

Operation on Siddiqur's eye conducted

Four-six weeks needed to know the outcome

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Doctors at Sankara Nethralaya in India's Chennai yesterday operated on the left eye of Titumir college student Siddiqur Rahman, whose eyes were damaged in police action during a protest last month.

Lingam Gopal, a senior retina specialist, started the surgery around 3:30pm. After the three-hour operation, Siddiqur was taken to bed, said Zahidul Ahsan Menon, assistant professor of National Institute of Ophthalmology in Dhaka, who is accompanying Siddiqur.

"Siddiqur is physically well," he added. But nothing could be known about the condition of his operated eye.

Siddiqur's bandage will be removed tomorrow. To assess his visual outcome, it may take four to six weeks," Zahidul told The Daily Star over phone.

Earlier, Lingam said he saw little hope of Siddiqur getting his eyesight back even if a surgery was conducted. But he left it up to Siddiqur to take a decision about the operation.

On July 20, students of seven Dhaka University-affiliated colleges,

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The footpath on Mayor Hanif flyover in the capital's Jatrabari is littered with garbage, and in no way it can be used by pedestrians. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

House help

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spread that "her employer hacked her" as she went to the house to claim her due salary, her neighbours and locals besieged the building at 3:00pm, said local rickshaw-puller Abdul Khalek.

"The protesters started pelting bricks at the building indiscriminately, damaging windows of different floors," said Khalek, who suffered head injuries as he was passing the nearby road carrying a passenger.

They also set a microbus on fire, he told The Daily Star.

As police tried to disperse the locals, they threw rocks on the law enforcers, resulting in a chase and counter-chase.

Police responded by firing rubber bullets and teargas shells, forcing the protesters to retreat. They again gathered and rained bricks on the police around 7:15pm, forcing the law enforcers to retreat. Police again fired teargas shells and rubber bullets.

Officer-in-Charge of Khilgaon police Kazi Mainul Islam told The Daily Star they detained house owner Moeen Uddin, a retired customs official, and a guard for questioning.

Laily is originally from Fulbaria upazila of Kurigram and had two children. Her husband Nazrul Islam is in an Indian jail, locals said.

She was supposed to go her native village with her children after collecting four month's pay of Tk 24,000 from her employer, said Noor Islam, Laily's brother-in-law.

"Laily was suppose to come back home before noon but we came to know about her death in the afternoon," he said.

Laily used to live in India's Hariana along with her husband, but she came back to Bangladesh around two years back with her children. Her husband was later arrested by Indian police one and a half years ago for illegal stay, said Noor.

About a year ago, Laily started working at Moeen's house, where she worked from 6:00am till 10:00pm, he added.

Biman

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shortage of passengers set to get onboard, he added.

Ashkona Hajj Camp Director Saiful Islam said 35,294 pilgrims had left for Saudi till of 9:00am yesterday.

Biman operated five while Saudi Airlines operated eight hajj flights carrying over 4,000 pilgrims yesterday, according to officials of the two airlines.

One of the cancelled flights was originally scheduled to fly on Thursday at 10:15am. Biman, then, said it would fly after 48 hours.

"But due to shortage of passengers, Biman finally cancelled the flight that was supposed to fly at 10:15am tomorrow [today]," Shakil said.

The other cancelled flight was supposed to leave Dhaka today at 2:35am.

The national flag carrier has so far canceled 14 flights which could carry over 6,000 pilgrims, Shakil added.

Biman and Saudi Arabian Airlines started hajj flights from July 24. No other airline is allowed to operate hajj flights.

Biman will have to take 63,599 pilgrims by August 26 while Saudi Airlines will take as many pilgrims by August 27.

Top officials of religious affairs ministry and Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh told The Daily Star that they believed all pilgrims would be taken to Saudi Arabia on time if Biman does not have to cancel flights in the coming days.

Meanwhile, the religious affairs ministry, in a circular, informed hajj agencies that repeat pilgrims must pay an additional Tk 44,000.

HAAB Secretary General Taslim said nearly 5,600 repeat hajjis have agreed to pay the additional fee.

Take back Rohingyas

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Othaimeen said pressure will be put on Myanmar to give them citizenship and return their assets so that the refugees can go back to their own country.

He held a meeting with local government and non-government officials.

The OIC Secretary General had a long conversation with a number of women who were brutally tortured by the Myanmar troops. He also had separate conversations with a group of another 30 males and females in an IOM-run school.

While talking to journalists, Othaimeen thanked the government and the people of Bangladesh for hosting the refugees for more than three decades and for providing humanitarian assistances to them.

During his conversation with the Myanmarese refugees, he also urged the Rohingya people to abide by Bangladeshi laws.

Senior government officials, senior BGB officials and representatives of international bodies were present there.

Earlier on Thursday, the OIC chief reminded Myanmar that Rohingya people must be granted full citizenship and basic rights.

"Rohingya people are denied their basic rights. They need to be recognised ... They must return to their country. They must have their full citizenship," he said.

Othaimeen, who arrived here on Wednesday night on a four-day tour,

also called upon Myanmar government to come up with a roadmap on how to go forward to settle the issue peacefully.

This was Othaimeen's first visit to Bangladesh.

He met President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali on Thursday.

On July 24, United Nations Special Rapporteur Yanghee Lee, after her visit to Myanmar, accused its government of adopting policies reminiscent of the previous military regime and presiding over a worsening security and human rights situation.

"I continue to receive reports of violations allegedly committed by security forces during operations,"

she said.

Besides, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Filippo Grandi at a press conference on July 10 after meeting refugees in Cox's Bazar said the Muslim minorities in Rakhine state cannot move freely without authorisation and cannot access basic services like healthcare, education and their livelihoods easily.

"These people deserve a better future than the present conditions of extreme poverty, deprivation and isolation," the UN high commissioner said and put emphasis on implementation of the citizenship verification process "efficiently and rapidly" which will help unblock all the remaining barriers to the solution.

Traceless for three months

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Urur Char union unit AL in Chittagong's Sandwip upazila, went to visit Padua Nazimia Darbar Sharif at Kabirhat in Noakhali on May 11.

Some 15 people in two minibuses picked him up on his way to a nearby pond around 7:30pm the next day, Mamun's wife Farzana Bobby told The Daily Star.

Since then, his mobile phone has been switched off.

Mamun's sister Selina Akhter Shelly filed a general diary with Kabirhat Police Station on May 13.

Bobby along with her 16-month-

old child has been passing her days in anxiety.

"We contacted police, Rab and the home ministry, but we are yet to know whether any step has been taken to trace my husband," she said.

"Can we think of a civilised country where law enforcers cannot trace the whereabouts of a man three months into his abduction?" she asked.

Bobby added that Mamun owned a department store at Bandartila in the port city, but she was compelled to sell it to maintain the family.

She said, "I believe my husband

will return ... What else can I do? I didn't get any response from police or Rab."

Contacted, Mohammad Shahjahan, president of Sandwip upazila unit AL, said Mamun was very popular in his locality.

"It is very unfortunate that law enforcers seem to be not so active in rescuing him," he added.

Mamun's nephew Syed Rafiqul Islam Suman said they had also lodged written complaints with Rab-7 and the Rab Headquarters.

Mirza Mohammad Hasan, officer-in-charge of Kabirhat Police Station,

admitted that a GD was filed with the police station, but said no case was lodged in this regard.

"We are trying our best to find out a clue [about the abduction]," he said.

Lt Col Miftah Uddin Ahmed, commanding officer of Rab-7, told this correspondent yesterday that they got a complaint.

"We asked the victim's wife to come to our office and give them her husband's mobile number and other information, but she said she was sick and would come later."

But she never came, he added.

Save hills, save lives

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coordinated actions to stop illegal encroachments.

It also asked the government to relocate the hill people to safe areas, carry out development projects or construction works after making environment impact assessments (EIS) and use appropriate technology suitable for hill topography.

The report also suggested drawing up an appropriate land use plan,

designing an appropriate drainage system, ensuring early warning from the Met department to the local authorities and vulnerable population.

The UNDP called for building environmental awareness among local communities through traditional institutions, and integrating environmental education in the school curriculum.

It recommended ensuring climate

resilience funding for the climate change mitigation/adaptation projects and nurturing the local beliefs and practices that sustain the environment.

LONG-TERM ACTIONS

The UN body suggested setting up a dedicated Disaster Risk Management Cell for the three hill districts and training officials in the districts on hill development and management aspects.

It also suggested formulating a hill

management policy based on the experiences and lessons from the neighboring counties, allocating at least five percent of the annual national budget for conservation of the hills and forests, and promoting social-cohesion and implementation of CHT Peace Accord.

The report, however, said rebuilding houses, resumption of livelihoods and foods were the top current priorities in the hills.

Is rape rising?

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Between January and June, 319 incidents of rape took place, according to rights body Ain o Salish Kendra tally, made from media reports.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad puts the figure at 429. In addition, 104 incidents of gang rape and 80 incidents of sexual harassment were reported during the same period.

According to Manusher Jonno Foundation, 229 children have been raped in the last seven months.

The Daily Star reported at least 13 incidents of rape in which 16 women and children were violated in July alone. One victim was as young as four, who was allegedly killed by the perpetrator after rape.

Of these incidents, the alleged rape of the Bogra college student by the now-suspended Sramik League leader Tufan Sarkar sparked a firestorm of public outrage.

The victim said Tufan abducted her from her home on July 17 and raped her. He then asked his party men and woman councillor Marzia Akter Rumki to cover it up.

So they picked up the victim and her mother, tortured them for four hours and then shaved their heads.

Yesterday, doctors found evidence of rape after a forensic test on her at Bogra Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital, said Abul Kalam Azad, the investigation officer of the case.

Meanwhile, Tufan and his sister-in-law Rumki were placed on two-day fresh remand yesterday. They were placed on remand twice before.

In another development, Tufan's associate Munna gave a confessional statement before a court yesterday. Tufan's two other aides Atik and Jibon Rabi Das already confessed their role in the crime.

BCL LEADERS HELD
Police arrested six people, including two Chhatra League leaders, on Thursday over sexual harassment of a college girl.

Sohel Rana Shanto, vice-president of Sirajganj district BCL, Ashraf Islam Don, president of Natuapara union BCL, and four of their associates were held from different villages of Kazipur upazila.

They were sent to jail, said police.

The central BCL expelled Soheli and Ashraf on Thursday night over the allegation, said Zakirul Islam Limon, president of Sirajganj district BCL.

Samit Kumar Kundu, officer-in-charge of Kazipur Police Station, said the girl and her two friends came to her relative's house at Natuapara on Wednesday morning from Bogra.

When the three were about to leave for Bogra in the afternoon, the BCL leaders stormed the girl's relative's home yard and sexually assaulted her. Hearing screams, neighbours rescued the girl and her two friends, he said quoting the victim.

The girl filed a case on Wednesday night accusing six people.

ANOTHER ARRESTED
Police yesterday arrested a college student for allegedly raping a woman on May 15. He also captured video of the rape and circulated it on the internet.

Accused Al Mamun, 24, is a first-year student in a Natore college and son of a former ward-level Awami League leader.

Primary investigation found the allegation to be true, said Sayedur Rahman Bhuiyan, OC of Puthia Police Station.

Philippines' Duterte orders free state college education

AFP, Manila

President Rodrigo Duterte has signed a law making education at all state universities free, a palace official said yesterday, despite warnings from his economic advisors that the Philippines cannot afford it.

Duterte, who is known for his populist leanings, believes the long-term benefits of the measure outweigh the short-term budgetary challenges, said deputy presidential executive secretary Menardo Guevarra.

"Free tertiary education in state universities and colleges is a very strong pillar or cornerstone of the president's social development policy," he told reporters.

Exoplanet

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used spectroscopy to analyse how the planet's brightness changed at different wavelengths of light.

Water vapour in the planet's atmosphere, for example, behaves in predictable ways in response to certain wavelengths of light, depending on the temperature of the water.

At cooler temperatures, water vapour blocks light from beneath it. However, at higher temperatures, the water molecules glow.

The water molecules in the atmosphere of WASP-121b similarly give off radiation as they lose energy, but it is in the form of infrared light, which the human eye is unable to detect.

"Theoretical models have suggested that stratospheres may define a special class of ultra-hot exoplanets, with important implications for the atmospheric physics and chemistry," said Tom Evans from the University of Exeter in the UK.

"When we pointed Hubble at WASP-121b, we saw glowing water molecules, implying that the planet has a strong stratosphere," Evans said, lead author of the study published in the journal Nature.

The exoplanet orbits its host star every 1.3 days, and the two bodies are about as close as they can be to each other without the star's gravity ripping the planet apart.

This close proximity means that the top of the atmosphere is heated to a blazing hot 2,500 degrees Celsius - the temperature at which iron exists in gas rather than solid form.

China holds

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participants that included the operator of Microsoft's cloud service in China.

China's Ministry of Public Security called for the drill "in order to step up online security for the 19th Party Congress and tackle the problem of smaller websites illegally disseminating harmful information", according to a document circulating online attributed to a cyber police unit in Guangzhou.

An officer who answered the phone in the Guangzhou public security bureau confirmed the drill but declined to elaborate.

President Xi Jinping has overseen a tightening of China's cyberspace controls, including tough new data surveillance and censorship rules. This push is now ramping up ahead of an expected consolidation of power at the Communist Party Congress this autumn.

The drill asked internet data centres to practice shutting down target web pages speedily and report relevant details to the police, including the affected websites' contact details, IP address and server location.

China's cyberspace administration declined to comment, saying it was not the correct department to address the question to. China's Ministry of Public Security did not respond to a faxed request for comment.

Several service providers, including 21Vianet Group and VeryCloud, issued notices to users, warning of possible temporary service disruptions on Thursday afternoon as a result of the drill, which were confirmed to Reuters by their customer service representatives.

Nasdaq-listed 21 Vianet Group is China's largest carrier-neutral internet data centre services provider according to its website, and counts many Western multinationals including Microsoft, IBM, Cisco and HP among its clients. It runs Microsoft's Azure-based services in China.

21 Vianet Group did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment.

Kalsindur

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peasant father could not afford to provide for her transport expenditures.

"This is my dream come true," said the girl of Gamaritola village in the upazila.

Halima Akhtar, another 10th grader said the bikes would boost the girls' enthusiasm for studies.

Rafiqul Hasan, brand manager of Pran-RFL Group, said people who have the means should do something for women in rural areas.

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Unwanted!

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wanted a boy, she said. "There was always a feud over this before he set his daughter on fire on July 30."

According to the complaint, Jahirul used petrol to do this and he did not take the girl to a hospital, which led to the infant's death.

Kulsum Begum told The Daily Star that her husband was a drug addict and used to abuse her frequently.

She demanded justice for the "murder" of her daughter.

Sonargaon Police Station Inspector Sheikh Mofizul Islam recovered the body of the baby and sent it to Narayanganj General Hospital for an autopsy.

Officer-in-Charge Morshed Alam said the complaint was accepted, and police were trying to arrest the accused and his family members, all of whom were absconding.