

Teen raped, murdered in Habiganj

STAR REPORT

Police yesterday recovered the body of a 14-year-old girl in Habiganj's Chunarughat upazila.

Victim Tamanna Akhter Pria, of the upazila's Dudhpatil village, was raped before being murdered, said police.

Tamanna's father Abdul Hannan filed a case with Chunarughat Police Station in this connection, said Nazmul Haque, officer-in-charge of the police station.

Police detained three persons for quizzing, he added.

Meanwhile, Hannan told The Daily Star that Tamanna and her seven-year-old younger brother used to live at home alone during the day time as their mother is an expatriate in Saudi Arabia.

Tamanna went missing on Monday afternoon and did not return home at night. Later, locals noticed her body floating on a Haor in the area. On information, police went there and recovered the body, he added.

Primarily police suspected the criminals raped the victim before killing her. The body bore injury marks, said Nazim Uddin, assistant superintendent of Habiganj police.

The body was sent to Habiganj Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

Meanwhile, a Chudanga court yesterday sent a woman to jail for her alleged involvement in assisting a local music teacher to rape a sixth grader.

The victim's father filed a case against the accused -- Hazera Khatun, of the district's Alamdanga upazila -- on Tuesday night, said Munshi Asaduzzaman, officer-in-charge of Alamdanga Police Station.

Police arrested Hazera on the same night and placed her before the district's chief judicial magistrate court yesterday, he added.

Another accused of the case -- music teacher Habibur Rahman -- remained absconding, he added.

According to the victim's family members, Habibur started teaching Hazera music in January this year. Since then, the girl has been visiting Habibur's house. Habibur first raped the girl around six months ago and then raped her for multiple times.

The victim shared her experience with her family members a few days ago.

Meanwhile, a Jashore court yesterday sent two madrasa teachers to jail for allegedly raping an eighth grader on September 30.

The accused are Nazrul Islam, 37, and Tariqul Islam, 23, said police.

The duo was arrested on Tuesday night and placed before the chief judicial magistrate court in Jashore yesterday.

The court then sent them to jail.

Botswana rhinos risk wipeout as poaching rises

AFP, Gaborone

Nine Botswana rhinos have been poached since April, the government said yesterday, an unprecedented rate of one per month that could see rhinos wiped out in the southern African country by 2021.

The thousands of rhinos that once roamed Africa and Asia have been culled by poaching and habitat loss. Very few are found outside national parks and reserves, where they remain threatened.

Botswana is home to just under 400 rhinos, according to Rhino Conservation Botswana, most of which roam the grassy plains of the northern Okavango Delta.

A ministry of environment statement said two rhinos were poached within five days in the Okavango late last month, raising the total number to nine since April.

"We have been losing about a rhino a month to poaching," said Mmadi Reuben, rhino coordinator for Botswana's wildlife department in the statement.

"If the poaching continues at this rate there will be no rhinos in Botswana in a year or two, especially the black rhino."

While southern white rhinos have been rescued from extinction, black rhinos are still considered critically endangered, with only around 4,200 living in the wild.

Less than 20 are found in Botswana, which is also home to the continent's largest elephant population.

Botswana has a zero-tolerance approach to poaching and previously operated a "shoot-to-kill" policy against perpetrators.

"The anti-poaching forces have now placed the protection of rhinos and location of these poaching gangs as their highest priority," said the statement, adding that two perpetrators were killed in recent operations.

But poaching is escalating in the region, driven by demand for rhino horn in Asian countries, and authorities are overwhelmed.

"The Okavango is a very large area with difficult wetland terrain, which these poachers are using to their advantage," said the ministry.



Students near the TSC of Dhaka University reenact the violence on campus as part of their protests that have taken the campus by storm since the killing of Buet student Abrar. Right, Buet alumni form a human chain at the Shaheed Minar on their campus demanding justice for Abrar.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN/STAR

Ban politics at Buet, punish the killers

FROM PAGE 1 Association yesterday thronged the campus and expressed solidarity with the agitating students on their demands.

At a rally there, they demanded removal of the VC, recasting of the university administration, expulsion of the accused students and trial of the murder case at a speedy tribunal.

Association President Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury placed a seven-point demand, including banning politics and ragging on the campus.

"This brutal murder [of Abrar Fahad] is the outcome of the university authorities' reluctance, mismanagement and failure to ensure security on the campus," he said.

"Qualified, bold and neutral persons should get promotions and the Buet administration needs to be recast through the removal of the VC. These are needed to protect the image of the institution," he added.

ULTIMATUM

The agitating students of Buet continued their demonstration on the campus for the third straight day yesterday to press home their 10-point demand, including death penalty for Abrar's killers.

Skipping classes, the protesters joined a sit-in on the university's Shaheed Minar premises around

10:00am. About an hour and a half later, they put up barricades at Palashi Intersection and in Baksibazar areas and chanted slogans.

Their demands include expulsion of all the accused students, prevention of torture that comes in the form of ragging and ban on organisation-based politics on the campus.

The protesters gave the university authorities a two-day ultimatum to give compensations to Abrar's family, remove the provost of Sher-e-Bangla Hall and identify and expel the students who killed Abrar.

The university authorities were given until October 15 to meet the other demands.

Around 500 students of Dhaka University brought out a procession on the campus around 1:30pm and extended support to the demands.

Earlier in the morning, a section of Buet teachers and students brought out a silent procession, demanding justice for Abrar.

Around 7:00pm, Buet students held a candlelight vigil on the campus over the same demand.

BAN 'INDIRECT' POLITICS Buet Teachers' Association also expressed solidarity with the agitating students of the university.

Speaking to reporters, the platform's President AKM Masud said

their meeting in the morning decided that they would recommend banning "indirect" politics by students and teachers on the campus.

At that time, he also placed their eight-point demand, including resignation of the Buet VC.

"Such a situation has been created as the VC did not give proper assistance in the academic activities. He is responsible for Abrar's killing. We will not let our institution get spoiled because of an "unskilled" vice-chancellor," said Prof Masud.

The other demands include evicting outsiders from the university halls.

'ENSURE SECURITY' Holding black flags, students, teachers and their guardians brought out a procession at Dhaka University, demanding justice for Abrar and safety of students on the campus.

They alleged provosts were failing to ensure security at the dormitories and demanded their resignation.

At a rally at the foot of Raju Memorial Sculpture, eminent lawyer Jyotirmoy Barua slammed the Buet administration over Abrar's killing and asked, "If you failed to ensure security of students, why did you take the responsibilities as VC, pro-VC and provost?"

"They [Chhatra League activists] killed freedom of opinion through the

killing of Abrar," he said.

Jahangirnagar University's Prof Anu Muhammad said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina "should shoulder the responsibilities of all activities of Chhatra League as she was the organisational chief of Chhatra League".

DU Economics Professor MM Akash said students being tortured at guestroom of dormitories were leading miserable lives.

DU teachers Gitiera Nasreen, Asif Nazrul, Kaberi Gayen, Samina Luthfa, Tanjimuddin Khan and Ducsu Vice President Nurul Haque Nur also spoke at the rally.

At a sit-in on the campus, BNP-Jamaat backed "White Panel" teachers of Dhaka University demanded capital punishment for Abrar's killers.

Left leaning Pragatashil Chhatra Jote and Pro-BNP student body Chhatra Dal brought out separate processions from Madhur canteen premises on DU campus. They also demanded capital punishment to the killers and an end to student torture at dormitories.

BCL WARNING Acting president of Chhatra League Al Nahean Khan Joy yesterday said the student organisation would give a "fitting reply" if anyone tried to destabilise the country over Abrar murder, reports UNB.

"Police and administration are doing their work. Chhatra League has already expelled those found involved in the incident," he told a press conference at Dhaka University.

3 MORE REMANDED

Three students of Buet -- Moniruzzaman Monir, Akash Hossain and Shamsul Arefin Rafat -- were placed on five-day remand each yesterday in connection with the murder.

Metropolitan Magistrate Tofazzal Hossain passed the order after DB Inspector Wahiduzzaman produced the trio before the court with 10-day remand prayer for each of them.

A total of 13 students of the university were arrested in connection with the murder case filed by Abrar's father.

The accused include 10 members of Buet BCL. The other seven are on five-day remand.

Meanwhile, students and teachers of different other educational institutions, including Chattogram University and Rajshahi University, continued demonstrations yesterday for punishment to the killers.

Chhatra League men beat up Chhatra Dal activists at Jahangirnagar University and Jagannath University and barred them from holding protests.

'He's feigning, can be beaten up for two more hours'

FROM PAGE 1 Robein, organising secretary of Buet BCL.

"After Robein started it, Anik joined him. At one stage of the relentless beating, Anik went out [of the room] but came back soon afterwards. He again struck Abrar [with a stump] who then lost consciousness," a police officer told The Daily Star.

The others who led the torture are Meftahul Islam Zion and Ifi Mosharrif Shakal, the officer said wishing anonymity.

The grisly murder at Sher-e-Bangla Hall of Buet sometime between 7:30pm Sunday and 2:30am Monday sparked widespread protests at different universities.

Investigators believe, 23 or 24 students of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) were involved in the killing, police said.

RASEL CALLED THE POLICE

Receiving a call from Buet BCL General Secretary Mehedi Hasan Rasel, Chawkbazar Police Station sent a team led by a sub-inspector to Sher-e-Bangla Hall around 2:15am Monday.

Sub-inspector Delwar Hossain went to the hall with a constable and an Ansar member, expecting that a student was injured.

When he reached the hall, Rasel told him that the provost was on his way and asked him to wait in the reception room.

After waiting for around 45 minutes, Delwar called Rasel from a hall security guard's phone.

"When Rasel came, I asked what had happened. He said a Shibir man

has been caught and beaten up, I wanted to go upstairs. But Rasel said there was no need [for me] to go inside," Delwar told The Daily Star.

The SI also said he asked Rasel to allow him to take the injured student to a hospital.

But Rasel told him that the student suffered minor injuries and they would take care of him once the provost arrived.

The SI said he then informed the matter to the inspector of his station and left the hall.

Around 4:00pm, Chawkbazar police received a call and were informed that a Buet student had been killed. The same team from the police station went to the hall and saw that the provost, physician, student adviser and Buet's security personnel were there.

Police sources said Rasel and other students involved in the killing actually tried to buy time to be able to destroy evidence.

Asked why police had not entered the hall despite receiving information that a student was injured, a senior officer of Lalbagh division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police said police could not enter a public university hall without the consent of its provost or at least a house tutor.

Police officials said even after Abrar's death, Rasel and Shakal seemed quite nonchalant. In the morning, they hung around the hall and smoked cigarettes while senior police officials and hall authorities had gathered at the scene.

Campus physician Masuk Elahi said he went to the hall around 3:00am after receiving phone calls

from students and found Abrar dead.

"It seemed to me that Abrar had died about an hour and a half before I reached the hall," he said.

Prof Zafar Iqbal Khan, who was the hall provost, resigned yesterday. He didn't answer his phone when this correspondent called him.

TALES OF BRUTALITY

"He [Abrar] is feigning [injuries]. [He] can be beaten up for two more hours," Anik was telling others when the second-year student of Buet was left on the staircase between the ground floor and the first floor after being beaten up for hours, according to Yeamin, a student of chemical engineering.

Another attacker, Zion made a similar comment, asking his fellows to keep Abrar on the floor.

"He is pretending. Keep him here," Zion said.

Some students, who witnessed the last moments of Abrar before his agonising death, yesterday narrated the brutality of the attackers to the demonstrators in front of the Shaheed Minar on campus.

"I could not sleep for the last three nights after seeing him [Abrar] in that condition. I could not save him," Kazi Mohiuddin Alamgir, a student of electrical and electronic engineering, said on a loudspeaker.

He said he and one of his roommates were going to buy some snacks when they saw Abrar lying on the floor and groaning in pain.

"I told my roommate that he might have had epilepsy and should be rushed to hospital," Mohiuddin said.

"But Zion was saying, 'He [Abrar] is pretending; keep him here,'" he said,

bursting into tears.

"Please forgive me. I could not save him even after seeing him alive."

Many Buet students broke down in tears as Mohiuddin spoke.

Yeamin said some students of the batch-15 or older ones asked the students of batch-17 to beat Abrar up. A student of batch-17 then started beating him up, he added.

At one stage, Yeamin heard Anik or a student of batch-15 say, "Do you know he was caught on suspicion of being a Shibir activist? Look at me [and see] how a Shibir man should be beaten up."

It could not be known whether Yeamin witnessed the torture or heard about it from someone else.

Yeamin added that Abrar seemed to have lost control over his bladder but they did not stop beating him.

Arafat, a student of civil engineering, said Abrar's body was cold when he touched him.

"His shirt was wet. He vomited twice. His trousers were completely wet. A bad smell was coming from his body and he was frothing at the mouth," he said.

ABRAR WAS GIVEN A PAINKILLER

Talking to reporters, a student, wishing not to be named, said Zion, Anik and Robein were beating Abrar.

"I have heard that he [Abrar] was pleading [for them to stop]. Then he was given a painkiller and beaten up a second time. He was tortured three times," said the student, quoting witnesses.

He also heard that one of the attackers stopped others from taking Abrar to a hospital.

BTRC blocks Buet site for complaints against BCL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) yesterday blocked a website of Buet that contained complaints against Bangladesh Chhatra League's university unit.

The website, run by the university's Department of Computer Science and Engineering, had registered 166 complaints against the leaders and activists of Buet unit BCL before it was blocked, said sources.

Md Asif Waheed, senior assistant director (system and services) of BTRC, directed all International Internet Gateways (IGs) and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to block the domain at 9:14pm.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the email.

Seeking anonymity, a leader of Internet Service Provider Association of Bangladesh said, "We complied with the order within half an hour."

According to a source, students of Buet started registering their complaints against BCL men on the website and mentioned what they had faced over the years on the campus.

Abrar Fahad, a second-year student of the university's electrical and electronic engineering department, was beaten to death allegedly by some BCL leaders at the university's Sher-e-Bangla Hall sometime between 7:30pm Sunday and 2:30am Monday.

Univ admin did nothing

FROM PAGE 1 sparking countrywide outrage.

"This has been going on for a long time and it did not happen overnight. Undoubtedly, it is the failure of the university authority and also the teachers," AKM Masud, president of Buet Teachers' Association, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the teachers' association had a meeting yesterday where representatives of dormitory authorities said they were aware of the abuses but could not act properly as they did not get the necessary support from their higher authorities.

Masud said, "Why do meritorious students become unruly after getting admission here? It is a matter of worry. Another issue of concern is that the authorities go into denial mode because of political pressure."

Masud mentioned the director of students' welfare (DSW) as one of the higher authorities tasked with looking after the students.

A number of teachers said the dorm authorities had reported the matter to higher authorities but was asked to

"manage the situation".

Most of the teachers said students were scared of making formal complaints because of backlash. Even after formal complaints, perpetrators have hardly ever been punished or the punishments meted out.

Around 1:00am on July 25, some Chhatra League leaders called Abhijeet Kar to the common room of Ahsanullah Hall. When Abhijeet went there, he saw 14 other students in the room. All of them were asked to stand in a line and then Chhatra League leaders beat them up.

Sowmitro Lahiri of mechanical engineering had slapped Abhijeet. He started bleeding from the ear.

Seeing his condition, Sowmitro sent him to his room. Abhijeet went to the doctor's the next day. The doctor said that his eardrum was perforated and blood had clotted inside the ear.

Abhijeet then lodged a complaint with the DSW which formed a probe body. The Daily Star obtained a copy of the probe report.

It recommended suspension of Sowmitro Lahiri, Plaban Chowdhury,

Nahid Ahmed, Farhad Hossain Mithu, Arnab Chowdhury and Sabbyasachi Das from Ahsanullah Hall for a year each and banning them from entering the dorm.

The committee also recommended harsher punishment of Sowmitro and Plaban through Board of Residence and Discipline for the greater interest of the university.

The university authorities last month expelled only Sowmitro and Plaban from the dorm for a year and the rest were sort of let off with suspended sentences.

But in reality, the duo did not leave the dormitory right away, said students and an assistant provost.

Two more students of Suhrawardy Hall faced similar beatings but the university did not take any action.

A final-year student of computer science and engineering said six people attacked him on November 23 last year at MA Rashid Hall.

They beat him with cricket stumps causing a tear in his left leg ligament. The beating was for refusing to pay

the "charge" for a "hall feast" some students organised. The CSE student had refused as he would not be in the dormitory during the feast.

The student could not walk for one month but did not lodge any complaint fearing retribution.

He said even though he did not lodge any complaint, the hall provost and assistant provost knew about the matter.

An assistant provost said these were not isolated incidents and that these had been going on for the last five to six years.

"It is a cumulative failure of the university administration. We failed to protect the students," the assistant provost said wishing not to be named.

Another assistant provost said the situation would have been different had the administration taken proper action on each of the incidents.

"It is our failure. It was our duty to protect the students but we could not because of politicisation of the administration. Whenever we complaint to the DSW, the director

always says 'adjust with the situation', the assistant provost said.

A Buet student said, "If the administration had taken proper action and were proactive, Abrar would not have died and Chhatra League men could not have gotten the audacity to repeat such incidents."

Prof Md Mizanur Rahman, director at the office of the DSW, said, "It is not my failure. It may be an institutional failure.

"I took the charge three months ago. If anyone can say in front of me that I asked them 'to manage the situation', I will resign right away."

The Daily Star tried to contact the vice-chancellor and the registrar of the university for comments but they could not be reached.

The CSE department launched a website in 2016 for reporting such incidents online. There were 103 incidents reported as of July. The 103 complaints were printed and submitted to the university authorities but no visible action was taken, said a Buet teacher.