

Israeli tourist, homestay host raped in Hampi, male friend body found in canal

Agency: Two women, a 27-year-old Israeli tourist and a 29-year-old homestay owner, were gang-raped near Hampi in Karnataka on Thursday night. Three male companions, who were with the women, were also assaulted by the attackers and later thrown into a canal. One of the men's bodies was recovered from the waters this morning. According to the police, the incident happened between 11 and 11.30 pm on Thursday by Sanapur Lake - roughly 4 km from Hampi, which is a popular tourist attraction in Karnataka, especially among foreigners. Four tourists, including an Israeli woman, three males from Odisha, the US and Maharashtra, respectively, along with their female homestay owner had gone stargazing after dinner. The group was sitting by the bank of the Tungabhadra Canal near the lake, playing guitar and enjoying music while stargazing, police said. At this time, three bike-borne men approached the group and

asked them for directions to a petrol pump. When the homestay owner informed the individuals that there was no station nearby, they demanded cash from the group. On refusal, the miscreants - who spoke Kannada and Telugu - misbehaved with the group and began assaulting them. The homestay owner, who filed the complaint, said that the attackers pushed the male tourists into a canal. Then, while they struggled to come out of the water, two of the three attackers raped her and the Israeli tourist. According to the FIR reported by agency, the accused dragged the homestay owner to the side of the canal, where one of them tried to strangle her and removed her clothes. Then, two of them thrashed and raped her. They also snatched her bag, stealing two mobile phones and Rs 9,500 in cash. Similarly, the third attacker dragged the Israeli tourist to a spot and raped her. Then, the men fled on the motorbike. Pankaj from Maharashtra and Daniel

from the US managed to come out of the canal, and are currently undergoing treatment at a government hospital. However, the tourist from Odisha failed to come out, and his body was found this morning, police said. "Yesterday, around 11.30 PM, two women and three men, four tourists, visited Hampi and other nearby places. They stayed at a private homestay. One woman and three men, along with the female owner of the homestay, went out to look at the stars and talk. Three young men on a motorbike approached them, asking for petrol, and stating that they didn't have money to buy it and requested money. They were given Rs 20, but the men on the bike demanded Rs 100. An argument ensued, leading to a physical altercation. The men on the bikes fell into the water," Lokesh Kumar, senior cop, told agency. "The group then went to a private resort and reported the incident to the police station. All four victims claimed they were sexually assaulted and

have been sent for medical examination. The three men, who are believed to be locals, came on a motorbike," he added. The police, along with fire department officials and dog squads, had been searching for the missing tourist since the incident happened. Another special police team is working to track down the suspects. An FIR under multiple sections of

the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita (BNS) has been registered in the case. These include Sections 309(6) (theft of extortion), 311 (robbery with intent to cause death or serious injury), 70(1) (gang-rape), and 109 (attempt to murder). With one of the male tourists' bodies being recovered now, details of the murder are expected to be added to the FIR.

Delhi approves Rs 2,500 monthly aid under Mahila Samriddhi scheme on Women's Day

Agency: Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Saturday announced that the Rs 2,500 financial aid for women under the Mahila Samriddhi Scheme has been approved, after days of speculation and war of words between the BJP and the Aam Aadmi Party. A special committee led by Rekha Gupta and also comprising ministers Ashish Sood, Virender Sachdeva, and Kapil Sharma will oversee the implementation of the scheme. Also, a portal will be launched where eligible beneficiaries can register. Terms and conditions will also be laid on the same portal. The scheme is open to women living in Delhi aged between 18 and 60 years with an annual family income below Rs 3 lakh and those who are not required to pay income tax. It does not include government servants and individuals already

getting financial assistance under other welfare schemes of the government. The Delhi government held a Cabinet meeting chaired by Rekha Gupta and took the decision to approve the scheme with an annual budget of Rs 5,100 crore on International Women's Day.

"Today is Women's Day. Looking at the auspicious occasion, we had our Cabinet meet and, in the presence of all the ministers, we approved the Rs 2,500 financial aid under the

Mahila Samriddhi Yojana as promised to our sisters in Delhi during our poll campaign," Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said while addressing the media on Saturday. "We made a provision of Rs 5,100 crores

in the Delhi budget for the implementation of the scheme so that our sisters in Delhi can benefit from it," she added. "The scheme will leverage advanced technology to ensure transparency, efficiency, and seamless disbursement of financial benefits and Aadhaar-based e-KYC will be used," a government statement said. "This initiative is a step towards fulfilling our promise to the women of Delhi. By providing direct financial assistance, we are ensuring economic security, greater independence, and empowerment for women across the city. This scheme is not just a financial benefit but a commitment to building a stronger, more self-reliant community of women in Delhi," it added.

Indira

Bhawan at 9-A Kotla Marg, critical aspects of the organisation's functioning would be discussed.

"We will brainstorm and churn out new ideas.

Roles will be defined. It is expected that more autonomy would be given to DCCs so that they would have more say in the organisation. Our priority is to empower DCCs," said a party's senior leader. The development comes after the party, in continuation of its Belagavi

announcement, said it has decided to launch 'Samvidhaan Bachao Yatra' from April this year.

The party insiders said the focus would be on having a dialogue with the people at the ground level and also to know their aspirations.

Party insiders said the yatra would be held simultaneously across the country and unlike 'Bharat Jodo Yatra', it would be a relay type yatra. It would start from Ahmedabad, and PAG to disperse the miscreants, but they did not

Pakistani smugglers pushing free meth to fuel addiction in Punjab

Agency: Pushed to the brink by heightened security measures, smugglers from across the border have come up with a new strategy — bundling free samples of ICE (crystal meth) with heroin packets in a bid to lure more Punjab youth in the grip of addiction. ICE, or crystal meth, is typically a synthetic drug, but this new wave of supply is plant-based, sourced from Afghanistan. It is derived from ephedra plant, which grows wild in that region. Cheaper, more potent and alarmingly accessible, this Afghan-made ICE is meant to target the state's youth, while becoming a challenge for law enforcement agencies to curb its spread. Facing heightened security, smugglers bundling free samples of ICE with heroin to lure Punjab's youth. Afghan-made ICE is a cheaper and more potent plant-based drug derived from ephedra plant Smugglers pushing ICE following 70% drop in opium cultivation and smugglers have been relying on existing stockpiles.

However, in recent months, the authorities have observed a new trend: Pakistani smugglers, who traditionally smuggle heroin from Afghanistan, are now offering free samples of ICE in a "one-plus one" kind of scheme. In 2024 alone, the state police seized a record 22 kg of ICE, a staggering 11-fold increase compared to the 2 kg seized in 2023. In the last five days, an additional 2 kg of ICE has been seized in a special anti-drug operation. Haji Salim, also known as Haji Baloch, a Pakistan-based drug lord considered one of the world's largest smugglers, is reportedly behind the large-scale supply of ICE. "He operates a vast global network and is now shifting focus to ICE produced in Afghanistan," revealed a police official. ICE is significantly cheaper internationally,

Bring back Khilafat: Banned Islamist organisation marches in Bangladesh

Agency: Chanting 'Khilafat, Khilafat', hundreds of people marched on the streets of Dhaka. What should have surprised many is that the 'March For Khilafat' was organised by Hizb-ut-Tahrir, a radical Islamist organisation banned by Bangladesh in 2009. The march by the outlawed organisation, which seeks an Islamic Caliphate, comes amid regular shows of strength by radical outfits in Bangladesh that is now being ruled by a caretaker government under Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus. The huge rally by Hizb-ut-Tahrir started from the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque after Friday prayers and was attended by thousands of activists. Police attempted to block the rally, but protesters clashed with them. Authorities had to resort to the use of tear gas and sound bombs to disperse the protesters. The rally has raised concerns about the heightened activities of banned Islamist groups in Bangladesh amid political uncertainty. The Hizb-ut-Tahrir was banned by the government of Sheikh Hasina, who was forced to flee Bangladesh on August 5 after a quota agitation turned into a regime-change movement. A former minister in Hasina's ministry alleged

that Bangladesh was heading towards "Talibanisation" under the Yunus government. "The Islamist organisation Hizb-ut-Tahrir was banned by Sheikh Hasina. Because of her strong stance against jihadists and Islamic extremists, followers of these groups always hated her; therefore, they also had a violent participation in the movement against her government in July-August," said Mohammad A Arif, who was the junior minister for Information and Broadcasting in the Hasina government. The rise of radical outfits in Bangladesh is also a security concern for India. India banned Hizb-ut-Tahrir and all its front organisations in October 2024 under the stringent anti-terror UAPA law. Two Hizb-ut-Tahrir members were arrested in February this year by the NIA from Tamil Nadu. Despite being banned in Bangladesh since 2009, Hizb-ut-Tahrir supporters gathered in large numbers and started their protest. The Dhaka Metropolitan Police had issued prior warnings against public gatherings by banned organisations, yet protesters, chanting slogans like "Khilafat, Khilafat", moved forward, attempting to push past security barricades, according

Bangladeshi smugglers attack BSF party, 1 miscreant killed

Agency: A BSF party was attacked by Bangladeshi miscreants near the border area of Raiganj in Darjeeling district of West Bengal during the early hours of Saturday, in which one jawan was severely injured. The attack was carried out by a group of around 15 to 20 miscreants who had crossed over into the Indian territory and were also joined by some Indians. This is the second attack on a BSF party by Bangladeshi smugglers within a week. BSF sources said that the group had entered the Indian territory with the intention of smuggling cattle and contraband. The BSF party detected the intrusion and asked them to surrender. However, the miscreants attacked the party with sharp-edged weapons and lathis, besides pelting stones at them.

Two cows along with an iron sword and lathis used in the attack were seized from the spot. A breach of the international boundary fence was also detected by the BSF personnel. The injured BSF jawan was taken to a hospital after first aid and his condition is reported to be stable. This is the second such incident of attack on BSF personnel in a week. On the evening of February 28, a Bangladeshi smuggler had died and a BSF jawan was injured during a clash along the India-Bangladesh border with Tripura.

CBI cracks down on gold smuggling gangs, registers FIR after Ranya Rao's arrest

Agency: The Central Bureau of Investigation On Saturday registered a case against gangs involved in smuggling gold into India through various airports. Officials confirmed on Saturday that the agency is working closely with the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence to dismantle these operations, PTI reported.

The move comes after the recent arrest of Kannada actress Ranya Rao, who was caught carrying 14.2 kg of gold worth Rs 12.56 crore at Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport. Two CBI teams have been dispatched to Mumbai and Bengaluru airports to collect further information. Ranya Rao, known for her roles in Kannada films like Maanikya and Pataki, was detained by the DRI upon her arrival from Dubai on March 3. Authorities allege that she was attempting to smuggle 17 gold bars, weighing 14.8 kg, into the country. She was produced before a special court for financial offences on March

4 and has been remanded in judicial custody until March 18. The court has permitted her to meet her lawyer for half an hour each day and has instructed officials to ensure she is provided with basic necessities. Following her arrest, an image of Ranya with swollen eyes and bruises circulated on social media, sparking speculation of possible assault during custody, as per news agency PTI. Karnataka State Commission for Women Chairperson Nagalakshmi Chaudhary addressed the concerns but stated that the commission could not investigate unless a formal complaint was filed. She condemned any potential mistreatment, adding that no one has the right to take the law into their own hands.

The case has also brought renewed scrutiny to the misuse of airport protocol services. Reports suggest that certain privileges meant for high-ranking officials were exploited to facilitate gold smuggling. In response, the Karnataka government has decided to revise standard operating procedures, restricting protocol services strictly to officials themselves, rather than their family members or associates. Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Umashankar SR confirmed the decision, stating that security measures would no longer extend to relatives of senior bureaucrats. Meanwhile, sources indicate that a protocol staffer at Kempegowda International Airport was briefly detained by the DRI after Ranya's arrest. However, he was later released after stating that he had been instructed to receive a senior officer's daughter and was unaware of the smuggling attempt.

In a voluntary statement to the DRI, Ranya admitted to possession of the gold, acknowledging that 17 gold bars were recovered from her. She described herself as an artist, wildlife photographer, and real estate freelancer in Dubai. Her case remains under investigation as authorities expand their probe into the smuggling network.