



Government Titumir College student Rajib Hossain being taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital from Samorita Hospital yesterday after his hand had been crushed between two buses at Farmgate on Tuesday. Inset, his aunt in tears.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

A hand lost, grim days ahead

HC issues rule asking why Rajib should not be given Tk 1cr in compensation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

He wakes up in a delirium every now and then, trying to find his right hand with the left one. He searches in vain, and goes back to sleep again.

Rajib Hossain, a third-year student of Government Titumir College, lost the hand after it got stuck between two speeding buses trying to overtake each other in the capital's Bangla Motor area on Tuesday.

Profusely bleeding, he was taken to Samorita Hospital in Panthapath. He was at the post-operative intensive care unit (ICU) until yesterday noon.

Dr Hossain, medical officer at the ICU of the private hospital, said Rajib was under sedation and kept regaining consciousness after intervals.

The 22-year-old was shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) later in the afternoon.

"While in the ambulance, he [Rajib] woke up and asked me to help him straighten his hand. I could not answer him when he asked me 'why is my hand folded, khala?'" Rajib's aunt

Jahanara Begum told The Daily Star.

"How could I tell him that he doesn't have his hand? ... How would I console him?" Jahanara said and she burst into tears.

Rajib lost both of his parents. His relatives, who are already in shock, are struggling to bear his treatment costs.

"Till this [yesterday] morning, the medical bills at Samorita Hospital were Tk 1.26 lakh. How could we afford such a huge amount of money?" said Jahanara, a section assistant at the GPO (Government Post Office).

She paid around Tk 35,000 and signed a bond saying that the rest of the money would be paid later, she said. Earlier, Rajib's uncle Jahidul Islam paid Tk 17,000 for medicines. Also, a team from Government Titumir College gave them Tk 10,000 in assistance.

Meanwhile, the High Court yesterday directed the owners of the two buses to bear all the costs for Rajib's treatment.

In response to a writ petition, the

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Shortage of funds

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"You need to have a regular flow of supplies, maintenance and the staff. Sadly, certain things are lacking here," said Professor MA Khan, head of the Department of Haematology and BMT, at the DMCH.

For example, Hepa filters, which are important to free the cabins of bacteria, need replacements at least every six months, but were not replaced for the last three years, he said.

All the six infusion pumps, a medical device used to deliver fluids into a patient's body for transplanting bone marrow, have remained dysfunctional for the past six months, the physician added.

However, an alternative is being used for the transplantations, although the infusion pumps are considered to be more effective.

"We are issuing demand letters to the health ministry every year, but in vain," MA Khan said.

The BMT Unit had a three-year contract with a maintenance company that expired. Shortage of funds is holding back the unit's maintenance works, he added.

"Cleanliness is a fundamental element in the BMT unit, but it has no regular cleaning staff. For now, the unit has borrowed four cleaners from the DMCH Burn Unit," he said.

Meanwhile, two of the physicians trained for BMT were transferred from the department, he said.

The blood cancer patients coming to the BMT unit need to stay for at least three months in Dhaka after the transplantation but they often fail to do so because they cannot afford it, MA Khan said. A dormitory is required, Prof MA Khan noted.

WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

Physicians said the only treatment for various types of blood cancer and thalassemia is a bone marrow transplant.

According to Bangladesh Thalassemia Foundation, seven percent of people in Bangladesh are thalassemia carriers. Every year 7,000 new babies are born with the condition which is a very common blood disorder caused by a genetic mutation which results in defective haemoglobin production.

There are no official data about

people needing bone-marrow transplants in Bangladesh but doctors say many go abroad, mostly to India and Singapore, for it.

They also said it was crucial that authorities took immediate measures and updated all the facilities required and allocated funds to fully utilise the BMT unit.

ALLOGENEIC TRANSPLANTS A NEED OF THE DAY

All the bone marrow transplants conducted at the DMCH were autologous, meaning the healthy stem cells of the patients themselves were used for the transplant.

However, the procedure is not suitable for the more critical patients of leukaemia, thalassemia and aplastic anemia. Such critical patients require allogeneic procedure needing stem cells from donors.

Dr Bimalangshu R Dey, associate professor of medicine at the MGH, Harvard Medical School, who played a critical role in establishing the BMT unit of DMCH, said many young boys and girls in Bangladesh are dying in their 20's and 30's for thalassemia though it is curable.

"We have the capacity to conduct allogeneic transplant here. We have trained physicians, nurses and technologists for allogeneic transplant. However, there are some infrastructural issues to be addressed," he told The Daily Star during his recent visit to Dhaka.

The requirements for allogeneic transplant are a technical lab, a drug lab, immunological assessment, medicines, renovation of BMT cabin, patients' day-care room and third party inspection, which was supposed to be done last year, he said.

"It is a matter of only a few months," Dr Bimalangshu said.

Physicians of the BMT unit said they had a plan to start allogeneic transplant by 2017, but shortage of funds has been a serious bottleneck.

"This is the best international collaboration in the field of medical science in Bangladesh... it is our responsibility to continue the high level of cooperation for the people of Bangladesh," said Dr Bimalangshu.

Canada should welcome Rohingya

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according to Canadian broadcaster CBC.

Rae was appointed special envoy to Myanmar by Trudeau on Oct 23 and has travelled to Indonesia, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Vietnam and the UN in New York, holding discussions with officials, leaders and non-governmental organisations.

Shortly after release of the report, Trudeau thanked Rae for his insights, professionalism, and recommendations, and said Canada will continue to work closely with the international community and the United Nations on a path forward.

"This report brings much needed awareness to the grave humanitarian crisis and gross violations of human rights faced by hundreds of thousands of people, including Rohingya communities, other religious and ethnic minorities, and women and girls," he said in a news release.

"We share a global responsibility to respond to this crisis and meet the needs of those displaced and most vulnerable," Trudeau said.

The renewed commitment of Canada comes when experts fear uncertainty of repatriation of the Rohingyas, some 700,000 of who fled atrocities in Myanmar's Rakhine state, though Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a repatriation deal.

The conditions for their return, including safety, citizenship and reintegrating in their original homes, are still

elusive.

The UN Security Council also remains divisive over taking any concrete actions against Myanmar.

Rae, a lawyer and former interim Liberal leader, suggested Canada develop a multi-year funding plan beginning this year for a response that focuses on humanitarian assistance, education and supporting infrastructure. He estimates the annual costs of such a plan to be about \$150 million for the next four years, CBC reports.

Rae said as Canada should welcome the Rohingya, he did not detail how many more refugees he hoped Canada would accept.

At the same time, he suggested Canada work with Myanmar to create safe conditions for the return of refugees, saying any future return must be "conditional" on proof that their safety and rights will be protected.

He said Canada should establish a Rohingya Working Group within the government, chaired by a senior deputy minister, to ensure a "whole-of-government" response, and urge allies to establish an international working group to pursue joint efforts.

TAKE CLEAR STANCE

Rae urged Canada to take a clear stand and press for justice and accountability for the tragedy unfolding in the region, reported Canadian online news site Thestar.com.

Although Myanmar hasn't signed the treaty granting jurisdiction to the International Criminal Court, there are

ways for the international community, via the court or the UN, to investigate events over the last several years, and prosecute those responsible, Rae said.

"What we do, or don't do, in response to the Rohingya crisis will be a litmus test for Canada's foreign policy," he said.

Rae said the situation has all the hallmarks of a "possible genocide" and the world doesn't need to dwell on legal definitions before acting to prevent it from happening.

He said "it is clear that a strong case exists for the presumption that a number of crimes against humanity have been committed in Myanmar," including abuses and forced deportations by the Myanmar military, militia and other groups and individuals, all fuelled by deliberate campaigns of hate and contempt distributed on social media.

"The lesson of history is that genocide is not an event like a bolt of lightning; it is a process, one that starts with hate speech and the politics of exclusion, then moves to discrimination, then policies of removal, and then finally to a sustained drive to physical extermination," he wrote.

Amnesty International Canada Secretary General Alex Neve said Rae's report offers a roadmap for global leadership to address the urgent and long-standing human rights crisis, and called on the Liberal government to adopt the recommendations without delay.



Indian foreign secretary due on April 8

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Indian Foreign Secretary Vijay Keshav Gokhale is coming to Dhaka on April 8 on a two-day visit at the invitation of his Bangladesh counterpart.

During the visit of Foreign Secretary Vijay Keshav Gokhale, discussion on several bilateral issues including the Teesta water-sharing deal and upcoming summit meeting of prime ministers Sheikh Hasina and Narendra Modi would take place.

Gokhale reaches Dhaka on Sunday and is scheduled to meet the top leadership including Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali the next day before returning home on April 10.

He would also meet his Bangladesh

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Rohingya relocation to start in June

AFP, Dhaka

Bangladesh will begin relocating around 100,000 Rohingya refugees to a desolate island off its southern coast in June, a senior official said yesterday, despite warnings the site is prone to violent weather.

Authorities say shelters for around 50,000 refugees have been constructed at Bhashan Char, a silty strip of land that only emerged from the Bay of Bengal in 2006.

The remaining shelters will be completed within two months, Bangladesh's disaster management secretary Shah Kamal told UN agencies during a briefing about the controversial plan in Dhaka.

"It will begin in the first week of June," Kamal said of the relocation project that has attracted fierce criticism since being first proposed in 2015.

"We're building accommodation for 100,000 people," he told AFP,

adding the navy would construct more than 1,440 large shelters to house the refugees by May 31.

The navy is also filling in low-lying areas and building embankments around the entire perimeter to ensure the island can resist tidal flooding and monsoon storms.

Bangladesh, a low-lying riverine country at risk from rising sea levels, is prone to tropical cyclones and 120 evacuation shelters are also being

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Irregularities are with regulator

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undue privilege, he also pulls down a big question mark on his credibility and that of the regulatory body as well.

Things got all the more complicated when a US-Bangla Airlines crashed in Nepal on March 12, claiming the lives of 50 -- 27 of them Bangladeshis.

Since the tragedy, both the US-Bangla Airlines and its regulator Caab are facing a flurry of criticism over a whole range of safety issues -- from flight maintenance to pilot's fatigue. Ironically, Zia is also mandated to play a crucial role in the Caab's probe into the incident.

The permission clearly created scope for conflict of interest among the regulatory body's inspectors, with professional decisions being undermined through compromises in the process.

Why the Caab and the ministry bent the rules and allowed Zia to take the favour from a private airline remains a million-dollar question. When approached, the ministry remained tight-lipped and the Caab simply said the permission was given during the tenure of the previous chairman.

And current Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Naim Hassan, who took over the Caab helm in September last year, said he has no idea why his predecessor approved the proposal to send Zia for training in Indonesia at a private airline's expense. He also declined to make any comment on the ICAO rules.

The answer that came from the US-Bangla Airlines is quite straightforward.

"It was not our option or choice. We didn't go to Caab with any such proposal," said Imran Asif, chief executive officer of the airline.

"We bore all the expenses of Zia-Ul-Kabir as the proposal came from Caab."

Zia, on the other hand, claimed that it is an international practice for officials of civil aviation authority to take training at private airlines' expense.

Many high Caab officials took such training in the past, he told The Daily Star.

Imran further claimed that they had also borne expenses of Captain Salahuddin M Rahmatullah, the then chief flight operation inspector of Caab, for training on Bombardier Dash-8 aircraft in Ethiopia in September, 2015, following Caab instruction.

Asked, the Caab chairman said he didn't know whether any other Caab officials, except for Zia, had received training at private airlines' expense.

The rules of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), of which Bangladesh is a signatory, on training of technical personnel are very clear.

"As a general rule, it is not desirable for the CAA (Civil Aviation Authority) inspector to obtain qualifications from an operator under the CAA inspectional jurisdiction," reads a relevant para of the ICAO manual.

"The state authorities must be prepared to finance their technical personnel's initial and recurrent training," it mentions.

The parliamentary standing committee on the civil aviation and tourism ministry recently woke up to the harsh reality, spurring the Caab to investigate whether its inspectors compromise flight safety in exchange for undue benefits from private airlines.

"After the US-Bangla plane crash, we received allegations from different sources that the Caab inspectors take undue benefits from private airlines and compromise safety and maintenance of aircraft. The committee asked the Caab chairman to enquire into the allegations," Col (ret) Faruk Khan, chief of the committee, told this newspaper after a meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban last week.

Industry insiders alleged that Zia, a former aide-de-camp to the prime minister, knows well how to use his connections and get the Caab to do things his way.

Zia is found to have a completely different view about a regulator's role and the critical issue of conflict of interest. He even sees no problem in flying planes of operators under his jurisdiction.

"As the Caab does not have its own aircraft, we need to depend on private airlines' aircraft to increase our professional excellence in the interest of the country's aviation sector," he told The Daily Star.

"And it is me who has introduced the practice for the first time in the Caab."

He insisted that there is no conflict of interest in it, as he does not take any benefit or money from them in exchange for being their pilot. According to him, the civil aviation ministry gave him permission to fly private airlines' aircraft after his office hour for free.

"I usually fly the aircraft at night after my office hours," claimed Zia, arguing that his stint with private airline is not creating problems to anyone, and that the country is getting an expert on aviation.

Seeking anonymity, an additional secretary at the civil aviation and tourism ministry admitted that they had given permission to Zia on special consideration so that he could increase his flying hours.

"This will also benefit the airlines as they don't have to spend money for pilots," reasoned the official.

But aviation experts, pilots and other private operators see it as a beginning to greater irregularities.

"What happens when supervisors take advantage of their positions? ... Compromise leads to chaos and then to disaster. And that is precisely the case with Caab," asked a high official of another private airline, wishing not to be named.

"US-Bangla planes were allowed to

fly frequently in low visibility (for fog) during the last winter. None but the US-Bangla was allowed. The permission was given by the Caab's flight safety department that Zia leads. Why do you think it happened?" he asked with a wry smile on his face.

The CEO of the US-Bangla Airline flatly rejected the allegations.

Former civil aviation minister GM Quader was found too critical of the Caab.

Talking to The Daily Star recently, he said safety and maintenance get compromised in the Caab for bribes and undue facilities taken by its officials.

"I got three evidence where Caab officials compromised on fitness of three aircraft of two private airlines in exchange for undue facilities," said Quader, adding that some air force officials, who work for the Caab on deputation for a brief stint, often lack commitment.

Captain SM Helal, former president of Bangladesh Airlines Pilot Association, said private airlines do not care the Caab as they "manage" Caab officials with undue benefits.

"If they [Caab officials] are in my pocket, then why should I bother to go by Caab regulations?"

All the stakeholders are however of the same opinion that Bangladesh has an immense potential in the aviation sector. And an efficient Caab can only make that ambition fly and a corrupt Caab get it grounded.