

Stabbed by stalker, teen dies

A CORRESPONDENT,
Shariatpur

An 18-year-old madrasa student died in a private hospital in the capital yesterday, just over two days after she was stabbed by her stalker in Shariatpur.

Police said the stalker stabbed the girl at her house on Thursday night after her family rejected his proposal of marriage and fixed her wedding with someone else.

The victim, Kakoli Akhter, daughter of Nuruzzaman of Char Palang village of the district's Sadar upazila, was supposed to get married today, said Officer-in-charge of Palang Police Station Md Akhter Hossain yesterday.

The man who stabbed her is Zahidul Islam, 22, from Kashabhog area of the same upazila, the OC said.

Zahidul was a former student of the same madrasa where Kakoli was studying and had long been stalking her, OC Akhter said.

He had proposed marriage but was denied by Kakoli's family and recently, the family had fixed her marriage with someone else. On Thursday night, Zahidul went to her house and stabbed her repeatedly.

Neighbours caught Zahidul and beat him up, leaving him critically injured.

Police went to the spot and sent both of them to Shariatpur Sadar Hospital, from where they were shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, the OC said.

Kakoli was rushed to the ICU of a private hospital where she died around 5.30am yesterday, the OC added.

Zahidul is undergoing treatment under police custody, the official said.

The deceased's brother filed an attempted murder case on Saturday, which will be turned into a murder case, the police official said.



People try to help a woman who lost consciousness in the heat and the pushing and shoving at the TCB outlet in Kalunagar Govt Primary School ground in Keraniganj yesterday. Holders of Family Cards thronged the outlets across the country to buy essentials at subsidised prices.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Lights turning on in Payra region

ASIFUR RAHMAN, from Patuakhali

Patuakhali's Rangabali upazila, a coalition of 22 small islands in the Bay, did not have access to electricity just a year ago.

Families there used to light up their houses with solar panels and traditional forms of lighting such as kerosene lamps and candles.

However, as soon as modern submarine cables provided all six unions of the upazila with electricity in last September, the situation started to change.

Idris Ali Sardar, 70, of the upazila's Baherchar Bazar area, said, "I never thought I would have access to electricity in my lifetime."

He also delightedly shared how his grandchildren now studied under electric lights at night.

Like Idris, some 25,000 consumers are now getting benefits from the electricity in the upazila that is around 40km away from Patuakhali Sadar.

Rangabali, an upazila that got recognition on February 25, 2012, is surrounded by the Bay in its south, the Agunmukho river in the north, the Buragauranga river in the east and the Rabnabad river in the west.

According to officials, a 33kV-5.80km submarine cable was installed under the Tetulia and the Buragauranga rivers and another 5.38km cable of 11kV was set under the Galachipa and the Tetulia rivers to provide the local communities with

electricity.

The lines were connected with the mainland from Bhola district's Charfasion Mujibnagar substation through Amgachiya Bazar and 2km under the Buragauranga river.

Tawfiq Omar, officer-in-charge of Rangabali sub-zonal office of Palli Biddut Samity, said at least a 1,000km transmission line was set up at Rangabali's four unions with a power sub-station while the consumers of the lines are now over 25,000 in 104 villages.

Engineer Md Mainuddin Ahmad, deputy general manager of Galachipa Zonal Office of PBS, said it was like a "war" to get the project done.

"PBS conducted the job by the contractors. But it was a pandemic situation while we were working. The weather was against us and so was the environment. We needed the support of locals," he said.

With remote areas like Rangabali, Bangladesh is now providing 100 percent electricity coverage, according to the officials of the Ministry of Energy, Power and Mineral Resources.

Explaining the claim of 100 percent electrification, they said they provided connections to all of those who applied for it.

This achievement puts Bangladesh ahead of India and Pakistan, among the countries in South Asia that have brought 98 percent and 74 percent electricity

networks respectively.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the 1,320 MW ultra-supercritical coal-based power plant at Patuakhali's Payra today at 10:00am where she could announce the achievement, said Nasrul Hamid, state minister for energy ministry.

Visiting the upazila on Saturday, this correspondent found at least six electronics shops in Baherchar area, the main bazar.

Bani Yamin, one of the shop owners, said they sell two to three refrigerators every day and they have sold at least 300 fridges of different brands since their union got electricity connection last September.

In the shop, Yamin sells electric products like refrigerator, ceiling fan, oven, electric stove, cooker and blender.

Not only such shops but also two auto rice mills have been in operation in the area since September. One of the mills is located at Baherchar.

Abdullah, the chief of labourers at the mill, said he worked for 37 years in different rice mills in Cox's Bazar.

"I am from Patuakhali and took no time to come and join here after coming to know that a mill would be established here," he said.

He said 14 employees including five females now work at his mill.

A total of six ice mills were set up in the

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SI lands in jail in rape case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A Panchagarh court yesterday sent a sub-inspector of police to jail in a rape case after the end of his six-month bail granted by the High Court.

Judge of Panchagarh Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal Mehedi Hasan passed the order rejecting the bail prayer of the accused.

A woman accused Abdul Jalil, 45, a sub-inspector of Kurigram Police Station of raping her in a case filed with the court on March 25 last year.

According to the complaint, the officer allegedly raped the woman, a widow, and was detained by the locals. He then married her but never accepted her as his wife.

As the SI dithered to accept her as his wife, the widow filed the case.

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According to the complaint, the officer allegedly raped the woman, a widow, on June 10 and was detained by the locals. He then married her but never accepted her as his wife.

As the SI lingered to accept her as wife, the widow filed the case.

India-Bangladesh train services may resume next month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An inter-ministerial meeting ended yesterday without fixing any date for resuming the operation of trains between Bangladesh and India amid expectations that the service would resume soon.

Officials decided that Bangladesh Railway, through the foreign ministry, will write to India regarding the matter.

"Date for resumption of train services will be fixed upon receiving India's response," said Sardar Shahadat Ali, additional director general at Bangladesh Railway.

However, April 1 or April 14 (Pahela Baishakh) are being discussed as probable dates, sources said.

Currently, India is not allowing any foreigners with tourist visas to enter the country through land or waterways.

Mutilated body of child found in Bagerhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Police yesterday recovered the body of a toddler from a field in Morrelganj, Bagerhat.

The body was recovered from a field next to Kalam Sardar's garden in Hoglapasha area.

There were severe injury marks on the face, abdomen and several other places. Police said the face was unrecognisable.

After the inquest, the body was sent to Bagerhat Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Shahjahan Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Morrelganj Police Station, said: "We have recovered the body of the child after receiving information from the locals. An unnatural death case has been filed. Police have started working to unravel the mystery of the child's identity and death."

Officials flock to fly

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The state minister's spouse and their daughter will also accompany him but they will bear their own expenses, according to the civil aviation ministry.

Mohammad Musabbir, assistant personal secretary to the state minister, and Tanbir Ahmed, public relations officer of the ministry, will also be on the flight for the same reasons.

Biman will bear their travel expenses while all other expenses will be borne by the ministry.

Contacted by this newspaper, Md Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh asked why the government undertook a highly expensive visit like this for purposes that can be achieved by much more cost-effective alternative means including the support of the Bangladesh high commission in Canada.

"Even if there were justifiable reasons for the visit, there can be no valid grounds for the state minister and a couple of MPs to undertake a visit like this, which is practically demeaning of the high level of public positions they hold.

"On the other hand, it will be hard for anyone behind this whole initiative to explain what relevance officials like APS and PRO of the minister have to the stated purpose," he said, adding that it was nothing but a "pleasure trip at public expense" and an "embarrassing example of

abuse of power".

"Those involved in the decision-making process of the initiative should be held to account," he said.

Biman Managing Director and CEO Dr Abu Saleh Mostafa Kamal will also be on the flight.

A top Biman official, preferring anonymity, said around 25 to 30 officials of Biman, civil aviation ministry and two lawmakers are going on the test flight.

The official said irrelevant officials on the flight was nothing but a waste of public money.

It was also alleged that all tickets for the flight were unavailable when Biman started sale of tickets on March 19.

On that day, when correspondents of this newspaper called to book tickets, Biman staffers said the flight was not for "ordinary passengers".

But the Biman MD refuted all those allegations saying they are nothing but propaganda.

"This flight is not a VIP flight. Anyone can buy Biman's ticket on this route at a price of Tk 1,28,000 for round trip on economy class," he said.

When this correspondent called to the Biman call centre yesterday, a Biman staffer said only seven tickets remained and they would cost Tk 90,000 for a one-way trip.

Biman is using Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner to operate flight on this route which will take around 14 hours.

US wants Bangladesh vocal

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Russia's invasion of Ukraine violates sovereignty, territorial integrity and the basic fundamental principles of international law and the UN charter.

"This is a battle between autocracies and democracies around the world."

US WON'T BE SILENT OVER HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

At the dialogue, Bangladesh raised deep concern about the recent US Treasury sanctions on RAB and seven of its current and former officials, saying that this might affect the efforts of Bangladesh to combat terrorism and transnational crimes.

Nuland said she knows the sanction has been a difficult issue for Bangladesh.

"We have concerns about how the RAB has performed about extrajudicial killings, about disappearances. That said, we have seen progress in the last three months with regard to mitigating these

things."

At the dialogue, Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen, who led the Bangladesh side, said he presented a dossier on what measures the Bangladesh government is taking to improve RAB's human rights records.

"We look forward to working together on these things because our security and counterterrorism cooperation is so important," Nuland said, adding that the US is never going to be silent on human rights abuses and violations of basic law.

Yesterday's dialogue was the beginning of a series of meetings this year.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen will meet US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on April 4 marking the 50 years of diplomatic relations. Then, there will be security dialogue, defence dialogue and the US-Bangladesh Business Council in the following months.

"We already have a strong partnership. We will deepen and thicken it in the coming days," said Nuland, who also had a separate call with Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen.

Foreign Secretary Momen underscored the shared commitment to democratic governance and human rights serves as the fundamental basis for Bangladesh-US partnership.

Bangladesh also reiterated its strong commitment to upholding all kinds of civil and political rights of the people.

US TO INCREASE SECURITY COOPERATION

The two governments agreed to continue to cooperate closely to advance a shared vision of a free, open and secure Indo-Pacific region, underscoring the need for having an economic component in the Indo-Pacific Strategy.

In the context of a broader Indo-Pacific Strategy meant

to establish a rules-based system over the Indo-Pacific Ocean, Nuland said: "We think we can do more in the areas of security, particularly maritime security (both bilaterally and regionally). And that's what we want to do."

Asked about the signing of any defence deal with Bangladesh, she said they handed a draft agreement – GSOMIA (General Security of Military Information Agreement) – to the Bangladesh side.

GSOMIA is a foundational agreement that facilitates security cooperation.

"We are very confident that we will be able to get this issue settled and that's what we look forward to."

The US sought to sign GSOMIA and the Acquisition Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) in 2019 after Bangladesh had sought to buy defence equipment from the US in 2018.

Nuland leaves Bangladesh today.

Govt reduces

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press conference at the commerce ministry office in Dhaka.

The new price will come into effect at mill gates from today and it will take four or five days to be effective at the retail level, Ghosh also said. The new price chart will continue up the Eid-ul-Fitr, he said.

The commerce ministry will fix the prices of palm oil in a meeting on March 22, Ghosh said.

The decision was taken in a meeting with refiners at the commerce ministry office in Dhaka.

Ghosh said the prices of edible oil have been reduced as a consequence of the 30 percent out of 35 percent VAT withdrawal on import of edible oil.

Ghosh also said the mill gate rates of edible oil will be announced soon. Replying to a query, Ghosh said the government cannot give free edible oil to the consumers as the government will have to pay a big amount of

subsidies from the revenue.

The Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) has increased the sales volume of commodities at subsidised rates three folds this year to bring down the prices of some basic commodities in the local markets ahead of Ramadan.

The government will also assess the supply, freight charge and origins of palm oil sourcing countries to fix the palm oil prices in the local markets, Ghosh also said.

Palm oil prices may be much lower as palm oil is mainly sourced from Indonesia and Malaysia.

So, the prices of palm oil may be much lower as freight charge is lower because of the geographical locations of Indonesia and Malaysia, he added.

Mohammad Mostofa Haider, director of TK Group, a leading refiner of edible oil said the supply of edible oil is adequate to address the demand for edible oil in the market up to Eid-ul-Fitr.