

DHAKA

JONNY'S CUSTODIAL DEATH

'We still live in fear'

Family says justice remains elusive; alleges associates of accused threatening them

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Five years after a Dhaka court delivered the first-ever verdict under the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013, in the Ishiaque Hossain Jonny murder case, the victim's family says justice remains incomplete.

Although the High Court disposed of the case in August this year, ruling on appeals lodged by the convicts, Jonny's relatives allege they continue to face threats from the accused.

"The accomplices of the accused persons are constantly threatening us. Some of them have asked me not to move any appeal before the Supreme Court against the High Court verdict, which commuted the sentence of a convict and also acquitted another," Jonny's younger brother Intiaz Hossain Rocky told The Daily Star.

"Another group vandalised my garage last September, where I work for a living, and looted items from it. I filed a general diary with the police..." he said.

Rocky said former SI Zahidur Rahman

and former ASI Rashidul are now in jail, while former SI Qamruzzaman Mintu remains absconding. Police informer Russell is in jail in another murder case, and informer Sumon has already served his term. "Our family, including me and Jonny's two children, are still living in fear," he said.

Defence lawyer Md Abdur Razzak Razu, however, dismissed Rocky's claim, saying he was making such allegations to draw sympathy. "The reality is that the families of the accused are now in a very vulnerable position," he said.

According to the case statement, police informers Sumon and Russell called law enforcers after Jonny, a garment-waste trader from Dhaka's Mirpur, slapped Sumon for stalking and harassing women at a wedding in Pallabi's Irani Camp area on February 8, 2014.

A team of 25-26 police officers, including then SI Zahidur, raided a house that night and detained Jonny and Rocky. The two were tortured at Pallabi Police Station.

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As the evening sun sets, glowing like an orange ball in the distance, people from all walks of life gather at nearby ghats to witness the majestic spectacle. The photo was taken from Baruipara Ferry Ghat in Kalia upazila of Narail yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Mahmudur Rahman, Nahid to testify at ICT

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amar Desh Editor Mahmudur Rahman and Nahid Islam, convener of the National Citizen Party (NCP), have been asked to testify before International Crimes Tribunal-1 as prosecution witnesses on September 15.

They are set to appear in the crimes against humanity case against deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, and ex-IGP Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun. Mamun has pleaded guilty and turned approver.

ICT prosecutor Gazi Monwar Hossain Tamim said both witnesses were scheduled to testify yesterday but could not attend due to personal reasons.

Tamim said the prosecution has submitted a list of 81 witnesses, of whom 45 have already testified. "Some will provide historical background. After that, seizure-list witnesses and the investigation officer will testify, and then no more witnesses will be called," he said.

"After that, we will move to arguments," Tamim said, adding that efforts are underway to complete all

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Then who set fire to Mohanganj Express?

Despite cry for justice, PBI plans to submit final report citing lack of evidence

EMRUL HASAN BAPPI and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

For Karwan Bazar hardware shop manager Mizanur Rahman, life has not been the same since the night his world turned to ashes. His wife Nadira Akter Popy, 32, and their three-year-old son Yeasin were among four people killed when arsonists set fire to the Dhaka-bound Mohanganj Express in Tejgaon on December 19, 2023.

Twenty months later, justice remains elusive. Police have yet to arrest the culprits, and investigators now plan to submit a final report citing lack of evidence.

The attack occurred just 18 days before the 12th national elections.

Around 4:45am, passengers on



Popy, 32, and her three-year-old son Yeasin. When rescuers recovered their bodies from the train, Yasin was still nestled into her chest.

the Mohanganj Express were jolted awake by screams of "fire". Popy grabbed Yeasin, holding him close as she tried to flee the carriage. But



Charred interior of one of the three burnt carriages of Mohanganj Express.

FILE PHOTO

thick smoke trapped them inside.

Hours later, rescuers found their charred bodies - Yeasin still nestled against his mother's chest.

Police termed the blaze an "act of sabotage", and Bangladesh Railway authorities filed a murder case.

But in the months since, the family says the case has been left in limbo.

"Various authorities called me shortly after the incident. But everything has changed now," said Mizanur, still grieving.

"I learned the rail authorities filed a case. But I don't know what happened to it. A long time has passed since I lost my wife and son.

However, I still have not received any justice," he said.

Popy's brother Habibur Rahman, who survived the fire, still carries the scars of that night. "My sister was running to safety with Yeasin, and I was with my elder nephew Fahim. I managed to escape with Fahim, but when I tried to find my sister, the smoke made it impossible."

"Those memories still haunt me," he said.

He added, "We have heard the PBI is investigating the case. But none of them contacted us. There is no progress, which is painful. We only want justice."

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HC halts construction in Hatirjheel, Panthakunja

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday restrained the government from carrying out any construction work in Panthakunja Park and the Hatirjheel waterbody in Dhaka.

In the injunction order, the court directed the respondents concerned not to interfere with common people's access to the spots for recreation and other purposes.

The HC also issued a rule asking the respondents to show cause as to why the construction of the FDC-to-Palashi extension of the Support to Elevated Expressway inside Panthakunja and Hatirjheel should not be declared illegal, and why they should not be directed to relocate the construction work of the FDC-to-Palashi extension of the Support to Elevated Expressway Project to any other suitable area and restore the Moghbazar-to-FDC intersection of the Hatirjheel waterbody.

The HC bench of Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Justice Biswajit Debnath came up with the order and rule following a petition filed by many eminent citizens and rights organisations.

Lawyers Jyotirmoy Barua and Ripan Kumar Barua appeared for petitioners.

DURGA PUJA 'Apologise for your remarks' 22 noted citizens urge home adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The home adviser's recent comment on the Durga Puja festival has not only hurt religious sentiments but also raised questions about communal harmony, said 22 eminent citizens yesterday.

In a joint statement, they demanded that Home Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Jahangir Alam "publicly apologise" to the Hindu community and to all religious and peace-loving citizens of the country for his "racist, provocative, and communal remarks."

Jahangir, on Monday, said, "Fair stalls won't be allowed around the puja mandaps this year in any way because alcohol and marijuana gatherings are held at those fairs."

The state must establish specific directives

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Bangladesh seeks increased migration opportunities to EU

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has called for expanding legal migration opportunities to European Union (EU) countries, stressing that structured initiatives such as the EU Talent Partnership could help curb irregular migration.

The call came during a meeting between Nazrul Islam, secretary (Bilateral) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Michael Shotton, director for Migration and Asylum at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, at the ministry yesterday.

Welcoming the EU official, Nazrul Islam praised the EU's continued engagement with Bangladesh on migration and mobility cooperation.

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'Pivotal moment for gender equality'

MJF hails BBS report recognising women's economic contribution in household work

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) has congratulated the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) on the findings of its first Household Production Satellite Accounts (HPSA), which, for the first time, placed a monetary value on unpaid household work.

Launched on Tuesday, the report estimates unpaid household work at a staggering Tk 6,70,000 crore - equivalent to 18.9 percent of the national GDP - highlighting the vital, yet often invisible, labour that supports the economy.

According to BBS, unpaid household work alone is worth Tk 4,00,000 crore, with women contributing the vast majority - Tk 3,40,000 crore. The figures provide official recognition of the historically overlooked economic contribution of women.

In a statement issued yesterday, MJF praised the government's commitment and acknowledged the support of UN Women and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in producing the report.

Shaheen Anam, executive director of MJF, described the report's release as a "pivotal moment for gender equality in Bangladesh".

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A traffic policeman sits beside a battery-run auto-rickshaw driver as the vehicle tows a line of similar ones seized for illegally plying the main road. The photo was taken on Mirpur Road in Shyamoli yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Ex-DC Sultana suspended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has suspended former Kurigram deputy

commissioner and joint secretary Sultana Parveen, who was jailed in a case over torturing a journalist. The public administration ministry confirmed the information yesterday. On September 2, a lower court denied her bail petition and sent her to jail. Following that, she was made OSD. The High Court granted her bail on September 9.

On March 13, 2020, a mobile court led by Kurigram district administration raided Ariful's home after he published reports on irregularities. He alleged that he was blindfolded and tortured during the incident. He was later jailed for possessing alcohol and cannabis.

A ministry probe later found Sultana's involvement in the incident.

