

Family under pressure

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heinous crime would have gone unheeded. I am now getting threats from different quarters.”

The victim woman and girl used to live alone. The elder sister had come to stay with them around two weeks ago.

The 40-year-old mother and her daughter, a fourth grader, were raped by a gang in Nalitabari upazila early Sunday.

The same day, the mother filed a case with Nalitabari Police Station, accusing eight people.

Police arrested two. Six others, including prime accused Omar Ali, are on the run.

The two arrestees named in the first information report (FIR) are Abdus Sattar, 45, a political aspirant and a cattle trader, and Sadek Mia, 30, who operates a dredger.

The six others accused are Omar Ali, Osman Ali, Jahangir Alam, Tara Mia, Mofiz Uddin and Ahmed Ali – all aged between 30 and 42, said Bashir Ahmed, office-in-charge of Nalitabari Police Station.

According to locals, the perpetrators and the victims are from the same village – Palashikuri.

They said that except for two, none of the accused have political affiliations. They have formed a group and are known as local goons. They spend most of their time gambling.

Though they have no past criminal records, they were well connected to each other and committed the different crimes together, said OC Bashir.

Main accused Omar Ali was a garments worker in Dhaka and lost his job during the pandemic. He came back to the village and started working as a farm labourer on his own and hired land, said Fazlul Haque, senior vice chairman of Poragaon union Awami League.

Jahangir Alam and Mofiz Uddin were also garment workers in the capital and lost their jobs during the pandemic. They also returned to the Palashikura village and started farm work, villagers said.

Tara Mia is a leader of the ruling party’s Truck Workers’ union leader, while Ahmed Ali is farmer by profession.

Osman, the owner of the house where the gang rape took place, works as a security guard at a garment factory in Dhaka. He still lives there with his family. He came to his empty house in the village around three days before the incident, said Fazlul Haque.

Visiting the victims, this correspondent found that the teenage daughter has not stopped crying since the incident.

The family has been traumatised as the news spread across the entire village. Neighbours are rushing to provide consolation but the victims keep themselves isolated in a room.

“They have ruined my daughter’s future... Now I want justice and exemplary punishment to the perpetrators,” said the victim mother, as tears roll down her cheeks.

This correspondent visited Osman’s house and saw that it was in a remote area with no other houses, except one, within 100 yards of it.

Locals allege that the house and a bamboo cluster behind it are used by criminals for different illegal activities, including gambling.

The primary medical test confirmed that the mother and daughter were gang raped, said OC Bashir, adding that samples will be collected from the victims as well as the accused for cross examination.

No other accused were arrested till the filing of this report yesterday evening.

Drives are on to arrest them, police said.



Indian Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel check the bags of a scooterist as part of security checking in Srinagar, Kashmir yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Monem Khan shot dead

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MONEM KHAN KILLED
Abdul Monem Khan, former governor of East Pakistan and a collaborator of the Pakistani junta, was shot dead by freedom fighters today. He was buried under tight security precautions.

Former Pakistani president Ayub Khan sent a message of condolence saying Monem Khan was a “great patriot.”

Monem Khan became the governor of East Pakistan in 1962 and was removed from office in 1969 at the height of anti-government demonstrations which led to Ayub Khan’s ouster from power.

QUESTION OF WAR DEPENDS ON PAKISTAN: INDIRA

“We are a peaceful people. The question of a war with Pakistan depends on that country.”

This was Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s comment today about the reported amassing of Pakistani troops along Indian borders. Asked about Indian Foreign Minister Swaran Singh’s statement that a solution to the Bangladesh problem within the framework of the Pakistani constitution would be acceptable to India, Indira said, “ I think he has been wrongly reported. What we want is that the refugees must be taken back in safety and dignity.”

ON THE WAR FRONT

In the Kushtia-Jashore-Khulna sector, Mukti Bahini today engaged Pakistani troops in Mand area, killing two and injuring five enemy soldiers. On the same day, Mukti Bahini ambushed an enemy patrol at Baksha, killing four and injuring two.

In the Rangpur-Dinajpur-Rajshahi

sector, a group of Mukti Bahini raided Pakistani troops’ patrol in Jotosman area today. In this action enemy troops suffered 20 casualties.

On the same day Mukti Bahini ambushed Pakistani troops on the Bhurungamari-Paglahat road in Rangpur district, killing three and injuring four enemy soldiers.

Another group of Mukti Bahini ambushed a Pakistani patrol at Chakrabeni and killed four of the enemy.

In another operation, Mukti Bahini raided Pakistani troops’ position near Patnitala, killing six Pakistani soldiers and 17 irregulars. Two brave freedom fighters embraced martyrdom in the action.

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Helena Jahangir denied bail

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Md Rezaul Haque and Justice Md Badiuzzaman rejected her bail petition during a virtual hearing considering that the petition was not presented properly.

Deputy Attorney General Dr Md Bashir Ullah told The Daily Star that the HC refused to grant bail to Helena Jahangir as there are specific allegations against her.

Helena’s lawyer ZI Khan Panna told this correspondent that a fresh bail petition will be moved on behalf of his client before the HC after it reopens on October 20, following the ongoing annual vacation.

Panna said Helena sought bail in the case on the grounds that there is no specific allegation against her and she was physically ill.

The law enforcers filed the case against Helena with Banani Police Station under the DSA after she was arrested on July 30, he said.

Former additional attorney general Momtaz Uddin Fakir also appeared for Helena while Additional Attorney General Sk Md Morshed, Deputy Attorneys General Md Bashir Ullah and

AKM Amin Uddin Manik opposed the bail petition during the virtual hearing.

Helena, 49, drew criticism from different quarters after announcing the launch of “Bangladesh Awami Chakriji League” before her arrest.

After announcing the formation of “Awami Chakriji League” on Facebook, Helena reportedly declared that the organisation would pick presidents and general secretaries for its units at home (districts, upazilas) and abroad.

The Facebook post went viral.

Helena, the founder and CEO of JayJatra IPTV, became a member of the AL sub-committee on women affairs on January 18, said sources in the ruling party.

Earlier, she became a member of the advisory council of Cumilla (north) unit of the AL.

On July 25, Meher Afroz Chumki, AL women affairs secretary, issued a press release stating that Helena was sacked from the AL sub-committee for “breaching party polices” as her name surfaced on social media as the president of “Awami Chakriji League”.

Babar jailed for 8 years

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known sources. So, it is reasonable to punish him.

Babar was also fined Tk 10,000, in default of which he will have to serve another three months in jail.

The judge also said Babar’s sentencing in the case would be adjusted with his time in custody. He has been in custody since 2007 in connection with different cases.

When the verdict was read out yesterday, Babar was in the dock. He looked calm.

“Though the imprisonment period in this case is over, I will still appeal against the verdict because it labels me a criminal,” Babar told journalists after the verdict was pronounced.

Seven prosecution witnesses gave deposition before the court in the case.

The Anti-Corruption Commission had filed the case with the capital’s Ramna Model Police Station on January 13, 2008 against Babar for

amassing illegal wealth worth Tk 7.591 crore.

ACC Deputy Director Rupok Kumar Saha, also the investigation officer of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate’s Court of Dhaka on July 16, 2008.

The trial court accepted the charges, pressed against Babar, on July 23 the same year. It framed charges against him on August 12, 2008.

Later, Babar filed a writ petition with the High Court, challenging the legality of the lower court’s order.

On March 17 in 2017, a High Court bench heard the matter and lifted a stay order. It asked the lower court to finish the trial proceedings in six months.

Earlier on October 30 of 2007, Babar was handed 17 years’ rigorous imprisonment for possessing illegal firearms and ammunition found at his Gulshan residence in the capital.

Babar was handed death sentence in the 10-truck arms haul and the August 21 grenade attack cases.

Storms force Hong Kong to shutter twice in a week

AFP, Hong Kong

Hong Kong battened down yesterday evening for the second time in less than a week as an approaching tropical storm prompted forecasters to raise their alert level and trigger safety measures.

Tropical Cyclone Kompasu -- named after the Japanese pronunciation of “compass” -- is the second major storm to threaten the international business hub with torrential rain and high winds in five days.

As of 0900 GMT it was 480 kilometres to the south of Hong Kong packing winds of up to 110 kilometres per hour.

Hong Kong’s Observatory issued a T8 -- its third highest storm warning -- at 5.22pm (0922 GMT), although skies were clear at the time.

The order stopped ferries and many bus routes from operating, although the city’s subway system continued running.

Schools had already sent students home earlier in the day ahead of the order, with many offices following suit.

On Saturday forecasters also declared a T8 warning when the outskirts of another tropical storm, dubbed Lionrock, pounded the city with torrential downpours and high winds.

Although the epicentre of that storm remained hundreds of kilometres to the south of Hong Kong the T8 warning lasted for 22 hours, the longest typhoon signal since 1978, bringing some 460 mm of rain over two days.

Many residents were taken by surprise at the ferocity of Lionrock, which first began battering the city with heavy rain on Friday.

DB quizzes Moosa Bin Shamsher

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alleged involvement in embezzlement of money by his former legal adviser Quader.

Quader used to introduce himself as a legal adviser to DATCO and custodian of Moosa’s wealth, detectives said.

The DB on Friday arrested Quader, his wife Sharmin Chowdhury, and two associates over scamming people out of crores of taka using fake identity of a government official.

Detectives said Quader used to introduce himself as an additional secretary of the public administration ministry and travel in a luxurious car putting a government official’s sticker on it.

He managed a fake identity card of a government official and frequented the Secretariat to lobby for different projects.

Soon after his arrest, photos of Quader with Moosa surfaced in social media and DB investigators unearthed financial transactions between the two.

Before leaving the DB office, Moosa told reporters that he was victimised by Quader and would file a case against him.

The businessman claimed that Quader took some photos with him and used those to swindle money out of others and he has nothing to do with the fraudulence.

Moosa, however, admitted to conducting financial transactions of Tk 20 crore with Quader.

DB Joint Commissioner Harun, however, said they are not convinced with Moosa’s replies and he cannot shrug off responsibilities for the scam carried out by Quader.

Quader told Moosa that he was on good terms with the inspector general of police, but Moosa should have asked the IGP about it, the official said.

“We are investigating everything and we will do whatever is needed after the probe is completed,” he added.

Asked about Moosa’s claim that he owns huge wealth, the DB official

said it seemed to him that the businessman’s claim was fake.

“He has a house in Gulshan which is registered in his wife’s name. This apart, he has nothing in Bangladesh.”

Harun also said they asked Moosa why he appointed Quader, who only studied up to class nine, as the legal adviser to his company and why he gave Quader a Tk 10 crore cheque and took a Tk 20 crore cheque from him in return.

Moosa replied that Quader gave him the profit. “Does anyone give such a huge profit in a month?” the DB official questioned.

“Moosa and Quader had numerous conversations. In fact, Quader has a good connection with Moosa who fondly calls him ‘Baba’, ‘Sona.’”

According to Harun, Moosa claimed that he owns \$82 million deposited in Swiss banks, three lakh acres of land in Tangail and 1,000 acres in Gazipur. He even told the DB officials that if he got the money back from Swiss banks, he would give police Tk500 crore.

Long-delayed trustee board formed, finally

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from it.

The 12-member board is headed by the chairman of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA). Eight members are from different government agencies, two are transport leaders and the other one is a Dhaka University teacher.

The board, however, has no representation from the organisations which have long been working for road safety and ensuring compensations for accident victims.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, BRTA Chairman Nur Mohammad Mazumder said, “The board will now start working as a circular [regarding its formation] has been issued. It will start working in full swing once the rules come into force.”

The development comes more than three years after the Road Transport Act-2018 was passed in parliament and around a year after the chairman and member secretary of the board were appointed.

Under the Motor Vehicles Ordinance-1983, victims or their family members had the opportunity to seek compensation at the Motor Accident Claim Tribunal for death, injuries, and damage to properties caused in road crashes.

But the ordinance was repealed after the act came into force in November 2019, narrowing victims’ scope for getting compensation. In some rare cases, victims file writ petitions with the High Court seeking compensation.

Hundreds of people are killed and injured in road crashes every year, making it a serious cause of concern for the country. Two major movements were launched after July 2018 seeking safety on roads.

Following the unprecedented road safety movement in July-August 2018,

parliament passed the stringent act in September 2018.

But the government delayed for more than two years in making the law functional due to pressure from transport associations, which have been demanding that some sections of the law be changed.

Currently, the law is being enforced partially as the government could not formulate its rules.

TRUSTEE BOARD

As per the act, the government will create a fund for compensating and treating, if necessary, road crash victims.

The fund will be created with one time or annual “contributions” from motor vehicle owners, transport associations, and the government. The rules will determine the amount.

The government will form a trustee board to manage the fund and related works, the act says.

Road Transport and Highways Division (RTHD) in December last year issued a circular, giving BRTA’s chairman and its secretary additional responsibility of the chairman and secretary of the trustee board with immediate effect.

On Sunday, the division issued another circular formulating the full board. The circular came into force immediately.

The board members include representatives from RTHD, Public Security Division, Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division, Local Government Division, Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection, Roads and Highways Department and Highway Police.

Three other members are: Khondaker Enayet Ullah, secretary general of Bangladesh Road Transport Owners Association; Osman Ali, general secretary of Bangladesh Road

Transport Workers Federation; and Prof Tania Haque of Department of Women and Gender Studies of Dhaka University.

The BRTA chairman said they would now prepare an organogram and do other works of the board. Once the rules come into effect, they will start collecting contributions to form the fund.

“The rules will elaborately determine fees and procedures for collecting contributions and handing compensations to the victims,” he said.

THE RULES

After the law was passed, the RTHD under the road transport and bridges ministry tasked the BRTA with formulating a draft of the rules. After missing four deadlines, the BRTA submitted a “partial” draft.

But the law ministry, where the draft was sent for vetting in 2019, rejected it and asked for a “complete” one.

The BRTA then prepared the “completed” rules and sent them to the road transport ministry in September last year. The ministry sent the draft to the law ministry again in April this year.

After vetting the rules, the law ministry on September 16 sent back the rules with some queries. Later, the division sent it back to the BRTA, said officials aware of the development.

“We are working on the queries; and upon completion of the work, we will submit the rules to the division, which will forward them to the law ministry,” a BRTA official said, wishing not to be named.

If the law ministry gives the go-ahead, the road transport and bridges ministry will issue a gazette making the rules function, he said, adding, “So, it would take some more time.”

Germany unveils

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while airports often have automated monorail trains plying terminals, but those run on exclusive single tracks while the Hamburg train will be sharing tracks with other regular trains.

The project, which Siemens and Deutsche Bahn called a “world first”, is part of a 60 million euro (\$70 million) modernisation of Hamburg’s rapid urban rail system.

Deutsche Bahn CEO Richard Lutz said automated trains offer “a more reliable” service “without having to lay a single kilometre of new track”.

“We are making rail transport more intelligent,” said Siemens CEO Roland Busch, estimating that automated trains can transport “up to 30 percent more passengers, significantly improve punctuality and save more than 30 percent energy”.

Although the train is controlled through digital technology and fully automated, a driver will still be present to supervise journeys whenever there are passengers on board, the companies said in a statement.

49 cases filed

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2 lakh. Beside, an injured worker will get compensations from the company owner for his/her injury. If the owner does not take any responsibility, the injured victim will submit complaint to the court with necessary medical papers. Then the court will take necessary steps in this regard,” he told this correspondent.

The July 8 inferno at the Hashem Foods factory in Narayanganj’s Rupganj claimed 51 workers. The next day, Sub-Inspector Nazim Uddin of Rupganj Police Station filed a case against eight people, including Abul Hashem, over negligence in ensuring workers’ safety.

Police arrested all the eight accused, including Hashem and his four sons. They later came out of jail on bail.

The case is now under investigation by the Criminal Investigation Department.

Fifteen kidnapped Nigerians escape jihadist captors

AFP, Kano

Six women and nine children kidnapped by jihadists from Christian communities in Nigeria’s northeast have escaped their captors, walking for six days through the bush to freedom, an official said Monday.

The 15 hostages were seized separately from the farming villages of Takulashi in Borno state’s Chibok district and Kufre in neighbouring Adamawa’s Hong district several months ago.

Chibok was the scene of the 2014 abduction of more than 200 schoolgirls by Boko Haram which earned the jihadist group global notoriety.

Three of the hostages along with their five children were seized during a raid on Takulashi in October last year, while the other three with their four children were abducted from Kufre in May, according to Zuwaira Gambo, Borno’s women affairs commissioner.

The hostages, including an eight-month pregnant woman from Kufre, “trekked for six days” from Buni Yadi forest in nearby Yobe state to Damboa town in Borno, a distance of around 90 kilometres (56 miles), Gambo said.

“They have displayed resilience, trekking in the bush for six days,” Gambo said while presenting the escaped hostages to Borno state governor Babagana Zulum and Christian leaders.

At least 28 killed in Nepal bus accident

AFP, Kathmandu

At least 28 people were killed and more than a dozen injured yesterday after a packed passenger bus plunged off a road in a hilly region in northwestern Nepal, officials said.

The accident in the remote Mugu region happened at around 12.30pm local time (0645 GMT) after a puncture to one of the front tyres, district official Rom Bahadur Mahat told AFP.

The bus was driving from the southern Banke district to the Mugu area and was believed to have been carrying at least 45 people, many travelling to celebrate the Hindu festival of Dashain.

“The accident has killed 28 people, we are trying to identify the bodies. The injured are being treated in hospitals,” Mahat added.

Helicopters airlifted the injured to hospitals for treatment, with rescuers continuing to search for survivors and victims at the crash site late yesterday.

The bus drivers pick up travellers along designated routes but some passengers are not formally registered, making it difficult for officials to know the total number onboard.

Deadly traffic accidents are relatively common in the Himalayan nation due to poor road conditions, badly maintained vehicles and reckless driving.