

Moni waits for miracle

Doctors had given up but now a medical board is trying to diagnose her disease

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Her parents had been waiting for their 12-year old daughter's death.

Now, they can hope once again, albeit with some trepidation.

When doctors in Khulna gave up on 12-year old Muktamoni around two and a half years ago, claiming she was incurable, her parents could see their world turn fully upside down. "The doctors told us she had cancer and that she would not live. They suggested us to take her home and make the best of what little time we had," Ahsan Habib, Mukta's uncle remembered.

However, defying all odds owing to her resilience and perhaps a dash of luck, Muktamoni continued to survive, in anguish but with anticipation of a future cure. She continued to sing ghazals, a favourite of hers, distracting her from her pain but never for too long.

Hailing from Satkhira, she was admitted for treatment yesterday morning to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH).

An eight member board has already

been formed to conduct her treatment. Doctors suspect she has been suffering from blood deficiency and poor nutrition. But she needs to stay for eight to ten days at the hospital for more tests to identify her disease and confirm her treatment. If suspicions are proven correct, Muktamoni will have to first improve her blood and nutrition condition as her body may not be ready to go through any extensive surgery that maybe required.

Dr Samanta Lal Sen, member of the board, said, "She will get treatment free of cost like Abul Bajandar, who became known as the 'tree man'."

Muktamoni, has been afflicted by the disease mainly in her right hand, the condition leading to her hand swelling up like a bee hive. But it all started a long time back.

When Muktamoni was three years old, her parents observed a small swelling in her chest. After a few days, the marble-like protrusions appeared underneath her left armpit. Thus began a round of treatment that has continued till this very day.

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12-year old Muktamoni sits with her arm heavily bandaged. Once doctors declared her condition to be incurable and gave up on her. Now, DMCH offers her a fighting chance once again.

PHOTO: SHAHEEN MOLLAH

SWISS BANK DEPOSITS

Muhith slams media over 'exaggeration'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday criticised the media for what he said was exaggeration in reports on Bangladeshis' deposits in Swiss banks.

"Journalists unethically mentioned those [deposits with Swiss banks] as money laundering, which led to misunderstanding," he told parliament.

Muhith said several newspapers

recently reported that Bangladeshi nationals' deposit in Swiss banks in 2016 was \$694.15 million, up from \$582.43 million the previous year.

Taking the significance of the issue into consideration, Bangladesh Bank (BB) and Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit collected information and submitted a report to the finance ministry.

"I won't say money is not laundered.

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IS chief dead

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the Observatory," the monitor's director Rami Abdel Rahman told AFP.

"We learned of it today but we do not know when he died or how."

Deir Ezzor, in eastern Syria, remains largely under IS control even as the group is losing territory elsewhere in the country and in neighbouring Iraq.

Abdel Rahman said Baghdadi "was present in eastern parts of Deir Ezzor province" in recent months, but it was unclear if he was killed in the area or elsewhere.

There was no official confirmation or denial of the news on social media platforms used by IS.

The US-led coalition said it could not verify the Observatory's report.

"We cannot confirm this report, but hope it is true," said coalition spokesman Colonel Ryan Dillon.

"We strongly advise ISIS to imple-

ment a strong line of succession, it will be needed," he added, using a different acronym for IS.

There have been persistent rumours of Baghdadi's death in recent months, and Russia's military said in mid-June that it was seeking to verify whether it had killed the IS chief in an air strike in Syria in May.

Russia's army said Sukhoi warplanes carried out a 10-minute raid on May 28 at a location near the IS stronghold of Raqa, where group leaders had gathered to plan a pullout from the area.

The US-led coalition also said at the time it could not confirm whether the Russian strike had killed Baghdadi.

The 46-year-old Iraqi-born leader of IS has not been seen in public since making his only known public appearance as "caliph" in 2014 at the Grand Mosque of Al-Nuri in Mosul.

SWADHIN BANGLA BETAR

Freedom fighter status for 58 more artistes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday recognised 58 more artistes of Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra as freedom fighters.

Ministry of Liberation War Affairs yesterday issued a gazette notification in this regard 45 years after their important roles in the war effort and victory in the Liberation War.

The government last year began recognising the roles of artistes and employees of Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra after a definition for freedom fighters had been made on June 26 last year.

According to the definition, artistes of Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra, its medical team who treated freedom fighters, and its football team are

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JS uproar sparks debate, criticism

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opened a barrage of flak, terming the SC verdict "unexpected". They said the apex court has to prove how parliamentarians have "challenged the basic structure" of the constitution by passing the 16th amendment.

Lawmakers also came down heavily on the amici curiae appointed by the SC, especially Dr Kamal Hossain and M Amirul Islam, for opposing the 16th amendment.

In the wake of the JS discussion, the SC Bar Association got split over the issue.

In a press conference yesterday, pro-BNP lawyers alleged that the remarks made by senior ministers and lawmakers about the chief justice and two veteran jurists are tantamount to "contempt of court".

Pro-Awami League lawyers held another press conference and blasted the pro-BNP jurists.

They alleged the press conference of the pro-BNP lawyers will tarnish the

image of the judiciary and create confusion among people about the relationship between the judiciary and the government.

While speaking at the roundtable discussion, Prof CR Abrar of Dhaka University's international relations department said lawmakers even launched personal attacks on that day. "If anybody tarnished the image of parliament, it was the parliamentarians...." he headed.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, an executive member of Shujan, said it seemed parliament faced off with the judiciary over the appointment and ways of work of the judges.

Rizwana, also chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), said political leaders and lawmakers were not so excited when the Supreme Court scrapped the amendments brought by the military rulers, and the caretaker government provision.

"We even saw them welcome the

judgments but today, as the 16th amendment is scrapped, they say it is an attack on their independence and sovereignty. That means, when the verdict will serve your political interest, you will welcome it. We could not develop the mentality to accept a verdict if it does not serve our political interest," she said.

Prof Asif Nazrul of Dhaka University's Law Department said many lawmakers claimed that parliaments in many countries have the power to remove High Court judges but they were "totally wrong".

He said the British Institute of Comparative and International Law conducted a research in 2015 over 48 commonwealth countries and found that only in four countries -- Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nauru and Samoa -- parliaments had the power to remove HC judges without the involvement of judiciary.

The speakers also put emphasis on more independence of judiciary, more

some of the countries that had empowered their parliaments to remove judges have long ago introduced judicial commission or some other system free from the influence of government for the judicial appointments.

The above examples do not work in our country. Our Parliament is yet to enact a law in line with a constitutional provision detailing qualifications of people willing to be SC judges in the last four decades.

So far none of the previous parliaments nor the MPs of the current one speak about the urgent need to make the crucial law to meet the constitutional obligation regarding appointment of judges.

They also seem to have forgotten to speak about restrictions imposed on them by Article 70 of the constitution preventing them from acting according to their conscience play their role independently.

Moreover, any parliament in any other country that enjoys the power to remove apex court judges do not have articles similar to our Article 70 that imposes such stringent restrictions on its members preventing them from functioning independently. Under Article 70, our elected MPs are obliged to follow the party whip and toe the party line always and can never vote according to their conscience. According to the latest SC judgment, the lack of independence of the MPs contributed to the cancellation of the 16th Amendment.

As we saw in the Parliament last Sunday, every MP followed the prescribed line. Not a single one had a divergent view. The party line prevailed- this time across the aisle.

So much for free discussion in the Parliament.

FARHAD MAZHAR KIDNAP

Concern over bid to divert attention

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-one eminent citizens expressed concern over what they said was a vested quarter trying to distract from the incident of abduction of poet and writer Farhad Mazhar through a smear campaign.

"Everyone expected that administration and members of law enforcement agencies would identify and arrest the real abductors. But it is a matter of concern and frustration that a vested quarter is spreading hate speech and propaganda to divert attention from the crime of abduction," they said in a press statement on Monday.

"Such propaganda will create scope to divert attention from the Farhad Mazhar abduction case to another direction, which will provide a cover up for the criminals," it added.

"So civil society members are urging the law enforcement agencies and the administration to be more active in unearthing the truth to dispel the anxiety over citizen's safety and their freedom of speech," they said.

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RU REPORTER ASSAULT

Police yet to find accused

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police yesterday could not arrest any of the four Chhatra League leaders, accused of assaulting The Daily Star journalist Arafat Rahaman and vandalising a bus the previous day.

Humayun Kabir, officer-in-charge of Motihar Police Station, said police teams and plainclothes detectives hunted the accused in and around the campus, but could not trace them.

"We learnt that they were hiding in Rajshahi University dormitories. We can't raid the halls without cooperation from the university authorities," he told this correspondent.

Asked whether they sought cooperation, the OC said, "You know the reality."

RU Proctor Prof Mujibul Haque Azad said law enforcers didn't ask for help.

"Police must not blame the university authorities. They should seek help if they have any information about the accused."

He, however, said the university was yet to take any action over the journalist's assault.

Some 25 Chhatra League men, led by RU unit Vice President Ahmed Sajib, Organising Secretary Abid Ahsan Labon, Law Affairs Secretary Saiful Islam Bijoy and Information and Research Secretary Mahamudur Rahman Kanon, vandalised a bus of Desh Travels near the main entrance to the university on Monday.

They brutally beat up Arafat, 20, when he went to the area to take photographs.

The journalist that night filed a case accusing the four BCL leaders and 10

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US urges

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mission to do its job."

"The international community cannot overlook what is happening in Burma -- we must stand together and call on the government to fully cooperate with this fact-finding mission," she said in a statement. Myanmar was formerly known as Burma.

Some 75,000 Rohingya fled northwestern Rakhine state to Bangladesh after Myanmar's army carried out a security operation last October in response to deadly attacks by Rohingya insurgents on border posts.

A UN report from February, based on interviews with some of the Rohingya refugees, said Myanmar's security forces have committed mass killings and gang rapes of Rohingya in a campaign that "very likely" amounts to crimes against humanity and possibly ethnic cleansing.

"No one should face discrimination or violence because of their ethnic background or religious beliefs," Haley said.

Meanwhile, the UN high commissioner for refugees said Nearly half a million Rohingya refugees from Myanmar living in squalid Bangladeshi camps face staying "for some more time".

Filippo Grandi, the chief of UNHCR, on Monday visited two refugee camps in Cox's Bazar on the southeast coast where hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims have fled violence in neighbouring Myanmar.

Grandi warned the minority group faced a "very dire state in northern Rakhine" bordering Cox's Bazar, adding Myanmar officials had said the verification procedure for refugees before any repatriation would be lengthy.

"We offered our technical expertise (to Myanmar). I think it's possible that refugees will stay here in Bangladesh for some more time," he said in Dhaka.

Blame lies with city corporations

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The city corporations failed to kill mosquitoes, said State Minister for Health Zahid. They should be more serious about cleaning garbage which litters here and there, helping the spread of the mosquitoes that cause the disease, he added.

Chikungunya, which is transmitted to human bodies by infected Aedes mosquito, started spreading in the capital about two months ago. Symptoms of the viral disease include fever, muscle pain, headache, nausea, fatigue, rash and there are often accompanied by a very debilitating joint pain which can last for days.

In the first week of last month, the

Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) released a report where it identified 23 areas in the city as most risky. Those areas include Uttara-4, Uttara-9, Middle Badda, Gulshan-1, Lalmatia, Pallabi, Maghbazar, Malibagh, Rampura, Tejgaon, Banani, Nayatola, Kuril, Pirobagh, Rayer Bazar, Shyamali, Monipuripara, Mohammadpur, Mohakhali, Mirpur-1 and Korail Slum.

Health experts then suggested destroying all potential mosquito breeding sources.

Recently, the city corporations started area-based larviciding and fogging activities. However, the mosqui-

toes keep on breeding, infecting more and more people.

Against this backdrop, the government on Monday opened help desks for chikungunya patients at all public hospitals and medical colleges across the country.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora, director of IEDCR, said the estimated number of chikungunya patients in the capital was about 2,700.

"Although there were a few cases of chikungunya at the end of April, the disease mainly spreads in May and June and it's continuing."

The current trend may continue till

the end of September as Aedes mosquitoes could breed even after the monsoon, she said, calling upon everyone to ensure that the mosquitoes could not breed inside their homes.

Dr Sabrina also said they were receiving 60 to 100 calls from chikungunya patients every day through a hotline opened recently.

Meanwhile, Health Minister Nasim claimed in parliament last night that the chikungunya situation was under control. He called upon the media not to spread panic among people over the issue.

"The government has taken all sorts of preparations to deal with the issue.