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CUSTODIAL DEATH OF JONNY

HC upholds life term for two former cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday upheld the life imprisonment of two former police officers and reduced another officer's life term to 10 years imprisonment in a case over the custodial death of Ishtiaque Hossain Jonny, a garment-waste trader from Dhaka's Mirpur, 11 years ago.

This is the first High Court verdict in a case filed under the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013.

The court upheld the life term of Zahidur Rahman, former sub-inspector of Pallabi Police Station, dismissing his appeal against the trial court verdict.

It did not say anything about the life imprisonment of former assistant sub-inspector Qamaruzzaman Mintu, who has been absconding and did not appeal against the trial court verdict, meaning his sentence remains in place.



Jonny

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Indigenous rights still ignored despite political shifts

Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite their contribution to the July uprising, the situation of indigenous people in the country remains unchanged, speakers said at a discussion yesterday.

They noted that neither the interim government acknowledged them as "indigenous" nor observed the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

The speakers urged the government to sign the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The discussion, titled "Indigenous Peoples and AI: Defending Rights, Shaping Futures", was organised by the Bangladesh Indigenous Women Network (BIWN) at the Liberation War Museum auditorium on the occasion of the indigenous peoples' day.

Presiding over the discussion, BIWN Vice President Lalasa Chakma said, "We thought the new generation who joined the uprising would be progressive, but we have found them rather opposite. We have our own language, culture, food, and traditions, yet we are always deprived of our rights."

In her keynote paper, BIWN General Secretary Falguni Tripura said indigenous people in Bangladesh have been neglected by the state throughout the British period, the Pakistani era, and even after independence.

"Just as indigenous peoples were 'betrayed' after the Liberation War, they were also 'deceived' following the July uprising," she said, noting that persecution, repression, rape of women, killings, and violations of fundamental human rights against them have continued to rise.

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Fisherwomen left in the shadows by gender bias

Says study; speakers urge recognition, support, and policy reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite playing a crucial role in sustaining Bangladesh's fishing communities, nine out of ten women fishers face regular gendered bias and remain largely invisible due to deep-rooted social, structural, and policy barriers, according to a recent study.

Their vital work, ranging from fishing in rivers and canals to net mending and fish drying, is often dismissed as "less important" compared to men's sea fishing. Frequently labelled as mere "assistants" rather than full-fledged fishers, women are denied the recognition and respect they deserve, the study added.

One of the most pressing hurdles is the difficulty in obtaining National Fisherfolk ID Cards.

An overwhelming 83 percent of women surveyed have yet to receive these essential IDs, effectively cutting them off from government aid programmes such as ration distributions, which disproportionately favour male cardholders.

In the study area, only 1,234 out

of 6,695 registered fisherfolk are women, underscoring the gender gap in registration.

Subah Samara, assistant professor of public administration at Jagannath University, shared the findings yesterday at a policy discussion

AT A GLANCE

Women make up 12% of registered fisherfolk countrywide
90% women fishers face gender bias
83% lack Nat'l Fisherfolk ID Cards
57% excluded from safety nets
53% never received government support

seminar titled "Empowering Women Fisherfolk Communities in Bangladesh", organised by Badabon Sangho at the International Mother Language Institute in the capital's Shegun Bagicha.

She highlighted that the lack of

fisherfolk ID cards excludes many women from accessing low-interest loans through cooperatives. Instead, most are forced to rely on informal lenders charging exorbitant interest rates of 20 to 30 percent, trapping them in cycles of debt.

The study also revealed that women remain institutionally absent from governance and advocacy platforms, further deepening their invisibility.

Without proper registration, they are excluded from social safety nets, cooperative membership, and leases on state waterbodies, increasing their economic vulnerability.

Additionally, the research highlighted severe health challenges faced by women due to prolonged exposure to saline water -- issues worsened by climate change.

Access to clean water, hygiene products, and healthcare is limited, with local clinics often dismissing women's symptoms.

Specialised gynaecological services are largely unavailable, and the costs of treatment and transport are often prohibitive.

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People jump onto a moving train while others wait on nearby tracks, risking serious accidents. The photo was taken near Dhaka's Airport Rail Station recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

MALIBAGH HOSPITAL BASEMENT Police probing two mysterious deaths

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police are investigating the deaths of two men whose bodies were found yesterday inside a car parked in the basement of Sirajul Islam Medical College and Hospital in Dhaka's Malibagh area.

The victims -- Zakir Hossain, 40, and Mian, 42, from Gomtoli village in Noakhali -- were cousins.

According to Masud Alam, deputy commissioner of Ramina Division Police, officers went to the scene after receiving information and recovered the bodies -- Zakir in the driver's seat and Mian in the passenger seat.

It is not yet clear whether the men were murdered, Alam said, adding that CCTV footage and other evidence were being collected. The bodies were sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy.

Police said the white private car entered the hospital parking lot around 5:30am on Sunday.

One person got out of the car at the hospital gate and went away. Since then, the car remained in the parking lot. Police noted that the bodies had already begun decomposing when discovered.

It was later found that the person who got off the car was its owner, Zubair Al Mahmud Sourav, also from Noakhali. Contacted, Sourav said he ran a rent-a-car service and Zakir was working as a driver for the last three months. "I came to Dhaka to drop off a person at the airport. Mian tagged along as his relative booked the car. Zakir and Mian were supposed to pick up some relatives from Sirajul Islam hospital around 11:00am yesterday and return to Chatkhil. Since there were too many passengers, I got off at the hospital gate and took a bus to Noakhali.

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Star INTERVIEW

Towards a stigma-free, sustainable mental healthcare

SAJIDA Foundation CEO Zahida Fizza Kabir discusses reshaping Bangladesh's mental health landscape

JAGARAN CHAKMA

Inside a modest but modern office in Gulshan, one of Dhaka's busiest urban enclaves, Zahida Fizza Kabir was speaking with calm demeanour. "Mental health is not a luxury," she said. "Rather, it's a necessity."

As the chief executive officer of SAJIDA Foundation, one of Bangladesh's largest non-profits, Kabir is spearheading a quiet but

The aim was to create a credible, self-sustaining model -- one that could be scaled down over time without compromising clinical quality. We're trying to shift how people think about mental health -- from taboo to tool.

groundbreaking transformation in the country's mental health landscape.

At the forefront of this effort is Psychological Health and Wellness Care (PHWC), along with a host of other programmes and enterprises.

In a country where therapy is still spoken of in whispers and psychiatric illness is often dismissed as weakness or worse, PHWC has emerged as a rare beacon.

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SAGAR-RUNI MURDER PBI now asked to submit probe report by Sept 14

COURT CORRESPONDENT



A Dhaka court yesterday asked Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) to submit the probe report by September 14 of the case filed over murders of journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Rumi in 2012.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Minhazur Rahman passed the order after Investigation Officer Md Azizul Haque, also an additional superintendent of police at the PBI, failed to submit any probe report by yesterday. This marks the 121st extension of the deadline, according to case records.

Sagar, news editor at Mastranga TV, and Runi, senior reporter at ATN Bangla, were killed on February 11, 2012, at their rented apartment in Dhaka's West Rajabazar.

Lawyers scuffle during the bail hearing of ex-CJ Khairul Haque

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two groups of Supreme Court lawyers yesterday scuffled at High Court during the hearing of a bail petition filed by former chief justice ABM Khairul Haque in a murder case.

The incident, which lasted around 10 minutes, caused pandemonium in a courtroom of the HC bench comprising Justice Md Zakir Hossain and Justice KM Rasheduzzaman Raja after 3:00pm.

Angry lawyers shouted at each other, demanding opponents leave the courtroom.

Several senior lawyers including MK Rahman, Md Mohsen Rashid, Mohammad Munsurul Hoque Chowdhury, ZI Khan Panna, Qumrul Haque Siddique and Md Motaher Hossain Sazu appeared for Haque.

Deputy Attorney Generals Md Rasel Ahammed and Md Imran Khan, along with Assistant Attorney Generals Md Uzzal Hossain, Muhammad Safwan and Md Jasim Uddin represented the state.

Advocate MK Rahman placed the petition before the bench.

DAG Rasel Ahammed requested a week's time for hearing, saying that Attorney General Md Asaduzzaman would present the state's arguments.

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