

Two held over rape of girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Mymensingh

Police have arrested two persons on charges of raping a schoolgirl in Mymensingh's Haluaghat upazila on Monday.

The arrestees are Abul Bashar, 22, and Milon Mia, 21, said Halizul Islam Harun, officer-in-charge of Haluaghat Police Station.

He said the victim's mother filed a case against them with the police station on Tuesday.

Bashar, the prime accused, was arrested in Haluaghat yesterday, while Milon the night before, the OC said.

Quoting the case statement, the OC said the 15-year-old Garo girl, a ninth grader, was on her way home on Monday afternoon after meeting her friends.

Milon, who was with her, put her in an auto-rickshaw. The driver, Bashar, then took her to a secluded place and raped her, the OC said.

Locals rescued the girl and took her home, he added.

Milon was placed before a court yesterday, which sent him to jail. Bashar will be produced before it today, the OC said.

KAPTAL LAKE Three dead, 2 missing in separate boat mishaps

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Rangamati

At least three people died and two others went missing in separate incidents of boat capsizing in Kaptai Lake in Langadu and Naniarchar upazilas of Rangamati on Tuesday.

In Gulshakhali area of Langadu upazila, a small boat with five people on board capsized in the evening, leaving a woman and two children dead.

Locals recovered the body of Rana, 7, at night while Shirina Begum, 40, and her son Masum, 5, remained missing.

Firefighters recovered their bodies from the lake yesterday, said Jahangir Hossain, upazila nirbahi officer of Langadu.

In Naniarchar upazila, two people went missing when their boat capsized amid inclement weather around 9:00pm while they were returning home, said Supon Chakma, chairman of the local union parishad.

Of the six people on board, four managed to swim ashore but Delishan Chakma and Jitesh Chakma drowned as they could not swim, he said.

Divers from the fire service in Rangamati town have been informed, while locals were conducting searches till filing of the report around 8:00pm.



In Manirampur upazila of Jashore, local women spend their days breaking snails brought in by traders. The flesh goes to fish enclosures, the shells to poultry feed, and the women earn Tk 130 for every sack of snails -- a small but vital boost to their seasonal income. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Illegal township sprouts on railway land

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU,
Pabna

An illegal township has sprouted on around 150 acres of railway land previously leased out for agriculture and fish farming in Bhangura upazila of Pabna.

According to the Railway Estate Department, 150 acres of agricultural land and 29 acres of wetlands in the Boral Bridge Rail Station area were leased out to 144 persons and organisations for cultivation and fish farming.

Over the past three decades, at least 500 unauthorised structures and establishments -- including slums, business centres, residential houses, markets, mosques, bus and autorickshaw stands, children's parks, and roads -- have been constructed on the land in the absence of strict monitoring.

Md Al-Mamun, booking assistant (acting station master) of Boral Bridge Rail Station, said over a hundred permanent establishments, including multi-storied buildings, have been illegally constructed on railway land.

"There are also several hundred shops and dozens of markets around the station -- all being used for commercial purposes, violating the lease conditions for the railway land," he said.

The station has 154.10 acres of land, including 34.11 acres of operational space, according to the Railway Estate Department.

Md Baki Billah, former chairman of Bhangura Upazila Parishad, told The Daily Star before his recent arrest that "the railway land has been used to develop the township over the last three decades due to people's necessities."

Baki and his family members are among the leading possessors of railway land in Bhangura

Municipality, according to lease documents.

Besides local encroachers, the Bhangura Municipality authority has illegally constructed a number of establishments on railway land in recent years, violating rules, including a market, children's park, and a concrete road on an abandoned rail track, known as Ghat Line.

Md Eunus Ali, administrative officer of Bhangura Municipality, however, claimed that the market and other establishments were constructed on leased railway land

happened in the past, as he has recently joined the railway's Ullapara Estate Office.

Nazmun Nahar, UNO of Bhangura and administrator of Bhangura, said she was not aware of anything that happened before. "The railway authority did not claim their land to the municipality authority. We will not proceed with further construction on railway land. If the railway wants to free their land, then we will take steps," she said.

Pakshey Divisional Estate Officer Md Ariful Islam said the



following the rules.

Contacted, Md Abu Bakar, a surveyor of the Railway Estate Department, said nobody can build permanent establishments on railway land.

"If anybody makes any structure filling up wetland and agricultural land, that is obviously illegal," he said.

Asked about the illegally developed township on leased railway land in Bhangura, he said he was not aware of what

railway does not have enough manpower to take care of its vast land assets.

"When somebody takes lease of any land from the railway, we are unable to monitor them. We conduct eviction drives only when we get information about illegal encroachment," he said.

"We had evicted numerous illegal structures on railway land in Bhangura before. We will conduct another drive soon," the official added.

Two children tortured over alleged hilsa theft

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Patuakhali

Two children were allegedly tied up and tortured on charges of stealing hilsa in Patuakhali's Galachipa upazila on Monday.

The incident took place at Notun Sluice Bazar in Char Mohiuddin. Union parishad member Hasan Sardar has been accused of beating the boys.

The victims are Abdullah, 10, from Mahishkota village, and another boy from Char Agosti. Abdullah lives with his grandfather Shahjahan.

Locals said the boys went fishing on Sunday night and stayed on a boat at the sluice ghat. On Monday, a fish trader accused them of stealing 10 hilsa from his depot. Hasan allegedly beat them, tied them up under the sun, and forced them to pose with hilsa in their hands for photos later shared online.

Shahjahan said, "When I protested, Hasan abused me and demanded Tk 10,500. I couldn't pay, so he forced me to sign a blank paper before releasing my grandson. Abdullah's legs were swollen and scarred due to the torture."

Hasan denied allegations of torturing the boys but admitted imposing the fine. "They were accused of stealing 10 hilsa. I fined them Tk 10,500. Since their guardians couldn't pay, I took their signatures on a blank paper."

OC Ashadur Rahman of Galachipa Police Station said, "Legal steps will be taken after a written complaint is filed."

Youth shot dead in Khulna

UNB, Khulna

A youth was shot dead yesterday while he was asleep at his home in Maheshwar Pasha area of Khulna city.

The deceased, Tanvir Hasan Shuvo, 29, was general manager of an international marketing company. He was preparing to go abroad.

Quoting family, Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Daulatpur Police Station, said Tanvir was asleep when he was shot around 4:30am. Family members rushed to his room after hearing the gunshot and found three bullet shells, the OC said.

He died at Khulna Medical College Hospital before he could be shifted to a Dhaka hospital, the OC said.

Two held for shaving fakir's hair in M'singh



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Police on Tuesday arrested two men in Mymensingh city for their involvement in forcibly shaving the hair and beard of 70-year-old Halim Uddin Akand just before Eid-ul-Azha this year.

The arrestees, Muzlu Mia, 50, and Sujon Mia, 32, of Kashiganj area in Tarakanda upazila, were named in the FIR. They were produced before a Mymensingh court yesterday noon, said OC Tipu Sultan of Tarakanda Police Station.

They confessed to their involvement in the incident, the OC said, adding that drives are underway to arrest the remaining accused.

On September 27, Halim's son filed a case with the police station accusing 12 people, including seven named suspects.

Halim Uddin, locally known as Halim Fakir, was humiliated by a group of so-called social workers at Kashiganj Bazar in Tarakanda.

A video of the incident triggered nationwide outrage and condemnation. It shows Halim walking down a road when three men in grey vests chase him, drag him aside, and pin him down. As he struggles and cries out, "Allah, Tui Dehis!" (O Allah, You are witness!), they shave off his hair and beard.

Halim had been keeping his matted hair for 37 years. Once a farmer, he now leads a quiet spiritual life.

Sylhet police launch app to boost public safety

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Sylhet Metropolitan Police yesterday launched a new mobile application, "GenieA," aimed at enhancing public safety and providing citizens with easier access to police services.

The app was inaugurated by Police Commissioner Abdul Quddus Chowdhury. It will be piloted at Moglabazar Police Station from October 16.

According to SMP, two core features have been introduced initially. An SOS button allows citizens in distress to press for an automated alert to the police. The other feature is incident reporting, enabling users to report criminal activities through the app.

SMP plans to introduce around 16 features in phases, including CCTV monitoring, drone surveillance, enhanced security for school students, blockchain-enabled evidence preservation, AI-driven legal assistance, online filing of GDs and FIRs, integration with fire service and other emergency responders, traffic fine payment and emergency ambulance service.

200 birds burnt in Kapasias bazar fire



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

A fire at Kapasia Bazar in Gazipur has gutted at least five businesses and killed more than 200 birds, around 10:00am yesterday.

Firefighters from Kapasia Fire Service and Civil Defence brought it under control after about an hour and a half of effort.

"Initially, it is suspected that the fire started from an electrical short circuit," said Mahfuzur Rahman, in-charge of Kapasia Fire Service.

Bird trader Barendra Mandal said about 200 birds -- budgerigars, cockatiels, pheasants, pigeons, and doves -- perished in the fire. Bird food worth Tk 20 lakh was also destroyed, he said.

Sub-inspector Shafiq Mia of Kapasia Police Station said, "We will provide accurate details after the investigation is completed."

Eight rescued from traffickers in Teknaf

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Members of the coast guard and navy rescued eight people -- seven women and one child -- during a joint operation in the Baharchhara hills of Teknaf, Cox's Bazar, said Lieutenant Commander Syam-ul-Hoque, media officer of Coast Guard, yesterday.

He said intelligence reports suggested that several people had been held captive in Baharchhara hills to be trafficked to Malaysia by sea.

He said they launched the operation on Tuesday -- between 5:00pm and 7:00pm.

The traffickers managed to flee after sensing the presence of the joint forces, he added.

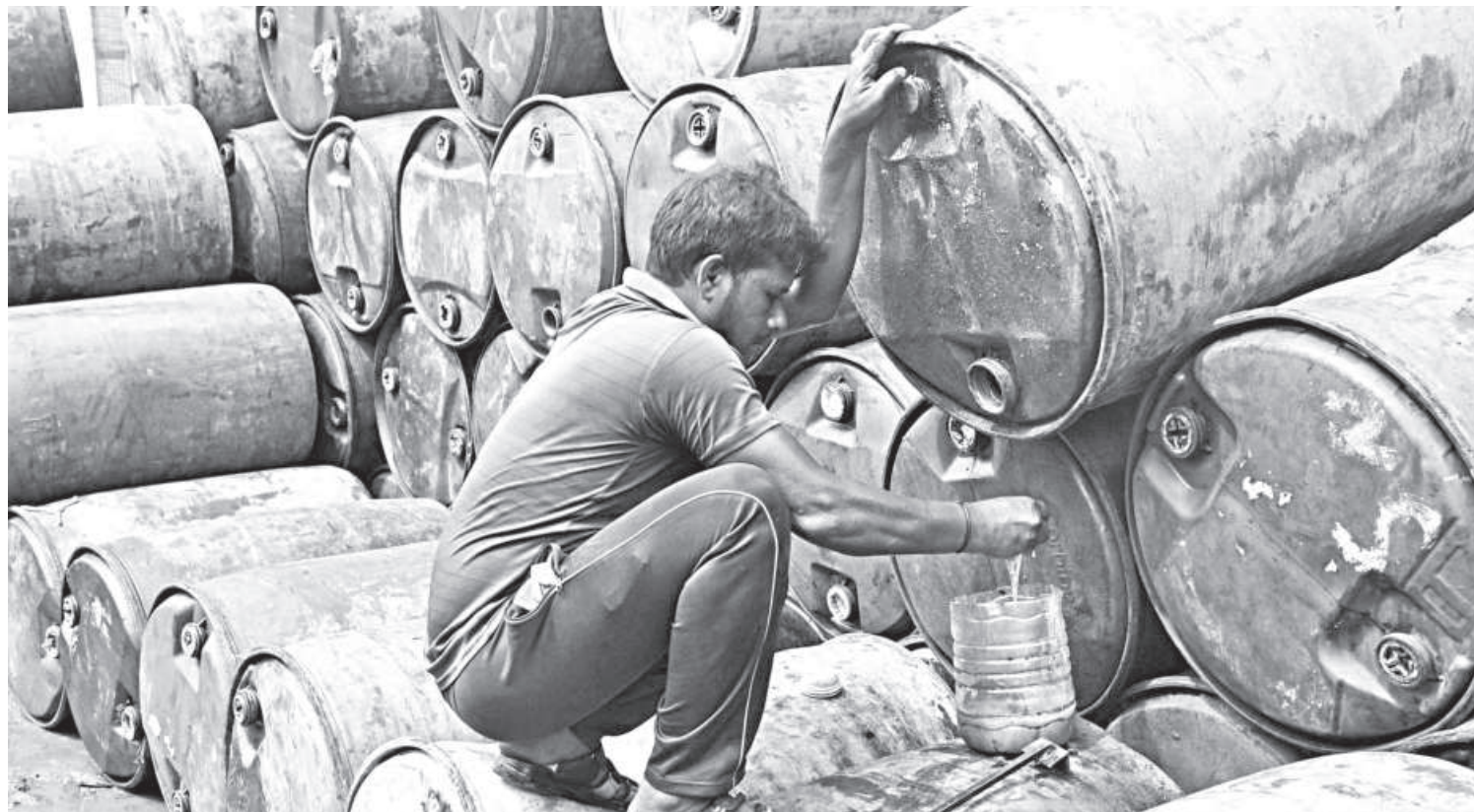


PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Haider Ali stuffs sponges into empty drums to extract leftover soybean and palm oil. Collecting 2.5 to 3 litres a day from drums discarded by large traders, he sells the oil in local markets and manages to support his family. The photo was taken at Shaheb Bazar in Rajshahi yesterday.