

GANG RAPE OF WOMAN

Police fail to submit report despite order from court

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kushtia*

Despite a court order, Kumarkhali police failed to submit a probe report in a case filed over the kidnapping and gang rape of a 24-year-old woman.

The victim was allegedly kidnapped and gang raped by three men over four consecutive days in Kushtia's Kumarkhali upazila.

According to her, officials of Kumarkhali Police Station had even refused to record a case in this regard and forced her away.

They registered the case only after a Kushtia court accepted it and ordered police to investigate.

According to the case statement, on March 26 the victim and her 6-year-old daughter were going to her grandfather's house on a battery-powered cycle van, when they were intercepted by Russel Ahmed, 25, who the victim alleged used to harass her often on the streets; Helal Sheikh, 28; and Aliman Sheikh, 32.

According to locals, the three men are politically influential in the area and have connections with the local units of the ruling party.

The three forced the victim and her daughter out of the vehicle, they slapped and pushed the child to the ground and took the woman away on a motorcycle.

The daughter was able to return home with the help of a van puller.

The statement further said the victim was confined in a house in Kumarkhali upazila's Jadubayar union with her hands, legs and mouth tied. She was gang-raped by the three men till March 30.

The next day, she managed to escape and return home.

On April 1, the woman tried to file a written complaint with Kumarkhali Police Station, but officials there kept her waiting for a few hours only to say they could not accept the case.

The woman then filed the case against the three with the Kushtia Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court on April 3. The court then ordered Kumarkhali police to record the case and submit a report within four working days.

Kamruzzaman Talukder, officer-in-charge of the station, said, "The case was complicated so we thought taking the court's direction was needed."

About why a report, which was due on April 7, was not yet submitted, he said, "We haven't been able to arrest any of the accused yet. We will submit the report after arrest and interrogation."



A car passes the Lysychansk Oil Refinery after it was hit by a missile at Lysychansk, Luhansk region, Ukraine, on Saturday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Don't harass UAE-bound workers on tourist visas

JS body asks authorities

RASHIDUL HASAN

A parliamentary body yesterday asked all authorities concerned not to harass UAE-bound migrant workers on tourist visas at the Dhaka airport.

The UAE government stopped issuing work permits for Bangladeshi workers in 2015. Since then, employers in the Gulf state have been bringing in migrant workers with tourist visas and later converting those to work visas, said industry insiders.

In a letter issued in September last year, the immigration police of Bangladesh said holders of tourist visas who intend to work in the UAE will not be able to go past the immigration.

The directive, which was taken to curb the abuse of tourist visas by traffickers and manpower recruiting agencies, came into effect the same day.

However, law enforcement agencies have expressed concern that the directive may have just created a scope for the airport authorities to extort migrant workers.

"Those who have a valid visit visa and if there is no objection from the



government about them, then they cannot be harassed and barred from going to their respective destination," said Jatiya Party MP Anisul Islam Mahmud.

Mahmud's comment came as he was emerging from a meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on the ministry of expatriate welfare and overseas employment, which he chaired.

"Why will the immigration authorities stop someone with a valid passport and visa? This must be stopped," he told journalists yesterday.

In yesterday's meeting, the parliamentary watchdog also asked the department of immigration

and passports to issue e-passports to migrant workers without any harassment.

The committee also recommended the introduction of insurance for expatriate workers.

"If they have life insurance, they will get money after death. If you get into an accident, you will get benefits. We have asked the ministry to look into the matter. The lives of expatriate workers must be protected," Mahmud said.

The parliamentary body also called for dialogue with Biman Bangladesh Airlines over bringing down the airfare for expatriate workers.

First Rab crossfire

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According to hospital records, Raju's body was brought to the facility at 2:15am.

There were gunshot wounds on the left side of his chest, stomach, and arms, said sources at the morgue of the college.

Raju's father Sadek Mia received the body from the

morgue.

"If my son committed a crime, the law and court were there to deal with it. The justice system could have punished him," he told The Daily Star.

He added that he heard about Raju's death when he woke up around 3:00am for sehri.

'Tortured on the spot'

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Rabiul and his father used to run a timber business, said the family members and locals.

The Daily Star correspondent yesterday talked to over two dozen people in Kazir Chawra village and all of them said they never heard that Rabiul had a gambling habit.

"I never saw Rabiul's involvement in gambling. I met Rabiul that night. He told me that he was going to the Mela to buy toys for his daughter," said Nurul Islam, 58, a resident of the village.

Rafiqul Islam, former chairman of Harati Union Parishad, said, "I knew him for a long time. I never heard any allegation against him."

Meanwhile, Rabiul's family members said they were not filing a case because of fears of reprisals.

A spokesperson of police in the district on Friday said the allegations against policemen would be thoroughly investigated.

Rabiul's widow Monira Begum, 20, yesterday said, "I want to file a case. But many of our family members are scared."

Rabiul's father Dulal Khan said, "We think that we will not be able to continue normal life, if we

sue the police. They may file another case against us. We can't have a legal battle against the police."

Rabiul's death sparked anger among locals, who blockaded the Lalmonirhat-Burimari highway in Mahendranagar for an hour on Friday afternoon demanding justice.

Sub-Inspector Halimur Rahman, who led the police team that attacked Rabiul, was closed from Lalmonirhat Police Station and attached to the district police lines.

S Africa flood toll rises to 443 as deluge eases

AFP, Durban

The death toll from floods that have battered South Africa's east coast has risen to 443, including a rescuer, a regional official said yesterday, as dozens more are still missing.

"The death toll now stands at 443," Sihle Zikalala, the premier of the KwaZulu-Natal province told a media briefing, adding 63 other people are still unaccounted for.

Watch out

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those are unlikely to help alleviate poverty and facilitate growth. It said an increase in government loans would pose risk to budget management.

Proposals were also made for increasing the Letter of Credit (LC) margin up to 100 percent to discourage people from importing luxury and unnecessary products.

Sources said the budget deficit rose more than 5 percent of the GDP in the last two years due to the Covid pandemic. In the current fiscal year, it is estimated to be over 6 percent of the GDP.

The Division advised bringing down the budget deficit below 5 percent of the GDP in the next two years.

In the first eight months of the current fiscal year, the current account deficit

reached \$12.83 billion which was a surplus of \$825 million during the same period in the last fiscal year. This was because the country's import rose to \$58.77 billion during the eight months in FY22 from \$40 billion during the same period in FY21.

The current account deficit is a measurement of a country's trade where the value of the goods and services it imports exceeds the value of the products it exports.

The Division recommended adjusting the exchange rate of the dollar against taka gradually to encourage export and remittance, said sources.

Shamsul Alam said, "Our inflation has increased recently... Domestic production has gone up but not up to the expected

level. Restrictions on luxury and unnecessary products are necessary to keep the foreign currency reserves at a satisfactory level.

"No restrictions will be imposed on import of essential items and productive sectors." He further said subsidies on agriculture will continue and it will not be curtailed.

"During the Covid pandemic, the agriculture sector has given us relief... We will give more subsidies on agriculture."

Shamsul said the government will give subsidy on energy. "But it may be reduced if it goes beyond the tolerable level."

The Division also proposed gradual withdrawal of extra loan facilities offered during the pandemic.

It observed that this regard. He also demanded that the authorities concerned take strict actions to stop collection of extra fare from passengers.

Different problems on railway and waterways, including those involving ticketing services, should be resolved before Eid, he said.

Journalist Abu Sayeed Khan said authorities should prepare a year-long plan centring Eid and spoke in favour of decentralising Dhaka to prevent the increasing pressure of people.

huge traffic congestions and sought the authorities' intervention.

Besides, ongoing development work on the Dhaka Gazipur section of the Dhaka-Mymensingh Highway could add to the suffering, he said.

He demanded that the authorities keep the highways free from illegal easy bikes and battery-powered rickshaws.

Extortion at different points of highways by some members of law enforcement and transport associations often causes traffic jams, he said, demanding measures in

One killed in AL factional clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Jhenidah*

An activist of the ruling Awami League was killed in a clash between two factions of the party over a trivial matter in Jhenidah's Harinakundu upazila yesterday.

The victim Altaf Hossain, 58, was a resident of the upazila's Barbari village.

According to police, supporters of acting UP chairman Kamal Hossain and former UP chairman Golam Mostafa got involved in the clash.

The victim was a supporter of Kamal, said locals.

The two groups had a long standing conflict over establishing supremacy in the area. Around 9:30am yesterday, the clash took place.

Two more men were injured during the clash and later hospitalized.

Saiful Islam, officer-in-charge of Harinakundu Police Station, said additional forces were deployed there to avoid further untoward incident.

House help raped for 1.5 years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Moulvibazar*

Police rescued a teenage domestic help from a flat beside Station Road in Moulvibazar's Sreemangal upazila.

She had been raped for the last one and a half years at the house, said police.

Shamim Ur Rashid, officer-in-charge of Sreemangal Police Station, said a case was filed against three persons on Saturday night.

The prime accused Chandan Dhar, 45, also the owner of the flat, was arrested yesterday morning.

The man was sent to jail after police produced him before a Moulvibazar court yesterday, said the OC.

Two more women were also arrested in connection with the case.

Humayun Kabir, inspector (investigation) of Sreemangal Police Station, said the victim was sent to Moulvibazar 250 Bed District Sadar Hospital for medical tests.

Finally, she returns to Canada

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Canadian girl, who had allegedly been confined by her parents in Dhaka's Mughda for around 10 months against her wishes, was handed over to the Canadian High Commission yesterday.

High Court Registrar Md Golam Rabbani handed over the 19-year-old girl, a student of Toronto University, to the officials of Canadian High Commission following the HC directive, as she wanted to return to Canada.

In response to a writ petition, the HC asked the Canadian High Commission to take necessary steps to send her back to Canada, ensure her security and bear her living and study expenses.

The girl will stay in the custody of Canadian High Commission in Dhaka until she flies for the country on completion of all relevant procedures, Advocate Md Ozi Ullah, lawyer for the girl's parents, told The Daily Star citing the HC order.

He said her parents, who are also Bangladeshi-born Canadian nationals, can meet their daughter in Canada under the laws of that country.

Mariupol will 'fight

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resistance in the north, the Russian military has refocused its ground offensive on the eastern Donbas region while maintaining long distance strikes elsewhere including the capital Kyiv.

Lamenting an "Easter of War" during an address in St. Peter's Square, Pope Francis pleaded for an end to the bloodshed and implicitly criticized Russia.

"May there be peace for war-torn Ukraine, so sorely tried by the violence and destruction of the cruel and senseless war into which it was dragged," he said, thanking those who had taken in some 4 million refugees from Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Russia on Saturday of "deliberately trying to destroy everyone" in Mariupol and said his government was in touch with the defenders. But he did not address Moscow's claim that Ukrainian forces were no longer in urban districts.

Zelenskyy said that if Russian forces kill Kyiv's troops remaining to defend the city, then a fledgling negotiation process to end nearly two months of fighting would be ended.

If Russia's capture of the port is confirmed, it would be a major strategic prize for Moscow: connecting territory it holds in Donbas with the Crimea region it annexed in 2014.

Russia calls its action a special military operation to demilitarise Ukraine and clear out what it calls dangerous nationalists backed by an expansionist

Nato military alliance. The West and Kyiv accuse President Vladimir Putin of unprovoked aggression.

With fighting raging in the east, Deputy Prime Minister Vereshchuk said that humanitarian corridors allowing civilians to flee would not open yesterday after failing to agree terms with Russian forces.

Elsewhere in Ukraine, there were more reports of sporadic Russian strikes around major popular centres.

In Kyiv, renewed Russian air strikes hit an armaments factory, despite Moscow shifting its military focus to gaining control of the eastern Donbas region and forging a land corridor to already-annexed Crimea.

"During the night, high-precision, air-launched missiles destroyed an ammunition factory near the settlement of Brovary, Kyiv region," Russia's defence ministry said, the third such air strike near the capital in as many days.

Besides fresh attack on Kyiv, Russian artillery attacked multiple neighbourhoods in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city, killing 5 people and wounding 31 including four children, regional governor Oleh Synehubov said.

Meanwhile, Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer, the first European leader to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin in person since the invasion began, said he thinks the Russian president believes the war is necessary for his country's security.

Mali says 'dozen terrorists' killed in air strikes

AFP, Bamako

Mali's army said Saturday that it had killed "a dozen terrorists" including a French-Tunisian jihadist in air strikes in the centre of the Sahel nation.

The armed forces carried out two strikes on Thursday "to neutralise a dozen terrorists in the forest of Ganguel" about 10 kilometres (six miles) from the village of Moura, the general staff said in a press release.