

3 teachers beaten in Lalmonirhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Three teachers of Khandor Chawra Multipurpose High School were beaten up in front of the institution at Malgara village in Kaliganj upazila over formation of the managing committee on Saturday afternoon.

On information, law enforcers rescued the schoolteachers but could not arrest the attackers, police said, adding, the assaulted schoolteachers took emergency treatment at Kaliganj Upazila Health Complex.

The teachers are identified as Headteacher Abdul Latif, Assistant Headmaster Indrajit Adhikari and Assistant Teacher Mukul Chandra Roy.

The headteacher filed a complaint with Kaliganj police against Golzar Hossain, Tofazzal Hossain, Rokon Uzzaman, Bachcha Miah Khalifa and six other unnamed people on Saturday night.

The police said Abdul Latif was attacked by a few people in front of his school when he was returning home. His colleagues Indrajit and Mukul

went to save him but were also assaulted.

There had been some problems over formation of the school managing committee (SMC) for last six months. The attack might be linked with those problems, the police observed.

"There has been no managing committee for last six months. A new committee will be formed according to the government rules. But the attackers were putting pressure on me to form the committee with their chosen people," said Abdul Latif.

As he had refused to take steps to form the committee as per their desire, they attacked him, he added.

Alleged attacker Golzar Hossain said he was the president of the SMC, which was abolished due to the headteacher's "conspiracy".

"We did not attack the headmaster. We just asked him about the committee," he claimed.

Officer-in-Charge of Kaliganj police Maqbul Hossain said they would investigate the matter and take steps accordingly.



The collapsed Bailey bridge over a river in Jamalpur. Already badly damaged by last year's flood, it gave way after the 13-tonne truck got on it with 36 tonnes of cement.

PHOTO: STAR

Law stands in way of transplantation

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kidneys, knowing that one is enough for a person. But the law does not allow cousins to be donors.

So she has decided to go to India, where non-relatives can donate kidneys, and sought financial help via newspapers as her family cannot afford Tk 20 lakh she will need there for a kidney transplant.

In Bangladesh, the cost is only Tk 3 lakh.

"Had my cousin been allowed to donate, I would not have to worry about money," she said.

Life has become tough also for another kidney patient, a 33-year-old schoolteacher in Manikganj. She has already spent Tk 5 lakh in the last two years for treatment and dialysis.

Her friends are mobilising a fund of Tk 30 lakh for her kidney transplant in India. Her family is looking for a donor, failing to have one among the specified relatives.

There are some 2 crore kidney patients in the country.

Every year, some 30,000 people die in Bangladesh failing to have kidney transplants or dialysis and some 40,000 become end-stage kidney patients.

"Lives of at least 20,000 could have been saved had their kidneys been transplanted," said Kidney Foundation President Prof Harun Ur Rashid.

Tragically, only some 130 can have their kidneys transplanted here per year, he said. On the other hand, differ-

ent hospitals in Kolkata alone transplanted kidneys of 140 Bangladeshis in 2016.

Many have kidney transplants in other places of India or in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Singapore. There are, however, allegations that many well-off patients having kidney transplants abroad fake documents to prove the donors are their close relatives.

Rabindranath Tagore International Institute of Cardiac Sciences (RTIICS) in a recent letter requested the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission in Kolkata to be watchful in issuing no objection certificate (NOC).

No Bangladeshi can undergo a kidney transplant in India without an NOC, which is meant to prove the donor and the recipient are close relatives, and the donation is not violating the 1999 act.

Though India allows non-relatives to donate kidneys, it follows the law of Bangladesh in cases of Bangladeshi patients.

RTIICS, a reputed hospital in West Bengal, transplanted kidneys of 111 Bangladeshis in 2016, 81 in 2015 and 41 in 2014, reports our correspondent Subrata Acharya from Kolkata.

Experts say while there is a shortage of kidney donors at home, the high cost of dialysis makes it impossible for most patients to continue the procedure.

Besides, there is a shortage of kidney surgeons and a lack of initiatives to increase the number of kidney donors within the existing legal framework

that allows using kidneys of brain-dead persons.

Brain death is the complete and irreversible loss of brain function, which may be caused by accidents, stroke and primary brain tumour. In such conditions, their organs including kidney can be taken out and given to those needing it.

Law permits such transplants upon written consent from the brain dead person's appropriate relative, but no hospital has taken any initiative to make it happen.

A survey by the Kidney Foundation in 2007-08 found relatives of 25 percent of around 300 brain-dead persons would give consent if approached. The BSMMU and DMCH were picked for the survey.

The percentage can be higher with proper motivation, said Prof Harun.

Experts say the lack of latest health technologies is another obstacle to kidney transplant in Bangladesh.

Founder of Gonoshasthaya Kendra Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury, who himself undergoes kidney dialysis, said kidney disease has become no less than epidemic in the country where the shortage of donors is a big problem, which is causing organ trafficking silently.

On the other hand, the solvent patients are spending huge amounts abroad, Tk 25 lakh to Tk 1 crore.

Dr Zafrullah said any non-relative wishing to volunteer in donating organs should be allowed to do so. There is also scope for posthumous donation, he said.

For this to happen, he suggested setting up an authority to keep all the records of the donors and recipients and to handle the related issues under a law.

RESERVATIONS?

There are also reservations about allowing kidney donations by the non-relatives.

Dr SAM Golam Kibria, former professor of urology at the BSMMU, said the law allowing all to donate kidney is very likely to be abused in the country's current socio-economic context.

"There will be more and more organ trafficking and it may become a huge social and health crisis."

Prof Harun too fears the same.

Dr Touhid Md Saiful Hossain, a transplant surgeon at the BSMMU, proposes inclusion of cousins, grandparents and grandchildren as kidney donors but not the non-relatives.

Dr Zafrullah, however, argues that kidney trade is already happening amid widespread kidney failure cases as the law limits kidney donation to the close relatives only.

"The government has to take stringent measures to stop any kind of organ trade. It should arrange incentives, including preferred healthcare facilities, for the donors," he added.

Prof Harun argues that creating public awareness and introducing cadaver transplantation (taking organs from the dead) would significantly increase the number of kidney donors.

He said kidneys of those dying in road accidents are more suitable for

transplantation. Even if half the road accident victims can be rushed immediately to the ICU, they will be a major source of kidneys.

"This requires a medical board at a hospital to declare brain death, emergency transport arrangement, intensive care unit facilities and a team of dedicated physicians."

Every year, over 23,000 people are killed in road accidents and nearly 49,000 people die of stroke, according to an estimate. Many remain brain-dead after stroke or road accident but the exact figure is not available.

KIDNEY SWAP & NEW TECHNOLOGY

Experts say swap of kidneys is a good idea. For example, there are two couples -- Hasan-Amena and Jahurul-Khadiza. Hasan and Jahurul need kidneys and their blood groups don't match with their spouses'. But Amena's blood group matches with Jahurul's and Khadiza's with Hasan's.

In such cases, Amena can donate kidney to Jahurul and Khadiza to Hasan.

"This is practised in many countries. We too can easily do it," said Prof Harun.

Sometimes a close relative cannot be a donor just because the blood groups are not matching. But new technologies have made transplantation possible even if blood groups do not match but 25 to 50 percent tissue matches.

Such technologies are widely used in the US, Europe and Japan, and on a small scale in India. "We can introduce

the new technology to increase the number of donors among the blood relatives."

Prof Harun said there are some 20 kidney surgeons in Bangladesh working in only two public and seven private hospitals, which is quite low compared to the need.

Similarly, he added, there is also shortage of trained nephrologists, anaesthesiologists, nurses as well as the shortage of ICU and operation theatres for kidney transplant.

Dr Touhid said there should be incentives for both -- those involved in transplantation as well as the donors -- to promote the organ donation culture.

Prof Abul Kalam Azad, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services, admitted shortages of facilities and physicians, but said facilities would be expanded under a scheme for 2017-2021.

He said people have kidney transplants abroad for various reasons that may include their confidence in foreign healthcare system. Doctors in Bangladesh are very cautious about transplantation since the widespread media coverage of kidney trade in Joypurhat in 2011.

Regarding the law, he said it was the doctors who suggested many contents of the act of 1999. If the kidney specialists come up with new suggestions, the authorities will surely consider those.

"It is now more important than ever to establish the culture of organ donation to save lives," Prof Kalam added.

PM's upcoming visit



Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Harsh Vardhan Shringla speaks during his interaction with journalists of The Daily Star at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

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India is also helping Bangladesh produce power.

"There is no limit to what you can get from India because we have a lot of surplus energy. We can sell you electricity any time... you can take 1,000 megawatt, 2,000 megawatt and even 10,000 megawatt," Shringla said.

Replying to a query on the 1,320MW coal-fired Rampal power plant, he said India is providing 80 percent of the financing with one percent interest on the loan payable over a period of 30 years. Bangladesh offered the land and it happened to be at Rampal.

The envoy said India has no issues regarding the location of the India-Bangladesh joint venture project.

"As far as India is concerned, we are happy to work with you [Bangladesh] in setting up power plant wherever you like, including in Rampal."

About Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's upcoming India visit, Shringla said it would be the first state visit in her current tenure. Her previous

state visit to India took place seven years ago.

"From our side, this is a very important visit..."

Shringla mentioned that Indian Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar would visit Dhaka on February 23-24, and assess areas of bilateral cooperation and groundwork for the Bangladesh PM's upcoming visit.

"Preparatory aspects of the visit are important and we need to prepare. We need to make sure that both logistically and substantially we have the right input in place before the visit. So, all this work is in progress," said the Indian envoy.

He noted that the new level of cooperation helped the two next-door neighbours harness the benefits of bilateral and sub-regional trade and investment.

"India now allows duty-free benefits to all Bangladeshi goods, except for cigarette and alcohol items." Over the past years, the two countries have been moving forward to achieve socio-economic progress.

"For us [India] to prosper economically, socially and everywhere, Bangladesh needs to be a partner in this. For you [Bangladesh] to be a mid-income country by 2021 and developed country by 2041, you need to be a partner."

In order to achieve this, "we decided that we must remove some major impediments, some perceptions that existed in Bangladesh," he said.

"One of the aspects that we tried to resolve is the issue of market access..."

"The second thing that we resolved was land boundary. We were able to sign the land boundary agreement and implement it. The two countries also sorted out maritime boundary."

Referring to Indo-Bangla defence cooperation, Shringla said there has been cooperation between the armed forces of the two countries. Extensive training and exercises are held at military and navy levels, he said.

On the Indian defence minister's recent Bangladesh visit, he said it was Manohar Parrikar's first visit to Dhaka. The visit was very significant as he had

wide-ranging discussions with political and military leadership of Bangladesh.

"We certainly look forward to continuing our current level of cooperation, which is quite significant because we have talked army to army, navy to navy, air force to air force... we have regular exchange at all levels."

He said military-to-military exchanges are very extensive, and hoped that those would go on in the future.

On the Teesta water sharing issue, Shringla said India's commitment to conclude an agreement has been there on record and continues to be there. "It is something that is under constant consideration on our side," he said.

He pointed out that as per the Indian federal system, the centre needs to involve the state government before signing any such agreement.

On Bangladesh's growing relations with China, Shringla said, "Your relationship with other countries, as it develops and progresses, is absolutely, from our point of view, is good development."

"We want good cooperation, we want amity, we want economic development in the region. Economic development is also good for us. Our economies are so interlinked that if you develop, we also develop."

On the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, he said India remains steadfast in its commitment to regional cooperation, connectivity and contacts.

But increasing cross-border terrorist attacks in the region and growing interference in the internal affairs by one country have created an environment that is not conducive to Saarc's success.

He, however, sees huge potential and prospects of The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), and regional sub-grouping BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal), which, according to him, can play an effective role in achieving socio-economic development.

Jubo League man, another arrested for organising 'anti-govt Islamic rally'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police early yesterday arrested two people, including a Jubo League leader, in Godagari upazila for organising an Islamic gathering where a speaker allegedly called upon people to wage a "jihad against the government".

The arrestees were Khoibur Rahman Liton, president of the organising committee of the event and member of ward-9 of Basudevpur Union Parishad, and Khadimul Islam, union parishad secretary and also the ward unit Jubo League general secretary.

The gathering was organised at Paharpur Namajgram village on Saturday night without permission from the police, said Hifzur Alam Munshi, OC of Godagari Police Station.

Iman Hasan Naseri, a teacher of Khulna Alia Madrasa, was the main

speaker and he gave anti-government speech smearing Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

At one stage, he called for a jihad against the government, said the OC.

Following verbal complaints by locals, the police raided the event around 1:30am on Sunday. The two arrestees helped Naseri flee the scene, said the OC.

Most of the organisers of the event belong to Islami Chhatra Shibir, said Moyez Uddin Birprotik, general secretary of the Awami League ward unit.

"The organisers kept the Jubo League leader and UP member at the front to trick the administration..." he said.

Sumit Chowdhury, additional superintendent of Rajshahi police, said the police were keeping an eye on a section of people who were active in anti-government campaign through Islamic events.

ILLEGAL STONE EXTRACTION

Two killed in landslide

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Two labourers were killed and another was injured in a landslide while they were extracting stone in Jaflong area of Sylhet's Gowainghat yesterday afternoon.

They are Kamruzzaman, son of Madris Ali of Telikhhal village in Companiganj upazila, and Tajuddin, son of Jiadur Rahman of the same village.

The injured, Abdur Rashid, of Companiganj upazila, was admitted to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital.

Police detained seven people, including stone "quarry owner" Dulal Ahmed, in connection with illegal

stone extraction.

Locals said the workers were extracting stone from the quarry illegally and the landslide happened around 4:30pm.

Contacted, Salauddin Ahmed, Gowainghat upazila nirbahi officer, said stone extraction is completely banned in any quarry of Jaflong. But "the owner" was extracting stone from his quarry illegally.

The upazila administration was looking into the matter seriously, the UNO added.

Earlier this year, at least 13 workers were killed in landslides during illegal stone extraction in Companiganj, Gowainghat and Kanaighat upazilas of Sylhet.