

RAPE, MURDER OF TONU Disclose second autopsy report Demand Comilla people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Civil society members yesterday demanded the second autopsy report of college girl Sohagi Jahan Tonu be made public soon to put her killers on trial. They made the demand at a human chain programme under the banner of Comilla Sorbostorer Nagorik in front of Comilla Town Hall in Kandirpar in the afternoon. Speakers at the programme said complexities have arisen over finding the reason for Tonu's death and identifying her killers as the authorities concerned have been dilly-dallying on disclosing the second autopsy report. They also demanded the government take action against Dr Sharmin Sultana of Comilla Medical College Hospital for failing to find evidence of rape after conducting the first autopsy on Tonu's body. The history student at Comilla Victoria College was found dead in a bush inside Comilla Cantonment on March 20.

DNA profiling provided proof that the victim was raped before she was murdered, the Criminal Investigation Department said on May 17. Earlier, forensic doctors at the hospital in their first autopsy report said there was no sign of rape on Tonu's body. On March 28, a local court ordered exhumation of the body from the grave for a fresh autopsy.

Shab-e-Barat

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Sweets and homemade foods among the poor, their neighbours, friends and relatives on the occasion. According to Muslim belief, on this night Almighty Allah decides the fate of all creatures for the coming year taking into account their past deeds. Islamic Foundation Bangladesh and various religious and socio-cultural organisations organised elaborate programmes. Bangladesh Television, Bangladesh Betar, private TV channels and radio stations aired special programmes, while newspapers ran articles, highlighting the significance of the night.



A girl taking food to her family members in cyclone-hit Premashia of Chittagong. Her relatives from a nearby village brought the food for them. Top right, people at a cyclone shelter in the area. Bottom right, badly damaged houses in Premashia, which bore the brunt of the storm on Saturday. The photos were taken on Sunday.



PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Roanu leaves thousands homeless

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In the upazila was damaged, and the villagers are now in constant fear that the damaged part would collapse any moment, allowing seawater to swamp their houses and fields. In Bhola, around 10,000 people of Tazumuddin Upazila were running short of food after the cyclone destroyed their homes. Even 48 hours after the cyclone, many people in the storm-hit villages complained of getting no aid from the government. A number of them have been living under the open sky since Saturday when the cyclone lashed the country's coast with winds up to 88km per hour and rain, killing at least 23 people in Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Bhola, Noakhali, Patuakhali and Laxmipur. While visiting the cyclone-hit areas in Banskhali, Disaster Management and Relief Minister Mofazzal Hossain

Chowdhury Maya gave Tk 20,000 each to the families of 12 victims in Khankhanbad union of the upazila. Housing and Public Works Minister Engr Mosharraf Hossain accompanied him. The ministers ordered the local administration to arrange adequate relief, food and water for the affected people. In Chittagong Division, seedbeds of aush paddy on around 400 hectares of land are now under water. Besides, 360 betel leaf orchards and vegetables on 3,100 hectares of land were damaged by the storm, according to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE). Around 4.83 lakh people in 104 unions of different upazilas in Chittagong were affected by the cyclone, said Deputy Commissioner Mesbah Uddin in the district.

"Some 103,000 families were affected by it. Of them, around 19,437 were affected severely and 83,660 partially," he said at a press conference at his office yesterday. The cyclone ruined crops on 154 acres of land completely and that on 2,541 acres of land partially. Besides, a total of 46,654 houses were damaged, he said. In Cox's Bazar, at least 29,000 houses were damaged and 22,128 families were affected in the 71 unions of eight upazilas. In a primary estimate, the district administration put the financial losses at Tk 17.66 crore. The storm dealt a heavy blow to shrimp farming as a tidal surge ravaged 2,117 shrimp enclosures in seven upazilas, causing a loss of around Tk 13 crore, according to an estimate by the district administration.

The local administration has so far distributed Tk 3.30 lakh, 87 tonnes of rice, 80 sacks of puffed rice and molasses among the cyclone-hit people in the district. Local traders in Kutubdia of the district claimed that they would incur a loss of around Tk 200 crore due to the cyclone. At a press conference in Chittagong city yesterday, Mujibul Huq Bachchu, general secretary of Kutubdia Samity, said an 18-km stretch of the embankment in Kutubdia was washed away and crops on 500 acres of land were damaged in the cyclone. "The damages would amount to around Tk 200 crore," he said, urging the government to send emergency relief to the affected areas. In Patuakhali, the farmers of all eight upazilas have to count losses as

their standing crops were flooded by tidal surge and heavy rainfall. Besides, crops on 3,451 hectares of land were badly damaged in the eight upazilas, according to Patuakhali Agriculture Extension Department. Forkan Mollah, a farmer of Char Wadel, a remote shoal under Baufal upazila, said he had cultivated chilli on 72 decimals of land and hoped to get a yield of eight to 10 maunds this season. "I could have harvested the crops in a week or two. But the cyclone dashed all my hopes." He said the crops could have fetched him more than Tk 80,000 in profit. [Our Correspondents from Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Jhalakathi and Patuakhali contributed to the report.]



Oblivious to the danger of riding a motorbike without a helmet, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader visits the cyclone-affected areas in Noakhali's Companiganj on Sunday.

IS attacks in Syria kill 148

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In Tartus a 42-year-old bank employee was just as stunned. "It's the first time we hear explosions in Tartus, and the first time we see dead people or body parts here," Shady Osman said. Jableh lies in Latakia province, while Tartus is the capital of the adjacent governorate of the same name. Both cities have remained relatively secure even as the war has raged in Latakia province's rural northeast and throughout the country. State media earlier said 78 people -- 45 in Jableh and 33 in Tartus -- were killed in the bombings. The attacks began at 9:00 am local time with three explosions at a busy bus station in Tartus, where regime ally Russia has long maintained a naval facility. The Observatory said one car bomb detonated first, and as people began to flock to the site two suicide bombers detonated explosive belts.

A police source in the city confirmed a car bomb had hit the entrance to the station and two suicide bombers attacked inside. State television broadcast footage of the damaged station, where charred mini-buses lay on their sides while others were still ablaze. Approximately 15 minutes after the Tartus blasts, the explosions began in Jableh, 60 miles to the north. BLAST INSIDE HOSPITAL The Observatory said four blasts -- one car bomb and three suicide attackers -- targeted a bus station, a hospital, and a power station there. One attacker detonated explosives inside the emergency room of the state-run hospital after carrying victims of the first attack there, the monitor said. A police officer told AFP a car bomb also targeted the Asaad hospital in the city. A Kremlin spokesman condemned the attacks, saying they "demonstrate yet again how fragile the situation is in

Syria and the need to take energetic measures to relaunch peace talks." A spokesman for the French foreign ministry also slammed the bombings as "heinous". World powers have struggled to rekindle UN-brokered peace negotiations which fizzled in April when Syria's opposition walked away in frustration at stalling progress on the country's dire humanitarian situation. Syria's conflict has evolved from a popular uprising to a multi-faceted war that has killed more than 270,000 people and displaced millions. IS seized control of large parts of Syria and Iraq in mid-2014, declaring an Islamic "caliphate" and spreading its influence. The group has claimed deadly attacks in the West and throughout the Middle East, including twin bombings on military forces in Yemen's second city of Aden yesterday that killed at least 41 people.

Pressure piles up on Salim Osman

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Asked about the claim, Sunil Shuvo Roy, JP presidium member and also political secretary of JP Chairman HM Ershad, only said the party chief has requested Salim "not to go any further and no to do excesses" on this issue. Some sources close to the lawmaker, however, said the MP cancelled the press conference following a "government instruction". Earlier on Sunday, Health and Family Welfare Minister Mohammad Nasim, visiting the teacher at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said humiliation of a teacher by a lawmaker is an unforgivable crime. "The lawmaker who had humiliated the schoolteacher should apologise ... the lawmaker has insulted all lawmakers with this kind of incident." Nasim told journalists that those responsible for such a heinous incident should understand the language of public outrage. "If the lawmaker has a bit of shame left in him, he will not join the next parliament session." The minister also said, "I have urged the home minister to identify all those involved in this incident and bring them to book." As Salim Osman is a JP lawmaker, the party has an obligation to take action against him, Nasim added. Seeing the health minister at the hospital, Shyamal burst into tears. A doctor at the DMCH said they would form a medical board to examine mental health of Shyamal as he has been under huge psychological stress. Also on Sunday, BNP standing committee member Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman demanded that parliament membership of Salim Osman be scrapped. Talking to reporters after visiting Shyamal, the BNP leader again said the

MP should resign on his own. National Human Rights Commission Chairman Mizanur Rahman too met Shyamal on Sunday. Talking to reporters, he said considering the gravity of the crime, the government must ensure punishment of the perpetrators. In another development, the Narayanganj chapter of Hefajat, which on Friday staged a demonstration demanding punishment of the teacher for "making anti-Islam comments", apparently backtracked from its earlier stance yesterday. The unit had threatened with tougher movement if Shyamal was not punished within 72 hours. The ultimatum expired yesterday afternoon. In a release yesterday, it demanded the government launch another probe to find whether Shyamal made any derogatory remarks on Islam. Central leaders of the Islamist group, including Nayebe-e-Ameer Nur Hossain Kasemi, told this newspaper that they were not involved in the activities of its Narayanganj unit regarding the issue. On May 13, Shyamal, headmaster of Piyar Sattar Latif High School in Bandar area of Narayanganj, was physically assaulted by a mob over the allegation that he made derogatory comments about religion while beating up a student in class. Salim Osman then made the teacher do squats holding ears in public, sparking outrage across the country. Later, an education ministry probe body found that Shyamal had not hurt anyone's religious sentiment. The three-member committee also termed illegal the decision of the school managing committee to suspend Shyamal as the headmaster. The ministry reinstated him follow-

ing the probe body recommendation. Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader on Friday said the decision to reinstate Shyamal was made as per the prime minister's directives. He also said all the ministers support the education ministry's action to this end. Besides, Law Minister Anisul Huq and Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid condemned the JP lawmaker's role. Protests continued yesterday as people from all walks of life kept demanding action against Salim Osman and security of the teacher. The lawmaker and members of the school committee will have to be brought to book, said speakers at a rally of writers, publishers, teachers, students and leaders of different cultural organisations at Shahbagh yesterday afternoon. Avinna Kibria Islam, a teacher at Jessore Science and Technology University, said all the people responsible for humiliating the Narayanganj teacher would have to be tried to check recurrence of such incident. SALIM OSMAN MEETS JP CHIEF The JP MP called on Ershad on Sunday at the latter's residence in the capital and submitted a written statement in defence of his role regarding the Narayanganj incident, according to party sources. Details of the meeting couldn't be known. Contacted yesterday, JP Co-Chairman GM Quader said the party does not want to do anything in a hurry as the whole nation has taken this very seriously. "We want to make the right decision regarding the sensitive matter after discussing this at the party's presidium," he added.

Large parts of embankment

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The dam were in a poor condition. Visiting villages in the upazila on Sunday, this correspondent saw seawater rushing into villages through the damaged portions. Similar situation was also seen in Borgona, Kala Gazi Para, Premashia, Raichhria areas. Abul Khaer, a local of Khankhanabad, said no one was paying attention to the rebuilding. The seventy-year-old man is now staying at a Red Crescent cyclone shelter with his wife and two daughters as his house was damaged by the tidal surges. "Where will our children go if the situation continues?" he asked. Mohammad Forhad, a local of Premashia, said, "Over 500 houses were damaged in our ward alone." He said the embankment had not been in good shape and that it should have been repaired long ago. Farhad said there was no way to cook food in the houses in his locality as all the belongings were washed away. "There is a severe water crisis in the village." "Monsoon is just starting. The embankment might get damaged further any time, and that would bring more misery to the locals," he said.

"Due to tidal surges, the embankment has been damaged in at least 11 points in Khankhanabad union alone. Our life and livelihood depend on the embankment. If it is damaged, how will we survive," said Gazi Zafor Ullah, a volunteer of Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) at Khankhanabad. Shahab Uddin of Kala Gazi Para invested over Tk 3 lakh in his fish project. Dead fishes were seen floating on the water. "I hoped that I would make a good profit by selling the fish in the upcoming Ramadan but saline water destroyed everything," he said. Those who depend on fish farming in the area have been severely affected, he added. According to the deputy commissioner (DC) of Chittagong, seven people were killed and three others went missing in Banskhali. Meanwhile, Relief and Disaster Management Minister Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya at a meeting at the DC office in the port city on Sunday night said the casualties occurred in the coastal areas as the embankments there were not repaired. He mentioned that the present condition of the coastal embankments was not good to deal with the disaster. "The ministry alone cannot

solve the problem, rather every government department concerned should come forward," he said. Sources at the Chittagong DC office said a budget of Tk 235 crore to rebuild the embankment in Banskhali had already been approved by the Ecnec. Contacted, DC Mesbahuddin said the project had been approved four months ago and a tender had also been floated, but contractors did not show willingness to do the work at the proposed rate. "For this reason, the repair work of the embankment could not be started in time..." he added. Water Development Board Superintendent Engineer Siddiqur Rahman said, "A revised budget has been sent to the planning commission and we expect that it would be approved within one month. The repair work would begin soon." Crops were damaged and fishes of ponds and other water bodies had been washed away by the tidal surges caused by the cyclone that made landfall on Saturday, causing a huge loss to farmers in the upazila. According to the DC office, crops worth Tk 50 crore and livestock worth Tk 100 crore were destroyed in different upazilas of Chittagong.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK PAGE OF OBAIDUL QUADER