

22-year-old 'gang-raped' in Ctg; 2 held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

A 22-year-old boutique house worker was allegedly gang-raped by four culprits at her boyfriend's house in the city's Bowbazar area under Halishahar Police Station.

According to police, the criminals confined her 23-year-old boyfriend in another room and raped her in the kitchen.

The incident of March 16 came to light recently after the victim's brother had filed a case accusing five youths with Halishahar police. The police have so far arrested two of the accused.

The arrestees are Md Sohag, 23, and Osman Uddin, 25, while accused Md Hasan, 22, Md Fahim, 22, and Md Suman, 23, are on the run.

Assistant Commissioner Ashkur Rahman of Chattogram Metropolitan Police's Double Mooring Zone said Sohag is the mastermind of the gang-rape.

Police are conducting drives to arrest the fugitives, he added.

According to the case statement, the girl got acquainted with the youth over phone three to four months ago. They met on several occasions and on March 16, the girl went to a restaurant with the youth on PC Road, from where she went to his house around 7:30pm.

At one stage, the five accused forcibly entered the house, caught the youth and asked him about the victim's identity.

AC Ashkur Rahman said the gang stayed at the house for about one hour and left the scene around 8:45pm after issuing a threat that nobody should learn about the incident.

After learning the matter, the victim's family members went to the police, who started an investigation into the incident, he added.

Inspector Badrul Kabir, also the investigation officer, told The Daily Star that the two arrestees have confessed to their crime during primary interrogation. Sohag planned the incident and took the other accused to the house, he added.

A medical test of the victim has been done at Chittagong Medical College Hospital, while her clothes of that day have been sent to DNA forensic lab, said the IO, adding that they have yet to receive the medical test report.

Inspector Badrul further said the accused are local drug addicts, who are involved in mugging and other criminal activities.

"Sohag came to Chattogram from abroad earlier and Osman is an accused in a narcotics case filed with Halishahar police," he added.

The victim's brother told The Daily Star, "My sister is still in a trauma and has been feeling insecure since the incident."

"We demand exemplary punishment of the culprits so that no one dares to commit such heinous acts," the plaintiff said.

Earlier on December 13 last year, four women, including three expatriates' wives and their sister-in-law, were raped by four men during robbery in Karnaphuli area.

Facebook

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"We should have been faster and are working hard to improve our technology and tools to detect and prevent abusive, hateful or false content," the spokesperson told AFP by email.

"We are sorry that Mark did not make clearer that it was the civil society groups in Myanmar who first reported these messages."

Facebook has also added more Myanmar-language reviewers and is rolling out the ability to report content in the Messenger service, the spokesperson added.

In late January Facebook removed the page of popular monk Wirathu, known for virulent anti-Rohingya rhetoric. Last year it regulated the use of the word "kalar" which is considered derogatory against Muslims.

In their joint letter the local groups said Facebook's handling of hate speech and vicious rumours in Myanmar has been "inadequate" for years, adding that their offers to craft broader solutions have gone unanswered.

They urged the social media giant to add reporting mechanisms to the Messenger app, increase transparency, engage more with local stakeholders and draw on data and engineering teams to identify repeat offenders.

"Facebook doesn't have an office in Myanmar," Jes Kaliebe Petersen, CEO of Phandeeay, a Yangon tech hub that signed the letter, told AFP.

"We don't really see much of a commitment to dedicate resources to fix what's going on on Facebook in Myanmar," he added.

Facebook dwarfs all other social media platforms in Myanmar, with even the government and the military using it to make public announcements.

But it has come under fire for allegedly helping broadcast ethnic hatred in a fledgling democracy still emerging from decades of repressive junta rule.

Scrutiny has intensified in the wake of a bloody military campaign against the Rohingya that erupted last August, expelling some 700,000 of the minority to Bangladesh.

In March the UN's special rapporteur to Myanmar Yanghee Lee said Facebook had morphed into a "beast" and had incited "a lot of violence and a lot of hatred against the Rohingya or other ethnic minorities".

Trump to send thousands of troops to border as Mexico spat heats up

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump on Thursday said he would send thousands of National Guard troops to the southern border, amid a widening spat with his Mexican counterpart Enrique Pena Nieto.

The anti-immigration president said the National Guard deployment would range from 2,000 to 4,000 troops, and he would "probably" keep many personnel on the border until his wall is built -- spelling out a lengthy mission.

The announcement capped a day of developments in Mexico, where the caravan of Central American migrants whose trek toward the United States had infuriated Trump began breaking up.

And Mexican President Pena Nieto said Trump's "threatening attitudes and a lack of respect" were unjustified.

The decision to send National Guard forces to the border on an open-ended deployment also raised questions about who will fund the mission.

The Pentagon could not say where the money would come from and Trump admitted the White House was still "looking at" costs.

If 4,000 troops were deployed, that would be about double what the United States currently has in Syria and about half as many as the number of US troops in Iraq.

The National Guard has previously

been deployed to help patrol the southern border, including in 2010 under former president Barack Obama, and from 2006-2008 under George W. Bush. Both deployments were limited to around a year.

In a sign of the Pentagon's unpreparedness for Trump's initial border directive, which came Tuesday, just hours before the commander-in-chief announced the size of the troop deployment, military officials said they had no idea how many Guardsmen would go to the border, whether they will be armed, when they will deploy and how long they will be there.

Two suspects

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unknown people with Shayestaganj Police Station.

Babul was arrested in Beanibazar of Sylhet on March 31.

Earlier, police interrogated Babul's father-in-law Abdul Kadir, his aunt Johur Chand Bibi and cousin Jhuma Aktar in connection with the incident.

Police also detained Babul's mother and one Ismail of Brahmondora village for their alleged involvement in the incident.

Sub-Inspector Zakir Hossain of Shayestaganj Police Station was closed to Habiganj police lines for his negligence in dealing with the case.

No bail

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the morning, the sound of siren woke him up."

Jail Superintendent Vikram Singh said no special arrangements have been made for Khan who is now Prisoner 106 and was served a dinner of lentils and cabbage like other inmates on his first night.

According to sources, the star was depressed and even skipped his dinner, reported NDTV.

"He underwent the mandatory medical test and he has no medical issues. He hasn't made any demands. We will give him jail uniform tomorrow. Multiple-layer security has been put up for his ward," Singh added.

The actor also complained about lesser number (8-9) of toilets in the jail where there are about 100 inmates and recalled his offer made in 2006 (when he was in the same jail for a week for his conviction for another poaching) to fund construction of more toilets in the prison, our New Delhi correspondent said quoting Singh.

Khan has accused Rajasthan's forest department of trying to frame him.

His lawyers claim the black bucks died of natural causes such as over-eating, claiming there was no evidence the animals were shot.

Four other Bollywood stars -- Saif Ali Khan, Sonali Bendre, Tabu and Neelam Kothari -- who were also accused in the case were acquitted for lack of evidence.

Film industry analysts say Khan has nearly \$90 million riding on him with at least three big projects in the pipeline.

The case, which has dogged Khan for 20 years, has seen him held in custody three times before.

In 1998, Khan spent a week in prison after being accused of using unlicensed arms to shoot the black bucks.

Khan was also found guilty of killing gazelles on the same trip and served very brief stints in jail in 2006 and 2007, but was later acquitted on appeal.

The actor affectionately called "bhai", or "brother" in Hindi, enjoys a cult-like status with the majority of his devotees young men who envy Khan's glamorous lifestyle.

The latest verdict has triggered a wave of sympathy for the "bad boy" of Hindi cinema whose life has been dogged by controversies.

Khan, who has had a string of glamorous relationships but never married, was cleared in 2015 of killing a homeless man in a hit-and-run accident. That decision is now being challenged in the Supreme Court.

He was also accused of assaulting a former Miss World and provoked a firestorm in 2016 by saying his work-out schedule for a film left him feeling "like a raped woman".

Five stranded

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Aceh on Sumatra island and the group arrived early yesterday.

"They were immediately brought to a local hospital for treatment as they were weak," Abdul Musafir, head of the East Aceh search and rescue team, told AFP.

They were released yesterday afternoon into the custody of immigration officials for questioning, Musafir said.

The group said they had been travelling with some two dozen other Rohingyas but got separated, according to authorities.

East Aceh police said the rescued five were stranded at sea for about 20 days while five others had starved to death and their bodies were thrown overboard.

The UN refugee agency, UNHCR, said it was sending staff to Aceh to provide assistance to the refugees and Indonesian authorities.

"UNHCR is alarmed at reports that five or more Rohingya refugees may have died at sea before their vessel, carrying five survivors, was rescued," it said in a statement.

The agency said it was trying to make contact with the dozens of Rohingyas who came ashore in Malaysia this week, and pointed to "unconfirmed reports" that suggested other small vessels carrying refugees from Myanmar may be at sea.

"We are concerned for their safety and hope they will be rescued and allowed to disembark to the nearest place of safety," UNHCR added.

It has been rare for Rohingya migrants to attempt the sea routes south since Thai authorities clamped down on regional trafficking networks in 2015, sparking a crisis across Southeast Asia as large numbers were abandoned at sea.

But there have been concerns desperate migrants might start taking to the high seas again after mainly Buddhist Myanmar launched a new crackdown last year that forced about 700,000 members of the Muslim minority to flee to Bangladesh.

In 2015 hundreds of Rohingyas came ashore in Aceh, where they were welcomed in the staunchly conservative Islamic province.

Indonesia tends to accept asylum seekers but they are usually barred from working and often spend years in immigration centres.

'Picked-up' boy killed

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The family alleged that Rakib was picked up by Sub-Inspector Jyotish Chandra of Wari Police Station around 10:30pm on Wednesday as he went out to buy daily essentials for his mother.

"The next day, I went to the police station around 11:00am to meet my son. I saw him in the OC's room," Rita Akter told reporters at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Rakib's body was kept at the college morgue.

She said she waited at the police station for hours but was barred from meeting him. "I heard a shout 'Ma...Ma...' she said, adding that she then saw his son in handcuffs being taken to the OC's room.

Rita said she bought a packet of biriyani from a shop for her son, but it was not allowed. She waited till 4:30pm but could not talk to her son.

Sub-Inspector Jyotish Chandra could not be reached for comments despite several attempts.

Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Wari Police Station, refuted all the allegations raised by the family and claimed the deceased was unidentified until he was declared dead by the doctors at Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday morning.

"After the body was identified, we came to know that he [Rakib] was the boy who stabbed Talha on October 8 last year," the OC said.

Police came to know about Rakib from two other suspects, Abdur Rahman alias Milton, 20, and Bellal Hossain Sabuj, 19, who were arrested from Wari area 10 days after the killing took place, the OC added.

"Rakib became a charge-sheeted accused in a mugging case under a speedy tribunal after police arrested him red-handed on October 10, just two days after the killing of Talha."

The OC claimed they conducted a raid near Joy Kali temple around 3:00am yesterday, on information that some muggers were taking preparation



An undated photo of Rakib, released by police.

to commit robbery.

Sensing presence of the law enforcers, the gang opened fire forcing them to retaliate, triggering a "gunfight".

After that, the "bullet-hit" body of an unidentified person was found there. He was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors pronounced him dead.

Police said they arrested two of Rakib's accomplices -- Jakir Hossain, 20, and Shahed, 18 -- from the spot.

"The trio was also involved in murdering Muktar Hossain who was found dead in Wari area on April 2," the OC said.

The family learnt about it yesterday afternoon.

Rakib's grandfather Abdul Latif, president of Kaptan Bazar Awami League, said a relative, who is also a leader of the AL unit, told him that "a boy named Rakib of our area has been killed in an encounter" and asked if he knew anything about him.

Latif then informed Rakib's parents about it.

According to the police inquest report, the deceased was unidentified and aged around 22 years.

"There were holes stained with blood on the left side of his chest and shoulder," mentioned the report, adding that there was blood on his neck, chest and shoulder.

Rakib was born on February 1 in 2003, according to the birth certificate issued on January 17 last year. The Daily Star collected a copy of it from the family.

The boy studied till class II, said his mother.

He acted as a child actor in a cinema titled *Bhalo Amake Bashtei Hobe*, produced by his father in 2015, according to the family.

Rakib was arrested in a mugging case two months ago and kept in jail for 22 days, Rita said. "It was a false case," she claimed, adding that the plaintiff later got him free.

Following the "gunfight", Wari police filed two separate cases.

Ex-South Korea president

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Park was also ordered to pay a fine of 18 billion won (\$17 million).

When the wide-ranging corruption scandal broke last year it prompted massive street protests against Park across the country.

Yesterday, the verdict was greeted with public displays of outrage and grief by several hundred Park supporters who had gathered outside the courthouse.

Many protesters sat or lay in the road crying, while others formed a protest rally calling for her release.

"The rule of law in this country is dead today," said Han Geun-hyung, a 27-year-old Park supporter.

Park herself was not in court for the judgment which, in a rare move, was broadcast live on television. She had boycotted most sessions of the trial in protest at being held in custody.

Instead she was informed of her fate at a Seoul detention centre, where she sat in a reception hall with her lawyer awaiting the outcome, Yonhap news agency reported.

She now has seven days in which to file an appeal.

Park becomes the third former South Korean leader to be convicted on criminal charges after leaving office, joining Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo, who were both found guilty of treason and corruption in the 1990s.

Judge Kim said he had passed a tough sentence to "prevent such an unfortunate event from happening again".

The presidential Blue House said in a statement after the verdict: "Each person must have different feelings about former President Park Geun-hye. But a bleak wind blew through the hearts of all of us today."

"It is a heartbreaking event for the nation as well as for the person's life. A history that is not remembered is bound to be repeated. We will not forget today."

Park, the daughter of dictator Park Chung-hee, lost both her parents to assassins. She took office in 2013 as a conservative icon who cast herself in the role of daughter of the nation -- incorruptible and beholden to none.

Less than four years later, she was impeached, stripped of all her powers and ousted from office on the back of months-long mass protests that brought millions on to the streets of Seoul and other cities.

Much of the public anger was focused on Park's relationship with Choi and accusations that she let her friend -- who held no formal position or security clearance -- meddle in state affairs, including high-level appointments and editing official speeches.

Choi is the daughter of a shadowy religious figure who had served as a mentor to Park for decades until his death in 1994. She was tried separately and sentenced in February to 20 years in prison.

Condemned in the media for her "Rasputin-like" influence over Park, Choi was convicted of using her presidential ties to squeeze tens of millions of dollars out of major South Korean businesses, including Samsung -- the world's top smartphone maker -- and retail giant Lotte.

Former leaders Chun and Roh

received presidential pardons after each spent around two years in jail -- a privilege that may elude Park for many years, said Jeong Han-wool, an analyst at think tank Hankook Research.

"Given her attitude and public anger over her scandal that remains raw, it will be difficult to create a political environment in favour of her release any time soon," Jeong told AFP.

Park's left-leaning successor Moon Jae-in came to power largely because of the public backlash against Park and her conservative party, dimming hopes for a pardon under the current administration, he added.

Chun Sang-chin, sociology professor at Seoul's Sogang University, said the verdict could also spell bad news for Park's immediate predecessor Lee Myung-bak, who is in custody as prosecutors investigate multiple corruption charges involving him and his relatives.

"This is a good news for people who took to the street with candles but a nightmare for Lee Myung-bak," Chun told AFP.

Park's core supporters have always seen her as a heroically tragic figure who devoted her life to the service of her country despite childhood tragedy. But for the vast majority of Koreans, she has now been permanently disowned, and will go down in history not as the country's first woman president but the first democratically elected leader to be forced from office.

A school

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six and fifteen. To study there is free for the students, who are also provided with textbooks, stationery, clothes and nutritious food. Classes are held from 4:00 pm on every day except Thursdays in a tiny yard within the Ahsanganj Rail Colony. Each school day begins with the singing of the national anthem.

The school currently has 15 teachers, themselves students of various higher education institutions, who volunteer their time and effort for free.

"Our teachers actually pay to work here," says Dr Kumar. "Every month they contribute from their own pockets to buy textbooks and stationery. We all work from a sense of social responsibility. It is our little endeavour to put these children's lives on the right path."

"We teach all the primary school subjects as well as drawing, general knowledge and ethics," says Amanullah Faruk Bachchu, a student of Mollah Azad Memorial University College, teacher at the school and one of Sayapath's founders. "We do practical activities too, like tree-planting, which helps to broaden our students' horizons."

"Most of our students are quite talented," says another teacher, Moazzem Mithu, who attends the same college as Bachchu. "They only need support and encouragement. We are trying to do something good for society."

Sayapath may not be destined to grow into a university but Tagore has shown that great achievements in education can have humble beginnings. And besides, for the school's students who have had the world of education opened up to them for the first time, Sayapath's achievements are already great.

Trump hits Putin

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"This included their occupation of Crimea, instigation of violence in eastern Ukraine, support for the Assad regime in Syria... and ongoing malicious cyber-activity," the senior official said.

"But most importantly this is a response to Russia's continued attacks to subvert western democracies."

Campaigners against Kremlin corruption welcomed the US move.

Bill Browder, a US-born British financier whose lawyer Sergei Magnitsky died in a Russian jail after protesting alleged tax fraud, tweeted that Washington was "finally hitting Putin and his cronies where it counts."

Russia analyst Boris Zilberman, of Washington think tank the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, said the sanctions might finally give Putin's allies pause as "until there is a change in the Kremlin's behavior their bottom lines will suffer and their ability to enjoy the spoils of their corruption will be hampered."

The measures were taken under a US law passed to punish Russia for its alleged bid to interfere in the 2016 presidential election, engage in cyber-warfare and intervene in Ukraine and Syria.

But yesterday's announcement also came as Washington and its allies face a new diplomatic crisis with the Kremlin over the attempted poisoning of a former Russian double agent on British soil.

Trump begrudgingly signed the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) in August last year, despite arguing that it undermined his own authority to lead US foreign policy.

Aurora Station

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Orion Span was founded by Frank Bunker, now the CEO, and the company claims its mission is to "build and sustain human communities in space accessible to all."

"We developed Aurora Station to provide a turnkey destination in space," Bunker said at the summit.

"Upon launch, Aurora Station goes into service immediately, bringing travellers into space quicker and at a lower price point than ever seen before, while still providing an unforgettable experience."

Although the company intends to build the space station itself, it has yet to confirm launch details with any other firms.

It is believed the space hotel will be modular in design, making it easier to launch and add to at a later date.

As well as the extraordinary accommodation, customers will be able to take part and experience aspects of life as an astronaut.

Bunker told Forbes: "We have a virtual reality experience, what we call the holodeck, named after Star Trek."

"Lastly, when the guests return home to Earth, we're going to treat them to a hero's welcome."

Although pegged as a space hotel and offering all the bells and whistles for the guests, Aurora will also serve other functions outside of hospitality.

"We will offer full charters to space agencies who are looking to achieve human spaceflight in orbit for a fraction of the cost - and only pay for what they use," Bunker explained.

The space station will be about the size of a large private jet's cabin, measuring 43.5 feet long by 14.1 feet wide and feature a pressurised volume of 5,650 cubic feet.

Khaleda

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think those who have regularly treated Khaleda should examine her immediately."

Asked about her life in prison, Fakhru said, "You understand that people are not used to the life in jail. But she has enough mental strength. She repeatedly told me not to worry about her. She said, 'I am well. These silly problems will not put me in trouble.'"

Fakhru said Khaleda had asked him to "continue the peaceful movement to restore democracy in the country."

BNP has been demonstrating since Khaleda was convicted and jailed in a graft case on February 8.

Addressing another event in the capital, Fakhru yesterday said the BNP's priority was to free Khaleda.

"Our number one condition is to ensure unconditional release of Khaleda Zia. Her release will have to be ensured first; then we will consider talks with the government," he told a discussion at Dhaka Reporters' Unity.

At another event at Jatiya Press Club, Moudud Ahmed, a member of BNP standing committee, said the government would be responsible if Khaleda's health deteriorated in jail.

"The government medical board is eyewitness," he said referring to the body of physicians formed to assess Khaleda's condition.

If her health deteriorates the people of the country will never forgive the government, he added.