

8 Bangladeshis back home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eight Bangladeshi nationals, who were languishing in South Indian prisons and shelter homes for years, have finally returned home thanks to efforts by an Indian NGO and the governments of Bangladesh and India.

The efforts came following a news report published in The Daily Star last year on a Bangladeshi victim of a sex racket who wrote about her ordeals in a book during her detention at a shelter home in Kerala. In response, the Bangladesh government started looking for Bangladeshi nationals detained in different shelter homes and prisons of that state.

After visits to Kerala by Bangladeshi Consulate officers in January with the help of Arm of Joy, a South Indian NGO, the country's high commission in Delhi issued temporary travel permits to 20 Bangladeshis languishing in different jails and shelter homes in Kerala.

Of them, seven men and a young girl returned home through the Benapole checkpost on Sunday night. Nayek Subedar Abdul Rahim, in-charge of the 26 BCB camp at Benapole checkpost, said the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) had handed them over to Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

The arrestees had earlier gone to India illegally in search of jobs, he added. Indian police arrested them and they were sent to jail by a court.

Of the seven male returnees, six were in Kozhikode district jail in Kerala and one boy was from an Indian government home in the same district. Thirteen other Bangladeshis - one girl and three women and nine men - who had travel permits could not return because the Indian authorities did not give them clearance.

Anoop Gangadharan, founder of Arm of Joy, said, "Our authorities have blocked the travel of four girls on grounds that they are needed here for court proceedings. They have been here for last eight years and still the court proceedings are not over. We are approaching the Human Rights Commission and the High Court to fight against this injustice."

Mosharaf Hossain of the Bangladesh mission in Delhi told The Daily Star over phone that they would issue travel permits for the 13 Bangladeshis again since the previous ones expired on April 25.

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Fuel price cut

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The last time the fares of inter-district and long-haul buses were increased was in 2013 following a fuel price hike. In Dhaka and Chittagong metropolises, the fare was hiked in September last year.

Talking to The Daily Star, several passengers demanded that the fare be reduced.

"Previously, we noticed that bus operators started charging high even before the government revised fare following fuel price hike. Therefore, the owners must reduce the fare now," said Ragib Hasan, a private service holder, who frequently travels from Dhaka to the northern districts.

Bangladesh Passengers' Welfare Association Secretary General Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury said, "Reduction of fare is the right of passengers because the prices of fuel have been brought down. But bus owners do not do so, rather they show arbitrary attitudes."

However, energy ministry officials expressed hope that transport fares would be reduced soon.

Even, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader on April 7 at a programme in the capital said transport fare would be reduced by 1 paisa per kilometre if the government brought down fuel prices by Tk 1 per litre.

But bus owners are now giving different excuses and saying that the cost for vehicle maintenance, wages of workers, tolls of bridges and prices of motor parts have increased in the last couple of years.

"All these factors have contributed to an increase in the operating costs of buses. In such a situation, we will have to incur loss if fares are reduced," Romesh Chandra Ghosh, managing director of Shyamoli Paribahan, told The Daily Star.

"We will definitely scale down the fare if the government reduces fuel cost by Tk 10 per litre," said Abul Kalam, president of bus owners' association at the capital's Sayedabad Bus Terminal.

Contacted, Road Transport and Highways Division Secretary MAN Siddique yesterday said a verbal directive had already been issued to the BRTA to convene a meeting of the fare re-fixing committee to readjust passenger fare.

BRTA Director (engineering) Nurul Islam said, "We have already started working on this. We hope to prepare a draft of a revised fare chart within the next two or three days."

Currently, a passenger has to pay Tk 1.45 for travelling per kilometre on inter-district routes, while Tk 1.70 (bus) and Tk 1.60 (minibus) for travelling per kilometre in Dhaka and Chittagong.

Is this how

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While writing those poems in Kolkata, Jibananda laid bare his emotions for this part of the Bengal. He wished to be reborn to come back to the banks of the Dhansiri river that gives an overwhelming sense of longing for nature.

Mehedi Hasan, a resident of Munshi Garage area and student of class-IX, said the foul smell spoils the environment of the library.

"I do not understand how a dustbin could be placed in front of a famous person's house that many people come to visit. Nobody is taking any step to shift it."

Many journalists and photographers came here in the last two years to publish news over the issue but nothing worked, said Nayan, a tea vendor in the area.

Mohammad Mushin, founder of Adda Dhanshiri, an organisation that researches into the poet's works, said the organisation had asked the authorities several times to remove the dustbin from there but to no avail.

"I have visited the house a hundred

times with different visitors, including foreign guests. They all criticised the authorities for placing the dustbin in front of the famous poet's house," said Mushin, a professor of English and dean of the social science faculty at Barisal University.

Students of the university and Braja Mohan College where Jibananda served as a lecturer in 1935 have recently organised a human chain, pressing the same demand.

The city corporation is ready to move the dustbin elsewhere, said Dipok Lal Mridha, officer of the cleaning and waste management of the city corporation.

But all that needs is an order from the mayor, he said.

The mayor could not be reached by phone for comments.

The city corporation will shift all the temporary dustbins from the city soon, said its Chief Executive Ranajit Kumar.

Meanwhile, people of Bangladesh who find Jibananda very close to their hearts will recite his poems for their love for the country.

4 murdered in 3 dists

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armed with sharp weapons and firearms swooped on them while they were sitting outside their houses around midnight.

"We heard around 50 gunshots and screams outside our house around 12:00am. Hearing the gunshots, we did not go out of our homes to see what was happening. When everything was quiet around 1:00am, we went outside and found the bodies of my brother and his friend," said Mohammed Tayeb, younger brother of Kashem.

He claimed that his brother was murdered by the recently deceased Ukil Ahmed's family members with whom his brother had a longstanding feud. Ukil's brother Osman and Tofail led the team of murderers, he alleged.

Ukil, 52, was killed in an attack in the upazila on March 1 this year. His family members filed a murder case accusing 22 people, including Kashem and Manjur.

Meanwhile, according to the inquest report prepared by the police, Kashem had several bullet wounds in his body, particularly in the neck, chest and belly. There were hacking marks on Manjur's body and bullet wounds in his chest.

Mosiuddoula Reza, assistant superintendent of police of Hathazari Circle, said they were looking into whether the killings have anything to do with the March 1 murder.

He said Kashem and Manjur were accused in five and two cases for murder and robbery respectively. There was a longstanding dispute between the two rival groups over occupation of hilly land in the upazila, he added.

No one was arrested in connection with the murders, said the police official.

KUSHTIA Unidentified criminals hacked one brother to death and severely injured another at Fakirabad village in Bheramara upazila last night.

Of them, Mojibor Rahman, 65, a retired headmaster of a primary school, died on the spot. His younger brother Mizanur Rahman was taken to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital in a critical state, police and family mem-

bers said.

Nur Islam Khondkar, officer-in-charge of Bheramara Police Station said a group of seven to eight criminals swooped on the siblings soon after they came out of a local mosque after isha prayers around 8:45pm.

The criminals hacked them indiscriminately with sharp weapons and left.

Hearing screams, locals rushed there and took Mizanur to Bheramara Upazila Health Complex. He was later shifted to Kushtia General Hospital. As his condition deteriorated, Mizanur was taken to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

Taposh Kumar, resident medical officer of the Kushtia hospital, said Mizanur's condition was critical.

Zoynal Abedin, additional superintendent of Kushtia police, told The Daily Star that police were trying to pinpoint the motive and identify the killers.

BRAHMANBARIA A retired army sepoy was stabbed to death allegedly over a dispute regarding money in the town last night.

The deceased is Bahar Mia, 40, of Birgaon union in Nabinagar upazila.

Police arrested one Mamun of the same upazila in connection with the killing.

Bahar lend Mamun Tk 50,000 about a year ago, locals said.

Yesterday evening, Mamun asked Bahar to meet him in Brahmanbaria town for the money, said police.

They met in Pirbari area of the town around 10:00pm and after a few minutes they locked in an altercation over the money.

At one stage, Mamun stabbed at Bahar's throat with a knife, said Mainur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Brahmanbaria Sadar Police Station.

As Bahar screamed, locals rushed and caught Mamun and handed him over to the police.

However, Bahar died on the spot, added the OC.

The body was sent to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

During primary interrogation, Mamun admitted that he called Bahar over the phone to meet him for the money, said the police official.

Hackers compromised

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The BB lost \$81 million in foreign reserves after a band of hackers broke into its system and stole the money from its account with the Federal Reserve Bank of New York in February.

Adrian Nish, BAE's head of threat intelligence, said he had never seen such an elaborate scheme from criminal hackers.

"I can't think of a case where we have seen a criminal go to the level of effort to customise it for the environment they were operating in," he told Reuters.

"I guess it was the realisation that the potential payoff made that effort worthwhile."

The malware, named evtdiag.exe, was designed to hide the hackers' tracks by changing information on a SWIFT database at the BB, which tracks information about transfer requests, according to the BAE.

Nish said he was highly confident that the malware was used in the attack because it was compiled close to the date of the heist and was uploaded from Bangladesh.

The BAE said the malware appears to be just part of a wider attack toolkit and would have been used to cover the attackers' tracks as they sent forged payment instructions to make the transfers.

The custom malware was submitted by a user in Bangladesh, and it contains sophisticated functionality for interacting with local SWIFT Alliance Access software running in the victim infrastructure.

ing to the BAE.

Belgium-based Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT), a global member-owned cooperative, said it is aware of a malware that aims to reduce financial institutions' abilities to evidence fraudulent transactions on their local systems.

"Contrary to reports that suggest otherwise, this malware has no impact on SWIFT's network or core messaging services," it said in a statement on its website.

It, however, didn't mention the case of the theft of \$81 million from the BB account with the Federal Reserve Bank.

This was the first time SWIFT issued an official statement after the February 4 cyber heist.

SWIFT said it understood that the malware is designed to hide the traces of fraudulent payments from customers' local database applications and can only be installed on users' local systems by hackers that have successfully identified and exploited weaknesses in the local security.

SWIFT also mentioned that it had developed a facility to assist customers in enhancing their security and to spot inconsistencies in their local database records.

However, the key defence for users in case of such an attack is to implement appropriate security measures in their local environments to safeguard systems -- in particular those used to access SWIFT -- against such potential security threats.

"Such protections should be implemented by users to prevent the injection of malware into, or any misappropriation of, their interfaces and other core systems."

The company said it was making customers aware of the new facility through its ongoing security campaign.

Tortured

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of Borumchara area of Anwara upazila, came to visit his paternal aunt at Refinery Gate in Patenga. He went to Ishak's shop with one of his cousins around 4:30pm on Saturday.

He had a bottle of cold drinks worth Tk 16 at the shop but could not pay for it. Being furious, the shop owner started bullying him. At one stage, Minhaj ran away from the shop with Ishak chasing him.

During the chase, Ishak tripped and fell on the road. The fall made him further infuriated and as soon as he got hold of Minhaj, he started beating up the boy indiscriminately.

A local passer-by recorded the horrific scene in his cellphone and the clip soon spread in the locality.

The clip eventually landed at law enforcers' hands and they detained the accused on Sunday afternoon. A case was filed in this connection at 10:00am yesterday.

The video clip shows the shop owner kicking the boy repeatedly in the head. He was also hitting the boy's head with a shoe. But that much did not calm him down. He went on to tie up his prey with a rope and started beating him up again.

During the torture the boy was seen desperately trying to hold the brute's legs seeking pardon for the offense he had done.

He also called the abuser uncle and even father to evoke sympathy in him in vain.

The crowd that witnessed the scene comprised mostly children who dared not save the victim. After nearly 15 minutes, the accused left the scene.

Officer-in-Charge of Patenga police Alamgir Mahmud said the shop owner should have complained to the boy's guardian. Instead, he beat up the boy in a horrific manner, he added.

Two children have meanwhile been harshly beaten up by an elderly man for stealing litchis in Pirojpur Sadar upazila's Chitholiya village.

The victims are six-and-a-half-year-old Zayda, daughter of Shafikul Islam Kazi, and five-year-old Ferdaus Kazi, son of Badal Kazi, of Chitholiya village.

Zayda's mother Kulsum Begum said Zayda and Ferdaus along with some other children went to an adjacent litchi orchard owned by Miraz Khan and collected fallen litchis from the ground on Saturday afternoon.

After sometime, Miraz went to visit his orchard.

Sensing his presence, the children tried to run away, but Zayda and Ferdaus were left behind and were eventually caught by Miraz. He 'punished' the children by brutally beating them up with a stick.

Kulsum said the two children were trembling and crying when they returned home. They were very traumatised and had bruises all over their bodies. They were taken to Pirojpur Sadar Hospital in the afternoon and were admitted there.

"I found several beating marks on my son's back," said Mukta, Ferdaus' mother.

Dr Nani Gopal Roy, resident medical officer (RMO) of the hospital, said, "Ferdaus has come round and we have released him today [Monday]. But Zayda is still traumatised and has developed breathing problem. She will take more time to recover."

No serious injury was found on the children, he added.

Confessing to the beating, Miraz said, "After entering my orchard I found the children stealing litchis from my trees. So, I slapped them several times as I became angry."

Miraz however denied using a stick to beat up the children.

No case was filed in relation to the incident.

According to Ain O Salish Kendra, 43 children were subjected to physical torture in last three months, but only eight cases were filed.

Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum's (BSAF) statistics shows 30 children were physically tortured and seven children beaten to death in the corresponding time.

In 2015, 90 children were reported to have been subjected to physical torture.

23 die

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He said the dead included the baby boy's father and seven of his uncles.

Six African nations could be malaria-free by 2020: WHO

AFP, Geneva

Six countries in Africa, the continent where malaria is most widespread, could be free of the disease by 2020, according to a WHO report published yesterday to mark World Malaria Day.

One of the goals of the World Health Organization's 2016-2030 programme against malaria is to wipe out the disease in at least 10 countries by the end of this decade.

"WHO estimates that 21 countries are in a position to achieve this goal, including six countries in the African Region, where the burden of the disease is heaviest," the Geneva-based organisation said in a statement.

These countries are Algeria, Botswana, Cape Verde, Comoros, South Africa and Swaziland.

In South Africa the elimination of malaria is a public health objective. The country registered 11,700 cases of the disease in 2014 -- down from 64,000 in 2000 -- with most diagnoses coming from areas bordering

Swaziland, Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

"Through targeted action and cross-border collaboration, South Africa has the potential to eliminate malaria by 2020," the WHO report said.

The other countries the organisation believes could achieve this objective are China, Malaysia and South Korea, eight Latin American nations (Costa Rica, Belize, El Salvador, Mexico, Argentina, Paraguay, Ecuador and Suriname), as well as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Oman, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Timor-Leste and Nepal.

Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus eradicated malaria in 2015, according to a WHO report published earlier this month.

Some 214 million people suffered from malaria last year of which 438,000 died from the disease, according to the organisation.

Nine out of 10 deaths from the disease in 2015 came from sub-Saharan Africa, the report said.

US outraged

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US Ambassador to Bangladesh Marcia Stephens Bloom Bernicat has urged the government to apprehend the criminals behind the murders.

In a statement, she said, "I am devastated by the brutal murder of Xulhaz Mannan and another young Bangladeshi this evening in Dhaka. Xulhaz was more than a colleague to those of us fortunate to work with him at the US Embassy. He was a dear friend. Our prayers are with Xulhaz, the other victim, and those injured in the attack."

She added, "We abhor this senseless act of violence and urge the Government of Bangladesh in the strongest terms to apprehend the criminals behind these murders."

Amnesty International has also condemned the murders.

Champa Patel, Amnesty's South Asia Director, said: "The brutal killing today of an editor of an LGBTI publication (Roopbaan) and his friend, days after a university professor was hacked to death, underscores the appalling lack of protection being afforded to a

range of peaceful activists in the country."

Patel added that there have been four deplorable killings so far this month alone and it is shocking that no one has been held to account for these horrific attacks and that almost no protection has been given to threatened members of civil society.

"While the Bangladeshi authorities have failed to bring these violent groups to justice, the attackers have expanded their range of targets to now include a university professor and LGBTI activists," said the Amnesty official.

Meanwhile, the Committee to Protect Journalists has deplored the killings.

"Authorities must immediately investigate the murder of Xulhaz Mannan, and bring the perpetrators to justice," said Bob Dietz, CPJ's Asia programme coordinator.

"Journalists and intellectuals are under attack in Bangladesh and the government has done little to end the murderous mayhem or to ensure the safety of at-risk groups."

Mahmudur remanded

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conspiracy allegedly hatched in the US, produced Mahmudur in the court during the hearing on a remand prayer.

Metropolitan Magistrate Golam Nabi directed the IO to complete interrogating Mahmudur in seven workdays.

The IO was also asked to follow High Court directives during the interrogation.

The HC earlier issued instructions to be followed by law enforcers while interrogating an accused.

In the remand prayer submitted on April 18, the IO said the DB had found Mahmudur's involvement in the matter and so he should be quizzed for vital information.

The defence opposed the plea, saying their client was languishing in jail since April 2013 and that he did not go to America after 2006 according to his mother.

It added that Mahmudur had been implicated in the case as part of a conspiracy to harass him politically.

Earlier in the day, the Amar Desh editor was shown arrested in the case in response to another appeal by detectives.

In the same case, senior journalist and a pro-BNP intellectual Shafik Rehman was arrested at his Eskaton residence in the capital on April 16. He was remanded twice from the next day

for 10 days.

Police claimed that Shafik admitted meeting four people including three convicted by a US court for bribing an FBI special agent for confidential information.

They are US-Bangladesh citizen Rizve Ahmed Caesar, former FBI special agent Robert Lustyik and his "contact" Johannes Thaler.

DB Inspector Fazlur Rahman filed the case with Paltan Police Station in August last year.

According to the case statement, Caesar's father Mohammad Ullah Mamun, vice-president of BNP's cultural wing Jasas, and some top leaders of the BNP and its allies met in the UK, US and many places in Bangladesh before September 2012 and conspired to abduct and kill the PM's son who lives in America.

In March last year, Caesar was convicted by a US court for bribing an FBI special agent to collect information about a Bangladeshi political figure.

The US Justice Department did not name the person but it is believed to be Joy.

In a Facebook post on March 9 last year, Joy, information and communication technology affairs adviser to the prime minister, accused the BNP leaders of conspiring to abduct and kill him.

British astronaut

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zero gravity conditions. "Hello #London! Fancy a run?" Peake wrote on Twitter before the race, accompanied by a photograph of London from above.

He followed up with a message sent after he completed the marathon, in which he noted that while he had run the 42 kilometres the International Space Station had travelled almost 100,000 kilometres.

"Congratulations to everyone in #London Marathon & #teamastronaut," he wrote. "Gonna sleep well tonight!"

Peake is the second person to complete a marathon in space, after US astronaut Sunita Williams ran the Boston Marathon on the ISS in 2007 in a time of four hours, 23 minutes and 10 seconds.

But Peake managed to achieve the fastest ever marathon in space by making a time of three hours, 35 minutes and 21 seconds, according to estimated times posted on the website of the European Space Agency.

"Guinness World Records can confirm that ESA Astronaut Tim Peake has achieved a brand new Guinness World Records title for the Fastest marathon in orbit," the records body wrote on its website.

Peake had been helped by a training regime onboard the space station and an iPad showing a moving image of the run.

Back on earth in the British capital, more than 39,000 people completed the London Marathon, the biggest number ever as the event marked its 36th edition.

The men's race winner was Kenya's Eliud Kipchoge, who finished in two hours, three minutes and five seconds -- the second fastest time ever recorded.

The women's title was taken by fellow Kenyan Jemima Sumgong, who finished in two hours, 22 minutes and 58 seconds despite earlier hitting her head in a heavy fall.