

Women take the lead in anti-drug movement

Procession, rally held; peddlers shop locked in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Women have done what men and police could not do. They locked a big drug peddlers' shop in Satkhira town yesterday.

Bemused townspeople looked on from sideways as over 100 women marched streets raising fists and chanting slogans against drug use and authorities' failure to stop the menace, which is soiling the young generation.

They held a rally in front of the

drug peddler's shop at Polashpole, ransacked and locked it.

The incident woke up police officials. Additional Police Superintendent (ASP) Delwar Hossain Syeedi rushed to the spot along with Sadar thana Officer-in-Charge Shahjahan and a police team and assured the women demonstrators of arresting drug peddlers including Adar Ali who owned the shop at Polashpole.

But none could be arrested when the report was filed in the

evening. Police said they raided several areas in the town to arrest drug peddlers but could not nab any of them.

The women earlier formed an organisation styled Palashpole Uditee Mahila Sangha aimed at launching an anti-drug campaign in Palashpole.

Leaders of the newly formed organisation said they earlier urged police officials and the administration to take steps against drug peddling in the town, but to no effect.

They came onto streets as all their appeals to save youths from drug abuse failed, they told this correspondent during the brief rally.

Speakers at the rally vowed to free Satkhira town from drug peddling and its use and called upon people of all sections to join them.

Police know who are the drug peddlers but do not taken any action against them, they alleged. They are playing the role of onlookers while youths are being spoiled as drug use is spreading alarmingly, the speakers said.

They also called upon civil society members and NGOs to launch a coordinated anti-drug campaign.

Speakers at the rally included Mamta Begum, Mery Khatun and Lipi, all leaders of Palashpole Uditee Mahila Sangha.



PHOTO: STAR

Women marching streets in Satkhira before they locked a drug peddler's shop in the town yesterday.

'Shun politics of confrontation'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Gaibandha*

Jatiya Party chief HM Ershad yesterday said politics of confrontation pursued by the ruling and opposition alliances is ruining the country's economy and shattering the democratic process.

People are the ultimate sufferers, he said and urged the major parties to shun confrontation in the interest of the country and its people.

He was addressing a public meeting at Fasitola in Gobindaganj upazila to campaign for JP candidate Lutfar Rahman Chowdhury in the ensuing by-polls in Gaibandha-4 constituency.

"They are doing politics only for power", the former president said.

Prices of essentials have are soaring. Farmers suffered the most during the current Boro cultivation season only due to short supply of power and fuel, but the government did not take any step.

Presided over by Govindaganj JP President Lutfar Rahman Chowdhury, the meeting was addressed by party secretary general Ruhul Amin Hawlader and central leaders Kazi Zafar Alamed, Karimuddin Bharsha MP Solaiman Ali MP.

TRIPLE MURDER IN BAGHA

Police launch raids as BNP men shelter criminal gangs

ANWAR ALI, *Rajshahi*

About 300 policemen from Rajshahi, Natore and Kustia, divided into several teams, have started raids in Padma shoals in Rajshahi, Natore and Kushtia to nab terrorists following killing of three of a family in Polashy Fatepur shoal in Bagha upazila Wednesday night. The triple murder created panic in the area.

The raids are targeted at nabbing notorious gang leaders Panna and Lal Chand and their accomplices, police sources said. The two gang leaders hail from Daulatpur in Kushtia.

The terrorists allegedly sheltered by a section of local BNP leaders unleashed a reign of terror in the shoals to establish supremacy. They killed at least 10 people in shoals in Bagha, Lalpur and Daulatpur upazilas since 2004.

Over 70 families fled homes in

Korai Nawsara shoal in Rajshahi, Nawsara Sultanpur in Natore and Natun Char in Kustia in last six months following indiscriminate extortion and death threats by members of the two gang groups, locals and police sources said.

"Setting up of permanent police camp to ensure security of the shoal people there is expensive but it is easier to nab the culprits", said a senior police official.

Asked why police did not arrest the criminals earlier, the official said, "This was because they were sheltered by political leaders. We can not let the situation continue as they are killing innocent people".

The three victims -- Ripon, 28 and his uncles Abdul Latif, 55 and Majer Uddin, 70-- were buried on Thursday after autopsy at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH). They belonged to a family loyal to ruling BNP.

Police arrested seven people on Thursday after Ripon's brother and Bagha upazila Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) general secretary Zahidul Islam Swapan filed a case against 25 people, reportedly belonging to the gang led by Panna.

Clues to the killings

Officer-in-Charge of Bagha police station Akram Hossain told this correspondent that the three killings were aimed at frightening Char Gargaria Union Parishad Chairman Nazrul Islam who often protested activities of Panna Bahini.

Panna's brother and his 'deputy' in the group Safat was killed in crossfire in Kustia several months ago, raising rumours that Nazrul had a hand behind it, sources said.

Local BNP lawmaker Kabir Hossain who went to see the bodies of the three victims at RMCH morgue told The Daily Star there

that all the terrorists in the areas were identified.

"I do not want to say who are patronising them, but their stronghold is in Lalpur in Natore. I demand their immediate arrest and punishment".

Fazlur Rahman, State Minister for Youth and Sports, is the lawmaker from Lalpur-Bagatipara constituency.

Some locals in the area while talking to this correspondent said, the brother of the local MP and a some local BNP leaders including a Union Parishad chairman often sheltered Panna Bahini members.

"We are hostage to these criminals. They carry modern arms and maintain good relations with police and influential people", said Muktar Hossain of Char Fatepur village.

25 hurt in Rangamati clash

A CORRESPONDENT, *Rangamati*

At least 20 people were injured in clashes between police and traders after police seized three CFT timber from a carpenter at Manik Chhari Bazar Thursday night.

Police said they seized the 'illegal' timber from carpenter Nazim Uddin when he was taking it to his shop from a local saw mill. Local people protested this and clashed with law enforcers, saying the timber was legal and demanding its release from the police station.

Additional police force was

called in from the district headquarter, who quelled the violence by clubbing the protesters. At least 20 people were injured, police said.

Tension is prevailing in the market after police arrested three persons including Nazim Uddin and filed a case accusing 25 people. The two others arrested are Rafiqul Islam and Nurul Amin.

The market now wears a deserted look as shopkeepers have fled the area fearing arrest. Additional police and army are patrolling the area.



PHOTO: STAR

Journalists brought out a procession at Jaldhaka in Nilphamari yesterday in protest against the April 16 police attack on media men in Chittagong.

4X3

3X2

4X3

8X3

9X2

7X3