

# Woman sues BCL leader for ‘rape’

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

A college student has filed a case against a BCL leader in Rangpur’s Kaunia upazila for raping her on multiple occasions after promising to marry her, said police.

Accused Sarafat Hossain Sohag, 25, is the son of Mosaraf Hossain of Purba Miapara village in the upazila and a final-year student at Haragachh Government College.

Contacted, Saddam Hossain, president of Haragachh Government College’s BCL unit, said Sohag is vice president of the executive committee and action will be taken against him if he is found involved in any unethical affairs.

Rezaul Karim, the officer-in-charge of Kaunia Police Station, said the girl filed the case with the station on Saturday night.

On Saturday afternoon, upon learning that Sohag had recently married another woman, the girl went to his residence and started a hunger strike in front of the house, locals and police said.

Sohag has been in hiding since, police said.

At one stage, Sohag’s family members came out and physically assaulted her.

Later, at night, a police team took the girl to the police station.

According to the police and villagers, the 22-year-old girl had been in a relationship with Sohag for the last one-and-a-half years.

Her forensic test was conducted at a local hospital yesterday, OC Rezaul said.

Family members of Sohag refused to comment regarding the matter.

# Japanese national detained in Myanmar

AFP, Yangon

A Japanese man has been detained in Myanmar’s commercial capital Yangon, an official at Japan’s embassy confirmed yesterday, the latest foreigner ensnared in the junta-ruled nation.

A military coup last year sparked rolling protests and a deadly response from the junta, with more than 2,000 people killed and at least 14,000 arrested, according to a local monitoring group.

On Saturday, Japanese and local media said filmmaker Toru Kubota, 26, was detained near an anti-government rally along with two Myanmar citizens.



A firefighter tries to douse a fire in a building after shelling in Kharkiv, Ukraine, yesterday, amid the continuing Russian invasion of Ukraine.

PHOTO: AFP

## WAR IN UKRAINE

# Southern city hit by ‘strongest’ strikes

## Ukrainian grain tycoon killed; Kyiv reports heavy shelling in eastern region

AFP, Kyiv

Ukraine yesterday said the “strongest” shelling by Moscow so far of the southern city Mykolaiv killed a grain tycoon, as Russia claimed an attack from a drone wounded six personnel at the headquarters of its Black Sea fleet in annexed Crimea.

AFP journalists witnessed intense Russian bombardment of the eastern town of Bakhmut after President Volodymyr Zelensky called for civilians to leave the front line Donetsk region bearing the brunt of the Kremlin’s offensive.

Russian authorities in the Crimean Black Sea peninsula – seized by Moscow from Ukraine in 2014 – said a small explosive device from a commercial drone, likely launched nearby, hit the navy command in Sevastopol.

The local mayor blamed “Ukrainian nationalists” for the attack that forced the cancellation of festivities in the city marking Russia’s annual holiday celebrating the navy.

But a spokesman for Ukraine’s Odessa region military administration denied Kyiv – whose nearest positions are some 200 kilometres away – was responsible and called the incident “a sheer provocation”.

“Our liberation of Crimea from the occupiers will be carried out in another way and much more effectively,” spokesman Sergiy Bratchuk wrote on Telegram.

Authorities in Ukraine’s southern city of Mykolaiv yesterday said that widespread Russian bombardments overnight had left at least two civilians dead, as Moscow continued to pummel the sprawling front line.

“Mykolaiv was subjected to mass shelling today. Probably the strongest so far,” the city’s mayor Oleksandr Senkevych wrote on Telegram.

The authorities said leading Ukrainian agricultural magnate Oleksiy Vadatursky, 74, and his wife Raisa were killed when a

offensive to recapture territory lost after Russia’s February invasion.

Strikes also pounded the northeastern regions of Kharkiv and Sumy, near the front line with the Russian forces.

“Today a whole succession of explosions took place... a few buildings are reportedly damaged,” Igor Terekhov the mayor of Ukraine’s second city Kharkiv said.

Sumy regional chief Dmytro Zhyvtsky said that some 50 strikes on Saturday evening had left one person dead and two wounded.

The governor of the Donetsk region, where Moscow is focusing the brunt of its attacks, said three civilians were killed and eight wounded in shelling Saturday.

AFP journalists yesterday saw one wounded man collected by an ambulance after a ferocious bombardment of the town of Bakhmut.

In an overnight address Zelensky warned that thousands of people, including children, were still in the battleground areas of the Donetsk region.

“There’s already a governmental decision about obligatory evacuation from Donetsk,” Zelensky said, underscoring authorities’ calls to leave the besieged region in recent weeks.

“Leave, we will help,” Zelensky said. “At this stage of the war, terror is the main weapon of Russia.”

“Mykolaiv was subjected to mass shelling today. Probably the strongest so far.”

The city’s mayor Oleksandr Senkevych

missile struck their house.

Vadatursky, who was ranked Ukraine’s 24th richest man with a fortune worth \$430 million by Forbes, owned major grain exporter Nibulon and was previously decorated with the prestigious “Hero of Ukraine” award.

Mykolaiv – which has been attacked frequently – is the closest Ukrainian city to the southern front where Kyiv’s forces are looking to launch a major counter-

# Former Philippine president Fidel Ramos dies

AFP, Manila

Former Philippine president Fidel Ramos, who oversaw a rare period of steady growth and peace that won him the reputation as one of the country’s most effective leaders ever, has died aged 94, his family said yesterday.



Known as “Steady Eddie” for his unflappable demeanour during the country’s regular moments of upheaval, he was frequently pictured chewing unlit cigars as he guided the Philippines with a sure hand from 1992-1998.

A career military man who never previously held elected office, his professorial conduct was unlike the bombastic image of many Filipino politicians.

He was also the first Protestant to win the top office in the overwhelmingly Catholic nation, despite opposition from some in the Church. He later made an aggressive push for family planning to rein in rapid population growth.

But like other top officials of his generation, Ramos played a role in the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos, which saw thousands killed and thousands more arbitrarily imprisoned.

In a brief statement, the Ramos family said it was “profoundly saddened” to announce the patriarch’s death. The cause was not released.

Lawmakers, diplomats, ex-politicians and the new administration posted tributes to Ramos on social media.

# Lightning strikes kill two

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Two people were killed after being struck by lightning in Lalmonirhat and Kurigram districts in the last two days.

Homemaker Minara Begum, 47, died near her home at Belgacha union in Kurigram’s Sadar upazila yesterday noon.

She used to work as a day labourer alongside her husband Dabir Uddin, said Liton Miah, chairman of Belgacha Union Parishad.

Meanwhile, farmer Moza Mia, 52, died at Char Shoulmari village in Lalmonirhat’s Kaliganj upazila on Saturday.

Moza took his two buffaloes to a field for grazing near his house, said Golam Rosul, officer-in-charge of Kaliganj Police Station.

The animals also died after being struck in lightning, the OC added.

# 3 more die from Covid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three Covid-19 patients died in the last 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, reported the Directorate General of Health Services.

A total of 365 people were tested positive for the virus in the same 24 hours. Against a total of 5,720 tests, the positivity rate was 6.38.

Of the dead, two were male while one each was aged between 51 and 60, 71 and 80, and 81 and 90 years.

One each was from Dhaka, Sylhet and Rangpur divisions, according to the press release.

With the latest count, the total number of fatalities due to Covid-19 reached at 29,291.

# Supervisory govt sought for polls

FROM PAGE 1

Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal said, “You [political parties] have different kinds of proposals regarding all-party government, election-time government, caretaker government ... These are political issues. You should place your demands before the government and let the government understand how much pressure is there ...”

The EC would inform the government about the demands, he said, adding, “These are political issues, constitutional intervention may be required.”

Asked about the proposals for an election-time government, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retired) Ahsan Habib Khan yesterday said the demands that fall under the government’s jurisdiction will be forwarded to it.

The EC held talks with 28 registered political parties since July 17 to seek suggestions on how to hold a free and fair national election, either in late December 2023 or early January 2024.

Two parties sought rescheduling of talks citing different reasons.

Nine political parties including the BNP abstained from joining the talks. The eight others are Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Rab), Bangladesh Kalyan Party, Bangladesh Muslim League (BML), Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Islami Andolan Bangladesh and Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP).

They say this commission would not be able to hold credible and participatory national polls.

Talking to The Daily Star, LDP President Col (retired) Oli Ahmad, Bangladesh Kalyan Party Chairman Maj Gen (retired) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim and BML Secretary General Sheikh Zulfiqar Bulbul Chowdhury said they were in favour of a caretaker

government overseeing the polls.

JSD Rab in a statement last week demanded an interim government.

JSD Rab, LDP, Kalyan Party and BML are component of BNP-led 20-party alliance.

Contacted, CPB General Secretary Ruhin Hossain Prince, and Razequzzaman Ratan, assistant secretary of Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal, demanded an election-time neutral supervisory government.

Yunus Ahmed, secretary general of Islami Andolan Bangladesh, said they were for a neutral interim government.

Andaleev Rahman Partha, chairman of Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP), said they did not want the election under a political government. “There should be discussions on the formation of an election-time government, be it under caretaker or interim or all-party system,” he told this correspondent.

The caretaker government system was introduced in 1996 after mass protests led by the then main opposition Awami League. The demand, also backed by the Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islam, came to the fore following massive rigging in the 1994 Magura by-election under the BNP rule.

The BNP government at first strongly opposed the idea of a caretaker government but eventually amended the constitution to incorporate a provision for this.

Under the constitution, the caretaker government, comprised of 10 advisers and a chief adviser, had the jurisdiction to carry out only the routine works. Its main job was to assist the Election Commission in holding the polls.

The system was abolished by the AL government through an amendment in 2011.

There were three elections held

under the caretaker system – in 1996, 2001, and 2008. The 2007 election was suspended after the country plunged into a severe political crisis with a caretaker government assuming power at the end of the BNP tenure.

After the fall of autocratic Ershad regime and the restoration of democracy, only one election, in 1991, was held under an “interim government”.

PROPOSALS

During the talks yesterday, Bangladesh Congress proposed keeping the parliament and the cabinet ineffective during election time, and Nationalist Democratic Movement (NDM) urged the chief election commissioner to play the role of a “super prime minister” so that the administration can work neutrally and professionally.

Ruling AL’s electoral partners – Workers Party of Bangladesh and Samyabadi Dal and Islami Oikyajote – proposed that the incumbent government act as the election time government and perform day-to-day duties.

Khelafat Majlish sought a neutral caretaker government that would perform only the routine works.

Revolutionary Workers Party was for a caretaker or an interim government, Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon for a caretaker government, and Jamiat e Ulama e Islam Bangladesh, Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Janata League and the Gono Forum for a neutral government.

Besides, Bangladesh Jatiya Party (Mukit) and Bangladesh Muslim League sought an election-time government with representatives from the registered political parties.

The Gono Front called for an election-time government with representatives from the parties that have MPs in parliament since the independence, except for those who were elected through “debatable

elections of 1986, 1988, February 1996, 2014 and 2018.

Bangladesh Sangskritik Muktijote proposed forming a national council comprised of all registered political parties to oversee the next election.

Twelve political parties kept mum about election-time government. They include three members of AL-led 14 party alliance – Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Jasod), Ganotantri Party, and Bangladesh Tariqat Federation.

The rest eight are Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish, Bangladesh Islami Front, Bangladesh Nationalist Front, Islamic Front Bangladesh, Bikapladhara Bangladesh, National People’s Party, Zaker Party, and Bangladesh National Awami Party (Bangladesh NAP).

At least eight political parties demanded dissolving the JS before the election while at least 10 others demanded that the public administration, home, defence and some others ministries be brought under the EC.

Several parties demanded staggered elections; deployment of army; a level-playing field for all political parties; appointment of EC officials, instead of deputy commissioners, as returning officers; and installation of CCTV cameras at polling stations.

At the talks, ruling AL and its allies Samyabadi Dal and Bikalpadhara said they want EVM in the next general polls. Bangladesh Tariqat Federation was for using EVM in 150 constituencies.

Ten political parties, including Jatiya Party and Gono Forum, were against the use of EVM. Twelve political parties, including the 14-party alliance components JSD and Workers Party, are for conditional use of EVM.

Two political parties did not clear their stance on the issue.

# AL for all-EVM nat’l polls, JP against it

FROM PAGE 1

During the dialogue with the EC, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader said, “We have trust in EVM ... The Awami League demands that EVM be used in all 300 parliamentary constituencies.”

Mentioning that the AL has been the worst victim of vote rigging, fraudulence and farcical election, Quader said his party thinks there is no alternative to EVM to prevent vote rigging.

Election Commissioner Rashida Sultana said that since they took office, they heard that the EC lost its neutrality and voters lost their interest in elections.

She sought assistance from all stakeholders to revive the EC’s image.

AL Joint General Secretary Hasan Mahmud said voters have not lost interest in polls. “People have trust in the Election Commission.”

AL Presidium Member Abdur Razzaque said the ruling party and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will create such an atmosphere that the BNP will join the polls.

The AL proposed that public servants, not officials of non-government organisations, be made presiding officers and polling officials.

The party is against engaging in election duties those police, admin and EC officials who had been appointed during the tenure of the BNP-led four party alliance.

It also said the election time government should keep its activities confined to only essential and routine work.

During its dialogue with the EC earlier, the JP vehemently opposed the use of EVM in the next general

election.

“We do not have confidence in EVM. People believe that nothing can be done if the election results are purposefully changed as there is no scope for recounting votes in the EVM system,” JP Secretary General Mujibul Haque Chunnu said.

“It won’t be logical to use EVMs unless the Election Commission earns people’s trust and confidence in it.”

He also urged the EC to use ballot papers in the upcoming Gaibandha-5 by-polls, or else his party might not join it.

Chunnu said the EC should send ballot papers to the polling centres in the morning of the voting day, not the day before the polling.

In an oblique reference to the allegations of casting ballots on the night before the voting day in the last general election, Chunnu said, “The work was done at night ... We are the ones who got it done. What can I say... It happens.”

The JP called for enactment of a law to give the EC more power to take action against election officials for failing to perform duties or indulging in irregularities.

The EC’s talks with political parties started on July 17. Nine parties, including the BNP, skipped the dialogue.

The AL, Samyabadi Dal and Bikalpadhara Bangladesh favour the use of EVM in the next polls, while 10 political parties, including the JP and the Gono Forum, are against it.

Twelve political parties, including the JSD and the Workers Party – both components of the AL-led 14-party alliance, gave conditions for using EVMs.