

Dhaka-Ctg

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our Daudkandi correspondent.

Two hours after the accident, a police wrecker removed the vehicle from the road, but the traffic gridlock persisted till 6:00pm, said sergeant Anwar Hossain of Iliotganj Highway Police.

Passengers had to suffer much without enough drinking water and food.

Rajia Sultana, a university student from the capital's Dhanmondi, left Dhaka for Noakhali at 9:00am. At 9:00pm, she was in Chaudhagram of Comilla, which is usually a two and a half hour journey from Dhaka.

A resident of Mirpur in the capital, Ahmed Hossain was travelling to Chittagong with his wife and daughter. He said the passengers, especially women and children, suffered a lot due to the tailback as there were no toilet facilities.

AL wants

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on Thursday.

That day, Hasina had said the opposition was going for anti-government movement to fail democracy, bring back a 1/11-like situation and save war criminals.

Tariqul yesterday said democratic rights of the people had been violated through the announcement of the state of emergency on January 11, 2007 and subsequent arrests of many politicians.

He claimed that the incumbent prime minister had welcomed the then Fakhrudin-led government. The BNP spokesperson also raised the question of whether the incumbent government had come to power through proper elections.

"We are observing this day to express our disapproval to emergency state, but on the contrary Awami League is doing nothing," he said reasoning his claim.

Tariqul urged the prime minister to disclose the actual information regarding the stock market scam, corruption in Padma bridge project, Hall-Mark scam and how the government was feeling successful in dealing with Biswajit, Rafiqul and journalist couple Sagar-Runi murders.

"If you [Hasina] fail to do so, you must step down taking the responsibility of the failure," he said.

Finally he called upon the government not to create anarchy in the country and give the next election under an impartial caretaker government.

Meanwhile, thousands of activists and supporters of the 18-party opposition alliance yesterday took part in the black day procession that marched up to Moghbazar through Mouchak.

BNP's key ally Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami participated in the rally with banners demanding release of its leaders being tried at the international crimes tribunals for allegedly committing crimes against humanity during the Liberation War in 1971.

The Jamaat activists distributed among people leaflets containing some content of alleged Skype conversation between the former chairman of Tribunal-1 and an expatriate legal expert.

Water transport

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After the meeting, the shipping minister said, "We will hold a meeting with water transport workers in the last week of this month to discuss other problems in the sector."

BIWTA Chairman Shamsuddin Khandaker, Bangladesh Inland Waterways (passenger carriers) Association Chairman Mahub Uddin Ahmed Bir Bikram, Bangladesh Jahaji Sramik Federation President Shukkur Mahmood, among others, attended the meeting.

PM seeks support

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government's successes, namely economic growth, graft-fighting measures, war crimes and other high-profile trials, law and order, power generation, development in health sector, river dredging and local elections, among other things.

She also spoke of the 1/11 political changeover, its background and impact.

"After four years in power, we can proudly say today that we have kept most of the [2008] election pledges despite various limitations and obstacles. In some cases, we have achieved more than what we had aimed at," she said.

The prime minister assured the people of their voting rights, saying citizens' democratic rights were guaranteed by her government.

"The world now says that the massive development work of the present government is taking Bangladesh towards prosperity. Through this work we will build a prosperous, just, secular, peaceful and digital Bangladesh free from hunger and poverty.

"To attain this goal, continuation of this government is necessary. Only you can give that chance for continuing the progress that has been achieved for economic emancipation of Bangladesh," Hasina said in her recorded speech that went on air at 7:00pm.

Between 2009 and 2012, the country earned \$4,800 crore in remittance, four times that in the first four years of the BNP government, she said, adding that foreign reserve rose to its all-time high at \$13.11 billion in the past four years.

The PM was originally scheduled to deliver the speech on January 6, the day her government assumed power in 2009. But the date was later re-fixed for yesterday as "necessary formalities" were then incomplete.

Urging people to remain alert so nobody can snatch their voting rights, she said, "An environment in which the Election Commission can work independently and neutrally has been created. So people will elect and send to power whoever they like."

She blamed the main opposition party for bringing on the 1/11 and criticised the immediate past army-backed caretaker government for what she called its "misdeeds". The premier said those who wanted to implement the "minus-two formula" were still active and were trying to emerge again.

One-eleven refers to January 11 of 2007 when a military-backed caretaker government took over by declaring a state of emergency. The "minus-two formula" refers to the theory

Teachers

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Teachers and employees of institutes under the system receive a part of their wages from the government.

Yesterday around 10:30am, police barred the demonstrators from gathering at the Central Shaheed Minar for the second consecutive day.

The demonstrators around noon moved to Suhrawardy Udyan and on police request, they ended their fasting programme for the day around 5:00pm.

Officer-in-Charge Sirajul Islam of Shaheh Police Station said they prevented the teachers from using the Shaheed Minar because the teachers did not get permission from Dhaka University authorities to use it.

He claimed that he would allow the teachers in Shaheed Minar once the Dhaka University authorities, which has jurisdiction over the Shaheed Minar, gives them the permission.

However, the agitators claimed that they had sought permission for the use of Central Shaheed Minar from Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) and the proctor of Dhaka University.

Jote President Esharat Ali claimed that the university asked them to get the police permission first but the DMP commissioner did not give them time yesterday to meet.

The teachers would gather at the Shaheed Minar again today.

KEY POINTS

- Tough stance taken against corruption
- Law and order situation improved
- Armed forces being modernised
- 1/11 brought on by BNP misdeeds
- All 5,509 polls in last four years held free and fair
- Bangladesh now a role model for development
- Use of IT in major sectors

that some top leaders of the AL and the BNP with the help of the then government sought to get rid of Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia through forcing them into exile.

Hasina said 5,509 elections including by-polls and elections to city corporations, upazilas and municipalities were held in the past four years and they were all free, fair and credible.

"Nobody could raise any question over any [of these] elections."

She alleged the BNP was out to save the war criminals through street programmes, and its ally Jamaat-e-Islami through "subversive activities".

The prime minister reiterated her resolve to try the war criminals no matter what "conspiracies and evil designs" the BNP-Jamaat hatched. She also called on the BNP not to try to protect them.

"The nation will never forgive you if you do so."

Hasina also spoke of her global peace model "Peoples' Empowerment" being unanimously accepted in the UN.

Touching upon corruption, she said her government had taken a tough position against graft. As a result, the Anti-Corruption Commission has been working independently. The ACC can now summon ministers, lawmakers, advisers and secretaries for interrogation and even file cases against them.

"Could anyone imagine this during the BNP-Jamaat alliance rule? You, the countrymen, judge it," she said.

Mercury

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the tea-growing region in the northeast, which holds the 1968 record of all-time-low 2.8°C.

In the northern part, Rangpur and Dinajpur experienced 4.5°C yesterday as freezing cold claimed two lives in Hatibandha and Aditmari upazilas in Lalmonirhat.

Lalmonirhat district's civil surgeon, Jahangir Alam Sarker, said at least 240 patients, including children were admitted with cold-related diseases to sadar hospital and five other upazila health complexes during the last two days.

Of the patients, 25 children were referred to Rangpur Medical College Hospital yesterday morning, as their condition deteriorated, he added.

The Met office forecasts severe cold and dense fogs over the next few days, especially in the north.

In the capital, however, the sun was visible around noon yesterday, while the minimum temperature rose to 8°C from Thursday's 7.6°C.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina distributed warm clothes and blankets to 1,000 poor people at the city's Bangabandhu Avenue in the day.

As fogs kept disrupting public life across the country, ferry operations on Mawa-Kaorakandi route remained suspended for around 10 hours due to poor visibility in the Padma.

Our Munshiganj correspondent reports that an engine boat loaded with cement sank in the Dhaleshwari yesterday evening as passenger vessel MV Tipu hit it near Mukhtarpur bridge.

Police say Thandu Bepari, a staff of the sunken boat, has been rescued while Abul Kalam, its owner, remains missing.

VC must

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teachers and students of the public university in which seven teachers sustained burn injuries from battery acid.

Following the incident, administrative officers and a fraction of teachers held a meeting at night presided over by the vice-chancellor where they decided to close the university.

Chhatra League on Thursday had denied that any of their activists were involved in the attack on teachers and that the university unit of the pro-Awami League student body did not even have a committee there.

However, police yesterday evening arrested three students of the university at the district Chhatra League office in connection with the attack.

The vice-chancellor, who is at the centre of it all, yesterday at a press conference at his residence claimed that they had to close the university to bring the situation under control.

He claimed, "A vested quarter of the university collaborating with anti-liberation force tried to destabilise the peaceful situation and that they foiled their attempt by closing the university."

On the allegations of corruption against him, he said, "I throw a challenge for them to prove any corruption that I committed in the last year and a half. If they fail, they must compensate. If they can, I'll leave the chair."

The agitating teachers and students, under the banner "Durniti Birodhi Mancha", at a press conference held at a city hotel in the afternoon said they would form a human chain in front of Rangpur Press Club today protesting the attack on teachers and students.

Ashraf Alam, one of the agitating teachers, said they would begin a fast-unto-death programme the day the university reopens. He said, "Now we are fighting for one point demand. That is VC's resignation. Until the VC [vice-chancellor] resigns from his post, we would continue with the programme."

Thailand

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entered Thailand to travel to a third country," Thanusin said of Friday's raid. "Police will have to expand the investigation to the group of people who brought these Rohingya people in, as it is illegal entry."

Sectarian violence in Myanmar involving the Rohingya has left hundreds dead and many more homeless in recent months.

Thanusin said the refugees found in Friday's raid, including 230 men, 31 women, 22 boys and 24 girls, would be repatriated to Myanmar, also known as Burma.

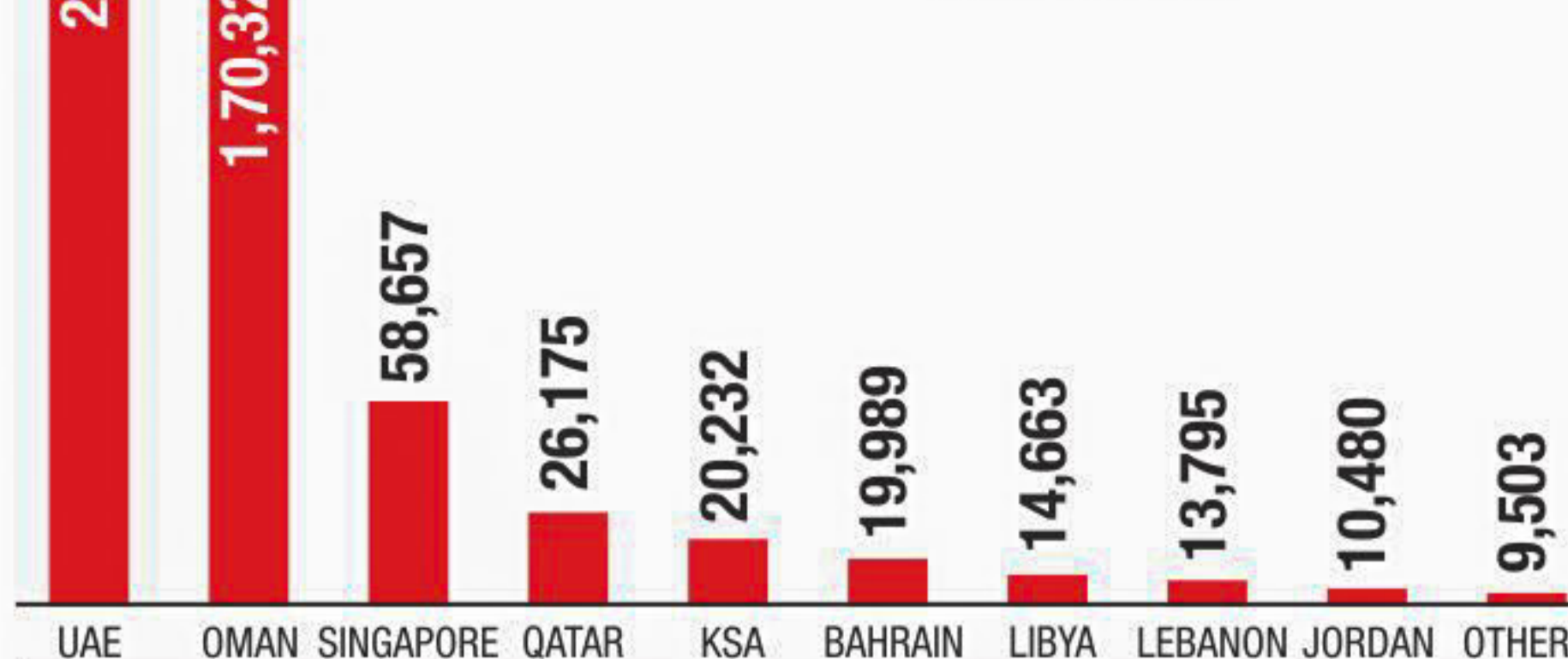
Human rights activists have called for the Thai government not to deport the Rohingya back to Myanmar, where they face widespread discrimination.

On Thursday, about 50 security officers from a joint military-police task force raided crowded makeshift shelters on a rubber plantation in Sadao district and rescued 397 Rohingya.

There were children and women in the group who appeared to be exhausted and were crammed under the metal-sheet roof, said army Col. Jaran lamthanon, who led the raid. He said some of the Rohingya attempted to flee by running into the mountains.

Police arrested eight suspects in Thursday's raid who were believed to be traffickers and confiscated a pistol, a sword, 10 mobile phones and a laptop, police Col. Kriskorn Pleetanyawong said. The men — six from Myanmar, including two Rohingya, and two Thais — face charges of bringing in and sheltering illegal immigrants, as well as illegal possession of a gun, he said.

OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT IN 2012



Record remittance

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the total Bangladeshi migrants, last year. The rate was 50 percent in the previous year.

Oman is in the second place for recruiting 25 percent while Singapore third for receiving 9 percent Bangladeshi workers last year, said the NGO.

The manpower sector might face a big jolt as some other major recruiting countries of the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Libya and Iraq, were not recruiting Bangladeshi workers on a regular basis, said experts.

Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) is worried because the Middle Eastern labour market is gradually being closed for the country.

Baira President M Shahjalal Majumder said the remittance inflow would be impacted negatively if the government failed to send workers to the Middle East countries on a regular basis.

"If migrant workers start returning home in large numbers and the flow of outbound workers is put on

hold, the inflow of remittance will be hit hard and the national economy will suffer heavy losses," he told The Daily Star recently.

Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Mosharraf Hossain, however, ruled out the apprehension. "Earlier, Bangladeshi workers used to go to only 77 destinations but now the door is open in 157 countries. So, no major problem will emerge in the sector due to the UAE ban," he said.

Currently, more than 60 lakh Bangladeshis work abroad and the majority of them are in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Malaysia, Singapore, and Libya.

Kuwait stopped hiring from Bangladesh in 2006, citing malpractices in recruitment. Since early 2008, Saudi Arabia significantly reduced the number of Bangladeshi workers it used to hire.

A report of the Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) said "the

labour migration sector tops the list in corruption rate" last year. But Khandaker Mosharraf disagreed with it.

The TIB report said around 77 percent job seekers in the migration sector has to pay a good amount for bribery and irregularities.

Meanwhile, Bangladeshi household helps are now being recruited in Middle Eastern countries, which is a silver lining. Lebanon happens to be a prospective destination for them.

The government has also succeeded in sending workers in Malaysia under state arrangements, as the government of that country decided to recruit Bangladeshi workers again in the plantation sector lifting a four-year ban.

In the first phase, it will take 10,000 Bangladeshi workers under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Dhaka and Kuala Lumpur.

The country had imposed the ban in 2009 on the allegation of irregularities in recruitment.

125 killed in Pakistan

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struck inside the building then, 10 minutes later, an attacker in a car blew himself up as police, media workers and rescue teams rushed to the site, said police officer Mir Zubair Mehmood.

He said all but five of the victims had been identified and handed over to their families for burial later yesterday.

Nine police, three local journalists, several rescue workers and a spokesman for the Frontier Corps paramilitary were among those killed, officials said.

Akbar Hussain Durrani, home secretary in the provincial government of Baluchistan, said more than 120 people were wounded.

The government has announced three days of mourning in Baluchistan, and compensation of two million rupees (\$20,560) to families of killed police officials and one million

rupees to those of civilians. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi claimed responsibility in telephone calls to local journalists. The group has links to al-Qaeda and the Taliban, and was involved in the kidnap and beheading of reporter Daniel Pearl in January 2002.

The attacks, coupled with violence in the northwest, revived warnings from analysts that an Islamist militancy could threaten national elections, expected sometime in May after parliament disbands in mid-March.

Polls would mark the first time an elected civilian government in Pakistan, for decades ruled by the military, completes a term in office and is replaced by another democratically elected government.

"The government is completely losing control over the situation. Events are taking place one after the

other," security and political analyst, retired lieutenant general Talat Masood told AFP yesterday.

"The disturbing law and order situation will have a very adverse effect on elections."

But a senior official in the Quetta administration, Mohammad Hashim, denied sectarian violence had any bearing on elections.

Human Rights Watch said 2012 was the deadliest year on record for Shias in Pakistan and the government's failure to protect them "amounts to complicity in the barbaric slaughter of Pakistani citizens".

Baluchistan has long been a flashpoint for attacks against Shias and Hazaras, and suffers from a separatist insurgency and Islamist militancy linked to a domestic Taliban insurgency concentrated in the northwest.

The ancient social networks

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Amid all these amateur "wall posts" were political campaign ads, most of which were done by professional painters, Viitanen said.

POMPEII'S POLITICAL ADS To narrow down the enormous amount of graffiti, the researchers focused on three regions of the city: two residential areas on opposite sides of town and one business district. There were more than 1,000 electoral messages scrawled on the walls in these regions, most dating from the last three centuries of Pompeii's existence.

Most of the messages are simple, containing just a name and the office the person was running for, Viitanen said.

"Sometimes there are some simple attributes such as 'a good man,' 'worthy of public office,'" she said. One candidate even bragged about his bread-baking abilities on his campaign-wall post, Viitanen said.

Other ads were sponsored by groups supporting a particular candidate, including such unsavory fraternities as pickpockets, late-night drinkers and petty thieves.

"Makes you wonder whether their candidates were really worth voting for!" Viitanen said.

CAMPAIGNING IN POMPEII

The first find was that politicians wanted an audience. The campaign ads were almost invariably on heavily trafficked streets, Viitanen reported on January 4 at the annual meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America in Seattle.

The second, more surprising, discovery, was that the most popular spots for ads were private houses rather than bars or shops that would see a lot of visitors.

Some 40 percent of the ads were on prestigious houses, she said, which is notable because there were only a third as many lavish homes as there were bars, shops and more modest residences. Clearly, candidates were vying for space on the homes of the wealthy.

That discovery makes Viitanen and her colleagues think the ads reveal early social networking. It seems likely that candidates would need permission from the homeowner to paint their ads, suggesting the graffiti is something of an endorsement.

The research is preliminary and not yet published in a peer-reviewed journal, and Viitanen said there is much more work to do to map the social networks

revealed on the ancient walls.

"So far, we have barely scratched the surface on this," she said. "There are hundreds of texts and locations, and it takes a lot of time to go through them all."

Saudi Arabia

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They stipulate that men and women will be segregated inside the council, with a special area designated for females who will enter through a separate door so as not to mix with their male colleagues.

King Abdullah had been carefully treading towards change, introducing municipal elections for the first time in Saudi Arabia in 2005.

In September 2011 he granted women the right to cast ballots and run as candidates in the next local vote, set for 2015.

In announcing those changes, he also said he was planning to name women to the Shura Council.

Women's rights activists have long fought for the right to vote in the oil-rich Gulf kingdom, which applies a strict version of Sunni Islam and bans females from driving or travelling without the consent of a male guardian.

Nearly half

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calling for urgent action to tackle this waste.

Their report, Global Food; Waste Not, Want Not, found that between 30% and 50% or 1.2-2 billion tonnes of food produced around the world never makes it on to a plate.

And about 550 billion cubic metres of water is wasted globally in growing crops that never reach the consumer. Carnivorous diets add extra pressure as it takes 20-50 times the amount of water to produce 1 kilogramme of meat than 1kg of vegetables; the demand for water in food production could reach 10-13 trillion cubic metres a year by 2050.

This is 2.5 to 3.5 times greater than the total human use of fresh water today and could lead to more dangerous water shortages around the world, the IMechE says, claiming that there is the potential to provide 60-100% more food by eliminating losses and waste while at the same time freeing up land, energy and water resources.

Tim Fox, head of energy and environment at the IMechE, said: "The amount of food wasted and lost around the world is staggering. This is food that could be used to feed the world's growing population — as well as those in hunger today."

In order to prevent further waste, governments, development agencies and organisations like the UN "must work together to help change people's mindsets on waste and discourage wasteful practices by farmers, food producers, supermarkets and consumers," the IMechE said.

Kuril flyover

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Around 87 trains cross the Kuril Level Crossing on Pragati Sarani every day, wasting around seven hours. The flyover will ease the traffic at the point, said Showkat Hussain, director of Project Builders Ltd.

Funded by Rajuk from its Purbachal New Town Project fund, the flyover is being built on about 12.68 acres of land.

Sources in Rajuk said the cabinet purchase committee of the Awami League-led grand alliance government on March 2010 approved the tender proposal for building the flyover at a cost of around Tk 153 crore.

The Rajuk awarded the project to a joint venture of Project Builders Ltd of Bangladesh and Major Bridge Engineering Corporation of China.

The construction work was scheduled for the same month, but the concessionaires could not start the work as the Bangladesh Railway and Roads and Highways Department gave Rajuk the required land in September and October 2010.

The delay hiked the project cost to Tk 254 crore.

Rape victim

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Given the social stigma associated with the incident, The Daily Star opted not to identify her anyway.

Her aunt, Ojufa Begum, told journalists at Patuakhali press club on Thursday that her niece went to a wedding party on December 28. Around 10:00pm, Nazma Begum "forcibly" took the girl to her house where Shamim raped her overnight.

The girl ran away from the house early next morning and took shelter at the house of Jalilur Rahman Khan, a former UP member. Later she was taken home by her aunt.

Ojufa said Shamim's father and uncle threatened her with consequences when she went to their home to say what their son had done to her niece.

"I demand punishment to the culprit," said the victim, who accompanied her aunt to the press club.

Police are investigating the incident and would take action against the culprit, said GM Shanewaz, officer-in-charge of Dumki Police Station.

The girl lost her mother a few years ago. Two months ago, Ojufa took her to her house as the girl's step mother had been "mistreating" her.