

Two held for rape attempt on JU student

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Two men were arrested on charge of attempting to rape a Jahangirnagar University student at her house near the campus early yesterday.

The victim filed a case against them with Ashulia Police Station in this connection, SM Kamruzzaman, officer-in-charge of the police station, told The Daily Star.

The arrestees are Rakib Hossain, a resident of Pallabi area in Dhaka, and Mezbah Uddin, of the capital's Baridhara area. They are under 30 years old and are not students of the university, police said.

The incident took place around 12:30am at the student's rented flat near the university campus, according to the case statement.

Rakib and Mezbah had earlier been introduced to the victim by another student, and they were at her flat on Sunday night, said statement.

As the victim was sleeping in her room, Rakib tried to rape her with the help of Mezbah. The victim over phone called students at the university who rushed there and rescued her. They also held the two and took them to the campus, the statement added.

The JU proctorial team then handed them over to Ashulia police.

Mohibur Rouf, an assistant proctor, said the incident took place outside the campus.

A Dhaka court sent the two to jail.

IMRAN KHAN'S RELEASE

Govt supporters call for Pak top judge to quit

AGENCIES

Several thousand pro-government protesters yesterday demanded the resignation of Pakistan's top judge for releasing Imran Khan last week, as the former prime minister went back to court facing yet more legal cases.

Khan, who was ousted from power last April, was arrested last Tuesday following months of simmering political crisis, prompting his voters to rampage through cities.

His arrest was declared unlawful by the Supreme Court's chief justice and Khan was later released and granted various bail applications, reports AFP.

"The chief justice and a few of his cronies are disgracing the judiciary like never before. Their justice seems to be serving one leader only," said Malik Hassam Mehmood, a 36-year-old trader and supporter of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's party.



PHOTO: AFP

Smoke billows in the distance in Khartoum, Sudan amid ongoing fighting between the forces of two rival generals yesterday.

BANGLADESH'S INDO-PACIFIC OUTLOOK

Canberra lauds Dhaka

Australian assistant minister says his country eyes int'l rule-based Indo-Pacific

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Australia said it wants an Indo-Pacific region where "no country dominates or is dominated" by others.

Tim Watts, assistant minister for foreign affairs of Australia, lauded Bangladesh's Indo-Pacific Outlook, saying that he particularly liked Dhaka's argument for an "inclusive region", a concept he said is also shared by Australia.

"Australia's vision in the Indo-Pacific is having a prosperous and resilient region governed by international rules, strategic equilibrium, sovereignty and where ... no country dominates or is dominated," said Watts.

He made the comments while in discussion with a select group of journalists on Sunday after attending the Indian Ocean Conference on May 12-13. On the sidelines, he also held a bilateral meeting with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam.

Asked, he said Australia is eager to enhance security cooperation with Bangladesh, adding that Australia has recently sent a defence adviser to Dhaka as part of its goal to enhance maritime security cooperation.

"Strategic equilibrium" is important in the region, he added.

The bilateral trade between Bangladesh

and Australia is \$3.6 billion and the signing of the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement last year means the Australian investment in Bangladesh will grow in the coming days, Watts said.

He said potential areas of growth are agriculture, education, vocational training and energy. Bangladesh also imports cotton from Australia, which supports the RMG sector in Bangladesh.

Watts said Australia is a "trusted and reliable" energy supplier to many countries around the world. Amid the global green economy and clean energy push, Australia is aiming to become a renewable energy superpower, he said.

Watts said they believe that Australia has the required solar and wind power resources and space to generate enormous renewable energy that can be exported to Bangladesh and other countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

"We are aiming to help Bangladesh meet its green energy needs."

Prime Minister's Energy Adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury has recently visited Australia to evaluate the potential for exports of renewable energy and green hydrogen.

"I think that the visit is a good indicator of the potential for further cooperation between Australia and Bangladesh," Watts said.

US won't comment on participatory polls in Bangladesh

BSS, Dhaka

The US is not concerned about participation of any particular party in Bangladesh's next elections but it wants the polls to be fair and held in a congenial environment, a senior visiting State Department official said.

"We are not making a comment on whether or not elections are participatory, more we are focused on electoral environment (in Bangladesh)," US Deputy Assistant Secretary Afreen Akhter told BSS diplomatic correspondent Tanzim Anwar on Saturday in the capital.

She added, "Ultimately it is up to (political) parties themselves to decide" if they would participate in the elections and "again we are not commenting whether it (requires to be) participatory".

The senior US diplomat said her country was not interfering or weighing in with any particular party or candidate though they were working to support the electoral environment here.

Akhter's comments came as asked if BNP or any other particular party's election participation would concern Washington.

"Let me emphasize that the US does not support any political party, any candidate, any individual," Akhter said adding that they were not seeking to mediate the election either.

Polls-time govt a possibility

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Bangladesh, but across the world.

"There is no serious crisis [of dollar in Bangladesh]. During the BNP's rule in 2006, the country had forex reserves of only \$0.744 billion. But now we have \$31.22 billion."

She said the IMF provided a loan to Bangladesh as the country has the capability to repay it and the country's economy has not become weak.

Asked if there was any reason to be afraid of following her statement that the government won't buy anything from those countries who imposed sanctions, the PM said, "I made a decision in this regard and told the finance and planning ministries to include a clause [in the related rules] stating that we won't buy anything from those who would impose sanctions. What is to be afraid of regarding this?"

The AL chief said they will make a declaration on developing "Smart Bangladesh" in the party's next election manifesto.

She said her success is that she has been able to turn the country into a developing one. However, those who opposed the country's independence, and killed Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman won't like it, the PM added.

Hasina said she would take part in the next election because she couldn't

complete the process of turning the country into a developing nation by 2024 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. "I hope to make it happen by 2026."

The AL president said she has been working for the welfare of the people.

Responding to a question about announcing dearness allowance for journalists, the premier said she has a special feeling for journalists as her father worked as a journalist for some time, reports UNB.

She said her government granted permission to a number of private television channels and newspapers aiming to create employment for journalists and ensure their betterment.

Hasina said her government in 2015 announced that dearness allowance would be given to the government employees every year considering the increased inflation.

She said the government can do it for its employees, but the newspapers and TV channels are being run under private ownerships.

The PM hoped that the owners of the media outlets would take necessary measures to this end.

Hasina expressed gratefulness to Allah for saving Bangladesh from Cyclone Mocha. She said her government had taken adequate preparations to minimise damage.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, Planning Minister Abdul Mannan, AL presidium members Matia Chowdhury, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim and Mosharrar Hossain, and PM's Private Industry and Investment Adviser Salman Fazlur Rahman were present at the press conference, moderated by PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim.

Hasina returned home from London on May 9 wrapping up her 15-day visit to Japan, the US, and the UK.

AL expels Zahangir

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Seven days after his expulsion, the government suspended him as the GCC mayor. The ruling party, however, granted him amnesty on January 21 this year on condition that any further violation of organisational rules by him would be deemed unforgivable.

Ignoring the party directive, Zahangir decided to run for the Gazipur city polls to be held on May 25 against AL candidate Azamat Ullah Khan.

The Election Commission cancelled his nomination as Zahangir was a defaulter as a loan guarantor. Now he is campaigning for his mother Zaida Khatun, an independent mayoral candidate.

security.

Meanwhile, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Khandker Golam Faruq said the envoys who have been obtaining extra police protection when they move will be provided with Ansar members instead of police personnel.

"We have decided to deploy Ansar members, instead of police, when they move, as we have a manpower crisis. We will ensure protection through the Ansar members," he told this newspaper yesterday.

Faruq said this is not weakening of their security. The police personnel deployed for the security of embassies

and high commissions will remain the same.

Asked about it, the US embassy in Dhaka said that in accordance with a longstanding policy, they do not disclose security details concerning the embassy.

"The safety and security of our diplomatic personnel and facilities are of the utmost importance. As per the Vienna Convention, the host country must uphold its obligations to ensure the protection of all diplomatic missions and personnel," said Sean J McIntosh, US embassy counsellor for public affairs.

Reforms must address rising inequality

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recommended flexible interest rates targeting monetary policy modernisation, which we are also in favour of."

But specialised and subsidised credit schemes for the disadvantaged such as those involved in agriculture and MCSMEs, and women and youth should be continued.

Besides, the IMF's loan conditions call for a reduction in tax exemption. But tax exemption rationalisation should be done through an open and transparent process and with consultations with stakeholders so that industries, particularly Small and Medium Enterprises, do not suffer, he added.

According to the noted economist, inequality in rural areas declined slightly because of the positive impact of non-farm activities, agricultural output, and social safety net programmes.

"On the other hand, urban inequality increased significantly..." he said.

Urban inequality has been fuelled by rural-urban migration, said Debapriya.

He suggested that the government implement IMF programme-stipulated reforms and policy steps by taking the inequality concerns into cognisance and in consultation with the disadvantaged.

"When the IMF goes to a country with their programme, it establishes a singular authority over economic management," he said.

"Recently I have said the budget has now become an orphan and the IMF has become its foster father."

Speakers at the dialogue held at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre also said the government should increase the budget allocation for disadvantaged groups and resources must be

allocated based on their priorities.

The disadvantaged groups, including climate-vulnerable people, Dalits, children, domestic workers, indigenous and ethnic groups, and micro, cottage, small and medium enterprises, should get priority in the budget allocation.

People with disabilities, migrant workers who have returned home from abroad, senior citizens, transgender people, people of the Urdu-speaking community, women, and youths should also get increased allocations, they said.

The budget should lay proper emphasis on agriculture, climate change and environment, education, skill development, entrepreneurship, and mental health.

Debapriya said, "Disaggregated data of allocations for these groups and sectors should be well presented to make the budget allocations and delivery visible for transparency and accountability."

At the dialogue, Planning Minister MA Mannan said the government should change their mentality of having big cars and big houses. "Now austerity measures are in place in all fields."

"The truth is that the poor are deprived. I've seen how they're deprived. They are deprived for procedural reasons. The government allocations don't always reach them."

He said there are many tax evaders and defaulters in the country. "It's an old disease. ... but we admit that we are not trying enough," said Mannan.

The minister said many vested groups are here and they have been in an advantageous position for a long time. Taking action against them might put the government in trouble.

He said there is inflationary pressure in the country, but it decreased a bit last month and wages have slowly been rising.

Gas supply cut in parts of Mohammadpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Titas Gas authorities suspended gas supply to six housing societies in the capital's Mohammadpur yesterday.

The action was taken against those on the list of having illegal connections and customers who had not paid their bills for a long time.

Dhaka Udyan, Chand Udyan, Nabinagar Housing, Chandrima Housing, Ekota Housing, and Turag Housing areas were on that list.

Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd issued a press release last night, but no officials were available for comment in this regard.

The release did not specify how long the supply would be suspended.

Mother, son found dead of apparent suicide

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Police recovered the hanging bodies of a woman and her three-year-old son from their residence in Bhairab upazila of Kishoreganj yesterday.

Jonaki Akter, 35, was the wife of an expatriate working in Italy Farhad Mia, and Alif Hossain was their only child, police said.

Bhairab Police Station OC Shah Alam Mollah said the bodies were sent to Kishoreganj General Hospital for autopsy.

Jonaki's family alleged that her in-laws put her through psychological abuse for dowry. Her in-laws fled the house after the incident.

Hearing on charge framing against Khaleda on June 15

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday set June 15 for the hearing on charge framing against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in 11 cases filed in 2015.

Judge Md Asaduzzaman of Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court adjourned the hearing and fixed the new date, said Additional Public Prosecutor Tapash Kumar Pal.

The adjournment came following petitions submitted by the defence citing different reasons. Khaleda, who is out of jail following an executive order from the government, is now unwell and staying at her Gulshan residence.

Ten of the 11 cases were filed in the first three months of 2015 over arson attacks, while the other one was filed with a Dhaka court on a charge of making seditious comments on freedom fighters and martyrs of the Liberation War.

Three corruption cases against Khaleda — Gatco, Niko and Boropukuria coalmine — are now pending with three other special courts in Dhaka.

Two more cases are pending with the Second Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court.

Govt calls off addl security

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services in exchange for payment.

He added that police have already informed the embassies concerned of the government decision and also sought to know if they want the additional security on payment.

"We don't want to provide any embassies with additional security. However, general security will be ensured for them as per the rules," Momen said.

He added that no diplomat will be given additional security with the taxpayers' money. In no country, Bangladeshi ambassador gets such

"We need safe homes built for us and opportunities for employment."