

A father lost forever

Family of murdered Ctg lawyer seeks justice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two-year-old Masura Islam Taskia, daughter of slain lawyer Saiful Islam Alif, remains unaware of the tragedy that has struck her family.


The little girl clings onto her mother, Ishrat Jahan Tarin, who is four months pregnant and too devastated to speak about her husband's loss.

Saiful, a former student of law at International Islamic University of Chittagong and a practicing lawyer since 2018, was from Lohagara upazila. He married Tarin in 2021, and the couple lived with their daughter in the family's village home.

He later moved to a rented house in the capital's Chawkbazar's DC Road area, where he lived with friends.

Saiful was murdered during a violent clash between police, lawyers, and followers of former ISKCON leader Chinmoy Krishna Das Brahmachari near

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Saiful Islam



Harmony of healing, where sound meets soul

REHNUMA SHAHREEN

Music is a language that transcends borders, speaking directly to the soul. It mends unseen wounds, bears the weight of shared histories, and offers glimpses into cultures, both near and distant.

Yet, it remains universally resonant, dissolving differences and finding a home in every heart.

This spirit defines "Harmony of Healing," an exhibition at Alliance Française de Dhaka, where instruments transcend their material form, becoming storytellers that bridge centuries-old traditions with the promise of a boundless musical future in the hands of contemporary artisans.

The instruments themselves are extraordinary, born of age-old techniques and daring experimentation. Some, like the gourd-crafted Ektaras, speak of wandering bards who turned whatever nature provided into vessels of sound.

Others are born of experimentation, blending science with a deep-rooted spirituality. Among the pieces on display, many

are made from materials as humble as coconut shells, gourds, and wood.

At the heart of the event is Mohammad Jakir Hossain, a musician, philosopher, and craftsman, whose life's work reverberates through every instrument on display.

His work, though rooted in tradition, reflects a profound understanding of music as a force that heals and uplifts.

Jakir's journey, from studying computer science to the spiritual philosophies of Sufism and the teachings of Indian gurus, has culminated in a practice that is both deeply personal and universally accessible.

His vision has brought together a team of dreamers and craftsmen

whose instruments are as much as tools of sound as they are bridges to inner peace.

"Music and my love for it inspired me so much in this ... To me, it is both sacred and spiritual. Most instruments here are made by me, and some I crafted alongside other makers.

"I trained myself first, and then I trained a few instrument makers in my locality. I've taken this as a research project, but my approach is different. I prefer living and internalising it."

Jakir and his team have experimented with different types of wood, refining their craft to create instruments that not only produce exquisite tones, but also embody the spirit of the heritage they represent.

The exhibition also includes a few restored instruments. "In this exhibition, I've seen instruments that are 150, maybe 200 years old," said Tapash Biswas, a visitor. "It feels like I've visited that time within a few minutes."

The event is more than an exhibition. Through interactive displays, live demonstrations, and curated performances, visitors are invited to experience how music binds us to our roots and one another.

Workshops offer hands-on sessions with folk instruments, allowing participants to soak themselves into the rhythms and melodies of Bengali traditions under the guidance of skilled musicians.

Another highlight of the event

is the collaborative folk-art session, where artists create live artworks inspired by the music around them.

This interplay between visual and auditory art forms adds a new dimension to the experience. Healing sessions, meanwhile, provide a quieter space for introspection, inviting attendees to reconnect with their inner selves.

Folk musician Shafi Mandal, a guest at the inauguration, summed up the awe many felt for Jakir's vision. "He must be an eccentric person; otherwise, it's not possible. As a musician myself, I understand how much effort and passion it takes to be able to do such a thing."

In a city as restless as Dhaka, where the air hums with the sound of horns and hurried footsteps, finding stillness feels almost impossible. Yet, even amid the chaos, there are moments when something extraordinary cuts through the noise.

The exhibition, running until November 29, invites you in not with grandeur, but with an intimacy that asks you to slow down, listen closely, and let the music speak to you.



Truck collides with car of Sarjis-Hasnat's convoy

Nobody hurt, trucker held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chattogram

A car in a convoy of vehicles carrying leaders of the anti-discrimination student movement Sargis Alam and Hasnat Abdullah was involved in a collision with a truck when the leaders were on their way back from Chattogram.

The incident occurred last night in Hazipara area of Chunti union under Chattgram's Lohagara upazila.

Additional Superintendent of Police Md Rasel of the Detective Branch (DB) of Chattogram District Police confirmed the incident to The Daily Star.

"Hasnat and Sargis were not in the car and are safe," he said.

"A Cox's Bazar-bound truck hit a car in their convoy. Fortunately, no one was injured in the incident, although the front of the car sustained damage. The truck driver has been arrested," he added.

Over 60pc think freedom of expression improved

Says VOA survey

UNB, Dhaka

Over 60 percent people in Bangladesh think freedom of expression has improved under the interim government compared to the Awami League regime, according to a survey by Voice of America Bangla.

Besides, 61.2 percent believe the media enjoys greater freedom now.

Between October 13 and 27, the survey was conducted among 1,000 people aged 18 and above in the eight divisions.

Among the participants, 25.2 percent said they feel freedom of expression remains unchanged under the current government.

On the other hand, 14.2 percent said freedom of expression under the government has been reduced, while 0.2 percent chose not to comment.

Among the younger participants (18-34 years), 57.1 percent observed increased freedom while 63.8 percent of those aged 35 and above expressed the same opinion.

Around 18.5 percent see no difference, and 13.3 percent feel press freedom has declined.

Bangladesh ranked 165th in the 2024 World Press Freedom Index, its lowest since the index's inception in 2002.

Over the 15 years of AL rule, the country dropped 44 positions due to factors such as repressive laws, partisan media licencing, and censorship.

The AL government repealed the controversial Digital Security Act last year and replaced it with the Cyber Security Act. But this law also faced severe criticism from various quarters, including journalists.

7 arrested over Ctg lawyer's killing

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and 30, in overnight raids on Mathor Potti, Bundle Road, which is not far from the place where assailants attacked Saiful with sharp weapons, he added.

Police filed three cases in connection with Tuesday's violence. A total of 79 named and 1,400 unnamed individuals were accused in the cases, he added.

A Chattogram court sent 27 of the arrestees to jail around 5:30pm, said CMP Additional Deputy Commissioner Mafiz Uddin.

Police said teams were looking for the other suspects.

In a 26-second video that went viral on social media on Tuesday night, a man, who locals identify as Saiful, was seen lying on the road, and 30 to 40 men were seen attacking him with sharp weapons and sticks.

One of them, Rajib Bhattacharya, was held by the Detective Branch last night, said Deputy Commissioner Rais Uddin.

Meanwhile, fear gripped both Muslim and Hindu residents of neighbourhoods near the Court Building, where large numbers of army, border guards, and law enforcers were deployed.

Locals said some shanties of Hindu cleaners were burnt down and two

temples were vandalised on Tuesday night.

Several windows of Niloy Sajan, the building near which the assailants attacked Saiful, were broken.

A local named Mahbub said somebody broke the security camera of the building, and police took the storage device at night.

Manik Kumar Das, a cleaner of Chattogram City Corporation, said, "I was outside the area on Tuesday. I heard later that a group of young men from our colony clashed with police. At night, there were police in the area. We don't know who vandalised the temples at night."

Another resident named Sujan Dey said, "After the attacks on houses at night, many of us went to our friends and relatives' houses outside the area and slept there to save our lives."

PROTESTS

Lawyers were on strike yesterday, halting all proceedings at the 74 courts in Chattogram, protesting the murder.

The strike will go on today, according to Ashraf Hossen Chowdhury Razzak, secretary of Chattogram Bar Association.

Yesterday morning, lawyers demonstrated on the court premises and demanded immediate arrest of the killers. Saiful's body was brought

'Ambitious' reforms may take 4-5yrs

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former student of East West University (EWU) and the daughter of late Akbar Ali Khan, former adviser to a caretaker government.

The noted intellectual highlighted the issue of inequality across four key areas – market injustice, inequitable social opportunity, political injustice, and state injustice.

About market injustice, he stressed the need for taking into cognisance unequal labour markets, where accessing a job is itself a social privilege rather than an economic right.

Detailing on inequitable social opportunity, Prof Sobhan said Bangladesh's educational system is profoundly unjust and perpetuates injustice.

Mentioning that the educational budget share remained low even by South Asian standards, he said this resulted in increased access to education quantitatively but the quality, especially in public education, remained low.

He viewed the educational system as a source of discrimination against the less privileged and the perpetrator of social injustice. Public education is largely accessed by lower income households, and thus their opportunities for remunerative engagement in the economy remains limited, he said.

"As a result, we are witnessing a progressive polarisation in the benefits of education due to the superior quality of education available to children of better off families," he said, suggesting substantially enhancing public investment in education – at least five percent of GDP – over the next decade.

On political injustice, Prof Sobhan said electoral democracy, even in the period where it commanded some credibility due to the constitutional provision for being supervised by a non-partisan caretaker government, suffered from many flaws.

"In practice, it had increasingly become a rich man's game. Over the years, we witnessed the escalation

of the role of money in politics, the emergence of politics as an instrument for business, and business as a source of entry into politics," he said.

He said successive parliaments degenerated into a chamber of commerce for "crony" capitalists, who, unconcerned by any issue of conflict of interest, used their power to advance their business fortunes.

He further said what passed for an opposition in the three previous parliaments served largely as an appendage of the ruling party, while the primary function of parliament to hold the government of the day accountable for their acts of omission and commission was largely abdicated.

This nexus between politics and business was not limited just to the Jatiya Sangsad but was also extended down to the institutions of local government by ruling party office holders who used their positions to monopolise business opportunities available through public expenditures, he said.

"Within such a political order, lower income groups remained excluded so that our primary institutions of governance, our representative institutions, remained undemocratic and highly discriminatory for the majority of the population who could never afford to contest elections.

"In this exclusionary environment, we witnessed the progressive criminalisation of Bangladesh's politics," Prof Sobhan added.

The state has emerged as the patron of crime because one could only be a criminal and a successful one if one stayed out of jail, he said, adding that the loan defaulters could seek the cover of parliament to ensure that no one was going to hold them to account for their default.

"Candidates with defaulted loans were, by law, not permitted to contest elections, but every finance minister relaxed this provision before an election so that the parliament and other elective bodies came to be populated with defaulters who resisted any attempt by parliament to address

City

Petitions pile up

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Tania at least knows who drafted the case – her brother – but in the rest six cases, the plaintiffs do not even know the people who came to their houses to take them to the police stations to sign the complaints. Four of these plaintiffs said these people identified themselves as local political party activists.

The case of Aklima Begum is among the most peculiar. She does not personally know any of the 167 suspects named in the case filed over her husband's death. She also does know any of those who came to her house to have the complaint signed or any of those who came to her house again to have the petition signed to have some of the suspects excluded from the case.

This case was filed with Mohammadpur Police Station over the death of her husband, Akhter Hossain, who was shot in Basila area on July 19, according to the FIR.

Rahima Akter, another plaintiff now seeking to drop some names, said she got some financial help from some local people after the death of her husband, Abdul Kadir Manik. She was then taken to Bhatara Police Station by some locals to sign the complaint. Over the last few weeks, she received so many phone calls from people protesting their innocence that she now wants to withdraw the case altogether.

"Tell me, how do I discontinue the case?" she told The Daily Star by phone.

'RELIEVE THE INNOCENT'

Legal experts and rights activists expressed concerns over the inclusion of random names, and said innocent people would be harassed if they are falsely implicated. There are also allegations that in many cases people are being implicated out of political rivalries or to settle old scores.

Noted rights activist Nur Khan Liton thinks many such cases are being filed to harass people.

"Cases are being filed against such people that it questions their veracity.... and now, many names are being excluded due to pressure and corruption," he said.

Noted Supreme Court lawyer ZI Khan Panna is one such victim. He was named in an attempted murder case filed on October 17, sparking harsh criticisms. The plaintiff subsequently applied to drop his name from the case.

A university teacher, whose name was included in a murder case, recently told this newspaper, "I was not involved in any crime, but I was accused in one case. The complainant appealed to drop my name when he realised I am innocent. The authorities should take quick steps to relieve the innocent from such harassment."

Senior criminal lawyer Ehsanul Haque Shomaji said that during investigation process, there is no

legal scope to withdraw any suspect's name, and so complainants should be more careful about naming people in FIRs.

According to him, when plaintiffs file for dropping names mentioned in the complaints, it generally weakens the case.

EXPLOITATION?

Shariatpur's Rubel Talukder has recently filed a petition to exclude 18 suspects from the case he filed over the death of his brother Riazul Talukder.

A BNP activist, Riazul was shot in the Jatrabari area around 5:00pm on August 4 during the anti-government protest. He died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital while under treatment several hours later, according to the case statement, lodged with Jatrabari Police Station on September 12.

Rubel named 135 suspects, including Hasina and AL leaders from Shariatpur, in the case.

"I appealed to drop the 18 names as they were wrongfully named in the case. I don't know how their names were included," he told The Daily Star.

Local sources confirmed that most of these 18 people are AL leaders and activists. Some of them held – or currently hold – posts in different local government bodies.

An AL leader from the district's Jajira, who is also a suspect in the case, said Rubel took money promising to drop some names from the case.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, he said he too was part of a discussion with some of these 18 people to have his name excluded. But they (the 18 people) struck the final deal with Rubel without informing him and several others.

Rubel denied the allegation. The Daily Star spoke with two of these 18, and both denied that they gave any money in return for dropping their names.

Besides Rubel and Tania, 18 complainants are now seeking to drop 77 names included in as many cases in Jatrabari and Uttara East police stations alone between August and October.

Sara Hossain, a human rights lawyer, said the recent allegation against senior lawyer ZI Khan Panna was a glaring example of how individuals can exploit the criminal justice system to harass others by falsely including their names in a criminal case. Fortunately, the complainant dropped his name after a public outrage.

"We now see a trend of plaintiffs seeking to drop names from the FIRs. If genuine mistakes led to their inclusion in the first place, this can be seen in a positive light as it will stop harassment. But if some names get dropped due to any kind of enticement, influence or threat, then there is a real risk of justice being denied to the victims of the July mass killings," she added.

Forge national unity

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To address these challenges, particularly those that threaten independence and sovereignty or seek to undermine them, we must build national unity to resist and counter such threats," Fakhrul said.

He also raised concerns over the law-and-order situation at the meeting, mentioning clashes between students of different colleges in Dhaka earlier this week and violent protests in Chattogram on Tuesday against the arrest of a former ISKCON leader.

"The main purpose of our meeting was to convey our party's concerns to the chief adviser regarding the recent developments, particularly the law-and-order situation in the past few days, the issues surrounding ISKCON, and the problems of students of some colleges," Fakhrul said, according to the UNB.

Fakhrul further stressed the need to hold elections as soon as possible after completing necessary reforms.

The BNP leader also called for withdrawing cases filed against party leaders and activists and also called for the dissolution of union parishads.