

13-year-old girl raped in Mirpur

STAR REPORT

A case has been filed over the rape of a 13-year-old girl by a neighbour in Dhaka's Mirpur.

The victim's mother filed the case against the alleged rapist, Raju Mia, 50, under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act with the Mirpur Model Police Station yesterday.

According to the case statement, the victim's mother is a garment worker, and her father is an auto-rickshaw driver. Taking advantage of their absence during working hours, Raju, an auto-rickshaw driver and tenant in the same building, took the girl to a house in Mirpur's Ahmed Nagar area around 3:00pm on September 15, 2025, intimidated her and raped her. Later, the man raped her several times and threatened her not to disclose it, said the case statement.

The incident came to light recently when the teenager fell ill, and a medical test confirmed her pregnancy.

Mahmudunnabi, sub-inspector of Mirpur Model Police Station, said the girl was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday as her condition deteriorated due to pregnancy.

Golam Azam, officer-in-charge (OC) of the police station, told The Daily Star that the accused, Raju Mia, is currently on the run and efforts are underway to arrest him.

Zelensky says US doesn't 'have time for Ukraine' now

AFP, Berlin

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday said that US peace negotiators "have no time for Ukraine" because of the war in Iran, in an interview on German television on Tuesday.

Zelensky told public broadcaster ZDF that Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, who have helped broker talks with Moscow on ending Russia's war on Ukraine, were "constantly in talks with Iran" at the moment.



PHOTOS: PRABIR DAS

'Ostad, bamey plastic, daine tesla': DECODING DHAKA'S BUS TALK

JANNATUL BUSHIRA

You must be reading the heading and thinking -- since when did Bangladesh quietly enter the Tesla-importing business, and more importantly, what does any of that have to do with Dhaka traffic?

Fair question. Suspicious, even. But stay with me.

This is fun. Now, we all know "fun" and "Dhaka traffic" don't usually belong in the same sentence, so let me clarify right away: this is not the window-seat-on-a-double-decker kind of fun, where a timely breeze shows up and Bijoy Sarani somehow lets you pass in one go -- let's not get carried away.

But it is the kind of fun that makes those long, unmoving stretches of traffic -- where you've already questioned your timing, your choices, and occasionally, your entire existence -- feel just a little less like punishment.

Because let's be honest, opting out isn't really an option. Unless you own a helicopter. In which case, congratulations --

this piece is not for you.

For the rest of us, however -- those firmly committed to the daily ritual of going nowhere slowly -- bear with me. This might not clear the road ahead, but it could make the wait feel slightly less pointless, and just a little more tolerable.

So, here's the thing: if you sit long enough in Dhaka traffic -- and we all do -- you start to realise it has a coded language. A very specific, high-speed, no-time-for-full-sentences kind of language, mostly spoken by bus helpers hanging off moving vehicles as if they are absolutely committed to defying gravity.

Take the classic: "Ostad, bamey plastic!"

Now, if you are unfamiliar with Dhaka's dialect of survival, you might assume this is an environmental complaint. It is not. "Plastic" is not litter here. It is not waste management. It is a private car -- smooth, shiny, air-conditioned, very much dentable, and therefore immediately categorised as something to watch out for.

In fact, once you start paying attention, you realise Dhaka

traffic is less about lanes and more about materials. Electric rickshaws are now confidently referred to as "Teslas" -- a piece of information that would deeply unsettle Elon Musk -- while private cars remain firmly labelled as "plastic," for reasons that feel both insulting and strangely accurate.

Then comes the phrase that practically runs the city: "Borabor, shamne clear!"

Now, "borabor" deserves respect. It is doing the work of at least five sentences: keep moving, adjust if needed, squeeze a little more, become reckless, accept your fate.

And "shamne clear?" That one is pure fiction. Not a lie exactly, just a hopeful interpretation of reality that the standstill has somehow been lifted.

Of course, what makes all of this even more interesting is that none of these helpers actually arrive in Dhaka speaking this language.

Bus helpers come from Noakhali, Barishal, Rangpur, Mymensingh and other parts of the country, each bringing

their own dialect and tone. In any other setting, I am sure they would need subtitles to understand one another. And then Dhaka happens. The city trims everything down. Words get shorter. Sentences get sharper. Tone does most of the work.

There's no time for grammar when five vehicles are trying to occupy the same space.

So, what emerges is this shared, improvised language -- efficient, direct, and just loud enough to cut through everything else.

And it works. Not perfectly, not peacefully, but just enough.

Even more fascinating is that bus helpers don't hold a monopoly on this system. Rickshaw-wala mamas have their own competing dialect, or code, or set of signals.

Even the humble rickshaw bell has syntax here: One tring means presence. Two trings means warning.

A desperate, continuous tring-tring-tring means: "move! Or my Tesla is going to dent your plastic!"

BNP will implement July charter

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On the first day of the Bangla New Year, Tarique called on everyone to support and cooperate in building a beautiful Bangladesh. He said the BNP-led government wants to build a safe Bangladesh where people can live safely and children can grow up, study, work, and prosper in comfort.

He said the government wants to make farmers self-reliant and economically secure. That is why they are giving Farmers' Card. "If we look at all the reviews, we will see that in Bangladesh, whenever the BNP got the chance to run the country, the BNP tried to stand beside the farmers. You trusted the BNP in the last election. This government will fully respect that trust," he added.

Tarique said the BNP and the government believe that the well being of Bangladesh and its people depends entirely on the survival and prosperity of the farmers.

As soon as the programme was launched, Tk 2,500 was transferred to the bank accounts of 22,067 farmers across 11 upazilas. In Tangail alone, 1,453 farmers received the money.

The initiative aims to recognise farmers as professionals, boost their incomes, and ensure subsidies. The programme is to target 1.65 crore farmers in four years at a cost of Tk 681 crore.

The PM handed over Farmers' Card and saplings to 15 marginal farmers at the event.

Farmers' Card is one of the electoral pledges of the BNP. It has so far launched the Family Card, Sports Card, and canal excavation after assuming power.

Eastern Refinery running

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Officials said there is little likelihood of any shipment arriving in April as well.

Located in Patenga of Chattogram, ERL operates under Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) and primarily processes Saudi Arabia's Arabian Light and the UAE's Murban crude to produce 12 types of products including diesel, petrol, jet fuel and octane.

However, with scheduled shipments from these sources being delayed, a supply bottleneck has been created, forcing a gradual scale down in ERL's operations.

According to BPC data, ERL has a storage capacity of around 2,25,000 tonnes.

directly from ships through pipelines. However, it is still not fully operational due to operational complexities, including operator selection.

In mid-2024, a limited amount of oil was kept there on a trial basis, which is now being used amid supply shortages.

"The refinery has not yet ceased operations entirely, but output has been reduced significantly. We still have around 25,000 tonnes of stock, which can support operations for more than a week," said BPC General Manager Muhammad Morshed Hossain Azad.

He added that three out of ERL's five processing units remain operational, and have collectively added around 100-120 tonnes of petrol and diesel daily to BPC's storage tanks over the past two days.

Seeking to reassure markets, Morshed said two vessels carrying 60,000

tonnes of diesel were expected to berth at the jetty last night, while another two shipments of similar volume are scheduled to arrive on April 18.

"There is no reason to panic over supply pressure," he added.

According to BPC import data, about 95 percent of Bangladesh's annual fuel demand of around 7 million tonnes is import dependent. About 5.2 million tonnes are brought in as refined fuels such as diesel, furnace oil, octane, and jet fuel, while only about 1.5 million tonnes are imported as crude for refining at ERL.

Officials said ERL typically processes around 4,500 tonnes of crude daily, but output has been scaled down amid the ongoing shortage. At one point, usable stocks fell below 2,000 tonnes, forcing authorities to limit operations.

national sufferings.

He also announced government support for farmers in agro-based regions, specifically the north, by promoting industries and boosting investment, processing, and exports for better prices and increased foreign revenue.

To secure fair prices and off-season availability, he proposed building cold storages and processing systems for Tangail's famous pineapples.

He said it is important to make women self-reliant, as they make up half of the population, and without their progress, the country cannot move forward.

He said that is why the government promised to introduce a Family Card for women heads of families, and the pilot project has already started.

Monir Hossain Chowdhury, joint secretary and spokesperson of the energy ministry, said, "Refined fuel from ERL has continued to be added to the system over the past two days, albeit at reduced capacity."

"Efforts are underway to keep the refinery operational by combining limited production with the use of deadstock which were stocked in ERL and SPM," he also said.

He also confirmed that Bangladesh is expected to receive a 1,00,000-tonne crude shipment on May 2, which will pass through the Strait of Hormuz on April 22.

"Most of our fuel demand is met through imported refined products. So even if crude stocks remain low, it is unlikely to create an immediate supply crisis," he added.

A dangerous turn in banking reform

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Nassa Group's Md Nazrul Islam Mazumder. Between them, these men presided over years of related-party lending, regulatory evasion, and outright embezzlement. Public deposits were treated as private vaults. Millions of ordinary savers are still waiting to recover their money -- and may wait years longer.

The original ordinance, passed in May 2025, barred these owners from any involvement. The interim government had been making genuine headway: restructuring boards, initiating mergers, signalling that the old order was finished. Confidence in the sector, badly battered under Sheikh Hasina's rule, had cautiously begun to return.

Many savers were starting to trust the banks again. The new law puts that recovery at risk. Bangladesh Bank officials now warn, with some understatement, that if former owners return, taking the banks back a second time will not be easy.

Zahid Hussain, former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office, puts it plainly. Allowing wrongdoers back in "reinforces a culture of impunity." It tells the financial sector that the consequences of looting are negotiable. It tells depositors that the state's promises are, too. After so many reforms, audits, and a formal merger process, he warns, reversing everything through a single legal adjustment raises serious doubts about whether institutional reform in Bangladesh can ever stick.

Birupaksha Paul, a professor of economics at the State University of New York in Cortland, goes further. The new act, he argues, is a "pernicious compromise" by the BNP government -- one that will "further deteriorate the banking health of the economy mainly because of its implied moral hazards."

The concern is not just about these five banks. It is about what the law signals to every banker, every borrower, and every regulator in the country: that recklessness is a price, and it is negotiable.

The government, Birupaksha warns, is "going against the grain of social and moral expectations which wanted to see a new banking order."

The new law is not without guardrails, to be fair. Applicants must inject fresh capital, settle creditor claims, and submit to two years of close monitoring. Bangladesh Bank must conduct due diligence and seek government clearance before any transfer. On paper, the safeguards look reasonable.

In practice, Bangladesh's banking regulators have not historically been known for their steeliness when facing well-connected businessmen. The same governance failures that produced this crisis are bound to come back.

There is a pattern worth noting. The Awami League once passed a power purchase law ostensibly designed to attract private investment and fix an energy shortage. It ended up benefiting a narrow group of well-connected businessmen at the public's expense. The law was widely seen as a template for how policy in Bangladesh gets shaped -- not around national interest, but around the interests of those with access.

The Bank Resolution Act, passed quietly on a Friday, fits the same mould.

Which raises the uncomfortable question that the amendment's critics are now asking openly: is the BNP government simply caving to pressure from powerful business groups? Is the word "oligarch" -- once used almost exclusively to describe the Hasina era -- making an unwelcome return? Bangladesh is not the first country to discover that banking reform is politically uncomfortable. Oligarchs, by definition, have resources and connections. They push back. Governments, facing other pressures, find reasons to accommodate them.

The technical language of resolution frameworks provides convenient cover.

What is harder to explain away is the timing and the optics. A government serious about reform does not sell banks back to the people who broke them. It does not do so while depositors wait in line.

The government insists it is cleaning up the mess left by the Awami League. On the evidence of the new law, it is at least partly recycling it.

Baishakh celebrations regain fervour

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The procession moved under visible security arrangements, with police accompanying the route through key Dhaka University points: Shahbagh, TSC, Raju Sculpture, and Bangla Academy before returning to its starting point.

A 27-year-old attendee reflected, "May we have a good year ahead. The tradition of Mongol Shobhajatra is what we carry forward, and I want to continue celebrating it in that spirit."

First-year students dancing in the procession said it was their first time joining. One of them remarked: "Call it Mongol Shobhajatra or Baishakhi, the joy remains the same. The spirit matters most. This is our celebration, and we will continue it our way."

Afsana, an ex-Dhaka University student and now a mother attending with her daughters in matching red saris, added: "Mongol Shobhajatra is not just a symbolic procession. It reminds us every year of who we are and where we came from -- our heritage and national identity. My hope is that we move forward as a nation with that spirit of Mongol."

From the moving crowd, Annaya of Jatrabari observed, "You can see a national picture here. We are not thinking of religion or caste. We are marching as Bangladeshis, and that is what I am most proud of."

Watching from afar, Ilham Faruki, a student of DU, said, "It is stunning to see these large artworks move through such an enthusiastic crowd. Extremists have always tried to disrupt this Shobhajatra, but it feels important that it was held peacefully this year with such a turnout."

Another Dhaka University student, Mostakim Ahmed Rahul, noted, "Even as there is debate over whether it

should be called Mongol, Anondo, or Baishakhi, this celebration shows how deeply the people own it."

Elsewhere in Dhaka, Pahela Baishakh unfolded through various programmes.

At Rabindra Sarobar, the "Hajar Konthey Borshoboron" celebration brought together mass renditions of Rabindra Sangeet. The programme opened with "Otho Otho Re" and moved toward "Esho Hey Baishakh" in continuous choral performance.

At Ahsan Manzil, the Dhaka South City Corporation staged a civic-historical programme of music and dance by city-affiliated cultural groups. The architecture itself became part of the staging, tying present performance to older urban memory.

Alongside organised events, roadside economies thrived. Closed stretches around Shahbagh, Katobon, and TSC became temporary markets.

In older commercial districts such as Banglabazar, Shankharibazar, and Tantibazar, the Halkhata tradition showed further decline. Traders spoke of a shift from physical ledgers to digital accounting systems and mobile transactions.

Some traders still maintained Halkhata in symbolic form, treating it as heritage rather than necessity. The shift remained gradual, shaped by changing financial systems and consumer behaviour.

Taken together, Pahela Baishakh 1433 across Dhaka presented a persistent cultural continuity: a sense of being Bangali as shared history rather than a fixed definition. Across songs, processions, markets, and crowds, identity appeared less as a declaration than as a repetition carried forward -- reshaped each year, but not broken.

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