

Retired banker spends all on orphanage

M ASADUZZAMAN

Mental agony no more haunts childless Pizirul Alam, 72, for he now is father of 52 daughters.

With all his retirement benefits and inherited paternal property, the former general manager of Uttara Bank at Chawradangi village in Jaldhaka upazila of Nilphamari set up a charitable home called "Chadmoni" in 1999 for orphan girls in his village home.

Alam is now a father to all the poor girls living under his care in this home and treat them like his very own.

He has not only given these orphan girls a place to live in but also provided them with education and training on different trades so that they can become self-reliant before they leave his shelter.

Over the last 17 years, Chadmoni, which stands on 1.10 acres of land, has become a refuge for poor girls. The home tries to teach the children to be self-reliant and fight social vices.

Alam said, "After my retirement in 1996, I felt more and more frustrated with the time on my hand. I had no real thing to do and also had to deal with the mental agony of not having any children of my own. My wife also

felt the same way."

"I spoke to my wife at length and we both decided to do something about it and that is how Chadmoni was born in 1999. Over the course of time, this venture grew and at present provides a home to 52 girls all studying in schools and colleges now," he added.

Alam's wife Motahara passed away in 2010 and since then he has been running the shelter home single-handedly.

Lipsi Aktar Ruby, studying for her BA degree, and Mofeza Begum, studying HSC at Jaldhaka Degree College, expressed how they dream of becoming independent one day after all the help and inspiration they got from Alam as a father.

One success story of the home is Jesmin Aktar Nipa who completed her MSS degree from National University. She works at the National Institute of Neurosciences and Hospital in Dhaka.

She said she came to the home at age of nine and her "Abba" (Alam) admitted her in class-IV at the local school. She stayed there for long 16 years and left after completing her MSS degree.

The home runs under Alam's direct supervision. He wakes his daughters

early in the morning every day so that they can offer Fazr prayers and study until around 8:30am before going to schools and colleges.

"At present, I need around Tk 60,000 to Tk 70,000 to run the home. This includes the cost of their training," Alam said.

Visiting Chadmoni on a Saturday afternoon, this correspondent found the home equipped with a library of 500 books, a skill developing training centre, a mini museum containing goods from olden days, a cultural center and an indoor games room.

Girls were seen engaged in reading books in the library, or attending training on sewing and embroidery at the training center.

Alam said he had spent all his retirement benefits, Tk 20 lakh, and also proceeds of selling 50 bighas of his inherited land, another Tk 20 lakh, to set up the home. Now some of his former bank colleagues and wealthy relatives and a few unnamed donors help him run the place.

The girls of Chadmoni also run a mobile library on a rickshaw van twice a week and run a campaign against

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1,050 women raped in 2016

Administration must be more responsible, says Mahila Parishad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One thousand and fifty women were raped in the country last year and violence against women increased, said a Bangladesh Mahila Parishad report.

Of the rape victims, 166 women were gang raped while 44 women were killed after being raped, the report said.

The report goes on to add that 165 women were targeted and then raped, 120 were harassed and 80 others were victims of sexual harassment last year.

These incidents continued despite different government and non-government initiatives to stop violence against women, said parishad leader Rekha Chowdhury at a press conference at the parishad office in the capital yesterday.

"The gruesomeness of the violence against women challenged women empowerment and overall development of the country last year," she said.

At the press conference, the parishad revealed statistics, based on reports published in 14 national dailies.

In 2015, as many as 1,007 women were raped in the country including 199 who were gang raped, said another set

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Childless retired banker Pizirul Alam with some of the 52 orphan girls he now takes care of at Chadmoni, the shelter he built for them, in Chawradangi village of Nilphamari's Jaldhaka upazila. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Aedes abounds

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The number is sharply rising in Bangladesh. Experts say this is because of erratic rainfall and rise in the temperature due to climate change and unplanned urbanisation.

SURVEY FINDINGS

The survey was conducted on 497 households of 22 wards in the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) and 500 households of 23 wards in Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) last year.

At least 20.5 percent of the households in the DSCC were found to have stagnant water, mostly in containers of some sort, with mosquito larvae or pupae. It was 13 percent in the DNCC, Prof Sanya Tahmina, director (communicable disease control, CDC) at the DGHS told The Daily Star.

The survey found that plastic barrels, buckets, clay pots, used or abandoned tires, their tubes and water tanks were places where Aedes larvae or pupae were found.

The areas surveyed include Uttara, Gulshan, Lalmatia, Monipuripara, Mirpur-10, West Rampura, Dhanmondi, Lalbagh, Mitford Hospital, Motijheel, Ramkrishna Mission Road, Shantinagar, Segunbagicha, Shankharibazar, Wari, Patlakhan Road and Moghbazar.

Aedes larvae or pupae were even found at the Gonobhaban, the Bangabhaban and Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, Prof Sanya said.

Aedes mosquitoes breed in clean and stagnant water and can hide in the shadows of trees, windows and doors, epidemiologists said.

Pulak Priya Mutsuddy, an epidemiologist at the DGHS, said dengue cases

reported in pre-monsoon season (between January and April) from 2000 to 2015 were less than one percent. In 2016, for the first time, dengue cases in pre-monsoon season were over six percent of the total cases reported, Pulak said.

"This is because of early rainfall this year [last year]. Also, it rained even in October and November," he said, explaining that dengue season is actually now expanding from monsoon to pre-monsoon and post-monsoon periods.

He said there seems to be a lack of awareness among people about mosquito breeding ground.

Prof Saif Ullah Munshi of virology at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) said first priority in mosquito breeding prevention is to ensure that there are no containers with stagnant water in or outside households.

If mosquitoes are still there, spraying larvicide to destroy larvae and fogging to kill adult mosquitoes are imperative.

The DGHS' role here is to conduct mosquito surveillance and to ask the city corporations and Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) to get to work.

"There needs to be a strong coordination among various agencies concerned," Prof Saif said.

The city corporations need to have a rigorous programme to spray pesticides to destroy larvae and adult mosquitoes, he said.

The DGHS, the city corporations, and Rajuk have to work together to destroy mosquitoes and educate

people. 'MOSQUITO CONTROL'

An investigation by The Daily Star found serious lack of coordination among agencies concerned. The city corporations cite shortage of manpower and logistics in mosquito control programme.

"So far, there has been no distinct record of any successful mosquito control programme [in Dhaka]," an official said requesting not to be named.

DGHS epidemiologist Pulak said they held meetings with the city corporations, civil surgeons and divisional health directors to share the survey findings and ask them to take actions accordingly.

Interestingly, officials of Dhaka city corporations say something else.

Brig Gen SMM Saleh Bhuiyan, chief health officer (CHO) of the DNCC, said they were not aware of any recent survey on mosquitoes.

"We know the DGHS has conducted a mosquito survey, but we have not received any copy of it," said Mir Mustafizur Rahman, health officer of the DSCC.

"If we had a copy of the survey, we could have taken actions based on the findings," he told The Daily Star.

Officials of city corporations, however, claimed that they regularly spray pesticides to destroy mosquito larvae and adult mosquitoes. They even intensify the mosquito control drive around homes of people who reported dengue cases, said Sheikh Salahuddin, CHO of the DSCC.

They also conduct regular campaigns including rallies, run

DENGUE IN BANGLADESH		
Year	Cases	Deaths
2000	5,551	93
2001	2,430	44
2002	6,132	58
2003	486	10
2004	3,934	13
2005	1,048	04
2006	2,200	11
2007	466	00
2008	1,153	00
2009	474	00
2010	409	00
2011	1,362	06
2012	671	01
2013	1,749	02
2014	375	00
2015	3,162	06
2016	6,000	14

SOURCE: NATIONAL HEALTH CRISIS MANAGEMENT CENTRE AND CONTROL ROOM

advertisements in newspapers and on TV, distribute leaflets, posters and involve ward councillors, he claimed.

Some Dhaka dwellers gave a different version when The Daily Star correspondents made random visits late last year to Uttara Jatrabari, Mirhajirbagh, Manda, Mugda, Kamrangirchar, Goran, Nikunja, Sheorapara, and Khilkhet areas of the city.

Locals there said they had hardly ever seen anti-mosquito drives in the last few months.

"The mosquito menace had become

so serious that I had to move from the ground floor to the fifth-floor. We are suffering even there," said Abdul Sobhan of Uttara Jatrabari. He did not see any mosquito control team in his area in the last six months, he said.

Sumon Sheikh of Kamrangirchar said he had seen mosquito control drives a few days after the mayor elections in April 2015 but since then he had hardly seen any men spraying pesticides.

"The mosquito menace is making it difficult to stay at home, not only at night, but also during the day," said Jahangir Alam of Khilkhet.

Fuad Hasan of Sheorapara, who works for a company, said he had dengue in July last year. "I used to shiver when my temperature rose. I had to be hospitalised for for two days," he said.

It not only caused him to suffer but also took 10 days from his life, he said.

Salahuddin, CHO of the DSCC, said alleys between houses in some residential areas were so narrow that the city corporation people could not spray pesticides there. Also, they cannot enter homes as per law.

House owners, therefore, should destroy mosquito breeding places on their own, he said.

Saleh Bhuiyan, CHO of the DNCC, said drains and stagnant sewerage channels covered by slabs and blocked by shops and shanties, and water bodies used for fish farming obstruct fogging.

They said city corporation supervisors do not have any transport facilities to monitor the spraying, a major problem of the mosquito control programme.

Saleh Bhuiyan said the DNCC has insufficient manpower -- about 300 spray men and 20 supervisors for 36 wards.

Contacted, DNCC Mayor Anisul Huq said he was surprised to learn that so many dengue cases were reported in Dhaka.

"I have not received any such complaint of high presence of mosquitoes in my city corporation area," he told this correspondent over phone.

DSCC Mayor Sayeed Khokon could not be reached over the phone despite repeated attempts.

ZIKA THREAT
The worrying thing is zika has spread to many Asian countries from South America, including Malaysia and Singapore where nearly eight lakh Bangladeshis work.

At least 19 Bangladeshis were infected with zika in Singapore in late August and September last year.

The World Health Organisation said zika will keep spreading in Asia as Aedes mosquitoes are widely found in the region that sees large number of travellers.

Dengue can be at times fatal but zika poses a great risk for pregnant women as the virus can cause severe birth defects, including microcephaly marked by small head and underdeveloped brain.

The zika outbreak in 2015 in Brazil caused microcephaly in more than 1,800 children, and has since spread across America, the Caribbean and Asia recently.

"If mosquitoes transmitting dengue cannot be controlled, the risks of zika go up in Bangladesh," said Prof Sanya.

Convicted killers 'free as bird'



Convicted in the Zubair murder case, from left, Shohan, Akram, Ashiq and Arup pose for a selfie in Genting Highlands of Malaysia. The photo was posted on December 13. The two others in this photo are not related to the case and have been pixelated.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK OF ARUP

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of JU English department, died from his injuries, a day after he was tortured and stabbed by some rival group activists on the campus.

The incident triggered huge uproar in and outside the campus. The university authorities filed a murder case the same day.

Son of Tofael Ahmed of Patuakhali's Khepupara, Zubair belonged to a Chhatra League group opposing the faction allegedly blessed by the then vice-chancellor (VC) Prof Shariff Enamul Kabir.

Following over a year's trial, the Dhaka's Speedy Trial Tribunal-4 on February 8, 2015 awarded capital punishment to Rashidul Islam Raju of philosophy department; Ashiq, Shohan and Zahid of zoology and Akram of

government and politics departments.

Six other students of the university were given life term. They are Arup of philosophy, Najmus Sakib Topu of biochemistry and molecular biology, Kamruzzaman Sohag of philosophy, Avinandan Kundu of statistics, Mazharul Islam of history and Shafiq Alam Setu of statistics.

The court in its judgment said the verdict was exemplary, asserting that it was the first time when capital punishment was given to anyone over any murder committed on the campus of a public university.

The court delivered the verdict in presence of Shohag, Mazharul, Setu, Avinandan and Topu. They were sent to jail later.

On February 23, Ashiq, Akram, Arup and Shohan fled the dock after a Dhaka court cancelled their bail and

ordered the authorities concerned to send them to jail. They have been absconding since then.

Raju and Zahid did not appear before the court that day. Though Raju surrendered later, Zahid is still on the run.

After the verdict was delivered, the death reference automatically reached the High Court within seven days. The HC authorities are now preparing papers for hearing on the death reference.

With the fugitive killers still roaming freely, Zubair's father Tofael Ahmed, who is in his 60s, is losing all his hopes to see the implementation of the verdict.

"I don't even know how many of the killers are in jail now. At this age, I can't go from door to door to push things," an emotional Tofael told The Daily Star recently.

He blamed police negligence for the

failure to arrest the fugitive killers.

Zubair's elder brother Abdullah Al-Mamun said, "My parents are still in shock. Their health has been deteriorating fast since the murder."

The family called for the quick execution of the verdict.

KILLERS ACTIVE IN SOCIAL MEDIA
Police official Mir Shahin Shah Parvez, who was the investigation officer of the case, said as far as his knowledge went, the fugitive killers were inside the country and the others in jail.

However, according to their Facebook and Instagram posts, Shohan, Ashiq, Akram and Arup, who had escaped from the Dhaka court, are currently in Malaysia.

Talking to The Daily Star, several of their classmates confirmed that the social media accounts that this correspondent checked belonged to the convicted fugitive killers.

Shohan was working as a manager at a hotel in Kuala Lumpur, shows his Facebook ID.

In a Facebook status uploaded in March, last year, he said, "Now I can put my whole life on bet against money making."

According to Arup's Facebook ID, he is a director at a Kuala Lumpur-based company.

Ashiq was seen making frequent posts on Facebook. Our correspondent in Jhenidah visited Ashiq's village home at Shailakupa in the district. But he found no one there. Locals said Ashiq's family no longer lives in that village.

Ashiq's cousin Liton Hossain said he left the country after Zubair's murder and has not visited Jhenidah ever since.

Our correspondent in Noakhali contacted Akram's father Mahub Morshed alias Azad recently. Azad claimed that he had no idea about his son's whereabouts.

One of their neighbours said Akram went to Canada and settled there.

However, Akram, Ashiq, Shohan and Arup were spotted together in group photos uploaded from Arup's Facebook account on November 29 and December 2. According to the captions, the photos were taken at two hotels in Kuala Lumpur.

Quoting local sources, our correspondent from Tangail reported that Zahid had fled to India after the murder. He, however, returned to the country later, but his whereabouts are currently unknown.

Apart from the fugitives, some of the other convicts were seen in public recently, said their classmates.

On September 27, Mahmudul Hasan Masud of History department, who was first made accused in the case but was later acquitted by the Dhaka court, uploaded a selfie taken by Setu near the National Martyrs Memorial in Savar, nearly five kilometres off the spot where Zubair was attacked.

In that photo, Setu was seen along with Topu and Mazharul, two of the convicts who were handed down life sentence.

Recently, Setu in his Facebook account mentioned that his current location was Brest, Belarus, saying he moved there for higher studies.

This newspaper could not confirm whether Setu, Topu, Mazharul, Shohag, Avinandan and Raju are currently on bail.

Contacted recently, Attorney General Mahubey Alam told The Daily Star that he was not aware of any of the convicts getting bail.

JU VC Prof Farzana Islam said those who were acquitted in the case took their certificates from the university following due procedures. She said she was not sure about "the current status of the case".

JU Registrar Abu Bakr Siddique said they wanted all the culprits to be punished.

Explain

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on instructions from the MD of the sugar mill.

Supreme Court lawyer Suproakash Datta filed the petition in December last year citing that destroying crime scenes is a punishable offence under the Penal Code and that police did not prevent Rangpur Sugar Mills from destroying the evidence.

Responding to this, the court asked the government and police to explain why their failure to take legal actions against the sugar mill's official under the Penal Code should not be declared illegal.

The home secretary, industries secretary, superintendent of Gaibandha police and officer-in-charge of Gobindaganj Police Station have been made respondents, Suproakash told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, Gaibandha's SP Ashraf Alam appeared before another HC bench and offered unconditional apology for writing words "Bangalee Duskritikary (miscreants)" in a report that he had submitted to it. In the report, he said the November 6 clash in Gobindaganj of Gaibandha was between "Bangalee Duskritikary" and Santal people.

The HC bench of Justice Obaidul Hassan and Justice Krishna Debnath accepted his apology and exempted him from personal appearance in further court proceedings.

It also gave time to Chief Judicial Magistrate of Gaibandha Shahidul Islam until January 31 for submitting an investigation report on the incident.

During the hearing on a writ petition, the HC on December 14 last year asked Shahidul to find out if police had been involved in setting fire to the Santal houses and who were responsible for the incident.

He was given 15 days at the time for the probe, but yesterday he prayed to the court for an additional one month's time, saying that he could not complete the investigation for staying abroad for an urgent task.