



Jharna Begum, *left*, at her clothing store in Duttapara area of Gazipur's Tongi recently.

PHOTO: STAR

The success story of Jharna

ABU BAKAR SIDDIQUE AKOND, *Gazipur*

Jharna Begum, who once sold clothes from door to door while covering her face to evade creditors, is now the centre of a tale of success that even intrigued the queen of the Netherlands.

Around 47 years old Jharna is now an example to women in her hometown Tongi. Many of the women working for her are trained by a fashion designer from the Netherlands.

In 1995, Jharna's husband Shamsul Islam had returned to Dhaka from the Middle East with Tk 5 lakh earnings. But the couple lost the money in no time as a joint business with a relative miserably failed.

But Jharna did not give up. She used to make handcrafts at home and do embroideries for many renowned brands, including Aarong. Despite the financial hardship, Jharna joined the Ansar VDP club in Tongi that year. She learnt how to run small businesses by taking a course organised by the club.

Seeing her experience and initiatives, Duttapara Brac Nari Unnayan Samity gave her Tk 5,000 loan. With the money, she bought fabrics from Dhaka's Islampur and earned Tk 6,000 by selling those to women at Duttapara in Tongi.

Later, she bought fabrics worth Tk 6,000 and made more profit. The profit rate never went downwards and today she earns Tk 70,000 a month.

In 2005, Jharna attended a seminar on SME (small and medium enterprise), arranged by Brac, at a factory of Viyellatex Ltd in Gazipur. The then ambassador of the Netherlands also attended the seminar.

After hearing Jharna's story, the officials visited her home in Duttapara. They made

a video of the place and the tasks carried out there.

In 2014, Queen Máxima of the Netherlands visited the place and heard from Jharna about her journey. Amazed, she asked Jharna what she wanted. Jharna stated her desire to support street children and abused women with money earned by selling clothes.

Queen Máxima promised her that she would provide her modern sewing machines and also send a designer to train her workers.

"Within a few days, the queen sent seven very modern sewing machines via an UNDP official to my place. A few days later, a fashion designer named Rose Merry arrived from the Netherlands. She stayed at my place for one-and-a-half months and trained me and my workers," Jharna told this correspondent. "The queen came to my place earlier this year to check on me," she added.

During a visit in early August, this correspondent found a number of customers purchasing clothes and placing orders at "Jharna Fashions", the store Jharna runs at her home.

In one room, Jharna keeps her products while sewing and cutting take place in another room on the ground floor. She and her family live on the first floor of the two-storey building.

Her husband Shamsul mostly stays at home and helps Jharna with the business. The couple has two children -- a son and a daughter. The daughter had been married off while the son earned a paltry amount from a job at a private company, Jharna said, adding that she bore almost all the expenses of the family.

A total 20 women are currently working in her factory.

Among them, eight are sewing machine operators while the rest are cutting masters.

One cutting master, Zayed Parvin, who took training from Rose Merry, can make various ladies wear, including skirts, palazzo pants, and frocks.

Jharna now goes to Islampur at least twice a week to buy fabrics. She got about eight street kids admitted to a local school in Tongi.

"After school, the children come to my place to have lunch. Then they help us by folding clothes, lend a hand in dealing customers too," Jharna told this paper.

She further said that although most of her customers were from Tongi and greater Gazipur, she has some eight to ten customers who time to time place orders from abroad. "My place became more known after the queen's visit," she said.

There was a time when Jharna could not pay her workers duly. "The workers used to crowd my place for payments. To hide from them, I used to cover my face with a scarf and sell clothes door to door for money," she recalled.

Masuda Ahmed, a long-time customer of Jharna, said, "I come to her place whenever I need to buy clothes. I first came here in 1995 when the rate of a yard of cotton was only Tk 20."

Parvin Akhter of Shokundibag said prices of clothes at Jharna House were lower than that in markets of Tongi.

"I get modern, elegant clothes at Jharna apa's place," said another customer, Farzana Akhter.

This correspondent bought a three-piece outfit from Jharna House at Tk 1,200. He checked and found out that similar products were selling for Tk 3,500 at other shops in Tongi.

"I always wanted to serve the people, never thought of gaining solvency. I believe it was my intention to serve people that helped me establish myself as an entrepreneur," Jharna said.

Chained man rescued after 30 yrs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Mymensingh*

The upazila administration of Pakundia in Kishoreganj has rescued a man, who had been kept in shackles in a small room for long 30 years.

The victim, Ratan Mia, 55, son of late Abdul Momen of Dakkhin Shatiadi village in Pakundia, was chained after he had 'mental problems' due to head injuries at the age of 25, said his elder brother Angur Mia, 60.

There are allegations that Angur Mia, a farmer, did the inhuman treatment to his brother to grab the latter's share of ancestral property.

As the story went viral on Facebook, Pakundia Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Md Nahid Hasan went to the spot on Monday, rescued Ratan and arranged his admission to Pakundia Upazila Health Complex.

"We found Ratan in a serious condition as he had been suffering from serious malnutrition for long," said the UNO.

"Some 30 years ago, he accidentally sustained serious injuries in the head, being hit by a bamboo stick," the UNO quoted the neighbours as saying.

"Ratan's brother Angur Mia said they chained Ratan as the latter sometimes went violent due to mental problem. He claimed that he tried his best for his brother's treatment in Kishoreganj but could not afford his better treatment outside. We are investigating into the

claims of Angur," he said.

Locals alleged that neighbours were not allowed to meet Ratan at the small room where he was chained. Meanwhile, his parents died 20 years ago.

"There was no light or fan at the room from where Ratan was rescued. A plastic pan was kept at the room for bathroom purposes," said Jewel Mia, member of local Patuabhangha union parishad (UP).

"Once Ratan was popular among the villagers for the mesmerising tone of his flute and he reared pigeons as a hobby. But the long confinement has ruined his life," he said.

"Angur did this to his brother possibly to grab the latter's share of paternal land," said UP Chairman Mohammad Shahabuddin.

The villagers have demanded proper investigation into the matter and punishment of the perpetrators.

Kishoreganj Civil Surgeon Dr Habibur Rahman, who inquired into the condition of Ratan at Pakundia Upazila Health Complex, termed the incident as a gross violation of human rights.

"Ratan is still very weak. Necessary medicines and quality diets are being given to him free of cost and his condition is improving. He has no psychological problem and hopefully he will be back to normal life soon," said the civil surgeon.



Ratan Mia at Dakkhin Shatiadi village in Pakundia upazila of Kishoreganj prior to his rescue on Monday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

'Punish those responsible for Lisa's death'

The schoolgirl's body was found in pond hours after stalker's threat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Thakurgaon*

Students of different educational institutions brought out a procession at Atwary upazila headquarters in Panchagarh yesterday afternoon demanding proper investigation to reveal the cause of the death of schoolgirl Sadia Samad Lisa whose body was found in a pond on Friday.

Later, speakers at a meeting in front of Atwary Police Station demanded exemplary punishment of the people who would be found guilty in this connection.

Police recovered the body of Sadia Samad Lisa, 14, daughter of Abdus Samad of the village, and a Class VIII student of Atwary Government Pilot School, from a pond at Chhoto Dap village in Atwary upazila on Friday.

Abdus Samad filed a case with Atwary Police Station on Friday afternoon accusing three neighbouring boys and police arrested two of them, both aged 15, on the same evening.

Another accused, a 14-year-old boy,

went into hiding.

Victim's family members alleged that the 14-year-old boy threatened Lisa on several occasions as she refused his proposal for 'love'.

The boy threatened Lisa's family of dire consequences on Thursday afternoon after he was beaten by another boy over the latter's 'relationship' with Lisa, they said.

Lisa went missing the same evening and her body was found floating in a pond near their house next morning.

After the incident the 14-year-old boy went into hiding.

The boy's father said, "The allegation against my son is false. He went to Lisa's house to seek justice after he was beaten by another boy. After Lisa went missing, a upazila vice chairman called my son for interrogation on the same night and he is yet to return home."

Officer in Charge of Atwary Police Station Abdur Razzak said, "Lisa's body has been sent to hospital for autopsy. The two arrestees have been sent to jail following orders of a judicial magistrate's court in Panchagarh."

Three 'rapists' sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

A Dinajpur court yesterday sent three youths to jail over charges of raping a woman on Thursday in Ghoraghat upazila of the district.

The three accused -- Rasel Hossain, 24, son of Rafiqul Islam; Sajib Hossain, 24, son of Bablu Hossain and Ismail Hossain, 28, son of Nurul Islam Fakir; all from the same village of the upazila -- were arrested on Friday evening in Osmanpur village where they boarded a Dhaka-bound bus.

Amirul Islam, officer-in-charge of Ghoraghat Police Station, over phone said the court sent the accused to Dinajpur jail

after they were produced before it around 1:00pm yesterday.

The woman, aged 19, was sent to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital in Dinajpur for forensic tests, he added.

On Friday, the 19-year-old woman filed a case with the police station, alleging that the three youths raped her at around noon on Thursday when she went to a lychee orchard in search of cow dung that she needed for coating earthen walls of a room she lived in nearby.

She and her day labourer husband rented the room after getting married three and a half months ago. Her husband was out for work when the incident took place.

Sundarganj roads under water for months

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Gaibandha*

Almost all the roads in Sundarganj municipality area go under water even after light to moderate rainfall, causing immense sufferings to people for the last six months.

Especially school children are the worst sufferers. They often fell into the potholes filled with water while crossing the roads.

Locals said the authorities concerned have been constructing a drain along the roads for the last six months.

As the construction work is going on at snail's pace, the outlets

through which the rainwater drains out, have narrowed down and due to this, the water cannot drain away.

Sumon Mia, a student of Class V in the area, said "The road is under water even after light to moderate rainfall and we often attend classes with wetting shoes and pants."

Badsha Mia, a resident of the municipality area, said the roads went under ankle to knee-deep water following heavy rain, which hinders smooth movement of pedestrians and vehicles.

Rafiqul Islam, a driver of CNG-run three-wheeler, said they face

huge problem while crossing the area as numerous potholes have also developed on the roads filled with stagnant rainwater.

Mayor of the municipality Abdullah Al Mamun said rainwater cannot drain away due to construction of the main drain in the municipality.

The contractor concerned has been asked to complete the construction work as soon as possible.

Sundarganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer Solaiman Ali said he has already requested the mayor to look after the matter.



Waterlogging in Sundarganj municipality of Gaibandha has been a longstanding problem due to lack of a drainage system.

PHOTO: STAR

Univ student held over 'abduction'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Mymensingh*

Two youths, including a university student, were arrested from Trishal upazila of Mymensingh on Friday night for allegedly abducting a businessman.

The arrestees are Al Amin Sarker, 23, and his accomplice Ripon Hasan, 22.

Al Amin is a third-year fine arts student at Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University in Trishal, said Dr Mohammad Emdadur Rashed Sukhon, head of the department.

The accused abducted garment businessman Mohammad Ferdous, 30, from Bhaluka bus stand area in Mymensingh and took him to Trishal on a microbus around 9:30pm on Thursday night. Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Bhaluka Police Station Mohammad Mainuddin said quoting family members of Ferdous.

The abductors confined Ferdous to a rented housing for students in Chikna area of Trishal and demanded Tk one lakh ransom from the victim's family.

Around 10:00pm on Friday, police made the arrests and rescued Ferdous after tracing the abductors using mobile tracking technology.

Contacted, Dr Uzзал Kumar Pradhan, proctor of the university, said police informed them of Al Amin's arrest and they would take necessary action if he is found guilty as charged.

The businessman's brother-in-law Mukter Hossain filed a case with the same police station, accusing the two arrestees.