

Five raped

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hospital. The girl's mother filed a case later that night.

The boy was arrested later and he confessed before a court yesterday evening that he raped the girl, said police.

The court sent him to the juvenile correction centre in Gazipur, said Saleh Ahmed Pathan, officer-in-charge of Dagonbhuiyan Police Station.

In Noakhali, a mother of three was allegedly gang raped in Kabirhat upazila early yesterday.

The woman's husband, a BNP activist, is now in jail, police said, adding that a suspect was arrested.

The woman said seven men broke into her village home around 1:30am while she and her three children were asleep.

Holding the children hostage at knifepoint, the men tied her hands and legs and three of them raped her. The men also took away the valuables from her house, she told The Daily Star.

She recognised one of the alleged rapists and filed a case accusing him and several unnamed men, said Mirza Hasan, OC of Kabirhat Police Station.

Police yesterday arrested the accused Jahir Hossain, 29.

The woman has been admitted to Noakhali General Hospital.

On December 30 midnight, a mother of four was gang raped allegedly by Awami League men for voting for "sheaf of paddy", the BNP's electoral symbol, in Subarnachar upazila of the district.

On Friday night, a garment worker was allegedly abducted and gang raped in Birampur upazila of Dinajpur.

The 22-year-old woman was going to her grandfather's home around 5:00pm when she was abducted, police quoted her as saying.

When she did not reach the grandfather's home on time, the family started looking for her.

Her family members found her unconscious at a litchi orchard around 10:00pm.

After regaining consciousness at a hospital, the woman told police that she was abducted and raped by five men.

She recognised one of them and told police about him.

Mithun Sarkar, assistant superintendent of police in Dinajpur, said the victim filed a case accusing five and police were looking for them.

In Faridpur, a 14-year-old girl was allegedly raped by her neighbour in the town early yesterday.

The girl told police that she was forcibly taken to the roof of a two-storey building and raped by her neighbour Obaidullah, 20, around 1:00am.

"My daughter told me about it in the morning. Then I went to police," her mother told The Daily Star.

The girl is now undergoing treatment at Faridpur Medical College Hospital.

Also on Friday, a 13-year-old girl was allegedly raped by two young men in Barishal's Muladi upazila.

Her mother told The Daily Star that she was playing near their village home when she was abducted and raped by Saidul, 20, and another 15-year-old boy.

Ziaul Ahasan, OC of Muladi Police Station, said the girl was sent to Barishal Sher-E-Bangla Medical College Hospital.

Our Noakhali, Dinajpur, Faridpur and Barishal correspondents contributed to the story.

AC (land)

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Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, said Rajshahi's Deputy Commissioner (DC) SM Abdul Kader.

Two other officials of the Land Office -- Rajib and Shamsul -- received minor injuries and were given first aid, he added.

Sanjay Kumar Pal, medical officer of Bagha Health Complex, said Imrul's injuries were severe.

"His face was bloodied when he was brought to us. He had a cut on his forehead and injury marks on his head, and around the eye, nose and other body parts," he said, adding that Imrul's driver needed a few stitches on his nose.

The attackers snatched the AC land's smartphone.

Locals said they face the problem of river erosion due to the illegal sand mining, adding that Nawshad Ali, brother-in-law of former Bagha municipality mayor and Awami League leader Akkas Ali, was involved in the illegal activity for several months.

Contacted, Bagha AL General Secretary Ashraful Islam said Nawshad had no connection with the AL.

"We condemn the attack and demand the immediate arrest of those responsible," Ashraful said. "None of the attackers will be spared," DC Kader said, adding that police have deployed several teams to arrest the attackers.

The UNO said a case was filed with Bagha Police Station in this regard.



A man belonging to a caravan of migrants from Honduras en route to the United States, holds his son as they wait at the border bridge entrance in Tecun Uman, Guatemala, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Ershad flies to S'pore

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Hospital in Dhaka for the last two months.

On December 10 last year, he went to Singapore for treatment and returned on December 26, just three days before the 11th parliamentary election.

Ershad was elected as an MP from Rangpur 3, even though he could not carry out any election campaign.

The JP took part in the December 30 election as part of the ruling grand alliance and bagged 22 seats.

Ershad made his last public appearance on January 6 during the oath-taking ceremony of the lawmakers in the House.

In a statement on January 4, Ershad said his party men would sit on the opposition and he would act as the leader of the opposition, contradicting the JP Parliamentary Party (JPPP) decision.

JPPP on January 3, unanimously decided to join the government instead of sitting on the opposition bench.

Ershad's sudden decision surprised and aggrieved his party lawmakers.

Talking to The Daily Star, a number of JP lawmakers termed his decision as "funny and a violation of the party charter."

Some JP lawmakers also said that GM Quader's leadership in absence of Ershad might face challenge as a section of MPs were loyal to JP Senior Co-Chairperson Raushan Ershad.

Raushan was in favour of joining the government, they added.

Against this backdrop, Ershad in a statement on Friday said that GM Quader will act as the party chief in his absence.

The appointment already came into effect, the statement said.

In a statement on December 9, Ershad made party presidium member

Ruhul Amin Hawlader his special assistant.

The status of Hawlader became "next to the JP chairman," and he was given the responsibility to manage the party's organisational activities in the absence of the chairman.

Earlier on December 3, he removed Hawlader as the party secretary general and replaced him with another presidium member Moshir Rahman Ranga.

BPL lights up

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Stadium yesterday kept the spectators right at the edge of their seats. While the first match of the day saw defending champions Rangpur Riders chase down the 194-run total posted by home side Sylhet Sixers -- the highest successful run chase of this edition -- the second match under lights treated the crowd to the first 200-run total of the season as Chittagong Vikings posted a mammoth 214 for four, the second highest total in BPL history, against Khulna Titans.

On a day when batsmen ruled the roost, Sylhet's Sabbir Rahman stood out as he authored a sublime 51-ball 85 -- the highest individual score of the edition -- but it was for a losing cause as his side failed to defend the total.

In the second game, Chittagong rode on contributions from skipper Mushfiqur Rahim (52 off 33), Yasir Ali (54 off 36) and a late blitz from Dasun Shanaka (42 off 17 balls).

Khulna, however, could not quite match the exploits of the three other teams as they were kept to 188 for 8 by Chittagong to lose the match by 26 runs. Abu Jayed was Chittagong's most successful bowler with three for 33 from four overs.

World's loneliest

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funding following a Valentine's Day appeal last year to help find Romeo his Juliet.

"It is an incredible feeling to know that thanks to everyone who believes in true love and donated for Valentine's Day last year, we have already found a mate for Romeo and can establish a conservation breeding program with more than a single pair," said Teresa Camacho, the museum's chief of herpetology and the expedition leader.

Romeo had been found in that same cloud forest a decade ago and it was feared that he was the last survivor in his species.

With a lifespan of 15 years, time was running out to find Romeo a mate to ensure the survival of the species, although the frog himself never gave up hope, continuing to call out for a mate during his 10 years in captivity.

In a statement, GWC said "the bachelor's luck is about to change drastically."

"Now the real work begins: We know how to successfully care for this species in captivity, but now we will learn about its reproduction, while also getting back into the field to better understand if any more frogs may be left and if so, how many, where they are, and more about the threats they face," added Camacho.

"With this knowledge we can develop strategies to mitigate the threats to the species' habitat, while working on a long-term plan to return Romeo's future babies to their wild home, preventing the extinction of the Sehuenas water frog."

The group of frogs has been placed in quarantine at the museum's K'ayra Center for Research and Conservation of Threatened Amphibians of Bolivia to help them acclimate to an environment that replicates the conditions they would face in the wild.

"They will also be treated for the deadly infectious disease chytridiomycosis, which is partly responsible for the steep decline of this species and other amphibians in streams where they were once found," said GWC.

Only then will Romeo meet his Juliet.

The priority now is to ensure that Juliet, who measures 55 millimeters (2.2

inches), makes a good impression on her beau, who is brown with dark spots and slightly larger at 62 millimeters.

"We want to ensure the perfect conditions for his blind date," an excited Camacho told AFP.

Reproduction is the primary goal, but Camacho says the team is in no hurry.

"We hope it will be love at first sight, but if that doesn't happen, we'll eat ice cream, watch 'The Notebook,' and try again!"

Given the success of last year's Valentine's Day appeal, when \$25,000 was raised to help fund expeditions into the forests, conservationists have decided to make February 14 the day of Romeo's blind date with Juliet.

UN calls

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regarding the allegations of vote rigging, intimidation and crackdown on opposition over the December 30 national polls, he said, "It is obvious that the elections were not perfect."

Asked whether the UN was willing to send any envoy or any special team to Bangladesh to investigate the allegations of polls irregularities, he said, "We have not the right to do investigations like that unless we're mandated for that."

Hailing Bangladesh's role in hosting Rohingya refugees, Dujarric also said the country was a very important partner for the United Nations in relation to the Rohingya refugees, and the UN was extremely grateful to Bangladesh for its generosity in hosting so many Rohingyas in extremely difficult circumstances.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also spoke at the press conference.

The ruling Awami League-led Grand Alliance secured a landslide victory in the December 30 polls last year by winning 288 seats out of 299. The opposition alliance, Jatiya Oikyafront, won in only eight constituencies.

The Oikyafront has been demanding cancellation of polls results and holding a re-election under a non-partisan polls-time government.

Canada PM renews calls for Saudi blogger's release

AFP, Ottawa

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau renewed calls for the release of Saudi blogger Raif Badawi after meeting his wife on Friday, calling the issue "a priority" for him and all Canadians.

Trudeau said Canadians' view of Saudi Arabia had been defined in part by its treatment of Badawi, who was jailed for 10 years for insulting Islam and has received 50 lashes of 1,000 to which he was sentenced.

Badawi's wife and three children have lived in Canada since being granted asylum in 2013, a year after his jailing.

"Freeing Raif Badawi is a priority not just for me and for his family but for all Canadians," Trudeau said.

"We continue to try to convince the Saudis and apply pressure on them both behind the scenes and in public to liberate Raif Badawi," including asking for a pardon, he said.

Trudeau said he had raised the case in conversation with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, highlighting Badawi's status as the face of Canada-Saudi relations.

The two leaders met at the G20 summit in Buenos Aires in early December.

"It's the same message that I delivered a few months earlier to the King of Saudi Arabia when we spoke" by telephone, Trudeau added.

In tears and shock, Poland bids farewell to murdered mayor

AFP, Gdansk

Poles will gather on Saturday in the Baltic port city of Gdansk for the funeral of murdered liberal mayor Pawel Adamowicz, whose public stabbing has raised questions about hate speech in politics in the country.

Around 3,500 people, including Polish President Andrzej Duda and EU Council President Donald Tusk, a longtime friend of Adamowicz, are due to attend the ceremony.

Duda has announced a day of national mourning.

Adamowicz, 53, was stabbed in the heart in front of hundreds of people at a charity fundraiser last weekend by an ex-convict wielding a knife.

The 27-year-old attacker, who reportedly has a history of mental illness, had previously been sentenced to more than five years in jail for armed robbery.

Recently released, the man claimed he was wrongly imprisoned by the previous government -- led by the centrist Civic Platform (PO) party, to which Adamowicz once belonged.

For many Poles, the mayor's murder cannot be solely blamed on the knifeman but also the prevalence of online hate speech and toxic divisions between the main political parties.

Lights at last

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insects and snakes could come into their homes and bite or attack residents without anyone being able to notice their presence in the dark. "This would happen mostly during monsoon seasons and the earthen lamps hardly helped," Sachin recalled, adding, "Now the villagers can be free of that menace."

Sachin also said that the biggest benefit that would come from the supply of electricity was that their children would now be able to study at night.

Fraudulent firms

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Chaklader Service 35 times, Laboni Enterprise 15, Mazumdar Trade International 10 and M&K Trading Company 9 times.

The fraudulence included forging signatures of customs officials and duplication of bank and customs documents.

Information on consignments imported before 2013 is not available on the custom's server. "I think the number of forgery incidents will increase if we get the previous data," an NBR official said.

According to sources, the customs authorities suspended the licence of Mozumder Trade International Ltd on February 28, 2012 for using fake documents to release goods and evade revenue of Tk 53 lakh. The authorities, however, withdrew the suspension in June of that year.

The license of MR Trade International was suspended in June, 2016 for duplicating bank documents. The punishment lasted for only eight days.

Chaklader Service had its licence suspended in November, 2016 after the authorities found evidence that it forged signatures of an assistant commissioner and a CCH revenue officer to release goods from the port.

Although a probe committee recommended scrapping the agent's licence permanently, it got away with it by paying the fine. Mozumder Trade International previously ran its business under the name M/S Neptune Trading Agency. It changed the name after it was fined for forgery.

C&F companies are responsible for importing products as representatives

of the importers. The customs authorities have the jurisdiction to issue and cancel their licences under the Customs Act-1969.

Asked, CIID officials termed the punishment handed to the three firms "too lenient" and said their licences should have been cancelled right away and those involved should have been in jail. "If that had happened, they could not dare commit forgery [that has surfaced recently] again," a CIID official said, wishing not to be named.

The rest of the seven C&F agents are facing further inquiry, the official added.

This correspondent went to the offices of the seven C&F agents in Chattogram's Agrabad on several occasions but found no one there.

Mizanur Rahman, owner of M/S M Trade International, has recently been arrested from the capital.

Ruhul Amin, chairman of Laboni Enterprises Ltd, said, "I don't know anything about the forgery."

CIID officials said the owners of the other C&F agents have been on the run.

Talking to The Daily Star, CIID Additional Director General Md Abdul Hakim said, "We have arrested one person and formed a committee to investigate the [latest] incident and determine the amount of the revenue lost in the scam."

"We filed a case with Ramna Police Station on Wednesday in this regard," he said.

Contacted, CCH Commission AKM Nuruzzaman said they suspended the licences of the agents on Thursday after receiving a letter from the CIID.

Bangladesh to see 3rd

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Asia, which saw its billionaires and UHNW populations grow faster than any other region in 2017, saw less than 1 percent growth in its HNW population and its wealth last year. While Asia's GDP grew by more than 8 percent last year, its stock markets plunged by more than 11 percent during the same year.

In 2018, the US remained by far the dominant HNW nation with 8.67 million individuals. China has the second-largest HNW population, at just under 1.9 million individuals.

Japan, with just over 1.6 million HNW individuals, comes in third place. European economic powerhouse Germany has the fourth highest HNW population, followed by the UK and France.

Canada, South Korea, Australia and Italy came in the seventh, eighth, ninth and 10th places respectively.

The top 10 countries accounted for 75.2 percent of the global HNW population and 73.8 percent of the total HNW wealth last year. In absolute terms, the top 10 countries added more than 387,000 HNW individuals compared with 2017, with combined net worth in the countries rising by an annual \$1 trillion.

With the world's population passing the 8-billion threshold by 2023, the report expects the number of HNW individuals to exceed 30.1 million, an increase of more than 7.7 million compared with 2018. The amount of HNW wealth is projected to rise to \$82.2 trillion, meaning wealth of an

additional \$20.9 trillion would be created over the next five years.

The top 10 HNW cities are New York, San Francisco, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Dallas, Chicago, Tokyo, Washington DC, London and Paris.

The majority of the HNW individuals have finance, banking and investment as their primary industry. Manufacturing and technology came second and third in terms of the top HNW industries.

Business services as an industry is in the top five industries. The fifth industry for the HNW population is construction and engineering.

The proportion of wealthy individuals whose fortunes are predominantly self-made continues to increase, and this is largely due to environments of free enterprise that foster accelerated wealth creation and the dynamism from technology-related industries.

In 2018, 83.8 percent of wealthy individuals were self-made and the proportion of inherited wealth dropped to 4.5 percent.

The proportion of women HNW individuals continued to rise gradually over recent years and increased further in 2018 to a record high of just below 16 percent.

Outside of wealth creation, and with some fitting symmetry, philanthropic activities are one of the main activities of the global ultra wealthy population; and to a lesser extent, HNW individuals. After a dip following the global financial crisis a decade ago, global philanthropic giving has recovered and reached record heights.

Trump-Kim

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demands that North Korea abandon a nuclear weapons program that threatens the United States and Pyongyang's demands for a lifting of punishing sanctions.

Sanders said that Trump's talks with the North Korean envoy were productive but added that the United States "is going to continue to keep pressure and sanctions on North Korea."

South Korea's presidential office said it expected the upcoming summit to be a "turning point to lay the firm foundation for lasting peace on the Korean peninsula."

South Korea will work with the United States and other countries to "achieve concrete and practical results towards complete denuclearisation and a lasting peace regime through the North Korea-U.S. summit...," presidential spokesman Kim Eui-kyeom said in a statement yesterday.

South Korea will also expand inter-Korean dialogue to help a successful meeting between Trump and Kim, he added.

The first summit produced a vague commitment by Kim Jong Un to work towards the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, but he has yet to take what Washington sees as concrete steps in that direction.

Nevertheless, both he and Trump had expressed an interest in arranging a second meeting, something some US-based analysts see as premature.

Critics of US efforts say the first summit only boosted Kim's international stature without much to show for it, and some believe Trump may see a second meeting as a way of distracting from his domestic troubles.

Trump declared just after the Singapore meeting that the nuclear threat posed by North Korea was over. But hours before Kim Jong Chol's arrival on Thursday, the US president unveiled a revamped US missile defense strategy that singled out the

country as an ongoing and "extraordinary threat."

Harry Kazianis, an analyst at the conservative Washington-based Center for the National Interest, called the agreement to hold another summit positive. But he added: "Both nations must now show at least some tangible benefits from their diplomatic efforts during a second summit, or risk their efforts being panned as nothing more than reality TV."

Communist-ruled Vietnam, which has good relations with both the United States and North Korea, has been widely touted as the most likely site of the next summit. There has also been speculation about other possible venues, including Bangkok, Hawaii, or a return to Singapore.

A senior US administration official said there was an exchange of letters for the leaders during the White House meeting, but gave no details of their content.

On his last visit to Washington in June, Kim Jong Chol delivered a letter from Kim Jong Un to Trump that helped overcome obstacles ahead of the summit in Singapore.

Kim Yong Chol, regarded as a member of Kim Jong Un's inner circle, also had talks with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and US special representative on North Korea, Stephen Biegun.

US-based analysts said that North Korea, which has developed missiles and nuclear weapons in defiance of U.N. Security Council resolutions, would likely be seeking a clearer message from the Trump administration on any concessions it may be willing to make.

South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha said on Wednesday that if North Korea took concrete steps toward abandoning its weapons programs, Washington could offer a formal end to the 1950-53 Korean War, humanitarian aid or a permanent channel for bilateral dialogue.