

## Another blow on the bruise

Rape victim's family fears arrest as abuser's son, brother sue them 'out of vengeance'

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Brahmanbaria

A speech-impaired girl was allegedly raped by her neighbour in Brahmanbaria's Sadar upazila last year.

With the trial of the rape case still ongoing, family members of the victim are now living in fear of arrest after being sued in two cases filed by the family of the rape accused.

The rape accused, Bachchu Mia, 55, was released on bail by Brahmanbaria Women and Children Repression Tribunal on November 27.

He was arrested and later sent to jail days after he had allegedly raped the girl on September 29, 2018.

Bachchu's son Billal Mia filed the first case with the Brahmanbaria Executive Magistrate (Sadar) Court on December 1, accusing five members of the girl's family, including her parents and siblings.

According to the case statement, family members of the girl wielding sharp weapons attacked Bachchu and his brother Bahar Mia "intending to kill or injure them" around 8:00pm on November 29 this year.

According to the second case, which was lodged by Bahar with the court of Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate (Sadar) in Brahmanbaria on December 5, the girl's family members invaded Bahar's house on November 30 and



Bachchu Mia

looted gold jewellery worth Tk45,000.

All the accused in the two cases are same.

Shafiq Babu, sub-inspector of Brahmanbaria Sadar Model Police Station, was given the charge of investigating the second case.

Contacted, he told this correspondent that he had not found any evidence of an attack on Bahar's family.

All the allegations were fabricated to harass an innocent family, the SI said.

Talking to The Daily Star, the girl's father, who is the prime accused in both the cases, said all the allegations made in the two cases were false as he had not visited his village home in the last one and a half months.

The father, who runs a tea-stall at Dhaka University's TSC, said his family can't attack someone as the two male members - he and his son - were in Dhaka at the time mentioned in the cases.

They filed the cases out of vengeance, the father said, adding that Bachchu's family members have been threatening them with dire consequences if they did not withdraw the case filed over his daughter's rape.

Alamgir Hossain, additional superintendent of police in Brahmanbaria, said the fact was known to them and that no scope would be given to harass the victim's family.



Going across this bridge in Phartali area of Chattogram's Raozan is not an easy feat. As no approach road has been built even an year after the bridge was constructed, villagers have to struggle a lot to use it. The photo was taken last week.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## The curse of contamination

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Many villagers own property but cannot sell, they claim, as the land is surrounded by putrid waterbodies. Villagers who have land in the Chankirtek Beel do not want to cultivate it as their crops get affected by the pollution.

"Every year, I cultivate paddy on my land. But the production has declined so much, I cannot recover expenses most of the time. Initially, the crop was good. But ultimately, there is no paddy on the sheaves," said Asad Mia, from Haji Bari of Shukundi village, who inherited around two acres of land by the Turag river.

As the land has almost no use for him, Asad wanted to sell it. "But the value of the land has decreased due to this pollution. People offer almost half price," he said.

According to locals, it all started nearly 20 years ago. Over the years, they have seen several drives on the polluting factories, conducted by the Department of Environment.

But the pollution never stopped. Contacted, Abdus Salam, assistant director at the Department of Environment's Gazipur office, said there are around 6,500 industrial units in the district, of which only 490 units discharge liquid waste. And 455 of these have installed effluent treatment plants (ETP).

He added that 12 washing plants



are legally bound to install and run ETPs.

Prof Mohidus Samad Khan, who teaches at the chemical engineering department of Buet, is currently studying the effects of pollution by textile industries in Dhaka.

His research reveals textile factories use, on average, 120 litres of water to dye and wash a km of fabric (about two pairs of jeans). Many subsequently discharge the effluent into nearby rivers or wetlands without proper treatment.

Though most of the factories have installed ETPs, many of these ETPs are undersized.

"Once they expand their factories after constructing the ETP, they cannot expand the size of the ETP. So, the ETP becomes undersized and it cannot treat the extra volume of waste water," he said.

When asked about initiatives to stop pollution by readymade garments factories, Rubana Haq, president of Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) said most garments manufacturers do not have their own washing plants.

"So, most of these polluters are not garments manufacturers. But these violations have to be stopped. If we get details, names and addresses of the factories and the owners involved, we will take necessary steps," she said.

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## City polls may thaw

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of candidacy is January 9. The EC will scrutinise nomination papers on January 2.

BNP

BNP activists usually keep a distance from the party's Nayapaltn headquarters that remain surrounded by plainclothes police members and intelligence officials round the clock.

The scenes, however, were different yesterday. As many as 134 ward councillor aspirants and their supporters thronged the office to collect the nomination forms.

The party, which has been staging demonstrations to free its Chairperson Khaleda Zia from jail, disclosed its decision to join the city polls on December 23, a day after the EC announced the election schedule.

"We've clearly said no election can be held fairly under this Election Commission and the government, and people's mandate won't be reflected in the polls. Even after that, we are participating in the city polls as we believe in democracy," BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said yesterday.

Sources said the name of BNP Executive Committee member Tabith Awal has been in discussion as the DNCC mayor candidate from the party. Tabith, son of BNP Vice Chairman Abdul Awal Mintoo, had contested the last mayoral polls in 2015, but lost to AL-backed candidate, former mayor Annisul Huq.

The sources said names of BNP Joint Secretary General Habibun Nabi Khan Sohel, party's international wing member Israque Hossain and Jatiyatabadi Mahila Dal President Afroza Abbas were being discussed as the mayor candidate for the DNCC.

Aforza Abbas is wife of BNP leader Mirza Abbas and Israque is son of late BNP leader and Dhaka mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka.

Nomination forms would also be distributed today and deadline for their submission is tomorrow.

The party's nomination board will sit on December 28 to finalise the candidates.

AWAMI LEAGUE

The AL president's political office in Dhanmondi was vibrant yesterday as mayor and ward councillor aspirants, along with their supporters, gathered there to buy nomination forms.

Incumbent DNCC Mayor M Atiqul Islam, Bangabandhu Foundation Joint General Secretary Shahidullah Osman, and Bhasantek AL unit Vice President Yaad Al Fakir collected party's nomination forms seeking party ticket for DNCC mayor polls.

AL lawmakers Fazole Noor Taposh and Haji Selim; Sheikh Russel Jatiya Shishu Kishore Parishad advisor Najmul Haq and former secretary general of Central Command Council of Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad

MA Rashid bought nomination forms for the DNCC mayor election.

Party sources said the name of incumbent DNCC Mayor Mohammad Sayeed Khokon also surfaced as a possible party candidate.

"We welcome the BNP. The election will be free and fair and this is what Prime Minister and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina wants," AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader said yesterday.

Quader, also road transport and bridges minister, was addressing a reunion, organised by Dhaka University Political Science Department Alumni Association at the TSC auditorium.

The AL will sell nomination forms to its aspirants until tomorrow. The candidates would be finalised the next day.

JATIYA PARTY  
Brig Gen (retd) Kamrul Islam collected Jatiya Party nomination form to contest the mayoral polls to the DNCC yesterday, the first day of distribution of the party's nomination forms.

The forms were distributed at the JP chairperson's Banani office.

As many as 50 others collected forms to vie for ward councillor posts at the DNCC, said a press release.

Nomination forms for the DNCC will be distributed from today, said Delowar Jalali, deputy press secretary to the JP chairperson.

While distributing nomination forms, JP chief GM Quader said they hoped the elections would be held in a free, fair and neutral manner.

The party would sell nomination forms until tomorrow and interview of the prospective candidates for the mayoral post will be held on December 28.

LDA  
Insiders of Communist Party of Bangladesh said the party was preparing to join the election.

Besides, the party's Dhaka unit has already recommended its General Secretary Sajedul Huq Rubel and former Chhatra Union President Manabendra Deb to the central committee to be given nomination as DNCC and DNCC mayor candidates.

CPB President Mujahidul Islam Selim did not comment on the matter, but said the party would hold a press conference today to clarify its stance on joining the election.

An LDA leader and Socialist Party of Bangladesh General Secretary Khalequzzaman said the combine was yet to make any decision on going to the polls. "We will take the decision in a day or two", he said.

Islamic Andolan Bangladesh's Sheikh Fazole Bari Masud would contest for DNCC mayor while Abdur Rahman for DNCC mayor from the Islamist party, said its media coordinator Shahidul Islam Kabir.

## Thailand charges two soldiers in killing of Muslim civilians

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand has charged two soldiers with murder in the shooting of three Muslim men foraging on a mountain in the south, police said yesterday, a rare push for justice that one rights group called "unprecedented."

The announcement comes after the military expressed regret last week over the killing of the unarmed civilians and said it was a case of mistaken identity in the insurgency-scarred region.

The Buddhist-majority state has been locked in a simmering conflict

with Malay-Muslim militants in Thailand's south for 15 years with rebels fighting for more autonomy.

More than 7,000 people have been killed, most of them civilians from both faiths.

Cases are rarely investigated but the police chief in the southern province of Narathiwat said two soldiers turned themselves into authorities on Monday after the shooting.

They were both charged with murder but released on bail as an investigation is carried out, Major General Narin Boosaman told AFP.

## 5,945 fall ill in last 24 hrs

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"During every winter, an outbreak of cold-related ailments happens and it is normal. It outbreaks spread until the end of December. This year, it may stay longer," Aysha Akter, assistant director (control room) at DGHS, told The Daily Star.

"People, especially the children, should dress warm, try not to stay outside in the morning and evening, drink safe water and eat enough vegetables," she said.

Meanwhile, the temperature in Panchagarh plummeted to 6.2 degrees Celsius yesterday morning, the lowest recorded this season, officials said.

On January 8 last year, mercury fell

to 2.6 Celsius in Tetulia, the lowest-ever recorded in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

Yesterday, a mild to moderate cold wave swept over Rangpur and Rajshahi divisions and the regions of Tangail and Kushtia, according to Met office.

Yesterday, temperature was 8.3 Celsius in Rangpur, 6.8 in Dinajpur, 7.7 in Kurigram, 7.4 in Naogaon, 9.6 in Chuadanga and 13 in Dhaka.

Flight operations at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport resumed at 7:30am after a five-and-a-half-hour suspension.

"Due to thick fog, visibility came down to 60 metres," said Group

Captain HM Touhid-ul-Ahsan, director of Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, ferry services on Shimulia-Kathalbari and Paturia-Daulatdia routes across the Padma river were disrupted due to foggy weather.

Our Faridpur Correspondent reports, the Shimulia-Kathalbari ferry services resumed at 10:00am after nine hours. The Paturia-Daulatdia services resumed at 9:00am after 11 hours.

Over 1,000 vehicles got stuck in tailbacks at the ferry terminals.

Officials distributed warm clothes and child food among poor people in Rajshahi.

## Iraqi city in turmoil after activist's death

AFP, Diwaniyah

Hundreds of anti-government protesters yesterday marched in southern Iraq to mourn a dead activist after a night during which the headquarters of two pro-Iran militias were set on fire, an AFP correspondent reported.

The demonstrators oppose the political class that has run the oil-rich yet poverty-hit country since a 2003 US-led invasion overthrew dictator Saddam Hussein. They accuse leaders of enriching themselves and of being beholden to neighbour Iran.

Thaer al-Tayeb, a prominent activist from the city of Diwaniyah, went to Baghdad's Tahrir Square, the epicentre of the unprecedented revolt shaking Iraq, when the rallies started nearly three months ago.

A suspicious explosion hit Tayeb's car on December 15, badly wounding him and fellow activist Ali al-Madani, back in Tayeb's hometown 200 kilometres (125 miles) south of Baghdad.

## DU proctor

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Rashed yesterday alleged that BCL leaders and DU administration collaborated and made the footages disappear as they tried to save DU BCL President Sanjit Chandra Das and General Secretary Saddam Hussain.

Rashed said he repeatedly called the proctor when Muktiyuddho Moncho activists attacked them.

"I called him at least 10 times... he received three times and rebuked me, asking why I went to the Ducsu when I was not a member of the [Ducsu] committee. I told him I have the right to go anywhere in the university as a student. But he kept scolding me.

"We demand resignation of the proctor, who is biased towards a party," Rashed said.

Contacted, Prof Rabbani said he would only speak to a probe body in this regard.

On Sunday, activists of a faction of Muktiyuddho Moncho, who are mostly BCL men, severely beat up Ducsu Vice President Nurul Haque Nur after storming into his office at the Ducsu building.

At least 27 of Nur's supporters were injured in the attack.

"POLICE BIASED"

Although some actions were taken after the prime minister's directive, police role seems biased, Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon and General Secretary Fazle Hossain Badshah, said in a joint statement.

Days after the attack, police filed a case on Tuesday accusing 30-35 leaders and activists of Muktiyuddho Moncho.

The Workers Party leaders said they had never seen an attack on a Ducsu VP.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday said the attackers would be identified from CCTV footage.

"The culprits will be identified after the CCTV footage are scrutinised. The attackers will not be spared," the minister said while addressing an event at Sher-e-Bangla Boys High School in the capital.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Shafiqul Islam yesterday told reporters that police were trying to find the CCTV footage.

## Don't want repeat

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returning officers at the Election Training Institute.

The polls to Khulna, Gazipur, Barishal, city corporations were held between May and July 2018 and faced huge criticism due to alleged anomalies.

Mahbub said the commission is independent as per law, but this freedom is confined to the election process.

"That's why reform in the election process is needed. If the election is the precondition to democracy, then there should be a free and fair election for the smooth advancement of democracy," he said.

DEBATE OVER EVM

At the programme, Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda said the commission did not see any problem with the use of electronic voting machines (EVMs) in the DNCC and DNCC polls while Mahbub Talukdar was sceptical about using the electronic device in polls.

The CEC asked the election officials to treat all candidates equally.

The use of EVM will continue as the commission has seen benefits of using the devices in national and local elections, Nurul said, adding that the EC officials have been given adequate training on the use of EVM and that they have attained enough skills.

Speaking at the same programme, Mahbub said many stakeholders were still hesitant over using EVM in the election.

"It is an acid test for the commission...If the use of EVM faces question, the election will also face question," he said.

He asked election officials to have zero-tolerance attitudes to create a level playing field for all candidates.

All the election commissioners said the two Dhaka city corporation polls would be very crucial for the EC as the citizens across the world would keep an eye on the polls.