

Woman, husband found dead inside room

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A woman and her husband were found dead yesterday in their rented house in Thanapara area under Kaliganj municipality of Jhenidah.

Being informed, Kaliganj police broke open the door to the couple's room and found the woman's body lying in bed, while her husband's body was hanging from a window grille.

Police identified the woman as Reba Rani alias Maya, 40, from Parnaduali village in Magura Sadar upazila; and her husband as Shailen Kumar, 50, son of Jugal Debnath from Kullapara village in the same upazila. Shailen was a vegetable trader.

The man's relative Subash Kumar said Shailen married Reba after his first wife died due to a fall from the roof of his house. Their son Biplob Kumar, 21, a truck driver's helper, and his second wife Reba used to live with him in the rented house in Kaliganj.

Biplob said he came home around 2:30pm for lunch. He informed the police after no one responded to his knocking on the door.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) Younus Ali of Kaliganj Police Station said they found the couple's bedroom door closed from inside.

Police sent the bodies to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy and filed a case in this connection, the OC said, adding that they would need to wait for the autopsy report and finish investigation before being able to ascertain the cause of the deaths.



Without any scope for privacy, both female and male patients talk to medical assistants at Lalmonirhat Sadar Hospital recently. Inset, a section of a huge crowd of female patients who wait in a long queue for their turn to see a doctor at the hospital.

PHOTO: STAR



LALMONIRHAT SADAR HOSPITAL

Patients suffer as doctor posts vacant

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

On a Sunday noon Sajjadur Rahman took his aging father Rahmat Ullah to Lalmonirhat Sadar Hospital's emergency for treatment. But he brought him back home, at Harati village of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, after finding no doctor at the hospital.

Sajjadur decided not to have his father treated that day at the hospital after seeing that instead of a full medical officer, a medical assistant -- known officially as sub-assistant community medical officers (SacMO) -- was prescribing medicines to patients.

"It's regretful that even the emergency department of the hospital is also being run by a SacMO," he said.

Patient suffering at the hospital reached large proportions lately as only

four medical officers are employed against 19 allocated posts there.

Moreover, eight out of 18 consultant posts also remain vacant at the 100-bed hospital in the district with a population of over 12 lakh inhabitants.

The situation turned for the worse after one of the four medical officers went on leave.

On an average day, Lalmonirhat Sadar Hospital sees around 450 patients at its outpatient section, while around 120 patients remain admitted at the hospital section.

With a small number of doctors and under pressure of serving an ever-increasing number of patients, who cannot afford treatment at private hospitals for higher fees, the hospital authorities are now allowing medical assistants to issue prescriptions.

Delwar Hossain, an elderly man from Rajpur in Sadar upazila, said even though the hospital lacks adequate doctors, many like him wait in long queues there because treatment at private hospitals are too expensive.

"Treatment here may not quite come up to expectations, but at least medicines can be expected here," he said standing in a long line of patients.

Fifty-six-year-old Saleha Bewa, from Kulaghat village of the same upazila, was going home disappointed. She said there was no scope for a patient to speak privately with the doctor as it was chaotic and overcrowded inside the hospital. Besides, she was given a prescription without a thorough examination.

One of the medical assistants, SacMO Abir Been Akhter, said due to the shortage of medical officers, patients at outpa-

tient and emergency sections of the hospital are being treated by SacMOs.

In order to serve a large number of patients, the handful of SacMOs "prescribe medicines to the patients only after hearing their problems as there's not enough time to thoroughly examine so many of them," he also said.

Agreeing with Abir's comments, his colleague Jasim Uddin, also a SacMO, said, "We try the best that we can, but a huge number of patients don't allow us to provide the atmosphere that we would like to provide to our patients."

Dr Sankar Kumar Saha, senior cardiology consultant at the hospital, told the Daily Star that the acute shortage of medical officers is pushing all physicians including himself to the limit. Aside from treating inpatients, he also had been treating outpatients every day.

Lalmonirhat Sadar Hospital's Superintendent Dr Golam Mohammad admitted the crisis, saying that three SacMOs, who are on deputation, had to be engaged at the hospital to address the situation.

A good number of patients from five upazilas of Lalmonirhat as well as neighbouring Kurigram's three upazilas -- Phulbari, Nageshwari and Bhurungamari -- rely on the hospital for affordable medical services, but it is quite difficult to serve them when "the hospital has only four medical officers, with one of them on leave at the moment," he said.

The superintendent also said, "Every month, we've been sending demand letters to health ministry, requesting medical officers [for the hospital], but no response [from the ministry] yet."



A man takes a risky walk on the awfully dilapidated iron bridge on the Kunimara canal in Kalapara upazila of Patuakhali. Around 30 thousand people of nearby villages are badly suffering as the authorities concerned have failed to replace the unusable structure. PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

Cow fattening pills seized in Joypurhat border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) yesterday seized around 2.38 lakh cow fattening tablets from bordering Panchbibi upazila of Joypurhat.

A BGB team from Panchbibi Camp, acting on a tip-off, raided Kolendrapur village around 7:30am and found the pills in an abandoned state.

Market value of the seized tablets would be around Tk 71.40 lakh, Assistant Director of BGB 20 Battalion in Joypurhat Abu Sayeed Mridha said.

Pro-BNP panel sweeps Bar polls in Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The panel backed by Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) won five posts, including those of president and secretary, while Awami League (AL) bagged four posts in Patuakhali Lawyers' Association election on Tuesday.

Advocate Golam Ahad was elected president with 262 votes while his nearest AL-backed candidate got 158 votes.

Advocate Afjal Hossain Swapan Talukder got 214 votes as secretary while AL candidate advocate Syed Mohammad Mohsin got 207 votes.

Other winning candidates are Vice President advocate Nizam Uddin Halali (BNP), assistant secretaries advocate Ajimur Raihan (AL) and AKM Mahedi Hasan (AL), Library Secretary advocate Anwar Parvej (BNP), Sports and Cultural Secretary advocate Liton Bonik (AL), executives members advocate Abdullah Al Noman (BNP) and advocate Abul Bashar (AL).

As many as 427 voters out of 446 cast their votes, said advocate Ansar Ali Khan who declared the election result.

Newlywed killed, husband arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A youth was arrested on charge of killing his wife in Sakhipur upazila of the district yesterday.

The arrestee is Shariful Islam, 25, son of Lutfar Rahman of Kawaljani village in Basail upazila.

Quoting family members, Lutful Kabir, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Sakhipur Police Station, said after returning home from Singapore a few months ago, Shariful married Rumi Akter, 19, daughter of Abdul Rouf of Dariapur village in Sakhipur last month.

Rumi along with Shariful came to her father's house on Tuesday afternoon. The couple went to bed after having their supper.

Hearing Rumi's screams, the family members woke up from sleep early in the morning and found her room locked from inside.

They entered the room by breaking open the door and found Rumi dead and caught Shariful. The family members then handed Shariful over to police.

During primary interrogation, Shariful confessed to strangling Rumi, said the OC.

A novel initiative to boost primary kids' attendance

Pabna Sadar upazila admin distributes 10 thousand flowering plants to first graders

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

After receiving a flowering plant from Pabna Sadar upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) yesterday, first grader Raisul Islam of Ichhamati Primary School in the upazila was quite excited.

His excitement stemmed from the thought that he now has something to look forward to at the school where he will have the sole responsibility of looking after the flowering plant.

Raisul was among the upazila's 10 thousand first graders who received flowering plants along with flower pots yesterday morning during a programme organised on the premises of Pabna Sadar Upazila Parishad.

The upazila administration organised the programme to announce the extraordinary campaign under which 10 thousand first graders in the upazila were given flower pots to grow flowering plants at their respective schools.

The primary objective of the campaign is to boost attendance of students at schools, while at the same time, induce a sense of responsibility from a young age as well as the importance of agriculture through the

introduction to gardening.

Speaking with The Daily Star UNO Joynal Abedin, said each student will have a flower pot in their own name and at least 10 students out of the 10 thousand will be awarded for taking best care of their plants after their plants bloom flowers.

The campaign will not only motivate them to be responsible for their own plants, but also grow their interest in attending schools regularly, he explained.

Pabna Deputy Commissioner Jasim Uddin was the chief guest at the programme, chaired by the Pabna Sadar UNO.

The DC during his speech said if the campaign successfully improves attendance at schools in Sadar upazila, the district administration will introduce similar programmes in other upazilas of Pabna.

Among others, Rafikul Islam, superintendent of police in Pabna; Prof Dr Humayun Kabir, principal of Pabna Edward College; Prof Shibojit Nag, president of Pabna Press Club; and journalist Abdul Matin Khan spoke at the programme.



A first-grade student receiving a flowering plant at a programme organised yesterday at Pabna Sadar Upazila Parishad auditorium. PHOTO: STAR