

'RAPE' IN BANANI

Accused 'confesses his involvement'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bahauddin Ivan, 28, has admitted raping a woman at his home in Banani on Wednesday, claimed Rapid Action Battalion yesterday.

Ivan, accused in the latest Banani rape case, also told Rab interrogators that he had been abusing drugs since 2005, Mufti Mahmud, director of legal and media wing of the elite force, said at a press conference.

Ivan's close relatives told Rab officials that he was no stranger to scandals involving women, the officer told reporters at Rab Media Centre in the capital.

"During primary interrogation, he [Ivan] admitted his role in the incident," Mufti said, referring to the rape allegation.

Rab arrested Ivan at his aunt's home in Majdair area of Narayanganj on Thursday.

Ivan told Rab that there were some video clips involving the plaintiff in his possession, but Rab couldn't find them, the officer said.

The woman in the First Information Report mentioned that Ivan threatened to upload the clips on the internet and blackmailed her.

"Ivan was hiding on the roof as police raided his Banani home on Wednesday morning," he said.

He later tried to hide in Chairman Bari in Banani and in Uttara. He eventually spent the night at a relative's



Ivan

house in Dakshin Khan. Ivan went to his aunt's place in Narayanganj's Majdair on Thursday. Rab handed him over to Banani police yesterday. Sub-Inspector Sultana Akhter of Banani Police Station, who is investigating the case, told The Daily Star that she would seek court's permission for a forensic examination on the tee-shirt the plaintiff was wearing that night.

On March 28, two university students were allegedly raped after they attended a birthday party at a Banani hotel. Police have pressed charges against five accused in the case.

Rab official Mufti said they talked to Ivan's parents, close relatives and friends for information leading to his arrest. "Ivan's father cooperated with Rab by providing necessary information on the whereabouts of his son."

Ivan dropped out of school when he was in class-IX and went into rehab twice for drug abuse.

His parents got him married in 2008 hoping that would change his way of living, said the Rab officer, adding that Ivan was a father of two.

Asked, whether the accused "drugged" the woman, the officer said it would be known after forensic tests.

In the case filed with Banani Police Station on Wednesday, the 21-year-old woman said she met Ivan on Facebook around 11 months ago, and they later started dating.

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A government primary school in Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar is partially submerged in water as flood hit the district recently. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

Floodwater recedes, diseases spread

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said, "We've been here for two weeks, but nobody gave us relief aid."

Gitesh Das, Sekoi Mia and Kotu Das from Maijgaon village in Sylhet's Fenchuganj upazila said they didn't have relief aid yet.

Moulvibazar Civil Surgeon Dr Saytakam Chakrabary said 67 medical

teams were working in three flood-hit upazilas to prevent any outbreak of waterborne diseases.

Himangshu Roy, civil surgeon of Sylhet, said 78 medical teams were deployed in the district's eight upazilas. They distributed oral saline and water purifying tablets among the flood victims.

JAMALPUR

Vast areas of low-lying lands in seven unions of Islampur upazila and four in Dewanganj went under water yesterday, leaving around 15,000 families marooned, according to upazila administrations.

Selim Khan, chairman of Chukaibari Union Parishad in

Dewanganj, said around 250 families took shelter near a government warehouse in the upazila town.

Ahmed Kabir, deputy commissioner of Jamalpur, said the district administration was taking preparation to stand by the flood-hit people with relief aid.

Our correspondents in Moulvibazar and Jamalpur contributed to this report.

FARHAD MAZHAR

Investigators grapple with confusions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Investigators are having trouble solving the Farhad Mazhar kidnapping mystery as the case is riddled with confusions and questions, said DB officials.

They need some clarification from Farhad but are failing to get that because he is still in hospital, said Golam Mostofa Rashel, additional deputy commissioner of Detective Branch.

"We're now waiting for his recovery to solve the puzzle," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Farhad, a poet, columnist and political analyst, in his judicial statement said several unidentified men had forced him into a microbus and blindfolded him minutes after he came out of his Adabor home to buy medicine early Monday morning.

His wife Farida Akhter held a press conference at their home around 10:00pm on Monday, about an hour

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Finally, they meet

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presidency last year. But he has been unable to deliver on that pledge because his administration has been dogged by investigations into the allegations of Russian interference in the election and ties between his campaign and Moscow. Trump says his team did not collude with Russia.

Speaking on the sidelines of a G20 summit in Hamburg, Tillerson said the two leaders "had a very robust and lengthy exchange on the subject. The president pressed President Putin on more than one occasion regarding Russian involvement".

"The two leaders agreed that this is a substantial hindrance in the ability of us to move the Russian-US relationship forward," Tillerson told reporters.

They agreed to work on commitments of "non-interference in the affairs of the United States and our democratic process as well as those in other countries", he added.

The face-to-face encounter was one of the most eagerly anticipated meetings between two leaders in years.

Trump and Putin spoke through translators with their respective foreign ministers present for six minutes

before reporters were allowed into the room for their statements. Afterwards the reporters were ushered out and the meeting continued.

"President Putin and I have been discussing various things, and I think it's going very well," Trump told reporters, sitting alongside the Russian leader.

"We've had some very, very good talks. We're going to have a talk now and obviously that will continue. We look forward to a lot of very positive things happening for Russia, for the United States and for everybody concerned. And it's an honour to be with you."

Putin, through a translator, said: "We spoke over the phone with you several times," adding: "A phone conversation is never enough."

"I am delighted to be able to meet you personally, Mr. President," he said, noting that he hoped the meeting would yield results.

Both men sat with legs splayed. Trump listened intently as Putin spoke.

The meeting lasted more than two hours and US first lady Melania Trump came in at one point to urge them to conclude, Tillerson said.

Before the meeting, some feared the Republican president, a political novice whose team is still developing its Russia policy, would be less prepared for the talks than Putin, a former KGB agent who has dealt with the last two US presidents and scores of other world leaders.

Amid criticism of Russia's actions in Ukraine and Syria and the investigations into its role in the US campaign, Trump has come under growing pressure to take a hard line against the Kremlin.

On Thursday, Trump delivered some of his sharpest remarks about Moscow since becoming president, urging Russia to stop its "destabilising activities" and end its support for Syria and Iran.

But Trump stopped short on Thursday of any personal criticism of Putin and declined to say definitively whether he believed US intelligence officials' assertion that Russia had interfered in the 2016 US election.

"I think it was Russia but I think it was probably other people and/or countries, and I see nothing wrong with that statement. Nobody really knows. Nobody really knows for sure," Trump said on a visit to Poland.

Searching

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members and renewing existing memberships than keeping records.

AL DRIVE FOR NEW MEMBERSHIP

The AL has temporary and permanent members.

If members do not pay the triennial fees, they could lose their memberships but party officials have no idea how many members pay the fees since they have no record.

AL sources said almost every day its 77 organisational district units collect forms and receipts from the party president's Dhanmondi office for recruiting new members and renewing memberships, but the units do not return those.

According to the party sources, the ruling party is now aiming for first-time voters and to bring them under the party umbrella before the 2019 national elections. It also puts emphasis on recruiting women.

Talking to The Daily Star, AL presidium member Faruk Khan said they were not satisfied with the recruitment progress and hoped that it would accelerate now as the month of Ramadan has ended.

Faruk said, "We did not set any target ... we will collect as many as we can."

After the AL assumed power in 2009, several thousand BNP-Jamaat men were believed to have joined the party, apparently to have their names off politically motivated cases and avoid potential harassment by law enforcers.

While inaugurating the member recruitment drive, Hasina warned party grassroots leaders against allowing any "bad elements" into the AL.

AL insiders, however, said efforts to stop such infiltration might not be very effective due to the lack of records and databases.

BNP TARGETS ONE CRORE NEW MEMBERS

According to its charter, BNP headquarters must have a database of its members with their addresses. All its organisational district units also have to have the same.

Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, senior joint secretary general of the party, told The

Daily Star, "We have a database of the party's executive committee members but we do not have any database of primary members."

Rizvi, who is also an office secretary of the party, said the BNP has millions of activists and supporters across the country and it was difficult to keep their records in a database.

Asked if the BNP maintains any list of its primary members, almost all organising secretaries of the party replied in the negative. None of them could specifically say how many members their units had.

The party had taken an initiative to make a digital database of its members.

Rizvi said they would try to make that happen this year.

On August 16, 2010, the BNP began its drive for fresh members (primary members who will become permanent members in one year's time) and renewal of existing memberships. It had set a target of 5 million members but the party did not know what that drive achieved.

This time, the BNP aims at recruiting one crore members in two months.

EXPERTS SAY

Former Dhaka University vice-chancellor Prof Emajuddin Ahmed told The Daily Star that it was essential for any political party to have a database of its members and that it was a key to ensuring discipline.

He believes political parties launch member recruitment drives ahead of elections only to allure young voters of the first-time voters.

Emajuddin, a political scientist, hoped that the two major parties would make their databases after completing their drives.

Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), said, "Membership drives of our political parties are more often an election-related affair rather than a part of any well-designed strategy to build institutional capacity of the party."

"There is rarely any effective membership policy anchored on political ideology. It is usually for short-term electoral advantage rather than for developing organisational and leadership capacity and structure."

Country's first nano satellite in orbit

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topographical data could be obtained, said Brac university officials.

It would relay audio signals and be used for communications during emergencies via amateur "ham" radio equipment. It would also be able to measure atmospheric density before disintegrating on re-entry at the end of its six-month lifespan, they added.

A ground station on the university premises in the capital's Mohakhali area is maintaining communication with the satellite -- downloading information and data collected by it.

Along with Brac Onnesha, four other similar nano-satellites developed by students of Ghana, Japan, Mongolia, and Nigeria were also

deployed into orbit by ISS astronauts yesterday.

Bangladesh Ambassador in Japan Rabab Fatima, who attended a press conference along with other dignitaries from other countries at Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency soon after the deployment, said the moment was "historic" as it took "Bangladesh to a new height".

"The space is the ultimate frontier for human advancement," she said, adding that such progress in the field of advanced technology would not only have great impact on students but would also greatly benefit the countries.

Science and Technology Minister Yafes Osman said science students have to come forward and express themselves and "sell their ideas" for

the country's advancement.

"And you have to sell these ideas in people's language," added Yafes, who attended the ceremony at Brac University as chief guest.

On June 4, the nanosat was launched into space from the Kennedy Space Center in the US. The SpaceX FALCON 9 rocket carried the nanosat to the ISS.

On 8 February, Brac University became the first Bangladeshi educational institution to get its very own nano-satellite, developed and assembled by three of its students -- Abdulla Hil Kafi, Raihana Shams Antara and Maisun Ibn Monowar -- using technology and facilities of Kyutech, where they are pursuing higher education.

The idea of nano-satellite tech-

nology was first raised to the Brac University authorities by Arifur Rahman Khan, an assistant professor at the University of Texas in Austin. He was teaching at Kyutech back then.

It was then taken forward by his acquaintance, Associate Prof Md Khalilur Rahman of the Brac University's computer science and engineering department. The university started space and remote sensing research in collaboration with Kyutech and Bangladesh Space Research and Remote Sensing Organisation in 2014.

On May 25, Brac founder and Chairperson Sir Fazle Hasan Abed formally inaugurated the ground station on the roof of Building-4 of the university.

judges are set to retire this year.

"There is one judge for every 10,000 and 67,000 people in the USA and India respectively. But in Bangladesh, we have one judge for more than 1 lakh people," Law Commission Chairman Justice ABM Khairul Haque had observed earlier.

The last time the Appellate Division saw new judges was on February 8 last year when Justice Mirza Hussain Haider, Justice Md Nizamul Huq and Justice Mohammad Bazlur Rahman were sworn in.

The total number of Appellate Division judges reached 11 on July 9, 2009 when the president brought in four new judges for disposal of some important cases including the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh

Mujibur Rahman and the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution.

In the HC, services of eight out of nine judges were regularised by President Abdul Hamid in February this year, two years after they had joined as additional judges.

An SC source said Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha in last one year has twice asked the government to appoint at least 10 judges to the HC.

"I advised the government to appoint eight additional judges to the High Court in August 2016 after a long discussion with the law minister," he told the National Judicial Conference 2016 in the capital's Bangabandhu International Conference Centre on December 24 last year.

"On mutual consent, a recommendation was sent to the government for appointing the judges, but the process has yet to see the light in four months," he said.

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) has long been demanding appointment of judges to the vacant posts for quick disposal of the pending cases.

SCBA President Advocate Zainul Abedin told this correspondent yesterday that qualified, skilled and experienced judges had to be appointed to the Appellate and HC divisions by formulating a law to establish justice, rule of law and democracy.

If such judges were not appointed, development of the judiciary would not take place, he observed.

Saudi, allies

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Since last month, the countries have cut diplomatic and transport ties with Qatar, which they accuse of supporting terrorism and allying with regional foe Iran. Doha denies the charges.

Among their demands were orders for Qatar to curtail its support for the Muslim Brotherhood, shut down the pan-Arab al Jazeera TV channel, close a Turkish military base in Doha and downgrade its ties with Iran.

Meanwhile, US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis reaffirmed America's strategic security partnership with Qatar on Thursday, the Pentagon said.

It was also announced that Secretary of State Rex Tillerson will travel to Kuwait -- the key mediator in the crisis -- on July 10 to discuss the

row.

Mattis, who spoke with his Qatari counterpart Khaled bin Mohammed al-Attiyah by phone, discussed the status of operations against the Islamic State group.

Qatar hosts a vital US-led command center at the Al-Udeid air base, where the anti-IS coalition launches raids against the jihadists.

"Secretary Mattis and Minister al-Attiyah affirmed their commitment to continued US-Qatar cooperation and deepening their strategic partnership," a Pentagon readout of the conversation stated.

Mattis stressed the importance of de-escalating tensions "so all partners in the Gulf region can focus on next steps in meeting common goals," the readout stated.

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He, however, did not specifically say when and how many judges would be appointed to the Appellate and HC divisions.

The president would take the decision to that end after consulting with the prime minister and the chief justice, the law minister added.

Among the Appellate Division judges, Justice Mohammad Bazlur Rahman passed away on January 1, Justice Md Nizamul Huq retired in April and Justice Nazmun Ara Sultana retired yesterday.

Among the 86 HC judges, three have been hearing war crimes cases in the International Crimes Tribunal. Justice JN Deb Choudhury died on December 15 last year, Justice Shamim Hasnain retired in April and three

Top court faces acute shortage of judges