

Boy killed after kidnap, ransom demand

Two held

Our Correspondent, Kushiia

A schoolboy was killed after abduction for ransom in Meherpur’s Gangni upazila on Saturday.

Police detained two people in this connection.

The victim was Abir Hossain, 12, son of Asadul Islam, who is a Malaysian expatriate from Sarishadanga village in Chuadanga’s Alamdanga.

Abir used to live in his maternal grandfather’s house with mother in Minapara of Meherpur’s Gangni. He was a class-V student at Minapara Government Primary School.

His mother Shahana Khatun said her son went to the village field on a motorcycle with his two co-villagers on Saturday afternoon.

In the evening, the two co-villagers returned and informed the villagers that an unknown person held Abir hostage and took him away.

Later, an unidentified person called Abir’s mother from Abir’s mobile phone around 8:00pm and demanded a ransom of Tk 1 one lakh.

An hour later, Abir’s phone was found switched off, said his mother.

The victim’s family then informed Gangni police of the matter.

A team of Gangni police went to the spot and recovered Abir’s body from the field with his arms and legs tied.

Bazlur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Gangni Police Station, said police detained the two co-villagers for their alleged involvement in the murder.

This paper could not mention the detainees’ names as they are below 18.

93pc people

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percent had the antibodies.

However, these findings should not be generalised, the speakers warned.

“We do not know how long the antibodies will last inside the body,” said Prof SM Samsuzzaman, head of microbiology at the college, who led the research done over five months.

The participants were all aged over 30, and 80 percent of them were over 50, he said.

College Principal Prof Titu Mia said, “Anyone can get infected with the coronavirus even after they get inoculated. However, it reduces the chances of developing severe illness.

“But, the number of samples is not small. The study at least gives us an idea. Research on a larger scale is needed.”

On February 7, Bangladesh launched a mass inoculation campaign with the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine. But the campaign stumbled amid depleting stocks of the doses, thanks to non-compliance of the international supply commitments.

Govt officially

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Nasrul said an English daily earlier published a list of the cancelled plants but that was not a correct one.

He claimed that the move will not adversely impact the power supply to the national grid as some alternative plants are now under construction and would generate electricity to meet the demands.

“After adjustment in the plan, finally the national grid will have 13,313 MW surplus electricity by 2041. There will be no problem of power supply to meet demands”, he said.

He, however, said there will be a special thrust on renewable energy promotion in the future planning of electricity as part of the country’s commitment to the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is currently chair of the organisation.

“We have pledged to the CVF to generate 40 percent electricity from renewable sources by 2041”, said Nasrul.

Responding to a question he said that the Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority (Sreda) has been given the responsibility to prepare a roadmap to achieve the goal.

“Sreda has already started work on the issue”, he added informing that a significant portion of renewable energy will be imported from Nepal and Bhutan.

“We’re going to sign a final deal with Nepal to import hydropower from an Indian company’s generation plant in Nepal”, he said.

Discussions are going on with both Nepal and Bhutan to set up hydropower plants there under a bipartite or tripartite arrangement, he noted.

The state minister said there is also a plan to increase the import of LNG to set up more gas-based power plants across the country.

“We want to take gas pipeline to south-western and northern regions including Gopalganj through Padma Bridge”, he said.



French President Emmanuel Macron greets local residents as he arrives at a polling station in Le Touquet, France during the second round of regional elections yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Over 3,000kms of roads

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not accept poor construction work as one of the main reasons behind it. They have blamed lack of budgetary allocation, along with overloading and waterlogging, for this condition.

SURVEY FINDINGS
According to the RHD, there are 22,428km of national and regional highways and district roads under the department across the country.

The RHD carries out the survey every year to project the total maintenance costs for its road network and also to prioritise the roads for maintenance, as it does not get enough allocation.

The latest survey was conducted between November last year and March this year.

According to the report, released on the RHD website on Sunday, a total of 18,473.67km (82.36 percent) of road was surveyed this year. The survey excluded the roads under rehabilitation or reconstruction work.

The survey found some 1524.29km (8.25 percent) of the roads in “poor”, 789.6km in “bad” and 691.83km in “very bad” conditions, totalling 3,006km.

The rest are in “good” or “fair” condition, according to the survey.

RHD officials classified the roads in five categories on the basis of roughness of roads, said a RHD engineer, who has knowledge of the survey.

Once a road is classified as very bad, the road needs immediate attention. While a bad road also needs attention and if not given, it would turn into a very bad one next year, he said.

If anyone travels on a “poor road”, he or she would take relatively more time and get less comfort during travel, he added.

The previous survey report in July last year found some 3,590km (18.61 percent) of road was in “poor, bad or very bad” condition.

Total 4,247km (24.34 percent) road was found in the same condition in 2019’s survey.

REASONS BEHIND POOR ROADS
Prominent transport expert Prof Shamsul Hoque said overloading, waterlogging, poor construction work and lack of timely maintenance are the main reasons behind the poor road condition.

He said the government, in a suicidal decision, was allowing overloaded trucks that were destroying roads long before the service life.

He said a two-axle truck is supposed to carry 16 tonnes, but the government is permitting it to carry 22 tonnes. Similarly, larger trucks are carrying more load against the approved load capacity set by the manufacture.

Prof Shamsul said most of the roads do not have proper drainage system, causing waterlogging which damages roads.

Poor construction work and lack of timely maintenance are also major reasons, he said, adding that, “RHD men do not actually maintain roads; rather they rehabilitate roads after roads are damaged.”

Contacted, RHD’s Chief Engineer Abdus Sabur, however, blamed inadequate budgetary allocation for poor condition of roads.

“We don’t get our required amount of money for road maintenance. However, we try to maintain roads with the limited allocation,” he told The Daily Star last night.

The budgetary allocation was Tk 2,645 crore in the outgoing fiscal year, against RHD’s demand of Tk 14,622, shows RHD document.

He also admitted that overloading and lack of proper drainage system in some cases for bad condition of roads. He, however, turned down poor road construction work as a reason for this.

Bangladesh poised to reach targets

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As the HIV epidemic continues to fuel the global TB epidemic, the surveillance of HIV among TB patients is increasingly recognised as an important tool for the management of both TB and HIV.

“We have to keep the transmission under control and if we can do that, we can achieve the SDG target,” he told The Daily Star yesterday, ahead of the unveiling of the findings of the study, the first-of-its-kind, today.

A nationwide cross-sectional survey was conducted among 12,065 TB patients managed by the TB Reporting Centre (TRC) of the National

Tuberculosis Control Programme (NTP) from June to December 2020.

Tuberculosis remains a public health concern as 129 people die of infectious disease every day in Bangladesh, according to the data of the government in 2019.

The disease also makes 978 people ill every day, according to the NTP.

At least 3.57 lakh TB patients are identified in a year in Bangladesh, with an incidence rate of 221 per lakh and mortality of 29 per lakh, according to the data.

Every year, at least 5,900 TB patients are identified with multi-drug resistance, which is concerning, the report said.

Among them, 1.5 percent are new patients and 4.9 percent are previously-treated patients but re-diagnosed with the drug-resistant TB bacteria.

“The good news is that not a single HIV positive case was found among drug-resistant TB patients, as they are the most vulnerable patients,” Riaz said.

As none of the HIV positive cases had any history of blood transfusion, it indicates the country’s blood transfusion system is safe at large.

The study also found that none of the TB-infected third gender was detected with HIV.

Out of the samples, only 12

TB patients was found with HIV positive and among them four were housewives.

It means either their husbands are HIV positives or they infected by other means, according to Riaz.

The study found that the prevalence of HIV among the TB patients was same for both the male and female.

The report also found that of those who are infected with HIV, 83 percent were suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis.

When it comes to occupation, the study found that HIV prevalence was also found higher among transport labours and day labourers.

Moscow posts

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solution,” Moscow mayor Sergei Sobyanyin told state-run television on Saturday.

The Delta variant is also feeding fresh outbreaks in Southeast Asia and Australia where authorities have brought back or prolonged restrictions.

More than five million Sydney residents endured their first full day of a two-week lockdown yesterday to contain an outbreak of the strain.

Restaurants, bars and cafes were shuttered and stay-at-home orders were issued, leaving the city centre virtually deserted.

More than 110 Covid-19 cases have been reported in Sydney since a driver for an international flight crew tested positive in mid-June for the Delta variant.

The flare-up has been a shock for a place that had returned to relative normality after months with few local cases.

Australia’s northern city of Darwin also entered a separate snap 48-hour lockdown yesterday after a handful of cases were linked to a coronavirus outbreak on a remote gold mine.

Similar spikes in infections have recently been seen across Southeast Asia.

Thailand will reimpose restrictions on restaurants, construction sites and gatherings in the capital Bangkok from today as it tries to contain a wave of infections.

The country’s latest wave kicked off in April when a cluster was found in upscale Bangkok clubs.

Premier Prayut Chan-O-Cha has said he plans to fully reopen the country by October, but this would require hitting a target of vaccinating 50 million Thais in four months.

Charges framed

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accused, Public Prosecutor Faridul Alam told this newspaper.

Security was beefed up in the court area with the deployment of additional policemen and ansar members.

In December last year, the investigators submitted the charge sheet of the case against the 15, about five months after Sinha was killed in police firing at a check post in Cox’s Bazar’s Teknaf upazila on July 31.

Sinha’s elder sister filed the murder case with Teknaf Senior Judicial Magistrate’s Court against Pradeep, Nandadulal and several others on August 5 last year.

Quader Mirza

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The enemy is taking me down. Obaidul Quader has taken a stand against me ... I have found out why he has taken that stance. “I have spoken against the ill-motivated politics of Obaidul Quader and his wife,” he added.

He said if he is jailed or killed, he has prepared someone to kill Obaidul Quader -- also the Awami League general secretary -- along with his wife and AL lawmaker Ekramul Karim.

“Obaidul Quader is a disgusting person with a cheap mentality,” Quader Mirza said, and wrote on the Facebook post that the minister had turned the whole family against the mayor by abusing his power.

Quader Mirza claimed that his brother had planned to kill him seven times and that Obaidul Quader wants to give the Basurhat mayoral post to his wife, Isratunnesa.

Quader Mirza also declared that he would never contest any polls in the future.

HC questions

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a Talaq notice, in which words like “wife’s being disobedient to husband” and “completely contradictory to Sharia” had been used.

The use of such words is illegal and unconstitutional, as article 11 of the constitution specifically states that the republic shall be a democracy in which fundamental human rights and freedoms and respect for the dignity and worth of a person shall be guaranteed, Abdullah said.

Citing the petition, he added that due to the use of such abusive words and phrases, women are humiliated and often face severe discriminations, and as such, the practice followed by the Nikah Registrar is liable to be set aside for securing the ends of justice.

Deputy Attorney General Bipul Bagmar represented the state during a virtual hearing on the writ petition.

China reveals

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Following that will be a manned Mars mission to develop the base, while the third stage will be transporting cargo fleets from Earth to Mars to construct a community on the planet; the current timetable schedules these launches approximately every two years from 2033 until 2043.

A potential fourth stage – a “sky ladder” that could reduce the cost and time spent travelling to Mars – is also being developed, but it is unclear how much progress has been made yet.

Theoretical designs, developed in computer simulations, feature a space capsule travelling along a “ladder” made of carbon nanotubes to reach a space station; following that, the capsule would be relaunched from the station to Mars.

The notion of a “sky ladder” or corresponding space elevator has been considered by humans since 1895, when it leapt from the brain of Russian space pioneer Konstantin Tsiolkovsky.

It is likely the elevator would need to be in geostationary orbit, so it moves concurrently with the planet. Engineers would first assemble an enormous space station, and then drop cables down to the Earth that would be fixed on the equator – as it would be impossible to build in the United States or Europe. Unfortunately, a cable that is both long enough, and strong enough, to maintain its integrity is yet to be invented.

AstraZeneca

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of existing vaccines and new variant vaccines is important to ensure we are best prepared to stay ahead of the pandemic coronavirus, should their use be needed,” said Andrew Pollard, chief investigator and director of the Oxford Vaccine Group at the University of Oxford.

Britain has had a succesful vaccine roll out programme, but experts do not know how long protection lasts.

“This study will provide vital evidence on whether further doses including ‘tweaks’ against new virus variants may be needed in the future,” said Maheshi Ramasamy, Principal Investigator at the Oxford Vaccine Group.

Initial data from the trial is expected later this year.

Current vaccines are believed to be less effective against the Beta variant, although it is the Delta variant, which emerged in India, that is currently causing most concern.

Although the main vaccines are believed to be highly effective at preventing serious illness, the Delta variant’s transmissible nature is leading to a spike in cases in some countries, including Britain.