

SNAPS

Eight Proshika employees held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Gopalganj* Eight employees of Proshika, a major national NGO, were arrested here by police under Section 54 on the night following Thursday.

The arrested are Md Abdur Rahim, Gopalganj Zonal Co-ordinator, Golam Mostofa Biswas, Area Co-ordinator, Benay Bhusan Sen, Assistant Co-ordinator, Bipul Chandra Ghose, Accountant of Kotalipara Upazila office, Adhir Kumar Biswas, Sadar upazila Co-ordinator, Golam Barkat, Accountant of Tungipara upazila office, Mominur Rahman, Co-ordinator and Kazi Alam, Assistant Co-ordinator of Maksudpur upazila Proshika office.

All were produced before the court on Thursday. The magistrate concerned sent them to custody.

The arrested had allegedly been trying to organise people at the grassroots level to overthrow the present government by April 30 through a movement, police told this correspondent.

Trawler, arms, ammunition seized by Navy

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barisal* A trawler was seized and arms, ammunition including sharp weapons were recovered by the Bangladesh Navy after chasing pirates in the Kirtankhola river on Thursday night.

Personnels of BNS Shahid Daulat anchored at the BIWTA Marine Workshop base, chased a running trawler in the river at about 10-30 that night. After a chase for about five kilometre, the pirates of the trawler fled away abandoning the vessel at the bank near Kamakati. One country made gun with five rounds of ammunition and sharp weapons were recovered from the trawler. Those were handed over to Barisal Kotwali police.

6 pirates caught by people

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Patuakhali* Six pirates were caught by people in Sadar upazila here on Wednesday.

Two home-made pipe guns, two bullets and five buffaloes were also recovered from their possession.

The pirates are Ali Hossain, 38, Razzak, 24, Touhidul, 25, Sentu, 25, Kamrul Mir, 26, and Jahangir, 25, according to police and locals.

They looted five buffaloes of a farmer from a trawler at Koralia village in Rangabali thana on Tuesday evening. While going to Jhalakati, on way at Islampur village in Sadar upazila they tried to loot another trawler. Hearing a hue and cry, local people rushed there and caught the pirates. Afterwards, they handed over them to Sadar thana police.

Jalampur village wears a deserted look after a murder case

JAHANGIR ALAM, back from Sharishabari (Jalampur)

Netrakona: Most of the villagers at Borobaria in Sharishabari thana of Jalampur district have left their houses in fear of police arrest.

Sharishabari office-in-charge (OC) went to the village to investigate the Khalilur Rahman Murder Case on Tuesday. He found none, not even any child or old man there except slain Khalilur Rahman's family and relatives.

Khalilur Rahman of the village was killed allegedly by his rival Nado Mia's group with sharp weapons on Monday.

A murder case was filed with Sharishabari police station accusing 32 persons including Nado Mia.

After filing of the case police 'agents' went to each and every house there and misguided the houseowners saying the number of accused as 64.

However, the villagers are not at all aware of the real culprits.

While visiting the village on Thursday this correspondent also found almost all the villagers' houses under lock and key.

However, finding a schoolteacher he approached him who said to him that initially male villagers left their abodes which was followed by their female counterparts.

A villager requesting anonymity told this correspondent that till date police did not name any accused whereas they sent their agents to rich farmers to give them bribe, otherwise they threaten to include their names in the chargesheet.

On contact, absconding Nado Mia told this correspondent that Sharishabari thana OC demanded five lakh taka from him as bribe. The OC promised to deduct names of all the accused from the chargesheet on payment of the money, he informed. Nado told this correspondent in a pensive mood that he had no ability to pay five lakh taka to police.

The concerned OC told The Daily Star that after investigation the real culprits would be traced. He also refuted all the allegations against him.

From darkness to light

Once smugglers are now affluent farmers in bordering Taluigacha village in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Smuggling was their main profession. At times they worked as day labourers also.

Now they are affluent farmers by cultivating patal (a summer vegetable).

It was a different scene at bordering Taluigachha village in Banshdah union in the Sadar upazila, about 13 kilometres from the district town.

There were greens all around, covering about 250 acres of land. People were all smiles, plucking and packing patal and working in fields.

This vegetable has brought the villagers to light and luck from darkness.

Marginal former and landless share-croppers are now well off with hefty profits from their small holdings.

Rezwan Mollah, 56, and Fazlur Rahman, 45, of the village deserves the credit as they took the initiative four years back. Both used to carry smuggled goods or work as day labourers to feed their families.

In 2000, Rezwan Mollah leased

12 decimal land and sowed cuttings of high yielding variety of patal plants brought from a village across the border.

"I earned Tk 20,000 after paying Tk 4000 to the land owner that year", he told this correspondent during a visit to the village last week. He then expanded the cultivation.

This year, he leased two bighas of land at Tk 24000 and cultivated patal. He has already earned Tk 53,000 and expects to get more Tk 27000 after meeting the production cost. He has employed three men in his fields.

Rezwan Mollah said he was inspired by seeing the success of farmers in Amudia, Tarali and Hakimpur villages across the border in India.

"Seeing their success, I cultivated patal and because successful". The bordering lands in Bangladesh are also suitable for cultivation of this vegetable.

Marginal farmer Fazlur Rahman, of Taluigachha village cultivated the vegetable on his 40 decimal land and earned Tk 60,000 in 2001. He

expects to earn Tk 70,000 this year.

"I have no training. Only experience helped me," he said.

His son Palash is an honours student at Dhaka College. Fortune smiled on him since he gave up smuggling and started patal cultivation three years back, he said. Now he employs three labourers.

Their success encouraged others in Taluigachha and neighbouring villages.

Share-cropper Akhtarul Islam, 35, son of Shahed Ali of Taluigachha was an unemployed young man. He leased 45 decimal land and cultivated patal. This year he has already earned Tk 30,000 and expects to get more Tk 26,000 after meeting the production cost including payment of Tk 14000 to the landowner.

Another marginal farmer Abul Kashem of the same village cultivated the vegetable in his two and a half bighas of land this year. He is expected to make profit of Tk 90,000.

Zahidul Islam has already earned T, 55,000 from his two and a half bighas of land.

Share-cropper Hafizul Islam, Asad, Rashid, Mokhfar Ali, Motaleb, Abul and some others of the same village are now happy as patal farming has changed their lot.

Helal, chairman of Banshdah Union Parishad said, most of the villagers at Taluigachha were poor and landless. They were engaged in smuggling or worked as day labourers.

'All most all the villagers have given up smuggling and are either cultivating patal or working in patal fields' he said.

He lamented that local agriculture officials did not come to assist or encourage them.

But they have problem also. The main problem is transporting the product to markets. They are often deprived of fair price by traders coming from Dhaka, who offer between Tk 200 and Tk 250 per maund, they said.



PHOTO: STAR

Farmers plucking patal from fields at Taluigachha (left) and traders from Dhaka packing the vegetable after purchase (right).

People say 'no' to dam building

300-feet WDB dam being built with Tk 75 lakh feared to stop normal flow of the lone canal at Char Zahiruddin in Bhola

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barisal*

The Water Development Board is constructing a cross dam on the Sider Dhon canal in Char Jahiruddin in Bhola despite protests by people.

On Tuesday, the local people staged a demonstration in the area against construction of the dam claiming that it would stop the natural flow of the canal and affect farming on about 2400 acres of land.

But the WDB continued its work.

The demonstrators claimed that the cross dam, being constructed at its confluence with the Meghna, will made the three-kilometre canal dead. This will linger floods and create water logging in the wet season and affect irrigation during the dry season, they told this correspondent during a visit.

The Sider Dhon canal is the only waterway running through Char Jahiruddin.

The WDB is constructing the 300 feet dam at a cost of Tk 75 lakh. Some sources in the WDB

said the dam is being built to bring 30 acres of land under cultivation.

The local people also claimed that the canal will be silted gradually if the dam is built, which will affect the ecology.

Char Jahiruddin is surrounded by the Meghna on all sides. In the rainy season, vast areas of the island go under water due to absence of protection dam. The flood water recedes through the Sider Dhon. Moreover, it provides river traffic facility to about 24,000 islanders.

Talking to this correspondent Union Parishad member Habibul Haque said, instead of constructing the cross dam on the canal, a dam could be constructed around the island with the money to protect it from floods and natural calamities.

WDB contractor Golam Mostofa, when contacted said the cross dam is being constructed as per a government plan.

WDB officials in Bhola said they informed higher authority about people's demonstrations against construction of the cross dam.



PHOTO: STAR

A portion of the 300-feet cross dam (left) being built by WAPDA on Sider Dhon canal in Char Jahiruddin in Bhola and local people raise fists in protest (right). The photos were taken on Wednesday.

Erosion threatens to devour four Gaibandha unions

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Gaibandha*

Four unions in Fulchhari upazila have been facing the threat of extinction due to unabated river erosion which already rendered 700 families shelterless.

The erosion has intensified in recent days due to increase in water level in the Brahmaputra basin following onrush of water from the upper catchment.

The badly affected unions are Kanchipara, Fazlupur, Uria and Gajaria. Last week the river devoured over 500 dwelling houses including a vast crop land.

In Kanchipara union only, over 200 dwelling houses disappeared from the river bank within two days rendering 150 families homeless.

Kanchipara Union Parishad (UP) chairman Akbar Hossain told this correspondent on April 20 that the Brahmaputra devoured seven out of 13 villages in his union only. The villages are Sayedpur, Resulpur, Bhasherpara, Balashi, Saterkandi, Notidanga and Harudanga.

The Brahmaputra is fast

approaching towards Gaibandha town which is now only four kilometre off the river bank.

However, the Executive Engineer of the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), Gaibandha told this correspondent

that they placed a 200 crore taka master plan to the higher authorities to combat erosion along the western bank of the Brahmaputra. But the master plan is yet to be finalised, he added.



PHOTO: STAR

Kutcha houses at Bhasherpara village in Fulchhari upazila, Gaibandha on verge of extinction due to unabated erosion by the Brahmaputra.

Dacoity at Barisal STT prosecutor's house

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barisal*

Dacoits beat the wife of Mazibur Rahaman Nantu, Special Public Prosecutor of Barisal Speedy Trial Tribunal and looted about Tk two lakh in cash and gold ornaments from the house in the city in the early hours of Saturday.

Nantu however told newsmen yesterday that it was an attempt to kill or threaten him. He was not at the house on that night. Special police have been deployed at the house.

About 25 armed men entered the house at Baidhya Para by breaking the collapsible gate at about 3 am.

They asked his wife Laily Begum where he was. Not finding him, they beat her, tied other inmates at gunpoint and decamped with ornaments and Tk 30,000 from the steel almira, according to a case filed with the Kotwali police. But no one named as accused.

Police visited the spot yesterday morning.

Advocate Nantu said some sensational murder cases are under trial in the tribunal.

BNP rivals' clash leaves 24 injured in Magura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Magura*

At least 24 people were injured, eight of them critically in a clash between two rival groups of the ruling BNP at Sarontadia village in Sreepur upazila on Friday morning.

Critically injured Bachchu Molla, 32, Shahidul Joarder, 27, Nizam Khondoker, 45, Akter Hossain, 28, Amjad Ali, 28, Selim, 22, Saiful, 29, and Alimuzzaman, 35, were admitted to Sreepur Health Complex and Magura Sadar Hospital.

Locals told this correspondent a long-standing rivalry over establishing supremacy in the area was prevailing between Sreepur thana unit Jubo Dal President Ashraful Islam Nalim and an expelled member of the same unit BNP named Mushfiquur Rahman Kanon of the village.

Kanon's supporters hacked two supporters of rival group, resulting in the violent clash in the morning.

Sreepur thana police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Both the feuding groups used lethal weapons during the clash.

No case was lodged till filing of the report at 5:15pm on the day.

RETALIATION BY UPDF, PCJSS

10 abducted in Khagrachhari, 5 rescued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rangamati*

Ten tribesmen were abducted by rivals allegedly belonging to UPDF and PCJSS in separate incidents on Friday and the day before in Matiranga and Guimara in Khagrachhari.

On information, army and police on Friday rescued the five abducted by PCJSS.

Talks with the UPDF captors of the rest five through local tribal leaders are going on for rescue of the rest, Khagrachhari SP-in-Charge Mahbubur Rahman told this correspondent over telephone yesterday.

If the talks fail, joint operation will be launched to rescue them, he said.

On Thursday night, a gang of UPDF (United Peoples Democratic Front) activists drove to Paindougpara village in Matiranga upazila and charged headman Boidhya Ranjan Chakma with sheltering PCJSS (Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity) men.

As he denied and protested, the gang took five villagers away at gunpoint. They were Sujon Chakma, 26, Asheesh Chakma, 25, Noni Chakma, 20, Mohon Tripura, 30, and Manobendra Chakma, 20.

To retaliate, a PCJSS gang drove to Master Para in Guimara upazila Friday morning and abducted five UPDF men including its local leader Konok Chakma. The four others are Kartik Chakma alias Kadira, 26, Shomvu Nath Chakma, Koloi Nani Chakma, 25, and Nilu Mohon Chakma, 60.

Being informed, a police patrol team and army personnel rush to the area and rescued the five immediately. None of the captors could be arrested.

But the fate of villagers abducted from Matiranga is still unknown.

JP leader Asadur Rahman 'unwanted' in Syedpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Nilphamari*

The Syedpur Poura Committee of Jatiya Party has declared former lawmaker Dr Asadur Rahman, brother-in-law of JP chief H M Ershad, "unwanted" in the town.

The declaration was made at a party rally, held in front of a local cinema hall on Wednesday.

The announcement followed temporary expulsion of Syedpur Poura JP President Abdul Hamid Master and Vice-president Mokhlessur Rahman from the party by Asadur Rahman and another JP central leader NK Alam Chowdhury following a clash between rival factions of the party in the town on last Friday (April 16).

Abdul Hamid Master and Mokhlessur Rahman had filed nomination papers to contest for the

post of Syedpur Municipal chairman. Recently, Abdul Hamid Master withdrew his candidature in support of Moklesur Rahman.

Asadur Rahman is also a former vice-chancellor of Mymensingh Agriculture University.

At Wednesday's rally, Abdul Hamid Master and Mokhlessur Rahman said Asadur Rahman and Alam Chowdhury have no right to expel them from the party. Only the party committee can take such a decision. Other leaders of the party's district committee were also present at the rally.

On Friday last, (April 16) Asadur Rahman and Alam Chowdhury were manhandled while they were going to attend a party rally, held in the town in support of Joyнал Abedin, another JP leader contesting in the municipal polls.

Woman gangraped, strangled

2 men murdered in Kushtia, Chuadanga

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kushtia*

A housewife was strangled after gangrape and a man was slaughtered allegedly by outlaws in two incidents in the district on Friday night.

In another incident on the same night, a young man was called out of his house at Chuadanga town and slaughtered.

Outlaws picked up Sahida Khatun, 30, from her house at Dangerpara village in Daulatpur upazila at about 10 pm in absence of her husband Umar Ali.

They took her to the bank of nearby Mathabhangra river, strangled her after gangrape and threw the body into the river.

On information, police recovered the body yesterday morning and sent it to Kushtia General Hospital for autopsy.

Police said outlaws were involved in the incident.

In another incident, eight alleged outlaws stormed into the house of one Abul Kasem 60, at Sultanpur in

Kumarkahli upazila Friday evening, took him to a nearby field and slaughtered him.

Quoting villagers, police said Kasem had enmity with his neighbours over land.

Police recovered the body yesterday morning and sent it to Kushtia General Hospital for autopsy.

Two separate cases were filed.

According to Chuadanga police, a gang called one Sahin, 30, from his house in the town, took him to the railway crossing and slit his throat.

Police said, Sahin was accused in several murder cases filed with the Sadar thana.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Chuadanga Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

Victim's father Rafiqui Islam in a case filed with police alleged that one Mafiz, son of Anawaar Hossain of Muslim Para in the town, called his son out of the house.