



Abu Talha's father Abu Reaz Mohammad Nuruddin Khondaker, mother Selina Chowdhury and sisters Tayeba Mahmuda and Rokeya Mahmuda pose, among others, at the ceremony where "Faraaz Hossain Courage Award 2017" was conferred posthumously on the youth on Saturday. Right, guests observe a minute's silence in memory of Faraaz, Abinta, Tarishi and other victims of Holey Artisan attack; late mayor Annisul Huq and Talha.



Honouring a brave soul

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Talha, a second-year student of computer science and engineering at Daffodil International University, managed to save the lives of the two, but lost his own as one of the muggers stabbed him when he tried to stop them.

Bleeding profusely, he was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he was pronounced dead.

For his act of valour, Talha was posthumously awarded "Faraaz Hossain Courage Award 2017" on Saturday.

PepsiCo Global last year introduced the award with a fund of \$200,000 which will support a \$10,000 prize to be awarded annually for the next 20 years.

The purpose of the award is to recognise acts of exceptional courage by individuals setting examples of empathy for fellow human beings and imbue the Bangladeshi youths with the spirit of bravery, the very spirit that 20-year-old Faraaz Ayaaz Hossain symbolises.

Faraaz refused to desert his friends and was brutally killed by terrorists in the July 1 terror attack at Holey Artisan Bakery in the capital's Gulshan area.

The terrorists specifically targeted foreigners dining at the Gulshan café. They were looking for "infidels", taking test as to who could recite verses from the holy Quran and who couldn't.

Faraaz, a brilliant student of Economics at Emory University in Atlanta, US, recited from the holy Quran, and was given the chance to walk out of it all.

But he chose to stay with his friends - Abinta Kabir, a Bangladesh-born US citizen and a student at Emory University, and Tarishi Jain, an Indian student at the University of California, Berkeley -- with whom he had gone to the café on that fateful night.

At Saturday's ceremony in the capital's Radisson Blu Water Garden Hotel, Brac Founder and Chair Sir Fazle Hasan Abed KCMG, and PepsiCo India Chairman and CEO D Shivakumar handed over the prize money of

\$10,000 to Talha's sisters Tayeba Mahmuda and Rokeya Mahmuda.

They also gave a certificate of honour to Talha's mother Selina Chowdhury and a plaque to his father Abu Reaz Mohammad Nuruddin Khondaker, a businessman in Tikatuli.

Last year, Miraz Sardar, a college employee in Madaripur, got the award.

After receiving the plaque, Nuruddin said, "Talha was our only son. We had many dreams centring him. He is no longer with us as he sacrificed his life to save others."

Talha sought help after the muggers stabbed him, but no one came forward, he added.

"We have to awaken people's consciousness if we want to check crimes."

He further said his son exemplified the ideals Faraaz had set for the young generation through his courage and sacrifice.

This year's jury was comprised of eminent personalities -- Sir Abed (jury chair), Bishwa Sahitya Kendra Chairman Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed, renowned Tagore exponent Rezwana Choudhury Bannya, Standard Chartered Bank CEO Naser Ezaz Bijoy, Dhaka Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Nihad Kabir, teacher of American International School Dhaka Sabahat Jahan, PepsiCo Bangladesh Country Manager Manish Muley, and Faraaz's grandfather and Transcom Group Chairman Latifur Rahman.

The ceremony started with a minute's silence in memory of Faraaz, Abinta, Tarishi and the other victims of Holey Artisan attack, Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Annisul Huq and the awardee.

Speaking on the occasion, Sir Abed said Faraaz's extraordinary courage and selflessness on the dark night of July 1 last year served as the beacon of light in Bangladesh and far beyond.

This year's awardee has exemplified the type of courage Faraaz had shown disregarding his own safety to save others, he said.

"I warmly salute the memory of the awardee of Faraaz Hossain Courage Award, 2017," he said.

Explaining the procedure, Sir Abed said notices were published in the national dailies and social networking sites to collect nominations for this year's award, and around 180 written

nominations were submitted. Of those, 20 were shortlisted based on their acts of courage.

The jury board was presented with a short list of four candidates, and it unanimously selected Talha for this year's award, he added.

US Ambassador in Dhaka Marcia

Bernicat said the July 1 incident was a turning point not only for Bangladesh but also for the world, because everyone who loves freedom and understands the true meaning of faith was attacked that night.

"Faraaz's action exemplified true friendship, bravery, and most of all selfless courage, standing against injustice and demonstrating true love, empathy and the ultimate sacrifice for humanity itself," she said.

D Shivakumar, chairman and CEO of PepsiCo India, said people wish the terror attack on July 1 evening had never happened. But it was a fateful day of courage as well.

An act of individual courage is what makes terrorism look very small and hopeless, and that's what Faraaz did that night, he noted.

Among the words, surfaced on the social media to describe valiant Faraaz, Shivakumar chose five -- "courage", "hero", "student", "grandson", and "inspiration".

Surprisingly, most of the social media users who used these words were not from Bangladesh but from other countries, Shivakumar said, adding that Faraaz's gallantry is celebrated all over the world.

"He [Faraaz] is a hero from Bangladesh but his act of courageous friendship resonates across the world."

"He resonates; his act resonates because he acted selflessly in a selfish world. He stood tall when many people think small," he added.

Addressing the ceremony, Latifur Rahman said, "Faraaz showed courage beyond my belief. He showed a character which I admire but I struggle to understand would I ever have had the guts to do what he did. Honestly, I doubt very much."

"He was much bigger in his 20 years than I am at my age." Faraaz displayed the characteristics of Bangladesh and what its people are, Latifur noted.

Praising Talha's bravery, Latifur said this is Bangladesh, a strong and proud nation.

"Bangladesh will not bend to any

kind of extremism in any manner whatsoever. And if all of us can put in our own little commitment in our daily lives, nothing can hold this country back."

Stressing the need for working for the country, he said Faraaz wanted to come back to Bangladesh from abroad, and live and build a career here.

Latifur thanked PepsiCo for the endowment of \$200,000 for the award.

Saying that his younger brother continues to be his conscience, Zaraq Ayaat Hossain, who moderated the program, noted that Faraaz's decision to stand and protect his friends from barbaric radicals shone a light on what truly matters.

"And that is the real life by principles, grounding in ethical values that encourage us to look out for one another, values that galvanize us to protect those we love, and values that bring us all together in the spirit of doing what is right," he said.

"Let Faraaz's example of selflessness manifest in our will to do good, no matter how small or large our efforts may be," he said.

Recalling their mother Simeen Hossain's contribution to their lives, Zaraq said Faraaz's act of selfless courage was because of the way their mother taught him.

Zaraq then announced the formal launch of Faraaz Hossain Foundation.

He said the foundation is a community that intends to build itself on unbreakable bonds.

"It is a reminder that we are strongest when we are together. It is a movement that begins here and continues to touch every life that we meet... the Faraaz Hossain Foundation is our vision together to see a brighter tomorrow."

"You can make a difference. You are the Faraaz Hossain Foundation. We are Faraaz," he added.



Faraaz's elder brother Zaraif Ayaat Hossain moderated the event, where the Faraaz Hossain Foundation was also launched.

Faraaz Hossain Foundation

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the will to write a brighter future, said a press release.

It took its very first step with a relief effort for the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. The entire community joined hands in providing food, clothing, blankets and medicine to help the refugees.

In his high school days, Faraaz worked very closely with the Center for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP). In respect to his memory, the Foundation will work with the CRP to help disabled people in Bangladesh acquire skills to become productive members of society.

As part of this partnership, the Foundation will help develop new spaces for CRP within its premises and build a state-of-the-art Faraaz Centre to help enrich the experience of those under CRP's care, according to the Foundation website.

Pope defends his Myanmar strategy

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emotional meeting, reports Reuters.

"For me, the most important thing is that message gets through, to try to say things one step at a time and listen to the responses," he said.

"I knew that if in the official speeches I would have used that word, they would have closed the door in our faces. But [in public] I described situations, rights, said that no one should be excluded, [the right to] citizenship, in order to allow myself to go further in the private meetings," he said.

Francis did not use the word Rohingya in public while on the first leg of the trip in Myanmar. Predominantly Buddhist Myanmar does not recognise the mostly Muslim Rohingya as an ethnic group with its own identity but as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

The pope met Myanmar's military leaders privately last Monday, shortly after his arrival in the nation's biggest city, Yangon.

The meeting had been scheduled for Thursday morning but the military pointedly asked at the last minute that it be pushed forward. The result was they saw the pope before the civilian leaders instead of the other way around, as had been planned.

NON-NEGOTIABLE TRUTHS

"It was a good conversation and the truth was non-negotiable," he said of his meeting with the military leaders.

The latest exodus from Myanmar to Bangladesh of about 625,000 people followed a Myanmar military crackdown in response to Rohingya militant attacks on an army base and police posts on August 25.

Refugees have said scores of Rohingya villages were burnt to the ground, people were killed and women were raped. The military have denied accusations of ethnic cleansing by the United States and United Nations.

Asked if he used the word Rohingya

during the private meeting with the military chiefs, the pope said: "I used words in order to arrive at the message and when I saw that the message had arrived, I dared to say everything that I wanted say."

He then gave a reporter a mischievous grin and ended his answer with the Latin phrase "Intelligenti Pauca," which means "Few words are enough for those who understand," strongly hinting that he had used the word the military detests while in their presence.

Human rights groups have criticised the country's de facto civilian leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize winner who was under house arrest for a total of 15 years before the 2015 elections, for not taking a stand against the generals.

But Francis, who met with her privately on Tuesday, appeared to give her the benefit of the doubt because of her delicate relationship with the generals who were once her jailers.

"Myanmar is a nation that is growing politically, in transition," Francis said in response to a question about Suu Kyi and budding democracy in Myanmar.

"So things have to be viewed through this lens. Myanmar has to be able to look forward to the building of the country."

On Friday, Francis held an emotional encounter with Rohingya refugees from Myanmar and then used the word Rohingya for the first time on the trip, although he had defended them by name twice from the Vatican earlier this year.

He told the crowd where the Rohingya were that God's presence was within them and they should be respected.

"I was crying and tried to hide it," Francis said on the plane, recounting how moved he felt when the refugees recounted their ordeals to him.

SOCIAL MEDIA REACTIONS

Pope's comments sparked a flurry of

online anger in Myanmar, a country locked off from modern communications for five decades but which now has an active social media.

"He is like a lizard whose colour has changed because of weather," said Facebook user Aung Soe Lin of the pope's strikingly different stances on the crisis.

"He should be a salesman or broker for using different words even though he is a religious leader," said another Facebook user called Soe Soe.

Myanmar's Catholic church had advised Francis not to stray into the incendiary issue of the status of the Rohingya in Myanmar, in case he worsened tensions and endangered Christians.

On his Myanmar trip, he treaded softly on the topic, urging unity, compassion and respect for all ethnic groups -- but not naming the Rohingya.

His caution initially won applause from Myanmar's tiny Catholic minority -- who feared a nationalist blowback -- as well as from Buddhist hardliners, who are on the defensive after a global outcry about the treatment of the group, AFP writes.

"The Pope is a holy person... but he said something here [in Myanmar] and he said different in other country," another Facebook user Ye Linn Maung posted.

"He should say the same things if he loves the truth."

Others were more sanguine about Francis' choice of language once he had left Myanmar soil.

Maung Thway Chun, chairman of an unofficial party of nationalists called the 135 Patriots Party, applauded the pope's decision not to name them in Myanmar despite pressure from rights groups.

"It means he respects Myanmar people," he said. "He even did not use the word many times in Bangladesh... I think he said it once, just to comfort human rights organisations."

Pay Tareque Masud's

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responsibility behind such accidents. We have sought redress under the law. I hope that many others will get compensation in the same way," she added.

Of the compensation, bus driver Jamir Hossain must pay Tk 30 lakh, his insurer Reliance Insurance Tk 80,000 and the three bus owners Tk 4.30 crore within three months after receiving the full HC judgment.

It is not clear what will happen if they fail to pay.

Four others, including ATN News CEO and former journalism teacher at Dhaka University Mishuk Munier, were killed in the same accident in Manikganj on August 13, 2011.

The rest are Mostafizur Rahman, driver of the microbus they were in, and production crew members Wasim and Jalal.

Catherine and three others were injured in the crash when the bus hit their microbus.

In February this year, a Manikganj court sentenced the bus driver to life for in the case.

Bangladesh is among the countries where road fatalities are high.

According to Bangladesh Passengers' Welfare Association, 6,055 people died and 1,600 were injured last year in road accidents. The figures were 8,642 and 21,855 respectively the previous year.

The World Health Organisation says the numbers are much higher.

Some 90 percent of the road fatalities occur in the low and middle-income countries and road crashes, which are preventable, are a leading cause of death for people aged 15-29, according to its 2015 global report on road fatalities.

Deaths of so many economically active people place a huge burden on the victims' families and a country loses an estimated 1.6 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) due to road crashes, said the report.

In the verdict, the HC observed that the incomes of road accident victims may be different but their affection and love are equal, and so the compensation should be same for all victims, Sara Hossain, a lawyer for the plaintiffs, told The Daily Star.

Under the Motor Vehicle Ordinance, 1983, there should be a tribunal in every district to deal with compensation cases. But not every district has this tribunal. In some districts, tribunals were formed but they are inoperative, she said.

Also, the law does not mention the standard amount for compensation, which is why families of road accident victims cannot claim compensation, she noted.

However, after the verdict, victims can now claim compensation, she added.

For Tareque Masud's family, a five-year legal battle for compensation ended with yesterday's verdict.

On February 13, 2012, the families of Tareque and Mishuk filed two cases with district judge and Motor Accident Claim Tribunal in Manikganj, seeking compensation from co-owners of the bus -- Kashed Miah, Khokon Miah and Jahangir Kabir -- its driver and the insurance company.

Following two separate writ petitions, the High Court on October 29, 2014, ruled that the HC, instead of the lower courts, will hold both the trials.

The same HC bench is scheduled to hear on February 4 next year the Tk 5.5 crore compensation suit by Mishuk's family.

In a statement, Bangladesh Passengers' Welfare Association lauded the verdict.

It termed the judgment "a milestone in the country's history" and demanded that the government include in the law provisions for capital punishment for drivers and set up a road accident fund.

Headmaster assaulted

in Barguna

Accused a Jubo League leader, also chairman of school managing committee

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A Jubo League man, also chairman of the managing committee of a high school under Amtali upazila in Barguna district, allegedly assaulted the headmaster of the school at about 5:30pm last Saturday.

The incident took place over the appointments of an assistant teacher and an office assistant. Teachers and employees of all 38 high schools and madrasas under the upazila brought out a procession in Amtali upazila town yesterday by boycotting annual examinations in their institutions in protest.

They also submitted separate memorandums to the chairman of Barisal Education Board who is also the deputy commissioner of Barguna.

Police arrested a man allegedly involved in the incident while a case was filed with Amtali police station accusing five people. Md. Sahid Ullah, OC of the police station, confirmed the matter.

The victim was identified as S M Mohiuddin, headmaster of Khekuany High School.

Police and local sources said, Abdus Sobahan Liton, organising secretary of Amtali upazila unit Jubo League has been serving as chairman of the managing committee of Khekuany High School. The school recently published an advertisement to appoint an assistant