

# VIOLENCE ON WOMEN is a byproduct of patriarchy

SHAYAN

**DOWEL BISWAS**

Renowned musician and social activist Farzana Wahid Shayan, known for her bold stance on gender inequality and oppression, has once again raised her voice in response to the alarming rise of gender-based violence in Bangladesh. In recent weeks, a wave of brutal incidents, including the rape of eight-year-old Asiya by a relative, has sent shockwaves throughout the nation, prompting widespread outrage and calls for justice.

Gender-based violence, particularly sexual violence against women and children, has long been a pressing issue in Bangladesh. However, the recent spate of cases has reignited concerns about the safety and security of women in the country. While the heinous assault on Asiya has incensed the nation, Shayan, like many others, is demanding more than just legal action—she is calling for a fundamental shift in societal attitudes and governmental responsibility.

"I consider looking at the issue of rape separately as a mistake. It

is a daily byproduct of how insensitively and patriarchally our country has treated the issue of women," the musician expressed, pointing out how the root causes of gender-based violence are deeply entrenched in societal norms and attitudes. She emphasised that the lack of strict governmental measures to protect women has allowed these crimes to persist, with rapists and abusers often escaping accountability or even being glorified in society.

The social activist expressed her frustration with the lack of action from the government, pointing out that while there is a legal framework in place, it is often ineffective in holding perpetrators accountable. "There has been no strict tone on the part of any government to justly handle the safety of women reflected in the laws of the

country," she said.

Rather than facing justice, Shayan pointed out that some rapists and abusers have been glorified in society, and even honoured by influential figures. She also criticised the silence of women in power, who have failed to challenge this pervasive culture of abuse. "Nobody wants to rock the boat," Shayan noted, underscoring how the political establishment has largely failed to confront this crisis head-on.

For Shayan, the need for immediate action is clear. She believes that the solution requires more than just legal reform—it requires a complete shift in societal attitudes toward women. "Make it a matter of shame to be remotely abusive or disrespectful towards women," she urged.

Shayan called for a culture where misogyny is no longer tolerated in any form, whether in the

workplace, public spaces, or even religious settings. She called for stricter measures to be put in place to identify and punish those who make disrespectful comments about women, particularly in waaz mehfil and other public forums.

One of Shayan's most urgent calls is for workplaces to implement mandatory rules to prevent abuse, suggesting that such policies should be as fundamental as fire extinguishers. She emphasised the importance of creating safe environments for women and ensuring that abusers do not have access to vulnerable individuals in any professional setting.

Shayan also stressed the importance of education and awareness campaigns to challenge the normalisation of victim-blaming and abusive behaviour. "Normalise feminism. Stop respecting superstars and celebrities who are associated with abuse," she stated.

She suggested that the fight against gender-based violence should be integrated into primary education, to ensure that future generations understand the importance of gender equality and respect for women from an early age.

As Bangladesh grapples with its ongoing struggle to address gender-based violence, the musician-activist's call for a collective societal effort to shift cultural attitudes and hold perpetrators accountable is a powerful reminder that change is not only necessary but urgent. With a combination of legal reforms, social awareness, and collective action, Shayan believes Bangladesh can begin to dismantle the deeply entrenched systems that allow violence against women to thrive.



French playwright Zazie Hayoum brings ‘Song of Hawkers’ to Dhaka stage

Alliance Française de Dhaka is presenting *Song of Hawkers*, a comedy play by French playwright Zazie Hayoum, celebrating the lively hawkers of Dhaka. The play will be staged at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy's Experimental Theatre Hall on March 20 and 21 at 3:30pm. Featuring three witty stories—*The Secret*, *The Thief Rewarded*, and *The Competition*—the production highlights the daily lives of hawkers, using Grand Guignol, a 19th-century French theatre style blending comedy, songs, dance, and puppetry. Prajna Tasnuva Rubayat is the assistant director, with music by Rahul Ananda and choreography by Farhad A Shamim. The cast includes Imam Hossain, MS Rana, PK Fazal, Suraiya Mou, and others. Admission is free with online registration.



‘Jongli’ set for worldwide release this April

The much anticipated film *Jongli*, starring Siam Ahmed, Shobnom Bubly, and Prarthana Fardin Dighi, is scheduled for a global release on April 25, ahead of its Eid-ul-Fitr debut in Bangladesh. The announcement was made by Siam Ahmed, who revealed the film's international rollout across key markets, including the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and the UAE, among others. Zahid Hasan Abhi, head of production at The Abhi Kathachitra, confirmed the distribution, which will be managed by Swapna Scarecrow, BongOZ, Reverie, and other international partners. Directed by M Rahim, *Jongli* has gained attention for its track *Jonmo Jonmo*, penned by Prince Mahmud and performed by Tahsan Khan and Atiya Anisha. Additionally, Siam Ahmed's appearance in the film has drawn positive reviews.

## NEWS

### Six children raped in 6 dists

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A local court sent Rakib and Helal to jail, the OC added.

Helal and the 10 other suspects were sued for provocation.

In Sherpur, a youth landed in prison yesterday in a case filed over raping a 14-year-old girl in Nakla upazila.

Police said accused Sabbir Miah, 20, and the victim used to work at a brick kiln. Sabbir raped the girl on Saturday afternoon.

Sabbir was arrested on Sunday night after the victim's mother lodged a case. He was produced before a local court that sent him to jail yesterday, said Habibur Rahman, OC of Nakla Police Station.

In another incident, a man landed in prison yesterday on charge of raping a three-year child in Noakhali's Kabirhat upazila.

The accused is Md Nuruzzaman, of the same upazila.

Police said Nuruzzaman took the child to a toilet and raped him on Tuesday afternoon.

On information, police arrested Nuruzzaman yesterday. A local court sent him to prison, said Shaheen Miah, OC of Kabirhat Police Station.

In Kishoreganj, a man landed in jail yesterday on charge of raping a 14-year-old girl.

The accused, Tafazzal Deen Islam, 27, is a resident of Kishoreganj Sadar

upazila.

Quoting locals, police said the victim came out of her room on Saturday night to use the toilet. Tafazzal, who was waiting there, forcibly took the girl to a nearby field and raped her.

Police arrested Tafazzal yesterday morning after her father lodged a case. A Kishoreganj court sent him to prison, said Abdullah Al Mamun, OC of Kishoreganj Sadar Model Police Station.

In another incident, a man was sent to jail yesterday on charges of raping a 10-year-old girl in the capital's Baridhara area.

The accused is Sazal Hossain Palash, 40, said Moklesur Rahman, inspector (investigation) of Gulshan Police Station.

He raped the girl at her house on Sunday, said police.

The victim is now undergoing treatment at the one-stop crisis centre at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

In another development, a 55-year-old man landed in jail yesterday on charges of attempting to rape a second-grader girl in Feni's Fulgazi upazila.

The accused, Nurul Islam, is a resident of the upazila, said police.

[Our correspondents from respective districts contributed to this report.]

### The damage Hasina

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hundreds of charges.

Despite his various reform initiatives, Yunus is facing mounting pressure from political groups, particularly the BNP, to hold elections swiftly, reports The Guardian.

Yunus denied any suggestion that the streets were less safe than under Hasina's rule, but others have warned that the country's security situation threatened to spiral beyond his government's control, reported the UK-based newspaper.

The chief adviser maintained that he had a "very good relationship" with the military, and that there was "no pressure" from the army chief.

"Hasina's regime wasn't a government -- it was a family of bandits," he said.

"Any order from the boss, and it was done. Someone's causing problems? We'll make them disappear. Want to hold an election? We will make sure you win all the seats. You want money? Here's a million dollar loan from the bank and you never have to pay back.

"Banks were given full licence to steal people's money, with active participation from the government," Yunus said.

"They would send their officials with guns to get it all signed off."

In December, a formal extradition request was made to India to send Hasinaback to face trial in Bangladesh, but the chief adviser confirmed there had been "no response" from the Indian government.

"Hasina would still face trial for crimes against humanity, even if in absentia," he added.

Yunus said that while India sheltering Hasina was tolerable, "allowing her to use India as a platform to undo everything we have done is dangerous. It destabilises the country."

The return of Donald Trump to the White House has also complicated matters. The Biden administration was a key supporter of Yunus, but Trump has slashed USAID funding. In efforts to bring the US on side, Yunus has invited billionaire Elon Musk to bring his Starlink satellite internet service to Bangladesh, reports The Guardian.

Yunus expressed hope that Trump might see Bangladesh as a "good investment opportunity" and trading partner, and said he intended to pitch this to Musk during his visit.

"Trump's a dealmaker, so I say to him: come, do deals with us," he said.

If he did not, Bangladesh would feel a little pain, Yunus said.

### EC starts process to register

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Commissioner Sarah Cooke at the EC office in Dhaka.

"We have informed them [British envoy] about our preparations for voter and party registration. We will go for procurements needed for the election very soon. We are revising the observer policies," he said.

"The chief adviser has already blown the train's whistle, signalling that the election will be held in December or January."

EC Senior Secretary Akhter Ahmed said the political parties seeking registration ahead of the national polls were given until April 20 to submit their applications.

The registration must meet the conditions set out in the Political Party Registration Rules, 2008, he said, adding, "We have not changed any rules."

For the registration, a political party needs to meet at least one criterion out of three.

A political party will get registered if it has secured at least one seat with its electoral symbol in any parliamentary election held since the independence of Bangladesh.

The second criterion is securing five percent of the total votes cast in the constituencies, for which its candidates contested in any previous parliamentary election.

The third condition is that the party needs to set up a functional central office with whatever name it may be called, a central committee, having offices in at least one-third of the administrative districts and in at least 100 upazilas or metropolitan areas, and having a minimum of 200 voters as its members in each upazila.

If the EC finds that political parties are not abiding by the law, it can cancel their registration, said the EC officials.

The registration of political parties was introduced in 2008. Now 49 political parties are registered with the EC.

The Electoral Reform Commission recently proposed major changes to the registration process. It recommended barring individuals accused of gross human rights violations like extrajudicial killing and enforced disappearance from becoming members of parliament if charges are accepted by the International Crimes Tribunal.

It also proposed relaxing the conditions for registering new parties, with the requirement for offices reduced to 10 percent of districts and 5 percent of upazilas.

The reform commission proposed that party registration renewal should be mandatory every five years.

Electoral Reform Commission chief Badiul Alam Majumdar told The Daily Star that the EC has the legal authority to start registering the political parties.

"However, it's not the right decision to start the process now. I believe they should have waited," he added.

Contacted, Election Commissioner Tahmida Ahmad defended the EC decision to start the process now. "It takes a long time to register political parties. And the notice was issued in line with the law."

"This is a regular process. If we don't do this now, how will we hold elections in December? We are working with the election in December as our target," she added.

On whether changes will occur if political parties agree on the reform proposals, Tahmida said, "If there is consensus, then changes can be made. I don't foresee any disagreement among the political parties regarding the registration process."

### Thief's phone

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rickshaw in Radhanagar village of the same upazila.

Several photos of the woman when she was alive, her stabbed body, and the body left on the rail lines were found in his phone.

Superintendent of Police Mizanur Rahman Munshi at a press conference held at his office yesterday said the suspect on Sunday afternoon confessed under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Rifat told the magistrate that he got on the Panchagarh-bound Ekota Express in Dinaipur and met the woman on the train at Thakurgaon Rail Station.

They got down at Kismat Railway Station in Atwari and at one point he raped the woman and then struck her in the head with a brick. He then stabbed her multiple times before dumping her body on the rail lines.

The suspect said he did not know who the woman was.

Meanwhile, a family from Bhulli village in Thakurgaon Sadar, who had buried the woman believing she was their missing daughter, stated that the body they buried was not of their daughter after seeing the photographs, said police.

Two cases were filed with Atwari Police Station in connection with rape and murder and the theft of the rickshaw.

### BSF killed 305

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commitments by India and diplomatic efforts, such incidents have been happening for years.

The rights group said border killings are one of the most sensitive issues in Bangladesh-India relations. These create diplomatic tension between the two countries.

Despite many bilateral meetings to bring border killings to zero, such incidents continue to occur.

The HRSS called on the authorities of both countries to have constructive dialogues and take effective steps to end border killings.

It asked Bangladesh and India to thoroughly investigate all border killings and ensure justice.

### ACC approves

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court is currently underway.

The cases registered on January 12, 13, and 14 were filed under Sections 161, 163, 164, 409, and 109 of the Penal Code, 1860, along with Section 5(2) of the Anti-Corruption Act, 1947.

The accused face charges of abusing their positions in the government to illegally obtain six 10-katha residential plots in Sector 27 at the Purbachal Housing Project. Despite being ineligible for allotment, they allegedly used their influence and power to secure the plots illegally.

Besides Hasina's family members, the other accused individuals include Shahid Ullah Khandaker, former secretary of the public works ministry; Kazi Wasi Uddin, additional secretary of the public works ministry; Saiful Islam Sarkar, administrative officer of the ministry; Purabi Goldar, senior assistant secretary of the ministry; and Anisur Rahman Miah, former chairman of Rajuk.

The ACC announced its decision to investigate the irregularities surrounding the procurement of the 60 katha plots on December 27 last year.

Additionally, a five-member team was formed on December 17 to investigate allegations of graft totalling Tk 80,000 crore in various projects linked to Hasina, Joy, Rehana, and Rehana's daughter Tulip Siddiq.

The commission is also probing accusations of laundering \$300 million against Hasina and her son Joy.