

Women repression on rise in N-dists

ANWAR ALI, *Natore*

Women's repression mostly in the form of rape is on the rise in northern districts, including Natore, Rajshahi, Pabna, Dinajpur and Nilphamari.

Over the last month, at least 30 women have been raped or repressed in the districts, while many incidents were unreported because of pressure from the influential quarters.

In most of the cases, the investigation officers could not make any headway due to the culprits' links with the ruling party.

On the night of March 21, four activists of the ruling BNP allegedly kidnapped a girl, 15, a labourer, from the Muladuli Railway Station in Ishwardi and two of them raped her at gunpoint in a nearby jungle. Police arrested one of the accused but failed to track down the main culprits.

On the afternoon of March 27, armed activists of the local BNP allegedly kidnapped a 22-year-old girl and her brother-in-law Waz Ali of Morrajpur from Nishchintapur char of the Padma River in Sujanagar, Pabna. They raped the girl at gunpoint before Waz Ali with his hands and legs tied. A case was filed with the Sujanagar Police Station, but none has so far been arrested.

A BNP activist allegedly raped a housewife at her house in the presence of her husband in Gurnoi village in Atrai, Naogaon, on the night of March 22. Police could not arrest anybody, though.

A gang of masked 'bandits'

attacked a Hindu family in the first week of March and raped three female bridal guests, including a schoolgirl. The bandits shot dead Nayan Kumar Sarkar, 24, and injured three other villagers -- Shiten Shaha, Binoy Shaha and Niranjan Kumar, who came forward to drive them away.

In Pabna, some unidentified miscreants raped a girl and burnt her alive. Bhangura police recovered the charred body from a field near the railway station.

On the night of March 12, two frauds seduced a schoolgirl in Rajshahi. Police arrested Jamsheer and Saidur Rahman in this connection.

On February 26, a schoolgirl was raped allegedly by JCD leader Akkas Ali in Dinajpur.

A madrassah student, aged 15, was raped at gunpoint in Dimlia of Nilphamari.

On March 12, Godagari police (Rajshahi) arrested the principal of the Mundumala College for raping a Hindu woman.

In Nilphamari, five women were killed in 12 days since March 10.

A physician of the Harinchara Union Health Centre allegedly killed Mila Rani Roy, 25.

Housewife Rehana Begum, 25, was hacked to death allegedly by her husband Atiur Rahman in Maodabon village and Somana Khatun, 23, beaten to death also by her husband in Bagdora village in Borabari upazila.

An unidentified young girl was raped and killed in Nautora village in Dimlia. Police recovered the body from a canal near the Tista barrage.

Clash over land in Sylhet: 2 killed, 15 hurt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Sylhet*

Two persons were killed and 15 others injured in an armed clash between two groups of villagers over land dispute at Nayanpur village in Kanalghat upazila at midnight on Thursday.

Police and local people said there has been a rivalry between the two groups -- one led by Shamsul Haque and the other by Oliur Rahman -- over a piece of land. A number of cases, filed by both the groups, are pending with court.

On Thursday night, Oliur group beat up Shamsul Haque while, he was returning home from local bazar at about 11:30 pm.

Immediately after the incident, both the rival groups locked in an armed clash. They used lethal weapons and fired guns, leaving Ainul Haque, 43, dead on the spot while Faizuddin succumbed to bullet wounds at the hospital.

The injured were admitted to Sylhet Osmani Medical College Hospital. Of them, condition of three are stated to be critical. Both sides filed cases with Chunarughat thana.



Palestinian Reuters TV cameraman Ismail Khader runs for cover as Israeli troops throw grenades at a group of journalists in front of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's besieged headquarters in the West Bank city of Ramallah yesterday. No journalist was allowed to cover Arafat's scheduled meeting with US peace envoy Anthony Zinni.

Mannan sued

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general secretary of the district unit of BNP, had also filed nomination as independent candidate ignoring party's decision.

In the complaint, Munir also alleged that the expulsion order had not been made as per constitution of the party.

The expulsion order as well as the case has created tension among local BNP leaders and activists.

The hearing of the case will be held today.

Zinni meets Arafat

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Washington, the Jewish state's guardian ally and provider of \$3 billion in annual aid, much of its devoted to military purposes.

But Israel and the Palestinians suggested Bush's statement left Israel some leeway to pursue its offensive until US Secretary of State Colin Powell arrives in the region some time next week to try to forge a ceasefire.

Zinni, whose effort to forge a truce after 18 months of conflict had been stymied by the latest bloodshed, was driven to Arafat's compound in a heavily protected convoy. Palestinian officials said the two began meeting at around 10:30 GMT.

Israeli troops threw stun grenades to turn back a convoy of foreign journalists on their way to cover the meeting.

While Bush's decision to intervene suggested a glimmer of hope, it came too late for the latest casualties of Israel's military drive into the West Bank.

Israeli military sources confirmed two Palestinians dead in Nablus saying they were combatants. The army said a soldier was wounded. Three soldiers died in Jenin refugee camp on Thursday.

"Enough is Enough"

"The storms of violence cannot go on," Bush said in his statement on Thursday. "Enough is enough."

The UN Security Council later endorsed the Powell mission in a 15-0 vote and demanded Israel withdraw from Palestinian cities. It called for a "meaningful ceasefire".

Bush also called on the Palestinians to stop suicide bombings in their revolt against Israeli occupation and criticised Arafat, who has been penned up in Ramallah since December.

Bush spoke shortly after Israel sent tanks into the divided city of Hebron. Troops have now reoccupied all West Bank cities except Jericho, along with several towns and villages.

Arafat said he accepted Bush's

call for an immediate Israeli withdrawal from West Bank towns as a prelude to achieving a ceasefire and peace talks.

A statement by the Palestinian leadership, carried by the official Wafa news agency, also underscored the importance of a Saudi-sponsored Arab plan offering normal relations with Israel in return for full withdrawal from Arab lands captured in 1967.

"From our side, we are committed to the declaration of President Bush without conditions," the statement said.

A senior Palestinian source said Powell spoke by telephone to Arafat late on Thursday, but gave no details. Powell also spoke to Sharon on Thursday.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres welcomed Bush "joining in the effort to bring about a ceasefire with the Palestinians in order to bring about the resumption of the peace process, which is a basic Israeli interest".

IU students

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the blockade, causing much suffering to passengers who got stuck on the road for hours.

According to witnesses of the incident, IU student Nur Islam Khokon was coming from Kushtia to the IU campus at about 7am yesterday on a Khulna-bound bus. When Khokon wanted to get down from the bus at a stop near the university main gate, bus conductors ignored his request and kept going until the bus reached the Sheikpara stop near campus. There, following an altercation over the matter, bus workers attacked the students leaving at least 10 of them injured.

Upon hearing about the incident, agitated students of the university rushed to the spot and damaged the bus; the bus driver and helpers however managed to flee. The students blocked the road there, stopping vehicles from passing through for as long as five hours. They also damaged at least eight vehicles on the road during that time.

After blocking off the highway, the students had labourers from a nearby area build four speed bumps at different points across the highway after instantly collecting funds for the job. During this time, four workers of a truck were injured after bouncing off the truck as it hit one of the speed bumps.

At about 9am, university treasurer Prof. Mosharrar Hossain along with proctor Dr Mizanur Rahman rushed to the spot and assured the students of extending all help to have proper speed bumps built on the road.

Later, after a meeting with IU

authorities, Bus Malik Samity of the locality and the police, students lifted the roadblock at about 12:30pm.

The authorities have turned a deaf ear to a longstanding request by students to build speed bumps across the stretch of the highway running along the campus area. In January, road accidents within a short period of five days killed three people and injured 48 others. And only last week, at least 12 people were also seriously injured in separate accidents in front of the IU main gate.

Violence

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a virtual battlefield.

Officer-in-Charge of the Bhadreswar Police Station Debashis Chakrabarty reached the spot with a large contingent of police. Twenty people were arrested, he said. The aged Hindus and Muslims said that 'outsiders' fanned the trouble.

"The trouble was caused by a group of miscreants who wanted to fan violence among the two communities. We resisted and resultantly, three innocent persons were killed," said a youth on condition of anonymity.

Security was tightened in most of the places where Hindus and Muslims stay together.

West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya said, "Let me assure you that all troublemakers will be dealt with severely. We will not spare a single person involved in this incident."

Tayebur

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projects with cooperation of the city dwellers.

"The Awami League government did never place necessary funds for development projects. They did not give me scope to do any development work", he alleged.

"Now that my party is in power, I hope to complete the projects I undertook to increase civic amenities and beautify the city. I have many projects to complete, including supply of sweet water, an impressive botanical garden and a good children's park". The AL government did not accept the World Bank survey report regarding supply of sweet water in the city, he alleged.

The 68-year old BNP leader said the KCC is now in economic crisis due to the non-cooperation by the immediate past government. "But the crisis will be over as my party is in power".

Asked about the common allegation that political parties shelter mastaans (musclemen), Tayebur, KCC mayor for the last eleven years, said, "I neither have any 'mastaan' nor do I shelter them as it is beyond my political practice".

He also listed some of the development works, which include the Zia Hall, Collegiate Girls' School, two modern slaughter houses, three new graveyards, Wonderland children's park, three super markets and Baitun Noor the biggest mosque in South-Western region of the country. "I have done my best during the last eleven years. It is up to the people to judge", he said.

He said he is confident of winning the election despite intra-party rivalry in Khulna. "I am loyal to my party and my leader Khaleda Zia who appointed me Mayor on May 22, 1991. I was elected Mayor on March 10, 1994."

Bangladeshis among 185 illegal immigrants held in Greece

AFP, *Athens*

Greek police said yesterday that they arrested 185 clandestine immigrants, mainly from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The immigrants are being held in a factory at Sparta in the southwestern Peloponnese peninsula, near the small port of Gerakas where they were put ashore by a boat, said Sparta police chief, Antonis Papadakis.

Papadakis was confident that no illegal immigrants from the ship escaped arrest and said they would be expelled.

Naval patrol boats were searching for the smuggling ship.

Editor of Kushtia daily arrested

AMANUR AMAN, *Kushtia*

Police on Thursday arrested the editor of a local daily following a court order.

Sakhawat Ibne Moyeen Chowdhury, editor of The Daily Sikol, was picked up by police from his house in the town where he lay ill in bed.

According to the court, a news item regarding the alleged corrupt practices and illegal activities of Nezarat Deputy Collector (NDC) Md. Masumur Rahman was published in the March 31 issue of the newspaper.

The NDC filed a case in this regard against the editor and publisher of the daily in the first class magistrate's court of Kushtia on April 2.

On April 3, the court issued a warrant for Sakhawat's arrest and police arrested the ailing editor from his Taligara house.

The day following the arrest, Sakhawat's condition deteriorated further and he was taken to Kushtia General Hospital where he is currently under treatment.

Organised gangs

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depending on the condition. The ghat owners kept the bikes in their possession for two to three days, when they also change the brands and decorations.

The gangs frequently change their routes and do not use one route for long for their security.

The Superintendent of Police of Sakhira, gave a different story. He said a section of dealers in border districts are involved in it to get tax-free motorcycles to earn more profit.

It is the duty of BDR, not of police, to check smuggling, he said.

Police raid

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Shara Khatun without any allegation or charge.

"This is as part of a government plan to eliminate Awami League through killing, repression and arrest of party leaders and activists. But the fascist government will not be able to separate AL from the people. Rather, it will be victim of people's wrath."

She called upon the government to refrain from such undemocratic activities. She also urged the people to build up resistance against such repressive activities.

Ctg AL

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Kahartali, Panchlaish, Agrabad and Kalurghat areas in the evening.

Police raided the houses of 31 leaders and workers of Awami League and Chhatra League Thursday night but could not arrest anyone.

CMP sources said about 1,000 police and paramilitary BDR would be deployed in the city today to maintain law and order during the hartal.

Jt border patrolling by Indo-Bangla troops soon

AFP, *India*

India and Bangladesh will soon join forces to patrol their porous borders to prevent the movement of separatists, officials said yesterday.

"There is a shortfall of security forces along the border and so the need for a joint patrolling of the frontiers," Gurbachan Jagat, director general of the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) told reporters.

Jagat said Bangladesh had "endorsed" the move for joint patrolling of the 4,000-kilometre (2,500 mile) border between the two countries.

The BSF chief discussed the idea with his counterpart Rezaul Haider, director-general of the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), during a visit to Dhaka last week.

Last April, relations were strained after a bloody border skirmish left 16 Indian and three Bangladeshi troops dead.

"Both sides have now adopted a forgive-and-forget policy with the relationship between the two countries on the positive side," Jagat said.

"We have invited BDR soldiers and officers to India for training as we have some very good training institutions here."

Bangladeshis burn copies of Far Eastern Economic Review in HK

REUTERS, *Hong Kong*

A group of Bangladeshis yesterday burned copies of the Far Eastern Economic Review magazine to condemn an article describing the mainly Muslim country as a land of rising fundamentalism and religious intolerance.

Carrying a Bangladeshi flag, about ten demonstrators marched to the building housing the Hong Kong-based magazine to protest the article published in its latest edition.

They tried to hand in a protest letter with 400 signatures, but representatives of the magazine were not available to receive it because of a public holiday.

The protesters then burned two copies of the magazine just outside the building.

Bangladesh banned the magazine's latest issue earlier this week.

The article said "rising fundamentalism and religious intolerance are threatening secularism and moderate Islam" in Bangladesh, adding the country had "militant groups with links to international terrorist groups."

Fundamental rights

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other agencies for questioning. Only Omor, the NGO activist, was spared from this violation.

Interestingly, the CMM did not record the reasons for giving remand.

Subsequently, these three accused were allegedly tortured inhumanly.

Then, two of these tortured persons -- Mohiuddin and Bahauddin -- were not produced before the CMM's Court in due time. Instead, they were sent directly to jail. These two were also kept under remand for extra few days, which is beyond any legal jurisdiction.

At the jail, all the four were deprived of their constitutional right to meet their lawyers or even family members.

The government also violated court order to produce Mohiuddin and Bahauddin before the court.

The government could not frame any specific charge against Mahiuddin Khan Alamgir and Omor Tarek Chowdhury even after detaining them for nearly three weeks.

Shahriar Kabir's case

Shahriar Kabir was arrested on November 22 under Section 54. When the government failed to bring specific charges against him, it applied the 1974 Special Powers Act to detain him. After 16 days, a sedition case was filed against him. According to Shahriar, he was mentally tortured while he was on remand.

Though he was taken on police remand, he was actually kept under the Joint Interrogation Cell comprising persons from three intelligence agencies.

Shahriar was refused bail four times and though he was a well known writer and columnist, he was kept in jail with common inmates. A long-time crusader against anti-liberation forces and the politics of Jamaat-e-Islami, Shahriar was also refused meeting with lawyers and family members in jail. He was finally released on High Court bail after 59 days.

Bahauddin Nasim's case

Bahauddin Nasim was arrested on February 28 under Section 54 but soon afterwards he was shown arrested in a foreign currency smuggling case. Few days later, he was shown arrested in a year-old case with Madaripur thana. On March 11, a sedition case was filed against him.

He was taken on a five-day police remand, but was kept for seven days in the cantonment. When he was produced in court, Bahauddin said he was brutally tortured, which was visibly evident.

His lawyer says, "While he was in police and army custody, security forces tied his hands and feet and covered his head with a bag, hung him upside down from what was felt like a ceiling fan, and spun him round. They beat him severely with glass bottles filled with hot water on his buttocks, knees, elbows, hips and genitals. He also says he was given electric shocks."

This happened though the court specifically instructed police that he should not be mistreated in custody.

Article 33 (2) of the Constitution and Section 54 of CrPC do not permit detention at any place other than police station.

The government lawyers however claimed that he was not tortured. A medical board was formed. The board in its report said it found nothing wrong with Bahauddin except "mild ache at dorsal spine."

Nasim's family claimed that the medical board consisted of doctors from pro-BNP Doctors Association of Bangladesh (DAB). The High Court later ordered formation of another medical board, canceling the previous one. What is its status?

Nasim was also refused meeting with lawyers and family members. Even after a High Court order in this regard on March 10, the government did not allow such meeting till March 13. He told his family that he is being kept in condemned cell (where only convicts sentenced to death are kept).

Meantime, the High Court on Wednesday instructed the gov-

ernment attorney to inform it, through affidavit, where Bahauddin was actually kept for seven days when he was placed on five days' police remand.

Mahiuddin Khan Alamgir's case

Mahiuddin Khan Alamgir was arrested on March 15 under Section 54. He was placed on four days' police remand on two occasions. He has shown arrested in a case for attempted murder in Katchua in 2001 in which he was actually not an accused.

In the remand order, specific directives were given to keep Mohiuddin with police, not to hand him over to the Joint Interrogation Cell and not to physical torture him.

But he was kept with police for seven days. Instead of sending him to court after the remand, which is the law, Mohiuddin was sent directly to jail on one month's detention and the detention was shown effective retrospectively from March 16.

On March 24, Mohiuddin testified before the court that he was brutally tortured by three masked men who beat him with bamboo sticks and glass bottles filled with hot water. He said he was beaten in his buttocks, feet and other private parts of his body, and was not allowed to take medicine for diabetes. He claimed that hot-water-filled bottle was pushed through his rectum.

On Mar 30, the High Court issued a showcause notice on the government asking it to explain why he was actually kept under the Joint Interrogation Cell comprising persons from three intelligence agencies.

He was also deprived of the right to meet his lawyers and family members till the High Court issued an order in this regard. An Awami League parliamentary delegation led by Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid Advocate went to Dhaka central jail to meet him. The jail authorities did not allow them to meet him.

Till date, no specific charge has been brought against him. As a result, the SPA has been applied to detain him.

Tarek Omor Chowdhury, a Deputy Director of Proshika, was arrested along with his peon on March 11 under Section 54. No specific charge could be framed against them till their release on Wednesday. Due to lack of charges, the SPA was also applied against them.

The torture and degrading treatment have been done not only in violation of their fundamental human rights guaranteed under Article 33 (2) of the Constitution but also in gross violation of the minimum international norms and standard.

Narious human rights organisation have been complaining for long about the misuse of Sections 54 and 167 of the CrPC.

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed and Attorney General AF Hasan Arif on several occasions admitted misuse of these sections and said these should be amended.

In November 29, 1998, the High Court issued a show cause notice asking the government why sections 54 and 167 would not be declared anti-constitutional. However, the writ on this did not proceed further.

Ctg jail

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They said prison guards recovered contraband items during a search in the cell of former BCL president of City College unit, Didarul Alam Masum, at about 10:30 am and then raided the cells of other BCL leaders and workers.

The jail authorities said the BCL men tried to resist the search operation that led to chase and counterchase.

Later, the authorities shifted Masum to another cell and started the process of trial.

The BCL press release added that more than 50 BCL leaders and workers observed hunger strike protesting the "torture" on Masum. The prison authorities, however, denied reports of any such hunger strike.

Ctg jail gate

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thana Awami League was released on bail recently.

"As we came out, some persons introducing themselves as detective police stopped us in front of the jail gate and demanded money to avoid detention under Section 54", Rahman alleged.

"After bargaining, we gave them Tk 9,000. Then another group stopped us. This time we were lucky as we incidentally came across a jail official. We told him what happened. He took us inside the jail compound and helped us come out through another gate near the Amanot Shah (R) Dargah."

When contacted, high police officials said they heard of such incidents but denied involvement of policemen in those.

They said some unscrupulous elements in the guise of detective police are involved in such incidents. Steps have been taken to nab these "criminals" who are tarnishing the image of police department.

"We heard of such incidents but did not receive any complaint. We investigated and found that some miscreants in the name of detective police are engaged in this criminal practice taking place in front of the jail gate and on the premises the court building," one police official said.

Detective police have nothing to do with detention of any person. It is the job of the jail superintendent or the AC (Prosecution), he said.

list of such criminals to be detained under Section 54 and only they enjoy the power to take steps in this regard," he said.

The Jailer of Chittagong Central Jail, Belal Hossain, said he is not aware of any such extortion.

He said, "My job is to release the accused who get bail and take care of persons inside the jail".

On an average, 30 accused are released on bail every day. A gang of 'brokers' are also involved in the criminal practice, the sources said.

Barapukuria

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