

Anti-domestic violence law is un-Islamic

Rules Pakistan's advisory body

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

An anti-domestic violence bill in Pakistan has been declared un-Islamic by the country's leading government advisory body on faith issues.

The Women's Protection Act was passed in the Punjab province last week, the largest district in Pakistan. It gives unprecedented legal protection to women suffering from domestic and sexual violence, as well as emotional abuse.

Key features include calls for a Freephone reporting hotline and for women's shelters to be set up. The law also establishes district-level panels to investigate allegations of abuse and mandates the use of GPS bracelets to keep track of offenders.

However, the bill has been met with resistance locally amid concerns that it is incompatible with the Quran. Muhammad Khan Sherani, the head of the Council of Islamic Ideology said at a news conference, that the group believe the law to be 'un-Islamic'. He said: "The whole law is wrong" and cited passages from the Koran.



Bangladesh Jatiya Sangsad Speaker Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury talking with her Indian Lok Sabha counterpart Sumitra Mahajan at the latter's office in New Delhi yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Mother taken

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told the press that they were killed by their mother out of her "concerns about their future." And Mahfuza made up a food-poisoning story to cover it up.

According to Rab, she first strangled her daughter Nusrat and then son Alvi. Following the revelation, the father of the siblings Amanullah filed a case against his wife.

On Wednesday, Rab brought the children's parents and an aunt, Mahfuza's sister Afroza Malek Mila, from their hometown in Jamalpur for quizzing.

Mila, however, said she does not believe that Mahfuza killed her kids.

"I will never believe it... It seems to me like a drama, a movie," she told reporters at her Banasree house yesterday.

Asked whether she suspects anyone, Mila replied in the negative.

Mila added, "She [Mahfuza] never looked tense. After my daughter who stood second last time became fourth this year, she told me: 'Mila, let her study the way she has been studying. Do not put pressure on her.'"

The investigation officer of the case Mustafizur Rahman said during primary interrogation, Mahfuza claimed that Aroni on that day had failed to perform well during lessons with her house tutor.

Out of anger, she strangled the girl and then the boy faced his mother's wrath.

Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Rampura Police Station, said they were investigating if there were any other reasons behind the murders.

Tigers keep cards close to chest

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tion to pull off a surprise for their opponents. It seemed that they have been, going by the vibe during yesterday's practice session.

True, in the shortest format, an over can completely change the complexion of a match but one should apply their best strategy in such a crunch match. "Freedom of expression" and "playing to your own strengths" seemed to be the mantra for the Tigers in recent times and they definitely will go with that mantra in the final. And apparently the inspirational Mashrafe endeavoured to make his boys enjoy everything, rather than take any pressure.

Prior to the tournament, there was hardly anybody who believed that Bangladesh would play the final in this format, seeing off teams like Sri Lanka and Pakistan. Of course they may not become a superpower in the shortest format by winning those games, but undoubtedly those games have given them confidence.

Apart from brave-heart captain Mashrafe, Bangladesh has a shrewd

tactician in their tent who is none other than their coach Chandika Hathurusingha, who has proved time and again that he has got the courage to gamble with strategy.

Bangladesh's bowling has proved to be their strongest department, so the biggest question is: will Bangladesh fire with their four-pronged pace attack? Pace sensation Mustafizur Rahman's absence due to injury has made things difficult, but if there is some spice in the track, Bangladesh may try to terrorise their strong opponents with a four-pronged attack. The decision would hardly come as a surprise, putting aside Abu Haider Rony's inexperience and the fact that he has not played a single match in the tournament.

Despite wins against Sri Lanka and Pakistan, Bangladesh's weak link is their batting, so a different batting order is likely. But Bangladesh's biggest problem is with their number seven batsman as they are yet to find someone who can go and hit all around the ground. One cannot expect Mashrafe to go to the number seven positions to

hit some boundaries everyday like he did against Pakistan.

It is hard to predict what kind of combination the home side will go with, but the feeling was that the Tigers will challenge India with something different.

Two held

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the organisation [Money Plant] are involved in the robbery," the OC added.

The police official on Thursday said they were skeptical about the role of the security company's seven staff, including two gunmen, who were on the spot during the incident, as they failed to resist the attack.

Around 2:30am on Thursday, some 10 to 12 robbers, equipped with sharp weapons and sticks, swooped on the ATM booth beside Dhaka-Tangail highway when the officials of Money Plant entered it to load money into automated teller machines (ATMs).

The gang beat up security guard of the booth and snatched two trunks filled with money.

Fraud gang busted

12 foreigners, 2 others held for extorting money from people using social media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion claimed to have busted a fraud gang and arrested its 14 members, including 12 foreigners, from different areas in the capital in last two days.

Posing as citizens of the USA and European countries, the fraudsters used to communicate with people through social media and swindle them out their money, said a press statement of Rab.

The criminals won the victims' trust by corresponding with them through Facebook, Viber and WhatsApp. At one stage, they offered gift from abroad.

Impersonating customs officials, the fraudsters later collect money from

the victims as cost of customs clearance, read the statement.

After receiving complaints about the gang, a Rab team picked up Mamun Mokarram from the city's Uttara and Sultan Mahmud from Nikunja-2 areas on Thursday.

The Rab men gleaned information from the two; conducted raids in Uttara and Bashundhara areas, and rounded up the foreigners yesterday.

Of the 12 foreign nationals, eight are from Nigeria, three from Cameroon, and one from Congo. They could not show any valid travel documents, said Rab.

Law enforcers recovered mobile phones, laptops and several passports from their possession.

BNP worried

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an unelected and repressive regime is in power, we can't shrug off the possibility of obstruction to the council until it ends."

Many devoted leaders and activists of the party have been subjected to repression across the country, he complained. "Many party men are behind bars while many others have been on the run. Those who are hiding for fear of repression will join the council braving all the obstacles."

The BNP leader said they will seek permission from Dhaka Metropolitan Police to use Suhrawardy Udyan, adjacent to the IEB, for the council.

KHALEDA, TARIQUE TO STAY PUT
Two BNP leaders yesterday filed nominations on behalf of party Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Senior Vice Chairman Tarique Rahman for contesting the same posts in the party's sixth national council.

BNP joint secretary generals Rizvi Ahmed and Mohammad Shahjahan submitted the nominations to returning officer Nazrul Islam Khan, also a standing committee member, at the party's Nayapaltan headquarters.

Both Khaleda and her son are going to be elected uncontested as no other candidate collected nomination papers to contest the elections.

According to the polls schedule, the party's election commission, led by Jamir Uddin Sircar, will scrutinise the nominations today. Contenders can withdraw their candidature by tomorrow.

Good news

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invented a new variety of it.

The new fruit has soft and juicy flesh and it can be picked four times a year. This unique variety of mango tree bears green and ripe mangoes along with flowers at the same time, said scientists.

They have not decided on a name yet for the variety.

While visiting an orchard of the research station recently, this correspondent saw two trees with both green and reddish mangoes in plenty, although the regular fruit season is yet a few months off.

The inventors had been working on the variety since 2006.

Sorof Uddin, senior scientific officer at the research centre, said the skin and the pit of the mango was thinner. "It would be known for its sweetness."

These mangoes would ripen on the trees in May, August, November and February. Two more years of research is needed before this variety is released for commercial cultivation, he said.

The scientists have released eight new mango varieties over the past few years. They are Bari Aam-- 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

Three other varieties -- Bari 5, 10 and 11 -- were released in Jessore, Khagrachhari and Chittagong.

Over 19 lakh mango trees grow on 24,360 hectares of land in Chapainawabganj where mango is an important commercial product.

The region has a long tradition of producing over 350 varieties of mangoes, including Fazli, Langra, Gopalbhog and Khirsapat (Himsagar), said scientists and agricultural officials.



Just a month after being evicted by the Dhaka South City Corporation authorities, hawkers have come back and occupied part of a road and an entire footpath with their merchandise in the capital's Gulistan. The photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: STAR

Probe finds

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City Bank's card division.

It is believed that fraudsters stole data of around 7,000 cards used in four ATMs of City Bank, EBL and UCB in Dhaka early last month. Initial probe found they were able to use only 40 cards and withdraw about Tk 25 lakh, before it was discovered on February 13.

Then last week, the biggest yet forgery was detected involving the withdrawal of Tk 40 lakh from Premier Bank using five international credit cards of the Riyadh-based bank.

Another two such cards got stuck in the machines and the gang failed to steal any cash using those.

The cards were used on last Saturday and Sunday, said Khondker Fazle Rashid, managing director of Premier Bank. The bank filed a case with Banani Police Station and informed the BB about it on Monday.

With the latest detection, the amount stolen so far stands at Tk 65 lakh. But it would go up once the BB gets information from all the banks hit by the trickery, said the BB executive director.

Another BB official fears the same.

"We don't know exactly how many cards have been cloned by the gang. These cards could be used later inside and outside the country," said the official.

"We don't know whether these cloned cards have already been used in foreign countries," he added, asking not to be named.

"Along with local cards, foreign cards were also used in ATMs that were skimmed off recently. After cloning these cards, fraudsters will use international cards in foreign countries," said Kazi Saifuddin Munir, managing director of IT Consultants that runs Q Cash, an electronic payment switch.

For years, skimming has been a popular technique used by fraudsters across the world. They steal data from the card's magnetic stripe with a device hidden near the ATMs' card slots.

To get the card's personal identification number (PIN), an overlay is placed over the ATM's PIN pad or a concealed camera is used.

Meanwhile, the ATM fraudulence has been affecting both the industry and customers, with banks fearing to lose money as card users lose their confidence in the system.

Migrant killed in brawl at Swedish asylum centre

AFP, Stockholm

A 19-year-old asylum-seeker was stabbed to death yesterday in a brawl at a Swedish refugee hostel, police said, adding that three other asylum-seekers had been arrested.

"We are still investigating the attack and its motive. We now have arrested three suspects whom we are questioning," said police spokesman Stefan Wickberg.

Police declined to release the nationalities of the casualty or the three suspects.

Police were alerted to a fight at the Stora Asylum Centre outside of the town of Lindsberg, some 160 kilometers west of Stockholm, at about 5:15 am yesterday.

'Missing' bookseller back in Hong Kong: govt

AFP, Hong Kong

One of five "missing" Hong Kong booksellers who was detained on the mainland returned to the city yesterday and met police, the government said, in a case that has provoked fears of increasing Chinese interference in the semi-autonomous region.

Lui Por, who has been missing since October, was among three of the booksellers who Hong Kong police said earlier this week would be released on bail.

"Police met with Lui Por, who returned to Hong Kong from the mainland, this morning," a brief government statement released late yesterday said.

"Lui requested to have his missing persons case closed and expressed that there was no need for assistance from the Hong Kong government or police," it said, adding he refused to provide any more information.

Hong Kong police had said that Lui and his counterparts Cheung Chi Ping and Lam Wing Kee would all be

released on bail. However, police yesterday were not able to immediately provide information about Lam and Cheung when contacted by AFP.

An unnamed source quoted by the South China Morning Post said Lui was not handed over to the city's police by mainland authorities.

Instead, Hong Kong police were sent to meet Lui at his Hong Kong home, according to the newspaper.

"He told officers that he was safe and he did not need any assistance from the police," the source said.

Meanwhile, pro-democracy lawmaker Albert Ho said Lui "must be very scared" to say he wanted to drop his case.

"It's just to show the mainland authorities that he will keep quiet," Ho told AFP.

The five booksellers from Hong Kong's Mighty Current publishing house, known for its salacious titles critical of Beijing, went missing last

year, only to turn up in mainland China.

One who apparently disappeared from Hong Kong, Lee Bo, appeared on television on Monday and insisted he had not been abducted by mainland authorities.

In the Phoenix TV interview, Lee said he had "resorted to illegal immigration" to get to the mainland as he did not want to draw attention to his visit and that he made the trip so he could cooperate in an investigation.

The other four booksellers, who are under criminal investigation on the mainland, also appeared on Phoenix Sunday admitting to smuggling illicit books into China.

In their first appearance since they were detained, Cheung, Lui and Lam blamed the company's illegal book trade on colleague Gui Minhai in their interviews.

Gui, a Swedish citizen who was among the five missing, confessed he had "explored ways to circumvent

official inspections in China", in the interview Sunday.

Amnesty International yesterday sent Hong Kong leader Leung Chun-ying an open letter regarding the booksellers, pressing for action.

"Amnesty International calls for the Hong Kong government to urge the mainland authorities to immediately and unconditionally release the booksellers and facilitate their return to Hong Kong, or another destination of their choice," the letter said.

The case has heightened fears of increasing mainland Chinese interference in Hong Kong and sparked international condemnation.

Britain had said the disappearance of Lee, a British citizen, was a "serious breach" of an agreement signed with Beijing before the city was handed back to China in 1997 which protects its freedoms for 50 years.

Washington has called on China to explain the disappearances and the EU has urged an investigation.