

Ex-UP chairman sued for raping physically-challenged girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Shariatpur

A local Awami League leader has been accused in a case of raping a 15-year-old girl with physical disabilities in Madaripur town.

Babul Sarder, also a former chairman of Chilarchar Union Parishad, has been accused of breaking into a home on Thursday and raping the girl when the parents were away at work, said Monowar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Madaripur Police Station.

When the girl's parents returned home, she told her parents what happened, the officer said, quoting the complaint.

Shihab Chowdhury, a doctor at the hospital where she is being treated, said a test was done to find if she was raped.

The OC said police were waiting for the test report.

Police are looking for the accused, he added.

Contacted over the phone, Babul said, "The allegation of rape is being made to tarnish my image. I am a victim of political conspiracy ... I will fight my legal battle."

The girl's father said Babul was an influential person. "No one dares to speak up against him. But I want justice for my daughter."

Hurricane Ian dumped 10pc more rain due to climate change: research

AFP, Paris

Climate change increased the rainfall from Hurricane Ian by more than 10 percent, according to a new quick-fire analysis, as one of the most powerful storms ever to hit the United States devastated parts of Florida.

Ian "could be the deadliest hurricane in Florida history", President Joe Biden said after the storm brought ferocious winds, turned streets into churning rivers that swept away homes and left an unknown number of casualties.



Children fishing in the shallow water of a trench, dug to carry water from the nearby Dhaki river to paddy fields for irrigation in Khona village of Khulina's Dakop upazila. Small fish like tengra, bele enter the trench with water flowing from the river during high tide. The photo was taken on Wednesday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

MAHSA AMINI'S DEATH

Clashes continue as Iran protests enter 3rd week

Death toll rises to 83

AFP, Paris

Iranian security forces opened fire on angry protesters as street violence sparked by the death of Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini entered a third week yesterday, foreign-based opposition media reported.

At least 83 people had been killed in a crackdown on the protests that erupted when Amini, 22, died in custody three days after her arrest by the notorious morality police in Tehran for allegedly breaching the Islamic republic's strict dress code for women.

"Death to the dictator," bare-headed

women chanted in the northwestern city of Ardabil, said Iran International, a Persian-language television station based in London.

In the southwestern city of Ahvaz, security forces fired tear gas to disperse scores of people who streamed onto the streets jeering and shouting anti-government slogans, in another video shared by the channel.

Men braved gunfire as they stoned a police station in Zahedan, near Iran's southeastern border with Pakistan, other footage showed. AFP was unable to immediately verify the videos.

Women have defiantly burned their

headscarves and cut their hair in the protests over Amini's death, announced September 16, that are the biggest seen in Iran since protests in November 2019 over fuel price rises.

Amnesty International said Iran was intentionally using lethal force against the protesters, adding that without international action "beyond statements of condemnation" more people risk being killed.

"The Iranian authorities have mobilised their well-honed machinery of repression to ruthlessly crack down on nationwide protests in an attempt to thwart any challenge to their power," it said.

Myanmar conflicts hurting Bangladesh

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San Lwin, who is based in Germany, said the Burmese youths are much more united now against the Myanmar junta -- a reality that reflects the unity among the wider public of Myanmar. He thinks in the long run, the military will not last.

WHERE IS MYANMAR HEADED? Prof Shahab Anam said Myanmar is moving towards massive chaos as the military is failing to properly handle the situation. Eventually, chaos may lead to disintegration of Myanmar, he said.

The intensified fighting will severely affect Myanmar's economy, which is already in a bad shape after the Covid-19 pandemic and supply chain disruptions amid the Russia-Ukraine war. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced by the conflicts across Myanmar, while several thousands were killed.

Prof Shahab said so far, mostly the Rohingyas have been the victims of conflicts in Rakhine State, but now Rakhine Buddhists are also becoming victims. Therefore, there is a real possibility of displacement of hundreds of thousands in Rakhine State.

In that case, Bangladesh and Myanmar's other neighbours have reasons to worry.

Anu Anwar said the intensified fighting certainly accelerated the possibility of disintegration.

He said geo-strategically, Myanmar connects South and Southeast Asia with the Bay of Bengal. For economic, connectivity, and geopolitical reasons, regional powers such as Japan or India and superpowers like the US, China and Russia take a greater interest in Myanmar affairs.

"A conflict in Myanmar will have multidimensional effects on the regional geopolitics..."

"Bangladesh, in particular, will be the primary victim of any conflict in and around Myanmar. A turmoil in Myanmar will not only increase the chances of a fresh influx of Rohingyas but also create the real possibility of an active conflict between two armed forces along the Naf River."

REPATRIATION COMPLICATED

Anwar said there has never been any real hope of repatriation regardless of the regime in Naypyitaw. Not a single leader in Myanmar has ever taken meaningful initiative towards repatriation.

The only time Myanmar has taken the Rohingya issue seriously was in 1978, when the government of Bangladesh made a credible threat that unless Myanmar took back their people, Bangladesh would arm Rohingyas, and if necessary, Bangladesh's military would launch a pre-emptive strike against Burma. Since then, Bangladesh has pursued only diplomatic means, but that has produced no substantial results as the number of Rohingya refugees only increased, he said.

"A fresh crackdown in Rakhine will not only tarnish the dying hope of repatriation but will generate a real possibility of a further influx of millions of Rohingyas into Bangladesh."

Shahab Enam Khan and Naw San Lwin said Rohingyas will not be willing to return to Myanmar when conflicts are escalating there.

WHAT SHOULD BANGLADESH DO NOW?

The experts said Myanmar's violation

of territorial sovereignty and Rohingya repatriation are separate issues and should be dealt with separately.

Anu Anwar said defending the land, air, and maritime boundary of a country is the duty of the armed forces.

Shahab said Bangladesh should have deployed troops for deterrence and strongly raised Myanmar's violation of sovereignty with the UN.

"Bangladesh needs to build a coalition of countries that support Bangladesh to mount pressure on Myanmar and work for Rohingya repatriation," he said, adding that bilateral negotiation is not working anymore.

Nay San Lwin thought the same. **HOW WILL WORLD POWERS REACT?**

Shahab Enam said Myanmar faced various sanctions because of the genocide against Rohingyas and military coup, mainly from western countries. Now, despite good relations, world powers like China and Russia, and even Japan, India and ASEAN are feeling uneasy about Myanmar.

But it is likely that Myanmar's resources will still continue to attract them more than those of Bangladesh, he said.

Anu Anwar said Beijing and Moscow provided cushion for the junta, which is nothing new. However, the new aspect is that world support for Bangladesh has increased in a dramatic fashion over the last few years.

"Myanmar's isolation is a win for Bangladesh if Dhaka is able to seize the opportunity," he said.

Durga Puja begins today

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been completed as artisans are busy giving the final touches to idols and pandals to celebrate the festival.

It is believed that Goddess Durga on this day descends on the earth with her four children -- Ganesha, Kartikeya, Lakshmi and Saraswati.

Maha Saptami puja will be held tomorrow, Maha Ashtami, Kumari and Sandhi puja on Monday, Maha Nabami on Tuesday and Bijoya

Dashami on Wednesday.

In separate messages, President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday conveyed greetings to the Hindu community people on this occasion, reports BSS.

This year, puja will be celebrated at 32,168 mandaps across the country, including 242 in the capital, according to Bangladesh Puja Ujjapan Parishad.

In the capital, the main puja

mandaps are at Dhakeshwari National Temple, Ramkrishna Mission and Math, Kalabagan, Banani, Shakhari Bazar and Ramna Kali Mandir.

Yesterday at a press conference, Mahanagar Sarbojanin Puja Ujjapan Committee issued 21-point directives, including installing CCTV cameras, frisking suspects and assigning volunteers, on maintaining security at the respective mandaps during the celebration.

Russia annexes four regions

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he wants to run the annexed regions, which Ukraine is fighting to win back.

"People living in Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson region and Zaporizhzhia region are becoming our compatriots forever," said Putin, referring to the four Ukrainian regions which he said Russia was annexing.

"We will defend our land with all our strength and all our means," he said, calling on "the Kyiv regime to immediately cease hostilities and return to the negotiation table".

Zelensky, speaking in Kyiv, said he was ready for peace talks if and when Russia got a new president and announced that Ukraine was formally applying for fast-track membership of the Nato military alliance, something Moscow fiercely opposes.

Kyiv's move to join Nato was the pretext that Putin used for the offensive he launched on February 24.

"We have already proven our compatibility with (Nato) alliance standards," Zelensky said in a video posted by the Ukrainian presidency on social media.

"We are taking a decisive step by signing Ukraine's application for accelerated accession to Nato," he added.

Zelensky and the West have condemned referendums that Moscow held in the four Ukrainian regions as illegal shams, while several dozen Ukrainians interviewed by Reuters in the last week said that only people they described as "Russian collaborators" had voted, with most people boycotting them.

US President Joe Biden condemned Russia's "fraudulent" declaration, vowing to keep backing Kyiv army.

"We will continue to support Ukraine's efforts to regain control of its territory by strengthening its hand militarily and diplomatically," he said.

Washington yesterday announced new "severe" sanctions against Russian officials and the country's

defence industry.

The latest sanctions come on top of sweeping measures already imposed by the US and allies this year that have already crippled Russia's international trading and local economy. But they stop short of Russia's energy industry, the country's largest source of hard currency.

Guidance from the US Treasury and Commerce departments warned that anyone outside Russia, including companies, that provide political, economic or material support to Moscow faced a heightened risk of sanctions.

The Treasury sanctions generally freeze any US assets of those designated and bar Americans from dealing with them.

Commerce added 57 entities in Russia and Crimea to bar exports.

Treasury said it imposed sanctions on 14 people in Russia's military-industrial complex, two leaders of the central bank, family members of top officials and 278 members of the legislature "for enabling Russia's sham referenda and attempt to annex sovereign Ukrainian territory."

Canada yesterday announced measures against dozens of oligarchs, financial elites and their family members, and 35 Russian-backed senior officials in the regions where the referendums took place.

Britain also put sanctions on the governor of the Russian central bank and imposed bans on new services and goods export.

Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said recent actions by Russia constitute the most serious escalation of the conflict since Moscow invaded Ukraine in February.

"This land grab is illegal and illegitimate. Nato allies do not and will not recognize any of this territory as part of Russia," Stoltenberg said.

"Putin has mobilised hundreds of thousands of more troops, engaged

Hasina invites Saudi crown prince to visit Bangladesh

UNB, Riyadh

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has invited Saudi Crown Prince and newly appointed Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud to visit Bangladesh.

Mohammad Javed Patwary, Bangladesh ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, handed over the invitation letter to Waleed bin Abdulkarim Al-khurajji, deputy minister of KSA's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at the latter's office yesterday.

In the letter, Hasina talked about the strong bilateral relations between the two brotherly states and hoped that the support of the two countries in different sectors will increase in the coming days.

Ctg businessman held for loan default

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Chattogram businessman hiding in Dhaka to avoid arrest was caught by police on Thursday.

Tipu Sultan, chairman of Marine Vegetable Oil, was arrested by a team from Chattogram Metropolitan Police at a house in Gulshan.

He is accused of loan default in 21 cases.

SSC student drowns in Khulna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

An SSC student who had epilepsy drowned while bathing in a pond in Koyra upazila of Khulna yesterday.

Priya Majhi might have had a seizure while she was in the pond and this was probably what caused her to drown, said local union parishad member Moni Roy, quoting the family members.

She was the daughter of Nitish Majhi of Khorakati village.

3 get life imprisonment for drug dealing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A Thakurgaon court on Thursday sentenced three men to life in prison for possessing 300 bottles of Phensedyl in November 2018.

The convicts, Akmal, 23, Hasem Ali, 24, and Sadekul Islam, 38, are from Haripur upazila of Panchagarh. The jail term is being counted from the day they were arrested.

Europe's biggest nuclear reactor reaches full power

AFP, Helsinki

Finland's long-delayed Olkiluoto 3 nuclear reactor has reached full power to become the most powerful electricity production facility in Europe, operator TVO said yesterday, a boost amid a continent-wide energy crunch.

With power level of 1,600 megawatts, the plant located on the Nordic country's southwestern coast is also now the third most powerful electricity production facility globally, the company said.

OL3's production is being closely followed in Finland, where the hope is that the plant could ease the coming winter's challenges as European

energy prices have soared following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"The plant unit is now the most powerful electricity production facility in Europe," TVO said in a statement, adding that regular operation expected to start in December 2022.

Around 40 percent of Finland's electricity production now comes from Olkiluoto, as the OLI and OL2 reactors combined produce approximately 21 percent and the new OL3 alone around 19 percent.

The reactor, built by the French-led Areva-Siemens consortium, went online in March -- 12 years behind schedule -- after suffering a long string of setbacks.

The plant's regular production was expected to start this summer but was postponed to December, after "foreign material" was observed in the turbine's steam reheater.

Operator TVO said that the ten remaining sets of tests will impact the power levels in the coming months.

"In some of the upcoming tests, the plant unit's production is either intentionally interrupted or the power level is lowered," the company said.

The European Pressurised Reactor model was designed to relaunch nuclear power in Europe after the 1986 Chernobyl catastrophe, and was touted as offering higher power outputs and better safety.