

9-yr-old rape victim fighting for life

Suspect remains unidentified after over a week

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

A girl aged around nine is struggling for her life at a hospital due to injuries she received when raped by an unknown man in the capital on October 12.

Doctors said the girl was in critical condition with profuse bleeding when she was brought to the hospital. Her mother said, "I cannot bear to see her lying in such a condition."

She added that her daughter left home on the night of October 12 to see a puja mandap in the neighbourhood, but did not return that night.

The next morning, she came back, bleeding and barely able to walk or talk.

"A man picked her up in a CNG-run three-wheeler to the empty first floor of a building and raped her there," said Inspector Mehedi Hasan of Banani Police Station.

The man then put her on a bus heading towards Mohakhali so that she could return home, he added.

A case was filed on October 14 over the incident, but no one has been arrested.

"We have not been able to identify the crime scene or the suspect. We will conduct a raid after talking to the girl once she is well enough to speak," he said.

Police have collected CCTV footage from near her neighbourhood and the clips would help them identify the suspect, he said.

A surgeon at the hospital said, "She was bleeding profusely and needed surgery. We created an opening in her abdomen to allow stool to bypass the injured parts. We had to put in a catheter to assist with urination. She will have to be in this state for at least three months."

The physician added that forensic examinations had been done.



With the tourist season setting off, people flock to Bholaganj Sada Pathor in Sylhet on weekends and holidays. This spot is famous for beautiful stones, crystal clear water, and green mountains. Those involved in the tourism industry are upbeat about their business. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

2 men sent to jail over rape of Marma girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Two men were sent to jail yesterday on charges of raping a 14-year-old Marma girl in Bandarban's Naikhongchhari upazila.

The accused are Md Selim, 23, and Motiur Rahman, 25, residents of the upazila.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Md Nurul Hoque of Bandarban passed the order after they were produced before the court.

The alleged incident took place around 6:00pm on Thursday in the Sadhu Ong Para area, according to the statement of the case filed by the girl's brother.

The plaintiff told The Daily Star that his sister had gone to fetch water from Baishari canal around 5:30pm, when most villagers were busy with preparations for Moha-Probarna, a major religious festival of the local Buddhist community.

"My sister went alone to the canal to collect water and bathe. The two men followed her. Motiur stood guard, while Selim grabbed my sister, dragged her into a bamboo grove, and raped her," he said.

"My sister has difficulties speaking. She also doesn't speak Bangla."

Noticing her delay in returning SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Bangladesh may get \$5.65b by this fiscal year

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The World Bank is expected to clear \$1.5 billion in fresh funds in the ongoing fiscal year, including \$1 billion under two programmes by December.

A finance ministry official said the World Bank will provide \$750 million to strengthen economic governance and reform programmes.

Another \$250 million will be provided for capacity building of the finance ministry, Bangladesh Bank, National Board of Revenue (NBR), and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), said the official.

From the ADB, the government expects \$1.15 billion by the end of this fiscal year. The funds will include \$650 million expected by December for a programme to strengthen economic management and governance.

The interim government also sought \$1 billion from the ADB for the banking sector and another \$1 billion

for the energy sector.

Out of these, there has been significant progress in getting the \$1 billion for the banking sector. The ADB could provide \$500 million of the funds by June next year.

The Bangladesh delegation will also hold talks with officials of the World Bank Group's Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) and International Finance Corporation (IFC), and the US Treasury Department during the WB-IMF Annual Meetings.

IFC in 2022 proposed to issue Taka-denominated bonds worth \$4 billion among local investors, either through public issuance or private placement, to lend the proceeds to projects in Bangladesh.

There has not been much progress regarding the proposal, but recently the member of the World Bank Group has shown renewed interest

in the matter.

MIGA has offered Bangladesh Bank \$1 billion in guarantee facilities for international trade to reduce import costs.

MIGA and IFC's proposals will be discussed further during the Bangladesh delegation's visit to Washington, a central bank official said.

PROBABLE CONDITIONS
Officials said the conditions for the fresh World Bank and IMF loans may include the separation of tax policy from revenue collection administration. The lenders have been raising the issue for a long time, but it could not be realised due to a lack of interest from NBR officials.

The lenders may also want the existing multiple VAT rates replaced with a uniform rate, and the introduction of a modern electronic VAT system to increase revenues and

improve compliance.

The World Bank recommended these reforms in its latest development update for Bangladesh last week.

It suggested enhancing efficiency in expenditure by aligning national savings certificate interest payments with market rates and controlling subsidy spending.

The report recommended implementing market-based tariffs in the power sector and transitioning from fertiliser subsidies to a voucher-based programme. It suggested replacing emergency procurement with competitive bidding to reduce generation costs.

A finance ministry official said the lenders may impose a condition under which the BBS will have autonomy and publish data independently.

Currently, BBS sends data to government high-ups for approval before publication.

Dilemma over Shakib's farewell Test continues

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Even though it is certain that Shakib will not feature in the Mirpur Test, the saga is refusing to quieten down on social media, news portals or even in the streets.

As many as 80 to 90 fans of Shakib gathered at the main entrance of the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium at yesterday noon with banners, demanding Shakib's safe return to the country to play his farewell Test and also to stop encouraging mob violence against the 37-year-old.

Shakib's childhood coach Mohammad Salahuddin expressed sadness at how the situation is panning out, saying he deserved a shot at redemption as he had already apologised for his silence during the student-led people's movement in July-August.

"I have never felt so much anger and grief towards the people of the country as I am feeling today. As humans, don't we all make mistakes? If someone repents, he should be given another chance," Salahuddin wrote on Facebook yesterday.

"Today, they [Shakib and Mashrafe] are enemies just because they didn't put any status on social media..."

They have never harmed anyone, only helped people. They are not murderers," he added.

Meanwhile, another childhood coach of Shakib's Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, who is now a director at the cricket board, refused to comment on the issue at a press conference in Mirpur yesterday.

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul said that the public anger against the ace all-rounder was not unwarranted.

"There has never been a player like Shakib in Bangladesh's history," Asif Nazrul said during a programme aired on private TV station Channel I. "He could have been the most popular man in Bangladesh's history if he had gotten involved with a fascist government," he said.

"I just can't believe it... When people were being killed, when people were crying, were angry, and suffering everywhere, he posted that he was 'enjoying life at'—I don't know where. How could a human being do that?" he said, referring to a social media post made by Shakib's wife during the protests when they were in Toronto, Canada.

"I feel for him, but the anger against him doesn't feel unwarranted."

It could be possible to hold polls by next year

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soon to help form the new EC. The commission will first compile an accurate voter list.

Replying to another query about the potential extradition of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina from India, the law adviser said that Bangladesh has an extradition treaty with India, and if the neighbouring country adheres to the treaty, Hasina should be returned.

Asif said that India will have many legal arrangements. "If India interprets the law honestly, it must repatriate Hasina."

The law adviser said he had never mentioned that any journalist would be tried in the International Crimes Tribunal.

"It was a big misinterpretation of what I actually said," he said.

Asked about a perception that he is the most powerful among the advisers, Asif said that he enjoys the same power as his fellow advisers.

He said Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus holds most of the consultations with the student leaders, and it is done logically.

The law adviser said he had never mentioned that any journalist would be tried in the International Crimes Tribunal.

LAW ADVISER OFFERS APOLOGY

Apologising to the people for the price hike of essentials, Asif said the government is working hard and making concerted efforts to improve the situation.

"I apologise to you. I feel so bad. This is intolerable to us. We are working very hard. We are working together," he said.

The law adviser said the impact of the floods is reducing and the winter is approaching. "We hope the situation will improve to a great extent. In some areas, the situation has already started improving."

Asif said the government is doing everything possible to deal with the price hike of essentials.

He said this issue causes mental anguish to everyone in the government.

Drive recovers 318 weapons

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According to the Department of Prisons, at least 70 militants escaped from 17 jails in late July and August, many with arms.

Air Cdre (ret'd) Ishfaq says the government should continue the drive to recover the arms, engage people through media campaigns, and offer rewards for information leading to recoveries.

At the request of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, imams of different mosques during Juma prayers yesterday read out a notice urging people to hand illegal arms to law enforcers.

Individuals depositing the firearms will face no legal action, added the notice.

During the mass uprising that led to the fall of the Awami League government, law enforcers used excessive force and fatally shot many protesters, causing significant public wrath. Groups of people, especially members of the AL, also shot at protesters.

On August 25, the interim government suspended arms licences issued to civilians during the AL rule.

As the AL regime fell, mobs attacked police personnel, vandalised hundreds of police stations, vehicles, set many facilities on fire, and killed at

least 44 officers.

During the chaos, 5,829 firearms and 606,742 bullets were looted from police stations and facilities. The weapons include Chinese rifles, submachine guns, pistols, shotguns, tear gas launchers, and signal pistols.

After taking office, the interim government ordered people to return the weapons by September 3. Only 3,763 of the looted firearms and 286,082 bullets were returned and recovered.

Firearms of the Special Security Force were taken from the Gono Bhaban and parliament. Police have not disclosed how many Special Security Force firearms were lost.

Asked about the lacklustre state of firearms recovery, Enamul Haque Sagor, assistant inspector general (media) at Police Headquarters, said, "We are trying, and doing our best. It is a top priority and the joint operation will continue."

"We request people to help us find the arms. Your identities would be secret."

As of September 3, people submitted 13,349 firearms with suspended licence, according to Police Headquarters data.

But the PHQ has no data on how many arms with suspended licences

are still out there because there is no database on the licences issued during the 15-year AL rule.

"We are working to make a separate database of legal and looted firearms to get a clear picture," said AIG Sagor.

An intelligence officer said a large number of AL leaders and supporters left the country or went into hiding after August 5. At least 187 police members also went into hiding.

Many of the police members and AL leaders had licensed arms, but none of them submitted those to law enforcers.

Police sources said that a large number of the weapons are in the possession of various criminals.

On September 29, the Inter-Services Public Relations Directorate said arms looted from the police were reportedly used by miscreants at the Geneva Camp in the capital's Mohammadpur.

Officials recovered two pistols, 20 bullets, many sharp weapons, and 12 packs of splinters from the Geneva Camp.

Tawohidul Haque, associate professor of social welfare at Dhaka University, said, "Weapons that are unaccounted for are a major concern because these can lead to deterioration of law and order situation."

Harris, Trump descend on Michigan

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In the states that break the figures down by party affiliation, Democrats accounted for about half of the total while Republicans — who have spent much of the Trump era casting aspersions over mail-in ballots — were responsible for less than a third.

Having ceded the early-voting battlefield in 2016 and 2020, Trump has dialed back his criticisms this time around and he too has been encouraging people to use the voting method they find most convenient.

"Early mail-in voting in your state is now underway, and early in-person is underway. But I'll tell you what, I'm hearing very good things," Trump said in Georgia's capital Atlanta on Tuesday, having already encouraged Arizonans to go out and vote.

'DEVELOPING NATION'

More than 800,000 people have voted in Michigan, where the largest city Detroit will host a Trump rally, a week after he disparaged the city by likening it to a "developing nation."

Harris was spent the entire day in Michigan, campaigning in Grand

Rapids, speaking at a union hall in Lansing and holding a rally in Oakland County before returning to Detroit today.

The Democrat has found herself on eggshells as she upholds President Joe Biden's support for key ally Israel, while Muslim and Arab American voters — particularly in Michigan — have voiced outrage over the death toll in Gaza.

The killing of Hamas chief Yahya Sinwar drew optimism from Harris as a Gaza ceasefire, but Israel quickly said his death is not the end of the campaign launched in response to the militant group's October 7, 2023 attack.

Meanwhile, Trump yesterday applauded the killing of Sinwar, saying his death had increased the likelihood of a peaceful solution to Israel's war in Gaza.

Asked if Sinwar's demise had made peace easier or more difficult, he replied: "I think it makes it easier. I'm glad that Bibi [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu] decided to do what he had to do."

Trump surprised analysts with a schedule that mixes swing state stops with appearances in staunchly Democratic corners he has no chance of winning.

He was in the liberal stronghold of New York for a Catholic charity dinner on Thursday, where he mocked Harris in an occasionally mean-spirited speech that earned gasps for its off-color remarks and profanity.

TRUMP 'EXHAUSTED'
Trump, 78, was back in friendly territory for a Fox News interview yesterday, where he complained about some of the jokes written for him for the dinner.

He also confirmed he planned to work at a McDonald's over the weekend in a bid to highlight his baseless claims that Harris has been "lying" about having worked in one of the fast food giant's California restaurants.

While he has been appearing regularly on Fox News, Trump has canceled a series of interviews with neutral media outlets, including NBC, CNBC and CBS.



Hussain Ahmed is supervising the investigation process.

"The operation will be conducted in all places based on the information we have. We have already raided four warehouses," Hussain told The Daily Star.

Fakhurul told this correspondent that analysing the seized cigarette papers and other equipment, it seems that counterfeit cigarettes of different brands, including Benson,

documents that point to the two tobacco companies' link with manufacturing cigarettes with illegally imported raw materials, according to documents and customs officials.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, an official involved in the investigation yesterday said the two companies are manufacturing various brands of cigarettes, including Oris and Easy Light.