

9-yr-old raped at knifepoint in Meherpur

3 sent to jail over gangrape of woman in Cumilla

STAR REPORT

A nine-year-old girl was raped at knifepoint in Meherpur on Monday, while three men were sent to jail yesterday in connection with the gangrape of a woman in Cumilla.

In Meherpur, the child is currently undergoing treatment at an upazila health complex. Her father filed a case accusing 26-year-old Shakil Ahmed, who was arrested the same night.

According to the case statement, the girl was on her way to deliver food to her father, who was working in a field, around 10:00am when Shakil stopped her, forced her into another field at knifepoint, and raped her.

She later told her father, who, along with locals, caught the accused, beat him up, and handed him over to police, said Bani Israel, officer-in-charge of Gangni Police Station OC Bani Israel. Shakil was sent to jail through a court yesterday, he added.

In Cumilla, three men were sent to jail yesterday on charges of raping a 21-year-old garment worker.

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BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed speaks at a meeting of the National Consensus Commission with political parties at the Doel Hall of the Foreign Service Academy in the capital. The commission in the second round of dialogue yesterday continued discussions on recommendations made by various reform commissions.

PHOTO: PID

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Nagad official robbed of Tk 55 lakh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Four armed men yesterday snatched Tk 55 lakh from two officials of Nagad in Monirampur upazila of Jashore, in the second such incident in three days.

Around 10:45am in the Kuyada Jamtola area, a car carrying the cash was en route to the Nagad office in Monirampur when a motorcycle carrying four men intercepted it, forcing it off the road.

The assailants then smashed the car's window, brandished sharp weapons and physically assaulted the two occupants before fleeing with a bag containing the money.

Rabiul Islam, manager of Nagad's Jashore branch, and Kazi Mominur Islam, an accounts officer, were transporting the funds when the robbery occurred.

The victims promptly dialled the national emergency helpline 999, and a team from Monirampur Police Station rushed to the scene.

The police operation has been intensified, said Imdadul Haque, additional superintendent of police (Monirampur Circle) of Jashore, confirming the incident.

While police said they responded swiftly, Bablur Rahman Khan, the officer-

Trump wants 'real end', not ceasefire

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intelligence agency was among the targets hit by the missiles.

The Israeli military said it killed senior Iranian commander Ali Shamdani in an overnight strike on a "command centre in the heart of Tehran", just four days after his predecessor, Golam Ali Rashid, was killed in a similar Israeli attack.

It also said it targeted multiple missile and drone sites in west Iran, including infrastructure, launchers and storage facilities, with black and white footage showing some of them exploding.

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said meanwhile that Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei could face the same fate as Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, who was toppled in a US-led invasion and eventually hanged after a trial.

Despite mounting calls to de-escalate, neither side has backed off from the missile blitz that began Friday, when Israel launched an unprecedented aerial campaign targeting Iranian nuclear and military facilities.

A cyberattack on Tuesday crippled Sepah Bank, one of Iran's main state-owned banks, the Fars news agency reported.

Trump flew back early from the G7 summit in Canada late Monday and was set to meet top officials in the White House Situation Room.

The US president has so far stressed that his country is not getting involved in the conflict, and has said that Iran could still take a deal to end its nuclear program that he had proposed before Israel's attacks.

But Trump has given mounting signals that Washington's intervention in some form may now be imminent.

Trump said Tuesday that "we" have complete and total control of the skies over Iran, hailing the use of US-made weaponry without explicitly mentioning

Israel.

Israel, the closest US ally in the Middle East, had recently made a similar claim.

Earlier, Trump told reporters on Air Force One while returning from Canada that he wanted "a real end, not a ceasefire" to the Iran-Israel conflict, and warning that "I'm not in too much of a mood to negotiate."

"I'm not looking for a ceasefire, we're looking at better than a ceasefire," he told reporters.

Trump had earlier issued an extraordinary warning on his Truth Social platform, saying: "Everyone should immediately evacuate Tehran!"

He said something "much bigger" is on the cards and predicted that Israel would not be easing its attacks on Iran.

"You're going to find out over the next two days. You're going to find out," he said.

Meanwhile, Iran's armed forces chief of staff Abdolrahim Mousavi yesterday urged residents of the major Israeli cities of Haifa and Tel Aviv to evacuate, warning of imminent "punitive" attacks.

He added that previous attacks on Israel have so far only been for "deterrence" purposes.

Meanwhile, Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth said the United States was deploying "additional capabilities" to the Middle East.

The aircraft carrier USS Nimitz left Southeast Asia Monday, scrapping a planned Vietnam port call, amid reports it was heading to the region.

Amid the belligerent rhetoric, China yesterday accused Trump of "pouring oil" on the conflict.

"Making threats and mounting pressure will not help to promote the de-escalation of the situation, but will only intensify and widen the conflict," said foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun.

China also urged its citizens to leave

Iran "as soon as possible".

Meanwhile, Russia said it was ready to act as a peace broker between Israel and Iran, but that Israel was showing reluctance to accept outside mediation.

After decades of enmity and a prolonged shadow war, Israel launched its surprise air campaign last week, saying it aimed to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons -- an ambition Tehran denies.

At least 24 people have been killed in Israel and hundreds wounded, according to Netanyahu's office.

Iran said on Sunday that Israeli strikes had killed at least 224 people, including military commanders, nuclear scientists and civilians. It has not issued an updated toll since then.

Netanyahu said Israel was "changing the face of the Middle East, and that can lead to radical changes inside Iran itself".

At the G7 summit, leaders called for "de-escalation" while stressing Israel had the right to defend itself.

"We urge that the resolution of the Iranian crisis leads to a broader de-escalation of hostilities in the Middle East, including a ceasefire in Gaza", G7 leaders said in a joint statement that also affirmed "Iran can never have a nuclear weapon".

It also said, "Iran is the principal source of regional instability and terror." Yesterday, Iran accused the G7 of siding with Israel.

"The G7 must give up its one-sided rhetoric and tackle the real source of the escalation -- Israel's aggression," foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said.

"Israel has launched an unprovoked war of aggression against Iran... in violation of... the UN Charter," the spokesman said.

"Iran is defending itself against a cruel aggression. Does Iran really have any other choice?" he asked.

400 Bangladeshis

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Yesterday, Israel warned civilians to evacuate Tehran's district-3 and the Iran Radio building before launching targeted strikes there. Eight Bangladeshis who worked in the building were moved to safe locations the night before.

With Iranian airspace closed, authorities are now working to relocate Bangladeshis to safer areas within the country.

However, sanctions on Iran, which effectively severed formal banking channels, are making it difficult to send money to those in need.

Speaking at a media briefing yesterday, acting foreign secretary Ruhul Alam Siddique said, "The Bangladeshis currently residing in mainland Iran, particularly in Tehran, along with our embassy officials, staffers, and their families are facing a very serious threat."

Asked whether the government is planning repatriation, Siddique said the immediate priority is relocating citizens to safety. "If they later wish to leave via land, the government will assist. For instance, those wanting to go to Pakistan or Turkey will be supported in reaching those countries."

The embassy had already begun the process of relocating about 100 Bangladeshis who contacted it for assistance. But the process has stalled due to financial hurdles. "We're trying ... But banking channels simply don't work in Iran. That's one of the main reasons for the delay."

A foreign ministry official added that embassy officials are still working from the building despite the risks. "They're risking their lives because their work is essential. But our decision is to move them to safer locations from where they can continue working."

Around 2,000 Bangladeshis, including students, professionals, tourists, and medical patients, are believed to be in Iran. Of them, about 400 are in Tehran, while 40 are

affiliated with the embassy.

Siddique said the Indians have managed to relocate their citizens to safer places within Iran. "One advantage the Indians have is that they don't face the same banking channel restrictions as we do, because their currency is convertible."

Meanwhile, Pakistan has opened up its shared border with Iran, and the nationals who wish to return are doing so through the open border point, he said.

"There are Bangladeshis who have already lost their jobs. And even if the war ends, post-war conditions may no longer be livable or viable for work."

He said many Bangladeshis have married Iranians and settled in the country permanently. Others work in sectors like maritime fishing. Many are there without valid documentation, some are in detention centres.

The foreign ministry has issued alerts to Bangladesh missions across the Middle East and Gulf regions. Hotlines are active in Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan, and no attacks involving Bangladeshis have been reported there so far.

"The international community must act urgently to end this war," Siddique added. "Peace in the Middle East is critical. Otherwise, the consequences could be catastrophic."

One Bangladeshi national, AK Azad (not his real name), said he went to Tehran for his mother's medical treatment. But as hospitals close down, her condition is deteriorating.

"My mother needs dialysis ... I asked an embassy official for help. He suggested another hospital, which didn't even have a dialysis facility," he told this correspondent while speaking from Tehran's district-6, where he had heard explosions.

"My mother's condition will be worsening if she cannot have dialysis. Please help us, if you can, relocate to a safe place," Azad said, choosing anonymity as he fears his family back home will panic.

Consensus on MPs voting

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advocated direct election to ensure a public mandate for women, others preferred retaining the current nomination-based system, which allocates women's seats to parties in proportion to their directly elected MPs.

Another point of partial consensus was the distribution of parliamentary standing committee chairperson roles. The commission proposed a formula to determine the number of opposition MPs that would chair standing committees.

This formula guarantees at least four standing committees headed by the opposition regardless of their number of seats and goes up to 24 committees if the opposition secures 149 seats.

The four committees guaranteed for the opposition are public accounts, privileges, estimates, and public undertakings.

Professor Ali Riaz, vice-chair of the National Consensus Commission, said at the end of the meeting that most political groups, with the exception of two parties, have agreed on the need to reform the process of appointing the chief justice. Further discussions are scheduled for next week.

On the proposal to establish a bicameral legislature, he acknowledged that some parties had raised objections. "They believe the idea should be reconsidered. But overall, the discussions are progressing positively. We hope to finalise the national charter by July."

Asked about Jamaat's absence, Riaz said the commission is in communication with Jamaat and other parties. "We hope they will join tomorrow's discussions."

Responding to allegations from two political parties that the commission's activities appear biased, Riaz said, "Any political party is free to raise concerns. But we are conducting our work with full impartiality."

Meanwhile, Salahuddin Ahmed, a key BNP policymaker, said the party has agreed to a number of proposals that were not on its reform agenda.

Regarding the chief justice appointment, he said: "As it stands, the constitution gives the president full authority. This means any citizen could theoretically be appointed chief justice. We believe such unqualified discretion is inappropriate. We want to introduce clear restrictions: criteria must be defined, and the president should make appointments accordingly."

Regarding the proposal for a bicameral legislature, Salahuddin said: "We support the idea of a two-chamber parliament, as outlined in our 31-point reform plan. The proposed upper chamber, tentatively called the senate, would have 100 seats. While the name and structure are not yet finalised, most parties have expressed agreement with both the concept of a bicameral legislature and the 100-seat proposal. A few parties have raised objections, but they are in the minority."

Ruhin Hossain Prince, general secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, said the chief adviser stated that only reforms backed by broad consensus would be implemented. "We took this very seriously and expressed concern over any attempt to impose decisions under the guise of consensus. We reiterate that without full agreement, no measure should be implemented."

Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Ganosamhati Andolon, described the consensus on Article 70 as historically significant.

He said while parties had agreed to reserve 100 seats for women, there is still no consensus on how they would be filled.

Meanwhile, Ariful Islam Adib, senior joint convener of the NCP, and Nurul Haque Nur, president of Gono Odhikar Parishad, said the government is showing "signs of partiality" in its approach to the reform process.

Adib said: "We believe that the July Charter -- formulated through the National Consensus Commission -- must be protected and implemented via either a constituent assembly or a public referendum."

He pointed out that while certain political parties have been prioritised, it would be in the spirit of the July Uprising and the ensuing charter to also include other participating parties, civil society, professional groups, students, and families of martyrs.

Tasnim Jara said although NCP's position was to abolish Article 70, it agreed to retain it for certain exceptions in the spirit of consensus. However, she said her party was opposed to BNP's proposal to extend Article 70 to national security and constitutional amendments. "MPs must be free to express their views on such critical issues. On national security, particularly wartime decisions, there must be collective consensus. MPs' right to vote freely must be preserved."

Nur said that most parties supported the idea of a bicameral legislature. "Our party has long supported a proportional representation system. We agreed to back this model in the upper house for national unity."

Gazi Ataur Rahman, joint secretary general and spokesperson of Islami Andolan Bangladesh, criticised the commission for "pushing" the proposal to reserve 100 seats for women, saying it was contrary to the goals of the July Uprising.

"Women already have full rights to contest all 300 constituencies. True dignity comes when they lead political parties and compete equally, not through reservations, which is inherently disrespectful," he said. However, he also clarified that if all parties agreed to the proposal for 100 reserved seats for women, his party would not oppose it.

Political parties that joined Tuesday's session included the BNP, NCP, CPB, Islami Andolan, Nagorik Oikya, Gano Odhikar Parishad, and Ganosamhati Andolon.

The National Consensus Commission was represented by Ali Riaz, along with Abdul Mueed Chowdhury, Safar Raj Hossain, Badiul Alam Majumdar, and Dr Iftekharuzzaman.

Jamaat skips consensus

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and BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman met in London on June 13 and issued a joint statement saying that the election could be held in February next year, a commission member told The Daily Star, wishing anonymity.

The Jamaat boycotted the talks yesterday as a mark of protest, the party informed the commission, added the member.

According to sources, the commission reached out to Jamaat and urged it to reconsider.

On June 14, a day after the meeting between Prof Yunus and Tarique, the Jamaat said holding a meeting and a joint press conference with one single political party in a foreign land were not "ethical" and were a "deviation from the country's political culture".

The chief adviser has shown he is leaning towards a particular party, and undermined his impartiality, the Jamaat said.

Meanwhile, Jamaat Central Working Committee Member Shafiqul Islam Masud yesterday said the nation's main expectations from the interim government were reforms, trial for the July mass killing, and a fair election.

"Instead, the government seems to have shown loyalty to a particular party, ignoring the aspirations of the people. This does not align with the spirit of the student-led July uprising," he said.

"The nation expects a more responsible role from the chief adviser in building national unity."

After the consensus commission meeting yesterday, BNP Standing

Committee Member Salahuddin Ahmed told reporters that the commission itself was in the best position to explain why the Jamaat skipped the meeting.

Nurul Haque Nur, President of the Gono Odhikar Parishad, said, "As far as we understand, the Jamaat has symbolically boycotted today's meeting. There may be a number of issues on the commission's agenda that the Jamaat opposes."

Expressing dissatisfaction, Gazi Ataur Rahman, Joint Secretary General of Islami Andolon Bangladesh, said, "As a significant political force, the Jamaat should have been present at today's session. They haven't provided a clear explanation as to why they were absent."

Several political groups believe that Jamaat's absence stems from policy disagreements with the commission, particularly regarding the proposed reservation of seats for women.

In the first phase of meeting with the consensus commission, the Jamaat delegation was led by the party's Nayebe-Ameer Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher.

Yesterday's discussions covered a range of issues, including Article 70 of the Constitution, nomination of chairman to the parliamentary standing committees, and reserved seats for women in parliament.

The proposal for a bicameral legislature and the process of appointing the chief justice were also discussed.

The commission's meetings with political parties will end tomorrow.