

RAPE OF SIX WOMEN

BCL leader sued, yet to be arrested

STAR REPORT

Police are yet to arrest the Chhatra League man, who allegedly sexually assaulted six women in Shariatpur and released video clips of his misdeed on the internet almost a month ago.

"One victim has filed a case today [yesterday]. We hope to arrest the accused very soon," Saifullah Al Mamun, superintendent of police (SP) in Shariatpur,



Arif

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

BCL leader sued

FROM PAGE 1

told The Daily Star yesterday evening.

Other victims of accused Arif Hossain Hawladar, 22, former general secretary of Bangladesh Chhatra League's Narayanpur unit, refused to come forward.

Unable to deal with the social stigma, two of them stopped going to college, one of them left home, and the in-laws of another kicked her out.

Arif allegedly sexually harassed the six, secretly filmed the act and then blackmailed them with the footage.

"Women are generally reluctant to file a complaint in rape cases, but police should have been proactive in filing a case under ICT Act for the serious nature of the crime. They should have arrested the culprit," said Salma Ali, member of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association.

Officer-in-Charge Mehedi Hasan of Bhedarganj Police Station said the women were reluctant to file a case and this being a sensitive issue, "we could

not go forward on our own".

SP Saifullah said they were able to persuade one of the women to lodge the case with Bhedarganj Police Station yesterday afternoon.

He, however, said, "We would have filed a case if she had refused to file one ... the evidence is already there online."

The case was filed under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act, he said.

Arif was expelled from Chhatra League, a pro-Awami League student body, yesterday over the allegations. He had been suspended on October 19, reports a correspondent in Shariatpur quoting Chhatra League Shariatpur unit.

Lawyer Salma Ali said they recently received a number of complaints of sexual assault where the victims were reluctant to file a case because of social stigmatisation.

"The rape complainants get victimised repeatedly when they go for legal procedures and medical tests," she said.

In Bangladesh, the rape victims have to go for medical tests where doctors use their index or middle finger to check the condition of their hymen and also to look for injuries on the vaginal wall.

"This test is humiliating," she said.

Salma said it was important that the authorities think of a mechanism where privacy of the complainants was ensured during the legal process, and that circumstances of rape were considered as evidence instead of the medical test known as the "two-finger test".

The video clips were first released on October 15 and continued to spread yesterday.

Bhedarganj MA Reza Degree College teacher Sayedur Rahman said the six women were still being victimised as the videos were being shared online, and police must act promptly to stop its spread.

Shariatpur Chhatra League President Mohsin Madbar said Arif's acts were in no way acceptable and he must be tried.