

INDIA GANG-RAPE VICTIM'S DEATH Murder charges filed against accused

PTI, New Delhi

Delhi Police yesterday invoked murder charges against the six men allegedly involved in the gang-rape of a 23-year-old girl in a moving bus after she died in a Singapore hospital and decided to file the chargesheet in court on January 3.

Police said it will be their endeavour to ensure the "harshesht punishment in the book" to the culprits.

"We hope to file the charge sheet by the 3rd of January, 2013. Section 302 of IPC, which is the penal section for murder, has been added in the case," Dharmendra Kumar, special commissioner of police (law and order), said.

He said a special public prosecutor of eminence has been appointed to conduct the trial in a fast track court on a day-to-day basis. "It will be our endeavour to ensure the harshesht punishment in the book to the culprits," he said.

The autopsy of the victim was done by a

Singaporean medical team and the report will be made available to investigators at the earliest.

"In this moment of national grief following the loss of a young and innocent life to a barbaric crime, we appeal to members of public to stay calm and maintain peace.

"We, in Delhi Police, as citizens of this country are equally saddened, if not more. Our sympathy goes out to the bereaved family," he said.

Police had initially booked the six men under sections 307 (attempt to murder), 201 (destruction of evidence), 365 (kidnapping or abducting), 376 (2)(g) (gang rape), 377 (unnatural offences), 394 (hurting in committing robbery) and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code.

The girl had boarded the bus, thinking it to be a legitimate public carriage, from Munirka but was attacked and gang-raped even as her male friend accompanying her tried to protect her. He was also injured in the incident.



Indian protesters take part in a candlelight procession in Amritsar yesterday following the death of the rape victim.

PHOTO: AFP

Your voice has been heard: Sonia Says gang-rape victim's fight will not go in vain

PTI, New Delhi

Congress president Sonia Gandhi yesterday said the government had heard the people's voice demanding an end to crime against women after the death of the 23-year-old gang-rape victim died in a Singapore hospital.

As people hit the streets expressing their outrage over the tragedy, Gandhi said "to all of you who have expressed their anger and anguish publicly, who have poured out in her support, I want to assure you that your voice has been heard.

Promising swift and fitting punishment for the Delhi gang-rape accused, Congress president Sonia Gandhi said the nation's "beloved daughter" will get justice and her fight will not go in vain.

"As a woman and mother, I understand how you feel. I appeal you to remain calm and help strengthen our collective resolve to fight the menace of violence against women," Gandhi, who is also the UPA chairperson, said in a televised address.

"Today all Indians feel as they have lost their own



beloved daughter, their cherished sister, a young woman of 23 whose life full of hope, dream and promise was ahead of her. Our hearts go out to her parents, family, the whole country shares their pain," she said.

Appealing for peace and calm in wake of the tragic incident, Gandhi said, "Today we pledge that she will get justice and that her fight will not go in vain".

The Congress president said that the tragedy "strengthens our resolve to fight with all our might and with all the powers of our laws and our administration for the safety and protection of all women of our country and to ensure swift and fitting punishment for the perpetrators of such acts.

She urged the people to remain calm and "help strengthen our collective resolve" to stop such crimes.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh also said he was deeply saddened by the death of a gang-rape victim and that the protests which erupted in the aftermath of her assault were "understandable".

AL to accept people's verdict

FROM PAGE 1
programme sounded somewhat like an election campaign.

She said democracy would continue to prevail and none would be allowed to play with it since the country had to sacrifice much blood to restore democracy.

"It is the principle and responsibility of Awami League to protect people's democratic and constitutional rights. Awami League will continue to carry out the responsibilities," she added.

She urged her party's grassroots-level leaders present in the council to make people aware of their rights and responsibilities.

Hasina said some people want to grab state power without having the courage to seek people's mandate through forming organisation. "They want to assume power through the backdoor."

She also pledged that the next parliamentary polls under her government would be free and fair. In her defence, she cited the holding of a number of polls to local government bodies during her government's present tenure.

"Not a single complaint was raised about the fairness of the polls. We did not interfere in the functions of the Election Commission," she said.

Emphasising the need for strengthening the party, the AL chief said it was not possible to fulfil people's expectation without a strong organisation. She urged grassroots-level leaders to complete holding due councils of all units of the party in next two months.

She also asked her party leaders and workers to dedicate themselves to the

service of people. "The trust and confidence of people are our assets," she said.

Countering the criticism of holding this council "for the sake of the rules", she said the national council was not held only to comply with the Election commission rules but also to create new leadership. Organisational activities would be geared up and strengthened across the country through creating the new leadership.

As a note of warning, Hasina said her party would not take the responsibility for any leader's greed and unjust behaviour. She asked her party men not to recruit dubious elements in AL when the election was just a year away.

"There are those who always stay in ruling party. These people change colours and faces and commit wrongs which taint the party's image. I am always against recruiting these people in our party," said Hasina.

On the ongoing trials of war criminals, she said the trials must be completed. She warned those who intend to foil the trials to keep afar.

In her 30-minute speech, she also dwelt on her government's various development activities.

She inaugurated the council around 11:30am.

In his speech, AL General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam urged the party men to work together to ensure victory in the next parliamentary polls.

THE FESTIVE MOOD
From early morning yesterday, hundreds of councillors, delegates and party leaders thronged the Suhrawardy Udyan. The venue for the council was decorated with banners, posters and festoons welcoming the 19th council of the country's oldest political party.

Portraits of former AL legends Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy and Maulana Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish, and four national leaders Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, Capt Mansur Ali, and AHM Qamruzzaman were placed high on two sides of the dais in the shape of a huge boat, the electoral symbol of AL. The portraits of the country's supreme leader Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and AL chief Sheikh Hasina were also placed on a symbolic mast on the stage.

All the AL leaders and workers from across the country gave a standing welcome and chanted slogans when Hasina stepped on to the stage. The AL president hoisted the national flag while its general secretary, and presidents and general secretaries of the party's 73 district units hoisted party flags.

The AL chief and party leaders also released balloons and pigeons to formally inaugurate the council programme amid huge fanfare and festivity. The national anthem was played on loud speakers followed by the theme song of the party and songs on patriotism and different indigenous groups, and dance performances.

AL presidium member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury delivered the welcome speech while Nooh-ul-Alam Lenin and Ashim Kumar Ukil conducted the council with calls to take the country towards peace, democracy, development and progress.

STALWARTS FIND NO PLACE ON THE DAIS
For the first time since 1981, AL veterans Amir Hossain

Amu, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta and Abdul Jalil, among others, had no place on the dais yesterday.

They were seen sitting around 40 feet away from the stage in a row for invited guests. However, all the AL Central Working Committee leaders were on the dais.

Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Matia Chowdhury, Obaidul Quader, among others, sat on the left of the AL chief on the stage while Syed Ashrafur Islam, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Kazi Zafarullah, among others, on the right side.

Mob beats 2

FROM PAGE 20
Officer-in-Charge (Investigation) Shahabuddin Chowdhury of Niamatpur Police Station quoted the members as saying.

The members met at Begunbari village around 7:30pm over the matter on Friday, said the OC.

During the meeting, Soheli and other members had heated arguments.

Soheli left the meeting at one stage and came back minutes later with eight to ten people, including his uncles Saidur and Mainul. They attacked the members.

Hearing yells, villagers came hurrying in and beat with sticks the two brothers, who could not make a getaway unlike Jahangir, Soheli and the other attackers, said the OC.

On information, police came around 9:30pm and brought the two siblings to Niamatpur Health Complex.

Saidur died around midnight and Mainul at 2:00am.

Police have sent the bodies to Naogaon Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsies.

Pakistan briefly unbars YouTube

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan briefly unblocked access to the popular video sharing website YouTube yesterday before Prime Minister Raja Pervaz Ashraf ordered the plug be pulled again.

Ashraf in September blocked the website after it refused to heed the government's call to remove a controversial anti-Islam video.

Pakistan Interior Minister Rehman Malik earlier through Twitter said the decision to allow access again was due to huge public demand, and that the telecom regulator would install a firewall to maintain a block on unseemly content.

China launches rival GPS satellite system

AFP, Beijing

China has launched commercial and public services across the Asia-Pacific region on its domestic satellite navigation network built to rival the US global positioning system.

The Beidou, or Compass, system started providing services to civilians in the region on Thursday and is expected to provide global coverage by 2020.

Ran Chengqi, spokesman for the China Satellite Navigation Office, said the system's performance was "comparable" to GPS, the China Daily said.

It is the latest accomplishment in space technology for China, which aims to build a space station by the end of the decade and eventually send a manned mission to the moon.

The Beidou system comprises 16 navigation satellites and four experimental satellites, the paper said. Ran added that the system would ultimately provide global navigation, positioning and timing services.

The start of commercial services comes a year after Beidou -- which literally means the Big Dipper in Chinese -- began a limited positioning service for China and adjacent areas.

China began building the network in 2000 to avoid relying on GPS.

Japan seeks security ties with Australia, India

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's hawkish new Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has sought to expand the Japan-US security partnership to Australia and India as it faces a bitter territorial row with China, a newspaper reported yesterday.

"The Japan-US alliance is the cornerstone," Abe, sworn in as prime minister on Wednesday, said in an interview with the mass-circulation Yomiuri Shimbun.

Victim's village mourns its brave daughter

TNN, Ballia

A pall of gloom prevailed in the native village of the victim of Delhi gang rape incident, who dies early yesterday in a Singapore hospital.

The cold weather wrapped with fog cover yesterday morning failed to soothe the anguish of her family members as well as the villagers when they came to know that the girl is no more.

The natives of this nondescript village near UP-Bihar border in Ballia district had been praying for the life of the girl for last 13 days.

"Our heart is weeping. Only hanging is not enough, we want to see the culprits to bear the same torture and pain that killed our beloved beti (daughter), their limbs (legs and hands) should be cut and they should be put on burning fire. We also demand stringent laws and effective implementation so that no one can dare to even think about hurting girls," said an elderly member of the family.

The girl was born and brought up in Delhi where her father is an employee of a private firm. Her two younger brothers are pursuing their studies.

To console the family members the local BJP MLA Upendra Tiwari also reached the village. He demanded a compensation of Rs 25 lakh to the family and jobs for her brothers besides capital punishments to the culprits.

EU running out of patience with UK

AFP, Brussels

Europe's patience with an increasingly eurosceptic Britain is running out, EU President Herman Van Rompuy has warned, saying London's pick-and-choose approach puts the whole project at risk.

Attempts by British Prime Minister David Cameron to win back selected powers from Brussels threaten the 27-nation bloc, Van Rompuy said.

"If every member state were able to cherry-pick those parts of existing policies that they most like, and opt out of those that they least like, the union in general, and the single market in particular, would soon unravel," Van Rompuy told The Guardian newspaper in an interview Thursday.

The reference to the single market is telling, because Cameron insists that what he is trying to do, especially when at odds with Brussels, is to protect the single market in the best interests of all member states.

Former head of the European Commission France's Jacques Delors weighed in by suggesting that Britain could leave the EU and then negotiate a new type of partnership which might suit its interests better.

Opinion polls increasingly show Britons favouring a full exit from the EU. Britain joined the EU in 1973 after years of uncertainty over its commitment to Europe.



Herman Van Rompuy



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