

From distress to hope

Stories of a journey towards self-reliance with Brac

MOSTAFA YOUSUF

Beli Ara's (51) life had all hallmarks of tragedy. She had been acquainted with great grief from an early age -- from losing her mother, step mother's torture and an eventual forced, early marriage with an elderly man.

She fled her in-laws' house with her two children after being tortured by her sister-in-law and thought all hope was lost. Luckily, she survived that dark phase of her life and became a beacon of hope for all who knew her.

Hailing from Sujalpur union in Dinajpur's Birganj upazila, Beli received the Joyeeta award in recognition of her contribution to society in 2017.

She earned the trust of locals to an extent that they voted her to be a member of the union parishad. Her tenure ended in 2022.

"My days of poverty and starvation continued till 2012. It all started changing when I came into contact with a Brac programme in 2013, titled "Ultra Poor Graduation Programme", under which I was given ten lambs and ten hens. They trained me and provided weekly financial allowance so that I can continue taking care of the livestock," Beli told The Daily Star yesterday.

Beli said the lamb started to give birth after every six months. "I used to sell those in the local market and earned enough money to invest in my children's education and nutrition intake."

"I could only bounce back after being trained under the Brac programme. Otherwise, I would have lived a life

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



At Hope Festival, organised by Brac marking its 50th anniversary, the grounds of the Army Stadium were adorned with exhibitions, pavilions, stalls, and workshops sporting diverse cultural motifs, which eventually turned into a hub of collaboration, interaction and success stories. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Police to get 2 more grade-1 posts

Decision approved in committee meeting of secretaries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The proposal to create two more grade-1, equivalent to secretary posts, for police has been approved in the Secretaries Committee on Administrative Development's meeting.

Right now, there are 22 posts of Additional Inspector General of Police. However, only two of them are of grade-1 status.

Both Additional IGP (admin) and chief of Special Branch (SB) are grade-1 posts.

Headed by cabinet secretary Mahub Hossain, the Secretaries Committee on Administrative Development approved the proposal yesterday.

Nine proposals made by seven ministries and departments were listed in the meeting agenda.

SAGAR-RUNI MURDER

'We also want the mystery to be solved'

Says home minister; DRU seeks speedy trial

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday said they will instruct Rapid Action Battalion to quickly inform them about the murder of journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi.



Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi.

"We also want the mystery behind the killings to be solved as soon as possible," the minister told leaders of Dhaka Reporters Unity, when they went to the secretariat to submit a memorandum, demanding speedy trial of the murder case.

"These two budding journalists, who had a lot of talent, could have given a lot to the country. They have left us. We also want to find out why the murders happened. I am sending DRU's memorandum to the Rab DG," the minister said.

In the memorandum, DRU expressed disappointment, as law enforcers could neither identify the killers nor unearth any motive behind the killings even though 11 years have passed.

Sagar, news editor at private TV channel Maasranga, and his wife Runi, senior reporter at AIN Bangla, were killed in the early hours of February 11, 2012, in their rented flat in the capital's West Rajabazar.

The memorandum mentioned that the then home minister assured that the killers would be arrested within 48 hours. But sadly, even after 11 years, there is no

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

A grand ploy to get visas

Seven held over trafficking people abroad by duping foreign companies

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The gang first communicates with businesses in the US, Czech Republic, Italy, and Poland, introducing themselves as suppliers of Bangladesh's security forces.

Gang members then send emails to the companies, attaching fake supply contracts, to buy products.

After getting a response from any company, the fraudsters request to send a small group of people to the country to oversee its work and receive training on the products.

For the visit, they ask the company for an invitation letter, which they later submit to the embassy to obtain a visa. Once the visa is issued, they send the group there.

After stepping foot on foreign land, this group never returns home.

For sending people abroad, this gang charges each person Tk 18 to 20 lakh. In the last seven years, at least a dozen people went to Poland, Italy, or the Czech Republic this way.

Junaed Alam Sarker, additional deputy commissioner of the Cyber and Special Crime Division of police's detective branch (DB), disclosed this to The Daily Star yesterday.

Detectives claimed to have gotten the findings following the arrest of seven people -- Rezaul Islam, 60; Saiful Islam, 40; Azizur Rahman, 48; Khairul Kabir, 33; Sadakur Rahman, 41; Shahrir Hasan Bikram, 30; and Abu Bakar, 47.

Law enforcers caught the seven from the capital's Rampura on Wednesday, said Junaed.

DB started the investigation after the US embassy in Dhaka filed a case with Gulshan Police Station.

According to the First Information Report (FIR), filed by Michael Lee,

assistant regional security officer of the embassy, six of them -- Bakar, Saiful, Azizur, Bikram, Kabir, and Sadakur -- duped a US company named American Signal Corporation into believing that they were a company dealing with a Bangladesh military-purchase contract worth over \$1.2 million.



Using the company name "Sara Enterprise", six of the arrestees created fake documents of Directorate General Defence Purchase and convinced a US company to contact the embassy for visa appointments and guarantee approval, under the pretence that the perpetrators were going to receive training in the US.

For this, the six -- using the company name "Sara Enterprise" -- created fake documents of Directorate General Defence Purchase (DGDP) and convinced the US company to contact the embassy for visa appointments and guarantee approval, under the pretence that the perpetrators were going to receive

training in the US, the FIR reads.

Like before, the gang used this method to obtain appointments and get US visas to illegally immigrate there. But this time, their plan did not work out.

The six went to the embassy for a visa interview on Wednesday, and against officials' questioning, admitted there that the DGDP document was fake and they are not going for training, the FIR reads.

After the documents were analysed, the seals were found to be fake and the forged signature belonged to an individual who used to work for DGDP five years back, the FIR added.

Harun-or Rashid, additional commissioner of DB, said arrestee Rezaul is the gang's mastermind and "the proprietor of Sara Enterprise". He uses the alias Sabuz Alam.

Between 2011 and 2012, Rezaul ran the company "Defence Icon" and supplied rice and lentils to security forces through a local tender, he said.

"Using this experience, Rezaul later started cheating international companies using the name of Sara Enterprise from 2014 to 2015. For sending a person abroad, Rezaul would charge Tk 18 to 20 lakh," Harun said.

To communicate with a company in Poland, Rezaul identified himself as a furniture supplier, he said. Similarly, when talking to the US company, he identified the gang as a "Loud Outdoor Warning Fixed Port Sirens" supplier of the security forces.

Law enforcers seized 20 fake seals, two seal pads, nine passports, four fake ID cards, one flash drive, and two phones from the arrestees' possession.

DB's Junaed said the gang also used to submit fake bank statements and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

DUAL CITIZENSHIP

Can they buy property abroad with money earned here: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday questioned whether dual citizens can purchase properties abroad with the money earned in Bangladesh as per the laws and constitution.

The HC bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Khizir Hayat Lizu raised the question in response to a news report published in Bangla daily Bangladesh Pratidin under the headline "Bideshey Sampad Kenar Utsab (festival of purchasing properties abroad)".

The bench asked the lawyers concerned to study the relevant provisions of law and constitution in connection with the issue, and fixed next Monday for passing an order.

ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan and Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin Uddin Manik placed the news report before the HC bench for necessary directives.

GRAFT BY BPC CONCERN

Finish probe in three months, HC tells ACC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the Anti-Corruption Commission to finish the investigation into a case filed for irregularities of Tk 472 crore by Standard Asiatic Oil Company (SAOC), a subsidiary of the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation BPC, in next three months.

The HC bench of Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Khizir Hayat Lizu passed the order during a hearing of a suomuto (voluntary) rule on this issue.

Following a report published on The Daily Star on November 4 last year, the HC bench on November 6 last year issued the suomuto rule asking the ACC and government to explain why their inaction to take action against the irregularities of the SAOC should not be declared illegal.

Rezaul started cheating international companies using the name of Sara Enterprise from 2014 to 2015. For sending a person abroad, he would charge Tk 18 to 20 lakh.

HARUN-OR RASHID
Additional commissioner of DB



AMAR EKUSHEY BOI MELA

Old book, new price

DIPAN NANDY

Mahatabul Rahman was roaming around the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela with his wife. He went to a stall on the Suhrawardy Uddyan premises and took a book in his hand, raised his eyebrows and put it back.

He said, "I knew before that the price of new books will increase a bit in the fair this time. But when I came to the fair, I saw that the price has been increased by reprinting the old books. If the price goes up, you can't buy a book."

Syed Tariqul Islam, who was standing in front of the same stall, echoed the same.

He said, "I came to the fair with a list to buy several books. But now I'm seeing publishers have also increased the price of old books. I don't think I'll be able to buy books according to my list."

On the other hand, publishers say they have no choice but to increase the prices.

Afzal Hossain, owner of Anindya Prokash, said, "Last year, I published more than 150 new books. There are plans to publish 40-45 books this time. But I don't



PHOTO: PRABER DAS

know if it will be possible to bring all the books to the fair. Due to the global recession, the price of paper, book binding materials, printing press plates and ink has increased. Publishers have had no choice but to increase the price of

books." In this regard, Prof Muhammad Zafar Iqbal said due to the paper price increase, books are going out of the purchasing power of the reader.

"The government could have

subsidised the publishing industry to promote creative books and make them accessible to readers. Due to the increase in the price of paper, many publishers are losing interest in printing books by new authors," he added.

انا لله وانا اليه راجعون
(Verily we belong to Allah and verily to Him do we return)

Mrs. Rokeya Begum, wife of Mr. Rezaul Rahman, passed away on February 8th, 2023. May she be in our hearts and in eternal peace forever.

Please join us in prayers at her Kulkhani on Saturday, February 11th, Badh Asr at Gulshan Azad Mosque.

"O God forgive her and have mercy upon her, excuse her, and pardon her."

Rezaul Rahman | Shamsun Nahar Haq
Sonia Haq | Nadia Haq