

2 sent to jail for raping woman, drugging her in-laws

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A Rangpur court yesterday sent two men to jail on charges of raping a woman in front of her husband and drugging her in-laws in Rangpur's Badarganj upazila.

The accused – Milon Hossain and Mostakin Hossain, both residents of Amrulbari village in the upazila – are friends of the victim's husband, police said.

According to the case statement, Milon, Mostakin and another friend had come to the victim's house upon a dinner invitation on Friday night. The husband, a barber, was not at home then.

The three men spiked the food with sedatives when the victim and her in-laws were not looking. When the woman and her in-laws began feeling ill after eating, the three friends left.

When the husband came home around 10:30pm, he found everyone asleep. Around 1:00am, the criminals broke in and first tied up and gagged the husband.

Milon then raped the woman with the help of Mostakin and the other friend. When she screamed for help, neighbours rushed to the spot to help. The criminals, by then, had fled.

Police visited the spot after hearing about the incident on Saturday. The husband then filed a case against the three with Badarganj Police Station, said Habibur Rahman, officer-in-charge of the station.

"The in-laws, who were drugged, were admitted to Badarganj Upazila Health Complex, while the woman was sent to Rangpur Medical College hospital," he said.

He added that both the arrestees were produced before a court, which ordered police to send them to jail.

"Drives to arrest the third accused are underway."



Police escorting lawmaker Haji Salim to jail yesterday after he surrendered before a Dhaka court in connection with a corruption case. PHOTO: COLLECTED

FLOODS IN SYLHET, SUNAMGANJ

Water receding, but thousands still stranded

STAR REPORT

With the water levels of the Surma and Kushiara rivers slowly receding, the damming impacts of the floods in Sylhet and Sunamganj has become more visible.

With thousands of people still stranded in flooded areas, the demand for relief and rehabilitation has further intensified.

Mujibur Rahman, a resident of Fatehpur in Sunamganj's Bishwambharpur, said, "The flood has damaged many homes, including mine. It has damaged the roads, schools ... It has destroyed Boro crops and washed away fish from fisheries. We are in a state of distress."

Aleya Begum of Sultanpur area in Sunamganj town's suburbs, said, "Our almost-ripe Boro paddy was submerged but we managed to harvest a few from underwater. However, due to poor weather, we are not being able to dry whatever we could salvage and they are beginning to rot."

Around 20 lakh people of Sylhet and Sunamganj, including parts of Sylhet city, have been affected by the flood, which began on May 12.

Meanwhile, the situation deteriorated in Sunamganj's Derai upazila and

Netrakona's Kalmakanda upazila after Puratan Surma and Someshwari rivers started flowing above the danger level on Friday.

According to the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC), the water level in the Surma receded. The river was flowing 70cm above the danger level – 15cm lower from Saturday – at 3:00pm yesterday.

At the same time, the river was flowing 8cm above the danger level in Sylhet city point (17cm less from) and 15cm below the level in Sunamganj town point (also 17cm less).

Upstream, the Kushiara was flowing 124cm above the danger level (32cm less from Saturday) in Amolshid of Sylhet's Zakiganj upazila and 46cm above it in Beanibazar's Sheola point (9cm less from Thursday).

The Puratan Surma in Derai upazila was flowing 7cm above the danger level and Someshwari in Kalmakanda point was flowing 23cm above.

FFWC Executive Engineer Arifuzzaman Bhuiyan said the flood situation will further improve in Sylhet and Sunamganj but will worsen in Netrokona.

Meanwhile, the increasing floodwater in the low-lying areas of Tangail and Sirajganj

over the last few days has inundated many a homestead and crop land.

Moreover, intense erosion has been occurring in Tangail's Sadar and Sirajganj's Shahzadpur upazilas due to the swelling of the Jamuna.

Char Poulee village in Tangail Sadar's Kakua is nearly erased from the map due to dreadful erosion over the last few days.

Several hundred homes and vast agricultural land were already devoured and locals have taken shelter in different areas, locals said.

Mohammad Ali Jinnah, chairman of Kakua union parishad, told The Daily Star that although the Water Development Board had dumped some GEO bags to stop erosion last year, no such measures were taken this year.

Meanwhile, around 50 homesteads have been engulfed by the Jamuna in Sirajganj's Shahzadpur upazila in the last few days, while several hundred homes and other establishments in the union are facing the threat of erosion, locals said.

WDB Engineer MD Nasir said, "We are now dumping sand bags in the erosion hit areas."

(Our Sylhet, Pabna and Tangail correspondents contributed to the report)

Cleaning black money Don't panic

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who pay tax regularly," said Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

The continued provision, which gives immunity to non-compliance, sends out the wrong signal to the upstanding taxpayers and discourages them from paying taxes regularly.

"We should be focusing on enforcement of tax compliance – there should be zero tolerance on tax

evasion," he said, while citing neighbouring India's success in purging its economy of black money as an example.

However, unwillful tax defaulters can still be given a window to legalise their income, said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office.

It cannot be all year round.

"But ill-gotten gains should never be tolerated," he added

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fiscal year.

Mustafizur recommended the BB implement "a drastic depreciation of the local currency" in order to defuse the panic.

The central bank's exchange rate yesterday was Tk 87.50 a dollar, up from Tk 84.80 a year ago. The central bank depreciated the local currency five times this year, but failed to reduce the demand for dollars.

The BB should have depreciated the taka gradually over the years, but it did not do so fearing inflation, which is why a pent-up pressure developed in the market, Mustafizur said.

Since May 2012, the taka has been devalued by 6.19 percent. The Vietnamese dong depreciated by 11.95 percent in the last one decade.

In Bangladesh, the common people now pay Tk 97-98 to purchase a dollar in the open market whereas receivers of remittance at best get Tk 90 per dollar, including the

incentive provided by the government.

The gap between the formal and informal channels have been encouraging hundi, an illegal cross-border financial transaction system.

The current situation may also result in exporters under-invoicing for their products.

Mustafizur said lessons should be taken from the foreign exchange crisis Sri Lanka is facing.

The debt structure in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh has many differences. The foreign debt to GDP ratio in the island nation is 66 percent and in Bangladesh 13 percent.

Bangladesh's economy is less integrated with the global economy than that of Sri Lanka.

On the taka's value, he said, depreciating the local currency has certain unintended effects.

Bangladesh's private sector took a significant amount of foreign loans from foreign sources. After depreciation, the debt servicing of the

loans will increase, he said, adding that the government should boost its monitoring of foreign loans due to exchange rate risk.

The pressure Bangladesh is facing over inflation is partly driven by the rising prices in the global market. Depreciation of the taka will increase the pressure, he said.

This means, designing the next budget will be a challenging task for the government. It should give utmost importance to tackle inflation, Mustafizur said.

The government should focus on stimulating investments and redistributing the tax money among the poor, he said.

There is no need to worry about achieving the GDP growth target. Rather, it should emphasise on keeping the exchange rate stable and containing inflation.

Inflation shot up to 6.29 percent in April, the highest in 18 months.

Haji Salim lands in jail, finally

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The HC on March 9 last year upheld a lower court's verdict where he was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment in a corruption case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission during the 2007 military-backed caretaker government.

It also upheld a fine of Tk 10 lakh imposed on Salim for amassing wealth worth Tk 14.65 crore beyond the known sources of his income.

The HC, however, scrapped another part of the lower court's judgement delivered in 2008, which handed three years' imprisonment to Salim for concealing information about his wealth to the ACC.

Delivering the verdict following an appeal by Salim, the HC also said

his illegal wealth worth Tk 27 crore would remain confiscated.

The HC bench, however, abated another appeal filed by Salim's wife Gulshan Ara Begum challenging the trial court judgment that had sentenced her to three years' imprisonment in the same case.

Gulshan died in November 2020.

On April 27, 2008, Dhaka's Special Judge's Court-7 convicted Haji Salim and sentenced him to 13 years' imprisonment over two separate charges brought in the corruption case.

The court also sentenced his wife for abetting her husband's crime and keeping the ill-gotten wealth in her possession.

She was also fined Tk 1 lakh, in default of which she would have to spend six

more months in prison.

The court also fined Salim Tk 10 lakh, in default of which he would have to stay another year in jail.

Besides, the judge issued orders for confiscating all his illegal assets worth Tk 27 crore.

Salim and his wife were tried in absentia.

They filed two separate appeals with the HC on October 25, 2009, against the trial court verdict. Following his appeal, the HC on January 2, 2011, acquitted Salim of the corruption case.

The ACC then appealed against the HC verdict to the Appellate Division.

The Appellate Division on January 12, 2015, scrapped the HC verdict and directed the HC to hold a rehearing of Salim's appeal and to dispose of the appeal again.

Can't take further action if no case lodged

Police on woman being sexually harassed in Narsingdi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Police yesterday said they cannot take any further legal action unless a formal complaint is lodged over a woman being physically and verbally harassed because of her attire at Narsingdi Railway Station on Wednesday.

Police on Friday arrested 38-year-old Ismail Hossain after video of the incident had gone viral on social media.

He was arrested under Section 54 of the Criminal Code of Procedure, said Ferdous Ahmed Biswas, officer-in-charge of Bhairab Railway Police Station.

OC Ferdous said they could not take further steps in this regard as no complaint had been lodged.

When contacted, Shaheb Ali Pathan, additional superintendent of police (crime) of Narsingdi district said, "As the incident occurred at the railway station, it is the responsibility of railway police to probe the matter."

Akhaura AL man jailed after yaba seizure from residence

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

The president of Akhaura municipality ward unit Awami League was sent to jail yesterday after law enforcers seized 2,235 yaba pills from his residence in the municipality's Devgram area.

The arrestee is 70-year-old Abdul Quadir Mollah.

Members of an anti-drug task force – comprising Akhaura police and upazila administration – raided Quadir's residence around midnight on Saturday night, Mizanur Rahman, assistant director of Brahmanbaria Narcotics Control Department, told The Daily Star.

Besides the yaba pills, the task force also recovered yaba packaging machines and eight mobile phones. The pills have a street value of Tk 11 lakh and the equipment are worth Tk 13.17 lakh, Mizanur said.

Quadir's son Sohag Mollah, 40, managed to flee when the raid began, he said.

A case was filed against them with Akhaura Police Station and Quadir was sent to jail through court, he added.

Nassa Group GM's body recovered in the Jamuna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Paturia River Police yesterday recovered the body of Nassa Group's general manager from the Jamuna two days after he went missing while bathing in the river in Manikganj's Shibaboy upazila.

The deceased was Ash Habib, 43, of Bogura district was a resident of Savar.

He was a GM of Nassa Group in Ashulia area, said Abu Bakar Siddique, officer-in-charge of Paturia River Police Station.

Locals found his body floating in the river around 11:00am and informed the police, OC said.

According to the deceased's family members, and fire service and police officials, Habib drowned when he was bathing with his wife and son in the river in Jafarganj area of Shibaboy on Friday.

Mirpur braces

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Hossain is likely to be used as the off-spin option.

Batting, though, will remain the centre of focus, with Tamim Iqbal and Mushfiqur Rahim – centuries of the first Test – are expected to continue their form alongside Mahmudul Hasan Joy and Liton Das, both having scored half-centuries

in the port city. Shakib Al Hasan is expected to play a crucial role in spin department alongside Taijul Islam.

Sri Lanka, on the other hand, have never lost a Test series against Bangladesh, and despite the lack of experience in their bowling department, the visitors will surely want to put pressure on the home side.

WHO international meet starts amid crises

AFP, Geneva

The Ukraine war looms large as the World Health Organization opens its main annual assembly yesterday, threatening to overshadow efforts on other health crises and a reform push aimed at preventing future pandemics.

The UN health agency will kick off its 75th World Health Assembly Sunday afternoon, convening its 194 member states for their first largely in-person gathering since Covid-19 surfaced in late 2019.

The agenda will remain focused on the continuing coronavirus crisis and efforts to avert future pandemics. But the war raging in Ukraine and rebukes of Russia for its invasion are expected to take centre stage.

US high schoolers design low-cost filter to remove lead from water

AFP, Washington

When the pandemic forced schools into remote learning, Washington-area science teacher Rebecca Bushway set her students an ambitious task: design and build a low-cost lead filter that fixes to faucets and removes the toxic metal.

Using 3D printing and high-school level chemistry, the team now has a working prototype – a three-inch (7.5 centimeter)

tall filter housing made of biodegradable plastic, which they hope to eventually bring to market for \$1 apiece.

"The science is straightforward," Bushway told AFP on a recent visit to the Barrie Middle and Upper School in suburban Maryland, where she demonstrated the filter in action.

"I thought, 'We have these 3D printers. What if we make something like this?'"

We'll scrap DSA, all repressive laws

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the discussion titled "Media control laws killing democracy: Bangladesh perspective".

In the keynote paper, presented by BNP leader Zahir Uddin Swapan, the repressive acts and ordinances were blamed for the country's poor performance in media freedom indexes.

During the discussion, Sohrab Hossain, Prothom Alo's joint editor, talked about the importance of press freedom.

"We can try to be

assured, but our past does not allow us that scope ... No government has been newspaper- or media-friendly since independence."

He said it was the responsibility of politicians, alongside journalists, to remove the barriers to freedom of expression and raise voice against certain laws and repression of journalists.

"We surely want the support of the opposition in removing obstacles to free press and freedom of expression. But at the

same time, I would caution against the same thing happening if they [BNP] come to power," the senior journalist said.

He added that the ruling Awami league government has enacted a repressive and autocratic law, the Digital Security Act. "I condemn it and demand its withdrawal."

Sohrab recalled that AL amended the ICT act that was enacted during the BNP regime. "Awami League has increased the punishment."