



TENSIONS WITH WEST, UKRAINE
 Putin says Russia needs 'immediate' guarantees, doesn't want conflict
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Tourist raped in Cox's Bazar

Victim was on holiday with husband, 8-month-old baby; Rab identifies 3 key suspects from CCTV

STAR REPORT

Rab yesterday identified three young men suspected of raping a tourist while their cohorts held her husband and child hostage in Cox's Bazar on Wednesday evening.

The rape incident at the country's prime tourist destination sparked outrage on social media. Netizens criticised law enforcers for failing to provide safety to tourists.

Rab sources said the suspects identified from CCTV footage are: Ashiqul Islam Ashiq, Israfil Huda Joy, and Mehedi Hasan Babu. All of them are from Madhya Baharchhara in Cox's Bazar town.

The woman, her husband, and their eight-month-old child went to Cox's Bazar on holiday on Wednesday morning from the capital.

They checked into a hotel and went to Laboni Beach in the afternoon, reports our correspondent in the district.

While shopping at a nearby market in the evening, the victim's husband got into an argument with three men, one of whom he had bumped into, the victim told Rab after being rescued.

Her husband at one stage begged pardon and left, she said.

"Later, a group that included the three youths ambushed us near the golf course



JOY ASHIQ BABU

area. They threatened to stab me and separated me from my husband and child," said the victim.

"They took away my husband and child in a CNG-run auto rickshaw and took me to a secluded place at knifepoint where they raped me. They threatened to kill my husband and child," she added.

She said later the men took her to Zia Guest Inn in an auto-rickshaw and gang raped her again confining her to a room on the second floor.

The rapists then left the room, locking it from the outside. They threatened to kill her husband and child if she disclosed the matter to anyone, the victim said.

The victim managed to open a window of the room and contact a hotel guest who unlocked the door.

After she called 999 and Rab-15, Rab officers rescued her around 1:30am yesterday.

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With sheer excitement, nine-year-old Meem plays on a swing hanging from bamboo poles by the Buriganga river in the capital's Kamrangirchar area. Children living in the area do not have a field or any other places for recreation, so they try to find joy in such little things. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



Where do they go from here?

ANISUR RAHMAN

Crisp passing, brilliant dribbling, coordinated attacks through either flanks and tight defending resulted in truly scintillating performances for Bangladesh on way to clinching the title of the SAFF U-19 Women Championship, but it was far from an easy task for the girls, who had to cross multiple hurdles to reach these heights.

Restrictions from society and in some cases, family, deterred these girls from football, but they defied the odds and burst onto the scene thanks to inspiration from teachers, dedicated local coaches and family members and the introduction of the government venture, the Bangamata Gold Cup Primary School Football tournament.

They were then picked by Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) for advanced training programmes designed to sharpen their knowledge of football.

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ANSAAR AL ISLAM Lying low, continues recruitment

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Militant outfit Ansar Al Islam has no plan to carry out any attacks right now but its recruitment and training activities are going on in secret.

The hiring and initial training are done online, whereas the advanced training -- for the outfit's military wing -- is given in person in some remote areas of the country, counterterrorism officials told The Daily Star.

Besides, a recent intelligence report shows Ansar Al Islam, said to be the Bangladesh chapter of al-Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), is finalising a list of its targets, but has no plan to launch any attacks now.

The report categorises atheists as their "soft targets", and organisations promoting Hindutva and foreign mission as "hard targets". The Daily Star has obtained a copy of the report.

According to the report, Ansar Al Islam, previously called Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), has no plan to attack law enforcers as it believes such attacks will ultimately backfire, leading to a full-throttle crackdown on the organisation, weakening its strength.

Instead, it plans to build dens in the Indo-Bangla border areas to smoothly run its activities. Its ultimate aim is to take control of the Indian sub-continent through Ghazwa-e-Hind (conquest of India), it says.

Besides, the outfit sees Kashmir as a possible shelter and the Rohingya community in Bangladesh as a source for recruitment of new members, the report said.

The report also said a group of new Ansar Al Islam recruits tried to go to Afghanistan and Kashmir through the Chattogram Hill Tracts and Cox's Bazar. It, however, did not mention whether they were successful.

Asked about it, officials of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit said they have information that three youths possibly reached Afghanistan.

Talking on the issue, CTTC chief Md Asaduzzaman said Ansar Al Islam has no organisational strength to carry out any attack right now.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Garbage truck claims yet another life

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man was killed in the capital's Wari area yesterday morning after a garbage truck ran over him.

Police said locals told them that the vehicle belonged to the Dhaka South City Corporation.

This is the third road accident in a month that involved a city corporation vehicle.

Police, however, said they were yet to confirm whether a DSCC truck was involved in the accident as they did not get any clear footage.

The victim is Swapan Kumar Sarker, 62, a businessman who hailed from Brahmanbaria and used to live in the capital's Narinda area at a rented flat with his wife.

On the day of the accident, he took a rickshaw and headed toward Kamalapur as he was going to Feni on a business trip, said his brother Tapan Kumar Sarker.

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Biman to launch flights to Maldives

Hasina says as she holds talks with President Soleh in Male; 3 MoUs signed



BSS, Male

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said Biman Bangladesh Airlines is set to introduce air connectivity with the Maldives via Chennai of India as both the countries agreed to enhance connectivity aimed at increasing bilateral trade and investment.

The number of Bangladesh-Maldives direct flight was enhanced through the commencement of flights by Bangladeshi airlines US-Bangla, she said during the Bangladesh-Maldives bilateral meeting held at the President's Office in Male yesterday.

PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed reporters

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Dewanganj Municipality Suspended mayor held in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of Rab arrested Shah Newaz Shahanshah, suspended mayor of Jamalpur's Dewanganj municipality, from a hotel in the capital yesterday.

He was suspended from his mayoral post after he slapped a government official in a Victory Day programme in Dewanganj.

Khandaker Al Moin, director (media wing) of Rab, said they recovered heroin, phensedyl and yaba from Shah's possession.

"He is an addict and takes drugs regularly. He brought these drugs to his hotel room for consumption," he claimed.

Shah had gone into hiding right after the incident. He also tried to communicate with senior leaders of the ruling Awami League after that, he added.

Shah has a mentality of abusing power. On December 16, he became agitated as he failed to

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Policemen ask a bus to stop on Dhaka-Chattogram highway in the capital's Rayerbagh area during a mobile court drive by Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) yesterday. Several buses were fined for taking excessive fares from passengers, not having fitness documents and illegally using horns that make huge noise. Inset, a man removes pneumatic horns underneath a bus during the drive.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

BUSINESS Economic recovery fragile: CPD

The economy is recovering from the damages inflicted by the coronavirus pandemic but the revival has remained fragile owing to rising inflation, exchange rate volatility and squeeze in the government's fiscal space, said the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) yesterday.

"Many of key macroeconomic correlates are in the recovery trajectory, led by export-oriented sectors. Regrettably, macroeconomic stability is no longer in a comfortable state," said CPD Executive Director Fahmida Khatun.

Rising prices of essentials are hurting the recovery efforts of low-income people, said the think-tank.

STORY ON B1

এক উজ্জ্বল বাণিজ্য

তিনি বাংলাদেশের বাণিজ্য ও শিল্পখাতকে পৌছে দিয়েছেন এক অনন্য উচ্চতায়। তিনি আজ নেত্রে, তবু তাঁর কাজের মাধ্যমে আজও আমাদের মাঝে অমল হয়ে আছেন।

এম এ হাম্মেদ
(১৯৪৭-২০২০)

তাঁর প্রথম স্মৃতিস্মারক

PARTEX

পরিবারের পক্ষ থেকে স্নানাজলি