

ONE YEAR OF TASLIMA'S MURDER

Probe drags on despite footage of crime



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A year has gone by but little Tasmin Mahira Tuba's search for her mother is still far from over.

With no idea that her mother will never return, she keeps asking again and again - "Where is ammu?"

The four-and-a-half-year-old is disappointed with her aunt who promised that her mother would return from abroad soon. The family is also exhausted from making false promises to Tuba about her mother Taslim Begum Renu, who was beaten to death by a mob in July last year.

"Sometimes Tuba wakes up in her sleep and stares through the window. Sometimes she says she would talk to her mother when she comes back. It is agonising to make false promises to the little girl now," lamented Tuba's maternal aunt Nazmuna Nahar Nazma.

But what's more distressing is the delay in ensuring punishment to the killers, she said.

"It's been a year now but police are yet to complete the investigation and submit a charge sheet," she said.

On July 20 last year, 40-year-old Taslima, a single mother of Tuba and Ta-seen al Mahir, a fifth grader, had gone to Badda Uttar-Purba Primary School to inquire about admission in hopes of getting her daughter Tuba enrolled.

But a mob beat her brutally to death there suspecting her being a child kidnapper.

Videos taken on mobile phones and CCTV, which went viral, showed some young people kicking, striking, and trampling Taslima amid a gathering of several hundred people, most of whom were just silent spectators.

The killing, which touched off a firestorm of outrage in the country, took place at a time when incidents of mob attacks on people labelling them "child kidnappers" suddenly got spike following rumours about the Padma bridge authorities needing human sacrifices at the construction site.

At least eight people were killed while a couple of dozen others were injured in mob beatings at different places across the country in July last year.

DELAY

While the investigation of Taslima's case is being lingered, five of the 14 accused arrested so far in the case have already obtained bail from the High Court and come out of jail causing frustration to the victim's relatives.

The delay in submitting the charge sheet is very disappointing. The delay will be a huge setback for us as the

other accused will come out of jail on bail one after another," Syed Nasir Uddin Titu, a nephew of Taslima, said recently.

"We will have no regret if the court considers granting bail to any accused after the trial starts," said Nasir, who filed the case against 400 to 500 unknown attackers.

Supreme Court lawyer Mahidul Islam Polok who looks after the case said due to the delay, important evidences might get missing and the case may lose the gravity.

"Since many people are involved in the killing, the case should be investigated actively and flawlessly with expert police investigators to make a flawless charge sheet in the quickest possible time," he said on Saturday.

Assistant Commissioner Abdullah Al Mamun of DMP's Detective Branch, who is now supervising the investigation of the case, said they have almost completed the investigation.

The previous supervising officer in January told this newspaper that they would submit the charge sheet soon.

Mamun said the investigating officer of the case was coronavirus positive and almost recovered. "We hope to submit the charge sheet within two weeks after the IO rejoins the office," he said.

A total of 14 people have so far been detained in connection with the case.

Nasir said the concern is that no further arrest was made for a long time.

PROGRESS OF OTHER LYNCHING CASES

The Daily Star talked to police to know progress of investigation in six of the rest seven cases filed in the capital's Badda, Dhaka's Savar and Keraniganj, Moulvibazar, Narayanganj, Brahmanbaria and Netrakona following lynching of innocent people.

Police could not complete the investigation and submit charge sheet in six cases in the last one year. The only charge sheet is submitted against 15 accused by Kamalganj police in Moulvibazar in the case filed for beating a 50-year-old man to death by a mob.

Two of the six cases filed with Siddhirganj police in Narayanganj and Netrakona Sadar Model Police Station are now being investigated by the Criminal Investigation Department.

Police said their investigation into the cases have been hampered for the last few months due to Covid-19 pandemic.

According to the rights body Ain o Salish Kendra, 22 people have been killed in mob beating from January to June this year. Last year it was 65.

Telltale signs they are fake

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He and several other resident physicians, wishing anonymity, blamed the hospital for handing them fake masks to treat Covid-19 patients.

They have complained on Saturday to the hospital director and the authorities concerned about the matter.

Each resident doctor treating Covid-19 patients was given five N95 masks to use over a week. The doctors said a few of the masks seemed authentic, but most of them were obvious knockoffs.

"Is it possible to find such spelling errors in a high-end product like N95?" a resident doctor asked.

Another doctor said during the orientation programme for the Covid-19 doctors earlier this month, officials promised the doctors of N95 masks and other protective equipment for treating the coronavirus infected patients.

"If proper PPE [personal protective equipment] was given to us, we would have no problem working," said a doctor.

The director's office was tasked with purchasing the masks and PPE and ensuring the quality of the products.

"But the authorities have failed us," another doctor said.

Director Brig Gen Dr Zulfiqur Ahmed Amin did not tell the names of the companies that supplied the equipment.

He also did not say how much money was spent for buying these masks or how many have been bought.

"We have got some complaints from the doctors. We are investigating the allegations. We are now collecting masks from another source," he said.

He added that those who complained about the quality were asked to return the masks and were given new ones.



Doctors in many public hospitals expressed their anger when they were given fake masks and other protective equipment in early April.

Health care professionals in various hospitals raised questions about the quality of respirators, with some taking to social media to express their frustration. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also talked about the issue.

Counterfeit and low-quality masks pose potential health risks for the healthcare professionals and their families as well as the people who are treated by them, experts said.

At least 71 physicians have died with Covid-19 infection while 11 others passed away with what appeared to be the coronavirus, according to Bangladesh Doctors Foundation.

In the US, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulate N95 respirators.

N95 means a respirator that blocks at least 95 percent of very small - 0.3 micron - airborne particles. A micron is one-millionth of a metre, and viruses are in the range of 0.3 microns.

23 lakh marooned and it can get worse

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regions until yesterday, according to RHD's flood information centre.

As per the preliminary assessment, the RHD would require around Tk 94 crore for short and long-term repair of the roads, said an RHD official who asked not to be named.

In Sunamganj, around 700km roads have been damaged by flood, calling a halt to the vehicular movement on these roads.

In Faridpur, a portion of an embankment stretching 22 meter was washed away by flood water in Beelgozaria area under Sadar upazila yesterday morning, submerging 50 houses.

In Munshiganj, ferry services on Shimulia-Kathalbari route were resumed last evening after 48 hours. The services were disrupted in last few days due to heavy current.

Meanwhile, the absence of toilet and sanitation facilities has aggravated the sufferings of flood-hit people, especially the women and children.

Many flood victims have taken shelter on roads and dykes after their houses were inundated. They have set up makeshift houses there, but they could not build temporary toilets.

The volume of relief and food aid from individuals and private organisations has reduced significantly this year due to the pandemic, our correspondents report citing locals.

According to the report of the disaster management and relief ministry, 4,965 tonnes of rice, Tk 2.10 crore cash, 43,772 packets of dry food and Tk 22.50 lakh for children food, Tk 22.50 lakh for fodder and 80 bindles of corrugated iron sheets were distributed among the affected people.

The government has formed 593 medical teams, of which 204 teams have already started working in the affected areas, the report says.

FLOOD SITUATION MAY WORSEN AGAIN

Although Saturday's report of Flood Forecasting and Warning Center (FFWC) of Bangladesh Water Development Board shows that water of most of the major rivers was receding and it may continue for 24 to 48 hours.

But the water of those rivers may rise again within days.

Saturday's report says flooding situation in Sylhet, Sunamganj, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Bogura,

Jamalpur, Natore, Sirajganj, Tangail, and Manikganj is improving while the situation in Munshiganj, Faridpur, Madaripur, Rajbari and low-lying areas of Dhaka will remain static.

A special report of FFWC published on July 14 says water level of all major rivers in the country will rise again between today and tomorrow.

The water of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and other rivers will rise to the highest level on July 25 and 26 and then it would start receding, it says.

Some areas of northern regions may be hit by flood again during that time.

On the other hand, flood situation in many areas of northern, northern-central, and central areas may turn into a long-term flood which may remain till the end of this month," the report says.

Arifuzzaman Bhuiyan, executive engineer at FFWC, yesterday told this newspaper that water level may rise again as there is a possibility of heavy rainfall in the upstream regions in the middle of this week.

"So, flood situation in the country may deteriorate again," he said.

Third phase trial

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clinical development, regulatory review and approval, manufacturing and quality control.

Phase-III clinical trial means the vaccine is at its final stage of major trials in which the vaccine is given to thousands of people and tested for efficacy and safety.

The hospitals where the trial will be conducted are: Mugda General Hospital, two units (unit 1 and 2) of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Kurmitola General Hospital, Holy Family Red Crescent Medical College Hospital, Kuwait Bangladesh Friendship Government Hospital, and Mohanagar General Hospital.

"The vaccine will be administered to the healthcare staffers who are not infected with Covid-19 as they are exposed to the disease. It will be examined whether and how much antibodies against Covid-19 grow in their bodies," said the BMRC director.

Researchers around the world are developing more than 155 vaccines against the coronavirus, and 23 vaccines are in human trials, according to New York Times newspaper.

Of them, four is in phase-III clinical trials while only one vaccine, invented by Oxford University team, has been approved for limited use in human.

The icddr, b, is also conducting efficacy trial of ivermectin, a drug used for parasitic roundworm infections.

Train up the youth

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their parents. At present, it is considered a "second-class brand".

The youths will not feel attracted to vocational education if it is left in its present state, he said.

Kamran T Rahaman, president of Bangladesh Employers' Federation, said the country needs to focus on creating demands for employment as soon as possible to overcome a recession-like situation.

To do so, a jumpstart is required, and the government needs to ensure that its stimulus packages reach the target groups of employers.

"The sooner we will be able to reach the target groups, the sooner we will be able to create job demands."

Since the country has a huge domestic market, focus should be given equally on it and the export-oriented sectors, Kamran added.

Shah Alam Majumder, specialist (course accreditation) at Bangladesh Technical Education Board, said the Covid pandemic has created scope for integration of the country's skills development activities.

So far, the country's skills development activities have been conducted haphazardly without any national qualification framework, he mentioned.

Most of the countries have classified workforce pattern and national qualification framework, but such framework has not yet been developed in Bangladesh, he said.

Alam, however, said Bangladesh has been implementing the national technical and vocational qualification framework since 2012.

Referring to a recent survey, Hatem Ali, deputy manager at ActionAid Bangladesh, said job advertisements on websites have dropped drastically amid the pandemic.

Besides, many of the migrant workers lost jobs overseas and returned home. Many more are at risk of losing jobs. The returnees are in uncertainty about their future, he said.

In his speech, Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam said the newspaper believes in the notion that the future of Bangladesh is intertwined with that of its young population.

He said the newspaper will work for the wellbeing and development of the country's youth.

ActionAid Bangladesh Country Director Farah Kabir stressed the need for coordinated and collective efforts to make the most of the new opportunities that have come up due to the pandemic.

At the beginning of the online discussion, the organisers launched a microsite "Young People Igniting Transformation".

The site's contents will prioritise information on youth employment opportunities, infographics and selected expert opinions on youth participation amid the pandemic.

Mahfuz Anam and Farah Kabir made formal announcements on the microsite's launching.

Country Director of International Labour Organisation Tuomo Poutiainen; Chief Executive Officer of Light to Life Labib Tazone Utshab; President of D Engineers Club Somen Kanungo; Executive Director of UCEP Bangladesh Tahsinah Ahmed; and Executive Director of Awaj Foundation Nazma Akter, among others, took part in the discussion.

Cobweb of deception

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Shahed handed over the papers of the LC to the showroom in Ekhla's presence. "But a month later, when I went to the showroom, they informed me that Shahed took away the LC after a week," he added.

"I was told that all I needed to do was give him Tk 5 lakh."

The man said he arranged the money by selling his property and handed it to Shahed but never got the job.

On Friday, the Rapid Action Battalion formed an investigation cell to provide support to the people who were allegedly cheated by Shahed.

Till yesterday noon, the elite crime buster received calls from 120 people and emails from 20 others, who claimed to have been conned by Shahed, said Lt Col Ashique Billah, director of Rab's legal and media wing.

"Analysing the complaints, we have found that Shahed gained around Tk 10 crore by deceiving people -- like promising job or transfer," he said.

One of Shahed's sources of wealth was giving fake licences to rickshaw pullers. He would first take Tk 2,000 and then Tk 200 per month for one such licence.

Some government and private banks also said he defaulted on loans, said the official.

Investigators say Shahed had five armed bodyguards with him round the clock. They, however, went into hiding after these scams came to light.

He used to take photographs with ministers, admin officials and law enforcers and show those to people to

him from Satkhira on Wednesday while he was trying to flee the country.

Ashique Billah said the Shahabuddin Hospital authorities started Covid-19 tests with the unauthorised kits since April and also provided Covid-19 reports without testing samples.

They also admitted Covid-19 negative people at the hospital, issuing fake reports claiming they

were Covid-19 positive, the Rab official said.

Rab also found date expired medical and surgery equipment in the operation theatre and unauthorised medicine during the drive, he said.

On July 12, the DGHS suspended Covid-19 testing approval of Shahabuddin Medical College and four other healthcare service providers as those did not have any RT-PCR labs.

were Covid-19 positive, the Rab official said.