

# Who tortured the trader?

Rab, police refute charges but Selim shifted to RMCH from Rajshahi jail in critical condition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,  
Rajshahi

A traders' association leader, arrested by Rab (rapid Action battalion) on May 27 and allegedly tortured by police, have been admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) in a critical condition.

Rajshahi jail authorities shifted Selim Sarder to RMCH on Tuesday as his condition deteriorated, sources said.

Selim, general secretary of Jhalmalia Bazar Businessmen's Association, was handed over to Putia police after arrest.

Doctors at RMCH found Selim's toes, knees, fingers of right hand

critically fractured and mussels in the back and lower part of his body mangled in several areas, sources at the hospital claimed.

His condition is serious and we are thinking to send him to the Orthopaedic Hospital in Dhaka, a doctor told this correspondent yesterday seeking anonymity.

Rab arrested Selim after several hundred traders clashed with local BNP activists protesting toll collection. At least 100 people were injured in the clash.

Selim told his fellow traders that he was beaten severely by five policemen including Putia Circle ASP Alamgir Kabir.

"They (police) hit him on bone-joints with hockey sticks and batons

on the night of May 27 and did not provide any treatment till noon on the following day", Selim's brother Abu Bakkar Siddik said quoting him.

Siddiq, also Putia Municipal Awami League president, alleged that his brother was tortured to avenge chasing the BNP toll collectors. He also claimed that the two police officials are loyal to a local BNP lawmaker.

Talking to The Daily Star, Rajshahi Police Superintendent Abdullah Al Mahmud said the allegations will be investigated if any complaint is lodged and action would be taken against the persons responsible.

When contacted, ASP Alamgir Kabir refuted the allegation of torture.

in custody. He might have been tortured during arrest, he said.

The allegation of torture in custody is politically motivated, he said.

He, however, admitted that he and the OC were chased and injured during the May 27 clash.

Sub-inspector Mukul of Putia thana filed a case against 30 businessmen for assaulting police during the violence.

Meanwhile, traders at Jhalmalia Bazar observed a three-day strike protesting the violence.

A Rab official when contacted yesterday denied the allegation that Selim was tortured during arrest.

## Hepatitis-B scare in Nilphamari village

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Panic has gripped the people at Holhia village in Domar upazila after a woman died from Hepatitis-B virus.

The villagers also claim that several people are suspected to have been infected with the virus.

Koushala Devi, 38, wife of Thakur Das, 55, died on May 20.

According to Domar Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Fazle Rashid, Koushala Devi died from Hepatitis-B virus. This was confirmed after her blood test at a clinic in Domar, he told this correspondent on Monday.

Thakur Das also died on May 28 from a disease which showed symptoms of jaundice, according to villagers. They now suspect that he could have been infected with Hepatitis-B virus. But this was not confirmed through blood test.

A five-member medical team led by Domar upazila health official Dr. Zahid visited the village on Monday.

As he went there, villagers crowded around him, claiming that

many people were attacked with 'jaundice', a similar type of virus, he told this correspondent.

He however found four persons suffering from a disease showing symptoms of jaundice, but their blood test is yet to be done, he said.

Dr Zahid said there is no blood test facility at Domar Upazila Health Complex to identify Hepatitis-B virus. The Nilphamari Civil Surgeon has been informed of the matter, he said.

The affected people are taking treatment at their houses with assistance from health workers, he added.

When contacted, the Civil Surgeon said he has asked Domar health complex officials to arrange admission of the afflicted people and their blood test for Hepatitis-B virus. He however said it is unlikely that so many people are infected with the virus in a village.

This will be confirmed after blood test, he said.

Bogra Journalists Union President AHM Aktheruzzaman presided over the rally.

## Human chain in Bogra protesting repression on newsmen

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Journalists yesterday formed a human chain at Sathmatha in the town protesting murder, repression and filing false cases against journalists.

Bogra Journalists Union, Northern Region's Federal Journalists Union and Bogra Reporters Forum jointly organised programme. Human chains were also held in other northern districts yesterday.

A brief rally was held prior to the human chain in Bogra. It was addressed by, among others, daily Korato Executive Editor Farrukh Talukder, Bogra Correspondent of Independent Abdul Majid and Observer Correspondent Shahdat Alam.

They demanded action against filing of 'false cases' against journalists and withdrawal of the case filed against Hasibur Rahman Bilu by a women leader of a ruling party.

Bogra Journalists Union President AHM Aktheruzzaman presided over the rally.

## Comilla editor murder protested

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Journalists in Satkhira and Brahmanbaria have protested murder of the Comilla Mukta Kanta editor Muhammad Golam Mahfuz and demanded arrest of the killers.

Our Satkhira Correspondent reports: A protest meeting was held at Satkhira Reporters' Club yesterday protesting the killing. The Daily Star Correspondent Prof Abu Ahmed was in the chair.

It was addressed by, among others, Kalyani Banerjee (Prothom Alo), Abdul Bari (Dinkal), Anisur Rahman (Editor, The Daily Satkhira Chitra), Ramkrishna Chakrabarty (Samakal), Momtaz Ahmed Bappi (Inqlab) and Ujjal Tulshi Das (Kafela).

Satkhira Reporters' Club has chalked out a three-day mourning programme including wearing of black badges, procession and submission of memorandum to the Prime Minister.

Our Brahmanbaria Correspondent reports: A protest meeting was held at Brahmanbaria Press Club on Tuesday. It was presided over by Brahmanbaria Press Club president Monsur Kamal and addressed by, among others, Sheikh Md Shahidul Islam, Syed Md Mizanur Reza, Muhammad Arzoo, Zobed Rahim, KHM Rashidul Islam, Md Ashiqul Islam, Badal, Guha, local Dainik Samat Barta editor Md Munzurul Alam, Dainik Brahmanbaria editor Md Nurul Hossain, Dainik Prajabandhu editor and publisher Md Mohibur Rahman.

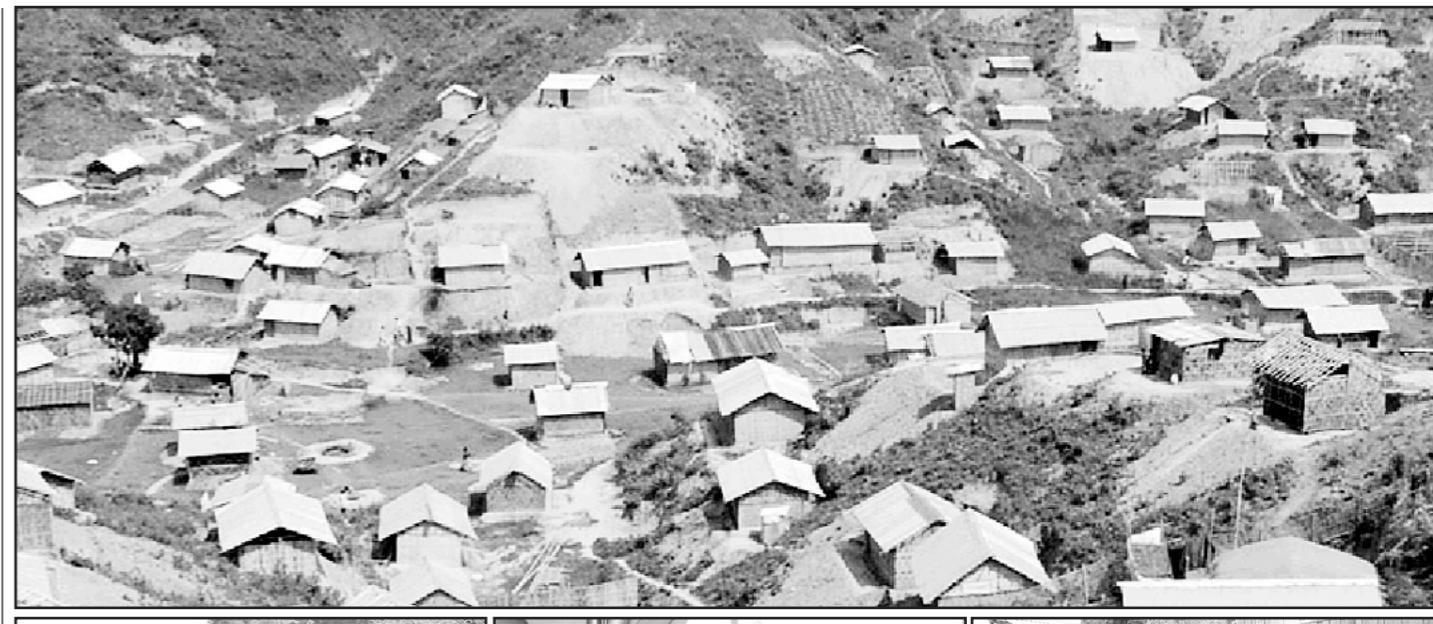


PHOTO: STAR

SERENE HILLS RAVAGED: An aerial view of Jangal Salimpur in Sitakundu occupied by so-called floating people (top); and one of the injured being taken to hospital (bottom left), the three held by police and a family guarding the homestead after the clash yesterday.

## Probe into 'anomaly' in Tk 25cr WDB work

BNP bigwigs in Rajshahi allegedly lobbying for their contractors to stop the move

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,  
Rajshahi

The Ministry of Water Resources has decided to probe alleged irregularities in awarding Tk 25 crore embankment construction projects to contractors in Godagari upazila.

The ministry formed a three-member committee headed by Additional Secretary Sayed Muhammad Zubayer on May 16 to probe the irregularities, allegedly done in league with some contractors aligned with ruling BNP.

Other members of the probe committee are Deputy Secretary (development-2) Abdul Halim and Senior Head Assistant-2 Moinul Islam Titus in the ministry.

The committee was asked to submit its report within one month, fixing responsibilities and suggesting punishment for the wrongdoers.

But the probe is yet to start as some BNP bigwigs are lobbying for their contractors to stop the investigation, sources said.

The project works are now

stopped following a High Court injunction after filing of a writ petition by some contractors who had earlier won the works through bidding.

Early last year, Rajshahi Water Development Board (WDB) had tendered tender for the two-kilometre Rajbari-Baliaghata dam construction project along the Padma, involving Tk 16 crore. A total of 537 contractors had submitted bids for the works in eight groups. Eight contractors won the works and WDB authorities issued work orders.

This enraged some contractors

favoured allegedly by local BNP leaders. They beat up several officials and damaged offices of the Chief Engineer, Superintendent Engineer and Executive Engineer.

They also threatened the CE and the SE to award them the project works or to leave Rajshahi.

WDB's security department in a letter to Rajshahi Metropolitan Police sought security of its officials after the CE lodged a complaint in mid-April.

In the meantime, top WDB officials cancelled the work orders given earlier to the eight selected contractors and awarded the works to eight other contractors, raising the involvement to Tk 18 crore from Tk 16 crore suggested in the project plan.

Two of the contractors given the jobs had no experience in such work, it was also alleged.

The officials also awarded the new contractors more three groups of work involving Tk 7 crore in the same project without any tender, it was alleged.

But interestingly, the project plan was disapproved by the ministry as the design was changed twice.

The original project plan suggested that the work be done using only concrete blocks. It was later changed suggesting use of 'geo textile' and concrete blocks in equal proportion. Again, it was changed suggesting use of only concrete blocks.

Local people and witnesses said, the incident occurred when a rival group, reportedly led by Sekander and Azam, attacked the families in an alleged move to capture the lands.

They rival groups used lethal weapons. Some gunshots were also heard, witnesses said.

Being informed, Rab (Rapid Action Battalion) personnel and police from Bayezid thana rushed to the spot. The attackers fled away.

Police later picked up three persons-- Alamgir, Azizul and Abdul Kalam-- from the spot.

## Clash over land in Sitakundu leaves 25 hurt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

At least 25 people including some women were injured in a clash between two groups of people over possession of government land at a remote hilly area in Jangal Salimpur in Sitakundu upazila yesterday.

Of the injured, five have been admitted into Chittagong Medical College Hospital. They are Nurul Haq Bhandary, Alam, Mostafa, Foyez and Aziz. The rest were treated at local clinics, sources said.

Following the clash, many of the people who earlier claimed themselves as "rehabilitated ones" left their houses while many others with lethal weapons in hands were seen guarding homesteads fearing further attack.

A tense situation was prevailing in the area, some two Kilometers off the site for the proposed Asian Women University. The area is under the city's Bayezid thana.

Some 200 families under the banner of 'floating people' had erected thatched houses in the area few months back, claiming that they were "rehabilitated" there by the government.

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## KRC chemical unit resumes operation

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Rangamati

The chemical unit at Karnaphuli Rayon Complex (KRC), after about two years' closure, started operation again on Tuesday under the management of Karnaphuli Paper Mill (KMP).

The KMP revived the chemical unit at a cost of about Tk 3 crore to produce Chlorine and Caustic, the two most essential ingredients for paper production, sources in Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) said here yesterday. Of the amount, Tk two crore was spent for renovation and Tk one crore for purchase of raw materials to start production, the sources said.



Mafroza Begum Mili

among others, by child rights worker Rajab Ali, Nokkon Shilpi Gosthi president Hasib Panna and social worker Moniruzzaman Bablu.

Earlier, police arrested the house owner's son Fazle Rabbi Rion, his relative Saiduzzaman Minar and their neighbour Fazlur Rahman and remanded thrice, but they could not find out any clue of the murder.

The speakers expressed their anguish over police failure to make any headway into the case within a month because of what they said 'influence exerted by ruling BNP stalwarts'.

Advocate Khairul Alam chaired the meeting while it was addressed,