

## Failing to pay hospital bill, she loses son

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A six-month-old child died on Thursday as he along with his twin brother was allegedly driven out of a private hospital in the capital's Shyamoli after their parents failed to pay the bills.

Rab arrested the hospital's owner, Mohammad Golam Sarwar, 57, in Mohammadpur area yesterday, hours after the victim's mother Ayesha Akter filed a case with Mohammadpur Police Station against Golam and a director of the hospital, Shoaib Khan, 47.

According to the case statement, Ayesha got her ailing sons Ahmed and Abdullah admitted to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital from their home in Savar's Radio Colony on December 31. Influenced by an illegal agent, the mother took the children to Amar Bangladesh Hospital on January 2 hoping to get better treatment.

On Thursday, Amar Bangladesh Hospital authorities asked Ayesha to pay Tk 1.26 lakh for the treatment cost, the statement shows.

Ayesha's husband is a migrant worker and they could not pay the hefty amount. After she managed to pay the hospital owner Tk 50,500, the hospital authorities started showing negligence in the treatment, Ayesha said in the case statement, adding that they even removed oxygen masks from her son's face on multiple occasions.

**In the afternoon of Thursday, the two accused and several unnamed persons drove the children and Ayesha out of the hospital**

In the afternoon of Thursday, the two accused and several unnamed persons drove the children and Ayesha out from the hospital. Desperate, Ayesha took her sons to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared Ahmed dead.

"I lost my son. I want justice for his murder," Ayesha told The Daily Star.

Sajia Afroza, a receptionist at the hospital in Shyamoli, said all relevant papers have been seized by Rab. She claimed Ayesha paid them Tk 4,000.

At a press briefing at the Rab Media Centre, Commander Khandaker Al Moin, director of the force's legal and media wing, said Golam, the hospital owner, has been involved in running hospitals and diagnostic centres for 20-22 years. He opened Amar Bangladesh Hospital a year ago.

A syndicate of brokers would lure patients from various government hospitals into his, Moin said, adding, "We are interrogating him."



Nur Islam and Jahanara Begum holding photos -- one showing BSF members carrying away the body of their daughter Felani Khatun and the other in which she is hanging from a border fence. The killing of Felani 11 years ago by Indian Border Security Force at the Kurigram border had caused a huge outcry. The photo was taken in front of Felani's grave in Kurigram's Nageshwari upazila on Wednesday.

PHOTO: STAR

## 'We can't even get a fair trial'

Parents of Felani wait for justice 11 years after her killing at Kurigram border

S DILIP ROY

It has been 11 years since Felani, a Bangladeshi teenager, was shot dead by a member of India's Border Security Force and left hanging from the barbed fence of the border along Kurigram, but her family is still waiting for justice.

Felani's murder case is pending with the Supreme Court of India. But it has not yet been included in the judicial list.

On the dawn of January 7, 2011, Felani along with her father was coming back to Bangladesh through Anantapur border in Phulbari upazila of Kurigram when BSF member Amiya Ghosh fired upon them. Her father, Nurul Islam, had managed to cross the fence but Felani was killed on the spot and her body was left hanging on the barbed fence for four and a half hours.

Public Prosecutor of Kurigram Judge Court and human rights activist SM Abraham Lincoln said

Manabadhikar Surakhkha Manncha, a human rights platform of India, on July 13, 2015, filed a writ petition in the country's Supreme Court seeking justice and compensation for Felani's killing.

After the hearing on October 25, 2017, the date was repeatedly postponed in the Supreme Court of India. The trial of Felani's murder has not started yet. The case has not yet been included in the agenda of the court's judgment.

"We are praying for justice against the BSF member Amiya Ghosh; not against any state. The Indian government is also sincere in its demand that BSF member Amiya Ghosh, who was involved in Felani's murder at the border, be brought to justice," he said on Thursday. "If Amiya Ghosh was tried, no one would have dared kill people so brutally at the border."

Family members, relatives and villagers are still mourning Felani at her village at Dakshin Ramkhana

Colonetari village of Kurigram.

According to Felani's family, Nur Islam along with his family were then living in India's Assam, where he ran a small tea stall.

Felani and Nur Islam were returning to Bangladesh after the family had decided to arrange her marriage, they said. That is when, 11 years ago, Felani was shot dead.

After hanging from the fence for four and a half hours, her body was taken away by BSF. The BSF handed over the body to the Border Guard Bangladesh 30 hours after the incident.

The ghastly photo of Felani's body hanging from the barbwire upside down sparked protest and condemnation throughout the country.

Felani's father Nur Islam told The Daily Star, "We were supposed to be paid compensation but we haven't got it yet. We can't even get a fair trial for our daughter's killing."

## THREAT FROM CHINA, N KOREA

### US-Japan military deal extended

AFP, TOKYO

Japan moved ahead with an expansion of support to US troops as the allies held top-level talks yesterday over tensions with China and North Korea.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced the two nations were signing a five-year extension of the support package provided by Japan for the hosting of around 50,000 US troops on its soil.

The new agreement "will invest greater resources to deepen our military readiness and interoperability", Blinken said at the opening of four-way virtual talks between the allies' foreign and defence chiefs.

"Our allies must not only strengthen the tools we have but also develop new ones," Blinken said Thursday in Washington.

Tokyo pays the costs of the US forces in the country as well as utilities. A previous agreement was set to expire in March 2021, but was extended for a year around a change of administration in Washington.

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, appearing from isolation after a mild case of Covid-19, said the allies were "evolving our roles and missions to reflect Japan's growing ability to contribute to regional peace and stability".

Japan renounced its right to wage war after World War II and has since developed a close alliance with Washington, which is treaty-bound to defend the world's third-largest economy.

According to the foreign ministry, the new five-year package will amount to 211 billion yen (\$1.8 billion) per fiscal year, an increase of about five percent.

The package comes amid growing tensions with China.

"Beijing's provocative actions keep raising tensions across the Taiwan Strait and in the East and South China Sea," Blinken said.

He also described North Korea's missile programmes as an "ongoing threat" after Pyongyang fired a suspected ballistic missile into the sea.

A joint statement issued after the talks took aim at "efforts by China to undermine the rules-based order", with specific reference to activity in the East and South China Seas.

The allies also expressed "serious and ongoing concerns" about rights violations in China's Xinjiang region and Hong Kong, and called for "peace and stability" in the Taiwan Strait.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin yesterday expressed Beijing's "strong dissatisfaction and firm opposition to the US, Japan, and Australia crudely interfering in China's internal affairs".

On Thursday, Japan and Australia signed what they called a "landmark" treaty to strengthen defence ties.

**"Beijing's provocative actions keep raising tensions across the Taiwan Strait and in the East and South China Sea."**

## Two Haiti journalists killed by gang

AFP, PORT-AU-PRINCE

Two journalists in Haiti were killed Thursday by a gang operating on the outskirts of the capital Port-au-Prince, as the country endures an ongoing security crisis six months after the assassination of its president.

Wilguens Louissaint and Amady John Wesley were killed in a shooting, Radio Ecoute FM told AFP.

A third journalist, who was with them at the time, escaped.

## Brace for fresh Covid

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Prof ABM Khurshid Alam, director general of DGHS, told The Daily Star.

He added that the decision was made to reduce pressure on hospitals in Dhaka and contain the transmission of the Covid-19 as transporting a patient to Dhaka from a district is risky.

The DG said antigen test is mandatory for the incoming passengers and suspected Covid-19 patients for hospital admission as RT-PCR test is time-consuming.

"Instructions have been given to do the antigen test first and if needed then only go for RT-PCR test."

Officials said the meeting also instructed to coordinate with local law enforcement agencies to enforce institutional quarantine strictly.

They said oxygen supply to district hospitals is adequate and ICU beds along with nasal cannula and oxygen generators are sufficient.

"Even oxygen supply to upazila health complexes is smooth. So, we asked the civil surgeons and

health officials to take full preparations," said DG Prof Khurshid.

Country's Covid-19 situation is getting worse as the number of cases has been increasing for the last few days.

India yesterday registered one-lakh mark in its daily Covid-19 tally with as many as 1,17,100 new cases being recorded in 24 hours.

Meanwhile, World Health Organization on Thursday reported that more than 2.6 million coronavirus cases were registered around the world in 24 hours, which is the highest daily rate for the entire pandemic.

Expressing frustration over the lax in following the health protocols by people, Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said, "The way the political, social and religious gatherings are going on across the country is unacceptable. If such situations continue, hospitals will be burdened with patients and we will have nothing to do."

He said the surge is still in the "take-off" situation and it may reach to peak in March-April. "If we can delay it, it will be good for us."

## Doors open next month

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Most of them work in the farming and hospitality sectors while some have their own businesses, according to the Bangladesh mission's website.

Many more Bangladeshi workers may be able to work in these sectors once the MoU is signed, said Ambassador Ashud, adding that Greece currently needs a large number of foreign workers.

According to reports in the international media, Greece is a transit country for many Bangladeshis hoping to reach other

European destinations. But they often fail to make it and engage in farming in Western Greece.

Between January and November last year, 7,574 Bangladeshis travelled through the sea and land routes to reach Europe illegally. They reached shores in Italy, Greece, Spain, Cyprus, and Malta. By land, they reached Greece and Spain, according to the UN Refugee Agency.

On November 29, Imran Ahmad and Greek Minister of Migration and Asylum Notis Mitarachi signed the declaration of intent. They

agreed to systematically strengthen safe and orderly migration.

Ambassador Ashud said the MoU will ensure safe, orderly, and regular migration, adding that a draft copy of the agreement will be finalised by the end of January. This will be the first MoU of its kind between Bangladesh and a European Union country.

Shakirul Islam, the chairperson of Ovbashi Karmi Unnayan Program, a grassroots migrant rights group, said opening up regular migration to Greece will be an

"important" development as it will reduce irregular migration.

It will strengthen Bangladesh's global commitment in addressing irregular migration since the country ratified the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), he said.

"One of the objectives of GCM is creating a legal path for migration," Shakirul said.

The agreement may also be a stepping stone for opening up similar opportunities in other European countries like Italy, he added.

## Jobs for 1cr per month

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"People are the source of power. We believe in the power of people. So, we are with people."

**CORRUPTION, MILITANCY**

The premier said the government has taken a tough stance against corruption. "The corrupts are not spared and won't be spared either, no matter what their political affiliation and strength are. The Anti-Corruption Commission is discharging its duties independently in this regard. But to eradicate this disease, creating social awareness is needed."

Hasina mentioned that the government has resisted the emergence of militancy with an iron hand.

The PM said Bangladesh has made marked

economic progress in the last 13 years. "In the South Asia, Bangladesh is leading in various socioeconomic indexes, including poverty eradication, development of the health system, reduction of the maternal and child mortality, increase in average life expectancy, women empowerment and literacy."

She mentioned that this has been possible as people reposed trust in them. "You helped us keep up the pace of the development by giving the scope for running the country for three consecutive terms. By continuing this, we are working to build a pro-welfare, developed and prosperous Bangladesh so that Bangladesh could join the line of the developed countries by 2041. For this,

you were with us and I do hope you'll be with us in future."

**STIMULUS PACKAGES**

The premier said the pandemic has created a deep wound in the world economy. "The economies in many countries have been devastated. Our economy also suffered setbacks and it came to a standstill."

But the government with the cooperation of all has managed to overcome that to some extent, Hasina said. "We're trying to keep the wheel of the economy moving through policy support and various liberal financial stimulus packages."

She said 2022 will be a milestone year for Bangladesh's development in infrastructure. "After a few months, in June, we will

open the much-awaited Padma Bridge. We're going to complete it with our own funds defying conspiracies and hurdles."

The PM said the government has adopted a plan to open a 14-km Uttara-Agargaon part of the metro rail in the capital at the end of this year. She mentioned that the country's first-ever tunnel beneath the Karnaphuli river will be completed in October next.

Hasina said as a government of the people her government's duty and responsibility is to develop the livelihood of people. "You'll evaluate what we have done for you in the last 13 years. But I can say it firmly that we've been able to implement the pledges successfully we had made."

## Positivity rate

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This was the highest daily cases logged in the country in the last 100 days.

Meanwhile, one person died from Covid during the same 24-hour period. The dead was a female aged between 11 and 20 years.

With this, the total number of Covid fatalities in the country rose to 28,098. The death rate now stands at 1.77 percent.

A total of 20,204 samples were tested across the country in the 24

hours. Dhaka recorded the most cases among the eight divisions, logging 920.

At least 170 coronavirus patients have recovered during the same period. The total number of recoveries is 15,50,534 and the recovery rate is 97.45 percent.

Globally, over 300.38 million people have been infected by the novel coronavirus and 5.47 million have died, according to statistics by Johns Hopkins University.

## Apex court to get

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after the immediate past chief justice Syed Mahmud Hossain retired on December 30 last year.

Among the four sitting judges, Justice Muhammad Imman Ali has gone on a long leave citing personal reasons.

Currently, three judges of the Appellate Division headed by newly appointed Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique are running the top court.

More than one bench of this division cannot be constituted due to a shortage of judges, as at least three judges are needed for constituting a bench of this court, said court sources.

Five judges retired in the last two years, but the appointment of judges to the top court was not made in accordance with the vacancies, leading to the crisis.

President Abdul Hamid last appointed judges to

the Appellate Division on September 2, 2020.

On July 9, 2009, the then president raised the number of judges at the Appellate Division from seven to 11 prior to disposing of some important cases on the assassination of Bangabandhu and the fifth amendment to the constitution, among others.

The HC has now 90 judges. Among the 90 sitting judges, three are not being allowed to sit in the bench for running judicial functions as an inquiry is going on against them since August 22, 2019.

Besides, three others are conducting the International Crimes Tribunal that holds trials of crimes against humanity and war crimes committed during the Liberation War.

Some 15,225 cases were pending with the Appellate Division and 4,529,63 with the HC as of December 31, 2020, according to an annual report of SC.