

MILI MURDER CASE IN RAJSHAHI

Protesters lay siege to offices of DC, RMP commissioner

DC assures justice: School students stage demonstration today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Several hundred protesters paraded the city streets yesterday to register their concern over slow progress of investigation in the rape and murder of school girl Mili. They laid a 'token siege' to the offices of the Rajshahi Metropolitan Police (RMP) commissioner and deputy commissioner (DC) of the district and submitted a memorandum questioning the law enforcers' seriousness in identifying the culprits. Threatening tougher agitation

including strikes, they called a protest meeting tomorrow. Students of different city schools will also demonstrate today. Earlier, school students, housewives, human rights activists, cultural activists, professionals and others started gathering near the victims' home at Ghospara from the morning. At around 11am, they brought out a large procession that paraded Shaheb Bazar, Barendra Museum and C&B crossings. At the RMP headquarters, they laid a siege for sometime and submitted a memo to

RMP commissioner Nayeem Ahmed. They then marched to the DC's office and held a rally with senior citizen Sayed Md Mohsin in the chair. Rajshahi DC Sayed Ahsanul Haque came out of his office, addressed the rally and assured the protesters of justice. Among others, the rally was addressed by Sammilito Sangskritik Jote conveynor Dr Sayed Shafiqul Alam, Rajshahi Rakkha Sangram Parishad conveynor Zamat Khan, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association's Rajshahi president Dil Sitara Begum Chuni, ward commissioner Bilkis Ara Begum and Rajshahi Mohila Parishad president Kalpana Roy. The agitators in their memo said the circumstantial evidences show that the killers are none but relatives of the house owner. Police also arrested three, but failed to identify the killers, it said. The memo mentioned a few recent incidents of police apathy to similar cases and said police indifference helps none but the culprits. They said police did not submit charge sheet in the Noor Banu murder case in nine months and could not arrest anyone in Joly rape and murder case. Mafroza Begum Mili, 11-year-old student of class V at PN Government High School was gangraped and later strangled at their rented house on May 3 morning. Her father Mansur Rahman Mollah, an Instructor of Rajshahi Postal Academy filed a case accusing the house owner's son Fazle Rabbi Rion, his relative Saiduzzaman Minar, a relative of Rion and their neighbour Fazlur Rahman, an employee of Power Development Board. The police arrested the three accused and are now interrogating Rion and Minar taking them on a five day remand for the second time. Investigation officer SI Akhtar Hossain told newsmen that though they suspected the involvement of the three in murder, but the arrestees are yet to confess their offence.



Women workers sorting rotten potatoes at a cold storage in Nilphamari. Rainfall during harvesting period damaged a huge quantity of potatoes which later became unfit for preservation.

Power outages threaten cold storage industry

BCSA demands 20 pc cut in electricity bill

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

The leaders of Nilphamari unit of Bangladesh Cold Storage Association (BCSA) said rising power cost, load shedding and voltage fluctuation are threatening their industry. They demanded immediate exemption of 20 per cent electricity bill like other agro-based industries. They were talking to journalists of a number of national and local dailies and weeklies at the office of Mukta Cold Storage at Jaldhaka pazila of Nilphamari on Wednesday. The central committee members of BCSA and other local leaders of the organisation were present. BCSA central committee member and also managing director of Mukta Cold Storage Ltd Sayed Ali said, frequent load shedding and voltage fluctuation are damaging machines and spares of local cold storages. Narrating his own experience, he said, in the last three months he incurred a loss of Tk 6

lakh as electric motors, scatters and other parts were either burnt or damaged due to voltage fluctuation. Another leader and director of Shaon Himagar Ltd of Domar upazila, Monsurul Islam Danu said, the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) can not provide electricity constantly for running the cold storages. Because of this the cold storage authorities have to keep standby power generators which automatically doubles the storage cost. He pointed out that a cold storage can run only for five hours with the electricity produced by a generator using one barrel of diesel, costing around Tk 4,300 whereas the cost of electricity supplied by BPDB for the same is less than Tk 3,000. The managing director of Mukta Cold Storage Ltd said the cold storage industry is becoming a losing concern due to frequent use of diesel generators, rising cost of spare parts, high price of ammonia, transportation cost etc. He said that they are maintaining low cost for storage of potato for the greater interest of farmers. The charge for a bag of potato is still Tk 170- 190 like the previous year. But if the situation does not improve, it may not be possible to maintain the current charges. The cold storages in Nilphamari preserve potatoes worth about Tk 20 crore and potato seeds of Tk 8-10 crore a year. Monsurul Islam Danu further said that the farmers would fail to produce potato in the next year if the potato seeds are ruined due to power disruption. In that case the price of potato would also go up and create instability in the food sector. The cold storage leaders demanded that the cold storage industry, like other agro-based industries, should get 20 per cent exemption in electric bills. They also urged the government to refix the bank interest rate at 9 per cent in place of the current 12 per cent. They further called upon the government to provide loan on easy terms for buying sophisticated diesel generators as load shedding and voltage fluctuation are becoming 'everyday affair.' Meanwhile, potato is rotting in almost all the cold storages recently of the district due to electricity disruption. During a visit to a num-

ber of cold storages it was found that hundreds of potato bags are being taken out of the cold storages and women labourers were sorting the rotten potatoes. Besides, frequent rainfall during harvesting period damaged a huge quantity of potatoes, raising fear that the price may go up at the end despite a bumper production this year, sources said.

Waterlogging serious problem in SW zone

Workshop in Satkhira told

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Speakers at a daylong workshop yesterday said, water logging has become the main and nagging problem in the southwestern zone of the country. Waterlogging has gripped vast areas in Satkhira and Khulna, low lying areas in Jessore and a part of Bagerhat in the zone, they said. About 2 lakh hectare of land in the region have already been affected and the Sundarbans, the largest mangrove in the world is also not safe from it, they observed. The workshop on "Water Logging and Acute Scarcity of Safe Drinking Water in the Southwestern Zone and its Solution" jointly organised by Action Aid Bangladesh, Pani Committee and a local NGO Uttaran was held on the IDRT premises at Tala. Uttaran director Shahidul Islam moderated it. Satkhira deputy commissioner (DC) Md Elias inaugurated the workshop as chief guest while Bangladesh Water Mitigation Programme director Khoda Bux, BUET professor Firoz Ahmed, Integrated Coastal Management Project director Rafiqul Islam and Action Aid Water Partnership's Reba Pal were the resource persons. Principal Shafiqul Islam of the Pani Committee presided over the workshop. If the trend continues, the rest of the areas in the region may be affected by the water logging within the shortest possible time, the experts told the workshop. Due to continuous siltation the main rivers in the region were losing navigability and during the monsoon the vast tract of land became inundated causing water logging. Water from the silted rivers overflow their banks damaging crops on hundreds of acres of land, they said. Besides, waterlogging is affecting the envi-

ronment and surroundings, they observed. If the trend continues, the life-style of the people in the region will also be hampered greatly, Prof. Firoz Ahmed said. In addition to damaging the Sundarbans' eco-system, salinity will penetrate further affecting agriculture, forestry, fisheries and safe drinking water in the region, DC Md. Elias, the chief guest said. "Continuous dredging is necessary to keep the rivers alive and solve the problems, ICMP director Rafiqul Islam said. Uttaran's director Shahidul Islam demanded immediate restoration of canals and water bodies and also dredging of dying rivers in the region. Reba Pal suggested that through introducing the Tidal River Management Option, the water logging problem may be solved and it will increase navigability of the rivers.

Rab nabs 5 in Pabna, recovers firearms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday arrested five listed criminals and recovered firearms and ammunition from their possession at Bhabanipur of Sujanagar upazila in Pabna. The arrestees are Nazrul Haque Khondoker, Rafiqul Islam, Abdus Salam Munshi, Abdul Barek Ali Mollah and Rezaul Munshi. Tipped off, Rab forces from Rajshahi raided the house of Nazrul Haque Khondoker and nabbed the criminals, said a Rab press release. Two pipeguns, a cartridge and a knife were recovered from the house.

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Some 10,000 timber and fruit bearing trees worth about Tk2 crore have been felled and stolen at Manda upazila in Naogaon district from roadsides and embankments, according to sources in the Manda upazila administration. An official said, most of these trees are being used as fuel in 40 brick fields and as timber in saw mills in Manda upazila. Though the cost of each tree is estimated at about 2 thousand taka but those were sold to the brick fields and saw mills at a throwaway price of two to three hundred taka each, said a local Union Parishad (UP) chairman. He also informed that a case has been filed against one Saidur Rahman and Toyez Uddin with Manda thana who were caught read-handed while they were cutting trees a few days ago. Local administration sources and elite of Manda alleged some influential political leaders and activists of the area were involved in the indiscriminate cutting of trees. Most of the valuable trees by the 19-kilometre long road from Karumpur to Tatulia have disappeared in the last few months. The trees on 18-kilometre embankment of Atrai river from Busnupur to Manda Ferry Ghat have been felled without any resistance, said the UP Chairman. A huge number of trees on the 4-kilometre long road from Gugra to Khosumba have been cut down and sold by some local influentials and political leaders and activists. Besides, trees on 20-kilometre embankment from Mithapukur to Manda Ferry Ghat have been stolen and sold to brick fields and saw mills at nominal prices, the UP chairman alleged. District administration officials admitted that some 'known' groups of miscreants have taken away a huge number of trees from different roadsides and river embankment. They did it on the nose of the law enforcement agencies as they are sheltered by a section of ruling partymen. Sources further informed that only six brick fields out of 40 are running with valid documents at Manda.

9.5x4

7 get life in Kushtia for murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Seven people were sentenced to life term rigorous imprisonment (RI) by the Additional District and Sessions Judge Court here on Tuesday in Sahin Sardar Murder Case. The convicts are Muktar Ali, Harun, Hasan Mulam, Dulal, Aminul and Hirok of Jugia in Sadar upazila. They were also fined Tk 20,000 each. The court ordered to hand over the money to the victim's family. The convicts killed Sahin, 19, son of Jamat Ali of the same village on May 9, 2001. They killed him because he had protested when they teased his teenage sister on her way to school. The same night, the gang of culprits called Sahin out of house and slaughtered at a nearby field. Victim's sister Lili Begum filed a case accusing seven persons. Judge M Fazlur Rahman pronounced the verdict.

4.5x3

7x3