

## Man arrested for 'raping' minor girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

A man who allegedly sexually assaulted one of his nieces and raped another, both aged below 10, in Farzikandi union of the district was arrested yesterday.

Shipon Shil, 30, attempted to rape his first victim, an eight-year-old girl of class-II, on October 5 and raped the second victim, aged nine, a student of class-III, nine days later, said the investigation officer of the cases filed in connection with the incidents.

Fearing social stigma, parents of the victims were hesitant about filing a case at first and tried to settle the matter through a village court. But when the perpetrator did not pay fines as ordered by the court for his crime, the families separately sued him on Monday.

Shipon Shil was arrested soon after the filing of the cases. He was sent to jail after police produced him in court, said the investigation officer.

## Traumatic final farewell for reunited Korean families

AFP, Seoul

North and South Korean families were forced to say a final, traumatic farewell yesterday after meeting for the first time in more than 60 years, as the joy of temporary reunion gave way to the grief of permanent separation.

On the third and last day of their all-too brief, emotionally charged reunion in a North Korean mountain resort, the families were given two hours in the morning to say their last goodbyes.

It was perhaps the most fraught part of the entire event, with relatives on both sides -- especially the elderly in their 70s, 80s or even 90s -- all too aware that this was likely the last time they would ever see each other.

Some spent their last minutes together simply clinging to each other, while others sought to put on a brave face, holding hands and wiping away tears as they sat at numbered tables in the resort's main banquet area.

TV footage from the resort showed one elderly North Korean woman trying to keep the mood on her table upbeat, challenging everyone to an arm wrestle to show off her physical health.

But then the North Koreans boarded buses to take them home, prompting desperate final scenes as they pressed their hands and faces to the windows, trying to maintain eye contact with their weeping South Korean relatives outside as the vehicles moved away.

## Immersion

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for nine days. The celebration of Bijoya Dashami thus signifies the victory of good over evil on the 10th day of Aswin month of Bangla calendar.

Dashami is the day when, Hindus believe, the Goddess accompanied by her children set off for Kailash, her husband's abode.

According to the lunar schedule, Navami puja ended at 7:33am, followed by Dashami that lasted until 9:57am yesterday.

"I've prayed to the mother Durga to destroy all evil forces and establish peace in Bangladesh and across the whole world," said Gobinda Das who went to a temple at Wari in Dhaka with his daughter Sunita.

Sunita said she had sought courage and strength from the Goddess.

Even after Dashami puja ended in the morning, devotees flocked to see idols at different puja mandaps in the city, including those at Dhakeshwari Temple, Jagannath Hall of Dhaka University, Ramna Kali Mandir, Siddheswari Kali Mandir, and at temples in Tanti Bazar, Shankhari Bazar and Bangla Bazar.

Before the departure of the Goddess, married women of all ages take part in a ritual called Sindur Khela when they put vermilion on each other.

Today, Bijoya Dashami processions will be brought out with idols of the deity and her children -- Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartik and Ganesh. The festivities will end through the immersion of the idols into rivers or other water bodies.

A procession from Dhakeshwari Temple in Dhaka will begin at 3:00pm and end at Waighat in old town after parading through different city streets. Devotees will then immerse the idols in the Buriganga river.

"She has been with us for the last few days. She will leave us here for one year. It's a strange feeling I can't express," said Diba Rani at Dhakeshwari.



Players of Kolkata Mohammedan take a selfie at a Puja Mandap in Lalkhan Bazar area of Chittagong yesterday. The Kolkata football team is here to play at Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

## Where nobody is beggar

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respected citizen's committee that has worked closely with the project, says, "It's absolutely wonderful how the 979 identified beggars in the upazila have been empowered."

"Firstly, they were properly enrolled in the government's social safety net, to ensure they were receiving the benefits to which they are entitled, such as the old age, widow, disability or maternity allowances," he explains. "Then the beggars were greatly encouraged to leave their entitlements in the bank so that savings could accrue."

The small savings are a prerequisite for enrolment in another project, "Ekti Bari, Ekti Khamar", meaning "One Home, One Farm," which provides revolving loans to participants.

With access to small amounts of capital available, 711 beggars were able to launch micro-businesses including goat and cattle rearing, roadside shops

and poultry farming. Unoccupied government 'khas' land was made available for nurseries and vegetable farming, while various government departments supplied training.

Other former beggars found work in development programmes including the 40-day Food for Work project which provides a daily wage and subsistence rice to participants.

It's quite an achievement: in just fifteen months Kishoreganj has eradicated begging.

"We have proved that with nothing more than proper utilisation of the government's safety net programmes and a little advice and dedication, we can make our upazila beggar-free," says UNO Rahman, a strong supporter of the programme. "The same can be achieved nationwide."

Rahman's commitment runs deep. He recently turned down a promotion to additional deputy commissioner in

Jhenidah in order to continue overseeing the upazila's progress.

Currently, mobile courts are actively enforcing the anti-begging provisions under the public nuisance act, to ensure programme participants do not revert to begging. But enforcement is hardly required: most have vowed never to do so, with their eyes now firmly fixed on better and bigger horizons.

The success of local efforts has not remained unnoticed. "We are on track to win the United Nation's Public Service Award 2015," says Rahman, "We've already passed the first two evaluation rounds."

The Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), meanwhile, awarded it the Kaizan Role Model Award earlier this year.

"The achievement in Kishoreganj is a big and very welcome surprise," says JICA expert Masatoshi Higuchi. "It's been possible to eliminate begging

due to the programme's strong and enthusiastic leadership."

Nilphamari's Deputy Commissioner (DC) Zakir Hossain brought the upazila's efforts to the attention of the prime minister and others at the last DC Conference in Dhaka, apprising them not only of the success but of the challenges in overcoming begging, an activity that has complex causes and deep roots.

"Kishoreganj is a light of hope for all Bangladesh," says local lawmaker Golam Mostafa who has worked as an adviser on the beggar rehabilitation committee. "If we follow this example we can have a country where begging belongs only to the history books."

Thanks to Kishoreganj, a nationwide beggar rehabilitation programme is indeed under consideration, with a recent cabinet decision made to this effect, notes a rightly delighted Rahman.

## Karnaphuli in peril



A building is being constructed on a grabbed portion of the Karnaphuli river, to the south of Kalurghat bridge in Chittagong. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

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this correspondent saw more than a dozen newly-built structures on the riverbank.

The width of the Karnaphuli has shrunk considerably due to encroachment.

The Hydrographic Survey Chart 1989-90 shows the river's width at 870 metres at Bridgeghat point while the 2009-10 chart puts it at 600 metres.

Apart from encroachment, indiscriminate dumping of untreated sewage and industrial waste is taking its toll on the Karnaphuli.

One-third of 1,200-1,400 tonnes of solid waste as well as liquid waste from the city of six million go to the river through 30 canals every day, as Chittagong Water Supply and Sewerage Authority is yet to set up plants for treating waste.

Contacted, Chittagong Wasa

Secretary Shamsuddoha said, "A consultation team is working on sewage treatment plant project. It will submit a master plan by 2017. Once we get the plan, we will be able to start the project with World Bank's assistance," he said.

To make matters worse, a large number of factories are discharging an enormous quantity of untreated waste into the river daily.

Environmentalist Edris Ali, also vice president of Chittagong chapter of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, said around 800 industries dump untreated waste into the river every day.

"In most private industries, Effluent Treatment Plants are kept for show. Industry owners often avoid using them, as it increases production cost. The Department of Environment seldom monitors and

takes action against these industries," he said.

Asked about this, DoE officials said around 150 of the 800 factories discharge hazardous waste into the river, and only 15 of them don't have ETP.

Mokbul Hossain, DoE director for Chittagong region, was not available for comments, as he is abroad.

Despite repeated attempts, DoE Director General Raisul Alam Mondal couldn't be reached over the mobile phone.

Seeking anonymity, a DoE official, however, said they monitor the factories regularly and take action if any of them is found guilty of not using ETP.

On the pollution level of the river water, Edris said, "Water quality indicators, including dissolved oxygen, are found below the standard level."

The water may not seem much polluted since it is not black all the time. But decreasing biodiversity of the river is a clear indication of its poor state, said Idris, who has been doing research on the river water since early 1990s.

"Had there been no tide, the river would have died years ago," said Edris, associate professor of chemistry at Government Mohsin College.

In a 2009 survey, Manzoorul Kibria, associate professor at Chittagong University, found only 50 types of fish in the river whereas the number was 140 in 1986.

Unlike in the past, Hilsa can hardly be found in the Karnaphuli now.

Dolphins were seen in large numbers in the river a decade ago, but now they have become a rare sight, say locals.

## AL man killed, 5 injured in factional clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

A local activist of the ruling Awami League was killed and five others were injured during a factional fight in Natore's Singra upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Abdul Hannan, 40, son of Abdul Karim from the upazila's Trirail village, our Natore correspondent reports.

The incident occurred at Trirail Bazar around 8:30am, Munshi Shahabuddin, additional police superintendent of the district said.

The clash took place between supporters of local AL leaders Zinnah and Ariful Islam over putting up posters ahead of the Singra upazila by-polls.

There was tension between the two groups for a few days, locals said.

Hannan, a supporter of Zinnah group, was stabbed with sharp weapons during the clash, ASP Shahabuddin said. "He died on the spot."

At least 30 houses were also vandalised during the clash.

Additional police were deployed in the area to avert any further incidents, the ASP said adding that the dead has been sent to Natore Sadar Hospital morgue.

Police detained seven people from the area in this connection.

## Philippine typhoon toll hits 54 as floods shift

AFP, Manila

The death toll from a ferocious typhoon in the Philippines climbed to 54 yesterday, as home-wrecking floods shifted downstream to coastal villages, displacing tens of thousands of residents.

Inundations from torrential week-end rains in mountain regions caused by Typhoon Koppu cascaded into coastal fishing and farming villages, submerging them in waters up to three metres (10 feet) deep, officials said.

Residents of Bulacan and Pampanga province, around two hours' drive from the capital Manila, fled by foot to evacuation centres as the waters rose quickly overnight, aggravated by a high tide, they said.

"The waters have nowhere else to go. Imagine two to three days worth of rain from the mountains coming down," Nigel Lontoc, assistant director of the region's civil defence office, told AFP.

Close to 60,000 people left their homes in Bulacan and Pampanga, a geographic catch basin for waters from the upland provinces of Nueva Ecija and Aurora, which bore the brunt of Koppu on Sunday and Monday.

Lontoc said the floods in the coastal areas may last a week.

Koppu made landfall on the east coast of Luzon, the Philippines' biggest and most populated island, early Sunday with 210-kilometre (130-mile) per hour winds.

Koppu, the second strongest typhoon to hit the disaster-weary country this year, then crawled over vast swathes of Luzon for three days, bringing torrential rains that triggered landslides and massive flooding.

## ASI stabbed

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on October 3.

Faruqul Alam, inspector (investigation) of the police station, said a nine-member police team was making random searches at the checkpoint. The team stopped two youths, aged about 25, who were passing by the checkpoint around 9:00pm.

The two came to Gabtoli from Bogra by a bus, said Abu Taleb, driver of a microbus that the police team rented for patrolling.

Taleb, who was watching the incident from his vehicle parked nearby, said three to four policemen took the two youths to a dark corner inside Parbat cinema hall premises, around 20 yards from the checkpoint.

When the cops were about to search the youths, one of them managed to free himself from the grips of the policemen and ran away.

At this, all cops but Ibrahim chased him.

Meanwhile, Ibrahim continued to search the other youth, who suddenly stabbed him and fled.

"I saw the youth take out something from his waist and attack Ibrahim," Taleb told this correspondent.

Later, Taleb took Ibrahim to Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

He was stabbed in the chest and abdomen and he died of excessive bleeding, said Rahat Nazma, a doctor at the emergency department there.

Father of an eight-year-old daughter and a two-year-old son, Ibrahim had been living with his family near the police station.