

SNAPS

Victim's house torched by rapists

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

The house of a woman was set on fire by her alleged rapists at Borotia village in Ghor upazila on Sunday night for filing a case against them.

This correspondent found rape victim Sunity Chakravarty's along with her 12-year-old daughter Provti and five-year-old son Sujay crying beside the devastated house.

Police told this correspondent Borotia Union Parishad (UP) member Rawan Ali and his accomplices Dinesh Sarker, Dulal, Lalan and Delu raped the children's mother one month back.

Later, Ghor police arrested Rawan Ali member and Dinesh while others absconded.

The victim disclosed that the accomplices threatened her to withdraw the case, but she did not bow down at the threat. The culprits retaliated by setting on fire her house.

Sunity filed a case in connection with the fire incident with Ghor thana police.

Killer gets life in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A killer was awarded life term imprisonment by a court in Chuadanga on Monday.

The convict is Rabiul Islam, son of Monhor of Khaskara in Alamdanga, Chuadanga.

He slaughtered his neighbour Sanwar Ali, 42, while sleeping over a land dispute on November 26, 2001.

Chuadanga district and sessions judge AFM Mostafa pronounced the verdict.

A laudable initiative

Kushtia bidi factory owner signs accord not to employ children: NGO to provide schooling

AMANUR AMAN, Kushtia

It was a unique occasion. In the first such event in the country, a big bidi factory released 200 children from hazardous jobs and signed an agreement not to employ children anymore.

At the simple and solemn ceremony here on Monday, the children got books from SETU, an NGO, which signed the agreement with the owners of Mansur Bidi Factory.

The agreement was sponsored by ILO (International Labour Organization) and IPECL (International Programme for Elimination of Child Labour).

Representatives of different international bodies, local NGOs and some other bidi factories, government officials, lawyers, journalists and the local elite were

present at the signing ceremony, held at Kushtia municipality auditorium.

The event is viewed as a turning point in eliminating child labour from bidi factories and tobacco industry. Representatives of other bidi factories said they are also thinking of eliminating child labour from their factories.

"We are also planning to eliminate child labour", said Abu Bakr Siddiqui, who represented Nasir Bidi Factory, a big tobacco industry in the district.

Nine-year-old Aminul Islam of Haripur, who had started making bidi sticks since the age of five at Mansur Bidi factory, said he is very happy that he will go to school.

"I also want my friends to go to school with me", he told this corre-

spondent.

Islam will be among many who will go to school, arranged by SETU with assistance from ILO and other donors. SETU will give all facilities for their education. Those who will not attend school will be trained in different vocations, its officials said.

SETU and Bangladesh Trade Union Centre (TUC) have been working to eliminate child labour from hazardous work in bidi factories and tobacco processing units. Kushtia is a tobacco growing area.

According to survey made by SETU and TUC, there are about 3000 child labourers in eight big Bidi factories in the district.

After signing the agreement Mansur Bidi Factory owner Mossahraf Hossain said he is happy that the children will now go

to school. His factory will survive without child workers, he said. Child labour should be eliminated from this hazardous job in unhealthy atmosphere, he said.

Mossahraf Hossain, SETU President Omar Ali and ILO Social Monitor ILO Jaganmoy Projesh Biswas signed the agreement.

Ahasan Nabab, Assistant Programme Coordinator of TUC moderated the function.

It was addressed by, among others, Haripur Union Parishad Chairman Mostak Hossain Murad, journalist Matur Rahman Lattu, Jasim Uddin Akand, Abu Bakar Siddique of Nasir Bidi factory and ILO official Mahfuz Alam.

The speakers urged all bidi factory owners to do away with child labour.



A breakthrough finally made... Owners of Mansur Bidi Factory signing an agreement with SETU and ILO officials not to employ children in the factory any more (left) and children march streets at Daulatpur, Kushtia Monday demanding a ban on child labour in tobacco industry.



PHOTO: STAR

Saidpur Rly Workshop to be modernised

Communications Minister moved by success of Bangladeshi engineers: Export quality carriages can be built, officials say

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamanj

Overwhelmed with the success of Bangladesh engineers, Communications Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda has said the Saidpur Railway Workshop will be modernised and its carriage construction unit reopened.

Amid cheers from officials and employees, Huda said manpower would be recruited and all assistance provided to fully utilise the potential of the big and old workshop.

"Its past glory will be restored and if necessary, foreign experts will be engaged", he told a function marking inauguration of a luxury passenger carriage built at the workshop on Tuesday.

The minister inspected the newly constructed carriage and was visibly moved to see the success of Bangladeshi engineers at the workshop, so far regarded as a burden on the government.

The minister's declaration created great enthusiasm among officials and employees the workshop.

Local MP Amzad Hossen Sarkar, Railway General Manager Saifur Rahman, Chief Mechanical Engineer Abul Hossen, Chief Planning Officer Abdul Halim, Divisional Superintendent of the Khalilur Rahman were also present on the occasion.

Divisional Engineer Khalilur Rahman later told newsmen that Bangladeshi engineers are capable



PHOTO: STAR

Communication Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda alighting from the railway carriage after inspection. The carriage has been built at Saidpur Railway Workshop at less than one fourth of its import cost.

of building air-conditioned export quality passenger carriages at the workshop at lesser costs if it is modernised.

The carriage was built with only Tk. 81 lakh against its import cost of Tk 5 crore, he said.

It was built using the under-frame of a luggage van damaged in an accident.

The 22.2 metre long and 3.9 metre wide carriage fitted with roof-mounted air-conditioner and other modern facilities is comparable to

imported ones, railway sources said. It was built in about three months.

They said two passenger carriages were built in a month at the workshop before the carriage construction unit was closed in 1991 for unknown reasons. Some sources claimed that it was closed to cripple the factory and encourage import. Since 1991, carriages were repaired and goods wagons constructed at the factory.

Suspension of Surma hanging bridge project triggers protests

Month-long agitation includes 'grand rally' on May 20, hartal on May 31

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet.

Suspension of a government decision to construct a hanging bridge to replace the 68-year old Keane Bridge over Surma river in Sylhet city has triggered widespread agitation in the district.

The Department of Roads & Highways in a notification published in newspapers two weeks ago suspended the earlier decision to construct a ganging bridge. It did not

make any alternative proposal.

All political parties and socio-cultural and professional bodies protested the decision. Some of those have started agitation programmes, holding rallies and bringing out processions in the city and other areas. Posters have appeared on city walls protesting the decision.

Leaders of all political parties including the ruling party have demanded immediate steps to

implement the hanging bridge project.

The Greater Sylhet Ganodabi Parishad, a nonpartisan forum, launched a month-long programme with a rally in the city on May 2. On May 4, it held 10 public meetings at Court Point, Rikabi Bazaar, Sobhanighat, Shibganj, Tilagarh, Ambarkhana, Tukerbazar, Station Road and Shibbari in the city and at Hetimganj Bazar in Golapganj upazila.

It also formed a human chain on Sunday in front of the Keane Bridge. People from all classes and representing different professional and trade groups joined the rally with placards, posters and festoons.

The month-long programme includes rallies at all district and upazila headquarters and commercial centres in Sylhet division and sending memorandums to the Prime Minister.

It will hold a big rally in the city's Court Point May 20, to be attended by leaders and activists of all political parties, sources in the Parishad said.

A half-day hartal in Sylhet district has also been called on May 31.

Speakers at a rally prior to Sunday's human chain said that after necessary formalities, the project was approved at an ECNEC (Executive Committee of National Economic Council) meeting on October 23, 2002 with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in the chair.

Tender for appointment of consultants was floated and it was decided to complete the construction by June 2004.

But the date for laying foundation of the bridge by the Prime Minister was changed several times.

The Communication Minister and the Finance Minister also announced on several occasions that a hanging bridge would be constructed.

They said tougher programmes will be announced on May 31 if the decision is not withdrawn.



PHOTO: STAR

A partial view of the human chain formed near the old Keane Bridge over Surma river in Sylhet city on Sunday protesting suspension of the government decision.

20 hurt in Jhenidah post-polls violence

Cop bullet-hit by criminal in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Twenty people were injured in a post-polls clash at Kabirpur village of Saikupa upazila in Jhenidah district on Monday.

The clash ensued when Mizan, a defeated candidate of Saikupa municipal polls beat Shyamal Kumar Adhikari, a lecturer of Saikupa Girls' College for lending his support to winning candidate Abul Kalam Azad.

As the news spread all over, both the groups rushed with lethal weapons and locked in a fight leaving 20 people injured.

Of the injured five, were admitted to a local hospital.

In Kushtia on the same day a police constable was injured in another incident.

The constable was wounded by bullet at Bheramara when an armed gang opened fire on a police patrol team in Bakapur area at about 12pm on the day.

An hour after the clash police arrested Harun, 30, with a pipe gun. The gang was involved in lifting railway sleeper, according to Bheramara Railway Police.

31 trauma victims treated

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

The Bangladesh Rehabilitation Centre for Trauma Victims (BRCT) on Monday treated the victims who were tortured by the joint forces during the 'Operation Clean Heart' Here.

The mobile treatment camp set up at the local Maya Clinic and Nursing Home where 31 persons received free treatment of their physical and mental ailments.

BRCT regional co-ordinator Khan Md Rostum Ali acted as facilitator while physicians Dr Laila Arjumand, Dr Saifunnessa Zaman, Dr Shamsuzzoha Khandker, President of BMA Gaibandha, Dr EK Saifque, Secretary BMA Gaibandha, Dr Nazrul Islam, Medical Officer, Gaibandha Sadar Hospital and TFT Co-ordinator Dipok Kumar Pal examined the patients and gave their advices.

Tk 8.60 lakh smuggled goods seized, 4 held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

The Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) jawans of 7 Rifles Battalion, Sarail arrested four persons and recovered a huge quantity of smuggled goods worth about 8,61,086 taka in a month.

Seized goods include Phensidyl, hemp, wine, bidi, motorparts, sugar, by-cycle, saree, cosmetics, eggs, oil betel-leaves and dry fish.

Three separate cases were filed with Akhaura police station and the arrested four were handed over to police.

BDR jawans also seized 157.550 kilogram of hemp during their drive last month.

Uplift programme in Gaibandha faces setback

MP-UP chairmen discord over sharing of foodgrains

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

The Food for Works Village Infrastructure Renovation Programme in Sundarganj upazila faces setback due to disagreement between the local member of parliament (MP) and the union parishad (UP) chairmen over sharing of allocated foodgrains.

The Relief and Disaster Management Ministry allocated 80 metric tons of rice on February 22 and 50 tons of foodgrains on April 6 for implementation of renovation work under the village development programme.

The Sundarganj Upazila Project Implementation Committee comprising local MP as advisor, upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) as president, project implementation officer as member-secretary and concerned UP

chairmen as members were entrusted for sharing of the allocated food for implementation of the work.

But there arose a discord between the MP and UP chairmen over sharing of foodgrains.

However, the member-secretary summoned a meeting of the committee on April 10, 2004 for approval and distribution of allocated foodgrains. But local MP Mowlana Abdul Aziz asked Sundarganj UNO to defer the meeting which led to uncertainty in the implementation of programme.

Sundarganj UNO informed the matter to the Relief Ministry through the deputy commissioner (DC) of Gaibandha.

However, no solution is still in sight causing uncertainty in the village development programme.

Piracy on the Brahmaputra

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Pirates on Monday looted cash and goods worth one and a half lakh taka from a merchant boat at Putimari here along the Brahmaputra basin. Seven persons were also injured.

According to eye-witnesses, a merchant boat sailed for Gaibandha from Kartimari shoal in Kurigram district with different kinds of goods. When the boat reached Putimari in Gaibandha district, about 15 to 16 pirates equipped with deadly weapons on board another boat attacked it. The pirates fired blank shots creating panic among the passengers. They captured the merchant boat and beat up its inmates and looted cash and goods.

Seven critically injured persons including the boatman were admitted to Gaibandha Sadar Hospital.

Before fleeing the pirates snapped the fuel pipe of the merchant boat. A fisherman's boat pulled it to Syedpur Ghat.

22 held in B'baria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Brahmanbaria police in a special drive arrested 22 persons from different parts of the district within 24 hours.

The arrested were absconding for a long period. Different criminal cases were lodged against them including two murder cases.

AL MP killing slated

STAR NATIONAL DESK

The Savar unit of the Awami League (AL) and the Rajshahi University Teachers' Association (RUTA) condemned the killing of AL lawmaker Ahsanullah Master.

Our JU Correspondent reported that a mourning procession had been brought out at Savar on Monday to condemn the dastardly act.

The procession began at local bus stand and ended at the party office at around 5 pm on the day. A meeting followed the procession where speakers demanded immediate arrest and punishment to the killers after a proper inquiry.

Among others, party leaders Hasina Doula, Ali Haider, Haji Abdul Gani, A Halim, Parvez Dewan, Sagiruzzaman Shakik and Mahbuba Parvin addressed the

meeting.

Our RU Correspondent reported that the Rajshahi University Teachers' Association (RUTA) in a statement on Saturday expressed deep shock at the brutal killing.

RUTA also conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family saying we are stunned and shocked at the killing of the veteran freedom fighter. RUTA demanded immediate arrest to the killers and give exemplary punishment to them.

The statement was signed by RUTA president Prof Khalequzzaman and joint secretary Sadekul Arefin Matin.

Other socio-cultural organisations like Sammilito Sangskritik Jote, Anushilion Nattyto Dal, Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote, Bangabandhu Parishad and Udichi also condemned the killing.



Rezaul Karim Reza,

Appeal for help

A CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Rezaul Karim Reza, a social worker of Kurigram district and a former athlete of Kurigram District Sports Association is now suffering from blood cancer.

He is now under treatment of renowned hematologist Dr M A Rashid who suggested him to go to either Singapore or Thailand for better treatment at a cost of at least 30 lakh taka. It is quite impossible on his part to bear alone the cost of the treatment.

He seeks economic assistance from well-to-do persons of the society. Philanthropists are requested to deposit donation at Account Number: 18160/66, Sonali Bank, Kurigram branch.