suhila.

During police interrogation in the afternoon, Waliullah confessed to killing the children, said Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Md Abdur Rashid of Kotwali Police Station.

Waliullah married Rokshana Begum of adjacent Dapunia village seven

years ago and the two children were born to them.

He got angry with his wife on various occasions as she liked to live at her parent's house, said the ASP, quoting confessional statement of Waliullah.

After staying at her parent's house for several months, Rokshana was taken to Waliullah's house by his relatives five days ago.

"As the feud continued, finally I took the decision to kill my two children and then commit suicide," Waliullah told police.

"Oishi was sleeping with my mother and Babu with my wife in separate rooms. Returning home around 12:15am today, I entered my mother's house, took away Oishi and threw her into the pond. Then I did the same to

Babu.

"I woke up my wife and mother from sleep and started screaming, saying that the two kids had gone missing. Family members and neighbours rushed to the spot and started searching here and there," police quoted Waliullah as saying.

Seeing the kids' bodies in the pond water in the morning, locals informed police who rushed to the spot, and sent the bodies to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital morgue.

The bodies were handed over to the family members after conducting autopsy at the hospital, said Mohammad Ali Sheikh, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Kotwali Police Station.

MURDER OF GOBINDAGANJ MAYOR'S SON

Locals demand capital punishment of killers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

All sections of people continued protest for the third day yesterday against the murder of Gobindaganj mayor's son Ashkur Rahman Samya.

They brought out a procession and formed a human chain at Gobindaganj upazila headquarters, demanding immediate arrest and capital punishment of the killers.

Protesting the murder of the mayor's son, local traders kept the shops shuttered for three hours from 9:00am. They also took out a procession, demanding immediate arrest and capital punishment of the killers.

The traders later formed a human chain along the Rangpur-Bogra highway for

an hour.

Police recovered the body of Samya, only son of Mayor Ataur Rahman, and a Class IX student of Gobindaganj High School, from behind Gobindaganj Community Centre on Eid Day, 14 hours after he was called out of their house by his three classmates.

Locals found the body stuffed in a sack in the morning and informed the police. Mayor Ataur Rahman filed a case with Gobindaganj Police Station on Saturday, accusing 11 people, including councillor Jainul Abedin, of the murder.

In the case statement, Mayor Ataur stated that Samya's classmates Sharier Khan Hridoy, Jakir and Sajib called his son out of his house at Ghoshpara under

the municipality on Thursday evening and later killed him with the help of other accused.

Police picked up Hridoy, Rabeya, Runa, Sujan, Rafiqul, Al-Amin, Jakir Hossain and Shimul for interrogation.

After preliminary investigation, police said there had been an altercation between the victim and Hridoy over a costly mobile phone set and previous disputes with some other friends. Hridoy, Jakir and Sajib tactfully called Samya out of the house and later killed him, they added.

Victim's family members alleged that police did not take necessary steps even though they informed them (police) that Samya went missing on Thursday noon.

Thousands cry for bridge over Bullai River in Nilphamari

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Forty thousand people of eight remote villages in Kishoreganj upazila under the district are suffering much for want of a bridge over the Bullai River at Naur Ghat in Garagram union.

People of Sonakhuli, Jummapara, Dhorear Bazar, Nauatari, Holaitari, Nepuchipara, Garagram and Majapara villages are facing serious problems to go to required places like educational institutions, markets, hospital, land registration office etc for want of a bridge at Naur Ghat, said Biplob Kumar Sarker, chairman of Garagram union parishad.

There are ten educational institutions including primary schools, high schools and madrasas on the other side of the river where hundreds of students from those villages go to study, he said, adding that they have to cross the river by small boats or bamboo rafts amid risk.

Visiting the site a few days ago, it was found that people including a good number of female students were crossing the river on rafts.

away by strong river current at beginning of the rainy season this year.

A few days ago madrasa student Aklima Begum was about to drown after falling into the river from a raft, locals said.

Luckily she was rescued by some youths.

A number of villagers at

Dhoreyar Bazar said that before 10th Jatiya Sangsad election, local lawmaker Shawkat Chowdhury promised to make arrangement to construct a permanent concrete bridge at Naur Ghat but he never visited the site afterwards.

Contacted, SM

Keramatullah Nannu, Local Government and Engineering Department engineer of the upazila, said they had sent a project proposal to the higher authorities for construction of a bridge over the Bullai River and they are now waiting for its approval.



PHOTO: STAR

People of eight villages in the surrounding areas have to take risky ride on small boats to cross Bullai River in Kishoreganj upazila under Nilphamari district in absence of any bridge there.

61 Indian fishermen held for intrusion

A CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Bangladesh Navy personnel on Monday night detained 61 Indian fishermen along with five fishing trawlers from the Bay for intruding into the Bangladesh maritime territory.

The seized trawlers are FB Laxmi, FB Pradip, FB Dakkhineshwari, FB Tripathi and FB Satyanarayan.

The law enforcer also seized 3,100 pieces of hilsa from the trawlers, said Narayan Chandra Mondal, district fisheries officer in Bagerhat.

During the drive, Sanjay Samanta, 35, a fisherman from one of the trawlers, allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself inside the toilet.

The deceased's body and the Indian fishermen were handed over to Mongla Police Station yesterday.

Mongla police later sent the body to Bagerhat Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Quoting the navy, Manjur Elahi, sub-inspector of Mongla Police Station, said a patrol team of the navy arrested the fishermen, some 90 nautical miles off shore, while they were fishing near the fairway buoy in the Bay of Bengal on Monday night.

The arrestees and the deceased hail from different areas in South 24-paraganas district in the Indian state of Paschim Banga.



PHOTO: STAR

Fishermen catch hilsa in the Meghna River at Majherchar in Haimchar upazila under Chandpur district on September 26, defying the ongoing 15-day government ban meant for protection of mother hilsa and ensuring their safe spawning.

34 more fishermen jailed for defying hilsa netting ban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

Mobility courts here yesterday sentenced 34 more fishermen to one year's imprisonment each for catching hilsa in the Meghna River, defying a 15-day temporary ban.

Of the convicts, 31 were identified as Kalu Bapari, Md Monsur, Ruhul Amin, Hasan, Shah Alam, Habib, Abul Kashem, Osman Goni, Monir, Abul Halim, Siddik, Selim, Oli Ullah, Iman Gazi, Harun, Salam, Liton, Ripon, Shahid, Joynal, Nazrul, Kalu Mia, Hashim, Kalam, Siddik Ali, Osman, Monir Hossain, Hakim, Farid, Arif and Sumon.

Additional Superintendent of Police BM Nuruzzaman of Chandpur River Police said a team of the law enforcers conducted drives from

Lagnimara Char to Haimchar area in Sadar upazila from 7:00am to 4:00pm yesterday and detained 31 fishermen. They also seized 81kg of mother hilsa from them.

The arrestees were later produced before the courts of executive magistrates Kamal Mohammad Rashed and Pulok Kumar Mondal. The courts sentenced them to one year's imprisonment each.

In another drive, members of Coastguard yesterday detained three fishermen from the Meghna River.

The arrestees were produced before a mobile court in the afternoon that punished them, said Lt Nuruzzaman Sheikh, station commander of Chandpur Coastguard.

The government has imposed a 15-day tempo-

rary ban on September 25 on catching, selling and transporting hilsa for safe spawning and protection of mother hilsa.

On Sunday, eight fishermen were jailed for one year each for fishing hilsa in the Meghna River, defying the on going ban.

Law enforcers arrested the fishermen from Harina Ghat in Sadar upazila and Char Bhairabi in Haimchar upazila in the afternoon, said Sub-inspector Mosharraf Hossain of Chandpur River Police Outpost.

They were later produced before the courts of executive magistrates Mohammad Rashed and Saiful Islam which delivered the verdict, said Omar Faruk, sub-inspector of the river police outpost.