

SEXUAL ABUSE OF SCHOOLGIRLS

Kushtia teacher's accomplice held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Detective Branch of police yesterday arrested another person in connection with the sexual abuse of several schoolgirls of Kushtia, and for disseminating the obscene video clips on the Internet and mobile phones that were shot during the illicit acts.

The arrestee, Alimuzzaman Tutul, is the deputy chief engineer of Islamic University in Kushtia.

Tutul was arrested from a house under Iswardi upazila town in Pabna around 2:30am, and was later brought to Kushtia for interrogation, said Abul Kalam Azad, officer-in-charge of the DB in Kushtia.

A Kushtia court yesterday sent Tutul, after he was produced before it, to jail as he confessed to his crimes before the court.

Tutul, hailing from Haripur village in Kushtia Sadar upazila, is also a member secretary of Durniti Protirodh Citizen Committee of the district unit, a platform initiated by the Anti-Corruption Commission to raise people's voices against corruption.

Tutul also got the best social worker award for Khulna division last year.

Earlier, police arrested the main accused Helal Uddin Panna, an assistant teacher of Adarsha High School in Kushtia district town, from the capital on Saturday.

Panna along with six of his associates had sexually abused several schoolgirls, who used to come to his house for private tuition.

The culprits not only videoed the illicit acts through hidden cameras but also



Alimuzzaman Tutul

spread those video clips through Internet and mobile phones.

On July 8, police arrested Engineer Hasanuzzamn, one of the accused in this case, from Bagerhat.

Monirul Islam Mono, a Jubo League activist of Kushtia unit, was also arrested in this connection in Jessore on August 1.

A total of 26 video clips have so far been released.

People erupted in protests after the incident came to light in July.

Different organisations have demanded the immediate arrest of the culprits.

Locals, including students, blocked the Kushtia-Rajshahi highway before Adarsha High School in the town for three consecutive days from July 7 to July 9.

On July 7, Sub-Inspector Monirul Islam of Kushtia Model Police Station filed a case accusing four people, including Helal Uddin Panna, Alimuzzaman Tutul, Sariful Islam Sajal, and Monirul Islam Mono, of involvement in the crime under the Pornography Control Act 2012.

Two more characters seen in the video clips -- Engineer Dulal Hossain of the LGED in Jessore, and Hasanuzzaman of the LGED in Bagerhat -- were excluded from the case.

Mofiz Uddin Ahmed, superintendent of police in Kushtia, however, told this correspondent that the names of the two culprits had later been included in the case.

All the arrestees and accused have temporarily been suspended from their jobs.

Separate enquiry committees initiated by the institutions concerned are also working to probe into the matter.

Admission

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noting, however, that admission seekers should not be worried about seats at the institutions.

A uniform admission test at all the public universities under a "cluster system" will not take place this time, as some universities said they were not prepared now.

The government had considered introducing the system this year to ease admission hassles and help students get out of the grip of coaching centres.

Therefore, students will have to sit admission tests held at different public universities around the same time of the year as usual.

Every year, admission seekers face a huge amount of pressure. They travel from one part of the country to another to take admission tests. They have to buy many admission forms and spend a lot on travel and accommodation. But the lion's share of their money is spent on coaching.

In a survey conducted by the University Grants Commission last year, students mentioned huge overall costs and tests taking a great deal of time and causing hassles as the major drawbacks of the current admission test procedures at public universities.

As many as 7,44,891 students -- 3,93,899 males and 3,50,992 females -- passed the HSC and equivalent exams this year. Of them, 58,197 got GPA (grade point average)-5 while 2,31,533

scored between GPA 4 and higher.

But the number of seats at the 33 public universities is around 47,000 while the 22 public medical colleges, 53 private medical colleges and nine dental colleges have around 8,500 seats, according to the education ministry and BANBEIS.

This shows that the admission seekers will be battling hard to enrol at the public universities and medical colleges, especially Dhaka University, BUET and Dhaka Medical College.

As for the private universities, they have more than one lakh seats. Many of these universities might raise the number of seats to take in more students.

Besides, there are 500 colleges under the National University, which admitted more than two lakh students last year.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said there would be intense competition for seats at prestigious public universities like previous years. "But there will be no seat crisis."

Referring to the cluster system, he said the ministry would decide how to make the admission process easier from next academic session.

The vice chancellors of many universities agreed to the cluster system, but said they had already started the admission process in the traditional system. Therefore, introducing the system now would create difficulties, said sources in the ministry.

Al-Qaeda chief's message

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Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to discuss the sensitive issue publicly.

American spies and intelligence analysts on Monday scoured email, phone calls and radio communications between al-Qaeda operatives in Yemen and the organisation's senior leaders to determine the timing and targets of the planned attack.

The call from al-Zawahiri, who took over for Osama bin Laden after US Navy commandos killed the al-Qaeda leader in May 2011, led the Obama administration to close diplomatic posts from Mauritania on Africa's west coast through the Middle East to Bangladesh, east of India, and as far south as Madagascar.

The US did decide to reopen some posts on Monday, including well-defended embassies in Kabul, Afghanistan, and Baghdad.

Authorities in Yemen, meanwhile, released the names of 25 wanted al-Qaeda suspects and said

those people had been planning terrorist attacks targeting "foreign offices and organisations and Yemeni installations" in the capital Sanaa and other cities across the country.

The Yemeni government also went on high alert Monday, stepping up security at government facilities and checkpoints.

Officials in the US wouldn't say who intercepted the initial suspect communications the CIA, the National Security Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency or one of the other intelligence agencies that kicked off the sweeping pre-emptive closure of US facilities. But an intelligence official said the controversial NSA programmes that gather data on American phone calls or track Internet communications with suspected terrorists played no part in detecting the initial tip. That official spoke on condition of anonymity because the official was not authorised to discuss the spying publicly.

Once the plot was detected, NSA analysts could use the programmes

that leaker Edward Snowden revealed to determine whom the plotters may have contacted around the world. Snowden revealed one programme that collected telephone data such as the numbers called and the duration of calls on US telephone networks. Another programme searched global Internet usage. Therefore, if a new name was detected in the initial chatter, the name or phone number of that person could be run through the NSA databases to see whom he called or what websites or emails he visited.

The surveillance is part of the continuing effort to track the spread of al-Qaeda from its birthplace in Afghanistan and Pakistan to countries where governments and security forces are weaker and less welcoming to the US or harder for American counterterrorist forces to penetrate such as Syria, Iraq, Somalia, Mali and Libya as well as Yemen, already home to al-Qaeda's most dangerous affiliate, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, which is headed by al-Wahishi.

Govt suspends

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men since supporters of the two parties were protesting the verdict against Sayedee.

"Similar action will be taken against persons

belonging to any other party if their involvement in the violence is proved in investigation," the secretary said.

Action is being taken against them on the basis of

police investigation reports and charge sheets. More chairmen and members might be suspended since the probe into the violence still continued, he added.

Kolkata HC

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Sayedee, allegedly went missing from the tribunal premises in Dhaka on November 5 last year. He later landed in a Kolkata jail for trespassing across the Indian border.

Bali was originally a prosecution witness but he later agreed to testify for Sayedee, reports BBC Bangla Service.

In the verdict, Justice Sanjeeb Banarjee of Kolkata High Court said Bali's family appealed to the court fearing that if he was sent back to Bangladesh he might face death threats or physical torture.

"But neither Bali nor his family could provide any document in support of the claim before the court. Such fear was just an assumption," said Justice Banarjee.

Bali's lawyer Debashish Banarjee told BBC Bangla Service that Bali should be given a few days to decide whether he would ask for political asylum in India.

Earlier, the lawyer had alleged that Bali's disappearance from Dhaka was full of confusion.

He said if Bali was sent back to Bangladesh, he might be exposed before the law enforcers and might face harassment.

Meanwhile, Law Minister Shafique Ahmed told BBC Bangla yesterday that the Kolkata High Court had dismissed Bali's appeal because the petition was not acceptable to the court. According to the court order, Bali will now return to the country.

The minister also dismissed Bali's family's fears that Bali might face harassment.

Bali, he added, would be provided with security if necessary.

According to the BBC report, members of India's Border Security Force arrested Bali from Shwarupnagar area of Uttar Chhabish Pargana when he was trespassing on December 23 last year.

Bali was produced before an Indian court later and was charged for illegal trespassing, a charge he confessed.

According to the court documents, the BSF handed him over to Shwarupnagar police and a case was filed against him on December 25 last year.

Earlier, it was alleged that law enforcers had abducted Sukhranjan from the tribunal premises, a claim the prosecution dismissed.

Five Indian soldiers

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of peace talks between the two nuclear-powered South Asian neighbours.

"The ambush was carried out by approximately 20 heavily-armed terrorists along with persons dressed in Pakistan Army uniforms," Indian Defence Minister A.K. Antony said in a statement to parliament where uproarious scenes were witnessed over the incident.

"A patrol of Indian Army comprising of one Non-Commissioned Officer and five other ranks was ambushed by a Pak Border Action Team close to the Line of Control in Poonch Sector of J&K early morning", Indian Defence spokesman S N Acharya said in an official statement.

"In the ensuing fire fight, five Indian soldiers were martyred. The ambush was carried out by approxi-

mately 20 heavily-armed terrorists along with soldiers of Pak Army," he said, adding one Indian soldier was injured.

The incident saw political parties coming together in Parliament to assert that India should respond strongly to such provocative acts not only by Pakistan but also China whose troops have made repeated incursions in India in recent months.

Congress President Sonia Gandhi said India would not be cowed down by the "deceitful" killing of five of its soldiers by Pakistan along the Line of Control and asked the government to take "appropriate" measures.

Samajwadi Party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav said neither Pakistan nor China can be trusted, alleging both of them were aggressive towards India.

The attack, one of the worst

since the two countries signed a ceasefire in 2003, puts the Indian government under pressure to respond aggressively as it heads into a tough election next year.

India summoned Pakistan's Deputy High Commissioner to New Delhi Mansoor Ahmed Khan and lodged a protest over the killings near the LoC dividing the region, a government source said.

A Pakistani security official denied there had been any exchange of fire on the border. "There has been no incident whatsoever," the official said on condition of anonymity.

The incident came at a time when India was considering dates proposed by Pakistan to resume peace talks that were suspended in January after two Indian soldiers were killed, including one who was decapitated, in a clash on the border.

Extortion takes toll

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path-hawking in the capital.

MA Kashem, president of the ruling party's hawker wing, Bangladesh Hawkers League, provided The Daily Star with an estimate that a section of policemen and ruling party affiliates extort up to Tk 5 crore per day from around 2.6 lakh hawkers spread across the capital. But with the advent of the Eid, the daily collection has risen to Tk 7 crore.

Around 40 percent of the extorted money goes to police, 25 percent to Jubo League, Chhatra League and Sramik League leaders of the respective ward units and the rest to the "linemen" who collect the money on behalf of the police.

Ruling party men and bad cops have aggressively targeted the footpath hawkers ahead of the Eid, forcing them to pay an increased amount every day, alleged the victim hawkers.

Hawkers' leaders have done all they could over the years to escape from such rampant extortions. But all their efforts have gone in vain, said MA Kashem.

Extortionists damaged several hawkers' shops, tortured them and looted goods from their shops near Sergeant Ahad police box at Gulistan after hawkers refused to pay higher tolls on July 7, he added.

"We went to half a dozen ministers, including the home minister, and the inspector general of police and the commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police. But we did not get any respite," said Kashem.

The irony is hawkers can never file a case against such extortionists due to an unholy nexus between some police members and the ruling party men.

The hawker leaders, however, got a rare opportunity last month after the DMP deputy commissioner (Motijheel zone) at an open-public discussion assured them of recording their allegation with a police station.

Following the assurance, Harunur Rashid, general secretary of Bangladesh Hawkers Federation, a platform of several dozen hawkers associations, lodged an extortion case against 54 "linemen" of different parts of the capital.

"We got some consolation after the filing of the case, but it did not bring us any remedy," Rashid said, adding that police on Saturday had arrested one lineman but he was freed on bail the very next day.

In the case statement, the complainant named 19 linemen who have been extorting money from footpath hawkers at Paltan, Motijheel, Bangabazar, Bangabandhu Avenue, Fakirapul, near Bangabhaban, and the adjoining areas of Bangabandhu Stadium.

Yesterday, The Daily Star correspondents visited most of these spots and found the allegation to be true. Extortions through linemen were also found rampant in New Market, Dhaka College, City College, Mirpur, Farmgate and Malibagh areas.

A lineman is assigned to collect money from a certain part of a footpath. He hands over the amount to his Sarder (ringleader) who then distributes the money among police and party men.

Contacted, DMP Commissioner Benazir Ahmed said: "We will take stern action if we find any specific allegation of extor-

tion against anyone in the DMP." According to him, footpaths should be for the pedestrians alone.

Victim hawkers alleged two linemen named Bacchu and Rafiq collected money from hawkers on the footpath stretching from City College to Nilkhet intersection.

They said BCL's Dhaka College unit President Fuad Hossain Pallab and General Secretary Sakib Hassan gave shelter to the two linemen, a claim Fuad and Sakib dismissed as untrue.

A hawker in New Market said, "I used to pay Tk 100 a day. But since the beginning of Ramadan I have been paying Tk 300 daily."

A tea stall owner at a footpath at Farmgate said, "I give police Tk 300 daily. Half of the money goes to police and the rest to the ward unit BCL leaders."

A fruit trader at Mirpur-10 roundabout said the local police took Tk 20 from him every day. "A policeman comes to my shop, spends some time in my shop in the guise of a customer and at an opportune moment pockets the money."

Asked to comment on BCL men's involvement in extortion, BCL President Badiuzzaman Shohag said he was yet to receive any complaint in this regard.

"If we find these allegations to be true, we will take organisational action against those involved and will hand them over to the police," he told this paper yesterday.

Contacted, Jubo League Organising Secretary Salauddin Mahmud said no Jubo League and Awami League men were involved in extortion. "I'm proud of my party as none of its activists are involved in such crimes."

Jamaat makes

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home-goers' travel plans, as many of them had already bought their return tickets. This latest announcement makes things even worse.

As soon as the hartal was deferred, people went into a scurry for return tickets for either August 11 or August 14-15.

If the Eid takes place on August 10, the next day will also be a government holiday. Therefore, many people did not buy return tickets for August 11.

Now they have no alternative to managing return tickets for August 11. Those who cannot do so will have severe difficulties in getting tickets for August 14-15.

In a press release last night, the Jamaat said it

had deferred the hartal so that people could return to their workplaces in time.

The party did not, however, clarify how several million people, who are likely to leave the capital, can return in the two days between the Eid and the shutdown.

Balai Chandra Sarker, director (operations) of Hanif Enterprise, a transport company, told The Daily Star that around 20 lakh people leave Dhaka by road in the last two to three days ahead of Eid.

Many others leave the capital earlier to celebrate the Eid with their near and dear ones at their village homes.

A number of people called The Daily Star last

night to express their resentment over the hartal.

"After much suffering, my brother managed return tickets for August 14. He has just called me to say that he was visiting different bus counters but could not reschedule the return trip," said Mizanur Rahman, a media official who wants to return to Dhaka from Bogra.

Another holidaymaker, Ali Sharif, said staff at different bus counters had informed him that return tickets for August 14-15 were already sold out.

Those who plan to make return trips by railways or waterways might not face that much difficulty if trains and water vessels run smoothly defying the hartal.

RMG workers

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deputy director of Ashulia Industrial Police.

Transport movement on the highway was hampered by the blockade.

On information, police rushed to the spot and urged the agitators to settle their issues through discussions with the factory authorities, Sattar said.

As the workers refused to comply with their request, police charged truncheons to disperse them from the highway that left 10 workers injured.

The demonstrating workers also vandalised

some furniture of their factories.

They finally returned home around 3:30pm after getting assurances from the factory authorities of a payment of their salaries and Eid bonus today.

Contacted, Atiqul Islam, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said almost all factories had already paid salaries and bonus to their workers.

"If any factory fails to pay the salaries and bonus by today, it will pay tomorrow [today]," he added.

Amirul Haque Amin, chairman of Bangladesh Garment Workers Unity Council, said some garment factories were yet to pay the salaries and bonus to their workers.

He, however, could not mention the exact number of such factories.

Khairul Mamun Mintoo, general secretary of Garment Sramik Trade Union Kendra, said at least 300 victims of Rana Plaza tragedy demonstrated in front of the collapsed building, demanding bonus and compensation.

America's first climate refugees

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from the ferocious autumn and winter storms by a think layer of ice.

But, as reported by the BBC, during the last two decades there has been a huge retreat of Arctic ice, leaving the village vulnerable to coastal erosion.

The US government has attempted to help, but its solutions have never been long-term.

A defensive wall was built along the beach in 2008. However, it could not prevent an emergency evacuation two years ago following an enormous storm.

Now, engineers predict the 7.5 mile-long barrier island will be uninhabitable by 2025, completely submerged by the surrounding Chukchi Sea.

The US government estimates that it would cost up to £265m to relocate the residents to higher ground.

But, with there being no sign that the money will come from public funds, the indigenous residents of the village are furious.

Speaking to the BBC, Kivalina council leader, Colleen Swan, said: "If we're still here in 10 years

time we either wait for the flood and die, or just walk away and go someplace else.

"The US government imposed this Western lifestyle on us, gave us their burdens and now they expect us to pick everything up and move it ourselves. What kind of government does that?"

The problems in Kivalina are also experienced in the most northerly tip of US territory in the town of Barrow.

The residents of the town have been fraught with problems this year thanks to climate change.

One dead, four hurt in Swiss balloon accident

JAEP, Geneva

One man died and four other people were seriously injured yesterday when a balloon crashed to the ground after hitting a power line in Switzerland, police said.

The man's wife and their two daughters as well as the balloon's pilot were hurt when the balloon fell about 50 metres (160 feet) in the western region of Fribourg, the police told AFP.

The balloon had taken off from Chateau d'Oex, in the Vaud region.