

Wrapped in burqa, her mouth gagged

Missing schoolgirl found dead in Shitalakkhya

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A seven-year-old girl, who went missing from close to her Rugganj residence in Narayanganj on January 25, was found dead in the Shitalakkhya river in Dhaka's Demra area.

Kohinoor Akter Sadia, who was still in her school uniform, was discovered wrapped in a burqa with a gag over her mouth, say police.

She went missing as she was playing near her house after returning from school, the girl's uncle Wahidul Islam told The Daily Star yesterday.

"From her school uniform, we were able to identify her decomposing body at the hospital morgue," he said.

Locals spotted the body floating in the river, around 500 feet south of Sultana Kamal Bridge, around 1:00pm on Monday. Inspector Kaiyum Ali Sarker, in charge of Demra River Police Outpost, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We recovered the body and sent it to the Sir Salimullah Medical College morgue for autopsy in the early hours of Tuesday," he said.

"We primarily suspect that criminals strangled her to death and dumped her body into the river," the police officer said.

Meanwhile, morgue sources said they were working to determine the cause of death.

Abir Hossain, assistant superintendent (Rugganj circle) of Narayanganj police, said they had already detained two persons for questioning over the incident.

"We have launched an investigation into the case," he added.

Beijing has hit 'temporary herd immunity': official

AFP, Beijing

Beijing has reached "temporary herd immunity" and its Covid outbreak is nearing an end, a city health official said yesterday, in another sign China's unprecedented virus wave is waning.

A torrent of cases has cascaded through the world's most populous nation since the ruling Communist Party abruptly ended its zero-Covid policy last month.



Envoys of seven OIC member states call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office in the capital yesterday. The envoys are, from left, UAE Ambassador Abdulla Ali Abdulla Khaseif AlHmoudi, Algerian Ambassador Rabah Larbi, Malaysian High Commissioner Haznah Md Hashim, Palestinian Ambassador Yousef SY Ramadan, Maldivian High Commissioner Shiruzimath Sameer, Saudi Arabian Ambassador Essa Yousef Essa Alduhailan and Omani Ambassador Abdul Ghaffar Bin Abdul Karim Al-Bulushi.

PHOTO: PIO

Biden rules out F-16s for Kyiv

Minister says Ukraine to receive 120-140 tanks in 'first wave' of deliveries amid new Russia assault fears

AGENCIES

President Joe Biden said the United States would not provide F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine as demanded by Kyiv, which insists it needs those to be better able to drive Russian forces from occupied territories.

However, Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba yesterday said Ukraine will receive 120 to 140 Western tanks in a "first wave" of deliveries from a coalition of 12 countries.

Kyiv secured pledges from the West this month to supply main battle tanks to help fend off Russia's full-scale invasion, with Moscow mounting huge efforts to make incremental advances in eastern Ukraine.

"The tank coalition now has 12 members. I can note that in the first wave of contributions, the Ukrainian armed forces will receive between 120 and 140 Western-model tanks," Kuleba said during an online briefing.

He said those tanks would include the German Leopard 2, the British Challenger 2 and the U.S. M1 Abrams, and that Ukraine

was also "really counting" on supplies of French Leclerc tanks being agreed.

Kuleba gave no timeline for any of the deliveries. Time will also be needed for training with the tanks.

But Biden on Monday appeared to draw the line on supplying American fighter jets to Ukraine.

"No," he said when asked by reporters at the White House if he was in favor of sending F-16s or others.

But European leaders said they were open to the idea, even if Ukraine has not yet formally requested advanced fighter aircraft from its allies for the war.

Analysts believe both Ukraine and Russia are gearing up for significant offensive movements in the coming months and Western aircraft could increase Kyiv's strength, with its own air force significantly depleted by 11 months of war.

French President Emmanuel Macron said Monday he would not rule out giving fighter aircraft to Ukraine but warned against the risk of escalation in the

conflict.

Macron had talks with Netherlands Prime Minister Mark Rutte, who has already floated the idea of sending Dutch F-16s to Ukraine.

"Nothing is excluded in principle," Macron said.

Any arms delivery "must not weaken the capacity of the French armed forces," he said, adding that France would have to be confident that the weapons would not be used to strike inside Russia, which could escalate the war.

"There is no taboo but it would be a big step," said Rutte.

Over in South America, President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said Brazil "has no interest in sending ammunition to Ukraine" during a meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz -- the first Western leader to meet the leftist premier since he took office.

He added that he had discussed this idea with Macron and would bring it up with Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping in future planned visits.

Fire breaks out at factory in Mongla EPZ

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

A fire broke out yesterday at a factory in Mongla Export Processing Zone in Bagerhat.

"The fire originated from an electric short circuit in VIP Luggage-1 factory in the afternoon. It spread quickly as the factory had glue and other flammable chemicals stored on its premises," said Monirul Islam, officer-in-charge of Mongla Police Station.

Around 700-800 workers were inside the factory when the fire broke out. The authority was able to safely evacuate all workers, he added.

Six fire service units from Bagerhat and Mongla were working to douse the fire, said Golam Sarwar, deputy assistant director of Bagerhat Fire Service and Civil Defence.

Though, the fire was brought under control, it could not be completely doused till the filing of this report at 9:15pm.

Special drives against air polluters to begin today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environment Minister Md Shahab Uddin yesterday directed the Department of Environment and other authorities concerned to start conducting special drives against air polluters today.

He gave the directive in a meeting held at the ministry in the presence of other officials, said a press release.

The minister also said mobile courts will be conducted against companies and vehicles that are responsible for air pollution from today.

Due to the alarming state of the capital's air quality, the ministry and the directorate must take every precaution to prevent air pollution, he asserted.

Effective legal decisions must be made and executed through inter-ministerial discussions, he added.

The minister also directed the project directors concerned to take effective steps to eliminate the use of hydraulic horns that cause noise pollution.

No Covid death in 24 hrs, positivity rate 0.71pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

No Covid-19 death was reported in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday while 13 others tested positive for the virus.

The total number of coronavirus deaths in the country remains at 29,442 while the mortality rate stands at 1.44 percent, read a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services.

A total of 1,824 samples were tested across the country during this period. With this, the total number of cases rose to 2,037,556.

The current positivity rate stands at 0.71 percent while the total positivity rate at 13.36 percent.

Meanwhile, 228 patients recovered from the infection in these 24 hours.

2,889 Rohingyas to be shifted

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"We will scrutinise whether any of the newcomers are involved in criminal activity. If we identify somebody involved in a crime, we will notify law enforcers," Mizanur told The Daily Star.

On the morning of January 18, a gunfight occurred between the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO), both of which were attempting to seize control of the Konarpara Rohingya Camp.

Konarpara Rohingya Camp is situated on the zero line near the Tambru border and run by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The violence, which left one refugee dead and two children wounded, destroyed numerous shelters, causing widespread panic among people.

The clashes continued the next day, forcing many Rohingyas to flee into Bangladesh from Myanmar and seek refuge inside a school in Tambru and its surrounding districts of Naikhongchhari upazila, according to Rohingyas and intelligence officials.

According to locals, the Konarpara Rohingya Camp housed 4,400 Rohingyas from 630 households. Many of them sought refuge in Tambru, while others escaped to other parts of Bangladesh and went untraced.

Contacted, Ghumdhum Union Parishad Chairman AKM Jahangir Aziz said, "We have already completed the counting of the Rohingyas who have taken shelter in Tambru, following the directives from higher authorities

and with the support of the ICRC."

"We found 2,889 Rohingyas from 357 families. The survey started on Sunday morning and finished yesterday evening. The activity was coordinated by a member of the union parishad," he added.

"The process of counting the Rohingyas has just been completed," Romen Sharma, Naikhongchhari upazila nirbahi officer, told this correspondent. "Now we'll go through their details. Then, following directives of higher authorities, we will begin the process of relocating them."

Bangladesh now hosts over 1.2 million Rohingyas, who are housed in 33 refugee camps in Cox's Bazar's Ukhiya and Teknaf upazilas. Over 8 lakh Rohingyas entered Bangladesh in 2017 alone.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen at a programme in the capital's Foreign Service Academy yesterday said, "A huge number of Rohingyas used to live on the zero line across the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. This area is very notorious; they also used to do drug smuggling there. So, we have been thinking of dismantling it."

As a consequence of the infighting among different groups in Myanmar, some Rohingyas have entered Bangladesh territory. Those Rohingyas are also carrying UNHCR cards, according to the minister.

"But we will not take anyone officially. The good news is that the camp on the zero line is almost closed now. This is good for us. Let's see what happens," he said.

Hathurusingha returns

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was appointed as technical consultant for the T20 unit till the T20 World Cup in November last year.

Hathurusingha is set to arrive by February 20, with his first assignment being the white-ball series against England, including three ODIs and as many T20Is, at home, starting from March 1.

Speculation about Hathurusingha's arrival had been rife since former head coach Russell Domingo tendered his resignation in December last year. Domingo had a contract with the BCB till the 2023 ODI World Cup, set to be played in October-November in India.

This is set to be Hathurusingha's second stint as Bangladesh coach, having previously served from 2014 to 2017.

"It's an honour to have been given this opportunity to coach the Bangladesh national team once again. I really loved the warmth of the people and the culture of Bangladesh

whenever I have been there. I'm looking forward to working with the players once again and enjoying their successes," Hathurusingha was quoted as saying in the BCB press release.

Hathurusingha's first stint with the BCB ended on a sour note, with the Sri Lankan tendering his resignation during Bangladesh's tour of South Africa in 2017 to take over as Sri Lanka's head coach.

However, BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon said that the 54-year-old's reappointment was welcomed by senior cricketers, including Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Shakib Al Hasan, and Tamim Iqbal.

Papon also informed that the BCB was looking for an assistant coach to help Hathurusingha share some of the workload.

"We are looking for an assistant coach. It is not possible for everyone to be available for every series," Papon said, adding that the board has already held talks with a few prospective candidates for the role.