

'Please, save me'

Sister recalls migrant worker's call for help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a desperate attempt to secure solvency, Abiron Begum (40) of Khulna's Paikgachha, went to Saudi Arabia to work as a housekeeper in July, 2017.

Two years and three months later, her family members received her in a coffin.

Her relatives said they received the body at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital yesterday morning, upon completion of necessary procedure at the Prabashi Kalyan Desk under the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment.

At the time of filing this report last night, Abiron's body was being taken to Khulna for burial.

Abiron suffered severe torture at her employers' home, alleged her younger sister Reshma Khatun.

Talking to this newspaper over phone last night, Reshma said they could not communicate with Abiron over the past seven-eight months.

The family only recently learnt of her death after extended communication with the Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWB) in Dhaka, Reshma added.

She alleged when she spoke to her sister, Abiron used to describe abuse that she faced at the hands of her employers.

"They beat me up mercilessly, and shove my head against [hot iron] grill. Please, save me," Reshma quoted her sister as saying.

Abiron was second among six sisters. She got divorced about 17-18 years back, said her relative Ayub Ali.

She did not get her due wages in Saudi Arabia, he alleged.

Ayub said Abiron went overseas with the help of a middleman: one Rabiul of Paikgachha.

He demanded that the authorities take apt measures to identify the real reason behind her death and ensure justice.

Contacted over phone, WEWB Director General Gazi Mohammad Julhash said if a migrant worker dies abroad, WEWB takes initiative upon being informed.

It also takes steps to bring back the body home and hand it over to family members, he said.

Julhash said the Bangladesh missions also prepare reports where they mention the reason behind the death of migrant workers.

Still, family members can file complaint with the authorities concerned for further investigation, he said.

Woman held over torturing 12-yr-old house help to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested a housewife from the capital's Mohammadpur area yesterday, for allegedly torturing a 12-year-old domestic help to death.

Roksana Parvin, 38, was arrested after the deceased Jannati Akter's father Janu Mollah filed a murder case, said GG Biswas, officer-in-charge of Mohammadpur Police Station.

Police is now looking for Roksana's husband Sayed Ahmed, an engineer of Water Development Board, who went into hiding after the case was filed, he said.

On Wednesday around 12:30am, the employer took Jannati to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital (SSMCH) in an unconscious state. Jannati had been working for Roksana for the last three years.

Doctors declared her dead on arrival and informed police, said the OC, adding, "We found injury marks on the the victim's body while conducting the inquest report."

Police later informed victim's relatives and sent the body to the morgue for autopsy.

Professor Selim Reza, head of forensic department of SSMCH, conducted the autopsy yesterday.

After autopsy, Prof Selim told The Daily Star that they found injury marks on victim's body and they are suspecting

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A museum waiting to be discovered

HELEMUL ALAM AND HASAN MEER



There's hope on the horizon for Postal Museum as it is being shifted to a bigger and better place. Below, a life-size statue of a "daak harkara".

PHOTO: STAR

Did you know in the early days of the postal system, a "dak harkara" (runner/postman) -- attired in bright uniform with badges, satchel full of mail on his back, armed with a spear for self-defense, a lantern in hand to show the path and jingling bells or bugle to announce his arrival ahead of time -- was the protagonist in mail delivery?

Enduring great discomfort and perils, especially if the route required him to navigate difficult terrains such as jungles or deserts, he used to deliver mail -- earning the well-deserved accolade of "service before self".

Also, there used to be a floating post office in the country, which opened on December 8, 1950 in Khulna's Chalna area. The post office conducted all sorts of transaction on a boat. It was, however, shut down and shifted to a permanent building in 1952.

These and many other interesting facts about the country's postal system can be found at the Postal Museum. But finding the museum, located at a distant corner of the third-floor of the GPO building, is quite a challenging task in itself.

The only hint to its existence is not any banner or sign but the security guards or postal workers inside the building, who may or may not want to help one find the museum, depending on their mood.

But if you are adamant, then be ready to make quite a few bends and turns through the gloomy and labyrinthine corridors with sacks of who knows what lying on the ground, climb a few flights of stairs without proper wall support and do some walking.

Rest assured, once you enter, you will surely be amazed by its

rich history and collection.

The country's lone Postal Museum was established in 1966 in Dhaka and was situated beside the main facade of the General Post Office counter. In 1985, it was shifted to the third floor of the Dhaka GPO. It consists two rooms -- 2,160 square feet each, said an official of the postal directorate.

From centuries-old post office memorabilia to life-size statue of

of them (dates back to 1890) weighs around nine maunds (over 335kg).

Also on display are curved long swords and spears used for security in post offices during the early British era. There are also rows of balances of all shapes and sizes used in post offices. One such Birmingham-made scale can measure up to seven maunds (261kg).

There are also dioramas of offices of postmaster generals and portraits of various noted personalities who contributed to the development of postal system. The museum also exhibits an assortment of around 3,000 postal stamps from around 191 countries.

Despite having such a rich collection, hardly five people visit the museum in a day for lack of visibility and bad planning. The displays need attention as many have become worn-out. The infrastructure also needs maintenance.

These correspondents visited the museum thrice. Once on a Monday around 2pm, when it was closed. During other visits -- on a Tuesday and Thursday morning -- the museum was open but there were no visitors, only a genial security guard.

A man stepped inside while looking for an official and was genuinely surprised to learn that there is a museum inside GPO.

NOT ALL IS LOST Contacted, Sudhangshu Shekhar Bhadra, director general of Postal Directorate, Bangladesh Post Office, said, "We have already undertaken a project to spruce up the museum. As part of the plan, we have started shifting it to the Postal Directorate in Agargaon."

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Push button for safe road-crossing

DNCC installs automated system in Mohammadpur, Mohakhali



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON, MATHEWS CHIRAN

FOLLOW THE RULES... Mayor Atiqul Islam, students and others cross the road in Mohammadpur after the green "walk" sign lit up. Inset, volunteers stop traffic manually as people and drivers are yet to be familiarised with the automated signal in Mohakhali.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Crossing a road in Dhaka is a feat in itself. Where other cities have already invested in smart traffic management systems based on automation, Dhaka is still relying on outdated methods.

Often times, people are seen risking their lives just to go to the other side or crossing a road at will as traffic management in this mega city is mostly dependent on manual control.

With an aim to help pedestrians cross an intersection safely and reduce risks of accidents, Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) has installed a "push button time countdown signal" system on a pilot basis in two of its areas.

Mayor Atiqul Islam inaugurated the automated system in front of SFX Greenherald International School in Mohammadpur yesterday. A similar signal has been set up in front of Brac University in Mohakhali.

The project cost around Tk 9.2 lakh.

"If someone wants to cross the road, he/she will have to push the button and after a certain time it will automatically show a sign for vehicles to stop. Also, a green arrow shape signal will light up for pedestrians to cross the road," said Nayeem Rayhan Khan, DNCC assistant engineer (civil).

"Pedestrians will have around 27 seconds to cross the road. A person can use the signal again after 127 seconds," he added.

However, after the signal was inaugurated, traffic police and volunteers from the school had to stop vehicles manually as drivers were yet to be habituated with it. Not just drivers, many pedestrians were seen crossing the road when the red light was on.

"There are cameras installed at the signal. If any vehicle violates rules, action will be taken against

them," said the DNCC mayor while addressing a programme as chief guest at Greenherald.

He said they will gradually set up the system in other areas.

DNCC has a plan to install this system at 22 points -- mainly in front of educational institutions -- by this year, according to officials.

The crossing and the footpath is at the same level to help people with physical disabilities, said architect Shareq Rauf Choudhury, who designed the system.

Initially, it will take some time for people to get used to it, he added. If necessary, the timeframe to cross the road can also be changed. Shareq said the signal at Mohammadpur will be maintained by the Greenherald authorities.

Among others, special assistant to the prime minister Barrister Biplob Barua and principal of the school Sister Virginia Asha Gomes addressed the programme.

Samrat sent back to prison

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former Jubo League leader Ismail Hossain Chowdhury Samrat, a "kingpin" of the illegal casino business in the capital, was sent to jail after rejection of his bail in connection with a case filed under the arms act.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Baki Billah passed the order after Rab Sub-inspector Shekor Chandra Mallick, also the investigation officer of the case, produced Samrat before the court on expiry of his five-day remand.

The court also ordered the jail authorities to provide Samrat with better treatment as per the Jail Code after his lawyer submitted a petition in this regard to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

In yesterday's forwarding report, the IO said Samrat has provided important information, adding that he needs to be

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'We want a normal life'

Geneva Camp residents urge govt to end 'police harassment', seek rehabilitation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three weeks after a clash with police, fear and anxiety still grips the residents of Mohammadpur's Geneva Camp; leaders of the community allege that police harassment has made their lives miserable.

Stranded Pakistanis General Repatriation Committee (SPGRC) yesterday urged the government to ensure a normal life for Geneva camp residents and wanted the prime minister's intervention to solve their problems.

They made the demands at a press conference at Jatiya Press Club.

They alleged that police often come to the camp with video footage of their October 5 demonstration, and pick up whoever is seen in the footage. "The footage shows our demonstration. We took part in the demonstration for uninterrupted power supply. That doesn't mean we were involved in violence," said M Shawkat Ali, general secretary of the camp unit of SPGRC.

"I am the headmaster of a high school. Does it sound plausible that I'd throw brickbats at police? I was also made accused in a case," Shawkat added.

Men -- without any involvement in the violence -- of the camp are on the run, they said, adding that police did not even allow them to open shops after the incident.

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