

MAGURA GIRL DIES

Nation engulfed by grief and anger

Protesters torch alleged rapist's house

STAR REPORT

After an agonising six-day struggle for life, the eight-year-old Magura girl succumbed to her injuries yesterday, leaving the nation in mourning.

The girl, who was choked and allegedly raped, breathed her last around 1:00pm at Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka, the army announced.

Protests erupted in Magura as an army helicopter carrying the girl's body landed at the local stadium around 6:00pm. At one stage, the protesters set fire to the accused's house in Sadar upazila.

Aiyub Ali, officer-in-charge of Magura Sadar Police Station, said the law enforcers struggled to bring the situation under control. The atmosphere grew sombre as the body reached Nomanai Maidan for funeral prayers, he added.

Thousands thronged the Maidan for the girl's namaz-e-janaza before she was laid to rest at 7:30pm.

Earlier, her mother, sobbing inconsolably at the CMH, said, "I thought my daughter would survive. If she had

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Magura rape victim's mother in tears in front of her coffin at CMH.

Trial may begin in a week

Says law adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government expects the trial for the rape and murder of the eight-year-old girl from Magura to begin within a week, said Law Adviser Asif Nazrul yesterday.

Law enforcement, medical professionals, and the judiciary are working with utmost urgency to this effect, he added.

There have been precedents where sensational cases were concluded within seven to eight days, the law adviser said at a press conference at the Secretariat yesterday afternoon.

He added that, under special arrangements, the post-mortem report would be available by the end of the day (yesterday).

"We expect to receive the DNA report within five days. However, if there is any delay, and if the judges find the circumstantial evidence sufficient, the

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THE DISAPPEARED OF THE JULY UPRISING ■ PART 2

AL govt sought to hide true extent of massacre

Seven months after the July uprising in Bangladesh, many protesters still remain missing. We investigated 31 cases: six were buried as unclaimed bodies at Rayerbazar graveyard; four were identified by families from among the charred bodies in Ashulia; two were handed over to families after DNA testing; and 19 are still unaccounted for.

We found evidence of systematic government efforts to cover up medical records and bodies of the victims so they can never be found again. This four-part series also documents how families were denied time to collect the corpses from hospital morgues, and how they are now waiting for the bodies of their loved ones.



The 'Wall of the Dead' at Anjuman Mufidul Islam. Among these 114 buried in unmarked graves in Rayerbazar in July-August 2024 are many victims of the July massacre. PHOTO: COLLECTED

MASHFIQ MIZAN, KEERO ADHNNAN AHMED and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

They all had families, desperately searching for them amid a nationwide curfew and internet shutdown at the height of the July uprising. Yet, they were buried as "unclaimed" bodies within one to six days after being shot dead, before their loved ones could find them. Seven months after the July killings, these families do not know where their kin rest.

An investigation by The Daily Star indicates that the hasty burials of the victims were part of a systematic effort by the fallen Awami League government to conceal the true extent of the massacre.

In some cases, medical records were tampered with and standard protocols for handling unclaimed bodies were bypassed. In other cases, the police quickly disposed of the bodies even though hospital morgues had the capacity to keep them longer, according to documents and morgue sources.

For example, Dhaka Medical College Hospital has two morgues with a combined capacity to hold around 100 bodies.

Before July 15, when killings of the protesters had not yet begun, there were 28 bodies in its mortuaries, said Ramu Chandra Das, a morgue assistant.

Yet, general diaries from Shahbagh police and registers at DMCH morgue and Anjuman Mufidul Islam, a burial service, show that eight protesters were buried on July 24 as "unclaimed" bodies in Rayerbazar graveyard within one to six days of their deaths.

These eight bodies include Sohel Rana, Md Assadullah, Faisal Sarker and Rafiqul Islam, who were killed by gunshots (Read their story in Part 1 of this series). The identities of the rest four remain unknown.

Asked why they got rid of these bodies so fast, Ramu said, "It was done on police instructions.

We could have kept the bodies longer."

Typically, DMCH reports about unclaimed bodies to police about a week after the bodies are brought to the hospital. Upon completion of various official processes, including autopsies, burial of such corpses takes about a month or even more.

"We usually keep unclaimed bodies for at least a week in the morgue. Many bodies are also kept for months or even years," Ramu said. Documentary evidence also suggests that DMCH does keep unclaimed bodies longer.

For instance, on July 8, 2024, a week before state forces began to kill protesters, Anjuman Mufidul sent seven bodies, all from DMCH, to Rayerbazar for burial. Records show they died between June 12 and July 4. This means, before these bodies were sent to Anjuman, six of the bodies were kept at mortuaries for about three weeks or more.

In contrast, Anjuman received eight bodies on July 24, by which time the number of corpses at hospitals was rising every day. Records show that four of these eight died just the previous day, and the four others the day before.

This suggests a systematic effort to erase evidence and prevent families from finding their loved ones.

According to the eight general diaries filed by Sub-inspector Jabbar from Shahbagh Police Station in relation to these bodies, six were from Jatrabari, and two from Uttara. All died from gunshot wounds, the GDs show.

Usually, Anjuman receives unclaimed bodies from hospitals after autopsies in the presence of police officers who facilitate the process. Before the handover of the bodies, representatives from Anjuman and a police officer are required to sign the morgue register.

However, this protocol was not followed in the case of at least nine bodies connected to the uprising.

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Six more land in jail over rape, attempted rape

STAR REPORT

At least six people were sent to jail in rape and attempted rape cases in six districts yesterday.

Besides, two men were sued in cases filed over the rape of their stepdaughters -- one of whom is a child and the other is a teenager -- in Savar's Ashulia. Both suspects are on the run.

In Panchagarh town, a 30-year-old man was sent to jail in a case filed over the rape of a three-year-old child.

Shariful Islam Shourav, an easy-bike driver, was the girl's neighbour.

A district court recorded the victim's statement yesterday morning under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Citing the case statement, Panchagarh Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge SM Masud Parvez said the incident took place when the child was playing near her house Wednesday afternoon.

As her mother was busy with household work, Shariful took the child to his room and raped her there, the mother said in the rape case filed against Shariful later that night.

Contacted, Dr Abdul Kadir, a physician at Panchagarh Sadar Hospital, said the victim was undergoing treatment there.

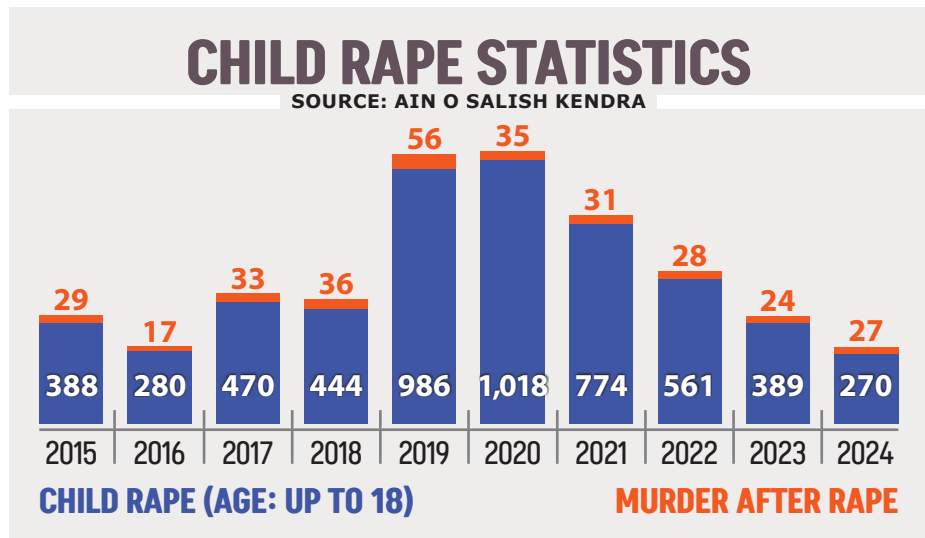
In Mymensingh, a 55-year-old man was sent to jail in a case filed over the rape of a five-year-old child.

Siddique Miah was arrested on Wednesday, said Mirza Mazharul Anwar,

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Over 5,600 children raped in 10yrs

Says ASK; police on average record 13 rape cases every day



MUNTAKIM SAAD and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

At least 5,632 reports of rape of girls aged below 18 were made across the country in the last 10 years, according to Ain Salish Kendra data.

The highest was recorded between 2019 and 2021. The worst year was 2020, when 1,018 children reportedly suffered sexual violence, followed by 986 in 2019 and 774 in 2021.

A noticeable decline in reported cases was observed in recent years, with 561 incidents in 2022 and 389 in 2023. The number dropped further to 270 in 2024. In the first two months of this year, 52 children were raped, ASK says, citing its own sources and media reports.

Activists and legal experts say the numbers may not reflect reality because many victims do not report the crime.

The number of children killed after

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UN chief in Dhaka to put spotlight on Rohingyas

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres arrived in Dhaka yesterday on a four-day visit that will highlight the Rohingya crisis that has worsened with cuts in monthly food aid for the refugees.

This is also his first visit after the political changeover in Bangladesh in August last year.

Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain welcomed the UN chief after he landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the afternoon.

"... Antonio Guterres will have iftar with Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar," Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Rafiqul Alam said at a media briefing yesterday.

Later, the UN chief in a Facebook post last night said, "Every Ramadan, I spend time with Muslim communities living in difficult circumstances, to observe the fast with them & help shine a spotlight on their plight. This year I'm in Bangladesh to express my solidarity with Rohingya refugees & the Bangladeshi people hosting them."

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Children welcome UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres with flowers at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday as Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain looks on.

PHOTO: PID

CONSENSUS COMMISSION 30 parties miss deadline for feedback

BNP, Jamaat, NCP, 13 others ask for more time to respond on reform proposals

MD ABBAS

The National Consensus Commission is struggling to gather timely feedback on key reform recommendations as most political parties are yet to respond within the deadline.

So far, seven out of 37 political parties have submitted their opinions: the Liberal Democratic Party, Khelafat Majlish, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Bangladesh, Jaker Party, Bhasani Anusari Parishad, Jatiyatibadi Gonotantrik Andolan and Amjanatar Dal.

However, 16 political parties including the BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, the National Citizen Party (NCP), Islami Andolan Bangladesh and the AB Party have sought more time to submit their feedback.

On March 6, the National Consensus Commission sent spreadsheets containing key recommendations from the Constitution Reform Commission, Public Administration Reform Commission, Election System Reform Commission, Judiciary Reform Commission and Anti-Corruption Commission Reform Commission to 37 political parties.

The parties were asked to respond by March 13. Contacted, Ali Riaz, the vice-president of the National Consensus Commission, said they have received responses from seven political parties, while 16 had requested one or

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