

AYAN'S DEATH Father files GD over death threat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The father of Ayan Ahmed, a five-year-old child who died following a botched surgery at the United Medical College Hospital in Satarkul, filed a general diary (GD) with Shabbagh Police Station yesterday, alleging that he received a threat.

In the GD, Shamim said six to seven unidentified persons threatened him to withdraw the case that he filed against two doctors and several unnamed staffers of the hospital.

The unidentified individuals also threatened to kill him, he said, adding that the individuals approached him at the shrine as he was coming out of the High Court after attending a hearing related to his son's death.

He further alleged earlier on Thursday that he received a similar threat from three unidentified persons near the HC premises.

In the GD, Shamim said six to seven unidentified persons threatened him to withdraw the case that he filed against two doctors and several unnamed staffers of the hospital.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Shamim said he and his family members were frightened as police could not detain any of the accused yet.

Badda Police Station Officer-in-Charge Yasin Gazi confirmed that no one was arrested as of yesterday in connection with the case filed by Shamim.

The case is under investigation, he added.

Confirming the filing of the GD, OC Mustazirur Rahman said the police were inquiring into Shamim's complaint of receiving threat.

After the incident at United Medical College Hospital in Satarkul on December 31, Ayan was later moved to United Hospital in Gulshan, where he died on January 7.

Following his son's death, Shamim filed a case with Badda Police Station on January 9, accusing two doctors, unnamed employees, staffers, and a director of the United Hospital and United Medical College Hospital.

The accused physicians are Saeed Sabir Ahmed, an anesthesiologist, and Tasnuva Mahzabeen, a surgeon, of the medical college hospital.

On the same day, the Directorate General of Health Services formed a four-member committee to investigate the incident.

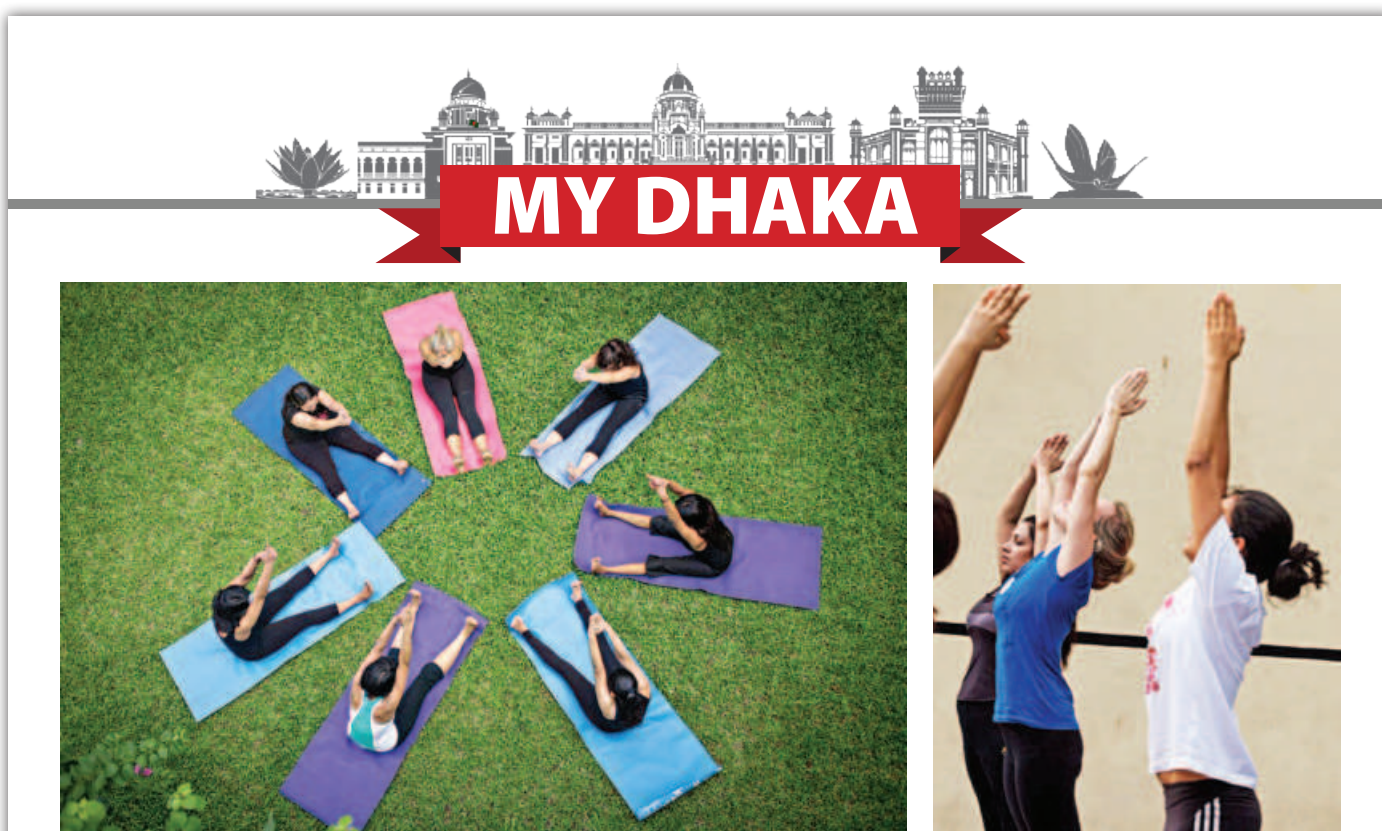


PHOTO: STAR

DHAKA FLOW

When influencers address MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

RBR

"Shrink" is the informal noun to describe a psychotherapist. The word gained popularity from the fact that talking about your problems with her/him can hopefully help you reduce the difficulties or make them smaller and more manageable.

In sitcoms or movies, the idea of going to a shrink somehow trivialises the person seeking therapy and portrays the therapist as greedy who counts money and keeps the time only!

The harsh reality is that there are loads of commoners like us who are in real need of a therapist's couch. Such portrayals put wrong ideas about the importance of mental health and seeking psychotherapy. As it is, going to a psychiatrist or a counsellor is taboo in our society, but I think it is high time we put aside our prejudices and face the truth.

Dhaka Flow, a leading organisation committed to promoting holistic well-being, is hosting a wellness retreat, that will be a supportive space for selected 20 youth influencers and change-makers to engage in discussions, share their personal experiences, and collectively explore strategies such as yoga, and meditation, breathwork, journaling, and therapy to tackle mental health challenges.

By bringing these influential voices together, Dhaka Flow aims to create space for conversations around

mental well-being within the youth community.

The fact that seeking help to discuss ways to tackle grief, trauma, or even to clear out your mind, is no longer a stigma or a taboo. It is okay to seek help, everybody needs mental well-being or support -- even your favourite celebrities on screen. The addition of the youth influencers will create a ripple effect, influencing positive change within the broader community.

"Social media influencers will have the ability to access 20 million and counting youths following their handles. It will have a greater reach and impact positively the youths of our society," says Shazia Omar, co-founder of Dhaka Flow.

"Transformation starts in the mind before it happens in the body," this deep realisation is of 27-year-old Rawan Ahmed Choudhury, a fitness and wellness campaigner and one of the influencers taking part in the retreat.

"The mind and the body are deeply interconnected and that is why mental health is critically important to our well-being. In life, I believe you have two options. Staying average, or striving every single day to become the finest version of yourself. You will be required to constantly improve yourself physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually even if it is by 1 percent every day and by doing so, you can find your purpose in life," he says.

"The event Dhaka Flow's 'Warrior Within: Wellness for All', is slated to take place from January 29-30 at the Seagull Resort and Spa Village, Tangail, and aims to bring together 20 influential youth leaders for an open dialogue on mental wellbeing, breaking the silence around issues such as depression, anxiety, stress, trauma, grief, and addiction that silently plague the city's young population," said Shazia.

Some of the influencers participating include singers Armeen Musa and Wahida Hussain, fitness experts, Rawan Choudhury and Nishat Khan, content creators, Takvlog, Maliha, Rakin Absar and SameerScene, and former Mrs. World Bangladesh, Abony Munjerin.

"One important component of self-care is community services," says Ambreen Miraly, co-founder of Dhaka Flow. "That is why we have integrated a component of giving in the form of a fundraising drive for Thrive, a school feeding programme. We are encouraging youths to contribute Tk 5000 this year to buy 100 meals for underprivileged children in our community."

Dhaka needs to recognise the urgency of addressing and prioritising mental health issues, especially among its youth. Talking about seeking help is taking the proactive step to foster a community that is mindful of its people.

Wait for Rohingya repatriation gets even longer

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communicated to Bangladesh in August last year.

For further talks, a delegation from Bangladesh went to the Myanmar capital Naypyidaw the following month.

Under a pilot programme, about 12,000 Rohingyas were supposed to be repatriated in 2023, according to foreign ministry officials.

However, the plan was dashed, first by Cyclone Hamoon and later by the eruption of conflict between Myanmar's armed opposition groups and the ruling military that began in February 2021. Both the events took place within days of one another.

The Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, Ta'ang National Liberation Army and the Arakan Army (AA) from Myanmar's Shan State joined forces and began a sweeping offensive in late October last year under Operation 1027.

The offensive has seen hundreds of military posts captured; more than 40 towns taken; important trade routes with China, India and Bangladesh affected; and massive

supplies of weapons and ammunition brought under the control of the resistance, according to international media reports.

In Rakhine State, the AA has seized more than 160 junta bases, outposts and battalion headquarters across northern Rakhine and in Chin State's Paletwa, a key western town near the border with India and Bangladesh.

In short, the AA has taken control of much of the Rakhine State, making the possibility of Rohingya repatriation unlikely for now.

"It is not a good time for Rohingya repatriation," Gwyn Lewis, UN resident coordinator in Bangladesh, told reporters after her meeting yesterday with Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud.

Asked if the UN asked Bangladesh to accept Rohingyas as many of them are getting displaced in the Rakhine State, Lewis answered in the negative.

"There is no movement of Rohingyas across the Bangladesh-Myanmar border because of the current tense situation. So, there is no request," she said.

Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud

also acknowledged that the situation in Myanmar is not "very favourable" for Rohingya repatriation.

"In fact, there was always some sort of problem in Myanmar, and we hope that the tension there will dissipate soon. We can then start the repatriation," he told reporters after his meeting yesterday with Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen.

Beijing is working on a ceasefire in Myanmar's Rakhine State and that will eventually pave the way for Rohingya repatriation, Yao told reporters.

So far, China has mediated three ceasefire agreements between the military junta and ethnic armed groups in Myanmar during the ongoing conflict in different parts of the country, he said.

Yao urged all to remain "confident" of the joint collaboration of Bangladesh, Myanmar and China to repatriate Rohingyas from Cox's Bazaar.

Safety and security of the Rohingyas are of paramount importance for their repatriation, said foreign ministry officials on the condition of anonymity to speak

candidly on the issue.

"I think it is high time for Bangladesh to expand its policies beyond the state-centric conventional diplomacy when it comes to Myanmar," said Shahab Enam Khan, a professor at Jahangirnagar University's International Relations department.

It is imperative to incorporate the growing popularity and influence of non-state actors such as the AA into the decision-making process.

Chinese mediation remains the foremost practical initiative, but the Burmese military has failed to comply with the efforts pursued by its key ally, he said.

It is also a time to explore the feasibility of engaging the Burmese government in exile -- the National Unity Government (NUG) -- in the repatriation efforts.

"I believe the US and the allies would welcome NUG's engagement in the repatriation process. Hence, a delicate balance has to be made between these two power centres, which would require greater political and deeper strategic planning," Khan added.

JS devoid of 'true opposition' again

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Meanwhile, the AL is apparently selecting who will sit in the opposition benches and deciding the roles of independents in the House.

Only five political parties have representation in this parliament -- the second lowest number of parties in the history of the Jatiya Sangsad.

Before this, the lowest number of parties in a parliament was after the February 1996 election. It lasted only 12 days.

Prof Nizam Ahmed, parliamentary affairs expert and former teacher of the public administration department at Chittagong University, told The Daily Star yesterday that representation of only a few parties in parliament is not a good sign for democracy.

About JP's role, he said, "It is

impossible for them to hold the ruling party accountable. Morally, they don't have right to criticise the ruling party as they were elected with the support of Awami League."

Nizam said the 12th parliamentary election was essentially AL versus AL-backed independents, with some seats compromised for JP.

"As a result, the parliament will lack a genuine opposition. This seriously undermines democracy."

The current parliament was formed following the January 7 national election, which was boycotted by 16 of the 44 registered parties with the Election Commission. The polls saw only 42 percent voter turnout.

The BNP and allied termed it "a dummy election" -- an allegation denied by AL.

Apart from the AL, JP won 11 seats, Bangladesh Workers Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), and Bangladesh Kalyan Party one seat each, and independent candidates 62 seats.

AL sources said that of the 62 independents, at least 58 were ruling party leaders.

Workers Party and JSD candidates won in the polls under the AL's electoral symbol -- "boat".

Considering the 58 seats of "AL independents" and two seats of Workers Party and JSD, the total number of seats for AL and its allies stood at 283.

Ruling party insiders said although the AL took several steps, including asking its grassroots-level activists to support some aspirants from other parties, to ensure a diverse

representation in parliament, the strategy did not seem to have worked.

Meeting independent lawmakers at the Gono Bhaban yesterday, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave directives on how to make the parliament more participatory and effective.

Jatiyo Party Parliamentary Party, however, at recent a meeting instructed all its MPs to refrain from giving flattering speeches to praise the ruling AL in parliamentary sessions, like they did in the previous two terms.

The first session of the new parliament is set to begin at 3:00pm tomorrow. It will start with the election of the Speaker and deputy Speaker of the House, who will be sworn in by President Mohammed Shahabuddin.

He will also deliver a speech in the first day of the session.

SSC exams to begin on Feb 15

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and equivalent examinations are scheduled to begin on February 15, and as such, all coaching centres will remain closed for a month starting February 13.

The decision came from a meeting of the National Monitoring and Law and Order Committee held yesterday with Education Minister Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury Nowfel in the chair.

This year, a total of 20,24,192 examinees will participate in the examinations from 29,735 educational institutions at 3,700 centres.

The meeting also decided that no one will be allowed to use mobile phones or other unapproved electronic devices to ensure a fair and cheating-free environment during the examinations.

Teachers, officials, and employees who will handle question papers will also not be allowed to use phones.

Only the centre secretary will be allowed to use a mobile phone without an internet connection.

2 detained over death threats to meat trader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rab has detained two people for threatening to kill meat trader Khalilur Rahman, who has garnered attention on social media for selling meat at an affordable price in the capital's Shajahanpur.

Nurul Haque, 67, and Mohammad Emon, 22, were detained in Ashulia, Savar Saturday night, said Commander Khandaker Al Moin, director of Rab's legal and media wing, at a press conference at its Karwan Bazar media centre yesterday.

On January 20, Khalil filed a general diary with Shajahanpur Police Station, saying that an unidentified caller threatened to kill him and his son over the phone on January 18 if he did not pay Tk 25 lakh.

The Rab official said Khalil started selling beef at "Khalil Gost Bitan" on November 19 for Tk 595 per kg. Later, some other meat traders had to bring the price down to Tk 600.

On December 22, the Directorate of National Consumers' Rights Protection, the Meat Traders Association, and the Bangladesh Dairy Farmers Association held a joint meeting and decided to sell beef at Tk 650 per kg.

Constable suspended after convict flees court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A police constable was suspended yesterday after a convict fled from a Chattogram court shortly after he was handed a jail sentence in a case filed over bank cheque fraud.

The convict, Saiful Karim Khan, was later arrested in the port city's Bandar area around two hours after the incident.

Meanwhile, Constable Kabir Hossain of Chattogram Metropolitan Police was suspended from his duties.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC-Prosecution) Nisan Chakma said, "The Judge of the Joint Metropolitan 1st Court sentenced Saiful to six months imprisonment after the trial in the cheque fraud case. After the verdict was announced, he fled the courtroom, dodging constable Kabir around 12:30pm."

Mortar shells, shots fired from Myanmar

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He visited Palongkhali, Tumbru, and Whykong border outposts and ordered the BGB to perform its duties carefully in the border area to monitor the ongoing conflict in Myanmar and the activities of the rebel groups.

He also instructed them to carry out their assigned duties professionally, the press release added.

Residents of the villages along the border in Teknaf upazila have been living in fear as sounds of explosions and gunshots are frequently heard from the other side.

Lt Col Md Mohiuddin, commanding officer of BGB-02 in Teknaf, said the security measures along the border were already strong before the conflict ensued in the neighbouring country and now they have been further strengthened as it is intensifying.

"We are on alert round the clock." Sirajul Mostafa, a union parishad member of Whykong in Teknaf, said he could not sleep last night due to the loud sounds of mortar shells and gunshots.

"It sounded like the fighting was going on in our village... We can't even go to our own croplands and shrimp enclosures that are situated near the border."

He added that a bullet from that side had also pierced through a house in his area on Saturday. "Thankfully, no one was injured."

Adnan Chowdhury, upazila nirbahi officer of Teknaf, said he heard about the bullet going through a house in Whykong union and also about the loud sounds.

"If instructions come from the BGB, we will start evacuating villagers living along the border."

Rape victim abducted from Khulna hospital

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However, the officer-in-charge (investigation) of the Dumuria Police Station went to the crisis centre to record the victim's statement, he said.

He said they had collected evidence from the victim and that they would hand it over to a court if it wanted.

When this newspaper contacted OC (investigation) Mukta Roy Chowdhury, she said she had been ordered to go to the crisis centre and confirm that a woman from Dumuria was admitted there.

She said, "I collected the victim's details like name and address and when she was admitted there. Then I left and I know nothing else."

Deputy Commissioner (South) Tajul Islam of Khulna Metropolitan

Police said they had heard about the kidnapping of the woman and that multiple police units were looking for the perpetrators and trying to rescue her.

Md Asif Iqbal, additional superintendent of Khulna police, said, "Neither the woman nor her family has come to us. If anyone files a complaint, we are obliged to give them legal assistance."

The victim's brother said Ejaz took his sister to his office around 8:00pm on Saturday and raped her there. Then he drove her away.

Mominul said, "If a victim does not get safety at a government hospital, then where will the people go?" An influential person will rape, and the victim is not allowed to go to the police station."