

TEACHER'S DEATH Husband sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

A Natore court yesterday sent to jail Mamun Hossain, husband of college teacher Khairun Nahar whose body was recovered from her home on Sunday.

Mamun was arrested on suspicion of instigating his wife to die by suicide.

Rejecting his bail prayer, Natore Judicial Magistrate Md Moslem Uddin sent Mamun to jail, said Khademul Islam, general recording officer at the court and also assistant sub-inspector of police.

Police on Sunday morning recovered the body of Khairun, assistant professor of Khubjeepur Mozammel Haque Degree College in Natore's Gurudaspur upazila, from her home in Balaripara of Natore town.

"As per our primary investigation, it was a death by suicide. But we are investigating whether it was instigated by Mamun," Liton Kumar Saha, superintendent of Natore police, said yesterday.

The SP said Mamun is Khairun's second husband. After separation with her first husband, the 40-year-old woman married 22-year-old Mamun late last year. She has two sons from her first marriage.

Khairun wanted to buy her elder son a motorbike, but Mamun did not agree to it, causing a disagreement between them, said the SP, quoting Mamun.

As per Mamun's statement, around 2:30am on Sunday, Mamun went out following the altercation.

He returned home around 6:30am and found Khairun's body hanging from the ceiling fan. Mamun then called security guard Nizam Uddin and got the body down and informed police.

On information, police rushed to the spot, recovered the body and detained Mamun for interrogation. At night, Khairun's cousin Saber Uddin lodged an unnatural death case with Natore Sadar Police Station, said SP Liton.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Khairun's 17-year-old son said, "Mamun Hossain might have killed my mother."

However, Mamun's mother Rabeya Begum said Mamun and his wife were happily married. They wanted to buy Khairun's son a bike, but didn't have the money.

"My son did not instigate Khairun to commit suicide. He is innocent," claimed Rabeya.

On Sunday, SP Liton told journalists that the couple was in mental distress as they were trolled

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A helicopter drops water as members of the Forest Fires Reinforcement Brigades (BRIF) work to put out a wildfire in the Moncayo Natural Park, near the village of Borja, in the northern region of Aragon, Spain yesterday. Firefighters were battling strong winds trying to fight a huge forest fire blazing out of control in southeastern Spain as another in the north was stabilised yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Russia steps up assault in Donetsk

Ukraine repels many of the attacks, says nuclear plant risks increasing 'every day'

AGENCIES

Ukrainian forces reported heavy Russian shelling and attempts to advance on several towns in the eastern region of Donetsk that has become a key focus of the near six-month war, but said they had repelled many of the attacks.

The General Staff of Ukraine's armed forces also reported Russian shelling of more than a dozen towns on the southern front - particularly the Kherson region, mainly controlled by Russian forces, but where Ukrainian troops are steadily capturing territory.

Natalia Humeniuk, spokesperson for Ukraine's southern military command, said yesterday the situation was complicated but under control. "The enemy doesn't dare advance by land, but fires at the territories in the rear with artillery and rockets," she told a news briefing.

Much attention has been focused on the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant in southern Ukraine amid fears of a catastrophe over renewed shelling in recent days that Russia and Ukraine blame on each other.

"What is happening there is outright nuclear terrorism, and it can end unpredictably at any moment," said

Dmytro Orlov, the mayor of Enerгодар city where the plant is based.

"The risks are increasing every day," he told AFP by telephone from the Ukrainian-controlled city of Zaporizhzhia yesterday. He said there was mortar shelling on the plant "every day and night".

"The situation is hazardous, and what causes the most concern is that there is no de-escalation process," he added.

The Zaporizhzhia plant dominates

"The situation is hazardous, and what causes the most concern is that there is no de-escalation process."

Says mayor of Enerгодар city where the nuke plant is based

the south bank of a vast reservoir on the Dnipro River. Ukrainian forces controlling the towns and cities on the opposite bank have come under intense bombardment from the Russian-held side.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, which seeks to inspect the plant, has warned of a nuclear disaster unless fighting stops. Nuclear experts fear fighting might damage the plant's spent

fuel pools or reactors.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Ukraine had many times proposed different formats to the Russian leadership for peace talks, without progress, reports Reuters.

"So we have to defend ourselves, we have to answer every form of terror, every instance of shelling - the fierce shelling which does not let up for a single day," he said in video remarks late on Sunday.

In the battleground, the situation was particularly difficult in Avdiivka and nearby towns, such as Pisky, Ukrainian military expert Oleg Zhdanov said.

In the neighbouring Russian-occupied region of Luhansk, in the grounds below an abandoned, charred apartment block, Lilia Ai-Talatin, 48, watched on as her mother's body was exhumed from a makeshift grave to be taken to a cemetery for a proper burial.

The conflict has pushed Moscow-Washington relations to a low point, with Russia warning it may sever them.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said yesterday that Moscow was ready to offer modern weapons to its allies. He used a speech at an arms show near Moscow to boast of Russia's advanced weapons capabilities.

Retired rail official lands in jail on charge of rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A Lalmonirhat court yesterday sent a retired railway employee to jail on charge of raping a 14-year-old girl in Lalmonirhat municipality.

Police arrested Mantaj Ali, 66, from his house in Uttar Saptana Linerpar area on Sunday night after the victim's mother filed a case with Lalmonirhat Sadar Police Station.

Talking to The Daily Star, the victim's mother, whose husband died two years ago, said as her family is poor, Mantaj helped them financially. He used to visit their house frequently and raped her daughter several times.

Ershadul Alam, officer-in-charge of Lalmonirhat Sadar Police Station, said the court recorded the victim's statement. Her medical test will be conducted today, he added.

Two brothers killed after electrocution

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Two brothers were electrocuted to death while they were hoisting the national flag to mark the National Mourning Day in Kishoreganj's Itna upazila yesterday.

The two are Ridoy Karmakar, 25, and his brother Bijoy Karmakar, 17, sons of Nepal Karmakar of Nagorhati area, police said.

Quoting locals, Kamrul Islam Mollah, OC of Itna Police Station, said Bijoy went to their shop in the upazila town to hoist the national flag using a steel pipe. He was electrocuted when he came into contact with live electric wire around 8:30am.

Hearing his screams, his elder brother Ridoy rushed to save Bijoy and was also electrocuted, the OC said, adding that Itna Upazila Health Complex doctors declared the two dead.

2 children drown while bathing in pond

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two children drowned while bathing in a pond in Lohagara upazila of Chattogram yesterday.

The victims were Fatema Jannat Sumaiya, 9, daughter of Moinuddin, Tasfia Tabassum Raisa, 8, daughter of Abu Taher of Borohatia area.

Villagers found them floating in the pond, rescued and took them to the Upazila Health Complex where doctors pronounced them dead, said Bijoy Kumar Barua, chairman of Borohatia Union Parishad.

Drones attack Syrian base of US-led coalition

AFP, Beirut

Drones attacked a Syrian outpost of the US-led anti-jihadist coalition yesterday but there were no injuries, the coalition said.

Coalition forces "responded to an attack by multiple unmanned aerial systems in the vicinity of Al-Tanf Garrison at approximately 6:30 am (0330 GMT)," a coalition statement said.

5 lives lost to gross neglect

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the bare minimum safety measures were taken, adding that the authorities should have cordoned off the area to keep traffic from being exposed to the danger.

There should have been safety and traffic management plans as the construction site is on one of the busiest highways of the country.

"This is sheer negligence. They seriously lack safety and traffic management. We have not been able to ensure accountability," he told The Daily Star last night.

It should be investigated whether the crane was suitable to lift such a heavy load and if the operator had the skills and the licence.

Right after the accident, locals rescued the couple, witnesses said.

But firefighters, reaching the scene, tried in vain to rescue the others inside. Grieving family members gathered at the scene and broke down in tears.

Firefighters first tried to cut open a part of the car, which was pinned to the ground by the weight of the girder segment. They failed. Then another

failed attempt was made to haul the box-girder segment away with an excavator.

After that, the excavator was used to right the crane and the girder segment moved away from the car, allowing the firefighters recover the bodies.

Accidents like this in the project are not unheard of. On July 15 this year, a construction worker of the BRT died after a crane fell on him in Chandana Chourasta area on the Dhaka Mymensingh highway in Gazipur.

On March 14 last year, at least six workers, including three Chinese nationals, were injured as a part of a girder fell on them near Dhaka airport.

The Tk 4,268.38 crore project was taken up to build a 20.50km dedicated bus service road from Dhaka airport to Gazipur. The project was originally supposed to be complete at a cost of Tk 2,037.85 crore by December 2016. The latest deadline expired in June this year but the project made only 78 percent progress at the time. Officials have

proposed setting the new deadline to December next year.

AKM Manir Hossain Pathan, chief engineer of Roads and Highways Department (RHD), which is one of the four implementing agencies of the project, said not halting traffic was a major fault.

There could have been an error in the crane operation, he said, adding that the operator fled the scene after the incident.

Asked whether the crane was capable of doing the work, he said the crane had been used for the task earlier.

Talking to this correspondent after last year's incident, a consultant engineer said the contractor - China Gezhouba Group Co Ltd - was not supposed to do loading, unloading and lifting of viaducts in daytime.

Asked about the matter, Shafiqul Islam, managing director of Dhaka Bus Rapid Company Ltd, which is another implementing agency of the project, said the contractor was working round the clock as the project was behind schedule.

About whether the probe committee formed after last year's incidents found a lack of safety measures at the site, he said the safety recommendations made by the committee were implemented.

About yesterday's accident, he said the investigation would reveal whether the crane was faulty or the operator made an error.

ABM Amin Ullah Nuri, secretary of road transport and highway division, said a five-member committee led by Additional Secretary Neelima Akhter was formed and asked to investigate the accident and come up with a preliminary report within today and a full report in two days.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock at the tragedy, reports UNB.

In November 2012, 12 people died and many were injured in a similar incident at the construction site of a flyover in Bahaddardhat, Chittogram.

In March 2017, a 36-metre-long girder, weighing about 70 tonnes fell from the capital's Moghbazar-Malibagh Flyover and killed a worker.

Nation mourns

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Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique and several other distinguished personalities paid rich tributes to Bangabandhu.

They placed wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu in front of the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum.

On behalf of the Speaker, Parliament Secretariat's sergeant-at-arms placed a wreath at the portrait of Bangabandhu.

Different organisations, including the AL, organised Quran Khawni, Kangali Bhoj (distribution of cooked food among disadvantaged people), and doa mahfil at different wards in the capital.

Bangabandhu's historic March 7 speech and patriotic songs were played over loudspeakers at different parts of the city.

Bangladesh missions abroad also observed the day.

Activists call for free enquiry

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"We said more than 600 people have become victims of enforced disappearances by state agencies," said Tulee, coordinator of Mayer Daak, a platform that represents hundreds of victims of disappearances and their families, and those allegedly killed in staged police encounters.

Another activist told The Daily Star that during the meeting they told the rights chief that the government should empty the "secret detention cells" run by the government and law enforcement and intelligence agencies, and stop lying about such centres.

They also told Bachelet of their demand that the government allow families of victims of enforced disappearances to pursue justice without fear of reprisals, and accept cases as enforced disappearances instead of forcing families to file "missing person" cases.

The rights activists also shared with Bachelet their demand that the government make public the conversation and engagement of the international community is having with the government agencies on this matter.

An activist also told Bachelet that the UN Human Rights Office should create an investigative mechanism involving senior judicial and civil society members and a UN special rapporteur.

After the meeting with the UN human rights chief, rights activist Sara Hossain told journalists that the organisations working on human rights and legal aid freely discussed the challenges they face while working here.

Nijera Kori Coordinator Khushi Kabir told Somoy TV that they informed Bachelet about the strong and weak aspects of human rights in Bangladesh.

Environmental lawyer Syeda Rizwana Hasan said they discussed the challenges of working on human rights, good governance and democracy, and that the

international rights bodies have a role to play in these cases.

"I have spoken of environment, good governance and accountability," she said.

"I raised issues of proper elections - how having a free and fair election is not enough unless accountability to the public is ensured. I spoke about the culture of impunity," another activist said.

They also told Bachelet that incidents of disappearances and killings increase before and after national elections, and this must end.

"We hope Bangladesh's engagement with the UN Human Rights Office will have reflections in actions," the activist said.

Talking to reporters yesterday, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam said when it comes to human rights, some people only talk about one or two issues, but it is an issue that has a broad canvas.

"Poverty-induced migrants, climate-induced poverty, displacement due to wars, impunity of the political killers, sheltering killers in foreign land - all these are violations of human rights. We hope these will also be taken into consideration," he said at Dhanmondi 32 after paying homage to the portrait of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

On Sunday, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen told Bachelet that there is no such thing called "enforced disappearance" and that something like "extrajudicial killings" might have happened between 2003 and 2005, but not after that.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan had told her that some people disappear after committing crimes, having family conflicts or becoming bankrupt.

The ministers also told Bachelet about how Bangladesh has suffered from terrorism and violence, that the media and civil society are free and vibrant, while seeking her help in repatriating Rohingyas to Myanmar.

Anger flares at slow response to deadly Cairo church fire

AFP, Cairo

Egyptians voiced outrage yesterday over reports that firefighters and paramedics took over an hour to respond to a blaze that tore through a Coptic Christian church and killed 41 people.

Grief has spread over Sunday's fire among Copts, the Middle East's largest Christian community, which makes up at least 10 million of Muslim-majority Egypt's population of 103 million.

But many other Egyptians have also voiced outrage over the disaster in the now scorched Abu Sifin church, located in the greater Cairo neighbourhood of Imbaba west of the Nile River.

As debate flared on social media, one Twitter user charged that the reportedly slow response time "is not just negligence, it's complicity".

"My cousin's children died," video creator Moha El Harra said in a widely shared online livestream after Sunday's blaze, which was blamed on an electrical fault.

"I'm from the area. I know that the ambulance could have been there in three minutes. It took them an hour and a half.

"All we want is justice - for the local ambulance authority, the fire services, civil defence. All of them need to be held to account."

Health Minister Khaled Abd el-Ghaffar had declared Sunday that

"paramedics were informed of the fire at 8:57 am" and the first ambulance "arrived at the site at exactly 8:59 am".

But many challenged this, with eye-witnesses saying it took "an hour and a half" for emergency services to arrive.

"No, the ambulance did not arrive within two minutes," one local resident, Mina Masry, told AFP. "If the ambulance had come on time, they could have rescued people," he added, stressing that many lives were lost to smoke inhalation, not burns.

A statement from the public prosecutor's office confirmed that asphyxiation caused all of the 41 deaths as the corpses bore "no other visible injuries".