

2 UP leaders abducted in Mohalchhari

Clash between UPDF, PCJSS feared

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Khagrachhari*

Tension mounted in Mohalchhari following abduction of Sadar Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Arkimides Chakma along with a UP member and another indigenous man on Sunday.

Rival indigenous organisations UPDF (United Peoples Democratic Forum) and PCJSS (Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity) blamed each other for the abduction. Arkimides Chakma is reportedly supporter of UPDF.

Till yesterday evening, police could neither rescue them nor find any clue about identity of the abductors.

The incident may trigger clashes between the two groups, sources in Mohalchhari said.

Police said Arkimides Chakma, UP member Bipul Chakma and Tirpal Chakma were abducted at Lemuchhari by some armed youths when they were returning home after attending a meeting of upazila law and order committee at the upazila headquarters.

Khagrachhari district UPDF leader Samari Chakma blamed PCJSS for the abduction and urged the authorities to rescue them.

Khagrachhari district PCJSS general secretary Sudakar Tripura refuted the allegation, saying it is pre-planned drama by UPDF to blame PCJSS.

Lobby for nomination of 'clean' candidates

Kamal urges civil society in Chittagong

CU CORRESPONDENT

Gono Forum President Dr. Kamal Hossain has said the Election Commission should work independently, free from any political influence, for holding free, fair and credible elections.

He also demanded reforms to the Election Commission (EC) and then caretaker system.

The EC it has proved ineffective in preparing a correct voter list, the first prerequisite for holding the next parliamentary election. There has been numerous complaints about fake voters having been recorded, he said.

He was speaking at a view exchange meeting on 'National Elections 2007: Evolving a Framework for Free and Fair Election, held on Monday at Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) auditorium.

CCC Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury also spoke at the meeting, organised by Centre for Democracy (CD), a local NGO.

CD President Abul Ahsan moderated the meeting while national daily Independent and local daily Purbokone were media partners.

The eminent jurist also stressed the need for transparency in election expenses of candidates to stop use of black money in polls. Candidates must declare their assets and defaulters must be barred from the polls race, he said.

Dr Kamal said the media and the civil society have great roles to play in creating awareness among people about the need for holding a free and fair election and nomination of 'clean' candidates in the next parliamentary polls.

Democracy will falter unless use of money and muscle power is stopped and fair and credible elections are not held, he said.

Honest, efficient and dedicated people should come to politics for consolidation of democracy and development of the country.

Political parties have to take the lead in this regard by nominating 'clean' candidates in the next polls.

Dr. Kamal urged the civil society to form a greater unity and launch a campaign so that parties nominate 'clean' candidates, he said.

Mohiuddin Chowdhury said the ruling party is patronising terrorists and militants to use them in the next polls to manipulate results.

"There is no alternative to fighting with the spirits of Liberation War to foil all conspiracies by ruling parties to manipulate the election," the Mayor said.

Former minister Mosharraf Hossain made a 12-point suggestion to hold a fair polls. These include preparation of electronic voter list with profile and finger print of voters which would be kept centrally in a computer database, introduction of voter identity cards with photo, increasing the number of polling centres and more vigilance by law enforcers during polls.

social scientist Prof Dr. Anupam Sen said the nation is passing a crucial juncture as doubt has been raised whether the election will be held timely. Such a situation has been created as the government and the opposition are in a stand-off over reforms to the EC and the caretaker government and alleged anomalies in the voter list.

The speakers included editor of the Independent Mahbubul Alam and Chittagong Press Club President Abu Sufian.

Man takes life failing to repay NGO loans

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

A poor rickshaw van puller has allegedly committed suicide night as he failed to pay loan installments of two NGOs.

The victim has been identified as Abdus Sattar, 40 of Chelatai village in sadar upazila.

Quoting local people police said, Sattar took Tk 5000 loan each from a national and a local NGO for treatment of his ailing wife Rehena Khatun four months back.

He could not pay the loan installments.

The couple quarreled on the issue Saturday night. At dead of night, Sattar took poison. He died while being taken to hospital yesterday morning, police said.

On contact, Sadar thana OC Shajahan confirmed the incident.

Pabna JMB 'commander' remanded

A CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

Pabna regional commander of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) Nurul Haque alias Kawser was taken on two-day fresh remand, court sources said.

A court here granted the remand after police produced him before the court on Monday.

However, no charge was framed against him in connection with the August 17 serial bomb blasts in Pabna.

Kawser was arrested from Joypurhat on December 18 in 2005. After arrest, he was handed over to Pabna Sadar police for interrogation.

During interrogation, he confessed to police under Section 164 that he had been directly involved with the the blasts in Pabna. Kawser disclosed the names of some JMB men and about militants' training camp. He also confessed to police his connection with Siddikul Islam Bangla Bhai.

Sakhipur UNO withdrawn

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Tangail*

Sakhipur Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Mokabbir Hossain has been withdrawn in the face of agitation against him.

The district administration on Sunday got the order, faxed by the establishment ministry, official sources said on Monday.

Local people under the banner of Sakhipur Bachao Sangrame Committee (committee to save Sakhipur) recently launched agitation protesting a move by the UNO to evict encroachers on government forestland.

They claimed that lessees were also being evicted.

Last week, the Sangrame Committee besieged the UNO office demanding removal of the UNO and Assistant Commissioner for Land, triggering clashes with police. At least 30 people including some policemen were injured.

The UNO had launched the eviction drive about a month ago. Besides encroachers, over 100 installations including dwelling houses and shops were evicted during the drive, Sangrame Committee leaders claimed.



PHOTO: STAR

The Barisal Citizens Council formed a human chain in front of Aswani Kumar Hall in the city yesterday to press construction of a bridge on Kirtonkhola at Dapdapia, a demand ignored for long.

Khulna BNP bigwig to join Bikalpadhara ?

QUAZI AMANULLAH, *Khulna*

An influential BNP lawmaker in Khulna is likely to join Bikalpadhara soon along with a large number of party leaders and activists including former general secretary of now-dissolved city BNP Nazrul Islam Manju.

According to party sources, the lawmaker along with Nazrul Islam Manju met with Bikalpadhara central general secretary Maj. (Retd) M A Mannan at his residence in Dhaka recently to fix up a joining date.

The lawmaker now heading his faction of Khulna BNP also talked to this correspondent but declined to be named.

The other faction is led by city Mayor Shaikh Tayebur Rahman and lawmaker Ali Asgar Lobi. Lobi is convenor of Khulna city BNP.

Both the factions staged show-downs in last last one year, holding separate processions and rallies as per party programmes.

Insiders in Khulna BNP said the lawmaker and Manju are in close touch with Bikalpadhara high command for about a month. They will join Bikalpadhara if BNP high command does not consider their contributions in giving nomination for the next parliamentary election. Bikalpadhara high command assured them in this regard, the insiders said.

When asked, former general secretary of city BNP Nazrul Islam Manju told this correspondent that he is yet to decide what to do. "BNP will lose all seats in Khulna district if two factions do not sink differences before the election", he said.

"There was no reason to dissolve the city (BNP) committee and form a convening committee with a non political man as its convenor", Manju said.

"We are just brooding over quitting BNP, being the worst victims of dirty internal feud in Khulna", said the lawmaker. He however sought a little more time to tell finally if Bikalpadhara would be his next political platform.

Meanwhile, intelligence agencies are reportedly watching movement of some top leaders of Khulna BNP including former Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali following information that they will join Bikalpadhara if they are not assured of nomination by the party high command.

Onslaught on coastal reserve forests

Large scale stealing by organised gangs in Patuakhali



PHOTO: STAR

Left over roots of stolen trees at Fatrar Bon in Kalapara in Patuakhali.

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, *Patuakhli*

Reserve forests in coastal areas of Patuakhali area are facing an onslaught by organised gangs of thieves who are stealing timber trees indiscriminately.

Local people alleged that the gangs are cutting valuable timber trees from forests in coastal areas of Kalapara and Golachipa upazilas allegedly in connivance with a section of forest department staff and law enforcers.

Scores of trees like sundary kewra, garan, mehogony and karai and being taken away from reserve forests in Fatrar Ban, Chan Gangamoti, Kachop Khah lake in Kalapara; Sonar Char, Nishanbaria and Chor Montaj in Golachipa almost every night, they said.

These are loaded on trawlers and country boats and sent to different areas including Dhaka, Chittagong. Parts of these are also sold at nearby sawmills.

Forest officials sometimes recover stolen timber and take alleged thieves into custody but this is only an eyewash, they alleged.

This correspondent during a visit also saw many leftover portions of stolen trees in Fatrar Ban.

When contacted, Divisional Forests Officer (DFO) Md Zahurul Alam in Patuakhali said, "I am yet to receive any complaint about stealing timber trees from reserve forests. I joined only six month ago. We will try our best to stop this".

He said forest guards and law enforcers on Sunday recovered about 500 cft of sundari timber from three trawlers on Kalagachia river and arrested 15 people.



PHOTO: AKM MOHSIN

Ravaging the environment...Illegal extraction of stone from fields goes on unabated in many areas of Lalmonirhat. The photo was taken from near the Teesta bridge.

8X3

6X2

6X3