

Another girl

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A Dhaka court yesterday placed each detainee on a four-day remand.

Officer-in-Charge of Savar Model Police Station Asaduzzaman said they picked up the arrestees from Singair of Manikganj and Bank Colony area of Savar.

Police said the arrestees had admitted to their guilt and taking of the footage of the incident during preliminary interrogation. Law enforcers are trying to arrest the rest of the culprits.

The incident of rape took place on November 25 last year, but the victim's family kept the news within until Thursday night when they finally filed a case with Savar Model Police Station accusing 11 youths. This was after Danesh, one of the arrestees, had shown the footage of the incident to the victim's mother a few days ago.

The victim, 20, is married to an expatriate living in a Middle Eastern country. They were wedded one and a half years ago over the phone. The couple is yet to meet each other.

According to the OC, Liza picked up the victim from her house at Singair in Manikganj and took her to Savar. She told the victim that she needed to visit her aunt, who was very sick.

Liza took the girl to a flat on the fourth floor of a five-storey building near Chhapra mosque in Bank Colony area of Savar where some youths had been waiting there for Liza to bring the girl. The female accomplice left the college girl with the youths.

Soon an unidentified youth jumped on the victim and she screamed out. At this a youth named Shaheen beat the girl up covering her mouth with his hand. Later, another youth called Jahed raped her.

The other youths in the room took footage of the whole incident. During the time, they put music on high volume to suppress the victim's screams, added the OC.

The victim told police that the youths had threatened her of leaking the footage if she ever spoke of the incident.

"Danesh used to stalk the girl and was beaten up by locals for this a few months ago. So he decided to avenge the insult and set his nephew Jahed to rape her," the OC said, adding that Danesh had shown the victim's mother the footage to prove that the girl was a nymphomaniac, he added.

Police yesterday sent the girl to the One-Stop Crisis Centre (OCC) of Dhaka Medical College Hospital for some tests. Coordinator of OCC Bilkis Begum told The Daily Star that the girl had been raped by one person.

Jakarta pledges \$1m in aid to Rakhine state

AFP, Jakarta

Indonesia's foreign minister yesterday said Jakarta would pledge \$1 million in aid to western Myanmar's Rakhine state, where tens of thousands have been displaced by sectarian violence.

Clashes between Buddhists and Muslims have left at least 180 people dead in Rakhine since June, and displaced more than 110,000 others, mostly Muslim Rohingya.

Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa said he would visit Myanmar on a 24-hour trip starting Monday "to deal with the issue of Rohingya on the invitation of the Myanmar government".

Natalegawa said he would bring up the controversial issue of Myanmar granting citizenship for the some 800,000 Rohingya in the country, whom the government and many Burmese consider to be illegal immigrants.

The UN says the Rohingya are among the most persecuted ethnic groups in the world and has called on Myanmar's neighbours to accept them as refugees.

All accused

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alias Gada, 42, Shajahan Ali, 40, Moniruzzaman Moni, 39, and Harunur Rashid Harun, 27, -- were arrested on December 31.

She was sent to Tangail District Jail yesterday on completion of her one-day remand.

Bithi told police that she along with the victim was at Nuruzzaman's house in Bokarbaid village of Madhupur on December 6 night, Mozibor Rahman, investigation officer of the gang rape case, said.

Bithi, who had previous connection with the four, took the girl to a video shoot in Madhupur on December 6, promising her a role in a drama.

After the shooting at Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation, the two came to Nuruzzaman's.

"As per the plan, Nuruzzaman had sent his wife and children to somewhere else. He along with the three others raped the girl while Bithi was present in the house that night."

On December 7, Bithi took the victim to her house in Mohela village of Kalihati the following day. Spending two days with her, the 15-year-old left alone for home, some three kilometres away.

Mozibor, also officer-in-charge of Madhupur Police Station, said, "Interrogating the five, we found some surprising facts about the incident. But we cannot disclose

those now for the sake of probe."

Talking to The Daily Star, Bithi's mother Bedana Begum said the girl came with her daughter from Madhupur around 3:00pm on December 7, stayed at her house until around 9:00am on December 9.

Fifteen days later, Bithi went to the girl's place to talk about a shooting scheduled for the next day.

Later in the day, she called her uncle over mobile phone to say that she had been kept confined to the house and the girl's family members were beating her.

"Informed, I along with my younger brother and his brother-in-law went to the house. The brother of the girl and his men beat us up too," Bedana said.

"They demanded Tk 1 lakh from us and threatened that if we failed to give the money, they will hand over Bithi to police."

"Later, they freed my brother and his brother-in-law. My brother returned around 3:00am with Tk 10,000 and handed over the money to the family in presence of local community leaders."

"We apologised to the family for what happened to the girl. Later at night, they freed us," she added.

Contacted, the victim's brother outright rejected Bedana Begum's version and said they want sever punishment to the violators and the abettor.

Women leaders

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Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Matia Chowdhury and Shahara Khatun.

On the immediate past 73-member working committee, there were 12 women, including the five named above, which was 16 percent of the total number. In the current committee, women's representation is 15 percent.

Under the RPO, a political party willing to get registered with the Election Commission shall have a specific provision in its constitution to fix the goal of reserving at least 33 percent positions for women in all committees, including in the central committee, and gradually achieve this goal by 2020.

To meet the registration requirement, the AL in 2008 included a provision in its charter, keeping reserve at least 33 percent of all committee posts for women and setting the goal to meet it by the stipulated time. The party constitution also went on to say efforts would continue to increase the ratio to bring a balance between male and female in the party bodies.

Ironically, all these promises remain in the book and the AL has yet to reserve any post for women in any committee.

Posts of two presidium members, one member and the party's environment and forest secretary are still vacant on the newly formed committee, but party insiders say there is little chance for women to come and fill those positions.

In the situation, the number of women members in the central committee needs to be doubled by 2020 to meet the RPO provision.

Since its registration with the EC in 2008, the AL has held national council twice -- first in July 2009 and recently in December 2012 -- and formed its central committee twice. The party may hold two more triennial councils before the deadline.

The number of women in other bodies of the ruling party is not encouraging either. The party's 41-member advisory council has so far 33 members on it, only two of them women. There are just two women in the 10-member AL parliamentary board.

Contacted, AL Presidium Member Nooh-Ul-Alam Lenin said they could not comply with the party constitution regarding keeping 33 percent posts reserved for women due to the "reality" in the country, meaning there were not as many women to fill the posts.

He also took credit, saying the proposal for keeping 33 percent positions for women was given by the AL, which the EC had accepted and

incorporated in the RPO.

"It's true that we can't make it always happen," Lenin, who was made a presidium member on January 2, told The Daily Star.

Efforts to increase the number of women on the party committees were on, he added, and claimed they were already including more women in party committees.

Asked whether the party would be able to meet the 2020 deadline for keeping 33 percent posts for women, Lenin said: "Definitely the percentage will rise. But I am not sure if it will be 33 percent or not.... But surely we will take initiatives."

Insiders said no tires of the AL have 33 percent posts reserved for women. The number of women in Jubo League and Swachhchasebak League, two associated bodies of the ruling party, is markedly poor.

Move on

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body, but could not remember how many.

Bishwajit Das, a 24-year-old tailor, was beaten and hacked to death by a group of Chhatra League activists of Jagannath University on the morning of December 9 last year in Old Dhaka, police and witnesses said.

According to the autopsy report, the victim suffered one stab injury -- three and a half inches long and one and a half inches deep.

Talking to The Daily Star over the phone, Bishwajit's brother Uttam Das last night said: "Everybody knows he [Bishwajit] was stabbed in the head, back and knee. Where are those marks?"

Maksudur Rahman, who conducted the autopsy at Sir Salimullah Medical College, told this reporter earlier that the weapon Bishwajit was hit with did not cut deep. "The weapon cut his auxiliary artery, causing profuse bleeding. Other marks were not of major wounds."

Prof Dilip Kumar Dhar, principal of the medical college, said he had seen the video footage, police inquest report and the autopsy results and talked to doctors of forensic department and experts.

"The police inquest report mentions of one deep injury as we do. There is no scope for confusion," he said, defending the autopsy report.

In the press conference yesterday, Gobinda Chandra Pramanik, secretary general of Bangladesh Jatiya Hindu Mahajote, alleged the physician was influenced by someone to submit such a report.

"I want the killers to be prosecuted," said Bishwajit's mother Kalpana Rani Das.

Exotic birds

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According to airport Armed Police Battalion (APBn), the birds and monkeys, which include 10 Marmosets monkeys, considered as one of the smallest species, are worth around Tk 15 lakh.

The birds include 30 African grey parrots, which are known as talking parrots, 100 budgerigar, 10 rainbow lorikeets, 10 golden mantled rosella and 10 green parakeets.

Assistant Superintendent of Police Motazzar Hossain of Airport APBn told The Daily Star a team challenged Mostafiz when he along with Manzur was trying to leave the cargo village with the birds and animals onboard a pickup van.

Mostafiz tried to dodge the APBn team showing some documents but failed as forest officials, being informed, asked the law enforcers to seize the consignment, he said, adding, Manzur managed to escape.

"Wrapping in blankets they brought the 10 monkeys in two cages, while the birds were carried in seven cages," he said, adding, the consignment was brought by a Qatar Airways flight.

Sub-inspector Siddiqur Rahman of Airport police told The Daily Star the animals and birds were handed over to them and later to the Department of Forest yesterday morning.

He added Sohel Rana, inspector of the forest department, filed a case against Mostafiz and Manzur in this regard.

The birds and monkeys were sent to the wild animals recovery centre of the forest department at Bhurulia in Gazipur. Next step will be taken upon a court order, said the SI.

Mostafiz was hauled before a court with a prayer for seven-day remand, but the court sent him to jail.

Picnic bus

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Police said the accident occurred around 7:00 am when the bus collided head-on with a Dhaka-bound goods-laden truck at Harisardar Bazar, leaving four people including the drivers dead on the spot.

The Sitakunda-bound bus was carrying a picnic party of Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) in Dhaka.

Of the 17 injured, an unidentified man died on way to Comilla Medical College Hospital while the other succumbed to his injuries after admission.

The injured were undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Police sent the bodies to Comilla Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsies.

Nato begins deploying Patriot in Turkey: US

AFP, Berlin

Nato yesterday began deploying Patriot missiles in Turkey to defend against threats from neighbouring Syria, said the US military's European Command (EUCOM).

US military personnel and equipment arrived at Incirlik Air Base in southeastern Turkey to support Nato's Patriot battery deployment on Ankara's request, EUCOM, based in the southwestern German city of Stuttgart, said in a statement.

It said that about 400 US troops would travel to Turkey over the next several days by US military airlift to operate two Patriot batteries supporting Nato's mission there. Additional equipment will arrive by sea later in January.

"The deployment of six Patriot batteries, including two each from Germany and the Netherlands, is in response to Turkey's request to Nato," EUCOM said.

"The forces will augment Turkey's air defence capabilities and contribute to the de-escalation of the crisis along the Alliance's border."

EUCOM deputy commander Charles Martoglio said the Patriot batteries would fall under Nato command "when set-up is complete and the systems are operational in the next several weeks".

AL plans recast

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three to four units, each having the status of a district committee. There will be a monitoring unit to supervise the activities of the segregated units," AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the present committee, which had been in office of the city AL since June 18, 2003, would continue its works until the city gets the new units and leaders.

Hanif, also a special assistant to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said the city unit AL, which arranged its council on December 27, had failed to elect new leadership as it did not hold a single council to its 22 thanas and 100 wards of the capital which was mandatory as per the party constitution.

There has been a widespread speculation that the city unit of the party would be bifurcated just like the Dhaka City Corporation. But the AL's latest move is being considered based on the large population and the size of the city. However, the speculation is still there.

Sources said AL leaders Fazle Noor Taposh, Aslamul Haque Aslam, AKM Rahmat Ullah, Qamrul Islam, Sayeed Khokon, Haji Mohammad

Selim, Shahe Alam Murad, and Kamal Ahmed Majumder, among others, might be picked for the new leadership in the segregated city units.

Incumbent acting president of AL Dhaka city unit MA Aziz and its General Secretary Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya Bir Bikram might supervise the units from a "special city monitoring committee", said party insiders.

AL TO RECAST GRASSROOTS UNITS
The party has decided to recast its grassroots units in a bid to prepare the party for the next general elections.

AL president and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and its General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam have directed the presidents and general secretaries of all the 73 organisational districts to hold the grassroots council within the next month.

The party constitution stipulates that every organisational district council should be held prior to its national council and prior to every district unit council it must hold council to its upazila, thana and union units.

However, AL on December 29 last year held its national council without complying with the provision and re-elected Hasina

as the president and Ashraf as the general secretary of the party.

In the last several months, the AL has been able to hold councils to only 10 organisational districts and some 100 upazila units. AL presidium member Obaidul Quader said many upazila and district units had already prepared for councils.

Failing to hold the council would lead the party central committee to interfere in that district unit to announce a new committee for it, said party insiders.

"Recasting the grassroots units is a routine work. Since the next election is nearing, we must prepare and make the grassroots units vibrant," Quader told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said if the earlier grassroots committees were recast it would be better for the party.

Asked whether it would be possible to hold the council within the stipulated time, he said it would be difficult, but not impossible.

AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif said several grassroots units will be recast drastically to bring change and dynamism in leadership and to prepare the party for the next national polls.

Fuel price hike

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responsible political party.

Hinting at the opposition BNP, he said the opposition knows how the government works as it had been in power in the past. He claimed the opposition was playing games.

Fuel prices in Bangladesh were far below than that on the international market, Muhith said, adding that fuel is smuggled to neighbouring countries because it is cheaper here.

He was talking to newsmen after attending the regional scout rally at Lakshmanaband of Golapganj in Sylhet yesterday.

Tariqul, meanwhile, claimed that the government hiked the price at a time when commotion of the previous increase was yet to die down.

He was speaking at a press briefing at the BNP central office in Nayapalton yesterday after a secretary general-level meeting of the 18-party alliance.

The meeting was called to discuss the alliance's course of action regarding the fuel price increase.

"Another anarchic situation is being created anew," he claimed, adding that they want to have a peaceful hartal and the government should refrain from provoking an anarchic situation.

On December 26, 2012, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at a mass contact programme had said they would call for hartal if the government hiked fuel prices.

The government on Thursday increased prices of diesel and kerosene by Tk 7 a litre, and octane and petrol by Tk 5 a litre to reduce subsidy burden. Diesel and kerosene is now Tk 68 a litre, octane Tk 99 and petrol Tk 96 a litre.

This government's previous fuel price hike was on December 30, 2011. It had increased the prices in that year four times but did not hike them in 2010 and it had cut prices of kerosene and diesel by Tk 2 in January 2009.

Meanwhile, Debapriya Bhattacharya, a distinguished fellow of think-tank Centre for Policy Dialogue, yesterday said, "The increase in prices of fuel was not at all indispensable if we take note of the global oil prices, the current overall fiscal deficit and the political backdrop."

"The fiscal deficit is manageable," he told The Daily Star.

He said since the non-food inflation was creeping, the hike would instigate the inflation further, which will have an impact on the economy.

The economist also said it was true that the price of diesel in India was higher than that in Bangladesh.

"But the price of diesel in India is not so high that it would induce illegal trading," he claimed.

"We should also appreciate the carrying cost of the economy and the ability of the poor people to shoulder the extra burden, as the two countries are different."

"The farmers and others in India also receive much more and bigger support than those in our country," he said.

He said the government had said that it increased the fuel prices for fiscal discipline.

"I will say that the fiscal discipline is quite okay. It just does not compel the government to raise the prices at this moment. The government is also saying that the money from the saving would go to development spending. I think the savings from the rise will have to be again reallocated in the agriculture sector."

The economist said the price hike was one of the compulsions for the government to get the third instalment of the \$1 billion in budgetary support from the International Monetary Fund.

Yesterday, even ruling 14-party alliance member Workers Party of Bangladesh held a rally on the capital's Tophkana Road protesting the fuel-price hike.

Workers Party Politburo member Fazle Hossain Badsha said by increasing the fuel prices, the government had double-crossed the people who voted it to power.

Lawmaker Badsha said they would continue with their protest.

Meanwhile, Gonotantrik Bam Morcha, an alliance of some left-leaning parties, also decided to call for hartal to protest the hike.

The leaders of the alliance, however, were yet to decide on the date, said a press release of the alliance.

Other left-leaning parties demanded withdrawal of the government decision and threatened to go for tough programmes if the price hike was not cancelled.

Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal in a statement said during the tenure of this government, the fuel prices were hiked five times and electricity price was increased six times.

It said people had already been suffering due to the extremely high house rent and transport cost and the recent fuel price hike would add to their woes.

Bangladesh Covered Van Truck Pannya Paribahan Malik Association at a meeting claimed that the price hike would lead the transport sector to decay.

The transport sector leaders said the hike created discontent among vehicle

owners, transport workers as well as people. It would make transportation of goods and passengers costly, they said.

Revolutionary Workers Party of Bangladesh in a statement called upon the people to unite and strengthen their protest until the government cancels withdraws the decision.

New Delhi

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fast-track court today.

The trial is expected to start at the weekend.

Case documents already run to more than 1,000 pages and include key testimony from the woman before she died.

Police say they have scheduled about 30 witnesses.

Meanwhile, the Bar Association said none of its members was willing to defend the suspects, so the court is expected to appoint defence lawyers itself.

Late on Thursday, Shinde announced that each of the 166 police stations in Delhi would have policewomen available at all times.

"I have signed the file for appointing two woman sub-inspectors and seven woman constables in every police station in Delhi," he told reporters.

Protests have been taking place every day since the attack, with demonstrators expressing anger at attitudes to women in India and calling for changes to the laws on violence against women.

They say women across India are frequently subjected to harassment and sexual assault, that reports of crimes against women are not taken seriously and that conviction rates are too low.

The medical student from north India was repeatedly raped and violated with an iron bar on a moving bus in the capital on December 16 as she returned from a cinema with her boyfriend.

The Press Trust of India quoted police sources as saying the driver of the bus had tried to run her over after throwing her out, but that she was saved by her friend.

Meanwhile, Delhi officials have responded to criticism that they are failing to protect women by announcing a series of measures intended to make the city safer.

These include more police night patrols, checks on bus drivers and their assistants, and the banning of buses with tinted windows or curtains.

A telephone helpline has been launched for women in distress, connected to police stations across the city.

The government has also set up a committee under a retired Supreme Court judge to recommend changes to the anti-rape law.

Controversy

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brother.

Armstrong, after becoming the first human to set foot on Earth's nearest neighbour in July 1969 during NASA's historic Apollo 11 mission, said, "That's one small step for [a] man, one giant leap for mankind." (Although the "a" isn't audible in his transmission, the moonwalker insisted that the official quote included the extra word.)

In numerous interviews and even in his own autobiography, Armstrong said he thought of the words after arriving at the moon, while waiting to exit his lunar module Eagle. But in a new BBC documentary, the astronaut's brother Dean Armstrong says the two discussed the statement months earlier, when Neil passed Dean a handwritten note during a late-night game of Risk, according to British newspaper the Telegraph.

"On that piece of paper there was 'That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.' He says 'what do you think about that?' I said 'fabulous.' He said 'I thought you might like that, but I wanted you to read it,'" Dean Armstrong said, according to the Telegraph.

Neil Armstrong, who died in August last year at the age of 82, had never mentioned the conversation publicly. If that scene took place just as Dean Armstrong says, it would contradict numerous statements by the first moonwalker. [Neil Armstrong Buried at Sea (NASA Photos)]

"Neil Armstrong said multiple times in multiple venues that he did not think about what to say until he got to the surface of the moon," said space history and collectibles expert Robert Pearlman, editor of SPACE.com partner site collectSPACE.com. "There were several hours after he landed, during which time he had the opportunity to give thought to what his first words would be."

That version of the story has been corroborated by other astronauts, as well, including the two other men who flew on the Apollo 11 mission with Armstrong.

"His crewmates Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins have said he did not discuss what he would say with them either before the mission or as the mission was progressing," Pearlman told SPACE.com.

This new information from Dean Armstrong has ruffled some space enthusiasts and historians, who wonder what Neil Armstrong himself would say if he were still alive.

"Whether intentional or not, Dean Armstrong's account now suggests his brother has been lying for 40-plus years," Pearlman said.

Jamaat

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chips at them and beat the cops with sticks.

Informed, Ali Azam Khan, officer-in-charge of the police station, rushed to the spot with additional force and fired eight rubber bullets to disperse the gathering, SI Monirul said.

Police arrested two activists -- Faruq Hossain of Durgadanga village, and Ismail Hossain of Enayetpur village under the upazila -- from the spot.

District ameer of Jamaat Abdur Rashid said police attacked their peaceful procession without any provocation.

In another incident, police arrested four Jamaat-Shibir activists from Palbari intersection of Jessore town for allegedly holding a secret meeting to conduct subversive activities.

The arrestees are Foshier Rahman and Abul Kamal Azad of Palbari area, Razibul Haque and Mizanur Rahman of Puratan Kasba and Ghoshpara areas of the town.