

Questioning rape victim's character: BLAST urges including 3 provisions, repeal 1 in Evidence Act



Star Digital Report

Mon Mar 21, 2022 05:44 PM Last update on: Tue Mar 22, 2022 09:50 PM



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The Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) has suggested the government include three provisions in the Evidence Act and repeal a section of the law to block all avenues of questioning the character of rape victims in court.

BLAST, on behalf of Rape Law Reform Coalition comprising 17 rights organisations, handed over proposals to the parliamentary standing committee on law ministry on November 17 last year and on March 10, requesting the latter to bring a bill in the parliament to amend the law.

In the proposal, BLAST said the female rape victims have to face derogatory and unnecessary questions with previous character and sexual experience in the open court because of some provisions of the Evidence Act.

Therefore, the victims lose interest in getting justice and the accused persons cannot be brought to trial and even the offence cannot be proved absolutely, it said.

BLAST suggested including a subsection to each of Sections 53(A), 146(3) and 150(A) of the Evidence Act and to repeal Section 155(4) from the act..

Mahbuba Akhter, deputy director (advocacy and communications) of the BLAST, told The Daily Star today that they will again request the parliamentary standing committee on law ministry to consider their suggestions and to place a bill on the relevant amendments of the law in the parliament.

Contacted, Shahiduzzaman Sarker, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on law ministry, told this correspondent that the committee is yet to analyze the suggestions given by BLAST

"The cabinet has already approved in principle the Evidence (Amendment) Act 2022. We will study and discuss the suggestions made by BLAST when we will officially sit in the meeting. If the suggestions of BLSAT is relevant, we will include them in the amendment bill," he said.

Law Minister Anisul Huq earlier, told The Daily Star that the government will amend both sections 155(4) and 146(3) of the Evidence Act, 1872 to stop questioning the character of rape victims in court.