



Illegal stone extraction with shallow machines from the Piayin river poses threat of erosion and land subsidence at different villages in Sylhet's Gowainghat upazila. The photo was taken from Bogaia village in Rustampur union a few days ago. PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Girl gang-raped in Bandarban

5-yr-old violated in Jessore

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Criminals raped a five-year-old girl and a teenager in Jessore and Bandarban yesterday and the day before.

Police yesterday arrested a man in connection with the gang rape of a fourteen-year-old girl at Fashiakhali in Lama upazila of Bandarban on Monday night, reports our correspondent.

The arrestee is Anwar Hossain, 28, Md Rubel, 21, another accused in the rape case filed with Lama Police Station under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, went into hiding.

The criminals forcibly took her to a remote hilly area while she was going to a local shop at about 6:30 pm on Monday, said the victim's family members and locals.

The criminals then gagged and raped her.

At one stage the victim was able to raise an alarm when the culprits fled.

On information, police went to the spot and took the victim to Lama Upazila Health Complex, from where she was sent to Bandarban Sadar Hospital, said Md Anwar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Lama Police Station.

Our Benapole Correspondent reports: A five-year-old girl was raped allegedly by a neighbouring youth at Ramnagar village in Jessore Sadar upazila yesterday.

The victim's father said Jihad Hossain, 27, son of late Ali Hossain, took the girl to his residence at noon and raped her.

Finding the girl absent at the house for a long time, family members started searching for her and found her at Jihad's house when she was bleeding, he said, adding that she was admitted to Sadar Hospital.

Tahmina Yeasmin, a doctor of Jessore Medical College Hospital, said they collected samples from the victim's body and sent them to a laboratory for test.

ILLEGAL STONE LIFTING IN GOWAINGHAT

Five Sylhet villages under threat of land subsidence

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Sylhet

Illegal stone extraction from a popular tourist spot in Gowainghat upazila of Sylhet is creating threat of land subsidence in Bichanakandi village and surrounding areas.

Officer-in-Charge of Gowainghat Police Station Delwar Hossain said three workers died as they were buried in land subsidence while digging a hole in a field for extracting stones near Badepasha Kheya Ghat in February.

Residents of Muslimpara, Bogaia, Bichanakandi, Bitorgul and Kuluncherrapar villages in the Piayin river area have been passing their days in panic following the incident.

On a visit to the area recently, this correspondent saw that the tourist spot has lost its greenery, and huge holes have been created due to stone lifting. Most of the houses are facing threat of erosion.

Monsur Ahmed of Bichanakandi said a group of illegal stone extractors

backed by stone traders are engaged in lifting stones from the river.

Milton Mia of Muslimpara village said they were living under threat of land subsidence due to extraction of stones.

Mohibul Islam, who came from Dinajpur with his family, said, "I visited this spot in 2012 and enjoyed it, but this time I did not enjoy like before due to the situation created by stone lifting.

Save the Heritage and Environment chief coordinator Abdul Hye Al Hadi said the stone lifters are dredging and excavating the banks of the river, which diverted the natural flow of the river.

The Piayin river has become unnavigable due to the illegal stone collecting with boma machines, Hadi said, adding that water cannot flow through the river during flood and hits the banks, causing erosion.

The illegal and machine-based stone collection should be stopped to protect the villages from erosion, he

added.

Gowainghat Upazila Chairman Abdul Hakim Chowdhury said unplanned stone lifting might cause land subsidence in the areas. Several large holes have been created in the river, making the nearby structures and riverbanks vulnerable, he added.

Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon's Sylhet chapter General Secretary Abdul Karim Kim said it is important to keep wetlands protected against siltation and degradation. Indiscriminate stone lifting may cause landslide at any time in the five affected villages, he added.

No effective measure has so far been taken to implement the existing laws by ensuring at least one exemplary punishment rather than just fine, Kim added.

The Department of Environment's Assistant Director Mustafizur Rahman told this correspondent that they will take legal action if anybody extracts stones in the area without permission.

Woman killed for dowry

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A housewife was allegedly murdered for dowry in Nawabganj upazila of the district on Monday.

The deceased was Sabina Begum, 23, daughter of Saiful Islam of South Basudevpur village under Phulbari upazila, and wife of Rezwan Mia of Debipur village in Nawabganj upazila.

After receiving an anonymous phone call saying his daughter was dead, Saiful rushed to Sabina's house with police and found her hanging from the ceiling. Rezwan and his family members fled the spot before their arrival.

Police recovered the body and sent it to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Rezwan and his father used to torture Sabina over dowry after her marriage, Saiful said. Rezwan and his parents beat her up on Monday night and hung her from the ceiling, Saiful alleged.

66 females raped or abused in 5 months

Number of sexual harassment incidents alarming in Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Sixty-six females, including children, were victims of rape and sexual harassment from January till May 23 this year in the district, and the number continues to increase alarmingly despite filing of cases against the rapists.

Gaibandha Sadar Hospital Superintendent Dr Nuruzzaman Ahmed said incidents of rape and repression on girls and children have increased in the society. There were 10 such incidents in January, 15 in February, 17 in March, 13 in April and 11 in May in different places. The victims of all such incidents were taken to hospital for medical test.

Police arrested the culprits and produced them before the court for justice, but this is not enough, said Superintendent of Police in Gaibandha Maskurur Rahman Khaled. A social revolution is needed to stop repression on women and girls, and the guardians should be more aware about the safety of their children, he added.

Locals said Harun Mia of Gopalpur village in Gaibandha Sadar upazila arranged a religious function at his house on May 19 where Jainul Abedin, alias Maisha Pagla, was present. At one

stage Maisha and Harun took the three-and-half-year-old daughter of a farm labourer to a nearby lonely place, where they tried to violate her. On hearing the girl's screams, locals rushed to the spot and rescued her.

Thousands of people of the village formed a human chain at Gopalpur bazar on Monday, demanding exemplary punishment to Maisha and Harun.

On May 16, Golam Azam of Laxmipur village took a Class IX girl student of Laxmipur High School and College to his house, promising to help her in getting her board registration, and attempted to rape her there.

On hearing the hue and cry locals rushed to the spot and rescued the girl, but Golam fled the scene.

Students and teachers of the institution agitated over the issue, demanding exemplary punishment to the accused.

On May 10, an eight-year-old girl was violated by her neighbour Farid Mia of Madha Bhangamore village in Sadullapur upazila.

Nine more incidents of violation and harassment took place during the month of May.



Physically challenged Rasel Talukder, an HSC examinee, manages his education cost by teaching students at his house at Kirtipasha in Jhalakathi Sadar upazila. PHOTO: STAR

Rasel, symbol of overcoming challenges

M JAHIRUL ISLAM JEWEL, Jhalakathi

Defying congenital physical challenge and poverty, Rasel Talukder appeared at the HSC examinations this year as a business studies student of Government Jhalakathi Government College.

The boy, now 17, cannot walk, stand, even sit or move properly without the help of others as his legs as well as the whole body did not grow proportionately.

"At first we were not interested to send Rasel to school. But he started learning sitting beside his younger brother at home. Seeing his eagerness to learn, we admitted him to a nearby primary school and his mother carried him to school regularly," said Rasel's father A Khalek Talukder.

"My mother took me to school in her arms regularly up to Class VI. When I was a student of Class VII, I got a wheelchair from an organisation. It eased my movement although I had to take the help of neighbouring class friends and my younger brother who pushed the wheelchair for taking me to school," said Rasel.

After passing the SSC examinations with good result from Isanil High School in Jhalakathi Sadar, Rasel got himself

admitted to Jhalakathi Government College in 2015.

"Despite our poverty and his physical problem, Rasel was determined to continue study. To manage the education cost himself, he started teaching younger students when he was in Class VIII and soon earned fame as a good tutor in the area," said Rasel's mother Rekha Begum.

"Rasel Sir is a very good teacher who helps us to understand difficult topics," said Rasel's student Takia Aktar, who reads in Class VII.

"Now I earn Tk 4000 to 5000 per month by teaching students in the morning and afternoon while some poor students get free coaching from me," said Rasel.

During free time, Rasel also helps his cousin to run a tea stall.

Rasel's parents said they now feel proud of the boy who has already become an asset for the society and earned love and trust of all for his honesty and good manners.

He wants to join teaching profession after completion of his higher study.

"Rasel was a regular student who served as an inspiration for others," said Prof AKM Mujibur Rahman, principal of Jhalakathi Government College.

Rapid change in char women's life

Many female workers come out of households for jobs in Jamuna char areas

MAMUN-UR-RASHID, Bogra

The life of women sees a rapid change as increasing number of female workers in the Jamuna river char areas of the district are getting engaged in jobs outside their households.

The poverty-stricken women in Sariakandi upazila previously had to work in households for a small amount of broken and low quality rice as wages, which was not sufficient for feeding their family members.

Many chars, landmass emerging from riverbed, have appeared in the Jamuna river under five unions of the upazila.

Once the women had to do such jobs and pass their days in hardship, the villagers said. The situation has changed now as they have been

contributing to their families like the male members, working in chilli, paddy, pumpkin, wheat and maize fields, they said. The women have proved their worth through their devotion and integrity, they added.

Upazila Social Service Officer Md Abdur Rashid said the women are engaged in cultivating chilli, paddy, pumpkin, wheat, maize and other crops, and are also working in rice-husking mills.

The chilli farm owners are engaging female workers for Tk 130 to Tk 150 a day as they are sincere workers and chilli farming has been getting popular, he added.

Upazila Project Implementation Officer (PIO) Sarwar Alam said the distressed women are engaged in repairing flood-affected roads and building markets and other govern-

ment establishments under projects run by PIO and Local Government Engineering Department.

Jahiron at Char Benipur said the women are busy in different works and the earning helps them to maintain their families. She said they are getting the same wages as male workers, which was not the case earlier.

Van puller Shailesh Kumar said his wife Kalyani Das earns Tk 130 to Tk 150 daily working at a chilli field and now they are able to send their two daughters to school.

Phulbari Union Parishad Chairman Anwaruttarik Mohammad said the lifestyle of the common people, especially the women, has improved a lot and

begging as well as crimes have decreased.

Sarwar said female workers have been engaged in government development works on a priority basis as they have been doing the works efficiently.

The women of at least 116 char villages in Kazla, Chaluabari, Kornibari, Bohail, Chandambaisha, Hat Sherpur and Sariakandi Sadar unions are engaged in different jobs, said Sarwar.

Of around one lakh people, at least 20, 000 women have been benefited from different income-generating activities in the chars and thus changing their lifestyle, Rashid said, adding that now they can arrange schooling for their children.



These women, like many others in Sariakandi upazila of Bogra, have brought changes in their life as well as their families by engaging in gainful jobs outside. The photo was taken from Char Banipur in Kazla union of Sariakandi. PHOTO: MAMUN-UR-RASHID