

Man dies hours after arrest

Family alleges foul play; police deny

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

A man died in police custody three hours after his arrest yesterday afternoon in Nasirnagar upazila.

Family members have alleged that Babul Mia, 54, died in hospital after being tortured by police. However, Nasirnagar police claimed Babul had fallen sick on the way to the police station and was taken to the hospital where he died.

Babul was arrested around 1:45pm and died at 4:45pm.

Police claimed he was wanted fugitive in a robbery case filed with Bijoy Nagar Police Station in the district and there was a warrant to arrest him.

On the contrary, his family members have alleged that a group of plain clothes men took him away but was unable to show any arrest warrant

to the neighbouring locals who were present there.

Officer-in-charge (Investigation) of Nasirnagar Police Station Kabir Ahmed said that Babul fell sick when they were near the police station after his arrest. He was taken to the upazila health complex and died there.

He added that the body was sent to Brahmanbaria General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Contacted, the attending and Residential Medical Officer (RMO) of Nasirnagar Upazila Health Complex told The Daily Star that when Babul came to the hospital he said he felt pain on the left side of his chest.

He was given oxygen but his condition began to deteriorate. He was then referred to Brahmanbaria General Hospital. He died on his way there in the ambulance.

MP Rumeen seeks govt plot, BNP 'embarrassed'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two months after taking oath, BNP lawmaker Rumeen Farhana sought allotment of a 10 katha plot in Dhaka's Purbachal from the government she terms "illegal".

Rumeen, the lone reserved seat BNP lawmaker, wrote to the public works affairs minister on August 3.

In the letter, she wrote that she would be "ever grateful" if the government allocated her a plot as she didn't have any land or flat in Dhaka.

Rumeen, assistant international affairs secretary of the BNP's central executive committee, took oath as a lawmaker on June 9.

The letter recently went viral on social media.

Asked about the letter, Rumeen told The Daily Star that she didn't grab anyone's land, but rather asked for a state benefit available for an MP.

"Why was the letter made viral on social media? Why did the ministry leak it? Will the government leak the letter of other lawmakers on social media?" she said, adding that the government did it because she was an opposition MP.

By publishing the letter, Rumeen said, the government had revealed the fact that no information is safe in their hands.

"A few days ago, former finance minister AMA Muhith bought a duty-free car though he is not a lawmaker," the BNP lawmaker said, adding that the government had published her letter to cover up that incident.

A section of BNP leaders has expressed disappointment over Rumeen's petition for the plot.

"She went to parliament to demand the release of Khaleda Zia, not to seek any plot. It is embarrassing for us," a senior BNP leader, wishing anonymity, told The Daily Star.

He also said the issue would be discussed in the party forum and the party high-ups should seek an explanation from Rumeen.

The BNP-led Oikyafront, which boycotted the January 5, 2014 election, contested the last parliamentary election and won six seats. Five lawmakers-elect took the oath while party's Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir refused to take oath.

Tk 425cr, not Tk 8,744cr

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always work with local agencies and pay them in takas.

BTRC also made the same error when calculating Banglalink's spending. The telco said it had spent over "28.64 crore", but the operator failed to mention whether the figure was in takas or dollars. BTRC took it to be in dollars. Banglalink confirmed to this newspaper that the figure was to be in takas.

The BTRC also said market leader Grameenphone had spent over \$433 million on digital advertisements between 2011 and 2018. GP's report, however, showed the spending to be \$4.58 million and Tk 336 crore, as they had spent in takas when using local agencies and in dollars when they dealt directly with the social media platforms. Grameenphone has declined to comment on the issue.

Md Jahurul Haque, chairman of the telecom regulator, did not comment on the issue but referred their lawyer Alomgir Parvez Bhuiyan.

Contacted over phone, Alomgir said, "It was a mistake and we will place a prayer before the court so that it's corrected."

Muhammad Risalat Siddique, chairman of Analyzen, the country's first ever digital and social media marketing agency, said the social media spending given by BTRC was absurd.

"Using all our sources from the industry, we can guesstimate that the number would not be so big. Our digital spending market size might be about Tk 2,000 crore annually and

small players are leading from the front," said Siddique.

He said small-scale e-commerce shops were the main sources of the spending.

The issue of digital campaign spending came up after a writ petition on it was filed by Barrister Humayun Kabir Pallab early last year. In it, he said that a huge amount of money was being spent on social media, but the government was not getting any taxes from it.

Later, an HC bench of Justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Md Ashrafal Kamal sought a report from the BTRC about mobile operators' 2018 spending on Google, Facebook, YouTube, Yahoo, Amazon and other similar platforms.

Bangladesh Bank had also placed a report before the HC earlier, which showed that only six banks were used for sending money to Google and Facebook since 2014.

Of this value, advertisers used Bank Asia to send Tk 102.95 crore and five other banks also reported \$3.8 million they have sent for this purpose.

Of the amount, Google Asia Pacific Pte Ltd got Tk 58.59 crore and \$1.59 million, Facebook Ireland Limited received Tk 44.36 crore and \$1.34 million and Ultimedia E Solutions pvt ltd, another platform, also received \$298,000, reads the banking documents.

This time though, the telcos themselves had made the payments in both takas and dollars and the banks had shown the spending according to the currency used.

Protect migrants

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If anyone goes abroad without receiving the training required that person would not be able to perform the work, Hasina added.

"So, they'll ultimately face oppression. We've taken various initiatives to stop this, but people fall prey to the middlemen."

The PM stressed the need for raising public awareness so that people are never cheated by the middlemen. The middlemen often lure the innocent rural people, Hasina pointed out.

"They take a hefty amount of money from people and send them abroad. After that they put pressure on their relatives for more money. This sort of irregularity is a common phenomenon in the country," she said.

The PM said a stronger monitoring system is needed to stop the deception of workers who are going abroad. The workers are sending a large amount of remittance, which is contributing to reducing poverty and increasing the

foreign currency reserve.

"Prepare a database of people going abroad for jobs with details such as where they are going and for which work."

The government is trying to convince people not to approach brokers and go abroad by registering through the digital centres, Hasina said.

The government has established Probashi Kalyan Bank so that people can get loans from the bank to go abroad, she mentioned.

The PM called upon the media to play an effective role to this end.

She added that in future, Bangladesh might not send manpower abroad as the country would need skilled manpower since it is setting up 100 special economic zones and developing the information communication technology sector.

Ministers, secretaries and other officials concerned were present at the meeting.



Rohingya refugees shout slogans as they gather to mark the second anniversary of the exodus at the Kutupalong camp in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Rohingyas call for justice

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Some of the Rohingyas wore T-shirts imprinted with a slogan, "Ensure justice for the Rohingyas". Many took positions on the hills around the field to listen to their leaders.

Another rally was organised at Unchirang refugee camp in Teknaf.

At the Kutupalong rally, ARSPH Chairman Mohib Ullah said they no longer trust Myanmar.

He urged the world leaders to intensify pressure on the Southeast Asian country to create a favourable environment for their return to the motherland and hold accountable the perpetrators of genocide.

Mohib further said they want to go back to their ancestral land, not to the camps readied by the Myanmar authorities. But before they return, Myanmar must ensure a safe

environment under supervision of the world community.

"Myanmar must give back citizenship we had been stripped of in 1982, acknowledge Rohingyas as an ethnic community, bring to book those involved in mass killings of Rohingyas and ensure our free movement," he noted.

Many of the refugees broke down in tears, recalling the atrocities two years ago what the UN described as a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing". The UN fact-finding mission said the military crackdown had genocidal intent.

An international research last year said an estimated 25,000 Rohingyas got killed and 19,000 Rohingya women and adolescents were raped during the military crackdown in Rakhine since late August, 2017.

The research, conducted by a consortium of academics and organisations from Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Norway and the Philippines, also found that around 43,000 Rohingyas suffered bullet wounds, 36,000 were thrown into fire and 116,000 beaten up by the Myanmar authorities.

At the Kutupalong rally, Rohingya singer Nur Hossen portrayed the ordeal of the Rohingyas through his songs.

"We will never forget the genocide. We will never cease to demand our rights. God willing, our dream of returning to the motherland will come true one day," he told this newspaper after the rally, sharing the emotions of other community members.

Md Younus from Lambasia refugee camp said he still repented for leaving

behind his bullet-hit brother during the crackdown in Rakhine two years ago.

"I fled the massacre and saved my life. But I didn't have the courage to save my brother who collapsed after being hit by bullets sprayed by Myanmar army personnel. I often have nightmares," he told this newspaper.

The Rohingyas said they were willing to go back only if their demands are met. Otherwise, they would prefer to live in cramped refugee camps no matter how much hardship they have to go through.

"Please, don't push us towards death traps. If a safe condition is not ensured, we won't go back. If you really care about our life, please don't force us to leave," Sheikh Ahmed, an elderly refugee from C-block of Camp-1, told this correspondent.

It's Myanmar's failure

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rights, and security for their return to northern Rakhine, it said.

Myanmar needs to take decisive actions and demonstrate political will to address the core concerns of the Rohingya. Bangladesh asked Myanmar to adhere to the spirit and provisions of the deal on repatriation and the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State.

It should seriously consider engaging the international community for creating an environment conducive to their return as well as for monitoring the repatriation and reintegration process, the statement said.

Two days ago, Myanmar blamed Bangladesh for the second failed attempt to repatriate the Rohingya.

It had said that Bangladesh failed to distribute the correct paperwork, the so-called "verification forms" to potential returnees -- a controversial form of ID that falls short of granting Rohingya citizenship, reports Reuters.

Bangladesh, in its first-ever response

to Myanmar's blames, yesterday said that the accusation was "baseless, ill-motivated and totally unacceptable".

The foreign ministry said Bangladesh ensured all necessary arrangements, including security and logistics for the Rohingya to return to Rakhine. All available information and the fact-sheets provided by Myanmar were shared with the families concerned.

Moreover, adequate measures including security arrangements were ensured so that the Rohingya could freely express their intent.

"Unfortunately, none of the families interviewed agreed to return in the present circumstances, as they consider the security situation and overall environment in Rakhine not yet conducive to their return."

It said almost all the families interviewed expressed their deep concern over the security situation in Rakhine. Overwhelming majority of the families underscored the lack of progress in addressing justice-

and rights-related issues, including citizenship, freedom of movement, and land-use rights.

All families interviewed have reaffirmed their desire to return, once their concerns were reasonably addressed by Myanmar, the statement said.

Representatives of the Rohingya refugees, during an interaction with a high-level Myanmar delegation in Cox's Bazar on July 27-28 this year, called for international civilian monitors' presence in northern Rakhine to guarantee security and to monitor the repatriation and reintegration process.

The Myanmar delegation also agreed to continue frequent dialogues with the Rohingya to find mutually acceptable solutions to core issues, including granting fundamental rights and citizenship.

Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a repatriation deal in November 2017. Later, it also signed a tripartite deal with the UNDP and the UNHCR meant to

improve conditions in Rakhine.

Two repatriation attempts -- one on November 15 last year and the other on August 22 this year -- failed as Rohingyas refused to return, saying there was no guarantee for citizenship and safety over there.

The UN says that the situation in Rakhine is not right for Rohingya return. The UN does not even have access to large parts of Rakhine, yet Myanmar repeatedly blamed Bangladesh for failures.

In the repatriation bid of August 22, none of the 1,276 Rohingyas of 339 families interviewed by the UNHCR volunteered to return.

Since August 25, 2017, over 743,000 Rohingyas fled violence in Rakhine and came to Bangladesh.

They joined some 300,000 others who fled previous waves of violence in Rakhine and took shelter in Cox's Bazar of Bangladesh, which is facing economic, environmental and social challenges due to the huge number of refugees.

Two-thirds still unmet

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"If they stay longer, they won't be in comfort. We have already spent around Tk 2,500 crore from our own fund. If the donors aren't interested to fund the humanitarian crisis, there will be problems," Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said.

"Those who are not willing to go should rethink it now for the sake of their future," he added.

Over the years, many Rohingyas have fled to Bangladesh to escape decades of systematic discrimination, statelessness and targeted violence in Rakhine State in Myanmar.

Over 743,000 of them fled military atrocities including killings, rapes, tortures and burning of houses in the Rakhine State since August 25, 2017. They joined the 300,000 others who had fled to Bangladesh earlier.

The Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), in an update on the current response plan on Wednesday, said that till July 31 the most well-funded sectors were education, with 35 percent of the requested funding met, followed by food security at 33 percent, and 31 percent of water and sanitation.

No funding was yet reported towards the emergency telecommunications sector, while the health sector is only 13 percent funded, said the ISCG, a combine of UN agencies and international humanitarian groups dealing with the Rohingya crisis in Cox's Bazar.

Economist Hossain Zillur Rahman said fund flow was a competitive area. "There are some more crises around the world, like in Syria and in African

countries. Natural calamities can also shift the attention of donors."

"They [international donors] might lose interest in the Rohingya issue," Executive Director of non-government organisation Coast Trust Rezaul Karim, said.

Earlier on Wednesday, sixty-one international NGOs termed funding commitments for the Rohingyas insufficient and said the international community must respond and stand beside Bangladesh to improve the refugees' living conditions, and allow Rohingyas and host communities to live in dignity.

"With shrinking funds and continued restrictions on refugees' access to education and livelihoods, the crisis is likely to worsen," said a statement of the NGOs, adding that the conditions in the camps remained dire and there were growing concerns about safety and security.

Development experts have also pointed out that the already stretched resources ought to be used more efficiently.

Coast Trust's Rezaul Karim said the humanitarian operations for the Rohingyas should be more cost effective as their repatriation may take time.

Cox's Bazar CSO-NGO Forum co-chair Rezaul said globally international NGOs operate through local NGOs and that reduces the operational and management costs.

Around 1,300 expatriates were involved in the humanitarian operations and they used around 600 SUVs and cars every day making the operation expensive, he said.

On the impact of falling international funding for humanitarian assistance, Bangladesh's Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner Mohammad Abul Kalam said, "We have to make an evaluation."

"Some of the agencies in Australia and the United Kingdom are yet to make their announcement. After that, we will be able to know the real picture."

This is, however, not the first slow response to funding. For the first phase from September 2017 to February 2018, about 73 percent of \$434 million requested by the UN was met.

In the second phase between March to December 2018, it was 71 percent of \$950 million.

"The Rohingya issue is simultaneously a humanitarian and geopolitical crisis. Who will take its burden? Insufficient funding is an indication that it is on Bangladesh," Zillur said.

He added that Cox's Bazar locals had already expressed displeasure over housing the refugees and host communities were complaining that the Rohingyas had started to engage in the local economy.

Rohingyas are not allowed to work in Bangladesh, but they often work as day labourers or fishermen, said locals. They have also lowered the wage rate in the area, they added.

"If the humanitarian assistance drops, it [Rohingyas going out in search of work] will increase," Hossain Zillur said.

DGHS confirms

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among people. HEALTH OFFICIALS' EXCEPTIONAL EFFORT

Doctors, nurses and other health officials have been working tirelessly.

There are 350 doctors at the Shaheed Suhrawady Medical College Hospital. Of them, around 150 medicine and paediatric specialists have been working without leave for a month, said its director of Uttam Kumar Barua.

Gobindo Chandra Roy, associate professor of medicine at the hospital, said he has not taken leave since June.

"There is no specific working hour. Sometimes we spend 12 hours at work," he said.

Shawon Shahriar, a surgeon, said he cancelled a four-day programme in Singapore next month to be able to work at the hospital.

Jesmin Akhter, in-charge of nurses at ward-802, said her team members had not taken leave during the Eid-ul-Azha.

Ayesha Akhter, assistant director of DGHS control room, said, "I come to the office around 9:00am and leave around 8:00pm. But after returning home, I also have to provide information to journalists."

A record 63,514 dengue infected people went to hospitals this year, according to the DGHS.

The number is five times that of last year. The total number of infected people are likely to be even higher, because many cases go unreported.

At least 5,940 people are currently admitted to different hospitals across the country.

In 24 hours since 8:00am on Saturday, at least 1,299 new patients -- 607 in Dhaka and the rest outside -- had been admitted to different hospitals, according to the DGHS.