

Five to die for rape, murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapinawabganj

A Chapinawabganj court yesterday awarded five men with death penalty for raping and killing a girl in 2015. The convicts are Nayam Karmakar Rabidas, 28, Proshanto Rabidas, 22, Nitai Chandra Rabidas, 25, Subhash Das, 42, and Proshanto Rabidas, 24, all hailing from the same district.

Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-2 Judge Shawkat Ali handed down the verdict after examining records and hearing fourteen witnesses.

The court also fined Tk 1 lakh to each of the convicts.

On June 14, 2015, police recovered the body of 20-year-old Ayesha Khatun from a ditch in Mahapara area of the district's Sadar upazila. After an autopsy was conducted on the body, the law enforcers found out that the girl was raped before being killed.

On August 15 of the same year, Shamim Aktar, sub-inspector of Sadar Police Station, filed a case against unnamed people, following which Inspector Sarwar Rahaman of the same station pressed charges against eight people on December 14 in the same year.

According to the charge sheet, Nayam developed a relationship with Ayesha over the time. On June 13, 2015, he called the girl and raped her with others at night.

Later, they strangled her and dumped the body at the ditch, the charge sheet added.

ROAD ACCIDENT

Critically injured NGO official to be operated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A senior official of the Save the Children Bangladesh has been critically injured in an accident on the highway between the capital's Juran area on Saturday.

Omar Faruque, deputy director (HIV/AIDS), sustained critical injuries to his spinal column, said his wife Shahin Zaman.

He was on the way to his home in old Dhaka on a motorcycle of a ride-hailing service at the time of the incident, police and family members said.

Shahin said it was drizzling at the time of the accident and he fell to the ground. Within moments, a truck hit him in the waist, causing critical injuries.

Omar then called his family members and they arrived there. They took him to the Square Hospital. After three days of being admitted to the ICU there, he was taken to another hospital.

He is expected to be taken to the Trauma Centre today for a surgery scheduled on Monday, his wife added.

Police could not seize the truck as it was heavily damaged after the accident, said Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Shyampani Police Station.

Bangladesh

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notches to the 140th place.

Norway ranked the top country in the index.

Analysing regional press freedom, the global media watchdog said Bangladesh journalists have been among the leading collateral victims of the tough methods adopted by the ruling Awami League.

"The campaign leading up to her reelection in late 2018 was accompanied by a disturbing increase in press freedom violations, including violence by political activists against reporters in the field, the arbitrary blocking of news websites, and arbitrary arrests of journalists."

Internationally recognised photojournalist Shahidul Alam was held for more than 100 days on "completely spurious grounds", in an attempt to silence those who annoy the government, the report says.

The government's latest weapon is the digital security law adopted in October 2018 under which "negative propaganda" is punishable by up to 14 years in prison, it adds.

Comedian on track to be next Ukraine leader

AFP, Kiev

An Ukrainian Volodymyr Zelensky appeared on track yesterday to become Ukraine's next leader as incumbent Petro Poroshenko fought for his political survival three days before a runoff election in the country.

Zelensky, a 41-year-old standup comic and television star with no political experience, sailing to victory in Sunday's second-round vote.



Child patients being treated at the ICCDR, in the capital yesterday. Hospital sources said the number of diarrhoea patients was increasing there with the mercury going up.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Impunity, moral decline to blame

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because many perpetrators force the victims to settle the matter outside courts and the legal process is so humiliating that the victims back out.

The database of a monitoring cell of the police headquarters says 18,668 rape cases were filed across the country between 2012 and 2016.

Data from Dhaka metropolitan areas paint an even grimmer picture.

In the Dhaka metro areas, five women and children repression prevention tribunals disposed of

2,057 cases out of 4,436 filed with different police stations from 2001 to 2016. Only 22 cases saw convictions, court and prosecution sources said.

Rights activist Nur Khan Liton also blamed the culture of impunity for rising trend in rape and sexual harassment incidents.

"A culture of impunity and fear prevailing in the society which fails to ensure justice to the victims. As a result, criminals get impunity," he said.

Besides, criminals often get political backing after committing

such offences which is one of the main reasons behind this situation, he added.

Ensuring justice for victims and positive changes in country's politics could change the situation, he added.

Mekhal Sarkar, associate professor of the department of psychiatry, National Institute of Mental Health, said if a person wants to rape anyone, he considers the reality, whether he will be punished, he will be stigmatised or socially humiliated, he finds that reality is in his favour, he

changes too.

The ICCCAD survey found that a year ago over 80 percent respondents used firewood as their main fuel, while around 20 percent used gas. But now around 39 percent of the Rohingya are using gas as their main fuel, and about 60 percent are still using fire wood. Some of them are using kerosene.

As a way out, researchers have suggested providing Rohingyas with alternative fuel to reduce the pressure on the forest. Planting fast-growing trees in fallow and other unused land in the locality could solve the firewood problem.

Sharif Ahmed said the major long-term strategy to improve the environmental condition in Cox's Bazar area should be forest and landscape restoration both inside and outside the camp, using local and native tree species.

Creating and maintaining biodiversity corridors to facilitate

goes on to commit the crime.

She said one of the reasons behind degradation of moral values was weak family bonding.

Hafez Matlana Muhammad Mizanur Rahman of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque said people of the country were getting education and the literacy rate was increasing, but the people were not receiving adequate moral education.

"If we can ensure moral education for all, I think incidents of rape will gradually come down," he added.

However, there are some positive changes too.

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Creating and maintaining biodiversity corridors to facilitate

elephant movement is also necessary to reduce human-elephant conflict and casualties in the area.

Although the government and NGOs are already working on the issue and planting trees, efforts are still scattered and limited, he said.

"A sound coordination between different conservation, development and humanitarian agencies is also critical," he told The Daily Star.

Humayun Kabir, Cox's Bazar divisional (south) forest officer, said the loss of forest and biodiversity due to the Rohingya settlements is irreparable, but the department is working on strategies to recover forest as much as possible.

Mizanur Rahman, additional commissioner, Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission, said the government has instructed all organisations involved in refugee management to take up sustainable projects to help restore the forest.

"Work at the grassroots level is already underway," he said.

According to Pali Bidyut Samity-1, the connection that Matin had applied for has been given to Shaiful Islam's house on March 22, 2015.

In Matin's application, they said, his photo was replaced by Shaiful's. Seventeen months later, bills had not been paid for the connection, for which Lakshmi Chandra Sen, AGM of Pali Bidyut Samity-1, filed a case with a local court against Matin to reclaim the amount of the bills — Tk 40,000.

Following the court's order, police arrested Matin on Tuesday. He was produced before the court, which sent him to jail on Wednesday.

Habibullah Rahman, deputy general manager of Pali Bidyut Samity, said, "Shaiful's photo was attached in the application. If Matin contacted us earlier, this would not have happened."

Speaking to The Daily Star, Abdul Kalam Azad, Jatrpani Union Parishad chairman, said, "In my union, everybody knows Abdul Kalam and Abdul Basar work for Pali Bidyut Samity-1. There are a lot of allegations of fraud against them, and Abdul Matin, an innocent man, has been sent to jail due to their fraudulence. Even Pali Bidyut Samity officials are involved in this incident."

He added, "Matin is a poor day labourer and a father of four daughters."

Charge of Muradnagar Police Station Manzur Alam said, "We arrested Abdul Matin as per the court's warrant. He was sent to jail on Wednesday."

A probe committee has been formed for Pali Bidyut Samity-1 to investigate the allegations of fraud against Abdul Kalam and Abdul Basar, said Advocate MD Sanaulah.

1 held with firearm at Shahjalal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Security officials yesterday handed over a former upazila chairman to police for entering the domestic terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) with a firearm and bullets without any prior declaration.

Mujibur Rahman Shamim, the former chairman of Bagherhat's Chitalmari upazila and a local Awami League (AL) leader, was detained by the airport security officials and later handed over to Biman Bandar Police Station for carrying a pistol and 10 rounds of bullets, said Wing Commander Noore Alam Siddiqi, director, Aviation Security (AVSEC) at the HSIA.

Shamim was preparing to board a Barisal-bound flight scheduled to take off at 4:20pm, the official added.

According to the rules, an individual must inform the airport authorities about the arms and ammunition while entering at the airport.

During security scanning, the pistol and bullets were detected inside Shamim's handbag.

SM Quaim, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Biman Bandar Police Station, told The Daily Star that Shamim would be produced before court today.

On March 24, security officials detained ABM Majharul Anam, president of Darus Salam Unit AL, for entering the domestic terminal of HSIA with carrying 44 rounds of bullets without any prior declaration.

Earlier on March 22, police detained Mujibur Rahman, agricultural affairs secretary of Sathkhal AL, for entering the domestic terminal of HSIA with a pistol and 32 bullets without notifying the authorities.

In another incident on March 16, police detained AHM Nurul Islam, bodyguard of the chairman of Probashi Pali Group, at the same terminal, for carrying a shotgun without informing the authorities.

On the same day, police arrested the terminal on March 11, Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh detained Mohammad Masud Chowdhury, chairman of Phulshahar Union Parishad in Jashore's Chougachupa upazila, for carrying a pistol and seven bullets.

The arrests come after the recent attempt of a passenger to hijack a Dubai-bound Bangladesh Biman flight on February 24, using a toy pistol and a bomb-like object. The incident raised serious concerns over security at the Dhaka airport.

Man wanted

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Shaiful Islam's house."

Abul Kalam, 50, sub-contractor of Pali Bidyut Samity, told The Daily Star, "Around two years ago, I did an electric wiring in Matin's house. When he refused to pay the amount, I demanded, I took off all the wirings from his house."

He added, "I don't know where the line that was applied for in Matin's name has been connected. Pali Bidyut Samity officials can say where they have given that connection."

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Cox's Bazar forests in grave danger

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Kuttapal camp blocked the only corridor used by the globally endangered Asian elephant as a migration route and trapped about 45 elephants in the western side of the camp," the report said.

It also alarmed human-elephant conflict, with 13 human casualties so far in the area. The remaining elephant habitat is under severe pressure from uncontrolled firewood collection in the forest, the article added.

Soil erosion and landslides are already common in the area, affecting water resources, irrigation, and groundwater reserves. But now, local biodiversity, including marine resources, acoustic environment, and air quality, is being degraded at an unprecedented rate.

Sharif Ahmed said Rohingyas are now frequently visiting the Bay of Bengal for fishing and other aquatic resource collection, causing pressure on local marine species and the environment.

"Also, discharge of domestic and other waste is causing water pollution locally, and heavy pressure on local groundwater reserve because of mass refugee influx within a very short period in the area," he said.

The study, done by the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) and the IOM, also paints a sorry picture.

The topography of Ukhiya and Inani Forest range is diverse with almost flat land to medium hillslopes.

Approximately 10 percent landscape of the area is occupied with well drained flood plains, and soils of the site are sandy to sandy loam in highlands and clayey to silt clay in the depressions, the report said.

"The demand for firewood from forests is likely to be higher than the environment can supply. It may also exacerbate the effects of flooding and cyclone; as low-lying, degraded land will become more exposed," said the report.

Station in Tangail, said 17-year-old girl's father went to Pakistan around 25 years ago. Later, he started a business there and married a Pakistani woman.

The ninth grader, along with her mother, came to her paternal grandfather's home in Tangail from New Karachi in Pakistan five months ago. They were staying at the house of one her uncle in Gopalpur upazila, the OC added.

The son of her another uncle had been allegedly stalking her for months. On Tuesday, the schoolgirl's 20-year-old cousin with the help of several others 'abducted' her from the house, took her to an unknown place and 'raped' her, said the OC, quoting the victim's mother.

A case was filed with Gopalpur Police Station by the girl's mother on Wednesday night, accusing the cousin and his parents.

Police arrested the alleged rapist's mother on Tuesday night. Cleaning information from her, law enforcers later rescued the schoolgirl early yesterday.

Police were conducting drives to catch the two other accused.

THREE HELD IN RANGPUR

Rangpur police yesterday detained three people for trying to cover up an April 15 rape incident.

Mother of the victim on Wednesday filed a case with Kotalwi Police Station, accusing six people, including a ward councillor of Rangpur City Council.

Of them, one was accused of rape and the others of threatening the victim's

Autistic girl, 15, raped in Narayanganj

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Besides, a schoolteacher was suspended on charges of sexually harassing several schoolgirls in Nature.

In another incident, a suspected rape victim died at Sir Salimullah Medical College and Mitford Hospital in the capital on Wednesday afternoon, hours after she hanged herself at her home in Munshiganj's Sirajdikhan upazila.

Police said the 15-year-old autistic girl was allegedly victimised by one Jamal, 32, in Narayanganj's Bandar upazila.

She used to go to Autism Child Care School in Farazikanda area. Around 3:00pm on Wednesday, she went to a shop in front of the school to eat an ice-cream, said Rafiqul Islam, an OC of Bandar Police Station.

At that time, Jamal took the girl to an empty home in Madhabpasha area saying that he would buy her an ice-cream. The man "violated" the girl there, the OC added.

Later, her mother filed a case against Jamal. Police sent the girl to Narayanganj General Hospital for medical examinations.

Drives were underway to arrest the accused.

In Bandabhan, a seven-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a sixth grader at an ice cream, said Rafiqul Islam, an OC on Tuesday noon.

She was admitted to Bandabhan Sadar Hospital on Wednesday night, said the victim's mother.

A case was lodged with Bandabhan Sadar Police Station in this connection.

PAKISTANI GIRL 'RAPPED'

AM Mamun, OC of Gopalpur Police

families to cover up the incident, said Kotalwi OC Rezauul Karim.

In Noakhali, father of a schoolgirl filed a case against one Abu Basar, 60, on Wednesday for allegedly raping his daughter in Mohammadpur village of Senbagh upazila.

Relatives of the schoolgirl said she was playing with her friends near her home on April 15. At one stage, Basar forcibly took her to his room and raped her.

The alleged rapist also threatened the girl not to disclose the matter.

Basar went into hiding following the incident. Police were trying to arrest him.

In Nature, the managing committee of BIAM Laboratory School under Singra upazila yesterday suspended teacher Fazlur Rahman on charges of sexually harassing several students of the school.

'RAPE VICTIM KILLS HERSELF'

A suspected rape victim died at Sir Salimullah Medical College and Mitford Hospital in the capital on Wednesday afternoon, hours after she hanged herself at her home.

The victim was identified as Setu Mandal, aged 14.

Police and Setu's relatives said she was abducted by Sohel Malik, 24, on April 10. The following day, she was rescued in an unconscious state from South Keramganj of Dhaka.

Police suspected that the class-eight student was dragged and raped by criminals.

Law enforcers have detained Sohel for interrogation.

Our district correspondents contributed to this report.

ACC seeks to freeze Tarique's money in UK bank

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission submitted a petition to a Dhaka court, seeking permission to freeze \$59,341 deposited in Santander UK bank in the name of BNPT acting chairperson Tarek Rahman and his wife Zubaida Rahman.

Judge EM Ennurl Kayesh of the Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka granted the prayer yesterday. Dhaka Assistant Attorney General, one of the ACC public prosecutors, told The Daily Star.

Tarique and his wife are now living in London.

EURO VOTE UKIP pitches itself as 'true' Brexit party

AFP, London

Britain's archly-euro-sceptic UK Independence Party (UKIP) launched its European election campaign yesterday, claiming to be the "true party" of Brexit despite the launch of a rival group by former leader Nigel Farage.

UKIP chief Gerard Batten has been forced to defend the party's rightwings lurch under its leadership, which has seen it team up with former English Defence League (EDL) leader Tommy Robinson.