

Husband tied up, wife 'gang-raped' in dead of night

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A newly-wed woman was allegedly raped by a group of villagers at Moricharchar Namapara village in Ishwarganj upazila of Mymensingh early yesterday.

The young woman came to the village to visit her parents a few days ago and on Friday evening she returned to her in-laws' house with her husband where the attack took place.

The young couple, both garments workers, got married in Dhaka two months ago.

Quoting the victim's husband, Md Golam Mowla, officer-in-charge (Investigation) of Ishwarganj Police Station said, when they were asleep at night at around 1:00 am when a neighbour named Al Amin and some others started calling for the husband to open the door.

When the husband opened the door, Al Amin along with six others forced their way into the house, tied up all family members, taping their mouths so that they cannot call for help. They dragged the husband outside and left him in a place adjacent to the house. They then forcibly took away his bride to a secluded place in the village where they gang raped her, the OC said quoting the husband.

Other neighbours came to the rescue of the family and informed the police who raided the area and rescued the woman. Police also arrested Abul Bashar alias Badsha Mia, 30, and Ratan Mia, 32, for their alleged involvement in the incident.

The victim lodged a case with the police station accusing seven youths including Al Amin, 30, and the arrestees. They were being interrogated at the police station as of filing this report.

The victim was sent to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital yesterday for medical tests.

Police are searching for the remaining accused in the case, the OC said.

Father linked

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Code of Criminal Procedure on Friday in presence of Habiganj Senior Judicial Magistrate Towhidul Islam.

Moyna admitted being involved in the murder, and gave a few other names which could not be disclosed for the sake of investigation.

In his statement, Moyna said how the murder took place and who were involved.

Beauty's father had planned to kill her, worried about her prospects of marriage after the incident of kidnap and rape, said Shamsur Rahman Bhuiyan, additional superintendent of police and also the head of a three-member probe committee formed over the case.

Moyna took the opportunity to take revenge against Babul, as his wife was defeated by Babul's mother in last year's union parishad election.

The incident of murder came to light when a photograph of Beauty lying dead on a field went viral on Facebook. Many blamed the police for failing to prevent the murder, especially after a rape case was filed against Babul earlier, the official added.

Beauty's father had filed an abduction and rape case against Babul and his mother at the district's Woman and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal on March 1.

According to case details, Beauty was abducted by Babul and his accomplices on January 21. Babul then raped her numerous times, holding her hostage in unknown places for a month. The case was filed after Beauty was let go.

On March 16, Beauty was reportedly abducted again and raped before being murdered. On March 18, her father filed the murder case accusing Babul and several others at Shayestaganj Police Station.

Babul was arrested on March 31 from Beanibazar area of Sylhet by a joint team of Rapid Action Battalion and police, said Additional Superintendent of Police Maniruzzaman, senior assistant director (Media) of Rab-9.

Because

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further 40 boxes of undelivered mail including bank statements, bills and other private correspondence. The stash weighed 400kg in total.

"I wasn't paid enough and so I quit," the man is reported to have told police.

He faces charges of theft, misappropriation of correspondence, and possession of a weapon.

It is the second time this year that Italian police have discovered piles of undelivered mail at a postman's house.

A 56-year-old was arrested in January in the northern town of Vicenza after officers found 500kg of post stashed away in his garage.

Police were called when workers from a recycling plant were sent to empty the garage and found 43 plastic postal containers stuffed full of letters, bills, bank statements and even electoral pamphlets dating back to 2010.

Police said it was the largest haul of undelivered mail ever found.

The Vicenza postal service promised to deliver the post, albeit several years late.

Forget polythene!

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Despite being biodegradable, the polymer is water and air resistant. At the same time, its texture is almost the same as polythene bags.

Furthermore, the material is durable and can support more weight than the conventionally used polythene bags.

"Jute polymer can take one and a half times more load than polythene. Although the polymer doesn't absorb water, it decomposes within three to four months under soil," Mubarak, the Bangladesh Science Academy Award 2010 recipient, said.

Polythene is a petroleum-based synthetic substance. It is used as packaging material due to its thermo-mechanical properties and low cost, but it is not biodegradable. Disposal of plastic waste has become a serious problem now, said Dr Mubarak.

"On the other hand, jute polymer is made of a cellulose-based substance and perishable. The production cost of the polymer is now high but if we can go for large-scale production, it will be [as widely] available as polythene."

Environmentalists hailed the invention and called to start its commercial production to reduce the use of polythene.

On January 1, 2012, the government banned the manufacturing, marketing and usage of polythene shopping bags in the capital. A nationwide ban was made effective from March 31 of the same year.

However, polythene was still being traded and used throughout the country due to inadequate enforcement of the ban and absence of cost effective environment-friendly alternatives.

Dr Mubarak, also the former director general of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission, said "I started working on producing the polymer six years ago, and finally became successful in 2015.

PRODUCTION OF JUTE POLYMER

Dr Mubarak said for producing the polymer, first cellulose is extracted



Dr Mubarak Ahmad Khan

from jute fibre. The cellulose undergoes surface modification to induce water solubility. Then it is blended with biodegradable binder and dissolved in warm water to make a viscous solution.

Finally, the polymer solution is poured in a casting tray and allowed to air dry at 40 degrees

Celsius and 40 percent relative humidity.

The biodegradable sheets are then dislodged from the casting tray and the bags are made by conventional sealing, the scientist said.

"Jute polymer is environment friendly. It can replace polythene...and such product can enhance the country's image," he said.

The government-run jute mill at Demra now produces enough polymers for making 2,000 bags per day. The project authorities store the polymer in the factory. It is occasionally used to make bags which are distributed to different government offices as souvenirs, Mubarak said.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

The product is yet to become commercially feasible with its cost of production currently double that of polythene. This results in a higher selling price.

It is one and a half times more expensive to produce jute polymer bags compared to polythene bags, Mubarak said, adding that costs could be reduced if production was scaled-up.

"Now we are producing the polymer through a semi-automatic machine. But, jute polymer-made bags will be available among all if we can go for its commercial production using an automatic machine," Mubarak said.

The government has already taken an initiative to establish a plant equipped with automatic machines to produce the polymer. Once operational, the plant will produce enough to make seven to ten tonnes of bags per day, he said.

He added that different local and international companies showed interest in buying the new bags.

One-stop cheating service

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The arrested bank officials are Monirul Islam alias Suman, probationary officer of Pubali Bank, Ashim Kumar Das, IT officer of Sonali Bank, and Sohail Akand, probationary officer of Bangladesh Krishi Bank.

"Pulakesh Das Bachchu, a Thana election officer, is the kingpin of this racket aided by assistant director of Bangladesh Bank Abu Zafar Mazumdar alias Rubel," according to a case filed with Ramna police.

Both of them were students of Jagannath University and have been involved in the racket, having around 15 to 20 members, since their university days, according to DB sources.

Pulakesh collected the devices from one his accomplice, named Curzon, Abdul Baten said, adding that the three have gone into hiding. Other members of the gang collected examinees and made contract with them, he added.

Abu Zafar joined Bangladesh Bank in 2015 while Pulakesh started working at the EC in 2014.

DB officials suspect the arrested bank officials and the others, who are on the run, got jobs through cheating.

The other arrestees are Jahirul Islam, Saddatur Rahman alias Sohan, Nadimul Islam, Enamul Haq alias Shishir, Sheikh Tarikuzzaman, Arnab Chakrabarty and Arifur Rahman alias Shaheen.

A DB team conducted a drive in the capital's Eskaton, New Market, Farmgate and Mirpur areas on Friday afternoon and arrested them. During

the drive, a scuffle took place when Jahirul, Ashim and Nadimul got hurt, says the case statement.

Small batteries, earphones and specialised electronic devices were seized from their possession.

Mashiur Rahman, deputy commissioner of DB (North), said they have a room in Panthapath area where the gang gathered on weekends as the tests are usually taken on Fridays.

"The members are service holders from different occupations like government officials, engineers and private university officials," he added.

Asked how the questions got leaked during the tests, the official said this gang usually sets up false examinees, who pass the questions outside using the same device, the DC said.

They had been doing this for last seven to eight years since their student life, he added.

"This gang now wants to cash in on SSC and HSC exams using the same technology, as the government is taking all-out action against question paper leak," the official said.

The DB filed a case with Ramna police accusing 13 people, including the 10 arrestees, under the public exams law and ICT act.

The 10 have been put on a three-day remand.

The police said they are now trying to arrest the other accused.

Earlier, the CID tracked down a similar kind of racket after the "Gha" unit entrance test of Dhaka University on October 20 last year.

Jamaat men eye

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"We have decided in general that we would pick a single mayoral candidate for each of the Gazipur and Khulna city corporation elections. As Jamaat has one candidate in Gazipur and had started campaigning, we asked its leaders to discuss the matter among themselves and make a final decision," Nazrul Islam Khan, coordinator of the 20-party alliance, told The Daily Star.

With the party's registration cancelled by the court, Jamaat men had collected nomination forms for the polls as "independent candidates". Jamaat leaders said they were eyeing the councillor posts and would ask the BNP for its cooperation in the polls.

Although the councillor post is non-partisan, Jamaat leaders have already bought forms for 20 posts in Gazipur and Khulna city corporations.

The BNP-led 20-party alliance leaders held a meeting on Friday where they decided that they would take part in the election under the banner of the alliance and form a coordination committee of the alliance soon.

A Jamaat leader seeking anonymity told The Daily Star that the decision taken at the alliance meeting would be discussed within his party.

An alliance leader, seeking anonymity, said the meeting was mainly called to seek Jamaat's support to the alliance in the upcoming city polls.

"What Jamaat is basically doing is

bargaining for the councillor posts," he said.

Gazipur city Jamaat Amir SM Sanaullah collected a mayoral form as an independent candidate on Wednesday.

Sanaullah told The Daily Star that he was hoping to win the election and that he had collected nomination form according to his party decision.

"Our leaders are discussing with the BNP leaders about the strategies during the elections. We hope that we will contest the election under the alliance's banner and the BNP will extend its support to me," he said.

The Jamaat leader also said around 10 candidates would contest for councillor posts. Six Jamaat councillor aspirants have collected nomination forms so far.

In Khulna, the Jamaat has not collected any nomination form for the mayoral post. The party, however, collected 10 forms for councillor posts.

Shah Alam, assistant secretary of Khulna City Jamaat, said, "In Khulna, we have decided to contest the election under the alliance's banner. We will run for the mayoral post. We will also contest in the councillor posts in 10 wards."

Elections in Gazipur and Khulna city corporations are scheduled to be held on May 15. Gazipur and Khulna city corporations are formed with 57 and 31 general wards respectively.

BNP leader killed in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A BNP leader was killed allegedly over land dispute with relatives at Khadimpur village in Chuadanga sadar upazila yesterday.

The dead, Helal Ul Islam, 55, was the vice president of Khadimpur union unit of BNP.

Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) in Chuadanga, Md Kalimullah said that a group of criminals, led by one Manik Hossain, attacked Helal with various lethal weapons when he was on his way to Khadimpur field for some work.

Razia Khatun, Helal's wife, said the field he was going to was merely half a kilometre from their house. After the attack, she ran to the spot to see her husband. "Before he died, he mentioned that Manik was behind the attack," she said.

After criminals hacked Helal with weapons and left him critically injured, he was taken to Chuadanga Sadar Hospital by locals. He died on the way.

Manik's father, Hasibul Hossain, and Helal were cousins. Recently, Helal and Manik engaged in dispute over family property, ASP Kalimullah said.

Helal's nephew, Habib Ul Islam said Manik was arrested earlier on February after police recovered drugs from his house. He was sent to jail and was given bail on March 2.

"After he came out of jail, Manik threatened to kill Helal in broad daylight," said Habib, adding that "Manik thought Helal planted the drugs in his house and informed the police to arrest him."

"We have evidence that Manik and his father, Hasibul, are directly involved in the killing," ASP Kalimullah said.

Police are trying to arrest the killers, he added.

Waheduzzaman Bula, joint convener of Chuadanga district unit BNP, demanded immediate arrest of the killers.

Gazans bury

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approached the border in demonstrations that saw Israeli forces kill 19 Palestinians, making it the bloodiest day in Gaza since a 2014 war.

No Israelis were injured on either day and the latest deaths have sparked fresh calls for an investigation.

Among those killed on Friday was Yasser Murtaja, 30, a photographer with the Gaza-based Ain Media agency, who died from his wounds after being shot, the health ministry said.

Murtaja's company confirmed his death, with witnesses saying he was close to the front of the protests in southern Gaza when he was hit.

An AFP picture taken after he was wounded showed Murtaja wearing a press vest as he received treatment.

His brother Motazem, also a journalist, said he was next to him when he was shot. "The target was very clearly journalists," he said.

Israel's army said it "does not intentionally target journalists."

"The circumstances in which journalists were allegedly hit by Israeli Defence Force (IDF) fire are not familiar to the IDF, and are being looked into," it said in a statement. 'INTENTIONAL SHOT'

Murtaja's body was taken from the hospital to his home in Gaza City yesterday morning, with dozens of journalists following, many fighting back tears.

It was wrapped in a Palestinian flag, with a press flak jacket placed on his stomach.

Ismail Haniya, the head of Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas, attended the funeral and said that journalists were attacked by Israel while trying to show a "true picture of a blockaded, downtrodden people".

In the West Bank political capital of Ramallah, around 50 Palestinian journalists held a vigil for Murtaja.

Christophe Deloire, secretary general of watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF), said Murtaja was "obviously the victim of an intentional shot" and that his organisation "condemns with indignation the deliberate shootings of the Israeli army against journalists."

Deloire urged an independent investigation of the incident.

The Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate said five other reporters were also shot and wounded by the Israeli army during Friday's protests, despite wearing clothes clearly identifying them as journalists.

A group of over 70 international NGOs operating in the occupied Palestinian territories meanwhile condemned Friday's "unlawful killing of civilians in Gaza," calling for "an independent and transparent investigation". 'FENCE NOT CROSSED'

Weeks of border protests have been called to demand the return of Palestinians to land they were forced from or fled after the founding of Israel 70 years ago.

They come with tensions high as the United States gears up to shift its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem after recognising the disputed city as the capital of the Jewish state.

Hasina starts 4-nation tour

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attend important international events.

Sources at the prime minister's office said Hasina is likely to begin the four-nation tour with Saudi Arabia on April 15.

They said the PM's first visit to the Kingdom is at the invitation of Saudi King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud to join a 23-country joint military exercise styled "Gulf Shield 1" in Dammam on April 16 which aims to upgrade coordination between the armed forces of 23 countries.

"Gulf Shield 1" is organised by the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Defense with participants from the land, air and naval forces of 23 countries, including Bangladesh, taking part in the month-long joint military exercise from March 18.

Tens of thousands of soldiers have arrived in the Kingdom to join the military exercise, which is the largest in the region in terms of the number of participating countries and the equipment used.

Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to depart Saudi Arabia for London on April 16 to attend the Commonwealth

heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2018 in London from April 16-20. Apart from attending CHOGM, Hasina will hold bilateral meetings with her counterparts from other countries, including Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The prime minister will return to Dhaka from London on April 23 and leave for Australia on April 26 to attend the Global Summit of Women - a prestigious international event dubbed "Davos for Women" - in Sydney from April 26-28.

More than 1000 women from 60 countries, including heads of state and government, will participate the largest annual global meeting of women, described as a business summit that focuses on women's advancement in the global economy.

On conclusion of summit in Australia on 28, the Prime Minister is expected to leave for New Zealand to on a 3-day bilateral visit.

Officials at the PMO and foreign ministry said they are still preparing the programme schedules of the four visits and the proposed dates for the upcoming visit may slightly change.

Indian foreign secy due

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very significant with general elections to be held in the near future in both the neighbouring countries.

The meeting of Hasina and Modi is likely to take place on April 19 or 20, diplomatic sources said adding that the talks would be dominated by political matters where Modi is expected to convey India's firm commitment to further consolidate bilateral ties with Bangladesh.

Indian diplomats in Dhaka said the Indian Foreign Secretary Gokhale's visit is part of his familiarisation trip since being appointed in February this year. Bangladesh is his second trip a visit to Bhutan on April 1-2.

"This is an important visit by the Indian foreign secretary since he comes to finalise the dates for the two prime ministers meeting in London in which they will discuss a wide range of bilateral and regional issues and review the implementation of the 62-point joint statement issued during the Delhi visit of Sheikh Hasina in April 2017," said a diplomatic source in Dhaka.

Gokhale, who arrives at 4:20pm today, will call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Foreign Minister

AH Mahmood Ali and also hold a bilateral meeting with his Bangladeshi counterpart. He will also meet think-tank representatives with whom he is expected to hold a close-door session this evening.

The Indian dignitary will hold a bilateral meeting with his Bangladeshi counterpart at the State Guesthouse Meghna Monday morning. The meeting will be followed by signing of some Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs), mostly on development and cooperation programmes, and he will make press statement at 12 noon. Gokhale will also call on with the foreign minister.

Gokhale is scheduled to attend a Bilateral Conclave on India-Bangladesh Relations: "Deepening Cooperation and the way ahead" organised by the Institute for Policy, Advocacy and Governance (IPAG) at 2pm on Monday. Dr Gowher Rizvi, International Affairs Adviser to the premier will be chief guest at this meet.

The foreign secretary will call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina ay her Jatiya Sangshad office Monday evening before departing from Dhaka on Tuesday morning for New Delhi by a Jet Airways flight.

If I can, you can too

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team which is working on making 'one of the biggest websites of the world' accessible, any one of you can do it too," said Bhashkar.

"These days, you won't find too many visually impaired persons who are not using smart phones. We are getting educated, so don't just turn your back on us. We don't want your pity, we want to contribute in your corporations," he added.

He added that Bangladesh signed the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007, which mentions the employment of the persons with disabilities.

"To acquire Sustainable Development Goals, the country cannot ignore the number of differently able persons," he added.

A total of 180 persons with disabilities participated in the fair. The programme began at 10:00am and continued till 5:00pm in two phases.

In the first phase, a seminar discussing the importance of empowering the person of disabilities was held, while

in the second phase, a spot interview opportunity was held where different organisations and companies set up stalls and interviewed the participants for different posts.

Md Jibon Chowdhury, a visually impaired person, said he used to work in a garments factory in Kalurghat for two years. But the amount of salary he earned could not even help him manage his conveyance as he lived at Agrabad, which was in another corner of the city.

"Such fairs give us the opportunities we had been missing," said Jibon.

Iqbal Bahar Chowdhury, police commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police was the chief guest at the programme, Ligaya Laoeng Dumaoang, Specialist at TVET and Skills Development of International Labour Organisation was the special guest, while Mahbul Alam, President of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry, presided over the programme.

Taking care

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Ten such centres are operating in Dhaka - five each in DSCC and DNCC areas, said Dr Mahmuda Ali, programme officer of Project Implementation Unit of Urban Primary Healthcare Services Delivery Project of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC).

Along with every healthcare centre, there is a hospital. "We provide all kinds of support during childbirth, including caesarean delivery at the hospital. A health centre has a medicine corner, lab facilities and ambulance services," she added.

To get registered with a health centre, only Tk 10 is charged. Every patient has to pay Tk 45 every time he or she takes service. Besides, red card holders who had been selected through a field survey before the project was launched get free health services. The list is updated time to time.

"We give primary healthcare at the centre. For childbirth, we refer patients to the hospital [attached to the centre] in Tilpapa," said physician Ayesha Khatun of Nagar Shastho Kendra.

Located on the ground floor of a four-storey building in Moddhopara, Meradia, the health centre runs with 16 staff. Every day, about 100 patients come to the Meradia centre for treatment. There is one room for counselling, one check-up room, nursing room, and a waiting room.

The contraceptive methods have side effects and many patients are not aware of it, Feroza said. "We advise

them on what is best for birth control. Women from families with low income also bring their children to the health centres for vaccination.

"We hold campaigns and other awareness building programmes on family planning method used by both male and female participants," Feroza added.

Under the project financed by the Asian Development Bank, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), field workers also visit households in the neighbourhood to raise awareness about domestic violence against women.

The low-income group living in and around Meradia is being benefitted.

One of them, Hosna Begum, a domestic worker, said she had been visiting the centre for the last five years. "It is very close [to her house] and the people [giving services] are very cordial."

Another health centre, Azimpur Nagar Shastho Kendra under Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), said it had distributed 1,339 red cards to destitute people until now. A total of 86,365 people have been registered with it.

The health centres under the project also conduct free screening for uterus cancer.

"Our focus is to give better treatment to the underprivileged people who are being deprived of treatment," said Habiba Sultana of Azimpur Nagar Shastho Kendra while talking to