

SNAPS

Ex-BCL leader slaughtered in Fatikchhari

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg
Armed miscreants allegedly belonging to Islamic Chhatra Shibir (ICS) slaughtered a former Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leader at Sahanagar in Fatikchhari on Saturday.

Agang allegedly having link with ICS cadre Shijon waylaid Kamal Uddin, ex-president of Nanupur union BCL and hacked him to death at about 1:30pm when he was going to his sister's house at Sahanagar in Lelang union.

Police recovered the body. Kamal, son of Badiul Alam, returned from the United Arab Emirates recently to get married, family sources said.

A case was lodged with Fatikchhari Police Station.

JCD, ICS file cases, counter cases against each other

A RU CORRESPONDENT
The Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) activists here filed five cases against 224 Jatiyatobadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists. They filed the cases as a retaliation because the JCD activists sued 95 ICS men earlier.

Following a clash on January 14 between the JCD and ICS activists on the campus, four JCD leaders filed four cases with Motihar Police Station against the ICS activists on Thursday night.

The accused are, among others, RU JCD President Motiar Rahman, Vice-president Masudur Alam, General Secretary Aslam Reza, Joint Secretary Alamgir Hossain.

The plaintiffs include ICS General Secretary Mahbub Saleh, Nur Muhammad and Golam Azam.

Meanwhile, the ICS cadres gave death threat to the university correspondent of Dinkal Nazul Islam on Saturday for covering news against them.

Seminar on women, children trafficking

BSS, Satkhira

A day long seminar on preventing women and children trafficking was held at Satkhira Pourashava auditorium on Monday.

The seminar was organised by a number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) Swadesh, Barsha, Bangladesh Vision, and Agragati Sangstha in collaboration with Action Aid Bangladesh and Rupantar Khulna.

Deputy Commissioner, Satkhira AYM Akramul Huq attended the seminar as chief guest. Director of Swadesh Madhab Chandra Dutta presided over.

Zillur Rahman, Deputy Director of the Social Welfare Directorate, Satkhira, Raquib Islam, Director Rupayan, Principal Ashit Kuma Mazumdar, businessman Sheikh Azahar Hussain, among others, spoke.

Thirty persons including journalists, NGO workers, lawyers, social workers and government officers participated in the seminar. The seminar discussed the incidents of large-scale women and children trafficking from the country and urged all to play their role to stop the menace.

Samannaya Committee's ultimatum Resume BRTC service in 3 Sylhet upazilas by January 25

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

A fresh agitation programme was announced from a public meeting organised by the 17 Parganas Shalish Samannaya Committee, a non-partisan forum of three upazilas (Uzs) at Jaintapur on Saturday.

The committee was demanding resumption of the Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) service in the three upazilas.

Speakers announced that if the authorities fail to resume BRTC service by January 25, a dawn to dusk hartal will be observed in three upazilas on January 26. The agitators will hold rallies and other programmes till January 25.

Leaders alleged that the Finance and Communication ministers have compelled them to go for greater movement.

They warned that the ministers would be held responsible for any untoward incident during the

ongoing agitation programme.

Speakers recalled that the BRTC service was introduced at the initiative of the Finance Minister. But at present withdrawal of the service is most unfortunate, they added.

Speakers threatened that in the event of the authorities failure to reintroduce BRTC service, supply of tea, sand, stones, and coal imported from India through Tamabil would be stopped for an indefinite period. We shall also stop the administrative activities in the region, they announced.

Former Upazila Chairman Siraj Uddin Ahmed, who is also convener of the committee presided over the meeting, while it was addressed, among others, by Jaintapur Upazila Awami League President Md Abdullah, also a former upazila chairman, upazila BNP General Secretary and former UP chairman Abdul Malik Mokhtisur Rahman Doula, UP chairman Eklasur Rahman, UP chairman Md Zakaria, Darbasi, UP chairman Kamal Ahmed, Fatehpur UP chairman Qudrat Ullah, Advocate Moulana Mohammad Ali, leading personalities like Abdul Haque,

Supply of sand, stones and coal from the three upazilas to Sylhet and other parts of the country remained suspended from January 9 at the call of the Samannaya Committee.

People in the region are already boycotting private bus and minibus service in different routes of the three upazilas since October 13 last year. They want reintroduction of permanent BRTC service which was introduced temporarily in the three upazilas on September 10 last year.

Because of pressure of people in private transport sector BRTC service was stopped. Again, the service resumed at the intervention of the Finance Minister. The number of BRTC buses were also increased.

But suddenly the authorities concerned sent a big contingent of police to the area and took away the buses from Jaintapur temporary depot on January 3. The incident sparked widespread resentment among common people in the region.

Rajshahi will have a modern children's park

BSS, Rajshahi

Work on a modern children's park in Rajshahi city will start by the end of this month.

Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) will execute the project titled "Children Park of Rajshahi City" at a cost of Tk 9.80 cr. The project was undertaken in May 1995, official sources told BSS.

This is the first ever modern children's park in the northern region.

A contract was signed between the RCC authorities and the appointed contractor farm named 'Domestic Engineering and technology Construction Company Consortium' at the city Bhaban on Saturday.

City Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu MP and other high officials of the corporation were present during the contract signing ceremony.

The project will be implemented on 12.29 acres of land in the city's Borobangram area with four main components like land development, physical construction, games equipment and electrification. The project is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2005.

RCC Executive Engineer Ashraful Haque told BSS that on successful implementation of the scheme children would be provided with maximum recreational facilities.

He said 70 games equipment of 19 items would be assembled at the park, where three lakh children of the city and its adjoining areas will play.



PHOTO: A K M MOHSIN

Industrial waste of paper and rubber mills at Fatulla in Narayanganj district polluting the Buringa creating environmental degradation. But nobody bothers to check the bad practice.

Manik's killing slated

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Journalists and newspapermen across the country protested the killing of eminent journalist Manik Saha and demanded punishment to the killers.

Our Rajshahi Staff Correspondent reports: Several hundred journalists and newspaper workers here agitated in the city on Sunday protesting the brutal killing of a celebrated journalist of the country.

Organised by the Rajshahi Journalists' Society, an alliance of different press bodies, the demonstration was participated by the journalists of different neighboring districts and upazilas also.

A big meeting was held at Shahab Bazar Zero point where the protesting newsmen wearing black badges and carrying black flags assembled.

Chaired by Ittefaq correspondent Shah Anisur Rahman, the meeting was addressed, among others, by Liaquat Ali, Abdul Quader, Hasan Millat, Zulfiqur Ali, Saidur Rahman, Alamgir Kabir



PHOTO: STAR

A child wants security of life of his journalist father in Barisal.

Tota, Manjura Khatun, Zahangir Alam, Yunus Ali and Shahadat Hossain.

Speakers urged the journalists to find out the patrons of the outlawed groups hired for killing newsmen. They said that Manik's

killing proved that people's security was now at stake.

Speakers demanded immediate arrest and punishment to the killers of Manik Saha.

Our Barisal Correspondent reports: More than 100 children and their journalist parents formed a human chain in front of Barisal Ashwin Kumar Town Hall premises on Sunday.

Barisal Press Club and Barisal Sangbadik Union formed the human chain, also joined by local elite as well as common people. They urged the authorities concerned to provide safety and security to working journalists in the region.

Barisal Press Club President Meherunnnesa Begum said, "we are so shocked that no words are left to condemn the brutal killing of Manik Saha in broad daylight."

Barisal Sangbadik Union President G M Babar Ali condemned the heinous act and urged the authorities concerned to immediately arrest the culprits and give them exemplary punishment.

350 industries closed down in northern region in 3 decades

1.55 lakh labourers become jobless

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

At least 350 industries were closed in the northern region due to high price of furnace oil, shortage of capital, faulty industrial policy and other reasons within three decades.

More than one lakh 50 thousand skilled and unskilled labourers were rendered jobless due to closure of these mills. Some jobless workers are now starving while others took up odd jobs like rickshaw pulling.

The Rajshahi divisional office of Deputy Chief Inspector of Factories and Establishment (DCIFE) sources said that industrialists invested more than Tk 2,200 cr. But their investment and bank loan were blocked due to closure of big and mid-level industries in 16

northern districts including Bogra.

Furnace oil-dependent Tajima Ceramic Industry in Bogra was closed two years ago due to its high price. The ceramic industry was established in 1961 and it was the only one ceramic industry in northern Bangladesh. Edible and vegetable oil company Rahatin Industry was closed in 1996 due to shortage of capital. Rahatin was also the first and only one edible and vegetable oil industry in North Bengal.

At least 50 textile mills in the region were closed down due to shortage of capital, marketing problems and faulty government policy.

The Investment Board and other government agencies like the Custom said at least 210 industries including Northern Tannery,

Hasna Textile, Ma Weaving, Islamia Nail, Bhandary Glass Factory, Dostaka Weaving, Popular Weaving, five industries of Jamil group were closed down due to labour unrest, shortage of capital and wrong industrial policy in Bogra since last 22 years.

At least 40 industrial units at Pabna and more than 20 industrial units at Bogra were closed down in Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industry corporation estate (BSCIC).

Northern Distilleries was closed due to shortage of fund and marketing problems at Khetla in Joypurhat which was established at cost of Tk 16 cr about 20 years back. The main reason of closure of the industry is due to wrong selection of factory site.

Life of poor woman made easy by civil society effort

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Mamata Begum of Ghonpara village under Sadar upazila, was one of the many poverty-stricken women in Nilphamari district. She was the eldest among five brothers and sisters. Her father was a day-labourer and he became paralysed when she was only eight years old. Ever since she had to earn a living by selling grass to the town dwellers who used it as fodder for their cattle. Every day she would walk four miles to Nilphamari town, with the bundle of grass on her head. At the end of the day it would bring her only Tk 15/20 which she bought rice.

At the age of 15 she was married off with the financial help of the villagers. With dreams in her eyes, Mamata entered into her husband's house at Darwani village next to her own village. But it wasn't long when she realised that poverty had followed her even there. Her dreams were shattered. Moreover, her rickshawpuller husband had an illicit relationship with another woman at the same

He would give away whatever he earned to that woman. When Mamata came to know this, she protested. But from then on her husband began to beat her; her in-laws also joined him. Thus began a tragic and miserable chapter of Mamata's life. After giving birth to a boy, she expected that her husband's attitude would change, but it was in vain. One day she caught

her husband red handed with the woman in her own hut. Her furious husband beat her so mercilessly that she became senseless. Her in-laws did not show any sympathy either. After learning of her state, Mamata's mother and her uncle took her back to their home at Ghonpara. She never returned to Ghonpara. She never returned to her husband's house and divorced him.

She was passing her days with her only son in great hardship. She was earning a negligible amount by selling her labour in fields or as domestic help.

Then one day, BRAC workers came to her village and listed her name along with 47 other poor women and her life changed dramatically. Because from then on she was included in the BRAC's CFPRTUP programme (Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction-Targeting the Ultra Poor). After a three day long training, BRAC allocated her two cows worth Tk 7,800 as her asset on September 22, 2002. BRAC officials told her that she did not have to pay a single taka for the cattle. BRAC officials also vaccinated her cows to prevent them from diseases and 18 months close follow up by a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM).

BRAC strongly emphasises community mobilisation to aid STUP members in combating their poverty. Such efforts encourage community to become more aware of the ultra poor's problems, give correct solutions to their problems, mobilise local resources and offer support to local service providers, NGOs, Government departments and others offering services to the ultra poor. Therefore Gram Shahayak Committee (a support group) was initiated and formed in STUP programme areas. It is an instrument that caters to community mobilisation efforts and builds a social safety net for the ultra poor in the district.

One such Shahayak committee comprising seven members of the civil society was formed at Mamata's village, Ghonpara as well. A local doctor Alauddin Mia was made the President and a small trader Saju Ahmed Babu was made Secretary and a farmer Noor Mohammad was made the Cashier, while Programme Officer Roknuzzaman remained in the committee as simply a member.

The Shahayak Committee came to Mamata's rescue when she needed their help the most. She used to keep her two cows in her broken thatched house at night. There were thieves living in Shapaitari village of the neighbouring Charaihkhola union. Naturally they came to know about Mamata's cows.

On the night of December 15, 2002, the thieves stole one of her cows. Without wasting any time, Mamata immediately informed the matter to the Secretary of the Shahayak Committee, Saju Ahmed Babu who assured to help as much as possible. He met other members of the Shahayak Committee and went to Chairman Mahbubar Rahman Shah of Charaihkhola union

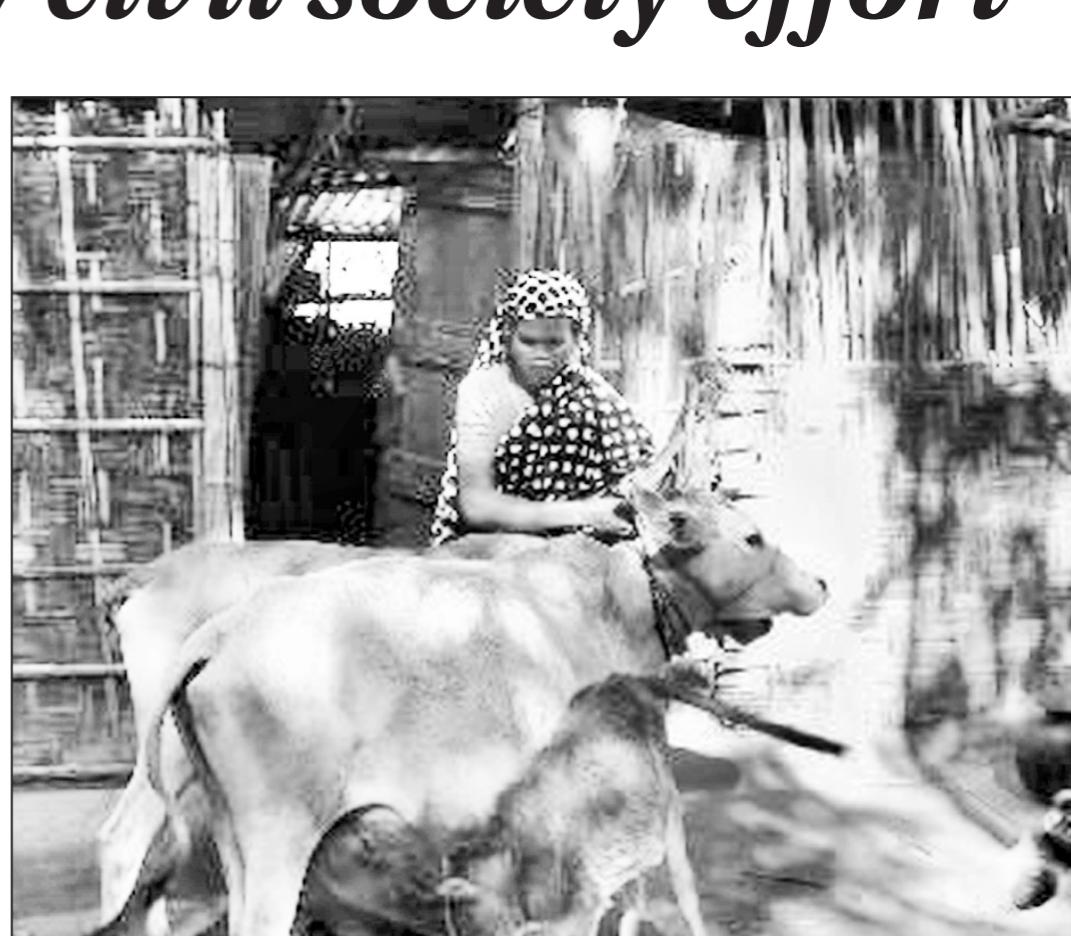
to ask whether he could help in recovering the cow. The chairman obliged and asked two 'Chowkidars' to go to the house of the identified thieves at Shapaitari village. After a thorough search they found Mamata's cow at a bamboo cluster. But they couldn't catch the thieves since they had fled the scene by then.

Mamata was elated when her cow was handed back to her. She was grateful to the Shahayak Committee for their efforts in recovering her cow. "To uphold the moral values and religious teachings we stand beside the ill-fated poor women of the locality," said Saju Ahmed Babu, Secretary of the Shahayak Committee.

Good days have returned Mamata's life. Two months ago one of her cows gave birth to a calf. Now she gets four kilograms of milk everyday. She sells the milk at the local market and gets Tk 45-50 per day. Her income will increase more when the other cow gives birth to another calf.

The Shahayak Committee Secretary leased two decimals of land to her to cultivate Napier grass which would help her solve the fodder problem.

Now Mamata is a happy woman content with life. She does not depend on other's charity to feed for herself and her son anymore. She says she will never forget the timely action and great service of the Shahayak Committee.

PHOTO: STAR
Mamata Begum takes care of her cows at her house at Ghonpara village in Sadar upazila, Nilphamari. The civil society has made life of the poor woman easier.