

Two to die for raping, killing teenager

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A tribunal in Chittagong yesterday sentenced two people to death for raping and killing a student in Comilla last year.

Akram Hossain Ripon and Jamal Hossain, convicted by the Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal, Chittagong, have been evading arrest since Rashida died on May 27, 2002, five days after she was raped and burnt in kerosene flames in her home village of Mohanpur, Comilla.

"What they did is a heinous crime and deserve no mercy," Judge M Hasan Imam said in his verdict recounting the May 22, 2002 dreadful incident in which the two stalkers burnt the class IX student of Mohanpur Dakhil Madrassah after

she recognised them.

The judge cleared Mohammad Kausar and Mirza Golam Dastagir of the charges in the case filed by Rashida's elder brother Abul Kalam with Chandina Police Station.

"We got fair justice," Kalam said.

Admitted to Comilla Medical College Hospital, Rashida gave a statement to a first-class magistrate, two days before her death, naming Ripon and Jamal in her recollection of the incident.

The girl was later shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital that confirmed her rape and death from severe burns in an autopsy.

The case was transferred to the speedy trial tribunal on August 20 this year.

Tigers on backfoot

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But after only four overs had been bowled with Bangladesh one without loss, the skies suddenly opened up and within a few minutes, the whole ground was awash with rainwater.

Although it ended as quickly as it started, the wet onslaught was too much for the BNS to handle and it took another five and a half hours before the country's premier venue was fit for a resumption of play.

The umpires decided to hold 19 overs in the remaining time but ended four short due to bad light.

When they came out to bat for the second time, Bangladesh openers Javed Omar and Hannan Sarker were treated to a hostile spell from lanky Durham quick Stephen Harmison.

With the pitch behaving in a lively manner, Harmison had Omar (3) fending one to Rikki Clarke at gully with the score on 12. The bounce of the short-of-length delivery was too steep for Omar who just couldn't get out of the way after committing himself.

Godfather issue 2 more cases filed against AL leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two defamation cases -- one in Khulna and the other in Pirajpur -- were filed yesterday against top leaders of the Awami League by two lawmakers of the ruling alliance for putting them on the AL's list of 101 godfathers.

Our Staff Correspondent from Khulna reports: Mian Golam Parwar, a Jamaat-e-Islami MP from Khulna-5 (Dumuria-Phultala) constituency, filed a Tk 7.50 crore defamation case against 14 top AL leaders.

Golam Parwar, also ameer of the Khulna city unit of Jamaat-e-Islami, filed the case with a metropolitan magistrate's court.

The accused are AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, its presidium members Abdus Samad Azad, Abdur Razzak, Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Suranjit Sengupta, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Motia Chowdhury, SAMS Kibria, ASHK Sadek and joint secretaries Obaidul Kader, Abdur Rahman and Ishaque Ali Panna.

Our Barisal Correspondent adds: BNP leader and Whip of the Jatiya Sangsad Syed Shahidul Huq Jamal lodged a defamation case with Pirajpur Upazila Magistrate's Court against 16 AL leaders.

The court accepted the case and fixed October 30 for hearing.

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Khaleda

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the army by providing modern military hardware and training," she told a reunion and annual conference of the armoured corps in Bogra Cantonment.

Khaleda conferred National Standards upon 6 Cavalry and 7 Horse units of the armoured corps for their professional skill, competence and high sense of discipline and leadership quality.

A smart contingent of the corps presented guard of honour to the prime minister at Shaheed Badiuzzaman parade ground. She inspected a parade from an open jeep and later took salute during a march past.

Chief of Army Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury, army commander Maj Gen Fazle Elahi Akbar, colonel commandant, family members of martyred army personnel, in-service and retired army officers, GCO and soldiers of all levels, MPs and local elite were present at the function.

Addressing the darbar assembly, the prime minister said despite resource constraints, her government is working relentlessly to develop the army.

The prime minister said the armed corps emerged as a skilled force after independence and praised its heroic and glorious role.

She said members of the armoured corps also earned laurels at home and abroad for their performance during UN peacekeeping missions.

In this respect, she mentioned their role in rebuilding Kuwait, Somalia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Congo and many other strife-torn countries.

"Contributions of Bangladesh Armed Forces in general and the army in particular are now recognised globally," the PM said.

18-piece body still remains unidentified

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The identity of the man whose mutilated body was found near a hospital in Maghbazar on Sunday could not be established till last night.

A young woman looking for her missing husband Babul disowned the body as her husband's after examining the body parts at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

Babul, a police source, has been missing for the last two days, hospital sources said.

Earlier on Monday, a man, whose brother Helal Uddin went missing on October 7, also went to the DMCH to inspect the body and found that it was not his brother's. Helal was travelling to Comilla from his home in Tongi.

Police recovered the body parts inside polybags from a pile of garbage in front of the old entrance to Al-Deen Hospital Sunday morning.

The head was severed from the torso and the face of the dead man in his early 30s was burnt beyond recognition. Forensic experts estimated his height at five feet four inches, and said he was slim and fair complexioned.

After reconstruction, the body was preserved in the DMCH mortuary.

49 more illegal outfits knocked down in clean Buriganga drive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On the third day of the eviction drive on the banks of the Buriganga river, authorities knocked down 49 unlawful establishments -- 23 under Sutrapur and 26 under Kotawali police stations.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), equipped with tug-boats and backed up by magistrates, ansars and local police, has knocked down 168 such structures on both banks of the Buriganga since the start of the eviction drive Sunday.

The authorities have counted 890 encroachers on the banks of the Buriganga. The increasing incidence of river encroachment has led to fears the river will become clogged up and eventually die, leading to the eviction drive.

"Most encroachers are politically influential and are using their political influence to try to keep their establishments," said a BIWTA official, requesting anonymity.

The government has decided to file a case against the grabbers, official sources said.

The first initiative in recent years to save the Buriganga, the lifeline of Dhaka city, was taken during the period of the caretaker government in 2001. At that time, the number of encroachers was pegged at as many as 304. But the encroachers set up their establishments again once the eviction drive ended.

During the present drive, the authorities knocked down a kitchen market at Shayambazar off the road by the river. As many as 250 small temporary shops were broken down at this time.

The eviction drive will move to the Lalbagh area today, the BIWTA official said, and will continue until next Saturday.

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Imamuzzaman new BCIC chairman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has appointed Major General (retd) Imamuzzaman Chowdhury as Chairman of Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) on a three-year contract, according to an official announcement on Monday.

Former principal staff officer to the prime minister and a freedom fighter, Imamuzzaman retired in 2001.

The government also appointed Additional Secretary Shafaraz Hossain as secretary-in-charge of the Ministry of Establishment.

Moreover, former establishment secretary, Anwarul Bar Chowdhury, has been appointed ambassador to Italy and Joint Secretary AM Moniruzzaman Khan has been made additional secretary of the establishment ministry.

Joint Secretary Badrul Alam Tarafdar has been transferred to the Appointment, Posting and Deputation (APD) wing of the establishment ministry.

Joint Secretary Mohammad Mohsin, who served at the APD, has been transferred to the Organising and Management wing of the same ministry.

Apec

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terrorist groups that threaten the Apec economies."

The leaders vowed to eliminate weapons of mass destruction by strengthening international non-proliferation regimes, adopting and enforcing effective export controls, and taking other legitimate and appropriate measures against proliferation."

In a widening of the focus of the group which was founded in 1989 to promote free trade and economic cooperation in the region, the statement said it would now take on the new mission of protecting the security of its members.

"We agreed to dedicate Apec not only to advancing the prosperity of our economies, but also to the complementary mission of ensuring the security of our people," the statement said.

In specific moves to eliminate the terror threat, they accepted a US proposal to curb the trade in shoulder-launched surface-to-air missile which Washington believes pose a grave risk to aviation.

They agreed to adopt export controls on the weapons, secure stockpiles, regulate production and trade, and ban sales to private clients.

To better coordinate counter-terrorism activities, they resolved to improve cooperation and technical assistance between Apec's Counter Terrorism Task Force and its counterparts in the United Nations and the G-8 group of developed nations.

They also agreed to implement an Apec Action Plan on SARS, the atypical pneumonia which flared in the region earlier this year with devastating effect on several economies.

A new health security initiative "will also help Apec prevent and respond to regional health threats, including naturally-occurring infectious disease and bio-terrorism," they said.

Kibria: Economy

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government for its easy transfer to Bangladesh and it's not the success of the coalition," the frontline AL leader said.

Kibria said Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in her October 10 speech to the nation in celebration of the coalition's two years in power did not touch on anything about the economy as "there was no major success".

The government is running the country on foreign loans under tough conditions, he alleged.

On the government claim of an increase in foreign reserves, Kibria said foreign reserves increased only because of the growth of remittance in what he said was a sign that does not necessarily mean overall development of the economy.

Yesterday's press briefing at the party's Bangabandhu Avenue headquarters was part of the AL's regular highlights on the "failures of the BNP-led four-party government" that came to power two years ago.

Kibria blamed the government for increasing the revenue budget by squeezing development projects. "The government increased the revenue budget about Tk 9,000 crore -- from Tk 20,000 crore to about Tk 29,000 crore in the first two years. By contrast, it slashed Tk 6,000 crore off the development budget."

The average economic growth was about 6 percent in the five years of the AL, while it has remained within 4 percent in the first two years of the coalition rule, Kibria said.

"Although the government claims the inflation rate is at 6 percent, independent sources say the inflation crossed the 10 percent mark -- one of the major reasons for the price spiral of essentials."

Kibria accused the government of misinforming people about economic management and budget deficit.

Budget deficit during the AL rule averaged about 4.66 percent, down from 5 percent during the coalition rule, he said.

Quoting the Board of Investment, the former minister touched on foreign investment in Bangladesh, saying it totalled \$516 million in the first two years of coalition rule, whereas it was \$3,390 million in the last two years of the AL government.

On the government's claim of self-reliance, Kibria asked Khaleda to make it public which sector has

become self-reliant. "How can the government become self-reliant by taking foreign aid?" Kibria asked.

He refuted the prime minister's claim of allocation of 49 percent domestic resources in the development budget and described the statistics as false.

Kibria said the government reduced allocation for rural development to 9 percent from 12.2 percent in the last fiscal year of the AL government.

The coalition could not add even a megawatt of power, Kibria said, adding the previous AL government added about 2000 megawatts to the national grid in its five-year term.

Kibria said: "Progress in agriculture and industries has been halted because of wrong policies by the government."

Senior AL leaders, including Sajeda Chowdhury, Motia Chowdhury and Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, among others, accompanied Kibria.

Trade talks

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Although India recognised the proposal of giving special and differential treatment to Bangladesh products, the issue remains to be finalised.

Elias Ahmed, joint secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, and his Indian counterpart Rama Sundaram led the sides.

"The agreements we arrived at are a big breakthrough for both countries. We still have differences on many issues. But if we meet regularly, these could be resolved," Sundaram told newsmen after the meeting at the conference room of the commerce ministry.

Echoing his Indian counterpart, Elias said revision of the existing trade agreement has been finalised.

"We however differ on the transit issue," he said.

On special and differential treatment, he said: "India recognised our demand. But the issue is yet to be decided."

According to sources, commerce ministry officials argued that the existing trade deal did not improve Dhaka's exports in the last 23 years while that of Indian increased sharply.

Bangladesh told India that the bilateral trade agreement needs revision as India derived the maximum benefit from it.

Doctors get jobs

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basis. Some of the departments include medicine, orthopaedic, cardiology, dental surgery, blood transfusion, ophthalmology, surgery, anaesthesia and virology.

Another 82 doctors previously appointed were designated to their respective posts in various departments. In another decision about two months ago the university recruited 322 doctors, mostly medical officers said to be DAB members.

A Daily Star investigation shows that in many departments number of doctors far exceed the number of beds allocated for patients like in paediatric surgery department there are 30 doctors against 16 beds only.

Similarly in dermatology and orthopaedic departments the ratio of doctors to patients is almost double.

Two professors, one in surgery and the other in endocrine surgery departments, were given appointment without having required qualifications.

Both of them lacked required length of experience and number of publications yet they qualified for the posts.

One doctor who had applied for the post of associate professor but mysteriously he was appointed as professor. In some departments where there is no student but the university has already recruited teachers like in endocrinology and hepatobiliary surgery.

The anaesthesia department had requisitioned for 20 trainee doctors but about 40 were recruited most of who had no formal interview and had not even applied for the discipline but placed in the department.

"The extra trainee doctors, all of who are members of DAB, have been 'pushed' in the department. This is an opportunity for the DAB leaders in fulfilling their election pledges. The posts offered to the young DAB members are gesture of gratitude to their supporters," said one senior anaesthetist, requesting not to be named.

Despite having qualified personnel within BSMMUH many teachers have been appointed from outside like in medicine, surgery, gynaecology and ophthalmology departments. "Such illegal practice clearly shows partisan role," said a senior professor of the university.

In the administration section more than one hundred staff were appointed since February this year. Some of the posts include store officer, senior office assistant, diet assistant, driver, telephone and computer operators and section officers.

It is alleged that the university had advertised for four section officers but instead they recruited 14

when they came out to bat for the second time, Bangladesh openers Javed Omar and Hannan Sarker were treated to a hostile spell from lanky Durham quick Stephen Harmison.

With the pitch behaving in a lively manner, Harmison had Omar (3) fending one to Rikki Clarke at gully with the score on 12. The bounce of the short-of-length delivery was too steep for Omar who just couldn't get out of the way after committing himself.

Bangladesh's top batsman Habibul Bashar arrived at the crease under generous applause from the 10,000-odd spectators. But the right-hander, who boasts a Test average of 37 and is the only local batsman with over 2,000 Test runs, perished playing an atrocious stroke just before stump.

Bashar on two, attempted a half cut, half square-drive to a ball inches outside the off stump and was duly snapped up by Marcus Trescothick at first slip to give Harmison his second wicket.

Meanwhile, at the other end Hannan was a study in concentration. He punished the loose balls and could have got three boundaries at least rather than just one had the outfield been a little drier. Hannan will resume on 18 on day two along with Rajin Saleh, who

Road Safety Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Road Safety Day will be observed today across the country for the first time with a call to take appropriate measures to avert more than 5000 deaths a year in road accidents across the country.

The government and different organisations have set up elaborate programmes to mark the day, including rallies, processions, sit-ins, human chains and discussions.

Towards the end of last year, the government announced that October 22 would be observed nationally as road safety day.

Meanwhile, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda said on Sunday the government will propose to the UN that October 22 be declared International Road Safety Day.

The UN is scheduled to discuss the road safety issue next April.

Nirapad Sarak Chai (Nischa), a road safety movement group led by actor Ilias Kanchan has been demanding the announcement of a national road safety day for about nine years. The actor lost his wife in a road accident on this day in 1993.

Nischa will deploy its activists at about 70 points in the city today to urge drivers, shopkeepers, office-goers, teachers and students to pause at noon for five minutes silence to express solidarity with the movement for road safety.

A discussion will be held at the Roads and Highways Department auditorium with the communications minister as chief guest. Officials of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation, leaders of the transport sector and representatives of non-government organisations will attend.

Nischa will bring out a procession at 10:00am from its office at Kakrai.

Among other organisations, Work for a Better Bangladesh and United Social and Human Advancement, Development Organisation of the Rural Poor (DORP), and Bauniabandha Proitibondhi Unnayan Sangstha will stage a sitin and form a human chain to mark the day.

Breakthrough in cancer treatment

AFP, Sydney

Australian researchers yesterday unveiled a breakthrough treatment for cancer that uses genetically altered blood cells to attack and kill tumours.

Melbourne's Peter McCallum Cancer Centre said it hoped to begin human trials within two years after the treatment proved effective in mice.

Associate professor Joe Trapani said the treatment involved taking hundreds of millions of white blood cells from the sufferer. The cells' DNA is then genetically altered so they can recognise the tumour and attack it.

"What we've shown so far is that you can take the cells from the immune system from the animal itself, treat them outside the body to be able to recognise cancer and then inject them back into the body," he said.

"Instead of having a very, very few, perhaps one in 1,000 cells that can recognise the tumour, now we have virtually 100 percent of them that can home in and so the attack on the tumour is much, much greater."

The treatment could ultimately be used to tackle many types of cancers but researchers plan to begin by targeting commoner forms.

"Initially the sorts of trials we think we'd be aiming at would be a form of glandular tumour called adenocarcinoma which is common to various sorts of tumours arising in organs such as the breast, the colon, the pancreas and perhaps even the lung," Trapani said.

Four shot in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four people including the owner of a jewellery shop were wounded by gun-fire in separate incidents in the city yesterday.

Sheikh Shahidul Islam, owner of Rajanigantha Jewellers at Tantibazar in Kotwali was shot in the leg by extortionists at about 10:00am for refusing to pay them Tk 1 lakh.

Another gang of extortionists shot Billal Hossain, 40, supervisor of an under-construction building, at South Badda after failing to realise Tk 50,000 from him.

The gang led by Imdad, Yasin, Sumon and Kamal shot Billal three times in the midriff and the shoulder, his family members alleged. They had been demanding Tk 50,000 from him for the last three days, police said.

Raqib Hossain, 25, an alleged criminal of Maghbazar Kutchabazar area under Ramna police station was shot in the abdomen and the leg by his rivals in the area at around 12:30pm, police said.

Baby-taxi driver Mortuza Hasan, 22, was shot in the neck and the midriff by gunmen at Nakhalpara in Teigaon at about 10:00am, hospital sources said.

Another source said Mortuza was wounded in crossfire during a clash between two groups of local criminals.

All four victims are undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Nukes demands

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illegal program," Iran's Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi told reporters following a brief meeting with the foreign ministers of Britain, France and Germany.

Diplomats said the EU ministers would offer Iran some help with developing a civilian nuclear energy program in return for its full cooperation with a tough International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) resolution which set the deadline.

"Naturally our rights should be respected and what's legitimate for us should be respected as well as our dignity and security," said Kharrazi, who described the talks as positive.

The three EU ministers went into talks with Iran's Supreme National Security Council chief Hassan Rohani immediately after the Kharrazi meeting. They were due to meet President Mohammad Khatami later.

Iranian officials, who insist Tehran's nuclear program is for electricity production, have adopted a notably softer tone on the nuclear issue in recent days, and Khatami has even hinted Iran may halt uranium enrichment which Washington says lies at the heart of a covert nuclear arms bid.

IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei has warned Iran's case may go to the UN Security Council if he cannot verify in his November 20 report that Iran has no intention of building nuclear arms.

"If we can agree today I think this would be an important step forward, if not we have a very serious problem," German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer said.

Kharrazi said officials from the four countries were working on a joint declaration for the talks.

Diplomats said the declaration would demand Iran cooperate fully with the IAEA, sign and implement a UN protocol for tougher inspections and freeze uranium enrichment.

In return, the ministers would offer to recognize Iran's right to a civilian nuclear energy program, give some technical assistance and

EPZ unionism

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three years.

The time is necessary to train EPZ workers on trade union activities in the context of special economic zones, sources said.

About 13,000 workers and employees out of some 1.30 lakh have so far received special training on trade unionism.

Bangladesh has also taken a number of steps to upgrade the working conditions at its six EPZs.

The US has been pushing for lifting the ban on trade unionism at the EPZs by January 2004. Otherwise, it has threatened to cancel the generalised system of preference (GSP) and Bangladesh could miss the chance to get duty- and quota-free access of its goods to the US market.

Call money rate

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funds it has been collecting against its initial public offerings (IPOs) in a few days.

"The low inter-bank transaction rate will help keep lending rates to clients low," said a Bangladesh Bank official. "When the banks are able to mobilise funds at low rates, they would be able to lend at cheap rates, too."

Onion still sells

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Hossain Ahmed.

A report by the monitoring team on yesterday's market prices has been sent to the commerce ministry, he added.

Ahmed alleged that retailers tag the essentials with unusually high prices according to their wish, the market and creating an intolerable situation.

Retailers at Karwan Bazar asked for Tk 30 for a kg of onion, saying price was Tk 2 less than what it was before.

The unusually high prices of other grocery items were found all the same.

"We cannot help it as we purchase them at higher prices from the wholesalers," said Karwan Bazar Kitchen Market Association General Secretary Monwar Hossain.

In a rare intervention into the essentials market to control unusual price hike, the commerce ministry Monday fixed prices of onions at Tk 18 a kg.

Moreover, it announced that the government would take stern action against those responsible for unusual price hike of essential commodities including onions.

At the district and thana level, the government sent an instruction to deputy commissioners and superintendents of police to play a similar role in controlling essential market prices.

The decisions were taken at a meeting of the commerce ministry with Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury in the chair to find ways to reduce prices of essentials that are shooting up ahead of the Ramadan.

Beside high officials, leaders of different importers, wholesalers and

BGMEA seminar

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agreed with the business leaders and said political parties should keep business activities unaffected by their protest programmes.

Moudud said major political parties should reach a consensus on creating a business-friendly environment and shun activities that hamper economic development.

"Business should come first on the priority list of the government and the opposition and they should not take any activities that impede trade and business," he said.

As an independent country, Bangladesh should not randomly incorporate macro-economic prescriptions of donor countries and multilateral lenders, the minister added.

Tofail said though the two major political parties hold common stands on free trade and other economic issues, their performance in facilitating trade and business has been lackluster.

He said politicians should refrain from undertaking activities which put the brakes on business.

Addressing the seminar, BGMEA President Quazi Moniruzzaman said if politicians can ensure a stable environment, the readymade garment industry would be able to boost exports and create more employment.

"The image of Bangladesh before the outside world is a perennial problem and the political parties appear to be in a race to bring more ignominy to the country," he said, referring to the opposition party's boycotting the recently-held Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference.

Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Tapan Chowdhury said the government and the opposition should initiate collaborative efforts to wipe out the image problem, which retards the flow of foreign investment.

BGMEA Director Anisul Huq said economic development will be limited to a certain level unless the government and the opposition change their attitude towards trade and business.

Moderating the seminar, The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam urged businessmen to bring trade issues into the public domain so that people can provide input and suggestions for evolving strategies.

On the challenges of a quota-free regime, he said Bangladesh should take lessons from other countries on how to prepare for such an era.