

Cyclone Bulbul leaves 10 families in Bhola with no breadwinners

M JAHIRUL ISLAM JEWEL from Bhola

Jewel and his two siblings were waiting for his fisherman father who promised to return home with new dresses, but they only received their father's body yesterday morning.

Jewel's father, Hasan, 45, was one of the 10 fishermen who lost their lives as their boat capsized on Tetulia River in Mehendiganj upazila of Barishal during Cyclone Bulbul on Sunday noon.

A total of 24 men, including the boat owner, were returning home from Chandpur by the boat.

Nine more fishermen, except Hasan, who were killed in the boat capsized were identified as Abbas, 45, Rafique, 42, Kamal, 40, Billal, 38, Khorshed, 38, Kabir, 35, Nazrul, 34, Mofiz, 29, and Nurunnobi, 26, all hailing from Charfashion's Abdullapur.

Of them, body of Kamal was found floating on the spot where the boat capsized. Rest of the bodies remained stuck inside the boat.

All the fishermen were the only breadwinners of their families.

"I might have to leave studies and start working as I have to repay loans," said ninth grader Jewel.

"My father took loans from some multipurpose societies to build our wooden house recently. The loan was supposed to be paid within this hilsa

Many faces

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disobeyed a signal and rammed into the last three to four coaches of Udayan Express, which was changing its track at Mandobagh Railway Station in Brahmanbaria's Kasba.

On impact, the three coaches were thrown off the track and badly mangled, leaving 16 killed, scores injured and others trapped inside the remains of the carriages.

Emon, along with his three siblings and maternal grandmother, are undergoing treatment at the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (Nitor) in the capital.

Emon's family had boarded the train from Shayestaganj of Habiganj around 12:00midnight.

All of them, except his elder brother, Md Sumon, were travelling in the compartment "Jha", in one of the coaches hit by the Turna Nishita. His elder brother was in Compartment "Dha".

Lying at his hospital bed in Nitor, Emon said he was lost in his thoughts when he was suddenly jolted back to reality by a loud bang and was then slammed against his seat.

Everything turned dark after that.

A while later, some people came and tried to help him. His elder brother appeared at the scene. Emon noticed his elder sister sprawled on the carriage floor and crying for him.

Next to her was his mother.

"I saw my mother amid a pool of blood," said Emon.

"We have none to look us after," he said, still racked by shivers every now and then.

Moni Shankar, assistant registrar of Nitor, said the three siblings had several fractures and would need to undergo operations.

HE DIED IN HIS LAP

While Emon and his family were coming to terms with the loss of Muslim Mia, Alamgir Alam was asleep with his fourth-grader son Yeasin securely cradled in his lap, in the same compartment of Udayan Express

Alam and his eight-member family had boarded the train from Shayestaganj Railway Station in Sylhet.

When the collision happened, Alam lost consciousness due to the impact.

Yeasin died in his father's lap.

"As we woke up, we saw Yeasin dead in his father's lap. His father, too, was unconscious," said Mojibur Rahman, brother of Alamgir, a resident of Habiganj Sadar.

Firefighters rescued Alamgir and took him to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital. After he regained consciousness, he started looking for his son, oblivious to the fact that Yeasin was no more.

"Have you seen my soon anywhere?" he was seen asking whoever came to meet him.

A LIFE CUT SHORT

Three-year-old Soha Moni was going to Chattogram with her parents and elder brother. Residents of Habiganj's Baniyachang, they were sitting together

season," he added.

Hasan went for sea fishing on November 1, said his son Jewel.

Thirteen crew members of the boat managed to swim ashore. One of them, seeking anonymity, told The Daily Star that the boat owner -- Tofayl Majhi -- who was also sailing the boat ignored the danger signal and continued sailing.

Tofayel survived the tragic boat capsize and was on the run since then.

Meanwhile, the whole village of Charfasion was shaken as all the bodies reached their homes together yesterday. All the bodies were buried at their families' graveyards.

Bhola Deputy Commissioner Masud Alom Siddik said a two-member probe committee was formed to investigate the incident. The committee would submit their report within three working days.

Families of each victim have been provided with Tk 25,000 cash as primary compensation, he added.

Ruhul Amin, upazila nirbahi officer of Charfasion, said another fisherman on the boat remained missing as of yesterday.

Two more men of Charfasion also went missing during Cyclone Bulbul, he added.

Abidur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Mehendiganj Police Station, said a general dairy was filed with the police station in this connection.

aboard the Udayan Express.

Soha was looking forward to the journey. Unfortunately, life had other plans.

After the accident, Soha was brought to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital, where doctors declared her dead.

At the time, no one had come to claim the girl, as her parents were also in the same hospital in critical condition.

Soha's father Sohel Mia lost both his legs, while her mother had sustained serious injuries to her arms and legs. Soha's brother, Sohag, 5, escaped with only minor injuries.

Soha's maternal uncle Jamal Uddin arrived at the hospital morgue around noon to take the body.

"Her parents were not informed about her death. They were told that she is injured," Jamal said.

He said they had applied to the deputy commissioner of Brahmanbaria to take Soha's body without conducting any autopsies.

Meanwhile, Jamal still does not know how to break the news of the child's death to her parents.

'I CAN'T FIND HER'

Abul Khayer, a resident of Sreemangal, was seen rushing between the accident spot and the hospital to find his brother.

On Monday night, he had gone to see his brother off for Chattogram.

"I have been calling his cell phone since early morning, but it is switched off. I don't know whether he is dead or alive," he said.

Mayen Uddin, a chef in a restaurant in Chattogram, found himself in a situation similar to Abul Khayer's. He was returning from Sylhet with his wife Kakoli and three-year-old daughter Mahima.

After the accident, he was relieved to have been rescued, along with his daughter, with some injuries.

The relief, however, was short-lived. There was no trace of Kakoli.

"Where can I find her now," said Ayesha, sister of Mayen.

A CRUEL GOODBYE

One-and-a-half-year-old Isha was afraid.

A huge number of people had gathered at the Bayek High School premises in Brahmanbaria, where her father Ali Mohammad Yusuf, 32, now lay dead.

Isha did not like being surrounded by the crowd. She sat on her mother's lap and cried.

Her mother Chistiya Begum, 24, a nurse of Raozan upazila health complex, had brought her here to take Yusuf's body.

Yusuf, vice-principal of Little Flower Kindergarten at Habiganj, was travelling in the doomed train with his daughter and wife to a wedding ceremony.

Well-wishers had come to bid the vice-principal a final farewell.

"I don't know how to console Chistiya," said Taj Uddin, a relative of Yusuf.

The consolation, though, may not come anytime soon.



The mangled remains of coaches of Udayan Express are being cleared off the rail lines by a bulldozer in Chandkhola area of Brahmanbaria's Kasba upazila yesterday. The accident happened when Turna Nishita Express rammed Udayan Express.

PHOTO: MASUK HRIDOY

'Train driver's fault' takes sixteen lives

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passengers of Udayan. No passenger of Turna Nishita was injured.

The railway authorities suspended three staffers, including the driver of Turna Nishita and his assistant. Five probe bodies were formed by different authorities to investigate the incident.

President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan and Law Minister Anisul Huq expressed deep shock at the loss of lives in the accident.

Sujan, Railways Secretary Mofazzel Hossain and Bangladesh Railway (BR) Director General Md Shamsuzzaman visited the spot.

In a statement, National Human Rights Commission Chairman Nasima Begum expressed sympathy for the victims' families.

"The reasons behind the accident needs to be investigated. Punishment to those responsible for the accident must be ensured," she noted.

The NHRC sent a letter to the railways secretary, requesting the ministry to inform it about the action taken against the persons responsible, mentioned the statement.

Though derailment of trains and fatalities at level crossings -- many of those unmanned -- are common in Bangladesh, collision between two trains is not frequent.

In 2017-18, at least 40 people were killed in 89 train accidents mostly caused by train derailment, according to the BR's Information Book 2018.

Of the accidents, 71.91 percent occurred due to human failures, 9.32 percent for technical defects and 11.23 percent for miscellaneous reasons, it says.

Earlier in December 2010, 14 people were killed and more than 100 injured as two trains collided head-on in Narsingdi.

HOW IT HAPPENED?

Mandobagh Railway Stationmaster Zaker Hossain Chowdhury said the red signal was shown at both the outer and home signal posts. But the driver of Turna Nishita got on the track violating the signal.

Salaullah Tipu, driver of Udayan, told The Daily Star, "We were crossing the station after getting the green signal from the control room."

"It was Turna Nishita that violated the signal resulting in the accident," he said.

Talking to reporters, the railways minister said the driver of Turna Nishita was at fault.

The train's driver Taser Uddin, his assistant Apu Dey and guard Abdur Rahman were suspended for violating the signal, added Sujan.

The railways secretary said the probe committees, formed by the ministry and the BR, will investigate the incident and also find out whether the signal system was working properly.

PROBE COMMITTEES

The railways ministry formed a four-member probe committee led by Additional Secretary Rafiqul Islam. It was asked to submit report within five working days.

Turna driver was possibly drowsy

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him. Besides, the guard at the train is also duty-bound to notice the signal, he said.

"But in this case, we found that all three failed to obey the signal," said a top railway official, wishing not to be named.

Railways Minister Md Nurul Islam Sujan told The Daily Star that they believed the driver of Turna Nishita and his assistants were responsible for the accident that left at least 16 dead and scores injured.

"We did not find any fault of Udayan Express or the line and signal system," he said, adding that Turna Nishita's driver Taher Uddin, Assistant Locomaster Apu Dey and guard Abdur Rahman were suspended.

Taher and Apu sustained injuries in

department said Turna Nishita disobeyed three signals -- the outer, the home and the advance starter.

"It is unusual because the driver couldn't have overlooked three signals had he been awake," he said.

There are chances that the driver's assistant and the guard were drowsy as well, he said.

The government yesterday formed five committees to investigate the fatal train accident.

Bangladesh Railway authorities formed three of the probe committees while the other two were formed by the Ministry of Railways and the Brahmanbaria district administration.

Between 2013 and May this year, 115 people were killed and 295 others injured in train-related accidents across the country, according to railway sources.



Aman paddy badly damaged by Cyclone Bulbul in Ghotkhali village of Barguna's Amtali upazila. Different crops, including Aman paddy and seasonal vegetables, were damaged by the cyclone which hit the country's southern coastal districts on Saturday night. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Govt to help 50,000 farmers recover loss

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the minister said the level of damage varied. The loss was not that high and there would be no impact on prices of rice, he said, adding that overall yield of aman would be good.

Aman is responsible for around 38 percent of the total annual rice output and it is the main crop for farmers in southern districts, particularly Patuakhali and Barguna.

Abul Hasan, a farmer at Boloiokathi, told our Patuakhali correspondent that he had aman paddy on an acre and half.

"Most of the paddy in my field

was damaged by the cyclone and inundation."

Md Mizanur Rahman, deputy director at the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Barguna, said they were suggesting farmers on how to take care of the affected crops and reduce losses.

Train drivers need better training

Says PM about preventing accidents

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday stressed the need for making the railway staffers better prepared to prevent train accidents, particularly in winter.

"I don't know why I see more rail accidents with the advent of winter. This happens not only in our country, but also around the world. Those who work in the railways should be made more alert. The drivers need to be trained as well," she said.



The premier was addressing the 34th meeting of the Board of Governors of the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza) at her office.

She expressed deep shock at the casualties in yesterday's Kasba train accident.

Hasina, also the chairperson of Bepza Board of Governors, said the rail communications are supposed to be the safest and her government is giving importance to this sector.

Describing the accident very shocking, she said, "We could protect ourselves from a natural disaster like the Cyclone Bulbul, but it is unfortunate that an accident occurred here [in Kasba, Brahmanbaria]."

She prayed for salvation of the departed souls of those killed in the accident and early recovery of the injured.

Heard a bang

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Shamim and his uncle lost trace of Al-Amin immediately after the accident around 3:00am. They searched everywhere, but could not find him.

Firefighters recovered Al-Amin's body in the morning, Shamim said before breaking down in tears at the morgue of Brahmanbaria General Hospital yesterday afternoon.

He said he did not have the courage to call his mother and tell her what happened. "She might not be able to bear the shock," he sobbed.

While narrating the horrific moments, another passenger, ten grader Abdus Salam, said there were screams and cries everywhere after the collision.

"People were crying for help. There were bodies lying scattered in our compartment," he said, adding, "I don't know how I managed to come out."

From Rangamati's Langadu upazila, Salam was in the Udayan Express compartment which was the worst hit. He survived with injuries to his right hand.

He was on his way to Chattogram from Sylhet's Kulaura where he had gone to meet his sister. Later in the morning, Udayan Express reached Chattogram Railway Station with nine intact carriages. Salam travelled in one of those.

Talking to The Daily Star at the station around noon yesterday, he said two of his friends -- Rahel and Rumel -- were also travelling with him from Kulaura. Both of them were safe.

But a woman, aged around 28, and her baby -- who were sitting opposite to him -- were badly injured. "One of the legs of the woman got severed," he said.

Salam said Border Guard Bangladesh members rushed in after the accident.

CNG-driver Ataur Mia, who lives in Chandkhola village near the accident spot, said he woke to a loud bang. Later, a large number of locals, including him, rushed to the accident spot and started the rescue effort.

Shafiqur new Jamaat ameer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Shafiqur Rahman has been elected Ameer of the party.

He was elected by the members (Rokon) of Jamaat-e-Islami, according to a press statement of the party.

He will be replacing Maqbul Ahmed.

The Rokon members cast their votes between October 17 and November 10. The results were published by Jamaat-e-Islami's central election commission yesterday.

Shafiqur passed MBBS exam from Sylhet Medical College in 1983.

During his student life, Shafiqur acted as the president of the Sylhet unit of Islami Chhatra Shibir, student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami.

Rebels kill 5 in DR Congo as army offensive rages

AFP, Goma

Suspected Ugandan rebels hacked five civilians to death in eastern DR Congo overnight as an offensive against militia groups neared the end of its second week, local sources said yesterday.

Suspected members of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) killed five people in the village of Mayi-Moya near the city of Beni, local

administrator Donat Kibwana told AFP.

"People are afraid and are leaving the village despite the army's assurances," Kibwana said.

Regional army spokesman Major Mak Hazukay said a "small group" of assailants carried out the attack.

The army responded immediately and put them out of action, Hazukay added.