

REMOVING CHILD LABOUR

Three more Kushtia bidi factories sign accord

AMANUR AMAN, Kushtia

Owners of three more Bidi factories in the district have joined hands with the ILO and three local NGOs with a noble mission to eliminate child labour from hazardous jobs in tobacco industry.

The factories are Monmohon Bidi Factory, Kalam Bidi Factory and Sonali Bidi Factory.

Their owners signed agreements with officials of ILO and three NGOs-SETU, BTUK and PIPASA—that they would no more employ child labour in their factories. The agree-

ments were signed recently in Kushtia town in presence of district administration officials, university teachers and the local elite.

The signing ceremony was followed by a seminar on Elimination of Worst Form of Child Labour: our Role".

Kushtia Additional Deputy Commissioner Mahab Uddin Jamadar, ILO's Chief Technical Advisor Suwjeeba Fonseka, Consultant Keth Fisher, Sector Coordinator AT Siddique, SETU Executive Director MA Kader, BTUK Assistant Programme Coordinator

Ahsanul Haq, PIPASA Executive Director Samayal Choudhury, Dr. AHM Zehadul Karim of Rajshahi University, Prof Dr. Julfikar Ali and Dr. Rezaul Karim of Islamic University, Dr. Amredranath Biswas and Abdul Gafur attended the programmes.

Earlier, 881 children were taken out of the hazardous jobs in these three factories.

With this, eight Bidi factories have so far signed agreements not to employ child labour.

The five factories which signed agreements earlier are Akiz, Naisr,

N Jaman, Banani and Monsur Bidi factories.

A total of 1733 children were taken out of the five factories—354 from Akiz Didi Factory, 426 from Naisr, 254 from N Zaman, 328 from Banani and 53 from Monsur Bidi factory.

ILO sponsored the programme styled PEWFLC (Preventing and Eliminating Worst Forms of Child Labour) in Bangladesh in 2001 to take out child labour from Bidi factories and to arrange their education and vocational training.

The three NGOs are implementing the programme, funded by the US Department of Labour (USDOL).

According to a survey by SETU and BTUK, at least 5000 children were working in the eight Bidi factories.

SETU has taken 1459 children out of the factories and 896 of the village and took shelter at a farmer's house, personifying a potato trader. He told villagers that he wanted to purchase newly harvested potato.

On Wednesday, when Siddique and his wife went to the field to harvest potato, Tozammel Hoque and two of his accomplices went to his house and picked up Dolena and Laboni, 15, daughters of Abu Baker Siddique, from their house.

Later at night Tozammel in a phone call to Siddique demanded Tk. 50,000 as ransom. The father lodged a case with Kotwali police station in.

According to the FIR, the abductors also threatened to kill the girls if police is informed. They also threatened their parents with death for



A partial view of the seminar on Elimination of Worst Form of Child Labour: Our Role", held in Kushtia.

Kidnapper in guise of potato trader

2 abducted sisters yet to be rescued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

The teenagers kidnapped for ransom from Paliachara village in the Sader upzila on Wednesday are yet to be rescued.

The kidnappers demanded Tk 50,000 from their father. Kotwali police said Tozammel Hoque of Raihai village in Dinajpur Sader upzila abducted Dolena, 14, and Laboni, 15, daughters of Abu Baker Siddique, from their house.

Later at night Tozammel in a phone call to Siddique demanded Tk. 50,000 as ransom. The father lodged a case with Kotwali police station in.

According to the FIR, the abductors also threatened to kill the girls if police is informed. They also threatened their parents with death for

failure to pay the ransom, police said.

Siddique told police that Tozammel Hoque had come to the village and took shelter at a farmer's house, personifying a potato trader. He told villagers that he wanted to purchase newly harvested potato.

On Wednesday, when Siddique and his wife went to the field to harvest potato, Tozammel Hoque and two of his accomplices went to his house and picked up Dolena and Laboni at arms point.

Rangpur Police Superintendent visited the house and assured of steps to rescue the two girls. A police official preferring anonymity said realisation of ransom may not be the motive of the abductors. The miscreants might have abducted the girls for trafficking.

RANGAMATI TIMBER TRADERS' SIT-IN FOILED 20 hurt in police action

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

About 20 persons were injured as the law enforcers swooped on agitating timber traders and tribal tree planters during a sit-in demonstration on the premises of the forest department in Bonorupa area here on Wednesday.

The sit-in programme was organised jointly by Rangamati Timber Traders Cooperative Society (RTTCS) and Upajaty Kath Babosayee and Jote Malik Samity (UKBJOS).

Members of both the associations were demanding for implementation of their 8-point demand including reopening of transit pass (TP), an official approval for transportation of logs elsewhere from the hill district.

They also wanted removal of State Minister of Forest and Environment Jarul Islam Choudhury for patronising a 'Syndicate' run by his son Jahurul Islam Choudhury, owner of Anki Enterprise in Chittagong, who imported about 10 to 12 lakh cubic feet

logs. By stopping TP they took timber traders hostage and they are now trying to gain huge profit from selling the imported logs at local market.

The clash erupted when army went into action after hundreds of agitating people damaged a vehicle carrying the head of Environment and Forest Ministry investigation committee, GMK Nurul Amin, joint secretary of Forest Ministry and acting chairman of Bangladesh Forest Industries Development Corporation. The probe body was formed in the wake of allegations of timber smuggling from reserve forests, according to witnesses.

A human chain was also formed in the town.

According to a source close to the state minister, issuance of TP was halted in the wake of much-allegations of timber trafficking and plundering from the reserve forest. 'An investigation is going on about the allegation and the non-issuance of TP will remain functional until the probe ends', the source added.

'Barisal AL leader harassed on political ground'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

An allegation of harassing an Awami League (AL) leader by detaining and humiliating him illegally for 11 days on 'political ground' was brought at a press conference held at Barisal Reporters' Unity on Tuesday.

The AL leader is the General Secretary of Ward No 11 unit of Barisal city Awami League, Rafiqul Islam Rab.

Rab's brother Bazlur Rahman read out a press statement alleging that his brother had been arrested by Kotwali police on the basis of a 'fake' warrant of a life term fugitive convict.

The press statement said that Rab had been arrested in Case No 24 of 2001 of Jana Nirapatta Tribunal Dhaka under Section 9 of Public Safety Act which originated from Case No 12(2)/2001 of Sbujobagh Police Station, Dhaka.

However, on inquiry in both the Jana Nirapatta Tribunal in Dhaka and Sabujbagh Police Station, Bazlur could not find existence of such case against his brother. He even found that his brother was not

at all a convict in any case. On further inquiry, he came to know that the concerned tribunal also did not issue any warrant against his brother, he disclosed.

Bazlur further alleged that police ransacked their house when they could not find him and his brother Rab on February 25 night.

However, police arrested Rab the next morning, he said.

EBazlur showed a photocopy of an order passed by the tribunal judge to reporters where it was stated that Rab was not an accused in the case and no warrant was issued against him.

EBoth Bazlur and Rab alleged that they had been victimised due to political reason.

In reply to queries by newsmen, Bazlur said they would take shelter of law for redress.

They expressed apprehension that they might be victimised in future in a similar way.

Prominent Awami League leaders Shawkat Hossain Hiron, advocate Yunus, advocate Anisuddin Shahid and Syed Anis were present in the press conference.

BHAIRAB TRAIN ARSON 83 AL men chargesheeted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Eighty-three Awami League (AL) leaders and activists have been chargesheeted in a case for setting fire to the 'Subarna Express' train and killing of its guard Mohammad Humaun Kabir during a hartal in the Bhairab on August 22 last year.

Mohammad Hammad Hossen, Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Bhairab GRP thana in Kishoregonj submitted the charge-sheet to a First Class Magistrate's court in Kishoregonj on Wednesday, police and court sources said yesterday.

Bhairab AL had called a day long hartal in the district on August 22 protesting the grenade attack on party chief Sheikh Hasina's rally in Dhaka on the previous day.

During the hartal hours, when the train reached near the Bhairab bridge, it was torched allegedly by AL activist.

Fourteen compartments of the train were burnt. The guard was in a toilet and fatally burnt as the train was torched.

The OC of Bhairab GRP thana, Mohammad Hammad Hossen, had filed a case on the same day accusing 120 AL leaders and activist.

After six months, the submitted the charge sheet.



About 150 feet of the Dinajpur irrigation canal embankment at Horish Chandra Pat village in Jaldhaka upazila is vulnerable and may collapse any time.

A boon now a bane

Teesta Irrigation Project embankment in Jaldhaka may collapse any moment

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

The embankment of Dinajpur Irrigation Canal of Teesta Irrigation Project at Horish Chandra Pat village in Jaldhaka upazila may collapse any moment, inundating several thousand acres of IRRI-Boro lands and damaging the 'observation road' along the canal.

The WDB (Water Development Board) sluice gate will also be affected if the embankment breaches.

This correspondent during a visit to the area on Thursday saw that a major portion of the embankment at that point has eroded into the canal water. If the flowing water devours a few feet, the embankment and the

'observation road' built to supervise the canal will collapse. About 150 feet of the embankment is now threatened.

Repeated breaches in the embankment in different areas has become a menace to the farmers, which inundate crop lands and affect irrigation, many of them told this correspondent. The erosion is going on for the last few days but the WDB did not take any measure, they alleged. More areas are eroding into the canal every day.

When contacted, WDB Executive Engineer in Nilphamari Yasin Ali said officials visited the spot and repair will be started soon despite fuel shortage.

The Dinajpur Canal breached at three other points in the last one

month, inundating about three thousand acres of IRRI-Boro lands and disrupting irrigation in more several thousand acres.

Mentionably, at least 15 major breaches took place in different canal embankments of Teesta Irrigation Project since it was commissioned on June 30, 1998.

The farmers alleged each the breaches took place as the embankments were not built properly.

Sand was used instead of earth in building the embankments, they alleged.

But WDB officials blamed local people for "sabotage". The breaches took place due to small outlets created by farmers to steal water, they claimed.

Meeting held to exchange opinion on Juri UZ

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A meeting to exchange opinion with the elite, Union Parishad (UP) chairmen and members persons of newly-constituted Juri upazila (UZ) was held here recently. The meeting followed beginning of administrative activities in the upazila. Presided over by Md Unsur Rahman, Deputy Commissioner of Moulvibazar, the meeting was addressed, among others, by Rowshonara Begum, Superintendent of Police, Ayat Ullah Additional Deputy Commi-ssioner (revenue), Md Tajul Islam Additional Deputy Commissioner (general), Md Motiur Rahman, Additional District Magistrate, Mostafa Kamal, Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) of Barolekha, Nurul Afsar, UNO of Kulaura, Nur-e-Alam Mina, Assistant Superintendent of Police of Kulaura circle, Asad Uddin Batal, Convener of Juri Upazila BNP, newly appointed UNO and Officer in Charge (OC) of Juri Police Station were present in the meeting.

Report on assault on Elen Bhutto denied

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A BNP leader on Tuesday denied a press report published in national and local dailies regarding assault on the lawmaker from Jhalakati-Nalchity constituency, Israt Sultana Elen Bhutto by the State Minister for Law on February 22.

Nalchity upazila BNP General Secretary and Dapdapia Union Parishad Chairman in Jhalakati Khondker Ahidul Islam categorically denied the press report at a press conference held at Barisal Reporters' Unity.

Islam said a vested quarter has done this to shatter the image of the state minister.

EHe said the state minister attended four scheduled programmes at Nalchity. Law maker Elen Bhutto was also present there. No incident of assault or harassment happened there, he added.

Nalchity upazila BNP, JCD and Juba Dal leaders were also present at the press conference.

DANIDA PROJECT

Teachers' training on adult education concludes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A two-day training for teachers on adult education concluded on Thursday at the office of DANIDA aided Rural Development Project (RDP-16).

Senior Advisor of RDP-16 Arne Engdahl, Training Specialist Anisur Rahman, District Engineering Officer Abul Kalam spoke, among others, at the concluding session.

Sixteen teachers took part in the training. They will teach 462 illiterate workers involve in canal maintenance in Patuakhali and Barguna districts under the project.

All educational materials will be given to the workers, sources added.

2 women arrested with heroin in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two women were arrested with 260-gram of heroin from Kadamtali and Halishahar areas of the city on Thursday.

A team of Narcotics Department, Chittagong metro sub-region arrested them after conducting separate drives.

Arrested Rowshan Ara Begum, 40, and Noor Jahan, 30, are alleged members of drug dealers' syndicate based at Railway Colony in Kadamtali and Rangipara in Halishahar.

Sources in the Narcotics Department said two more drug traders, Sakina Begum alias Sufi and Abu alias Langra Abu evade arrest during the drive.

However, cases were lodged against all the four persons in Doublemooring and Halishahar Police Stations.

Police produced the arrested persons to court and sent them to jail.



A training session for teachers under DANIDA's Rural Development Project (RDP-16) that concluded in Patuakhali on Thursday.

Two killed, 50 hurt as night coaches collide in B'baria

Minor girl killed in Manikganj

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Two persons were killed and 50 injured, some of them critically, as two night coaches collided on the Dhaka-Sylhet highway near Rajabaria Kandi village in Sarail Upazila at about 2:30 am yesterday.

In another tragic incident in Manikganj, a minor girl was crushed under the wheels of a bus and her mother and brother were critically injured on Thursday.

Our Brahmanbaria Correspondent reports:

Dhaka bound night coach from Sylhet (No. Dhaka-metro-Ba-11-0821) dashed with a Sylhet bound coach (No. Dhaka-Metro-11-0812) from Dhaka at dead of night, killing Helena Begum, 25, wife of Shahadat Hossain on the spot. Another passenger--Muksur Rahman, 40, son of Nazir Hossain of Palashbari village in Gaibadna -- succumbed to injuries in Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital.

Eleven of the injured passengers were admitted to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital in critical conditions, police and hospital sources said yesterday. They are Humayun Kabir, 20, Sahadat Hossain, 32, Arup Kumar Dey, 30, Mabbub Hossain, 40, Saad Uddin, 25, Urmu, 6, Zakir Hossain, 50, Joyanal Abedin, 20, Samsul Hoque, 25, Akram Hossain, 30, Asaduzaman, 26 and Hossen Mia, 30.

The rest injured passengers

were treated at Sarail Upazila Health Complex and Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital.

The autopsy of the bodies were done at the Sadar Hospital.

On information, police rushed to the spot and took the injured passengers to hospitals. The buses have been seized the buses but the drivers escaped.

Our Manikganj Correspondent reports:

Shilpi, 5, daughter of Aslam Hossain of Shivalaya in Manikganj died on the spot and her mother and sister were critically injured when they were hit by a bus at Uthuly on the Dhaka-Patura highway on Thursday, police said.

The mother --Selina Begum -- and her three year-old daughter Sonia were to Manikganj Sadar Hospital.

Schoolboy kidnapped for ransom in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A schoolboy was abducted for ransom from village Biralaxmi in Shyamnagar upazila on Tuesday. The criminals demanded Tk 10 lakh as ransom for his release after abducting Mohsin, 12, son of Abdus Salam of village Chhotokupat, also a member of Atulia Union Parishad in the same upazila.

Quoting victim's father police said, the victim, a student of class five of Chhotokupat Primary School, went to attend a 'Waz- Mahfil' at Biralaxmi madrasa ground on Tuesday night.

When he was returning home, the abductors kidnapped and held him hostage at a secret place demanding the ransom. Since then the victim has been missing.

They also threatened the victim's father to kill his son for non-fulfillment of their demand.

One killed by bandits in Moulvibazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

One person was killed and three others including a woman were injured in an armed robbery at a house at village Mollikoray in Sadar upazila on Wednesday night.

The bandits looted 45 tolas of gold and Tk 55,000 in cash.

Youth killed by tiger

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A young man man was killed by tiger in the Sundarbans on Wednesday.

Local people identified the victim as Amirul Sana, 22, son of Abu Bakkar of village Dhamrail in Paikgachha upazila, Khulna.

He was killed while cutting wood in Garankup area.

Later, local people recovered the body.