



The mangled wreckage of a private car that was crushed between two buses on Dhaka-Aricha highway yesterday, killing seven. Six of them were from a family.

PHOTO: STAR

BNP demands trial of molesters at special court

UNB, Dhaka

Denouncing Tuesday's sexual assaults on a number of women on the Dhaka University campus, the BNP yesterday demanded the government arrest and try the offenders immediately in a speedy trial tribunal.

"The sexual assaults on women took place on the New Year's day on the campus of the country's premier educational institution at a time when we're talking about women's empowerment and ensuring their representation at various levels. Not only that, an indigenous girl was also molested by the activists of the ruling party's student body at Jahangirnagar University on the same day," said BNP's International Affairs secretary Asaduzzaman Ripon.

Addressing a press briefing at the party's Nayapaltn central office, he also said, "We urge the government to take immediate actions against those assaulters, rogues and rapists. Hunt them down and try them in a speedy trial tribunal. We'll extend you all-out support to this end."

On Tuesday, a group of youths in front of police sexually harassed a number of women at TSC as they went

there to celebrate Pahela Baishakh, the first day of Bangla New Year.

The same day, a group of Bangladesh Chhatra League Jahangirnagar University unit activists allegedly assaulted a second year female indigenous student of Botany Department of the university during the Pahela Baishakh celebrations on its campus.

Later, BCL, the student wing of ruling Awami League, suspended five of its leaders and activists of JU unit on charge of physically assaulting the indigenous student.

Mentioning that rapists have no party and clan, he criticised the law enforcers for releasing some assaulters without arresting them when a group of youths caught them red-handed and handed them over to police. "When rapists and rogues are released without punishment they get inspired and repeat the same offence with a fresh vigour."

Ripon also condemned the "physical attack" on Rajshahi University VC allegedly by a group of ruling party men led by an MP. "It's a very shameful incident that a VC who was appointed by the ruling party was assaulted by a ruling party MP."

Police see it, finally

FROM PAGE 1
insisting that the CCTV footage showed no woman being stripped naked.

Police on Friday released footage from two of the 19 CCTV cameras installed for security in the area.

The Daily Star examined one hour footage of one camera and ended up taking 50 screenshots of women being groped and chased by the youths.

Police yesterday provided journalists with footage from six more cameras. The videos were shot between 5:00pm and 7:00pm on Pahela Baishakh.

CCTV camera-16 apparently covered the area in which a woman was claimed to have been almost stripped naked. Liton Nandi, president of the Dhaka University unit of Bangladesh Chhatra Union, had rescued the woman and had given her the Punjabi he was wearing. He broke his arm while trying to rescue another woman.

Footage of CCTV camera-16 was not released by police.

Reports published a day after Pahela Baishakh mentioned that there were at least 20 victims of sexual assault. But the footage examined by The Daily Star suggested that the number could be many times more.

The camera, the video of which this paper examined, was installed on an electricity pole along a pavement close to Suhrawardy Udyan. It covered an area between the northern side of Raju Bhaskarja and the street there.

A number of youths were seen in the area groping women every few minutes between 6:22pm and 7:19pm. They were in groups and at times they were attacking several women at once.

The women were trapped, surrounded and ganged up on.

In most cases, a perpetrator is seen posing as a gentleman. He first lets an obstructed woman through but his cohorts then instantly surrounds the woman. Then the groping by almost a dozen youths begins, the footage showed.

Sometimes the gang blocks a couple or a family from two sides and then assaults while their cohorts blow plastic horns to drown out the screams.

Sub-Inspector of Shabbagh Police Station, Abul Kalam Azad, who filed a case over the assault, was unwilling to call the youths molesters.

"Most likely the youths are related to the girls," said Azad, adding, "Above all no woman has complained of being sexually assaulted."

Police have already closed sub-inspector Ashraf Islam in connection with letting go of a perpetrator after he was handed over.

The decision to close him came after it was revealed by the footage that police were called in and they even caught one of the perpetrators on the spot.

Asked, DMP Joint Commissioner Munirul said they were working on releasing the suspects' photos taken from screenshots of the footage.

According to him, a separate committee was formed to probe alleged negligence in duty by police.

"The Raju Bhaskarja roundabout and its adjacent areas were under extensive watch and we should be able to find every single perpetrator," said Assistant Commissioner (Ramna) Shiblee Noman.

'Accidental' shooting at Zafarullah's rally

FROM PAGE 1
Munshibari Kumpar Bazar after laying the foundation stone of a bridge there, police and witnesses said.

A shotgun belonging to Dipak Majumder, vice-president of Bhanga upazila AL, went off "accidentally". Seven people, including Officer-in-Charge Najmul Hasan of Bhanga Police Station, were injured by shotgun pellets, Superintendent Jamil Hassan of Faridpur police told our correspondent there.

The injured were rushed to Bhanga Upazila Health Complex. Later, six of them were shifted to Faridpur Medical College Hospital. They are Shahjahan Miah (50), Farhat Matubbar (60), Zamir Matubbar (60), Imarat Akand (55), Saheb Ali (48) and Sobhan Khan (65).

All of them were activists and supporters of the ruling party. Of the injured, Saheb received at least 20

pellets in his hands and legs; Farhat received seven in his hands and legs; Shahjahan in his left leg; Zamir in his left hand; Imarat in his chest, hands and legs; and Sobhan in the chest, throat and neck, according to hospital sources.

OC Najmul suffered injury in his nose and was released from the upazila health complex.

They all were sitting in the front row of the audience.

"Dipak's gun was licensed and he had brought it to the rally venue for his personal security," Harun-ar-Rashid, OC (Investigation) of Bhanga Police Station, told The Daily Star last night.

Despite several attempts, we could not reach Dipak. However, according to reports, he claimed that he was not even present at the rally and so, it was not possible that people would be hurt by his gun.

Kazi Hedayet Ullah, president of the

ruling party's Bhanga upazila chapter, said Dipak was present there.

"Dipak was standing near the stage with his gun. He accidentally pulled the trigger. The bullet hit the ground first and then bounced away at the audience."

"It was simply an incident of misfire," he told The Daily Star.

Zafarullah, however, shifted the blame entirely on the policemen on duty there.

"A bullet went off from the gun of a policeman, who was on my protection duty. The bullet ricocheted off the ground and hit several people present there," he told The Daily Star over the phone in the evening.

"It was a mere accident," he added.

When this paper again contacted the Faridpur SP for his comments on this, he said: "I have already told that it was an accident. I have not enough time to talk to a newspaper twice." He

then hung up without saying anything on Zafarullah's allegation.

Meanwhile, injured Imarat Hossain gave a different account of the incident.

"There had been a row over the location of the bridge. Soon after Zafarullah finished the stone-laying ceremony, two groups of villagers locked into a scuffle," he told our Faridpur correspondent.

"Zafarullah then intervened to pacify the mobs. After bringing the situation under control, he went to the rally venue and took his seat on the stage.

"At one point, I heard a gunshot and something hit my body," he added.

Zafarullah contested the 10th parliamentary election in the local constituency with the AL ticket but lost to rebel candidate Mujibur Rahman Chowdhury Nixon.

FBI went 'too far' to catch poker champ

Las Vegas judge rules

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

FBI agents went too far when they turned off internet connection in a hotel room and posed as repairmen so that they could enter without a search warrant, a Federal judge in Las Vegas has ruled.

Agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation had received a tip-off that world champion poker player Paul Phua, who was staying at Caesar's Palace Hotel last July, was taking illegal bets on the Poker World Cup which was taking place at the time.

Agents cut off internet connection to the room before claiming to be repairmen sent in to fix the problem. They wore hidden cameras inside with them and said that the footage proved that those inside were making illegal bets.

However, speaking on Friday, Judge Andrew Gordon said that the scheme had violated Phua's right against unreasonable searches.

"Permitting the government to create the need for the occupant to invite a third party into his or her

home would effectively allow the government to conduct warrantless searches of the vast majority of residences and hotel rooms in America," Gordon said.

"The government need only disrupt the phone, cable, Internet, or some other 'non-essential' service, and reasonable people will opt to invite a third party onto their property to repair it, unwittingly allowing a government agents into the most private space to view and record whatever and whomever they see."

Phua's son, Darren, pleaded guilty to federal charges relating to the illegal betting incident last month. Five others have reached plea deals surrounding the case.

Paul Phua, charged under the name Wei Seng Phua, continues to fight the charges against him.

He is thought to have been a high-ranking member of the the 14K Triad, one of the biggest criminal organisations in the world, according to Pokernews.com, and has won more than \$1.5 million in prize money over the course of his poker career.

Gill nets burnt; factories boom

FROM PAGE 1
turtles and dolphins. Their gill, neck or flipper gets tangled up when they try to escape the net.

"The price of 1,000-metre-long current jaal ranges from Tk 600 to 900 while other types of nets of same length cost Tk 7,000 to Tk 35,000," said a manufacturer, requesting anonymity. This is however for one-time use.

The Daily Star obtained a list of gill net producers from the fisheries department, and learnt that almost all of those are based in Munshiganj.

Visiting Munshiganj recently, these correspondents found many of the factories are located at Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BISIC) area, which means government facilities are being used for manufacturing gill nets.

From Munshiganj, the net is sent to Dhaka's Chawkbazar, its main wholesale market in the country, and to other districts.

Shahajada Khasru, fisheries officer of Munshiganj Sadar upazila, said, "We have already sealed two current jaal factories out of 154 enlisted ones."

Troubles different

FROM PAGE 1
A senior BNP leader on condition of anonymity said the party leaders apprehend that their grassroots might face difficulties in going to polling centres on election day, April 28.

Under such a situation, Khaleda yesterday campaigned for BNP-blessed mayor candidate Tabith Awal in Gulshan to also convince party leaders in joining the campaign.

Things are better for the BNP in Chittagong though. Some senior leaders, including Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury and Abdullah Al Noman, had been electioneering for the BNP-endorsed mayor and councillor aspirants since the beginning.

No BNP leader is challenging the party favourite in any of the wards in Chittagong.

AL REBELS
Around 100 AL leaders are still in the race for 93 councillor posts of the two city corporations in Dhaka even though they have not been blessed by their party. There are 36 wards in Dhaka north and 57 wards under Dhaka south.

According to an AL estimate, around 60 unendorsed AL leaders in Dhaka

He, however, said traders are putting pressure on the authorities not to take any further steps.

Habibur Rahman, vice-president of Fishing Material Manufacturers Association, said, "With at least one lakh people involved, there are over 500 current jaal factories in Munshiganj and 200 of them are big business establishments."

Some other countries including India, Vietnam and Thailand produce and export gill net, he noted. If its manufacture is banned in Bangladesh, local manufacturers should be allowed to export it.

Manufacturers said apart from current jaal, there are many types of net that can be used for catching jatka.

"Only banning gill net would not stop jatka catching," said Neaz Morshed, owner of Modhumoti Fishing Net Industry.

"A proper policy on fishing net is needed to protect hilsa and other fishes of Bangladesh," he said.

According to an estimate, factories produce around 3,000 kg or five to six thousand pieces of nets a day (if a

single net weighing 500gm is about 500 metres long), while law enforcers and officials from different government agencies seize merely 3.5 lakh metres or 600 to 700 pieces of net a year.

A total of nine government agencies seized 335.75 lakh meters of gill net in 2011-12 and 381.16 lakh meters in 2012-13.

THE LEGAL BATTLE

Though the government in 2002 amended the Protection and Conservation of Fish Act 1950 imposing a ban on manufacturing, marketing, importing, storing, carrying, possessing and using gill net, writ petitions against the law hampered its implementation, said fisheries department sources.

"We could not conduct drives against current jaal, as there were 57 writ petitions against the law that bans the net," said Syed Arif Azad, director general of fisheries department.

The verdict on the last of the petitions, filed between 2000 and 2002, came in November last year.

"As we have got all the verdicts on

the writ petitions in our favour, there is no obstruction to drives against all the parties, including manufacturers, users and sellers," he said.

"It is hard to stop the use of current jaal in fishing only by conducting raids in rivers. There has to be action at the manufacturing level," he added.

For its violation, the law provides for three to seven years' rigorous imprisonment and a fine of upto Tk 10,000.

"Measures have been taken to stop the use of gill nets. We have sent letters to the authorities of every district to take action regarding gill nets," said Selina Afroza, secretary to the fisheries and livestock ministry.

In the first week of January this year the fisheries department wrote to the ministry seeking initiatives for legal action against all those involved in the business.

Contacted, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Sayedul Haque said, "We got all the verdicts, and we are going to start the drive within a week or so."

[Our Munshiganj correspondent Mirza Farhana contributed to this report]

--Edited by Shahtub Siddique Anik

RUSSIA MISSILE SALE TO IRAN

Obama 'not surprised'

AFP, Washington

US President Barack Obama said Friday he was not surprised that Russia lifted its ban on supplying missile systems to Iran, despite the move coming at the height of intense international talks on Tehran's nuclear program.

President Vladimir Putin, whose own government is under strict economic sanctions for Russia's involvement in unrest in Crimea and Ukraine, earlier this week removed the ban on supplying Iran with sophisticated S-300 air defence missile systems.

The move triggered concern that such sales could embolden Tehran in talks with the West on curbing its nuclear programme, reports AFP.

"I'm not surprised, given some of

the deterioration in the relationship between Russia and the United States, and the fact that their economy's under strain and this was a substantial sale," Obama said at a joint press conference in the White House with Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi.

"This is a sale that was slated to happen in 2009, when I first met with then-prime minister Putin. They actually stopped the sale, paused or suspended the sale, at our request," Obama added.

"And I'm frankly surprised that it held this long, given that they were not prohibited by sanctions from selling these defensive weapons."

On Thursday, the White House had suggested that economic desperation may have driven Moscow to lift the ban.

