

**BANGLADESH UPDATE**



**1,472**  
New cases in 24hrs



**3,79,738**  
Total cases



**5,555**  
Deaths



**2,94,391**  
Recoveries



**GLOBAL UPDATE**

**1,084,117**  
Deaths



**37,969,964**  
Total cases

## MAN'S DEATH IN 'CUSTODY' Cops' cooked up story falters

4 policemen of Sylhet suspended;  
family files case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Four police personnel of Sylhet city's Bandarabazar police outpost, where a man was allegedly tortured to death on Sunday night, were suspended and three others withdrawn yesterday due to their negligence in duties.

Azbahar Ali Sheikh, deputy commissioner (north) of Sylhet Metropolitan Police, said after getting family's allegation over Rayhan Ahmed's custodial death, a three-member internal body was formed to probe the matter.

The body found negligence of police personnel of the outpost, he said.

"Even though the man was detained by police, he deserved humanitarian rights, which was violated in the outpost. We have already taken primary disciplinary action against the seven police personnel. Now the investigation officer of the case [filed by the victim's wife] will formally probe the incident as per the torture and custodial death act," Azbahar said.

Rayhan's wife Tahmina Akter Tanni yesterday filed the case against several unknown persons with Kotwali Police Station, alleging that her husband was beaten to death inside Bandarabazar police outpost.

Four police personnel Akbar Hossain Bhuiyan, in-charge and sub-inspector of the police outpost, constables Harun-ur-Rashid, Titu Chandra Das and Towhid Miah were suspended and assistant sub-inspectors Ashke Ali, Kutub Ali and constable Sajib Hossain were withdrawn from the police outpost.

News of the death of Rayhan, 33, broke on Sunday, with different local newspapers quoting police officials as saying that he was beaten to death by a mob after he was caught mugging someone in the city's Kasthagarh.

Rayhan, a resident of the city's Niharipara, used to work as a medical

compounder at a doctor's chamber.

According to the case statement, Rayhan went out for work on Saturday afternoon and his mobile phone was found switched off after 10:00pm. Later, around 4:30am on Sunday, his mother received a call from an unknown number. During the call, Rayhan urged her to bring some money to the police outpost to have him release him.

Rayhan's stepfather Habib Ullah reached the police outpost with Tk 4,000 around 5:30am and a policeman asked him to bring Tk 10,000 around 10:00am, the case statement said.

When he again went to the police outpost with the money in the morning, he was told to go to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital where he found Rayhan dead.

According to the hospital's records, Rayhan was taken there by police at 6:40am and he died at 7:50am, says the case statement.

Meanwhile, seeing all CCTV footage of Kasthagarh area, no evidence on any mob beating was found from 12:00am to 7:00am on Sunday, said local councillor Nazrul Islam Munim.

Tanvir Ahmed, cousin of the victim, said, "They [police] tried to stage an incident of mob beating, but failed as we now have evidence. He was tortured inside the police outpost and he eventually died."

Soumen Maitra, inspector (investigation) of Kotwali Police Station, told this correspondent that Rayhan was accused in a mugging and drug cases.

Contacted, Jyotirmoy Sarker, additional deputy commissioner of Sylhet Metropolitan Police, said he was accused in a case filed in connection with drugs and another one under the special powers act.

Habib Ullah said they did not know that he was involved in any such activities or accused in any cases.



A motorcycle lies on the ground with the drenched rider standing next to it. While trying to avoid a roadside puddle, the driver lost control of the vehicle after it was cornered by a car near the Rokeya Sarani-Lake Road intersection in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Vital law reforms still not done

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penetration -- although rape in reality constitutes many types of violent actions. In addition, males raping females and female children is the only recognised form of rape currently.

Also, according to The Evidence Act 1872, the complainant's character is judged so as to understand the merit of the complaint.

"For the past two and a half years, as part of the Rape Law Reform Now campaign, we have analysed over one hundred reported judgments on rape from the past 40 years and consulted all relevant stakeholders to understand what obstructs justice for rape," said Taqbir Huda, a research specialist at BLAST and a spokesperson for the campaign.

"The absence of death penalty for single perpetrator rape [without murder] under the 2000 Act has not been an obstruction to justice at all. The biggest barriers to justice for rape have been the lack of a witness protection system, the lack of gender sensitisation of justice sector actors, the lack of timely medico-legal examinations, the lack of sentencing discretion of judges

and the lengthy trial periods due to overburdened judges and courts. None of these prime and actual barriers to justice for rape is addressed in the slightest by the introduction of the death penalty," he continued.

"Real change requires real reform, and real investment," the BLAST researcher added.

ASK sent a statement signed by Md Nur Khan, the secretary general of their executive committee, calling this a move that will only temporarily appease the general public.

"Since the public sentiment is against rapists, now is the time for real reform.

"The government can change the patriarchal system in which rape happens, the rape survivor is victimised, and prevented from seeking justice. A person is not born a rapist, the existing education system, political frameworks and social impunity turn him into one," the statement said.

The statement demanded that educational curriculums be reformed.

"We are not being able to ensure justice for rape even though the highest punishment is life sentence.

The prosecution manages to escape through legal loopholes," it added.

"Implement the current punishment of life sentence and make sure that the perpetrator is properly incarcerated for life," said Z I Khan Panna, chairperson of ASK. Currently the life sentence punishment refers to 30 years' prison term.

"The current punishment is severe enough. Right now life imprisonment is not just the highest punishment, but also the only punishment for rape, no matter what the circumstances of the case is," said Taslima Yasmin, associate professor of the department of law at University of Dhaka.

"Because this is the only punishment, the judges already feel the pressure of being a hundred percent sure that the complaint is valid, and they demand a lot of evidence and scrutinise it to the dot. As a result the rape complainant has to bear a heavier burden of proof than what a victim of a normal crime would have to," she added.

The death penalty would only make it harder for judges to serve justice, she opined.

## Rapists to face death penalty

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issue an ordinance tomorrow [Tuesday] under the president's order," he said.

The minister made the comment at a press briefing at his residence in the capital's Gulshan yesterday afternoon.

He said the previous maximum punishment for rape was life imprisonment. Although there are some controversies over the death penalty across the country, the prime minister felt the need to impose the punishment under the current circumstances, Anisul said.

He also said the chief justice would be requested to issue a directive so that the Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Daman Tribunals across the country could hear and dispose of old rape cases on a priority basis and also finish trial proceedings in new ones at a faster pace.

At the same time, the law ministry would issue necessary directives to special public prosecutors, asking them to take initiatives to finish trial proceedings quickly, he said.

Besides, the law ministry has introduced a digital way of sending text messages to witnesses in rape cases so that they can appear before court as per schedule.

Anisul hoped that the number of rape cases would drop once the amended act came into force.

A step towards women empowerment

Talking to reporters, State Minister for Women and Children's Affairs Fazilatun Nessa Indira thanked the cabinet for the approval, saying the decision would help women empowerment take a step forward.

"I believe the country will be free from rape following the act's amendment," she said.

"Our work is not done yet, we will pass it as a bill in the parliament session in November.

"Rapists don't belong to any political

party ... Everyone's joint efforts are essential to prevent rape incidents and violence against women," she added.

A GRIM PICTURE

At least 975 women were raped across the country in the last nine months and 161 rape incidents took place last month, according to rights organisation Ain o Salish Kendra's (ASK's) October report.

Of them, 208 women were gang-raped, 43 murdered after rape and 12 victims of rape died by suicide afterwards, the report added. Three women and nine men were killed while protesting assault incidents.

On the other hand, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad said they recorded 129 rape incidents in September and 83 of the victims were minors.

Amid the growing number of rape incidents and after a video clip, showing a Noakhali woman being tortured in the open, went viral, people from all walks of life hit the streets, demanding an end to violence against women.

The protesters were joined by different socio-cultural and rights organisations.

On Saturday, Feminists Across Generations -- an inter-generational feminist alliance -- held a rally in the capital. At the programme, the platform declared a "national emergency", demanding prevention of all gender-based violence.

They said the death penalty was not a solution; they demanded an end to the "rape culture".

Meanwhile, Shireen Huq, founder member of Naripokkho, asked, "How many people can be dealt with by the death penalty? The problem is all around us, rapists don't come from another planet -- they are our brothers, our relatives. Children must be taught to respect women from an early stage, this is the only solution."

## 45pc carrying

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Of the infected people, 24 percent were above 60 and 18 percent between 15 and 19.

And 82 percent of the Covid-19 cases were asymptomatic, which means most of the carriers of the virus show no symptoms despite being infected with the virus, researchers said.

They also found some incidents of second-time infection during the survey.

Genome sequencing of 67 novel coronavirus strains was completed and compared with 325 sequenced data available in Bangladesh.

IEDCR Director Prof Tahmina Shirin presented this part of the study.

The major findings of genome sequencing are that the first transmission of the novel coronavirus in Bangladesh happened in mid-February this year and the main one in March when people left the capital in droves following the shutdown.

Besides, lineages circulating in Bangladesh are closely related to those circulating globally, suggesting that therapeutics and vaccines would be as effective in Bangladesh as elsewhere in the world.

The mutation of the virus in Bangladesh is closely consistent with the global trend, the study said.

The findings suggest that therapeutics and vaccines, which are

becoming available globally, will be effective in Bangladesh," Prof Tahmina said during her presentation.

Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora, additional director general of the health directorate, said, "Wearing masks and maintaining health rules are the best way to stay safe from Covid-19."

Health Minister Zahid Maleque, Mission Director of USAID Derrick S Brown, Acting Executive Director of icddr, Dr Tahmeed Ahmed, and President of the National Advisory Committee on Covid-19 Dr Mohammad Shahidullah, joined the event online.

31 MORE DIE

Thirty-one people died from Covid-19 in the country within 24 hours till yesterday evening, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

During the period, 13,227 samples were tested all over the country, and 1,472 of those were found positive for the virus, taking the total number of Covid patients to 379,738.

The number of deaths from the virus now stands at 5,555 with a death rate of 1.46 percent, shows DGHS data.

Meanwhile, 1,531 Covid-19 patients recovered in 24 hours till yesterday evening, raising the number of recoveries to 294,391. The recovery rate is now 77.52 percent.

## Cabinet Division

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of Mujibur, also known as Nixon Chowdhury, and Md Kawsar, the newly elected chairman of Charbhadrason upazila, clearly violated the electoral code of conduct for local body polls.

"Under these circumstances, it is requested, as per instructions, that necessary actions be taken in this regard," it reads.

The Daily Star has obtained a copy of the letter.

The Cabinet Division made the move after getting a letter from Faridpur DC Atul Sarkar about the lawmaker's activities in the by-election.

"The district magistrate deployed the required number of executive magistrates as per the demand from the local assistant returning officer and the Election Commission for holding the election in a free, fair and impartial manner," the letter further reads.

At different public rallies the day before the election and on the election day and also at a victory rally, Mujibur and Kawsar used abusive language and gave false and defamatory statements about the DC, district magistrates, the UNO and executive magistrates for deploying 12 executive magistrates in the election.

At those rallies, they also threatened the DC, district magistrates, the UNO and executive magistrates, the letter said.

Mujibur contested the 2018 national election from Faridpur-4 as an independent candidate after failing to get the Awami League ticket. The AL gave nomination to Kazi Zafrullah to contest from the constituency.

Locals and witnesses told this

newspaper that while campaigning in favour of Kawsar, Mujibur warned the DC several times against arresting Awami League leaders and activists.

At the victory rally in front of the Charbhadrason upazila AL unit office on October 10, the lawmaker lambasted the DC for deploying 12 magistrates.

He also alleged that many of the AL men in Charbhadrason area were assaulted and arrested upon the DC's directives so that the BNP-backed chairman candidate could win the polls.

"My supporters became afraid. I told them not to be afraid. He is just a deputy commissioner. We have seen so many players bigger than him..." he said at the victory rally, reported our Faridpur correspondent.

Supporters of the lawmaker then chanted abusive slogans against the DC.

Pointing to the commissioner, Mujibur said, "You will not get even a minute to breathe if my people go against you."

"Being a government official, how dare you want to help a BNP candidate win the election."

The post of Charbhadrason upazila chairman fell vacant following the death of Mosharraf Hossain.

The by-election was supposed to be held on March 29. But it was rescheduled for October 10 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Atul Sarkar, DC of Faridpur, recently told The Daily Star, "Twelve magistrates were deployed as per the demand from the Election Commission to hold the election in a free, fair and peaceful manner. It was not clear to me why their deployment in the polls should be a problem."

## Five to die for killing minor girl after abduction

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A Joypurhat court yesterday sentenced five people to death for killing a minor girl after her abduction around five years ago.

The convicts are: Uttam Kumar Sarkar, 29, Biresh Chandra Barman, 38, Santosh Kumar Sarkar, 28, Mostafizur Rahman, 38, and Obaidul Islam, 25 -- all from Rashidpur village in the district's Panchbibi upazila.

Md Rustom Ali, judge of Joypurhat Woman and Child Repression Prevention Tribunal, delivered the verdict.

According to the prosecution, Radha Rani, two-and-a-half-year-old daughter of Poresh Chandra of Rashidpur village, went missing. She was last seen playing near her home on December 22, 2015.

Police recovered her body from a pond in the village on December 25 that year.

The victim's father then filed a case with Panchbibi Police Station accusing five people of killing his daughter after abduction.

During interrogation, they confessed that they abducted the girl for ransom. They murdered her and dumped her body in the pond after her father failed to pay the money.

After examination of the evidence and witnesses' statements, the court delivered the verdict yesterday, said Nripendra Nath Roy, public prosecutor of the court.

## HK leader postpones policy speech after Beijing summons

AFP, Hong Kong

Hong Kong's leader yesterday announced she had postponed a policy speech after being ordered to travel to mainland China for meetings with central government officials.

Chief executive Carrie Lam had been due to make a key annual address on Wednesday outlining her administration's plans for the politically restless city.

But the speech clashed with a sudden announcement that Chinese President Xi Jinping would make a visit that day to the neighbouring mainland city of Shenzhen.

Lam said she would also travel to Shenzhen, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary as a special economic trade zone, ahead of a visit to Beijing later in the month.

Her speech, she added, would now be delivered in late November.

"The best way forward is for the chief executive to go to Beijing and personally explain why these measures are important for Hong Kong," Lam said of the speech.

Hong Kong is ruled under a "One Country, Two Systems" model that allows it to retain a degree of autonomy and some freedoms that are denied to citizens on the authoritarian mainland.

But last year's huge and often violent pro-democracy protests prompted Beijing to ramp up control over a city it now sees as a national security threat.

In June it imposed a sweeping new security law on the restless hub which criminalised a range of political offences.

## Scrap puffed up

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the six electricity supply organisations for violating the BERC order should not be declared illegal.

In the rule, the court also asked the authorities to show causes as to why they should not be directed to take punitive action against the organisations under the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission Act, 2003, for violating the directive.

The HC bench of Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Justice Mohi Uddin Shamim came up with the order and rule, after virtually hearing a writ petition recently filed by Consumer Association of Bangladesh (CAB), seeking necessary directives.

During the hearing yesterday, petitioner's counsel Jyotirmoy Barua told the HC that the electricity supply authorities prepared inflated bills for months between February and June this year, in violation of the law and BERC directives, but no punitive action was taken.

Deputy Attorney General Nawroz MR Chowdhury represented the state during the hearing.

In August, CAB served a legal notice on the authorities, asking them to stop the collection of inflated electricity bills from consumers and take appropriate action against officials and staff responsible for the bills.

In the legal notice, CAB also requested them to prepare correct electricity bills by examining meter readings, not to take extra money, delay fees from consumers, and to publish how many inflated bills were prepared and how much extra was collected from consumers.

grader to his friend's home in Sarkar Pukurpur area and raped her there on September 16.

Informed about the incident by the victim, her parents later filed a complaint with the police.

In Dhaka, the four arrestees placed on remand yesterday are Md Juwel, 22, Md Alamun, 23, Md Ridhoy, 24, and Abdur Rahman Mintu, 26.

Police said the 13-year-old girl came to visit her parents in the capital's Pallabi area from Noakhali on Saturday.

The arrestees took the victim to a home in the same area in the evening when her parents were out.

Waking up on Sunday morning, the victim realised that she was raped. She later informed law enforcers about the incident, said police.

The victim was undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday.

[Our correspondents from Gazipur, Bagerhat, Savar and Chattogram contributed to this report.]