'Reporting cost him his life'

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yesterday while waiting outside the morgue at Netrokona Modern Sadar Hospital for his brother's autopsy.

"My brother's fault was that he reported about border smuggling, spoke out against drug dealers and exposed irregularities. These are what cost him his life."

Alif worked as the Netrokona correspondent for IPTV channel Ruposhi Bangla. He also ran a Facebook page called "Detective Article", where he regularly wrote about corruption, irregularities, and criminal activities.

Around 8:00pm on Thursday, unidentified assailants shot dead Alif, 44, of Dhitpur Shunui village in Netrokona's Kalmakanda upazila, in the Telonjia area of Durgapur, where he used to live with his family.

Before that, criminals hacked him in the upazila's Teribazar Ghat area on November 10 last year.

According to locals, Alif was chatting with others at a shop when two arrived on a motorcycle and opened fire. Hearing the gunshots, locals rushed to the spot, but the attackers fled on the bike.

This correspondent visited the slain journalist's home in the Telonjia area yesterday morning and found the family members stricken with grief.

Alif's wife Anondita Sangma, said, "Shortly before the incident, Alif came home from the shop and then left again. I thought he would return soon, so I was waiting for him with our one-and-a-half-year-old son, Ayan Safwan, and our daughter, Pranto."

Then someone came and told her that her husband was shot. "What was his fault? He only spoke out against irregularities. Did he have to be killed for that?" she asked.

Asked about any development in the murder investigation, Md Tarikul Islam, superintendent of Netrokona police, told The Daily Star, "Multiple teams from the police, Detective Branch, and Criminal Investigation Department are working to identify the attackers."

A five-member probe team, led by the additional superintendent of police (crime), has also been formed, he said.

"An operation is underway to quickly identify and arrest those involved in the killing. Checkpoints have been set up at various locations. No one involved will be spared," the SP added.

The papaya paradox

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yesterday found that most vegetables were selling for Tk 50-100 per kg, while beans, tomatoes and carrots cost Tk 150-220 per kg.

Green papaya, which sold for as much as Tk 80-100 per kg around the same time last year, has become one of the cheapest vegetables.

Traders said many had advanced substantial sums to farmers in several districts, expecting another profitable season. However, increased production has led to an oversupply, pushing prices down sharply.

Sher Ali Pathan, a papaya wholesaler at Karwan Bazar for 47 years, said he advanced Tk 3 crore to farmers in five districts after prices remained high last year. "I sold papaya at Tk 6-7 per kg over the past few days. Last Monday, the price fell to Tk 4. Yet, the transportation cost alone for bringing papaya to Dhaka from Chuadanga and Jashore exceeds Tk 4 per kg," he said.

"After advancing Tk 3 crore, I doubt whether I will be able to recover even Tk 50 lakh. I do not know how I will repay my bank loans and interest," he added.

Rafiqul Islam, who brought three tonnes of papaya from Singair in Manikganj to Karwan Bazar, said cultivation costs, including land rent, seeds and fertilisers, amounted to Tk 10-12 per kg. Transportation and labour added another Tk 3, taking the total cost to Tk 13-15 per kg. "I had to sell the papaya for Tk 6-8 per kg, incurring a loss of more than half the cost for every kilogramme," he said.

Dr Md Hazrat Ali, director of the Horticulture Wing at the Department of Agricultural Extension, said both cultivation and production had increased this year. "The cultivation of imported hybrid papaya varieties has expanded significantly, and production has risen across several districts as more farmers have brought land under papaya cultivation."

Meanwhile, low-income consumers and roadside eateries are benefiting from the price slump.

Amir Hossain, who runs a makeshift restaurant in Shewrapara, said rising LPG prices had increased cooking costs. He previously used pointed gourd, yard-long beans and hyacinth beans to prepare vegetable dishes.

To cut costs, he now makes a stir-fry with green papaya and potatoes, selling each portion for Tk 20. "Earlier, I needed five kilogrammes of papaya a day. Now I buy 20 kilogrammes," he said.

Rahima Begum, who supplies meals to a mess accommodating 30 people in Pashcim Rajabazar, said prices of fish, meat, oil and lentils had increased.

"Only papaya, bottle gourd and potatoes are relatively cheap in the market. So, I have increased the use of papaya in our daily meals," she said.

Mosharaf Hossain, who has been selling vegetables at Karwan Bazar for 45 years, said he had never seen papaya prices fall so sharply.

Middle East crisis threatens a lifeline

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6.2 crore remain vulnerable to falling into poverty after an economic shock.

Rezaul's case is part of a wider vulnerability created by Bangladesh's heavy dependence on overseas employment, particularly in the Middle East.

Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh's largest overseas labour market, is at the centre of the latest disruption. Attacks by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels and security restrictions at Saudi airports have disrupted flights, raising uncertainty for workers trying to enter the country and those already there.

As of October 14, restrictions had disrupted 100 flights and affected around 15,400 Bangladeshi passengers.

Shariful Hasan, associate director of BRAC's Migration Programme and Youth Platform, said, "Missing flights for even a single day creates uncertainty for 1,000-1,500 people travelling to Saudi Arabia."

BEYOND STRANDED PASSENGERS

Many Bangladeshi workers in Saudi Arabia depend on daily or weekly work, and employment opportunities have declined amid the security concerns, said Shariful.

A total of 33,611 Bangladeshi workers have returned from Saudi Arabia since the beginning of this year, according to him.

Prof Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said the crisis was putting Bangladesh's overseas labour market under three kinds of pressure.

These are: declining incomes for some workers already abroad, uncertainty for those unable to travel after taking loans and buying tickets, and fewer workers going abroad.

"If the crisis is not resolved soon, these three pressures will intensify further in the coming days," Mustafizur said.

The economic condition of the affected families would certainly deteriorate, but further research would be required to determine whether they actually fall below the poverty line, he added.

Mustafa K Mujeri, executive director of the Institute for Inclusive Finance and Development, said many unskilled workers spend their first three to four years abroad repaying migration loans. Only after clearing those debts can they use their earnings to improve their families' living standards.

"If these workers cannot return to their jobs abroad, or if their departure is delayed or they face other uncertainties, they may lose that opportunity," he said.

An ADB study released in March warned that Bangladesh and other South Asian countries could see lower remittances from the ME as the conflict weakens labour demand and squeezes migrant incomes.

Even if stranded workers eventually travel, their jobs may no longer be available if employers recruit replacements, Mujeri said.

Such disruptions could also slow remittance growth, which has supported Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserves and external balance over the past one and a half to two years.

SHRINKING OPTIONS

Shariful said Bangladesh was becoming increasingly dependent on Saudi Arabia as recruitment from the United Arab Emirates had declined, while job markets in Oman and Bahrain had remained virtually closed to Bangladeshi workers for years. "Job markets for migrant workers are closing one after another. This is really concerning," he said.

The wider conflict also raises questions about the future of the Middle East as a destination for migrant workers, he said.

Greater caution among investors could affect construction, tourism and other sectors that employ migrants, making it important for Bangladesh to diversify its overseas labour markets.

Saudi Arabia hosts around 3.5 million Bangladeshis.

The kingdom accounted for $1.95 billion, or 19.2 percent, of Bangladesh's total remittance inflows in the first three months of the current fiscal year, according to Bangladesh Bank data cited in recent reports.

Nearly half of Bangladesh's annual remittances of more than $30 billion come from the Middle East. Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, the UAE and Kuwait accounted for 86 percent of Bangladeshi workers who secured overseas jobs in FY2024-25, according to the Bangladesh Economic Review 2025.

An Asian Development Bank study released in March warned that Bangladesh and other South Asian countries could see lower remittances from the Middle East as the conflict weakens labour demand and squeezes migrant incomes.

Some workers have managed to avoid the worst consequences, at least for now.

Ridoy Ahmed, a painter whose flight was cancelled a day earlier, flew to Saudi Arabia's Prince Mohammad bin Abdulaziz International Airport on Wednesday evening, just two days before his visa expired.

"Otherwise, I don't know how much longer I would have had to wait or what would have happened to my family and me," he said by phone from the plane.

For families like Rezaul's, however, the stakes are more immediate: years of borrowing, working, and repaying debt can be undone by a crisis thousands of kilometres away.

Delhi cops detain CJP founder

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account said that she was detained and taken to an "unknown location".

"They don't have their phone! Delhi Police must answer: where is Neha? Once again an abduction, not detention!," the post further said.

Dipke called yesterday's protest in support of two Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) leaders detained and sent to jail this week for five days for demonstrating at a protest site in violation of a ban, reports Reuters.

The group and left-wing student organisations had urged supporters to gather at the Central Park in New Delhi's busy Connaught Place shopping and food district yesterday evening to wave and hoist the national flag.

The live video on CJP's Instagram handle showed Dipke coming out of a house and walking towards the street, where police officers stopped him and, after a brief argument, hauled him into a police car and drove away.

"We are placing you under preventive detention. Section 163 is in force in Connaught Place. You are being detained," a police officer could be heard telling Dipke, reports TOI.

"I have not broken any law right now... how can you detain me," Dipke asked the police officers as he was taken away.



Police officers detain All India Students' Association (AISA) President Neha Bora during a flag rally in New Delhi yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

According to officials, a notice issued on behalf of the New Delhi district authorities under the Delhi Police Act directed people not to visit Central Park, citing the restrictions in force under Section 163.

Senior police officer Sachin Sharma told news agency ANI that Dipke was served a notice that asked him to obey the law, and that he was informed of the implications of any violations.

Television images showed dozens of people arriving at Connaught Place amid heavy security, some of them waving small versions of the national flag.

Small protests were also held in financial capital Mumbai and tech hub Bengaluru, while student organisations held a demonstration in the eastern city of Patna, with people waving flags of their organisations and pushing against police barricades.

Dengue turns deadlier in October

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16.1 percent from dengue with bleeding, while 12.5 percent died from other causes. Many patients also experienced diagnostic delays of at least three days.

Medicine specialist Dr ABM Abdullah said repeated infections and delays in diagnosis and treatment were major factors behind dengue deaths.

Patients infected for a second, third or fourth time may develop severe complications, increasing their risk of death, he said.

Prof Abdullah urged people, particularly children and those with underlying conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, heart, liver and kidney diseases, and cancer, not to ignore even mild symptoms.

People experiencing fever, body aches, vomiting, diarrhoea, sore throat or loss of appetite should seek medical advice and undergo testing when necessary, he said.

He warned against taking painkillers or other medicines without medical advice, as certain drugs could worsen complications.

Prof HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, expressed concern over inconsistent application of national dengue treatment guidelines.

He said treatment should depend on a patient's clinical condition, as a low platelet count alone did not necessarily warrant a transfusion.

Dengue claimed 148 lives in September, 43 in August, 36 in July, 13 in June and one in May.

"Unnecessary platelet transfusions, inappropriate fluid administration and excessive fluid loading can themselves contribute to complications and, in severe cases, death," he said.

Prof Nazmul also called for more accessible dengue testing, particularly for low-income communities in urban and rural areas.

Public health expert Mushtuq Husain stressed the need for a three-tier dengue management system involving primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare facilities to reduce deaths and ease pressure on major hospitals.

Under the proposed system, primary healthcare facilities would offer dengue detection and initial testing free or at low cost. Patients requiring closer monitoring would be referred to upazila health complexes and district hospitals, while medical colleges and specialised hospitals would handle severe cases.

In Dhaka, hospitals run by city corporations, the railway, banks and autonomous organisations could provide secondary care, he suggested. Primary healthcare centres should also have additional beds and necessary treatment facilities.

Such a system would reduce pressure on tertiary hospitals and ensure specialised care for critically ill patients, he said.

Prof Kabirul Bashar, an entomologist at Jahangirnagar University, said dengue cases might decline slightly in November, but a noticeable fall was unlikely before December. Continued rainfall could prolong the outbreak, he warned.

Citing a forecasting model, he said cases could continue rising for up to six weeks after the last rainfall.

Why stop us when govt supports women athletes?

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administration and police to do so that you can play without facing these problems again?

SA: We just want to be able to go out and play without anyone stopping us. We want the administration to support us and encourage us, and tell us, "Go ahead, we are right beside you." If the authorities themselves are intimidated and tell us to stop playing, what can we expect? We want them to support us, not stop us.

DS: Do you think the match could have gone ahead if the administration and police had provided security?

SA: Yes, I think it could have. But we did not get the security we needed. We heard that our OC [local Officer-in-Charge] was on leave, so he could not be there.

DS: Some people opposed the match, claiming it was indecent and went against social values. What do you say to that?

SA: We wear modest sports clothes and behave properly when we play. We follow our own principles, so I do not understand why people are calling it indecent. These accusations are not fair. Women play sports in many countries, including Saudi Arabia. So why are people criticising us in Bangladesh in the name of indecency?

DS: How do you think the concerns of people who oppose girls playing football could be addressed?

SA: Sports organisations and the relevant authorities can take the initiative to explain things to people. We also have hope in the government. If it gives this issue importance and helps raise awareness, I think things can improve.

DS: Would it help if local leaders and religious teachers sat down with the authorities and the players to discuss the issue?

SA: Yes. If our DC sir [Deputy Commissioner] and UNO sir [Upazila Nirbahi Officer], along with other responsible officials, take the initiative to speak with everyone, they can explain that playing sports is not a crime.

DS: What can local young people and sports organisations do to support you?

SA: They can stand beside us and encourage us. If young people and the community support us, it will be harder for anyone to oppose us in this way.

How FB posts

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on Facebook on October 12. Someone had recorded the conversation during an argument between the couple. Allegations that the audio contained remarks insulting religion sparked tension in the area.

HM Shaheen, officer-in-charge of Debhata Police Station, said people first beat Shamim at Kuliya Bazar, near his home, around 5:30pm on October 13. The attackers then took him to a local doctor's chamber, where they beat him again.

Police rescued Shamim around 6:00pm and took him to the upazila health complex.

The Daily Star found that, around 8:30pm, a procession led by Fazlul Haque Ameni, a local religious speaker, reached Debhata demanding Shamim's execution. Ameni addressed the crowd before leading more than 200 people to the health complex around 9:00pm.

The attackers dragged Shamim out and beat him again. Doctors, nurses and police tried to stop them but failed.

Around 10:40pm, police finally rescued Shamim and took him to Satkhira Medical College Hospital. However, he died before reaching the hospital, said Manoj Kumar Mondal, the attending medicine specialist.

Shamim's family said he had a history of mental health problems. He had completed a Kamil degree from a madrasa before earning bachelor's and master's degrees from Jagannath University. He leaves behind two children, aged eight years and seven months.

The Facebook posts examined by The Daily Star do not independently establish the allegation against him.

AMENI'S ROLE IN KILLING

The online campaign began hours before Shamim's death. At 3:31pm on October 13, Ameni went live on Facebook, accusing Shamim of insulting religion and demanding punishment. He named Shamim and identified his location as Putimari Bazar in Debhata.

The 19-minute, 19-second broadcast was followed by another live session at 5:31pm. The two broadcasts received 286 and 1,600 reactions, respectively, while the second was shared 3,600 times.

Over two days, Ameni published 12 posts that incited the crowd, justified the killing and threatened similar fates for future offenders.

At 9:15pm, Ameni labelled Shamim an apostate and declared there would be "no forgiveness", again specifying his location. Later that night, he published another post dehumanising Shamim and comparing his life to that of a "koi fish" -- a reference to his survival of previous beatings.

By midnight, Ameni's posts had shifted from the allegation to Shamim's death.

Ameni expressed gratitude while announcing the death. At the time of reporting, the post had received 879 reactions, 441 comments and 228 shares. Other posts echoed the sentiment, celebrating the death and urging people not to attend Shamim's funeral.

In his last five posts, Ameni sought to justify the killing, sharing, among other things, the audio recording of Shamim made during the family dispute.

When contacted by The Daily Star, Ameni said neighbours had sent him an audio clip two days before the attack in which Shamim allegedly made the derogatory remarks. He acknowledged being present during the second attack.

CELEBRATING THE KILLING

The response extended beyond Ameni's posts. Several Facebook users justified the killing, while some framed it as a warning to others.

Another Facebook user urged people to share the news so that the Prophet's (pbuh) "enemies" would know they could face the same fate. At the time of reporting, the post had received 611 reactions, 115 comments and 25 shares.

Nearly three-quarters of the 476 people who commented on Ameni's post after Shamim's death celebrated the killing.

Shamim's family said he had a history of mental health problems. He had completed a Kamil degree from a madrasa before earning bachelor's and master's degrees from Jagannath University.

Other posts sought to discredit questions about Shamim's mental health. On October 15, one post questioned why people described him as mentally ill, asking why someone with a mental illness would allegedly make such remarks.

Another mocked those questioning his mental condition, arguing that his ability to discuss religious texts disproved their claims.

'NO NEGLIGENCE', SAYS POLICE

Police have denied any negligence in the 10 hours between Ameni's first Facebook Live and Shamim's death.

"There was no negligence on the part of police. We rescued him after the first assault and remained alert," said HM Shaheen, OC of Debhata Police Station.

Police said they had arrested two people in a case filed by Shamim's elder brother, Abdul Jalil Sana. The arrestees are Mostafa Hossain Khan and Asadul Islam Molla. The prime accused, Ameni, remains at large. Police said they are trying to arrest him.

The Daily Star has contacted Meta Platforms, Inc, the parent company of Facebook, for comment and is awaiting a response.

[Our Satkhira correspondent contributed to this report.]

PM urges families to join dengue fight

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dengue, saying public participation was essential to addressing the country's problems.

Referring to dengue deaths, Tarique said those who had lost loved ones to the disease understood the pain of such losses. Collective efforts to destroy mosquito breeding grounds could spare many families similar suffering, he added.

The PM said the country had around 2.5 crore students at schools, colleges and universities, while organisations such as the Bangladesh National Cadet Corps, Scouts, Girl Guides and Red Crescent had around 40 lakh members.

Members of these groups had been cleaning waste and rubbish across districts and upazilas every Saturday for about a month, he said.

Explaining the importance of such efforts, Tarique said Aedes mosquitoes breed in stagnant water, including water accumulating in corners of homes, along roads and in public spaces.

Although a dengue vaccine had been developed, he said studies had found it was not sufficiently effective, making the elimination of breeding grounds particularly important.

"A government succeeds when it works together with everyone," he said, adding that his government wanted to involve people across the country in addressing national problems.

He urged everyone to participate in the cleaning drive, expressing hope that collective efforts would help prevent dengue deaths.

Now rice adds to consumers' woes

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"An increase of Tk 1 or Tk 2 per kg may not seem significant, but we fear further hikes as we are already struggling to manage our daily expenses," said Momotaz Begum, a resident of Tejkuni Para who runs a meal service.

She provides lunch and dinner to around 30 people, mostly day labourers who consume large quantities of rice, charging each Tk 150. "If I raise the price of lunch and dinner, I may lose my customers. They are unwilling to pay more, especially as I raised the rate from Tk 120 to Tk 150 about four and a half months ago," she said.

Momotaz said rising prices of other essentials, LPG and electricity bills had already squeezed her earnings and increased her debts. "If rice prices continue to rise, I will have no choice but to leave this business. A Tk 1 increase per kg has already raised my monthly expenses by Tk 360," she said.

Kamal Hossain, proprietor of Makbul Rice Agency at Mirpur-11 kitchen market, said prices of all rice varieties except Nazirshai had increased.

After remaining stable for months, rice prices rose by Tk 0.50 to Tk 1 per kg over the past week due to higher transportation costs following the fuel price hike, he said.

Rice prices usually rise around this time as stored rice ages and fresh harvests take time to reach markets. New rice would take at least another two months to become available, he added.

Sohrab Hossain, manager of Janata Rice Agency at Karwan Bazar, said traders had taken advantage of higher transportation costs to raise prices after a prolonged period of stability.

However, there was no shortage of rice in any district, he said.

Zahidur Rahman, 55, an employee of a private courier service, said his income was no longer enough to support his family of six, including four children.

"The money I take to the kitchen market is no longer enough to buy everything we need. I have to drop some items from the shopping list or reduce the quantities to cope with the crisis," said the Hatirpool resident.

Rice prices usually rise around this time as stored rice ages and fresh harvests take time to reach markets. New rice would take at least another two months to become available.

He travels to Karwan Bazar despite having a market near his home, saving at least Tk 100 on purchases worth around Tk 1,200.

His family consumes at least 65kg of rice a month, meaning even a Tk 1 increase per kg adds Tk 65 to his monthly expenses.

Moslim Uddin, a stationery trader, said recent increases in packaged and liquid milk prices had further strained household budgets.