

'Kidnapper' tutor held in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police caught a tutor red-handed taking a ransom after "kidnapping" his student in the capital's Pallabi yesterday afternoon.

The arrestee, Hasan Al Banna, 30, was a tutor of a nursery student of a school in Pallabi, Dadon Fakir, officer-in-charge of Pallabi Police Station, told The Daily Star.

Banna "abducted" the six-year-old boy when he was going to school around 10:00am and asked his student's family to pay Tk 2 lakh as ransom through a mobile banking account, the OC said.

As per his demand, the boy's father Yunus Laskar, Nalchhiti upazila chairman in Jhalakathi, first "paid him Tk 15,000" through a mobile banking account and informed police of the incident, the police official said.

Police arrested the "kidnapper" when he along with the boy was waiting for the next payment on Mirpur Avenue-5 around 2:00pm, the OC added.

Yunus later filed a case against Banna with Pallabi Police Station.

Community

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People can leave surplus food in the fridge -- either home-made or bought from a restaurant. Anyone who is hungry is free to open the fridge and take something they want. No questions asked. No identity card required.

Tired and hungry, 72-year-old ragpicker J Kumar energised himself with bananas and fruit juice he collected from this cool machine. "For an abandoned person like me this is a boon. If I don't get food for lunch, I'd normally lie down hungry," he said.

The community fridge was the idea of Dr Issa Fathima Jasmine, an orthodontist. She said a high percentage of the food that India produces goes waste. "Actually we can feed double our population. But wastage is around 50 percent. We are only asking people to bring the food that they would otherwise have thrown into the dustbin," Jasmin said.

On Saturday, around lunch time, a group of children stacked the fridge with sandwiches, juice and other goodies. An employee from a local restaurant also left a box full of biryani. The fridge contained, among other foods, bananas, oranges and pomegranates.

"There are hungry children collecting food from garbage. We should think a hundred times before we waste even a single grain. There are many who don't get even that," said Kamakshi, a 12-year-old student who left a food packet in the fridge.

Priyanka Seth, another student, said, "Think once about all those people who starve." Other students said they keep replenishing the fridge regularly.

People can also donate books, clothes, toys and footwear. A shelf adjoining the refrigerator has them all.

Antony, a Class 9 student who has lost his parents, took home a pair of his dream denim trousers. Jaishree, daughter of an autorickshaw driver, has picked up a colouring book. Her brothers got a pair of footwear and a Barbie doll, while her mother got a salwar.

"Though these are available in the market, we can't afford them. I'm so happy," the girl's mother M Meenakshi said.

T Amudha, a software professional who brought surplus food, said it would be good idea to have a community fridge at every residential block. "We can feed the poor with our surplus. They don't have to depend on the government."

ARI pushes to end

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Two development projects aimed at reducing the number of accidents and ensuring proper road safety.

Prof Moazzem Hossain, director of ARI, said these at a seminar titled "Strategic Accident Reduction Programme: Joining Hands of Research and Realisation" at Buet Council Bhaban.

One of the projects, titled "Speed Enforcement, Incident Detection and Emergency System for Safer Bangladesh National Highways", aims to stop speeding and carry out prompt rescue operations at the scene of a crash, said an ARI handout.

The project will divide 2,000km of national highways into 40km segments. Speed cameras will be installed every two kilometres. A team of law enforcers and fire service will be stationed at every segment.

Footage of a speeding vehicle and its GPS location will automatically be sent to a central server or control room at ARI. The information will be sent to the law enforcement team for taking immediate action.

ARI, Roads and Highway Department (RHD), Highway Police, Fire Service and Civil Defence and Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) will jointly implement the Tk 1500-crore project.

The other project is titled "Instructor and Drivers Training Institutional Development and Introduction of Driving Simulator for Driver Testing and Training".

Citing BRTA data, the ARI handout said 50,000 new heavy and light vehicles hit the roads every year while the number of skilled drivers does not increase proportionately due to inadequate training centres.

Ninety institutions will be established to train drivers and their instructors and a driving stimulator will be set up at the ARI to understand how drivers react in different situations.

The project will produce 30,000 skilled drivers a year meeting 60 percent of the annual demand. Training will be given to 5.5 lakh existing drivers to enhance their skills.

The project worth Tk 1,600 crore will be implemented with the BRTA.

Besides, ARI prepared a technical project proposal to provide necessary equipment for the institute to conduct modern research to reduce accident.

Citing police reports, Prof Moazzem Hossain said around 3,000 accidents take place every year killing around 2,700 and injuring 2,400. He added that the number was under reported.

"Total loss in road accidents is two to three percent of the country's GDP. It amounts to Tk 40,000 crore."

Bikes keeping

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education too. The girls' dropout rate at local schools is decreasing because of the bicycles."

"We allocated the bicycles to meritorious students and to disadvantaged schoolgirls from the tea gardens," says Upazila Nirbahi Officer in Kamalganj Mohammad Mahmudul Haque. "We hope to support their schooling and address social problems associated with a lack of education."

The LINO also says the use of bicycles will be monitored to assess the longer term success of the scheme.

Indeed the bicycles are far more than transport. They offer the girls a sense of pride in themselves and their education, and can work to underline the importance of schooling for women across remote communities.

"At first it was difficult to convince some guardians that their daughters needed school," Haque recalls. "The benefits of schooling for girls are now better appreciated. When locals see a large number of female students cycling together, it helps promote the idea that girls pursuing education is both usual and of value. In our society, the social barriers to women's mobility are many. This initiative is definitely a step forward in overcoming them."

Seedlings crisis

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efforts are underway to provide flood-affected farmers with vegetable seeds and Aman seedlings.

Experts, however, cautioned that farmers would have to plant Aman by mid-September or else they would fail to achieve the targeted yield.

The disaster management and relief ministry statistics show crops were completely or partially damaged on 6.11 lakh hectares in 32 of the 64 districts till August 25 with Dinajpur, Naogaon, Kurigram, Jamalpur, Sunamganj, Bogra, and Manikganj being the worst-hit.

Talking to this newspaper yesterday, Abdul Jalil, a farmer in Naogaon's Niamatpur area, said he lost more than 60 maunds of Aus to recent floods.

"My Aman seedbed was also ravaged by the floods."

Jalil thought of planting Aman once floodwater recedes from his cropland. But he failed to manage seedlings and decided to cultivate mustard instead.

He said around a thousand flood-hit farming households in his area recently received 10 kgs of rice, two kgs of cooking oil and one kg of sugar each in relief but no seedlings to recoup the crop loss.

Prof Bahadur Meah, who teaches plant pathology at Bangladesh Agricultural University in Mymensingh, said that if farmers manage to plant Aman seedlings by mid-September, they could still recover the flood-induced losses.

He stressed the need for initiatives from both the government and non-government actors to provide seedlings to farmers.

FM Moinuddin, who heads Rice Farming System Division at Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI), told this newspaper that the government could help the farmers get seedlings from other areas not affected by floods.

Besides, many farmers, who produced BRRI-52, are now doing fine, as the submergence-tolerant variety can survive up to 15 days of flooding, he added.

Our correspondents in flood-hit districts reported that the assessment of the damage was not complete yet.

Dinajpur is the worst affected dis-

trict where standing crops were damaged on 121,170 hectares.

Ziaur Rahman, a farmer in Tentulia of Dinajpur's Chirirbandar upazila, said Aman on his two-acre land was washed away by the floods.

Vegetable farmers were also hit hard in the district.

In a recent visit to Majadanga village in Biral upazila, our correspondent found Roksana Begum, a 43-year-old farmer, checking her damaged pointed gourd farm.

Roksana said she and her husband Rafiqul Islam spent Tk 30,000 for producing pointed gourd on the leased land.

But floods damaged the crop as they were about to reap it.

"The price was good in the market...", she said while trying to choke back tears.

According to the DAE, vegetable on 550 hectares of land in Dinajpur was damaged by flood.

In Lalmonirhat's Dhairkhata village, farmer Khoda Baksh cultivated Aman in more than four acres of land, but the crop was destroyed by floodwater.

"I don't know how I will provide for my seven-member family," said the 55-year-old farmer.

There was no scope for him to replant Aman, as seedlings were not available.

DAE officials in the flood-hit districts are advising farmers to go for direct seeding of broadcast Aman if they fail to get seedlings.

Following flashfloods in haor areas of six northeastern districts in late March, the government is walking a tightrope as far as food stock is concerned.

With losses of 20 lakh tonnes of Boro due to flood and fungi blast, the government revised its food import projection from nine lakh tonnes to 20 lakh tonnes for the current fiscal year.

Experts note that a back-to-back loss of Aman would have a significant impact on the government's food reserve as it has to run a prolonged post-flood relief operation and provide rice to 50 lakh ultra-poor at a subsidised price of below Tk 10 a kg for the next three months.

[Our correspondents in the flood-hit districts contributed to this report]

Man

if implemented, the projects, with a combined cost of Tk 3,107 crore, will be able to cut crashes by 50 to 60 percent, he added.

Kazi Md Saifun Newaz, an assistant professor at the ARI, said they would hand over the first project proposal to RHD and second one to the BRTA for approval.

Finance and Planning State Minister MA Mannan said people becoming victims of road accidents on a regular basis was not acceptable. The ARI research would help prevent it, he said.

The government is struggling to curb road accidents and has already taken several steps towards prevention, he said.

RHD Chief Engineer Ebne Alam Hasan, BRTA Chairman Moshiar Rahman, leaders of bus and truck owners and workers' unions and government officials spoke at the programme chaired by BIUET Vice-Chancellor Prof Saiful Islam.

On August 1, the SC released the full text of its verdict that scrapped the 16th amendment to the constitution. The amendment had given parliament the power to remove the apex court's judges for misconduct or incapacity.

Several Awami League leaders, including its president and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, strongly criticised the verdict and Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha for his observations in the judgement. Some of them even demanded removal of the chief justice.

On the other hand, the BNP welcomed the verdict and sharply criticised the government and AL leaders for rebuking the chief justice centering the judgment.

The 25 signatories of the statement are: Serajul Islam Choudhury, Prof emeritus of Dhaka University, Prof Ajoy Roy, Prof Asif Nazrul and Prof Ridwanul Haque of DU, Tagore researcher Ahmed Rafiq, Convenor of the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports Engineer Sheikh Mohammad Shahidullah, columnist Syed Abul Maksud, Convenor of civil society platform Shujan Badiul Alam Majumdar, economist Swapan Adnan, political scientist Dilara Chowdhury, Vice-Chancellor of Central Women's University Prof Parveen Hasan, eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik, Gonosthasthya Kendra founder Zafullah Chowdhury, journalist Abu Sayeed Khan, anthropologist Rehnuma Ahmed, Shahidul Alam of Drik Gallery, physician Prof Mujaherul Haque, barrister Sara Hossain, barrister Jyotirmoy Barua, lawyer Ziaur Rahman and human rights activists Hameeda Hossain, Shirin Haque, Nur Khana Liton, Rezaur Rahman Lenin and Zakir Hossain.

Tigers start

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run-out of Usman Khawaja, who padded a ball from Shakib towards short cover and scammed halfway down the pitch, apparently looking to avoid the spin challenge as much as possible, and failed regain ground -- an unfamiliar attitude indeed from an Australian batsman.

Most importantly, off-spinner Mehedi looked like he was back in his den to repeat the heroics of the England series not just because he gave the first breakthrough with the new ball by removing David Warner, but because of the way he terrorised the opponents with awkward bounce which foreshadowed a daunting task for the remaining Aussies batsmen, including danger man Steven Smith. After Khawaja's run-out, Shakib removed nightwatchman Nathan Lyon in the same over to open hunt for genuine scalps on the second morning.

On a turner, where the odd ball has started to keep low or rear up from big footmarks, a special effort will be needed from Australia's batsman and especially from Smith, similar to what Tamim and Shakib did after Bangladesh were teetering on 10 for three following a triple-strike from fast bowler Pat Cummins.

The fans might have been surprised as the Test started on time under brilliant sunshine, despite heavy rainfall the previous night continuing till early morning and the rain only disrupted play for half an hour in the evening session, but they might not have been surprised that Soumya Sarkar yet again fished at a delivery to edge Cummins to gully. Neither was it surprising that Imrul Kayes looked uncomfortable at number three and punched on the up without any foot movement to get a bottom edge wicketkeeper Matthew Wade.

Sabbir Rahman was out for a first-ball duck to a peach of a fast out-swinger from Cummins that he edged to the keeper, but the young batsman piled on the agony as he wasted a review that could have saved Mehedi later in the innings.

And neither was it surprising that a special effort from Tamim and Shakib repaired the damage as the two vital pillars of Bangladesh cricket have proved time and again that they are capable of such match-changing displays.

Tamim's innings continued the path of burgeoning maturity that he has been on since the 2015 World Cup and it was nice to see the way he defused Lyon while Shakib played in his style as the left-hander took the risks and played shots that were at times reckless, but ultimately gave the team a platform to control the day.

Part-time off-spinner Maxwell broke the partnership by removing Tamim, who tried to cut but the ball turned and stopped on him, forcing him to check his shot. Shakib fell victim to extra bounce from Lyon as Australia became rejuvenated at the stroke of tea. The quick dismissal of captain Mushfiqur Rahim by Agar dashed Bangladesh's chances of reaching the 300-mark but some small contributions from Nasir Hossain (23), Mehedi (18) and Shafiqul Islam (13) took the score to 260, which was 10 more than Bangladesh had aimed for, according to Shakib.

Don't demean

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on the judgment -- is harmful to the dignity and creativity of the court, they said in a statement.

As the court is the last resort to protect people's democratic rights, any steps that weaken it are totally unexpected and very regrettable, they added.

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Teen gangs violent again

FROM PAGE 1

Police said four youths from his rival group, including one Bappy and his younger brother Munna, swooped on him with sticks and sharp weapons the moment he came out of his home around 6:10am.

Some CCTV cameras installed in nearby buildings captured the incident. The "killing mission" was completed in just three minutes, said Nazrul Islam, officer-in-charge of Mirpur Police Station.

He termed the murder an act of revenge.

The OC said just two days before the incident, Bappy and his father Fazlul Haque were brutally beaten up allegedly by Kabir and his gang members in the same area.

The father and the son were admitted to Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital. They had 27 and six stitches respectively.

Later, Bappy, aged around 22, sneaked out of the hospital and attacked Kabir, said the OC.

Locals said Kabir and Bappy belonged to two feuding gangs that frequently roamed the area to establish supremacy.

Kabir and his cohorts had attacked Bappy over the "senior-junior respect issue", they said, adding Fazlul was beaten up as he tried to save his son.

Police said the gang members were into drugs, including yaba and pot.

After the killing, Kabir's mother filed a case with the local police station against seven youths, including the four attackers.

Police were trying to arrest the culprits, said OC Nazrul.

The other victim, Shahin, was stabbed in Darussalam's Tolerbagh area around 10:00pm on Thursday, hours after his group had a scuffle with another during a neighbourhood football match.

"The scuffle broke out over younger boys not respecting their seniors and it seems the boy was killed as a consequence of the fight at the playground," Selimuzzaman, officer-in-charge of Darussalam Police Station, said.

The OC said they arrested an 18 year old on Friday in this connection. The arrestee said his friend Quraesh stabbed Shahin for not respecting him.

Earlier, Abdul Aziz, 16, was killed in East Tejknipara area on January 18 while Sajal Hossain, 15, in Adabor on July 2 and Mofazzal Hossain, 16, in Mohammadpur on August 14.

Dhaka's teen gang culture first hit the headlines after Adnan Kabir was beaten to death in Uttara.

Days after the incident, police said, the boy had left teen gang Disco Boys and was seen with the members of rival Nine Star gang.

At that time, there were some two dozen such gangs in Uttara. They fought each other with hockey sticks, cricket stumps and knives.

To show off strength, gang members often rode motorbikes recklessly and honked needlessly, painted graffiti and

clashed with other group members, said police and locals.

According to locals, some other gangs in Uttara included Chhoton Group, Power Boys, Nafiz Don, Big Boss, Dark Shadow, Red Light, Dada Boyz, Dazzling Spirit, DSB, F.C R/T, 15 Club, PL Rakib, Saiko Ridoy, Dare Devil, Gongzilla, HNY and Dark Souls.

However, when the shocking news of the marauding teen gangs emerged, their parents were astonished.

UTTARA GANGS REORGANISING

The gangs in Uttara had remained inactive since an investigation was opened into the Adnan killing case.

With prime accused Naimur Rahman Anik, 19, still on the run, law enforcers arrested 23 teenagers aged youths in the case. Many of the arrestees gave confessional statements before magistrates.

However, some of them came out of jail on bail recently and were trying to gear up for face-offs, said police.

Some gangs threatened each other on Facebook.

For example, Disco Boys which allegedly killed Adnan uploaded a Facebook post on August 18, saying "Uttara belong to us".

In another post on its Facebook page on August 6, the gang alleged that its rival Nine Star was led by petty criminal Talachabi Raju who is involved in theft, robbery, drug dealing and stalking girls.

In reply, Nine Star also uploaded a post on its FB page, accusing the Disco Boys members of committing the same crimes.

Visiting Uttara and its neighbourhoods last week, these correspondents saw the graffiti galore on several walls.

Many of the graffiti appeared to be of one "Nafiz Don", an accused in Adnan killing case.

He was arrested but came out of jail on bail recently.

Police said Nafiz had allegedly beaten up many people in the past.

However, the youth recently posted a video on YouTube and claimed that he had no hand in the graffiti. In that video, he said those were done by his "younger brothers".

Police claimed that the Uttara gangs were not as active as before but the rivalry between them was still a concern.

"Whenever we see eight to 10 boys together and find something suspicious, we take them to the police station for questioning. We hand them to their parents only after getting written statements," Ali Hossain Khan, OC of Uttara West Police Station, said.

"Police alone cannot stop them. Parents have to be alert as well," he added.

Talking about the investigation into the Adnan murder case, the police official said they would submit the charge sheet soon.

Another police official said the law enforcers did not file the charge sheet as they were trying to arrest prime suspect Anik.

Not so bad on rails

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yesterday instructed engineers of the Roads and Highways Division to fix damaged roads in Khulna division within 24 hours.

After a meeting with executive engineers of the Highways Division of Khulna at Jessore Circuit House, he said roads and highways should be repaired to ease the journey of Eid holidaymakers.

"There should be no excuses," the minister warned.

RAIL LINE DAMAGED

Five trains including Nil Shagor Express, Ekota Express and Agnibina Express were delayed due to the damage in the cantonment rail line area, said Kamalapur Railway Station Manager Sitangshu Chakraborty.

Due to the damage to one track, all the trains were running on another track, he said. "We are sorry for the disruption."

All other trains left Kamalapur on time, Sitangshu said.

These trains carried the first Eid travellers who bought tickets on August 16, the day the railway authority began selling advance tickets.

The manager also said a total of 63 trains were scheduled to travel from Dhaka.

Md Towfiq, a student of Dhaka University, said his train, Ekota Express, was scheduled to depart at 10:00am, but it arrived an hour later.

"Things will be fine when I reach home," said an exuberant Towfiq.

SUFFERINGS ON DHAKA-TANGAIL HIGHWAY

The sufferings of bus travellers began following the downpour on Saturday night. A 50-kilometre tailback stretching from Chandra of Gazipur to Elenga in Tangail was created following the rains, reports our Tangail correspondent.

Vehicles started moving slowly yesterday morning, but got stuck at several points.

"Our bus was stuck at minimum 12 points including Chandra, Dherua Rail Crossing, Hatubhanga Bus Stand, Mirzapur Bypass, and Elenga," said Masum Ahmed, a passenger of Bogra-bound bus from Dhaka.

"This is a regular phenomenon on this highway before and after Eid no matter what the authorities say."

Khalilur Rahman Patwari, officer-in-charge of Gorai Highway Police

Station, told The Daily Star that potholes and huge rush of Dhaka-bound trucks loaded with sacrificial animals from North Bengal were the main reasons for the situation.

The work to expand the highway to four lanes is also to be blamed, he added.

Ahad Miah, driver of a Rajshahi-bound bus, said he had struggled hard to drive in the Tangail part of the highway because of numerous potholes which was why it took two to three more hours.

Abdul Hakim, a sub-divisional engineer of the highways division in Tangail, said the authority had been repairing roads round the clock for the last few months, but the heavy rains hampered the works.

"Our teams are active at different points of the highway and are immediately fixing the new damages."

TRAIN SERVICES RESUMED

Train services between Dinajpur and other districts resumed yesterday after suspension for 14 days due to floodwater.

The railway authority had suspended its services in Dinajpur, Thakurgaon and Panchagarh with other districts after tracks between Dinajpur and Parbatipur upazilas went under floodwater on the night of August 13, said Golam Mostafa, station superintendent of Dinajpur.

Train services in Thakurgaon and Panchagarh will be restored after Eid festival, he said.

Around 16km out of 200km rail tracks was damaged. Tracks' bed and sleepers were washed away at several points.

Abdul Hanif, assistant engineer of Bangladesh Railway in Dinajpur, said they repaired rail tracks considering the Eid.

EID SPECIAL SERVICE LAUNCHED

Meanwhile, the authorities yesterday launched special services at Dhaka River Port. At least 24 more launches and six steamers would ply around Eid, said Ajmol Huda, deputy director of river safety and transportation of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority.

"We think there will be no transport problem this year, thanks to the special services along with the regular ones," he added.