

# 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 Sardar 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 Puthia 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 Puthia 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 tor-

ture 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 Puthia 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.



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.

They demanded action against for 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 Akhteruzzaman presided over the rally.

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 floated tender for the two-kilometre Rajabari-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.

### MILI RAPE AND MURDER

## Hartal in Rajshahi today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A half-day hartal (strike) will be observed here today demanding speedy probe and trial of schoolgirl Mili Rape and Murder Case.

The hartal was called by the Citizens' Action Council at a press conference held on May 28.

A procession was brought out in the city and a meeting was also held at Shaheb Bazaar zero point last evening to drum up support for the hartal.

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,



Mafroza Begum Mili

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

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.

## 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.

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 Abul Kalam-- from the spot.

## 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 KPM 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.

## Job training for indigenous women begins in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A three-month training programme for indigenous women to enhance their capability to compete in job markets began here yesterday.

In the first batch, 12 women will be trained in information technology and other job-related work.

The programme includes an orientation course to make the women aware of AIDS and healthcare.

Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council Chairman Jiotirindriya Bodhipriya Larma alias Santu Larma inaugurated the programme at the Centre for Indigenous Peoples Development (CIPD), a local partner of Bangladesh Freedom Foundation (BFF) which is financing the training.

Presided over by CIPD Chief Executive Jonolal Chakma, the inaugural session was addressed by, among others, Rangamati Hill District Council Chairman Dr Maniklal Dwan, Heli Uusikyla of UNDP, Rita Dewan of WFP, editor of local daily Giridarpon AKM Moksud Ahamd and retired teacher Dr Alorani Ayeach, a social worker.

## Comilla editor murder protested

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Journalists in Satkhira and Brahmanbaria have protested murder of the Comilla Mukta Kantha 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, Kalyan Banerjee (Prothom Alo), Abdul Bari (Dinkal), Anisur Rahman (Editor, The Daily Satkhira Chitra), Ramkrishna Chakrabarty (Samakal), Momtaz Ahmed Bappi (Inqilab) 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 Prazabandhu editor and publisher Md Mohibur Rahman.