

## AUG 30 RAPE ON BUS Main accused arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Police yesterday arrested the key accused in a case filed for raping a mentally challenged woman inside a bus in Tangail on August 30.

The arrestee is the bus driver, Alam Khandakar alias Bishu Miah, 45, of Punorbason area in Bhuapur upazila.

Acting on a tip-off, police detained Alam from a market in the upazila in the morning and produced him before a Tangail court in the afternoon, said Mosharraf Hossain, officer-in-charge of Bangabandhu Bridge East Police Station.

Shamsul Alam, senior judicial magistrate in Tangail, sent Alam to jail after recording his confessional statement under section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

The woman was raped on a bus near Bangabandhu bridge eastern end in Bhuapur upazila on August 30 night.

Mosharraf had at the time said the 28-year-old woman, who could only remember her name and that she was from Kushtia, boarded a local bus at Tangail bus stand around 10:00pm.

When the vehicle reached its last stop in Pathakandi on the eastern side of Bangabandhu bridge, all the passengers, except the woman, got off the bus.

Around 11:45pm, Alam stopped the bus in the area and raped the woman inside the vehicle, the OC said.

Police arrested the bus helper, Nazmul Hossain, after the incident, but its driver and conductor managed to flee.

The same day, Sub-inspector Nur Alam filed a case with the police station under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

According to the case statement, driver Alam and conductor Ershad raped the woman and Nazmul abetted them.

Nazmul was produced before a Tangail court on the same day where he gave a confessional statement. After recording his statement under section 164 of the CrPC, Senior Judicial Magistrate Md Ashikuzzaman sent him to jail, OC Mosharraf said.

On September 2, police held Ershad from Kalihati upazila and the same court sent him to jail.

## The Saudis

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murder of Mr Khashoggi," Graham told reporters.

"I'm not going to be denied the ability to be briefed by the CIA."

Both Mattis and Pompeo said that, after carefully reviewing the intelligence, they could find no direct evidence linking Khashoggi's murder to the crown prince, who is also known as MBS.

"There is no smoking gun," Mattis told Pentagon reporters, stressing he still believes those responsible should be punished.

"We have not changed, (in) that accountability for the murder is our expectation of everyone involved in the murder."

Saudi Arabia has acknowledged the Washington Post columnist, a US resident, was killed inside the kingdom's Istanbul consulate in October but has blamed his death on a "rogue" operation.

Trump last week called Saudi Arabia a "steadfast partner" and said it was unclear whether MBS was aware of the plan to kill Khashoggi.

He has also cast doubt on the CIA's reported conclusion that MBS was behind the killing.

Further debate and votes on the measure are expected next week.

Should it ultimately pass the Senate it would have little chance of clearing the House this year. But extended debate could serve as a powerful symbolic step -- and allow lawmakers to address alternative paths in US-Saudi relations.

Peace talks aimed at ending the war in Yemen have been set for early December in Sweden, between Huthi rebels and the UN-recognized government.

Mattis and Pompeo worry a move to cut US support to the Saudis ahead of the summit is poorly timed and could embolden Huthis not to negotiate.

Senator Murphy, however, said Pompeo and Mattis' testimony may have been counterproductive.

"They lost votes this morning," he said.

"They just had no good answers for why Gina Haspel wasn't there. They had no plan to end the war in Yemen."

The Yemen conflict has triggered the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with the country now on the brink of famine.

The UN estimates as many as 10,000 people have died, most of them civilians, since the Saudi-led coalition launched military operations in 2015 in support of embattled Yemeni President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi's government.

US military support for the coalition includes intelligence sharing and training pilots to avoid strikes that risk civilian casualties.

The Pentagon had also been conducting air-to-air refueling for coalition aircraft, but this month said it was stopping doing so.

Still, a series of high-profile coalition strikes has killed scores of civilians, many of them children, and now many US politicians are balking at America's role in the war.

Aside from the motion to pull US military support, some lawmakers want to impose sanctions beyond those that Washington enacted on 17 Saudis allegedly involved in Khashoggi's killing.

Events have left administration officials publicly grappling with global geopolitics, saying Saudi Arabia's role in countering Iran is too important for the US to turn its back.

"We are seldom free to work with unblemished partners," Mattis told senators.

"Long-standing relationships guide but do not blind us. Saudi Arabia, due to geography and the Iranian threat, is fundamental to maintaining regional and Israeli security, and to our interest in Mideast stability."

Pompeo warned lawmakers that ending US backing would lead to a stronger Iran, while reinvigorating both the Islamic State group and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

A *gacchi* extracts the sap from a date palm tree in the capital's Tejgaon area, right next to the Tejgaon-Bijoy Sarani. The sweet winter delight is a favourite among Bangladeshis. Although the number of such trees is unknown, a 2010 survey shows that up to 15,000 hectares of the country are covered with either wild date or Palmyra palms.

## 21 years on

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PCJSS organised the briefing marking the 21st anniversary of the accord signing on December 2, 1997.

The government and PCJSS, on behalf of the Jumma people living in CHT, signed the accord for restoration of peace in the region, ending a two-decade long insurgency.

Reading out a written statement, Santu said although the Awami League government came to power in 2009, it had not taken any "visible steps" to implement parts of the treaty.

The government claimed that 48 out of 72 sections of the treaty were fully implemented, but Larma said the actual number was only 25.

He said the government did not amend the law related to CHT in line with the peace accord.

The CHT Regional Council and three CHT district councils were established to introduce a special ruling system in the hilly districts but that did not take any organisational shape, he said.

The government did not take any step for the election of the district councils instead recruiting the ruling party and unelected people, he alleged.

The CHT Regional Council Act was not made functional and left as a worthless body, Santu, also the chairman of the council, said.

He said the "controversial" provisions of the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act 2001 were amended in 2016 but rule of procedure was not enacted, thus halting execution of the act.

He added that while the CHT Land Commission was established, it did not have sufficient manpower and funding and thus not a single dispute over land was resolved in the last 21 years.

Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum and rights activist Numan Ahmed Khan were present at the briefing.

## JU's largest lake neglected

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any space left in Jayapara for them to move around on.

Teachers and students of JU alleged that Jayapara -- that spans around 21.45 acres -- situated near the Botanical Garden and the university's swimming pool, was filled with aquatic plants, algae and garbage and has been neglected.

Earlier, the JU authorities came under severe criticism from bird enthusiasts for leasing out the water bodies, used by birds since 1985, for fish cultivation. A few teachers and students had then taken the initiative to cancel the lease and create a congenial atmosphere for the birds.

According to the JU estate office, the university has 26 small and large wetlands while guest birds sit in the four lakes -- one near Jahanara Imam hall, one near the administrative building, the Wildlife Rescue Centre's lake and Jayapara Lake.

Of the 26, 10 wetlands were leased out for Tk 13, 92,000 yearly. Most of them are leased out for around three years. In 2014, the authorities had also decided to lease out Jayapara and circulated an advertisement, but failed to manage any reliable holder.

Although the university authorities have "unofficially" stopped leasing out this lake for fish cultivation, no effective initiative has been taken yet to renovate the lakes that have been filled up with clumps of dried and dead flowers.

After visiting the lake, this correspondent found that hundreds of guest birds had flocked on the lake but were not able to move to and fro. Some of the bushy areas around the lake were also found burnt and destroyed due to human interference.

A JU estate official, preferring anonymity, said the university's central resource management committee had not been monitoring the internal resources with due diligence, adding that for the past one year, no meeting had been held in this regard.

"Long-standing relationships guide but do not blind us. Saudi Arabia, due to geography and the Iranian threat, is fundamental to maintaining regional and Israeli security, and to our interest in Mideast stability."

Pompeo warned lawmakers that ending US backing would lead to a stronger Iran, while reinvigorating both the Islamic State group and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

He said at least 20 communal attacks had taken place since the signing of the accord and 11 of them were carried out during the tenure of the present government.

"The main purpose of all those attacks was to drive away Jumma people from their land and exterminate them," he said.

Larma said the overall situation of CHT had become critical and the extent of the repression of Jumma women had increased to alarming levels recently, with perpetrators enjoying impunity.

More than 500 Jumma people from four upazilas of Bandarban left the country for Myanmar due to lack of security, he added.

He alleged that a negative propaganda had been launched against the democratic movement going on for the implementation of the treaty.

Replying to question, Larma said whoever came to power after the election had to implement the treaty to solve the problems in CHT.

Oikya Nap President Pankaj Bhattacharya alleged that CHT was now being "governed by an anti-treaty force."

"...I think the anti-treaty forces in the government and the state are getting powerful day by day.

"I think a conscious effort is on to make the treaty ineffective, which is regrettable," he added.

Dhaka University Prof Mesbah Kamal said there was a gradual decrease of political will to implement the accord and urged people to be united against the repression against the Jumma people.

Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum and rights activist Numan Ahmed Khan were present at the briefing.

## INDIA ASSEMBLY POLLS

### Congress cries foul after EVM malfunctions

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Around 3.25 percent of Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPA) machines attached to EVMs used in polling during assembly elections in Indian state of Madhya Pradesh were hit by malfunction and needed to be changed on Wednesday, prompting opposition Congress party to cry foul.

Chief Election Officer of the state V Kantha Rao told the media that 2,126 VVPAT machines, 881 control units and 883 ballot units had to be replaced due to malfunction.

The malfunctioning of the VVPATs that disrupted the polling for about three hours drew concern from senior Congress leaders of Madhya Pradesh Kamal Nath and Jyotiraditya Scindia. They demanded fresh polling in all booths where EVMs did not function properly.

Scindia wrote to Chief Election Commissioner Om Prakash Rawat complaining about faulty EVMs and delayed voting.

"The rate at which EVMs are malfunctioning is alarming. Several voters are de-motivated when they experience incomplete arrangements and may lose faith in this exercise if they come across allegations of tampering with EVMs," the letter said.

It said most of the complaints about EVMs malfunctioning came from rural areas where voters do not have adequate awareness about how to seek redressal.

What the Congress is concerned about is that the EVMs malfunctioned in an election which is seen to be a closely-fought one between ruling BJP and Congress and drew a high turnout of over 73 percent, a record for Madhya Pradesh in the assembly polls.

Both BJP, which has been ruling the state for 15 years having won three successive elections, and Congress have claimed that the high turnout of voters would go in their favour.

## Accused

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Ashulia Police Station.

Sensing the presence of the law enforcers, Kamrul Hasan of the zoology department denied Nurul Amin's allegations and said, "We only urged them to follow the timeframe for cleaning the bushes and aquatic plants. From May to August second week is the period for laying eggs of home birds in the bushy areas.

"This year, guest birds have started arriving early in the winter and most of them have taken position on the rest of the three lakes. The number of guest birds might lessen next year if they are not able to swim or move about, as the largest lake remains unguarded and filled with hyacinths and other plants," he added.

Four policemen were injured during the incident, while three bullets and a pistol were recovered from the spot, he claimed.

The OC said police had arrested two accused after a murder case was filed by Mehedi's wife.

The arrestees gave confessional statements before the court and the raid was carried out based on their information, said Javed.

Meanwhile in Cox's Bazar, police recovered the bullet-hit body of Mohammad Hanif, who had been missing for the last eight days, from a beach in Teknaf upazila yesterday morning.

Locals found the body on Baharchhara Noakhalipara beach in the morning and informed police, said Anwar Hossain, in-charge of Baharchhara police investigation camp. Later, police recovered the body.

There was a bullet injury mark on his chest, police said.

Victim's family told The Daily Star that Hanif's phone was found switched off after he went missing.

Our correspondents in Savar and Cox's Bazar contributed to this report.

## 13 lives lost on roads

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collision between an ambulance and a lorry in Daribausha area of Gazaria upazila.

Lucky Akhter, Razzak's daughter, was injured in the collision and undergoing treatment at Gazaria Health Complex.

The ambulance was carrying Razzak and his daughter to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said Md Habibur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Gazaria Health Complex.

In Pabna, a mother and her eight-year-old daughter died when two engine-run three-wheelers collided in Hemayetpur Bangabaria area of the district around 9:00am yesterday.

The dead are Rimi Begum, 40, and her daughter Borsha Khatun.

In Faridpur, a 54-year-old man died on the spot as a Dhaka-bound bus of Sakura Paribahan run him over around 2:00pm in Dhuldi Bazar area.

The dead was identified as Ashraful Alam, resident of Gholabari Chandpur village in Chapainawabganj.

Aladipur Highway Police later seized the bus from Basantapur area under Sadar upazila in Rajbari.

The dead are Rafiqul Islam Dulal, 45, and Baharul Alam Molla, 43.

## What we're eating

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The report is an independently produced annual analysis of the state of the world's nutrition.

"Diets are one of the top risk factors of morbidity and mortality in the world - more than air pollution, more than smoking," said Jessica Fanzo, a professor at Johns Hopkins University and a lead author.

"What we're eating is killing us. So something needs to get us back on track with our food system," she said on the sidelines of a global food conference in Thailand's capital, Bangkok.

She said a lack of knowledge and affordability of nutritious food, as well as ineffective supply chains, are among the factors that contribute to poor diets.

The researchers analysed 194 countries