

Traumatised, she learns her world has gone dark

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sheuli Akhter did not bow to the pressure of her husband for money and so his brutality led to her losing eyesight forever.

The 40-year-old yesterday came to know that she would not see the world for the rest of her life after doctors conducted surgery on both her eyes for four hours at National Institute of Ophthalmology in the capital.

Her husband slashed her eyes with a knife on Thursday over an altercation.

"She was traumatised by the news," said Prof Shawkat Ara Shakoor Milly of the hospital where she was brought early Friday from Jamaibazar in Tongi of Gazipur.

"Both her eyes were badly damaged. We had to clean up the remaining eye-parts to prevent infection and keep the shape of the eyes intact," Shawkat said.

Artificial eyes will be placed in the empty sockets but those will not enable her to see, the doctor added.

On the fateful day, Sheuli's spouse Jewel Hasan tied her hands behind her and then gagged her before beating her up. At one point of the torture, he

slashed her eyes with a knife.

Jewel is her second husband who wanted her to sell the property she got from her first marriage and give the money to him, Sheuli said. He had been demanding money from her since their marriage five years back.

Sheuli has two children from her previous marriage, police said.

Jewel wanted Sheuli's daughter to live with them so that he could grab her share of the property as well, victim's relatives told The Daily Star.

As Sheuli refused and sent her daughter to live with her maternal grandparents in Dinajpur, he became violent.

Sheuli married Jewel after the death of her first husband, police said. Jewel is a cousin of her late husband.

According to relatives, her first husband was murdered in 2009. Both Sheuli and Jewel spent a year in prison for their alleged involvement in the murder and came out on bail five years ago.

Jewel is an accused in 10 cases, including murder, filed with Tongi Police Station, said Officer-in-Charge Firoz Talukder by phone. The accused is on the run now, he added.



Sabrina Akter Akhi tries to listen to her mother Sheuli Akter's mumble at the capital's National Institute of Ophthalmology and Hospital. Sheuli's 'addict' husband gouged out her eyes at their Gazipur home on Thursday after she refused to give him money by selling her children's properties.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Protester killed in J&K after Modi's visit

AFP, Srinagar

A protester was killed during clashes with government forces in Indian-administered Kashmir yesterday hours after Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the disputed region, police said.

"The boy was injured in clashes with security forces and died on way to hospital," Javid Gillani, inspector general of the police, told AFP.

The day was marred with minor clashes; however, the unrest intensified soon after Modi's rally was over and restrictions were eased.

Separatists opposed to Indian rule of the territory had called for a march to counter Modi's rally but authorities imposed a near-lockdown to thwart it.

Modi announced \$12 billion in financial assistance to the restive Himalayan region, more than a year after deadly floods devastated large parts of it.

Speaking amid intense security, the Hindu nationalist leader said he wished to take India's only Muslim-majority state back to its "former glory".

Modi stressed the need to create jobs for young people, boost tourism and infrastructure, and close a gaping

digital divide in the conflict-wracked region, where many do not have access to the Internet.

"To fulfil these dreams, the Indian government is announcing an 80,000 crore rupee (\$12.1 billion) package to Jammu and Kashmir," Modi told a cheering crowd at a public rally in Srinagar, as authorities imposed a curfew for the second day running.

"My heart wants this money to be spent to change your fortunes, to give strength to your youth, to build a modern Kashmir," he said as some in the audience jumped up and down, waving their arms with joy.

"Not only are Delhi's funds yours, but so is its heart."

Srinagar was hardest hit after the rain-swollen River Jhelum burst its banks in September 2014 leaving thousands stranded.

The floods killed 300 people and caused an estimated \$16 billion worth of damage, with thousands of homes and large tracts of farmland ruined, according to official data.

Most Indian prime ministers have announced economic packages for Kashmir in the past, with some seeking political engagement with separatists

in the restive region.

"I hope he (Modi) will stop all the violence here," said Bashir Ahmed, a resident of Srinagar who had come to listen to the prime minister along with his family.

But Modi steered clear of politics in his speech, prompting opposition leader Omar Abdullah to react sharply.

"PM Modi has made the same mistake of weighing the Kashmir issue in Rupees & Paise!!!!," Abdullah, the former chief minister of the state tweeted.

Authorities imposed stringent restrictions and suspended mobile Internet services -- common during high-profile visits to the volatile region, which is divided between India and Pakistan but claimed by both in its entirety.

Hundreds of separatist activists were arrested ahead of the visit, with leaders confined to their homes to prevent them from holding a protest march against Modi's rally.

"Modi's visit and the economic package will not change anything, like in the past," top separatist leader Syed Ali Geelani told reporters outside his residence, surrounded by police to prevent him from leaving.

Reeling from terror blow

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Many publishers are now in a dilemma about publishing books on any sensitive issue.

Meshbah Uddin Ahmed, publisher of Admad Publishing and also acting secretary of Academic and Creative Publisher's Association of Bangladesh, told The Daily Star, "We are talking among ourselves about what we can publish and what we cannot. No one wants to get assaulted for publishing a book."

Robin Ahsan of Srabon Prokashan said "Even if we bring out such books, we'll have difficulty marketing them as no bookshop will want to display them fearing attack."

Talking about the publishing ventures of Dipan and Tutul, writers have said they were very popular among young writers.

Young poet Pranto Palash said, "In fact, Tutul bhui brought out the largest number of books by young writers during the last Ekushey book fair."

He said both of them had openly announced that they would not publish any books by fundamentalists.

Murshid Anwar, deputy director of Bangla Academy, said, "Nonfiction

Mahrukh Mohiuddin, director of Marketing and Business Development of University Press Limited, said it was only likely that publishers, in this context, would be more careful in bringing out books on sensitive issues.

When asked if publishers would refrain from publishing a writer whose works deal with sensitive religious issues, Sharifa Bulbul of Balaka Prokash said, "The publishing decision is made on the quality of one's writing, not on what he believes or does not believe."

She said despite all threats she'd continue to bring out books by free thinkers. "We cannot sit quietly. We are not afraid but worried."

"Each person has his right to practice his religion. Just like we have right to be Muslims, Hindus, or Christians, a person has the right to be an atheist," she added.

Publishers also said the financial impact of this pressure on progressive publishing would not be significant.

Murshid Anwar, deputy director of Bangla Academy, said, "Nonfiction

books, which include research work and essays on social, cultural, political, religious, literary and economic issues, constitute only 20% of the total sale of books at the Ekushey book fair and the readership of this is mostly limited to researchers and students."

Such books make up a small portion of the entire industry of books, said Mostafa Salim, executive director of Academic & Creative Publishers Association of Bangladesh.

"If books on sensitive religious issues are not published, there would not be any loss to business. But the space for free, new and advanced thoughts would become limited."

Milan Nath, publisher of Anupam Prakashani, said, "Publishers are not people of a separate island. If there is no place for tolerance in the society then works of various kinds and genres cannot be published."

Mofidul Hoque said, "A society needs free thoughts and ideas. It is the government's responsibility to ensure tolerance in the society and protect and support those who promote a vibrant creative future."

'Jet nearly avoided missile in Sinai'

Report says UK plane entering Sharm 'missed rocket by 300m' in August

AFP, London

A British tourist plane heading in to land at the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh came within 1,000 feet (300 metres) of a missile in August, newspapers reported yesterday.

The near-miss involved a Thomson Airways plane carrying 189 passengers from London on August 23. British authorities concluded it was not a "targeted attack".

The incident happened around two months before a Russian tourist plane leaving the Red Sea resort plummeted from the sky into the Sinai Peninsula last Saturday, killing all 224 people onboard.

A spokesman for Britain's Department for Transport (DfT) said of the August near-miss: "We investigated the reported incident at the time and concluded that it was not a targeted attack and was likely to be connected to routine exercises being conducted by the Egyptian military in the area at the time."

The Daily Mail newspaper said the Thomson Airways pilot took evasive action and landed safely. Holidaymakers were not told about the incident.

"The pilot was in the cockpit and saw the rocket coming towards the plane. He ordered the flight turn to the left to avoid the rocket, which was about 1,000 feet away," the tabloid quoted a source as saying.

"Another Thomson plane was also flying into (Sharm el-Sheikh) at the same time and saw the rocket.

"The crew were told the rocket was from an Egyptian military exercise, but with what has happened there is a lot of fear. The incident left staff petrified."

A Thomson spokesman said: "Thomson Airways can confirm that an event was reported by the crew of flight TOM 476 on August 23.

"Upon landing into Sharm el-Sheikh, an initial assessment was conducted and the event was immediately reported to the UK DfT in line with established protocol.

"The DfT conducted a full investigation in conjunction with other UK government experts.

"After reviewing the details of the case, the investigation concluded that there was no cause for concern and it was safe to continue our flying programme to Sharm-el Sheikh."

3 suspended

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authorities would, however, consider the situation before taking action against them.

The five constables were carrying Chinese rifles and shotguns but those were not loaded, said police.

An administrative committee has been interrogating the three suspended cops, Kawser said.

Following the incident, the authorities also suspended Sub-inspector Habibur Rahman of Ashulia Police Station for "negligence" in duty.

According to Ashulia police, Habibur, who was on duty overnight, was supposed to stay at the checkpoint until another one took over the charge

from him. But he left the place earlier leaving five constables without an officer to command.

SI Ekramul Haque of the same police station, who was supposed to take over the duty in the morning, was on his way to the checkpoint when the attack took place.

NO HEADWAY IN PROBE

Four days into the attack, investigators could not make any breakthrough in the probe, let alone arresting anyone.

Investigating officer Dipak Chandra Saha, officer-in-charge of Ashulia police, said they were still working on the case. A probe body comprising officials of Dhaka range has been helping him with the investigation, he added.

Eyes on two verdicts today

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a group of brutes in Kumargaon Bus Stand area of Sylhet Sadar allegedly for trying to steal a rickshaw van. Tied to a pole, he screamed for help, cried for water and begged for his life. But they laughed and jeered at him till the boy went silent, forever. One of them even filmed the horrendous incident and shared it on Facebook.

As for Rakib, also 13 years old, his only 'fault' was that he had left his old garage job and joined elsewhere. For this, he had to die a cruel death.

On August 3, his former employer Md Sharif and his uncle Mintu Mia stripped the boy naked, inserted a high-pressure air pump nozzle into his rectum and filled the body with air. Rakib's intestines tore apart and lungs burst as air filled the abdomen, which killed him later.

RAJON MURDER CASE

Sylhet Metropolitan Sessions Judge Akbar Hossain will deliver the verdict today as per the date he had set earlier,

said Public Prosecutor Mafur Ali.

On September 22, the court indicted 13 people on charges of beating Rajon to death. They are Quamrul Islam; Muhit Alam, 32; Shamim Alam, 20; Pavel Islam, 18; Ali Haider alias Ali, 34; Moyna Mia, 45; Nur Ahmed alias Nuru Mia, 20; Dulal Ahmed, 30; Ayaz Ali, 45; Taz Uddin Badal, 28; Firoz Mia, 50; Asmat Ali, 42; and Ruhul Amin, 25.

Among them, Pavel and Taz are on the run.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Rajon's father Azizur Rahman said, "I was waiting for this day. I want capital punishment for my son's killers."

He also demanded departmental probe into the negligence of police in arresting the killers, and sought security for his family.

A sub-inspector of Jalalabad Police Station was withdrawn allegedly for cutting a deal with Quamrul and helping him flee to Saudi Arabia after the killing.

Alamgir Hossain, the then officer-

in-charge, and Zakir Hossain, a sub-inspector of the same police station, were also suspended for negligence in arresting killers, illicit financial transaction and misconduct with Rajon's father.

RAKIB MURDER CASE

Dilruba Sultana, judge of Khulna Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, is expected to give her judgment in the case around the noon, victim's lawyer Mominul Islam said.

On September 25, Police pressed charges against Sharif, Mintu and Sharif's mother Beauty Begum, who allegedly aided and abetted the killing.

The three were indicted on October 5.

"We have been able to prove the murder charge against all three accused and hope that the court will give capital punishment to them," Mominul said, adding that verdict within three months of a killing is unprecedented in the country's history.

Strike stalkers

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Alongside 18 other girls from various villages across Lalmonirhat, Bipasha and Champa arrive at the hall room of the district stadium with enthusiasm. Arranged by Rupanatar, a local NGO, and funded by Plan International Bangladesh, karate training aims to empower women by teaching them basic self-defence skills.

"I am learning karate to gain confidence and to be able to stand against crimes like stalking," says Sumi Akhter of Mostafi village. "Having learnt karate, I face no problem to go to school or return home. The training is a must for all girls because when we know karate, we know we can take care of ourselves."

Course trainer Fency Akhter, an undergraduate student of Harati village, is well satisfied to train these young women. "I learnt karate from last year myself," she says, "and I'm really pleased to have been recruited as a trainer for the others."

According to Rupanatar officials, the 20

girls, all students, are from different areas of the district, especially from remote villages, and will receive 24 days' karate training every year under their Girl Power Project.

"Karate builds both mental and physical strength," says the project's technical officer Rumi Begum. "Once trained, the girls can lead better lives, free from the fear of harassment and insecurity."

Indeed, the project's benefits extend beyond the girls themselves. "We feel much more comfortable now," says one of their guardians, Delowar Hossain. "Our daughter knows how to protect herself from any incident and it means we worry less when she goes to school alone now."

"The karate training is invaluable," agrees Shafiqul Islam, a teacher at Fulgachh High School in the town. "I always encourage the girls because of karate's potential to save them from harm."

These girls are now bad news for stalkers in Lalmonirhat, the guardians said.

JS goes into session today

BSS, Dhaka

The 10th parliament goes into its eighth session at 4:30pm today.

Sources at the parliament secretariat said preparations for the session have been completed.

The business advisory committee of the Jatiya Sangsad will hold a meeting before the convening of the session to fix the duration and businesses of the session. Speaker Shirin Sharmin Choudhury will chair the meeting.

President Abdul Hamid convened the session on October 15 as per article 72 (1) of the constitution.

Sources said the eighth session would be a brief one. However, a number of important bills are likely to be passed in the session.

A total of 14 bills, including the Local Government (amendment) Bill-2015, have been submitted to the bill section of parliament so far.

The seventh session of the current parliament was prorogued on September 10. Six bills were passed during the eight working days of the last session.

Lawyer stabbed to death in Gazipur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A lawyer was stabbed to death by two youths in Chhaya Bithi area of Gazipur town last evening.

The deceased was Enamul Huq Biplob, 42. He was an apprentice lawyer at Gazipur Court, reports our Gazipur correspondent.

Doctors at Kurmitola General Hospital declared him dead when he was rushed there, Khandaker Rezaul Hasan, officer-in-charge of Joydevpur Police Station, told The Daily Star.

Locals and police sources said two youths named Rabbi and Robin surrounded the lawyer when he reached near his house around 5:30pm. The duo stabbed him indiscriminately and fled the scene immediately.

Police sources said enmity between Biplob and the assailants might have triggered the incident.

SEIZURE OF PHENSEDYL

Whose car is it?

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Highway police yesterday seized 300 bottles of Phensedyl from a car on Dhaka-Chittagong highway in Comilla's Chandina upazila.

However, there are confusions over the ownership of the vehicle.

Around 7:00am, the car was heading towards Dhaka from Comilla when police signaled it to stop near Khadghor area. But, it drove on.

The law enforcers caught it after a chase.

The driver, Bashar, was detained but a man who was sitting inside fled, said sources at highway police.

According to Bashar, the car owner is a senior assistant secretary of the public administration ministry who is now an officer on special duty (OSD), said Monirul Islam, assistant sub-inspector of Illiotganj Highway Police under Daudkandi Police Station.

The detainee himself had managed a car sticker of the ministry and visiting cards of the official, said the police official.

Rezaul Karim, superintendent of highway police (east zone), however, said the number plate and documents found inside the car had different registration numbers, suggesting it had two other owners.

He said according to the registration number, the car belonged to one Faruk Sarker and it was bought on loan from a private bank.

The car documents showed another private bank as the owner.

Four Pakistanis

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They were trying to rebuild their network in the country and topple the government through subversive activities, Monirul claimed.

He said they frequently visited Pakistan for their business purpose.

"We are quizzing them to know if they were involved in the recent attacks or murders in the country," the joint commissioner said.

After the arrest of JMB chief Saidur Rahman in May 2010, the militant outfit broke into several groups, and the arrestees are members of one such faction, Monirul said.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court placed the arrestees on a three-day remand each in connection with a case filed against them with Airport Police Station. The police had sought 10 days to grill them.

Police arrested a number of Pakistani citizens in the country at different times and seized a huge amount of fake Indian rupees from their possession.