

Solma returns from India

Her 22-month wait for repatriation finally over

STAR REPORT

The first thing Solma Begum asked her brother was how her two children, aged eight and 10, were doing.

"Do they get to eat when they are hungry? Can their father feed them?" asked the woman after arriving home yesterday.

The 38-year-old had been stranded at a shelter home in India for 20 months.

She was brought to the Benapole-Petrapole point of the border around 4:30pm by the Indian authorities. She broke down in tears seeing her younger brother Asgar Ali, who went there to receive her.

Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) hailed her repatriation as "a unique collaborative effort of police, civil society and judicial system in solving the case."

The woman suffering from psychological difficulties disappeared from her village Taluk Shorbananda in

Gaibandha's Sundarganj about four years ago.

Her family came to know in February last year that Solma was at a shelter home in Hooghly of West Bengal.

Hooghly police, in the evening of April 4, 2015, found Solma wandering in a village. They could not ascertain her identity as she did not speak. Police then sent her to Janasiksha Prochar Kendra where she was provided with regular counselling and treatment.

"I became attached to my sisters here in the shelter. I will miss them a lot," she told our Kolkata correspondent as she left the shelter home.

With care she gradually regained her memories and told people about her home in Bangladesh. Rights organisations said bureaucracy and red tapes delayed her repatriation for months.

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The part of Shah Arefin Tila where two workers were killed in a landslide while extracting stone. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

18-month-old killed, thrown into pond

Elder brother arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A 24-year-old man allegedly strangled his year-and-half-old sister and threw her body into a pond in Shimla Bazar area of Sarishabari in Jamalpur early Monday.

Deceased Prapti was the daughter of Paritosh Ghosh and Shilpi Rani Ghosh. The couple had two sons and two daughters and Prapti was the youngest.

Prapti was asleep in the same room as her parents Sunday night while her elder brother Indrajit Ghosh, 24, slept

in another room.

When Shilpi woke up around 2:00am, she could not find Prapti. The family members searched for her and eventually called Sarishabari police.

The police went to the house around 4:00am and detained Indrajit for questioning.

During interrogation yesterday afternoon, Indrajit told police that he had killed his sister. He said he took sleeping Prapti from her bed around 1:00am,

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2 killed in landslide

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The hillock used to be leased as a stone quarry to stone extractors. Following a writ petition of Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (Bela), the High Court ordered stopping of the leasing system and illegal hill cutting in 2012.

But a syndicate of local influentials continued hill cutting and extracting stones, claiming them as lessee.

After the landslide around 6:00am yesterday, locals claimed that at least six workers were killed.

They also alleged that bodies of the other victims were kept hidden by the stone traders.

Quoting some local stone workers, Shah Md Jamal Uddin, chairman of Paschim Islampur union in Companiganj, said some 13 workers were extracting stone from the spot, cutting hill. Landslide killed six of them.

He said, "At least eight incidents of landslide happened in the area in the last six months, injuring many workers, but the extractors hid the incidents."

Nasreen Jahan Fatema, vice-chairman of Companiganj upazila, also claimed that six people were killed in the landslide.

Seeking anonymity, a worker told

The Daily Star that three of his friends from Dirai upazila of Sunamganj were extracting stone from the spot where the landslide happened.

All his friends went missing after the accident, he claimed.

Abdul Hasib, a health assistant at Companiganj Upazila Health Complex, said he found three bodies on the spot.

ASP Sugyan told this newspaper that police could not be sure about how many people were killed. A police team with detectives went to the spot to know about the death toll.

The death toll might rise as he heard that about six workers died on the spot

and some bodies disappeared from the spot, he added.

ONE MORE DEATH

A worker was killed when a big chunk of mud fell on him at Lobhachhara stone quarry in Kanaighat upazila yesterday around 10:00am.

The dead, Suhel Ahmed, 25, was the son of Abul Kashem of Majertek village in Bishwambharpur upazila in Sunamganj.

Humayun Kabir, officer-in-charge of Kanaighat Police Station, said some workers, including Suhel, were extracting stone from the quarry near the Lobhara river.

Scientists

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well-established facts about climate change and then lies about it, the latter will cancel out the former.

But if the correct information is combined with a small "dose" of misinformation then it will have less resonance, according to the study.

Giving people a small piece of the data helps "inoculate" them against the kinds of tactics that people use to spread fake information and use it to political ends.

Lead author Dr Sander van der Linden, from the University of Cambridge, said: "Misinformation can be sticky, spreading and replicating like a virus."

"We wanted to see if we could find a 'vaccine' by pre-emptively exposing people to a small amount of the type of misinformation they might experience. A warning that helps preserve the facts."

"The idea is to provide a cognitive repertoire that helps build up resistance to misinformation, so the next time people come across it they are less susceptible."

A disguised experiment presented more than 2,000 US residents from a diverse range of backgrounds with two claims about global warming.

The first was that the scientific community was rigidly divided over climate change; with one website alleging "over 31,000" scientists agreed there was no credence the phenomenon was accelerated by human CO2 release.

Also shown was the accurate statement that "97% of scientists agree on man-made climate change".

Participants were asked to guess the percentage of scientific consensus on the issue, with those shown the fact estimating agreement was around 90%, while those exposed to the myth around 63%.

This was a jump of 20 percentage points (from 71%) in opinion difference based on what was believed beforehand among those who heard the scientific fact and a dip of nine percentage points (from 72%) on the opposite side.

In a group shown both claims consecutively, however, there was barely any shift from what was thought by participants initially (a drop of 0.5% to 73%) - suggesting the myth neutralised the lie.

A pair of groups were then shown the scientifically-supported fact, but with a caveat.

One heard simply that "some politically-motivated groups use misleading tactics to try and convince the public that there is a lot of disagreement among scientists" while the other had the specific myth analysed.

They were then presented with the misinformation.

Despite exposure to fake facts, a jump in the direction of the true figure still followed - up 6.5 percentage points, to 80%, among the former group and up nearly 13 percentage points, to 84%, with the latter.

Apt end to a tour of lost opportunities

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rain-induced rest, the Tigers somehow rediscovered that self-destruct mode.

The only difference from that inexplicable surrender in Wellington, where they had a 56-run first innings lead, was that they started with a 65-run deficit at the Hagley Oval. They surrendered for 173 this time, 13 runs more than they achieved at the Basin Reserve. But had it not been for a 51-run ninth-wicket stand between Taskin Ahmed and Kamrul Islam the innings could have folded much earlier. For the record it was the highest stand of the innings.

The outcome: a nine-wicket defeat with a day to spare and a 2-0 Test series whitewash following their 6-0 thrashing in the limited-overs series.

After Bangladesh were reduced to 115 for eight shortly after the tea break, Taskin and Kamrul were playing as if they were fighting for the pride of a battered cricketing nation. They should not have done that in protest against what their more established

batsmen had done to damage that dignity and pride.

They had no business to take a few blows to the body or to their helmets when the senior statesmen of the team, including captain Tamim Iqbal and his deputy Shakib Al Hasan, threw away their wickets in reckless fashion. You can however replace the word 'reckless' with 'a style of their own' because they always prefer to be described that way.

Bangladesh were desperately in need of a resolute approach at least for an hour to put the pressure back on the hosts and the immediate job in hand was to wipe out that deficit. But Tamim chose the spectacular way. He swung and missed the first bouncer he faced from Tim Southee. Hot under his collar, he repeated it in the same over and could only manage to top-edge to square leg where Mitchell Santner took a diving catch. The captain, who was supposed to lead the team by example, departed for four and Bangladesh lost their first wicket with only 17 runs on the board.

The other opener, Soumya Sarkar, and one-down Mahmudullah Riyad took the score to 58 when the former slashed at a harmless delivery from Colin de Grandhomme to gully where Jeet Raval took a spectacular diving catch. That particular catch defined the mood of the whole Test in which Bangladesh dropped as many as six regulation catches in New Zealand's first innings. And this number is an astonishing 20 from both sides as far as the whole series is concerned. If you drop that many catches you are not supposed to win a game.

The departure of Soumya brought vice-captain Shakib to the crease. He played seven balls and he could have been easily out twice off the first two balls he faced. It was not that those were unplayable deliveries from Grandhomme, the bowler was actually pushing the ball through the wind to get some swing. Shakib swung his bat to the first ball he faced. He got a thick edge and the ball raced between the slips for four. He charged down the

wicket the next ball he faced from Grandhomme. The ball flew to second slip where Raval dropped him.

The horrible Shakib show continued. This time he tried to chance his arms against Southee. It was a clever field placement from New Zealand captain Kane Williamson. Five fielders were positioned behind square on the off-side to stop Shakib from scoring runs through that area with his favourite cut shot. The left-hander was however least bothered and slashed one in the air only to be caught at gully after scoring eight runs. This shot in particular and his approach in the second innings demands a national inquiry and a medical board for a better understanding about that self-destructive approach that he simply refuses to compromise.

There are a number of reasons for Bangladesh's failure in the two Tests from good positions; some are tactical and others technical. But the biggest problem was their mental approach in a series of lost opportunities.

Stone collectors feast on hillocks

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stone traders dump the earth in the nearby Sonai river with trucks, polluting the river as well, they said.

According to the district administration, the Bureau of Mineral Development used to lease the hills and hillocks as stone extracting zones via the revenue section of the administration before 2012. That year, the High Court banned the practice.

The HC cancelled leasing out of the hills and hillocks in the six upazilas of Sylhet after the Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (Bela) filed a writ petition to stop the indiscriminate hill cutting.

The court also ordered the administration to take steps for protecting the hills and hillocks, including Shah Arefin Tila, said advocate Shah

Shaheda Akter, coordinator of Bela's Sylhet division.

Bela filed another writ with the HC exclusively to save the Shah Arefin Tila. The issue is currently pending with the court.

The unscrupulous traders are extracting stone from the hillock violating the HC order. But the authorities seem to be unwilling to protect it, he said.

Abdul Karim Kim, general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa), Sylhet, also said the authorities were looking the other way despite repeated calls from the environmentalists.

He urged the government to take immediate steps to stop the hill cutting.

Wishing not to be named, sources at the upazila and the district administration, said a syndicate of stone traders,

backed by some influential locals, is flattening out the hillock. The men own the lands around the hillock and call themselves the lessee of the hillock.

Shamim Ahmed, president of Paschim Islampur Union Awami League, along with his father Abdul Basit, Companiganj upazila chairman and Shamim's brother Joynal Abedin, newly-elect member of ward-6 of Sylhet Zila Parishad, have a hand in the illegal business, the sources alleged.

However, Shamim Ahmed outright rejected the allegation brought against his family.

"We only import stone and coal from India and our family has no connection with hill cutting, stone extraction or selling".

Contacted, Masum Billah, upazila nirbahi officer of Companiganj,

denied the allegation that the authorities were ignoring the matter.

"We carry out regular drives against illegal stone extraction from hills. Even last month, the upazila administration destroyed some illegal machines used for such extraction," he said.

Mostafizur Rahman, deputy director of the Department of Environment in Sylhet, said the authorities were well informed about hill cutting.

A taskforce, formed for the protection of the environment, carried out several drives since 2012 to save the hills, he said.

He, however, acknowledged the lack of manpower needed to launch frequent raids, creating scopes for the unscrupulous stone traders to destroy the hills and hillocks.

Ispahani Group chairperson passes away

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while the second janaja took place after Maghreb prayer at Hoseni Dalan Mosque in Old Dhaka. Later, he was buried at a graveyard in the area.

Born on October 30, 1950, Behrouze was a member of a Perso-Bangalee business family in Bangladesh, which owns and manages Ispahani Group, one of the most respected business conglomerates in the Indian subcontinent.

He took charge as chairman of the group after his father Mirza Mehdy Ispahani died in 2004.

Ispahani Group has been the forerunner in numerous fields and has achieved noteworthy success in many endeavours. But its Ispahani Tea is a household name and is the largest tea trading company in the country.

Behrouze Ispahani was the managing director of International Publications Ltd, the owning company of The Financial Express. He was also a board member of Dhaka Stock Exchange, Midas Financing Ltd and the Independent University of Bangladesh.

A committed philanthropist,

Behrouze chaired the board of Ispahani Islamia Eye Institute and Hospital. He was former chairman of Ispahani Adarsha High School and College.

The group is also one of the largest employers in Bangladesh, directly providing jobs to over 20,000 people in many sectors such as tea, textile, real estate, crisps, poultry, shipping and internet services.

It was honoured with Bangladesh Business Award 2003 -- initiated by DHL Express and The Daily Star -- for achieving success in numerous sectors

while making significant social contributions.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock at the death of Behrouze.

In a condolence message, the premier recalled with gratitude Ispahani's contributions to flourishing trade and commerce in the country, reports BSS.

Hasina prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed profound sympathy to the bereaved family.

No police action over assault of headmaster

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Four days into the assault of a school headmaster allegedly by some local Awami League leaders in the district's Singra upazila, police are yet to take action against the attackers.

Five to six people, led by Jahedul Islam Bhola, joint secretary of Singra upazila AL, beat up Rafiqul Islam, headmaster of Khidrabadia High School, on Saturday noon, the victim alleged.

The teacher is now undergoing treatment at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital in Bogra.

The victim's younger brother Ruhul Amin filed a complaint with Singra Police Station yesterday against five people, including Jahedul, also chairman of Chauagram Union Parishad.

Mir Asaduzzaman, assistant superintendent of police (Singra circle), said no case was filed in this connection until yesterday.

"A police team has investigated the matter. The headmaster took Tk 5 lakh from one Shahin Reza for appointing him as a teacher. Later, the education board dismissed him for securing the job with fake certificates. The followers of Shahin Reza beat up the headmaster as he refused to return the money," he told The Daily Star.

But the headmaster claimed that the UP chairman blamed him for Shahin's dismissal and demanded Tk 5 lakh from him.

"I fear a fresh attack from them [attackers]. They have threatened my colleagues not to give any statement about the incident," said Rafiqul.

Visiting the school yesterday, this correspondent found that some 20 to 25 supporters of the UP chairman were present. Teachers and students refused to talk to The Daily Star for fear of reprisal.

Abdur Razzaque, president of Jatiya Shikshak Karmachari Front's Natore unit, demanded punishment to the attackers. He expressed frustration at

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BNP broke

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know the proposed names for the search committee during the talks?"

He also said, "They [BNP] did not suggest any names for the Election Commission formation."

Quader said the BNP leaders did not need any help for disclosing any secret information as some of them have close links with the intelligence agencies.

Meanwhile, senior AL leader and Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed yesterday said Quader need not go to the president to know whose names BNP proposed to include in the search committee as there are many BNP leaders to disclose it.