

SNAPS

Oikya Mancho leaders exchange views

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Rangpur

Bikolpohra Bangladesh and Gano Forum leaders under a common banner of Jatiya Oikya Mancha exchanged opinions with journalists by holding a press conference at Rangpur Press Club on Friday. The leaders will visit Dinajpur on October 18 and Rangpur on October 19. Their visit has been aimed at preparing a people's agenda called Gono Ishtear based on dialogue with people. The leaders also informed the dialogue will concentrate on the nature of government according to people's hopes and aspiration. Convener of Gono Forum Shankar Bose, member of the national executive committee and central coordinator of Gono Istebar Firoz M Hassan, executive convener of Jubo Dhara ATM Kamal and executive committee member of Sramik Dhara Ainul Hoque were present at the meeting.

Shrimp cultivators urged to use virus-free fry

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Satkhira

Speakers at a seminar on Saturday called upon shrimp cultivators to use virus-free fry to increase production. The seminar titled 'Motivating cultivators to use virus-free fry in shrimp cultivation' was organised jointly by Niribili Hatchery and Shrimp Seal Of Quality (SSOQ). Held at a hotel in the town, the seminar was addressed by world renowned shrimp expert Gralon Bynar as a key-note speaker while Kudrat-E-Kabir Khulna regional director of SSOQ presided over it. Bynar told the seminar shrimp production will be increased in Bangladesh if cultivators use virus-free fry. The method is environment-friendly and produces virus-free shrimps.

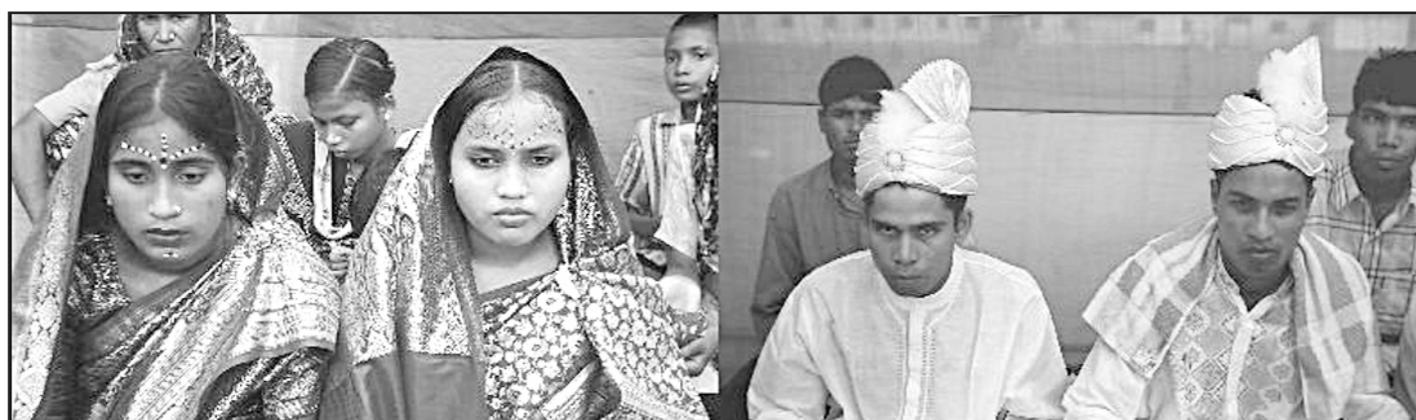


PHOTO: STAR

Brides and bridegrooms are seen on the podium of a grand marriage party held at Jaldhaka Stadium on Tuesday, above, while a partial view of a big audience gathered at the venue to witness the dowry-free marriage ceremony, below.

Thousands say no to dowry

RDRS beneficiaries evolve a unique way to motivate people in dowry-free marriage in Jaldhaka upazila, Nilphamari

E A M ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Over 10,000 people attended a different type of dowry-free marriage ceremony at Jaldhaka stadium on Tuesday.

On the occasion two courageous youths Sirajul Islam and Mizanur

Rahman married two teens Farida Akhtar Banu and Rubi Begum without taking dowry.

Ultra poor Atiqul Islam, 65, of East Balagzam village and Reazuddin of Chaoradangi village were suffering from mental agony

as they could not marry off their marriageable daughters due to would-be bridegrooms' demand for dowry.

Finally the poor fathers saw a ray of hope when 'Village Federations' came forward to solve their problems delightfully.

Village Federation is an organisation being run by RDRS (Rangpur-Dinajpur Rural Service) beneficiaries. It was formed in all the villages of Jaldhaka upazila. Jaldhaka Upazila Federation is their central committee. The Federation leaders told The Daily Star it is their work to identify problems and find out a solution. They also fight against dowry, repression on women and children and aid violence. They create fund by their own subscription while RDRS provides them moral and coordinated support, according to Village Federation leaders.

RDRS launched the programme from Harish Chandra Pathi village about three months back. The aim was to create awareness against dowry and its elimination from society. Village Federation started motivating people and convinced 10 bridegrooms and their parents to make arrangement for marriage without dowry.

The wedding ceremony which was discussed at the beginning of this story was the first one.

At the beginning of the actual ceremony, a big colourful procession was brought out in Jaldhaka town. Processionists chanted various anti-dowry slogans while parading different streets.

After that a discussion meeting was held at the stadium. Upazila Federation president Atiar Rahman presided over the meeting.

The deputy commissioner (DC) of Nilphamari Saiful Alam was chief guest at the meeting. In his speech he expressed that he was overwhelmed at the sight of such a big crowd in a noble occasion. He said that it was indeed a positive sign of awareness among poor people against dowry. He lauded the role of poor people's organisation Village Federation. He requested the Federation members to eliminate dowry from at least Jaldhaka upazila. He assured all possible help from the district administration and said that there are strict laws against dowry.

The DC said when womenfolk would be educated and self-reliant wage earners, only then total elimination of dowry from society would

be possible. He also cited various steps taken by the government for spreading female education all over.

The special guest of the function and administrative director of RDRS Dr Nurul Islam said that the government and NGOs had taken various steps to eliminate dowry, repression on women and children and establishment of basic rights of people. But he said when general people become conscious and come forward with open mind then the social curses vanish.

Senior programme manager of RDRS, Nilphamari Liqat Ali Khan disclosed that Village Federation is an organisation which performs their work independently. He said that RDRS only coordinates and advise them while performing their task.

Jaldhaka upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) Saodagar Mustafizur Rahman also addressed the meeting.

President of the meeting Atiar Rahman, also president of Upazila Federation, Jaldhaka in his speech said that members of Village Federation organised the dowry-free marriage ceremony utilising their popular subscription.

After the meeting, brides and bridegrooms came to the stage in presence of a big audience and other guests.

A local religious priest performed the rituals and the 'Qazi' of Jaldhaka registered the marriage.

Amidst cheering and applause from the audience, the DC handed over the brides to bridegrooms' hands. It was certainly a big roaring against dowry.

He also handed over saplings of fruit-bearing and wooden trees to the brides. He also distributed a Black Bengal Goat to a bride.

Afterwards, 'munajat' was offered for happy and long lasting conjugal life of the couples.

When this correspondent asked bridegroom Sirajul Islam to tell the reason of his bold decision, he replied he is well enough to earn money for maintenance of his family. So he hated to depend on his father-in-law's charity, he added.

In a similar way, other bridegroom Mizanur Rahman said he was honoured greatly by the villagers for not taking dowry from in-laws.

Both the brides expressed their gratitude to Village Federation for the happy marriage.

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'Corrupt' police official defies court order

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

A police official has been serving in Brahmanbaria Thana although he defied court summons twice.

The official is Nazmul Haque, a sub-inspector (SI) of police.

Previously he was posted at Kishoreganj Thana as SI where he tortured and abused the wife of a freedom fighter misusing power.

Freedom fighter Abdul Aziz had a long standing dispute over land with one person named Abdur Razzak of Islampur village in Mithamain upazila, Kishoreganj, according to court sources.

Aziz sued Razzak with the Assistant Judge Court, Kishoreganj. The court verdict went in favour of Aziz. But his rival Razzak bribed 'corrupt' SI Nazmul who called Aziz's wife Asia at the thana by a messenger on June 16, 1999. On arrival Asia saw her husband's rival Razzak and his followers there. Giving a stamp, SI Nazmul asked her to sign on it. But she refused to comply with the 'corrupt' SI's order. The act of corruption infuriated Nazmul who beat up her in front of

her rivals.

Later, Asia filed a case with Kishoreganj magistrate court complaining against five persons including the SI.

All but SI Nazmul surrendered to court and were granted bail. Then the court issued a warrant of arrest against him terming him an absconder.

Nazmul became more violent and began to threaten the complainant to withdraw the case. As the complainant remained firm in her decision, SI Nazmul implicated her son Mostafa in a false arms case. Now Mostafa is in Mymensingh jail.

As the police officer violated the court order repeatedly and failed to surrender before court, the court issued arrest warrants anew via Kishoreganj SP and the IGP (inspector general of police) on November 28, 2000.

Surprisingly, the SI was transferred to Brahmanbaria Thana where he has been serving till writing of this report.

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