

2 teens 'raped' in Ashulia, Joypurhat

STAR REPORT

Two girls, including a madrasa student, were allegedly raped in Ashulia of Savar and Joypurhat Sadar upazila on Friday night.

A 17-year-old garment worker was allegedly raped in Ashulia, reports our Savar correspondent.

The victim, a sewing machine operator at a garment factory, was admitted to the One Stop Crisis Centre of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said Abdul Awal, officer-in-charge of Ashulia Police Station.

Quoting the victim's family, the OC said the girl went out for shopping at a local market around 3:00pm. But locals found her in an unconscious state beside Nabinagar-Chandra highway around 10:00pm and informed the police.

Yesterday, the girl told the police that she went to Gazipur with one Russell Mia on Saturday and he raped her there.

Police detained Russell, 25 who has been in a relationship with the victim, for interrogation, the OC added.

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8 buy AL forms

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not hold any post in the party now.

Three teachers who collected the forms are Jobaer Alam, a Dhaka University teacher and also the editor and publisher of Bangladesh Today, Forhad Hossain, principal of Monipur High School and College, and Shah Alam, a former principal of a college in Dhaka.

Apart from them, a poet named Rassel Ashkei bought the AL nomination form.

In a meeting on next Tuesday, AL Local Government Nomination Board will finalise the party's mayor candidate for the DNCC by-polls.

Last night, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia met the party's standing committee members at her Gulshan office to decide on BNP's mayoral candidate.

The meeting talked about Tabith Awal as the mayor candidate.

However, the party would make an official disclosure of the BNP ticket winner after the meeting of BNP's Nomination Board tomorrow night.

The BNP decided to sell its nomination forms today. Aspirants had been asked to collect those within the day and submit those to the party's central office by tomorrow.

Two central BNP leaders have expressed interest in running. They are Tabith Awal, BNP central executive committee member, and Shakil Wahed, assistant publication secretary of the party.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Shakil said he would get a nomination form from the Election Commission today to run for mayor.

BNP-blessed candidate Tabith ran against AL-supported contender Annisul Huq in the last DNCC election after the AL-led government split Dhaka city corporation into two in November 2011.

In the last election held on April 28, 2015, Tabith boycotted the polls on the voting day, alleging widespread rigging.

The BNP-led 20-party alliance decided to nominate one mayor candidate from the alliance, while the ruling AL is yet to discuss the mayor candidate issue with its coalition partners.

A meeting of the AL-led 14-party combine will be held tomorrow. According to AL insiders, DNCC by-polls will be discussed then.

Sadek Khan, general secretary of AL's Dhaka north city unit, who was an aspirant for DNCC mayor candidate, said, "I was interested in running, but I will not collect party nomination form as I did not get the party's green signal."

According to AL insiders, leaders of the unit did not show any interest in running for DNCC mayor as party chief Sheikh Hasina had already given the green signal to businessman Atiqul Islam.

At the AL Central Working Committee meeting on January 6, a party leader wanted to know from the AL chief who would run for mayor from the party and Hasina said that she already gave the go-ahead to the candidate and he had started campaigning.

Hasina did not mention anybody's name. But Atiqul started campaigning, saying that he got the nod from the AL high command.

The ruling AL backed celebrated personality and successful businessman Annisul Huq in DNCC polls of 2015. He was not involved in the AL politics.

The mayor post became vacant after Annisul passed away in London on November 30.

The first election to the undivided Dhaka city corporation was held in January, 1994, and Mohammad Hanif became the first elected mayor.

By-polls to the DNCC mayor post will be held on February 26. Elections in the 36 new wards, which have been included in Dhaka north and south city corporations, will also be held on that day.



Devotees gather on the Turag river in Gazipur's Tongi on the second day of the first phase of the Biswa Ijtema yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

First phase of Biswa Ijtema ends today

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television channels.

This year, the Imam of Kakrail Mosque Hafez Mohammad Zobayer leads the munajat, expected to begin at 11:00am and continue for about an hour, Moulana Mohammad Giasuddin, a shura member of Bangladesh Tabligh Jamaat said.

Hafez Zobayer, who is also a member of Tabligh's 11-men Shura committee, will deliver a sermon.

Top Tabligh Jamaat Islamic scholar Maulana Saad Kandhalvi from India, who conducted the munajat in the last

two years, was supposed to lead the munajat this year too but could not attend the Ijtema. He left Bangladesh yesterday in the face of protests by a section of Tabligh followers. Radical Islamic organisation Hefajat-e Islam Bangladesh led the faction that claimed that Saad gave controversial statements about Quran and Sunnah.

Superintendent of Police of Gazipur Harun-or Rashid yesterday said vehicular movement would remain suspended on Abdullahpur, Ashulia Kamrapara, Bhogra bypass in Gazipur and Tongi's Nimtoli roads from zero

hour today.

Fifteen buses will shuttle devotees from Bhogra bypass and Nimtoli. Special buses and train services will be arranged to carry devotees to and from the capital.

Meanwhile, a Malaysian devotee, identified as Abdul Rahman, passed away yesterday. Organisers said he became sick early yesterday and died before he could be sent to Shaheed Ahsanullah Master General Hospital in Gazipur, said police. With this, three devotees have died in the first phase of Biswa Ijtema that began on Friday,

reports our Gazipur correspondent.

Islamic scholars from home and abroad delivered sermons on Islamic philosophy in light of the holy Quran and Hadith over the last two days.

The second phase of the Ijtema will begin on January 20 and conclude on January 22 with another Akheri Munajat.

Tabligh Jamaat has been organising Biswa Ijtema, also called the World Muslims' Congregation, every year since 1946. In 2011, the organisers split the congregation into two phases to deal with overcrowding, ensure better management and security.

Grim year for economy

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vulnerable situation in the entire banking sector, one of the main pillars of the economy.

Some state-run banks, including Sonali and BASIC, were also hit hard by loan scams. The government provided a total of Tk 15,705 crore to bail out the state banks from taxpayers' money between 2009 and 2017.

Currently, nine out of the 57 commercial banks in the country suffer from capital shortfall because of rising default loans, according to central bank data.

The CPD organised the event to present its review on the economic development during the first half of the fiscal 2017-18.

It said income and wealth inequality rose despite an average 6.5 percent annual economic growth between 2010 and 2016.

According to its estimate, the revenue collection in the current fiscal may fall short of target between Tk 43,000 crore and Tk 55,000 crore.

Also, the Rohingya rehabilitation expenditure, the damage from last year's flood, import of food grains by the government at higher costs and rising borrowing by the government from costly saving certificates have created a pressure on the fiscal management.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Conservative approach to economic management

Set up a reform commission for financial sector

Avoid conspicuous public spending

Curb duty and tax evasion

Expand safety net programmes

Challenges for the economy increased further in the face of inflationary pressure for higher prices of rice and other food items, rising default loans, capital shortfall in state banks, the trouble faced by some new banks and weak governance and leadership, said the CPD.

"We see various types of cracks in the macroeconomic stability," said CPD Distinguished Fellow Debapriya Bhattacharya at the programme.

He said the year 2017 began with signs of an increase in private investment but it did not end with the same level of enthusiasm. As a result, private investment did not rise as expected despite growth of credit flow and capital machinery import.

"The macroeconomic stability has

come under pressure," he said, adding that reforms did not gain momentum either.

"The best example is the banking sector. The year 2017 will be marked as a year of scam in the sector. And at this moment, we do not see any indication that things will be any better in 2018," said Debapriya.

He also spoke of soaring defaulted loans and shortfall in provision against defaulted loans by some banks, recapitalisation of state banks with taxpayers' money, concentration of loans to a handful of persons, transfer of ownership through administrative measures and poor performance of new banks.

"And we now see siphoning off funds through private banks. But the government, instead of taking measures against these problems, increased family control on banks," he said, citing the government move to extend the tenure of directors in the board and increase the number of director from a single family.

The potentials of the economy could not be exploited due to the weakness in economic management, he said.

"We have also seen weakness in the decision-making process of the finance ministry. We have seen that

finance ministry could not make decisions related to economy on its own. We have seen in many cases they [finance ministry] have implemented decisions that came from top even though those were not rational from economic point of view."

Under the circumstances, the CPD recommended a conservative approach to the economic management by curbing private sector credit flow, controlling inflation and increasing collection of income tax.

CPD Distinguished Fellow Mustafizur Rahman said foreign exchange reserve may come under pressure due to an increasing deficit in current accounts.

"We also need to analyse the quality of growth," he said.

CPD Research Fellow Towfiqul Islam Khan, who presented the report, said the rate of job growth and poverty reduction in 2010-2016 was slower than in 2005-2010. Also, the pace of poverty reduction has not been equal throughout the country.

The income of the bottom five percent of the population dropped 60 percent in 2016 compared with 2010. By contrast, the income of the top 5 percent rose 57 percent during the same period, he said.

Learn anywhere, anytime

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Junior School Certificate to Higher Secondary Certificate levels.

Apart from using the internet to access this new method of education, there are additional ways.

Another education technology (edtech) start-up, Eshosikhi.com, prepares paid video contents covering the curriculum of Higher Secondary Certificate exams.

At a cost of Tk 650 per subject, a student can access video tutorials and receive DVDs and other supplementary books through courier. The materials are also available online.

The courier option is available because internet penetration in the country is not comprehensive and being able to watch as many as 40-50 hours of video content online for one subject will be difficult if the internet speed is not good, said SM Tanveer, the man behind the initiative and the chief operating officer of Esho Sikhi Limited.

It can also prove to be expensive. The new edtechs also try to go beyond and add new dimensions to the method of providing education.

For instance, a learner can challenge another on the Durbin platform and invite them to a quiz competition over a chapter. Learners can also earn points by winning a contest, through outstanding performance in an exam or by asking questions or answering them in forums. The points are meant for unlocking video content. Additionally, users can also

spend Tk 99 to get access to all contents of a single class for a year.

One of the driving forces behind this new wave of educators is its ability to be inclusive.

"Building a cloud school is what we envisage... where all, including underprivileged children, will receive quality education," said Mohammad Adnan, chief executive officer of Durbin Labs Ltd that funds Durbin Academy.

The Academy, among others, won the first prize in Telenor Digital Awards 2015 and was the first runner-up in BASIS (Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services) National ICT Award 2017.

10 Minute also extends support to admission seekers at public and private universities and medical and engineering colleges and institutions through its 1,400 plus videos, quizzes, instant evaluation and other means. It offers skill development and professional courses too.

"I believe the new era of online education will reshape the idea of learning within the next two years," said Ayman Sadiq, founder of 10 Minute School, who won the Queen's Young Leaders 2018 award for his role in the education sector.

10 Minute School currently has sponsored content on all the mediums used (five youtube channels and 3 Facebook pages). The initiative has sponsors for interactive videos, blog posts etc.

Esho Sikhi also wants to play an important role in promoting educa-

tion for those lacking the support of good teachers and learning materials, its founder Tanveer said.

After receiving financial support from BD Venture last year, Esho Sikhi now has 1,500 paid subscribers -- HSC students, university admission seekers and BCS candidates.

"We are striving to ensure quality education for all [living across the country] at an affordable cost," Tanveer said.

Another platform, OnnoRokom Pathshala, has committed itself to creating better understanding of the sciences. They have plenty of video content for class eight students on general science and also for students from class nine to class twelve on physics, biology, mathematics and chemistry.

Talking about the cost of his paid content, he said, "It is as cheap as the rickshaw fare of a student to and from coaching classes or private tuition for his entire academic session."

OnnoRokom group funds OnnoRokom Pathshala as a corporate social responsibility (CSR) and it now looks forward to making contents on life lessons.

"We want to see a beautifully different Bangladesh.... For that the change should begin with the people, with their perception," said Mahmudul Hasan Sohag, founder of OnnoRokom Pathshala.

While the education system still has a long way to go in the country, initiatives such as these seem to be a

promising and positive step in the right direction. With a plethora of options to choose from, access to education is getting easier than ever and there may actually come a day when no child will be left behind.

Man dies

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team of Detective Branch of police raided Boyra Bazar area around 2:30am.

Sensing the presence of police, the gamblers ran away to evade arrest. But, the law enforcers chased them and managed to detain 13 alleged gamblers including Nazim Uddin, said Sademuzzaman, officer-in-charge of Jamalpur DB.

Soon after being detained, Nazim fell sick severely and was rushed to Jamalpur General Hospital where on duty emergency medical officer Hasnur Bari Shishir declared him dead, added the OC.

Contacted, Dr Shishir said the man was brought to the hospital dead around 3:45am.

"No external injury marks were found in the body and he might have died of heart attack or brain stroke," Dr Shishir added, saying that the actual reason oh his death would be known after autopsy.

An inquest was done in presence of executive magistrate Padman Singh that did not find any injury marks in the body, said the OC.

The body was sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy, he added.

Hold talks

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the parliament dissolved," he said.

Fakhrul came up with his party's formal reaction to the PM's address while speaking at a press conference at BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's Gulshan office.

At another press briefing at AL chief's Dhanmondi office yesterday, party General Secretary Obaidul Quader said, "The BNP has the right to participate in the polls, then why have talks become necessary?"

"The people of this country do not think that there is any complexity over the election."

Quader said talks could take place if it was required. "But there is no need for holding talks on election. Elections will be held in line with the constitution.

The BNP and some other political parties boycotted the January 5 national elections in 2014, demanding the polls under a non-partisan administration. As many as 153 lawmakers were elected uncontested. The polls-time government was headed by Hasina.

Khaleda and her party leaders repeatedly said they would come up with an election-time government formula, but the BNP is yet to place the proposal.

Fakhrul yesterday claimed that the PM's speech did not give the nation any specific directive over holding the upcoming general election under a non-partisan neutral administration.

"What she [PM] said about the next election was very unclear and misleading. Her speech frustrated the nation..."

Expressing optimism about the government holding talks to resolve the ongoing political crisis, the BNP leader said, "The prime minister should take an initiative for holding dialogue with all stakeholders if she [Hasina] is sincerely thinking anything new about the election time-government."

"My party thinks that it is possible to reach a meaningful solution over the 2018 elections through cordial talks. The opposition parties and the civil society members have long been demanding a strategy for holding a credible poll," he added.

His students

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After the attack on his village, Kamal along with seven members of his family, took refuge at Balukhali Hakim Para camp, trekking through hills for three days to reach the border.

Kamal graduated with a physics degree from a local university in 1985 and joined a high school as a teacher. He also had a bachelor's in education. For his performance and skill, he was promoted to vice-principal of the school after a few years.

His family had a solvent life in Maungdaw. Besides teaching, he also ran a general store in his town. But he lost everything to the violence that engulfed his neighbourhood.

Despite the hatred, which has spread throughout Rakhine, Kamal still hopes to go back to his home one day and believes disclosure of his real name or the publication of his photo would have consequences then.

He witnessed how the peaceful co-existence of Muslims and Buddhists turned into a violent one over the years, following persistent propaganda from the Myanmar state.

"I sometime get phone calls from my colleagues when I activate my Myanmar SIM card. They request me to come back assuring me of safety. But I have turned down their requests," he added.

His family exemplifies how Myanmar began depriving Rohingyas of education thus forcing them to lead a medieval life.

"I could receive higher education at a time when the hatred and deprivation were at their lowest. After me, it was my eldest son who achieved the feat of getting a bachelor's degree. But my other sons could not do so due to the restrictions in receiving higher education," Kamal said.

Kamal's youngest son told The Daily Star that he passed matriculation from a local high school but could not go further as he was denied admission even though his father was the vice-principal of the school.

The Rohingyas were stripped of the right to further education after matriculation in 2012, a year which saw another spell of violence in Rakhine state between Muslims and Buddhists.

From 2012, not only education, but every aspect of Rohingya life, including the movement of the Rohingya people, was strictly restricted, Kamal said, adding that visitation by guests would result in the local administration fining them 500 kiyats.

"Though we are facing hardship in the camp, we are at least safe here," a distressed Kamal told The Daily Star.

Coming home

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Station, confirmed the incident.

The family had only the one son Minhaj and the father Mannan is the driver of the tractor, owned by someone else, informed Moshir Rahman, chairman of Boda Union Parishad.

Mannan used to park his vehicle beside his house after work, the chairman added.