#### **DINAJPUR RAPE**

# Family wants verdict upheld; child still suffering

OUR CORRESPONDENT, DINAJPUR

Hailing a Dinajpur court for sentencing Saiful Islam to life imprisonment for raping a five-year-old, the victim's family said they were satisfied with the decision but the child is still to heal from the brutal torture she had to endure.

At a press conference in Dinajpur Press Club yesterday, the child's mother said the entire family was satisfied and urged the higher court to uphold the sentence and make a speedy disposal of the case.

The victim and her family were accompanied by several non-government organisation officials, including Shamim Ara Begum, executive director of Pallishree – a local NGO.

The child, who was raped by Saiful at the age of five on October 18, 2016, could not yet

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start going to school as her health has still not improved despite ongoing treatment. The mother

said that Saiful used to be a neighbour. "After abducting our daughter in

October 2016, he raped and tortured her."

The child had cuts all over her body, which caused massive bleeding. She had cigarette burns on her as well. Her uterus too is damaged critically, she said.

On October 19, the family found the little girl on a cropland near their home. After they rescued her, her father filed a case with Parbatipur Police Station.

Saiful was arrested on October 22 and has been in prison since then.

The child has so far undergone five major surgeries in a Dhaka hospital and is still in need of more. "She still has no control over her urethra, and that is the biggest barrier on her path to a full recovery and a normal social life," said the victim's grandmother, in tears.

"Children her age are supposed to be active and playing. My granddaughter can't even think of that due to her condition...She is even afraid of people she has known her whole life."

To that, the girl's mother added, "Her home is everything to her now."

A Dinajpur court convicted accused Saiful Islam to life term imprisonment on Monday. The court also fined him Tk 20.000, in default of which he will have to spend five more months in jail.



Kawra trees are dying fast in the reserve forest in Kuakata of Patuakhali's Kalapara upazila due to what forest officials say are the impact of climate change and sand accumulation during high tide. The death of the trees would expose the coastal people to serious damages from natural disasters, including storms and cyclones. The photo was taken on Friday.

### His homecoming speech had governance directives

Says PM on Bangabandhu

UNB, DHAKA

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said Bangladesh will be governed as per the ideological speech of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman that he delivered on his historic Homecoming Day in 1972.

"The father of the nation on his Homecoming Day on January 10, 1972, delivered his policymaking speech and ideological directives for governing the country. We've to go ahead with that ideology; we've to advance the country with that. And the pace of development in Bangladesh must not be stalled, no matter what," she said.

The PM was addressing a discussion, marking the historic Homecoming Day of Bangabandhu. The Awami League organised the programme at its Bangabandhu Avenue central office.

Hasina, also the AL president, presided over the event, joining it from the Gono Bhaban.

She said the AL has been in power, elected by the people, for three consecutive terms. "Had we not been elected by people, then we wouldn't be able to come to power for three consecutive terms and complete 13 years [in power]. This is the reality. This reality has to be accepted.'

If the AL remains in power, the wheels of development will be moving, Hasina said, adding that those who had made Bangladesh a place of killers, war criminals and corruption, there will be no place for them in this land. "This [message] has to be clearly conveyed to them."

Recalling the tumultuous days during the rule of Bangabandhu after independence, she said some people had written columns criticising the government of Bangabandhu, or created the volatile situation in the country in the name of a movement or scientific

> socialism. "What did they actually want to do? That's my question but I didn't get the answer

> > Coming down heavily on a section of people, the PM said it is the habit of a class of people to criticise all good work of AL. Regarding the allegation of wasting money in the name of development activities, Hasina said if thousands of crores of taka had been wasted in the name of development, then how had Bangladesh become the role model of

development in the world. Briefly describing various success stories of the country in the last 13 years, she said many developed and rich countries are not providing coronavirus vaccines free of cost.

"We're providing vaccines completely free of cost. So far, 13 crore people have been vaccinated."

She renewed her call to all to take vaccines to remain protected from the deadly virus. "And there's no shortage

AL Publicity and Publication Secretary Abdus Sobhan Golap conducted the discussion.

On January 10, 1972, Bangabandhu returned to independent Bangladesh via London and New Delhi aftei 290 days of captivity in a Pakistan jail.

#### Economy should remain open: PRI

The government should keep the economy open even during the new surge in Covid-19 cases due to the Omicron variant, the Policy Research Institute suggested at a webinar on "After the Pandemic Onslaught – Economy on Strong Recovery Path".

Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of PRI, said, "The government needs to strengthen the safety and healthcare system... But we don't want to hurt the economy anymore."

#### Trains to operate at half capacity

Following the latest Covid curbs issued by the government, Bangladesh Railway has decided to operate trains at half capacity from January 15, while maintaining health safety rules.

BR will sell 25 percent of its tickets on mobile apps or online and 25 percent at station counters. No one will be allowed at the stations without masks, the official said.

#### Ensure test facilities at all int'l airports: JS body

The parliamentary standing committee on expatriates' welfare and overseas welfare ministry at a meeting recommended the installation of rapid test facilities in all three international airports of the  $country \, for \, outgoing \, expatriate \, workers.$ 

The meeting held in the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban was chaired by Jatiya Party MP Anisul Islam Mahmud.

At present, the facilities are available in international airports of Dhaka and Chattogram.

#### IFB also asks for EC formation law

President Abdul Hamid yesterday said he will take measures to ensure a free, fair and credible national election at a dialogue with Islamic Front Bangladesh, said Syed Bahadur Shah Mujaddedi, chairman of IFB.

At the meeting held over forming the next election commission, the party proposed the enaction of a law in line with the constitution.

A Bangladesh NAP delegation also made recommendations, echoing the need for a law for the formation of a new EC, at a separate meeting

#### SC chamber judge to hold virtual court from Jan 16

Judicial functions of the Supreme Court's chamber judge will run virtually from January 16 to contain the surge of Covid-19.

Justice Obaidul Hassan, chamber judge of the SC's Appellate Division, said this at the beginning of his court proceedings yesterday, Deputy Attorney General Amit Das Gupta said.

#### Fire service introduces new hotline 16163

Fire Service and Civil Defence introduced a new hotline number -- 16163 -- for the central control room in Dhaka for any fire related emergency service.

The 11-digit land phone number 55555 -- will be active too, it added.

Jayedul

Narayanganj

superintendent

centring the polls.

Alam,

police,

### Metro to be costlier

the matter.

Asked why specious footpaths were considered at the design stage, Siddique said: "Metro rail is a new concept in our country. So it is taking us time to understand everything. We are learning from trial and error."

The expansive footpaths are not the only addition to the project design: the metro rail line would be extended from Motijheel to Kamalapur following Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's direction

As per the original plan, a walkway was supposed to connect Kamalapur, the country's biggest railway to Motijheel, station, Dhaka's commercial hub. Now a full-fledged

station would be built in Kamalapur for the convenience of users, taking the total number of stops to 17.

About Tk 1,100 crore would be needed for this end, according to Siddique.

The length of the line will now be 21.26 kilometres instead of the original 20.10 km.

The original plan had an option of station plazas in four stops. No allocation was made for the exercise, which would entail land acquisition, too.

DMTCL has now decided to take up on that option, which would fetch revenue, and has sought funds accordingly.

The original cost included land acquisition transit-oriented development (TOD) hub at Uttara Centre Station. But

it did not assign funds for from project aid and the registration, which DMTCL exchequer. is now seeking.

In urban planning, development of residential, business and leisure space within walking distance of public transport.

In doing so, TOD, which typically includes a central transit stop (such as a train station, or light rail or bus stop), aims to ridership by reducing the use of private cars and by promoting sustainable urban growth.

By implementing TOD construction and secure offset operating costs once the existing two hours. in service.

and the rise of value-added behind the cost escalation, Siddique said.

sought to extend the revised at least once. deadline by one and a half years to December 2025. But the partial operation to kick off in December.

Proiect Steering Committee led by Nazrul Islam, secretary of Road Transport and Highway meeting over the revision proposal today.

Of the revised project expressing 19,675.70 crore will come

preparing the layout and rest from the government

would be forwarded to the TOD is a type of urban Executive Committee of that the National Economic maximises the amount Council for final approval.

take off until 2016.

Agargaon section, which increase public transport is expected to open to the public later this year, is 90 percent complete. Once completed, the metro rail will be able to carry 60,000 people an

long-term revenues to around 40 minutes from Besides, the higher Mass Rapid Transit Lineexchange rate of the dollar 6 or MRT Line-6, it is one tax and customs duty are projects of the government. the other major reasons If the revision proposal is

Uncertainty funding, complexity over designs, planning and of metro rail from Uttara to land acquisition, lack of Agargaon is still expected capability of implementing agencies and the pandemic are blamed for the time and

> Time and cost escalation with

The revised proposal

Approved in December 2012, the project, which is being funded with soft loans from Japan, did not

At present, the overall progress of the project is 73 percent, while the Uttara-

hubs, rail owners can hour, bringing down the offset capital costs of commute time between Uttara and Motijheel to

Officially known as of the eight fast-track approved, all eight projects but the Rooppur Nuclear The authority also Power Plant would be

cost overruns.

of development projects Division, will hold a have become a major Prime concern, Minister Sheikh Hasina discontent cost of Tk 33,472 crore, Tk over the issues on several

# The heat is on, as barbs rule campaigns

leader, said the local administration should remain alert so that the polls atmosphere remains peaceful and voters can exercise their franchise.

Asked about allegation of harassment of Taimur's campaigners, immediate Narayanganj mayor said she was not aware of it. She demanded arrest of those possessing illegal arms to maintain a congenial voting atmosphere in the

Monday, Narayanganj-4 lawmaker Shamim Osman extended support to Ivy

and his supporters started

however, said Shamim cannot electioneering as it would be a violation of the electoral code of conduct.

She said it did not matter who was supporting whom. "My strength is my party men and also the people of Narayanganj."

TAIMUR'S CAMPAIGN BNP leader Taimur was

relieved of two party posts over contesting the election going against the party's decision. Many local BNP leaders have joined his campaign.

His election coordinator Islam, also Monirul the acting convenor of

campaigning for the mayor Narayangani BNP, was aspirations is reflected in hopeful.

Narayangani BNP, was aspirations is reflected in arrested by police on the polls Otherwise has Monday.

Taimur alleged that the Election Commission failed to create a level playing field for all candidates and the local administration was also biased towards the ruling party mayoral candidate.

He further complained that police were raiding houses of his supporters and harassing them.

"This harassment and intimidation of the opposition men show why many political parties are boycotting the polls. I hope that the prime minister will pay special attention so that people's hopes and

image will be tarnished,' Taimur told journalists at a press conference in the city vesterday.

Sounding a note of warning to the local administration, the mayor hopeful said he will stage a sit-in in front of the office of the Narayangani superintendent of police if the harassment of opposition men goes on.

Ivy, meanwhile, said she does not have any power to influence the local administration to work in her favour.

She also asked why the administration would work he told The Daily Star for her. "I think this is his

the SP said among the seven mayor candidates, only one independent runner is raising allegations which

said the overall election

atmosphere in the city was

very peaceful till now and

there would be no chaos

have been arrested so far,

Stating that five people

are baseless. "Police do not work for any specific party. It will do whatever is needed to hold a free and fair election,"

## Buriganga suffering, Dhaleshwari worse off

FROM PAGE 1 study found.

The tannery estate in Hemayetpur is upstream of the Dhaleshwari, and the resultant pollution in the river also streams into the Buriganga, meaning the latter is still affected.

There are also dozens micro-level rawhide processing units still being operated in Hazaribagh, Nurul Islam, one of the authors of the study and a professor of geography and environment department at Jahangirnagar University, told The Daily Star.

Apart from this, the plying of thousands of vessels, presence of dyeing factories at Shyampur and sewerage is adversely affecting the water quality of the Buriganga, he said, adding that the condition of the Dhaleshwari is far more devastating due to tannery waste.

There were 210 rawhide

units

in

processing

Hazaribagh in 2017, of which 170 were moved to Hemayetpur, said ABM Masud, executive member of Bangladesh Tannery Association. Of the units shifted to Hemayetpur, 110 are currently operational, he added.

The study team took samples from four points of the rivers during premonsoon and post-monsoon and analysed the data based on six indicators -- biological oxygen demand (BOD), total suspended solid (TSS), chemical oxygen demand (COD), ammonia, oil and

grease, pH level and phenol. It followed the Canadian Council of Ministries of the **Environment Water Quality** Index (CCME), a method widely followed in North America.

CCME model assesses water quality by assigning scores out of

categorised as poor quality, 45-64 is marginal, 65-79 fair and 80-100 is excellent. In the six indicators, Dhaleshwari scored 27.06 and Buriganga 39.39.

In the pre-monsoon sample of the Dhaleshwari, BOD had reached 800 mg per litre, indicating substances coming from the tannery estate, the study said. The sample taken from Hazaribagh along the Buriganga in the same period showed a BOD of 200 mg per litre -- consistent with standard levels.

Eliasur Rahman Babul, vice-president senior of Bangladesh Tanners Association, said the new site at Hemayetpur does not have enough space. He said it is spread over 200 acres, but they need around double that to properly

manage waste. Lambasting the failure Bangladesh Small 100. A score of 0-40 is and Cottage Industries regard," he said.

Corporation (BSCIC) to complete the industrial zone, he said all they need is cooperation from the government to comply with

environmental guidelines. November 2021, the parliamentary standing committee on the environment ministry recommended that the estate in Hemayetpur be shut down as it has been running without environmental clearance for the last 10 years and lacks the facilities to treat

all its liquid waste. Sharif Jamil, general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA) said they do not want the tannery industry to shut down.

"If we want a solution and to save the rivers, we all have to come forward with a positive mindset. We would like to cooperate with tannery owners in this

#### Half of Europe

FROM PAGE 12

vesterday.

"approved vaccines do continue to provide good protection against severe disease and death, including for Omicron". The city of Anyang in

Henan province in China on Monday night told its five million residents to not leave their homes or drive cars on the roads. China's official Xinhua news agency said. Last week, the one million

stay at home. Xi'an, home to 13 million people, is in its third week of lockdown, reports AFP. China reported 110 new local virus cases yesterday, a tiny figure compared with the hundreds of thousands

people in Yuzhou -- also a

city in Henan -- were told to

hotspots such as the United States. The United States reported 1.35 million new coronavirus infections on Monday.

emerging daily in global