

Clamour grows in India for death to child rapists

5-year-old rape victim improving

PTI, New Delhi

BJP leader Sushma Swaraj's demand for death penalty to child rapists yesterday got the backing of CPM which said it was open to the idea.

"We are willing to discuss and consider this because what happened in this Delhi rape case is gruesome. There is something seriously wrong in the society and there is no fear of the law," CPM leader Sitaram Yechury told reporters outside Parliament here yesterday.

He was asked to react on Swaraj's demand that the new anti-rape law be made more stringent and provide for death penalty in cases of rape of children and those involving brutality and barbarity.

Sushma Swaraj had asked home minister Sushil Kumar Shinde to convene a meeting of representatives of all political parties to consider provision on providing

death sentence to perpetrators of such brutal crimes.

Protesters continued to gather outside AIIMS and Delhi Police headquarters for the second day yesterday to express solidarity with the five-year-old rape victim.

They sought the resignation of Delhi Police commissioner Neeraj Kumar.

Though not in large numbers, the protesters of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) shouted slogans against Kumar and Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit.

Scores of activists of BJP's Mahila Morcha were detained and taken to a nearby police station when they staged a protest outside Congress president Sonia Gandhi's residence.

Meanwhile, the condition of the five-year-old rape victim is "gradually" improving but it will be at least two weeks before she is discharged from the hospital, according to the doctors at AIIMS.

2002 GUJARAT RIOTS State govt failed to protect people: US

PTI, Washington

India's civil society continues to express concern over the Gujarat government's failure to protect people or arrest those responsible for communal violence in 2002, a US report on human rights has said.

The report, titled 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012' released by the US state department, as mandated by the Congress, says human rights groups continue to allege that investigative bodies in their reports showed bias in favour of Gujarat's chief minister Narendra Modi.

"Civil society activists continued to express concern about the Gujarat government's failure to protect the population or arrest those responsible for communal violence in 2002 that resulted in the killing of more than 1,200 persons, the majority of whom were Muslim, although there was progress in several court cases," said the report, which was released by US secretary of state John Kerry on Friday.



Unrest tests iconic status of Suu Kyi

AFP, Bangkok

Aung San Suu Kyi's refusal to condemn attacks on Muslims in Myanmar has dimmed the Nobel laureate's lustre among global rights campaigners, but observers say her reticence will do her no harm with voters.

Nearly a month after religious riots killed 43 people in central Myanmar, the former political prisoner turned lawmaker finally voiced sympathy for Muslims targeted by violence that saw mosques and homes razed.

But Suu Kyi again failed to clearly condemn attacks against Muslims -- who represent an estimated four percent of the population -- or hate speech by some extremist Buddhist monks.

Instead, as in 2012 when two waves of violence between the stateless Rohingya Muslims and ethnic Rakhine Buddhists caused more than 180 deaths in the west, the opposition leader more indirectly

urged respect for the "rule of law".

"They did not feel they belonged anywhere else and you are just sad for them that they are made to feel they did not belong to our country either," she said of Myanmar's Muslims last week during a visit to Japan.

But Suu Kyi, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 and endured years of house arrest, defended the restrained nature of her remarks and said: "I am sorry if people do not find my comments interesting enough to acknowledge them."

Human rights groups say her comments, delivered late and without criticism of the perpetrators of violence, sit uncomfortably with her position as a democracy champion who led a long fight against Myanmar's former military junta.

The Rohingya in particular feel let down by Suu Kyi.

Human Rights Watch has accused security forces of allowing and in some cases leading assaults against the Rohingya.

7 masked men opened fire

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committee yesterday.

The probe body led by Chittagong district administration has so far recorded depositions of 20 people including those of six victims yesterday.

Narrating the mayhem, Rashedul Alam -- an AL activist who sustained bullet injuries in the legs that day -- said, "Seven masked men fired on the procession following an announcement from a local mosque's loudspeaker that 'the procession was going to attack the mosque and kidnap Jalal Ahmed known as Boro Hujur,' former principal of Al-Jamiatul Islamia Bhujpur Madrasa."

Apart from the gunmen, some 60 people took part in the assault on that part of the procession with locally made sharp weapons, he added.

BGB personnel reached the spot within half an hour of the attack, said another victim, Abu Tayeb.

AL men, including Jafatnagar Union Parishad Chairman Md Abdul Halim, requested ATM Azharul Islam, AC (land) of Fatikchhari, to order BGB men to quell the violence, he said, alleging that police remained inactive during the incident.

Afaz Uddin, another victim and a local Jubo League leader, also echoed Abu Tayeb.

The AC Azharul Islam, however, denied the allegations when contacted by The Daily Star.

He said, "I took adequate measures to stave off violence."

In his deposition, Md Ashraf, an AL supporter, said he was hacked by attackers when he was trying to get on

a running BGB vehicle to escape the scene.

The probe committee may pray for extension of the deadline for report submission, which ends tomorrow, on the backdrop of ongoing deposition of victims and witnesses.

REMAND
A Chittagong court yesterday placed nine more accused in Fatikchhari mayhem case on remand.

Of the nine, BNP leader Md Jahid and Shibir activist Parvez -- alleged masterminds behind the mayhem -- were placed on a five-day remand each. The rest were placed on a three-day remand each.

Judicial Magistrate Sharmila Roy Lovely passed the order when police sought a 10-day remand for each of the arrestees, said court sources.

GD AGAINST KHOKA

One AB Siddiqui, president of Bangladesh Janantri Parishad, on Saturday filed a general diary against BNP leader Sadeque Hossain Khoka with Paltan police in the capital.

In the GD, Siddiqui said that Khoka's statement on April 18 over the Fatikchhari attack was tantamount to a threat to the country and the prime minister, Mehedi Maksud, sub-inspector of Paltan Police Station, told The Daily Star.

On that day, Khoka at a rally in Nayapaltan thanked the "brave attackers" in Fatikchhari and said: "You [alliance men] will have to carry out fierce attacks again on Awami League leaders and activists if they bring out anti-hartal processions like the one by the party's bike-riding cadres... You will have to destroy them."

Tribunal brings contempt charges

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Hamidur Rahman Azad, MP, and Dhaka city unit assistant secretary general Selim Uddin.

Of them, Selim Uddin was arrested following a warrant of arrest issued by the tribunal, while Rafiqul Islam and Hamidur Rahman are on the run.

"As the explanation given by Selim Uddin does not appear to be satisfactory, and other opposite parties have not turned to the tribunal, we are of the opinion that contempt proceedings under section 11 (4) of the act of 1973 deserved to be initiated," the tribunal said.

The tribunal also fixed May 9 for hearing on the matter and asked the authorities concerned to communicate with Selim

Uddin's counsel Tajul Islam for compliance and necessary action.

Tajul was not present before the tribunal yesterday.

Earlier on February 7, the tribunal asked the trio to explain as to why contempt of court proceedings should not be initiated against them for making provocative and derogatory remarks about the tribunal at a public rally on February 4.

The court, on its own, issued the notice on the basis of reports published in The Daily Star and Bangla daily Prothom Alo on February 5.

The Prothom Alo quoted Selim Uddin as saying, "There is no scope for the controversial tribunal to deliver any verdict if

the country is to be saved from a civil war."

The daily quoted Azad as saying at the same programme, "This tribunal cannot exist any more."

The Daily Star, in a report headlined "Jamaat warns of civil war", quoted Rafiqul Islam as saying, "Don't push the country into a civil war by delivering one-sided verdicts against our leaders. If anything happens to Quader Mollah, every house will be on fire."

On March 6, the court ordered the police to arrest the Jamaat leaders and produce them before the court for "deliberately avoiding" appearance before the tribunal in connection with a contempt of court ruling.

On March 10, as law

enforcers produced Selim Uddin, who was arrested on March 8, before the court, the tribunal asked him to give explanation on March 21 and he gave his explanation through his lawyer Tajul Islam that day.

But Rafiqul Islam and Hamidur Rahman neither appeared before the court nor could police arrest them. As per the court order, Dhaka Metropolitan Police submitted two execution reports, one yesterday, mentioning their inability to arrest them.

If found guilty, the tribunal, as per section 11 (4) of the act, may award the Jamaat leaders simple imprisonment which may extend to one year or with fine which may extend to Tk 5,000 or with both.

Court order

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The six other leaders, whose bail prayers were rejected yesterday, are BNP standing committee members Mirza Abbas and Goyeshwar Chandra Roy and two joint general secretaries Amanullah Aman, Ruhul Kabir Rizvi and Vice-Chairman Abdulla Al Noman and Juba Dal chief Moazzem Hossain Alal.

Soon after the court passed the order, BNP leaders' counsel Masud Ahmed Talukder termed it farcical.

"All the accused are facing the same charges. But the court behaved with them in different ways."

He said they would go to the High Court challenging the legality of the order.

The BNP leaders filed the petitions with the court on April 9 challenging the CMM Court's orders that denied them bail in the cases. The court fixed yesterday for hearing the bail petitions.

According to the charges, the BNP leaders were involved in torching vehicles, assaulting police and obstructing the work of the cops during the opposition's agitation programmes.

Police filed the cases with Paltan, Ramna and Shahjahanpur police stations.

Ruhul Kabir Rizvi and Amanullah Aman were arrested in two cases out of the seven filed earlier on March 11, and were denied bail as well.

Meanwhile, in response to a writ petition filed on April 15, the High Court yesterday directed the government to shift Fakhru to Birdem Hospital immediately for treatment in compliance with an earlier order of a lower court.

'Pak Army won't be deployed in polls'

IANS, Islamabad

The Pakistan government has decided not to deploy army personnel at polling stations during the May 11 general elections, a media report said Saturday.

The decision was taken Friday at a meeting on law and order presided over by caretaker prime minister Justice (retired) Mir Hazar Khan Khoso, the Dawn reported.

Caretaker information minister Arif Nizami said the army would not be deployed at sensitive polling stations but it would be kept in reserve, close to cantonment areas to act as a quick response force if the need arises.

However, the government's decision is contrary to that of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) which said the army would be deployed at all sensitive polling stations in Karachi and other parts of the country.

Hartal Tuesday, Wednesday

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Mehedi, secretary general of Bangladesh Labour Party, a component of the alliance, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The hartal call has again worried the business communities. In April alone, the opposition parties enforced six days' country-wide hartals. This excludes hartals in districts.

A day of shutdown causes a loss of Tk 1,600 crore to the country's businesses as per a recent statement of Dhaka Chamber of

Commerce and Industry.

"The shutdowns are damaging our economy," Kazi Akram Uddin Ahmed, president of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, told The Daily Star.

"Considering the gravity of losses, we are organising the congress of businessmen in Dhaka on April 26 to listen to their opinion and we are planning to meet the political leaders to mediate a solution to the stalemate."

Moreover, Higher Secondary Certificate

examinees would suffer as the authorities like the previous occasions would defer their exams scheduled for tomorrow and the day after tomorrow due to hartals.

In defence of the hartal, BNP's Khandaiker Mosharraf Hossain claimed that the government had forced the opposition parties to go for hartal by oppressing them and denying all their demands, including restoration of a non-partisan election time government system.

"More than two hundred top party leaders across the country landed in jail. We will organise tougher agitations to free the leaders," Mosharraf, a member of national standing committee of BNP, said at a press briefing from where the hartal call was made.

The alliance would also observe protest rallies on April 27 in all district headquarters, he said.

Meanwhile, Islami Chhatra Shibir, a Jamaat-e-Islami student body, yesterday said it

Victims relates it differently

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respective areas. Around 42 percent respondents think climate change means floods, 37 percent believe it is cyclone or storm, and 22 percent associate it with drought.

The Asia Foundation has recently prepared the survey report titled Climate Change Perception Survey 2012. In the summary of the report, it is stated that Bangladesh is experiencing climate change as per the prediction of the scientific community.

Most of the respondents have faced losses due to natural calamities, but many of them do not know how to tackle it.

"The government could train up officials from the union parishes about how to adapt to certain calamities," said Farukh A Chowdhury, senior economist of the Asia Foundation.

Asked, most of the respondents said they had lost their agricultural produce. Some also reported destruction of houses, partially or completely.

Interestingly, 84 percent of 1,046 people who took adaptation measures said they had raised the plinth of their houses while other families migrated to urban areas and only a few mentioned about floating gardens.

About 45 percent of the respondents from the flash flood areas, 41 percent from drought-prone areas and 38 percent from hilly district Bandarban said one or more members of their family migrated temporarily and more people were migrating in recent years.

Almost half of the respondents

think climate change can be mitigated and suggested that the government's safety net programmes could be a way forward to deal with the problems.

Only 877 of the participants said they knew about the government's plan to deal with the problems and around 75 percent of them think the government would give them cash.

The participants were selected randomly, from drought, flash flood, flood, cyclone and salinity zones and hilly areas, both male and female, and from different profession groups including farmers, fishermen, day labourer or community living on extracting forest resources.

In Bangladesh, more than 50 million people had been affected due to climate change every five years from 1986 to 2007. The nation has spent around \$10 billion over the last 30 years in this regard, the report states. Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2008.

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