

SHOOTING OF PREGNANT WOMAN

Culprits must be punished: Nasim

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health Minister Mohammad Nasim yesterday said the government would punish the criminals involved in last month's shooting of a pregnant woman that injured both the mother and her unborn baby in Magura.

He was talking to reporters after visiting Nazma Khatun and her daughter Suraiya at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) around 2:00pm.

Earlier around 11:30am, State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Meher Afroz Chumki also visited the two patients, who are being kept separately in the hospital.

Later, Chumki told journalists that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had directed the law enforcers to bring the criminals to trial without considering their party affiliation.

The arrest of six accused in the case proved that the government was not indulged in any crime, she added.

New zinc-rice arrives

FROM PAGE 1

And it's the first method through which BRRI dhan72 has been developed.

Zinc is one of the three most vital micronutrients, deficiency of which adversely affects children's natural growth and immune system. Proper zinc supplementation can reduce the severity of morbidity from a number of common childhood diseases including diarrhoea and pneumonia.

Though fruits, vegetables and animal products are rich in micronutrients, these are often not available for the poor in Bangladesh as well as in many other Asian countries where the poor's daily diet consists mostly of relatively much inexpensive low-zinc staple -- rice.

According to the World Health Organisation, nearly half a million children die each year globally due to zinc deficiency. Seventeen percent of the global population is at risk of inadequate zinc intake. The regional estimated prevalence of inadequate zinc intake ranges from 7.5 percent in high-income regions to 30 percent in South Asia.

Among the three rice seasons -- Aus, Aman and Boro -- in Bangladesh, Aman contributes a big part of the country's total paddy output.

It requires less irrigation and inputs to grow rice during the rain-fed Aman season than what it takes during the dry Boro season.

Of all the varieties developed by the BRRI, BR11 (Mukta) has so far been the most popular among Aman rice growers since the breed's release in 1980.

"With the release of BRRI dhan72, we hopefully will be able to replace

Suspension

FROM PAGE 1

who were "punishing" him on charges of theft in Kumargaon Bus Stand area of Sylhet city.

Twelve people, including four who have been accused in the murder case, have been held.

A police probe body, led by Sylhet Metropolitan Police, has found negligence of law enforcers in arresting the killers and political influence in letting the perpetrators flee.

On July 23, the authorities closed Alamgir Hossain, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Jalalabad Police Station, and suspended its sub-inspectors Aminul Islam and Zakir Hossain.

Mizanur termed child torture and killing in Bangladesh a matter of concern and dire violation of human

Umrah visa

FROM PAGE 1

meeting with him in Jeddah on Monday.

The Saudi state minister made the commitment in response to a request from Shahriar, said a foreign ministry press release.

Madani said the KSA had already started hiring Bangladeshi female domestic workers. The recruitment of workers for all the other sectors would begin gradually, he added.

Shahriar thanked the Saudi government for reopening the transfer of Iqma (sponsorship of employer) for the Bangladeshi expatriates in February last year.

He also requested the Saudi government to recruit more professionals, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers from Bangladesh for various infrastructure and development projects in the KSA.

He said the two countries should

The state minister handed over a cheque for Tk 50,000 to Nazma.

Kaniz Hasina Sheuli, associate professor of Department of Pediatric Surgery at DMCH, yesterday said the condition of the newborn was improving but still she was not out of danger.

The baby was taking 12 ml breast milk in every two hours which was initially 2 ml in every three hour, the doctor said.

Meanwhile, police yesterday produced three accused, including Magura Chhatra League Vice-president Sen Suman, before a district court and sought a 10-day remand for Suman.

The court fixed August 9 for hearing the remand plea, said Imaul Haque, officer-in-charge of Detective Branch of police in Magura.

During a factional clash between Jubo League men on July 23, eight-month-pregnant Nazma was shot in the abdomen. The bullet pierced through her baby's right shoulder, also injuring her right eye.



Relatives and neighbours of slain Rakib try to console his mother at her home on Central Road in Khulna city yesterday. Rakib was brutally killed on Monday.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

Yet another savagery

FROM PAGE 1

The barbaric killing took place at Sharif's motor workshop in Tutpara Kabarkhana of Khulna on Monday, barely a month into the gruesome murder of Samiul Alam Rajon, also 13, in Sylhet.

Outraged, locals caught Mintu, Sharif and his mother Beauty Begum and handed them over to the police on Monday night. Before the handover, they beat up Mintu and Sharif.

Yesterday, locals blocked the Central Road in Tutpara, staged demonstrations and brought out a procession, demanding maximum punishment to the killers. The incident also triggered a firestorm of protest and condemnation on the social media.

Rakib had been working at Sharif's garage for Tk 50 a day for the last two years to support his family. His mother Lucky Begum works as a domestic help while his nine-year-old sister Rima is a class-three student. His father, Nur Alam, left the family several years back and now lives in Satkhira, said Parul Begum, the boy's aunt.

About five months ago, he left Sharif's garage -- Sharif Motors -- in Tutpara, as Sharif and Mintu would often beat him, she told The Daily Star by phone.

Rakib, a school dropout, then started working at another garage, which annoyed Sharif.

"As he [Rakib] went to buy some paint from a shop next to Sharif's garage yesterday [Monday] afternoon,

Sharif called him in," said Parul, quoting witnesses.

"He took off Rakib's trousers, pushed a tyre pumper into his rectum and pumped air into his body," she added.

The family learned about it all two hours later and they found their boy at the Khulna Medical College Hospital.

Locals said Rakib started throwing up near the garage gate with his abdomen swelled. Within minutes, he fainted.

At this, Sharif and Mintu took him to a local clinic and then to Khulna Sadar Hospital. They took him to KMCH when his condition kept worsening.

Parul said as they rushed to the KMCH after Maghrib prayers, they found Sharif, Mintu and Beauty there. Locals then caught the trio and handed them over to the police. Beauty Begum was present during the torture but did not save the boy.

She added the family started for Dhaka in an ambulance and stopped at Ad-din Hospital in Baikali, hoping to take Rakib to the capital by a helicopter as they heard the hospital had the facility. But doctors there declared him dead around 10:30pm.

Sharif and Mintu were injured in the beating and were admitted to the KMCH under police custody, said Sukumar Biswas, officer-in-charge of Khulna Sadar Police Station.

During primary interrogation, the duo confessed to the killing, he added.

Asked about the motive for the murder, the OC told The Daily Star last night that they did it out of anger, as Rakib had gone to work at another garage after learning the work for two years in their workshop.

Meanwhile, Child Rights Advocacy Coalition in Bangladesh (CRACB) yesterday expressed deep shock at the killing.

CRACB, a platform of 10 non-government, international and civil society organisations working to ensure child rights, said news of brutal torture and killing of children were being published in the media for the last few days.

"We are concerned and aggrieved by the recurrence of such incidents and the nature of brutalities," reads a press release.

The perpetrators go unpunished in many cases, and the long delay in trial of such cases appears to be the main reason for recurrence of the crime, the coalition said.

Rakib was buried at Tutpara graveyard yesterday afternoon.

"I want justice for my son. I want the three to hang," Rakib's mother Lucky Begum told reporters.

Meanwhile, Rakib's father filed a murder case against Sharif, Mintu and Beauty, said the OC.

A three-member committee led by Additional Police Commissioner Mahbub Hakim of Khulna Metropolitan Police has been formed to oversee the investigation.

US watered down trafficking report

FROM PAGE 1

shows that the government office set up to independently grade global efforts to fight human trafficking was repeatedly overruled by senior American diplomats and pressured into inflating assessments of 14 strategically important countries in this year's Trafficking in Persons report.

In all, analysts in the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons - or I/TIP, as it's known within the US government -- disagreed with US diplomatic bureaus on ratings for 17 countries, the sources said.

The analysts, who are specialists in assessing efforts to combat modern slavery - such as the illegal trade in humans for forced labour or prostitution - won only three of those disputes, the worst ratio in the 15-year history of the unit, according to the sources.

As a result, not only Malaysia, Cuba and China, but countries such as India, Uzbekistan and Mexico, wound up with better grades than the State Department's human-rights experts wanted to give them, the sources said.

Of the three disputes I/TIP won, the most prominent was Thailand, which has faced scrutiny over forced labour at sea and the trafficking of Rohingya

Muslims through its southern jungles. Diplomats had sought to upgrade it to so-called "Tier 2 Watch List" status. It remains on "Tier 3" - the rating for countries with the worst human-trafficking records.

The number of rejected recommendations suggests a degree of intervention not previously known by diplomats in a report that can lead to sanctions and is the basis for many countries' anti-trafficking policies. This year, local embassies and other constituencies within the department were able to block some of the toughest grades.

State Department officials say the ratings are not politicised. "As is always the case, final decisions are reached only after rigorous analysis and discussion between the TIP office, relevant regional bureaus and senior State Department leaders," State Department spokesman John Kirby said in response to queries by Reuters.

Still, by the time the report was released on July 27, Malaysia and Cuba were both removed from the "Tier 3" blacklist, even though the State Department's own trafficking experts believed neither had made notable improvements, according to the sources.

The Malaysian upgrade, which was highly criticized by human rights groups, could smooth the way for an ambitious proposed US-led free-trade deal with the Southeast Asian nation and 11 other countries.

Ending Communist-ruled Cuba's 12 years on the report's blacklist came as the two nations reopened embassies on each other's soil following their historic détente over the past eight months.

And for China, the experts' recommendation to downgrade it to the worst ranking, Tier 3, was overruled despite the report's conclusion that Beijing did not undertake increased anti-trafficking efforts.

That would have put China alongside the likes of Syria and North Korea, regarded by the United Nations as among the world's worst human right abusers.

Typically, I/TIP wins more than half of what officials call "disputes" with diplomatic sections of the State Department, according to people familiar with the process.

"Certainly we have never seen that kind of an outcome," said one US official with direct knowledge of the department.

'We only get one planet'

Obama reveals new climate change initiative

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Hoping to position the United States to take the lead in global negotiations later this year to combat climate change, President Barack Obama yesterday unveiled a bold plan to slash emissions of heat-trapping carbon dioxide from power stations at home by almost a third within fifteen years.

Detailing the new regulations, dubbed America's 'Clean Power Plan', Mr Obama asserted that "no challenge poses a greater threat to our future, the future generations, than the changing climate". He noted that hitherto the federal government had never attempted to curb CO2 from power plants.

"This is one of those rare issues, because of its magnitude, because of its scope, that if we don't get it right, we may not be able to reverse, we may not

be able to adapt sufficiently," Mr Obama said. "There is such a thing as being too late when it comes to climate change...the science tells us we have to do more." He warned: "We only get one planet. There is no Plan B."

The landmark proposal, the biggest climate change measure ever attempted by the US, triggered an instant political and legal backlash as several states prepared to challenge the rules in the courts and Republican presidential runners accused Mr Obama of declaring war on the already hurting coal sector.

It means that climate change will take centre-stage in the coming presidential election. In 2012, it barely featured. Hillary Clinton, the leading Democratic candidate, had already stated her support for the emissions plan. "It will need defending. Because Republican doubters and defeatists -

including every Republican candidate for president - won't offer any credible solution," she said.

Whereas an earlier version of the plan required a 30 per cent nationwide cut in carbon dioxide emissions by 2030, compared to 2005 levels, the final iteration toughens that target to 32 per cent. Unchanged is the pledge Mr Obama will take to final negotiations for a global United Nations treaty on climate change in Paris in December to cut overall emissions from all sources of pollution by 26 to 28 per cent by 2030.

The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon lauded the "visionary leadership" of Mr Obama. "We believe that this plan shows the United States determination to address global warming while also saving money and growing economy," Stephane Dujarric, his spokesman, said.

ACID ATTACK FOR DOWRY

Father-in-law of the victim arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday arrested the father-in-law of Ripa Rani Pandit in Netrakona town for "pouring acid into Ripa's mouth".

Rabindra Pandit was arrested around 4:30am at a bus stand where he was waiting to get on a bus to go to his daughter's house in Kalmakanda upazila, said Abul Bashar, sub-inspector of Kotiadi Police Station in Kishoreganj.

On July 26, Rabindra and his wife Kalyani Pandit poured acid into Ripa's mouth at their house in Kotiadi as her father failed to give them Tk 4 lakh as dowry, alleged the victim's family.

The in-laws admitted Ripa, 23, to Dhaka Medical College Hospital two days later and fled.

The severity of her injury is hard to define because it is mostly internal, doctors said. However, they said Ripa was between life and death and would be kept on a saline drip for the next three weeks. If she improved then only she would be allowed to have food or drink.

On July 31, Ripa's father Shadhon Pandit filed a case against her in-laws and husband Ratan with Kotiadi police.

Trafficking victim

FROM PAGE 1

died without treatment in the detention camp.

"My brother might not have died if the authorities arranged for proper treatment in the detention center," Kashem told The Daily Star.

Musharrat Jebin, first secretary at the Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur, said they are yet to receive a police report on Rashid's death.

The family learnt about Rashid's death on June 17 from Al Amin a fellow inmate who was also in Belantik detention centre in Malaysian Kedah state.

Rashid was a furniture maker in Narsingdi before he was lured by a local broker to Malaysia for work on March 27 this year.

He left home without his family's knowledge. The family knew about it a month later when the local broker, Jamir, asked them for ransom.

He told them Rashid was on a ship and Rashid's life would be in danger if the ransom was not paid to him. The family paid Jamir Tk 2.5 lakh by borrowing the money.

They could not contact Rashid even after the payment. When they asked Jamir, the broker said Malaysian police had caught Rashid. A few days later they learnt about Rashid's death.

Although Bangladesh government arranged for repatriation of the rescued trafficking victims from Malaysia, the process of bringing back Rashid's body was delayed for money.

Later, CARAM Asia, a Malaysia-based regional network on migrant rights, and Valobasi Bangladesh, an organisation of Bangladeshi expatriates, got the funds together to bring Rashid's body to home.

Rashid, along with 715 other Bangladeshis, was rescued by Malaysian police on May 11 from the Andaman Sea.

Abul Kashem said they submitted a written complaint against Jamir to Narsingdi police superintendent. The SP then ordered the Raipura police to investigate. However, Jamir has not been caught.

Govt to relocate

FROM PAGE 1

Concerns were also raised about managing the huge traffic that would clog Sher-e-Bangla Nagar once the secretariat was shifted.

Earlier in 1997 during the previous Awami League rule, a similar initiative was taken but the plan did not go ahead due to the same concerns, the planning ministry official added.

According to the draft proposal, the Secretariat Bhaban will be built on 32 acres of land with four blocks and each of the buildings will have nine storeys.

The draft sets tentative timeframe for completion of the construction by 2018. The planning ministry official said the project would soon be placed in the Ecneec meeting for approval.

The Ecneec yesterday also approved a Tk 796-crore project to set up the permanent exhibition centre on 20 acres of land at Purbachal Sector 4.

The exhibition centre, where various trade fairs can be held round the year, would be built by 2018 with 79 percent of its finance coming from Chinese grants.

The exhibition centre to be built in Purbachal would be named Bangladesh-China Friendship Exhibition Centre and China would provide Tk 626 crore in grants.

The Beijing Institute of Architectural Design has already prepared a design for the centre. It would have 806 booths of nine square metres each in two big hall rooms.

There would also be a conference room, press centre, meeting room and business information centre in addition to parking space for 1,500 cars. The first floor of the centre would house a maternity corner and crèche.

The Ecneec meeting yesterday also discussed eight other projects involving Tk 2,572 crore for approval.