

Rift in Dinajpur BNP widens, party office under lock

Meeting in Hawa Bhaban produces little result, leaders on the run as 35 of them sued by rivals

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Crisis in Dinajpur BNP has deepened, creating possibility of a rift in the party here.

The party office in the town is locked since yesterday morning while most of the leaders belonging to the faction led by Md. Moklesur Rahman Rawshan are on the run following his arrest in Dhaka and filing of four case against 35 of his followers.

The cases were filed by former party secretary Md. Shahin Khan, Nazrul Islam Khoka, Md. Alauddin and Taimur Rahman.

Police said they have arrested four of the accused. They are Afzal Hossin Khan, Abdul Hakim Ratan, Nasirul Haque and Abdul Majid, all leaders of BNP's student front jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD).

Moklesur Rahman, organising secretary of Dinajpur district BNP, who was PS to former children and women affairs minister Khurshid Jahan Haque, was arrested from Gulshan in Dhaka on Thursday on

alleged charge of corruption.

The rivalry in the party intensified as party men opposed to Moklesur Rahman showed up after his arrest and death of Khurshid Jahan Haque, party insiders said.

On Saturday night, at least 50 party men belonging to the rival faction gathered in the town and burnt effigies of Moklesur Rahman and Dinajpur BNP vice-president Ashrafal Alam.

Police deployed in large numbers at different points in the town on Thursday to stave off possible clash between rival factions are still on patrol.

BNP Senior Joint Secretary Tarique Zia called some senior party leaders including two lawmakers to Dhaka and held a meeting at Hawa Bhaban on Saturday to resolve the crisis but there was little success, party sources said.

Those who attended the Hawa Bhaban meeting included former army chief Md. Mahubur Rahman who is Dinajpur BNP vice-president and lawmaker from

Dinajpur-1 constituency; Md. Akhraruzzaman Miah, lawmaker from Dinajpur-4 constituency and Mukut Chowdhury, vice president of central Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and president of its Dinajpur unit.

Tarique Zia may come to Dinajpur on June 30 to help party rivals close ranks, the sources said.

The simmering feud in Dinajpur BNP came in the open after the death of Khurshid Jahan Haque and arrest of her PS Moklesur Rahman, widely blamed for protecting his followers allegedly involved in corruption, irregularities, tender manipulation, extortion and such other crimes.

The district committee was dissolved on Thursday night. The sources claimed that dissolution was hailed by dedicated party leaders and workers at all levels.

Party sources claimed that Moklesur Rahman was behind the corruption and irregularities, done by keeping Khurshid Jahan Haque in the dark.

Local leaders had earlier complained to the party high command against Moklesur Rahman and his men for their corruption, but to no effect, the sources said.

Seven party leaders earlier resigned from their posts in the Deaf and Dump Institute and the Dinajpur Red Crescent Society, protesting corruption by party men in the institutions, headed by the prime minister's mother.

The seven leaders are Dinajpur former army chief Md. Mahubur Rahman MP, district unit vice-president Khalequzzaman Babu, its secretary Ashrafal Alam, joint secretary AK Azad, treasurer Golam Rasul Rocket, publicity secretary Aftab Uddin Mondol and executive committee member Abu Taher Abu.

Mahubur Rahman also resigned from the Regent Board of Haji Danesh Science and Technology University (HSTU) protesting alleged corruption by BNP men there and also did not attend any party meeting in last two years, party sources said.



PHOTO: STAR
The Kalni river devoured at least 50 homesteads in Derai upazila in Sunamganj district in about a week. Panicked villagers watching the river erosion to decide when to shift their houses.

Aband of brothers join hands to combat drugs

Part of Mymensingh town is now free from the vice

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

An initiative by some youths has raised great hopes among townspeople in Mymensingh. Their success in an anti-drug campaign has drawn attention of all including local public representatives and police officials.

In about a month, drug use has come down drastically in Akua Bangarpool, an area known in the town for the social curse. Drug peddlers who had a booming trade earlier have left the area.

Many known drug peddlers including Rukun, Jamir, his wife Parul, Rubel and Jasim have been arrested.

Twenty-five youths led by Monsur initiated the anti-drug drive. Whenever informed about drug peddling or use, they rush to the spot in a body and stop it. The peddlers dens have almost been rooted out from the area and no body now dares to take drugs in the open.

Equipped with bamboo sticks, flute and torch lights, they start

their mission after sunset and search for drug peddlers and users. Their drive has drawn public support, locals said.

Before launching the drive, the youths first met the local Ward Commissioner Syed Shafiqul Islam Minto, who gave them wholehearted support and assured all possible help.

The commissioner discussed the matter with freedom fighter MA Halim Suruj and Alauddin Khoka, president and secretary of local defense party, Officer-in-Charge of Kotwali Police Station Robiul Haque, Chairman of Akua Union Parishad Ramzan Ali Ranju and former ward commissioner Kamrul Islam Walid. They held a meeting with local people.

Seeing their success, youths in other areas of the town now think of launching anti-drug campaign.

Rajan Sen, Shoel, Raju and Prince, all members of the a-drug squad, said they feel proud to be involved in a drive which saves youths from destruction.

They vowed to continue the

drive till drug use is completely eradicated and peddlers driven out from the town. They are also conducting a public awareness campaign against drug use.

Talking to this correspondent, Ward Commissioner Minto said the youths are doing a commendable job. Such anti-drug squads should be formed in other areas to remove the social curse.

They have become successful in a work which police and public representatives could not do.

Mymensingh Municipality Chairman Mahmud Al-Noor Tareq said he will extend all support to youths in such good initiatives in Akua Bangarpool and other areas as well.

OC Robiul Haque said, "We are impressed by their success and hope youths in other areas of the town will also launch such drives".

We will welcome such drives even in areas outside the town, he said.

The initiative has been praised by leaders of local socio-cultural organisations like Mymensingh Sangeet Biddhalaya and Prayona.

School indeed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

No student from 15 schools passed in the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations held this year under Jessore Education Board.

The schools are Bidyabithi High School in Dumuria upazila of Khulna; Janashakti High School, Shingor High School, Abdul Aziz Memorial High School and Jaria High School in Bagerhat; Islamtaki High School and Syed Kamal Bakht High School in Satkhira; MGHM High School in Meherpur; Bankri Girls High School, Srirampur Girls High School, Palli Unnayan Girls High School and Kakkilakhali Girls High School in Jessore; Muldarh Talatala High School in Narail; Palla High School and Gopalpur High School in Magura.

Stern action will be taken against the schools from which no student could come out successful, said Jessore Education Board Controller Amirul Alam Khan. Inefficiency, insincerity and corrupt by teachers are responsible for the bad results, he said.

According to sources in the education board, the number of teachers is higher than the number SSC examinees in several of the 15 schools.

Diarrhoea: 3 killed, 200 attacked in Khagrachhari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

At least three people including a child died and 200 others were attacked with diarrhoea in Khagrachhari in last 4 days.

Khagrachhari civil surgeon (CS) office sources confirmed the deaths and identified the victims as Chikon Bala Tripura, 32, Halendra Tripura, 42, and Shahin, 8.

The worst affected areas are Maratillalataban, Fatema Nagar and some remote villages in Panchhari upazila where 100 people were attacked with the disease. In Mohalchhari, Laxmichhari and Matiranga upazilas, 100 others are suffering from the disease.

Meanwhile, 100 people are attacked with malaria in Manikchhari thana but the Health Department took no initiative to control the situation.

Tea testing council held in Srimongal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

The annual 'tea testing open council' of Bangladesh Tea Research Institute (BTRI) was held yesterday at the institute in Srimongal with great enthusiasm.

Produced tea from factories of 63 tea gardens in Sylhet division were presented at the council.

Director of National Brokers Limited Saiful Islam and BTRI Tea Scientist Mukul Joyti Dutta tested standard of tea samples at an open session.

Five hundred categories of tea from 63 tea gardens were presented before for test.

After tests, grades were given in written to tea gardens concerned.

BTRI Director Dr Shahiduzzaman; Saiful Islam, Director of the National Tea Brokers Ltd; tea scientist Shah Kamal Haque; DGM of Bharaura Tea Garden Bashir Alam were also present.

On road to women's empowerment

Mini garments unit in remote Netrakona village makes them self-reliant

JAHANGIR ALAM, Netrakona

Mandi village, six kilometres from the district town, is now alive with working women.

The illiterate poor women coming from faraway areas produce garments in a tin-shed room.

They are 120 and all are self-reliant, earning Tk 150 to Tk 200 a day by working for six to eight hours.

They are members of Netrakona Integrated Development Project (NIDP), a local NGO. NIDP launched the garments project in June last year with 60 women members. The member has doubled in a year.

The women became members with a monthly contribution of Tk 10.

Once enrolled, they are trained in garments production and given subsistence allowance during the six-month training period.

After training, each woman is provided with a sewing machine and supplied with fabrics and other inputs. The specified products are bought back by NIDP and supplied to markets in Netrakona and other districts.

They produce garments for men, women and children but do not have to worry for marketing those.

The products are in good

demand, NIDP Project Director Gopal Karmakar told the correspondent during a visit.

"We are surprised at the success of the poor and illiterate women. All the women working here are illiterate but once trained and supplied with inputs, they utilise the scope properly in an intelligent way.

"They are changing their life and 95 per cent of the women have become self-reliant", Gopal said.

He said, seeing the good response and success, NIDP authorities are now thinking to replicate the project in all upazilas of the district.

Amana Begum, 30, of Baischakra village said she earns 150 to Tk 200 a day by working in the garments project. She said she does not have to worry. The NGO markets the products.

Amana Begum said her husband is a rickshaw puller. Now that she adds a substantial amount to the family income, her two sons and a daughter go to school.

Rahima Khatun, 25, of Madni village, said her husband is physically disabled and can not work. She worked as a domestic help before becoming member of NIDP. She can maintain her four-member family with the earnings.

Most of the women this correspondent talked to said they are now self-reliant.

NIDP Planning Manager Abu Hanif said they have a plan to set up 10 to 12 more such projects in every upazila of the district.



PHOTO: STAR
The once sleeping Mandi village in Netrakona is now abuzz with women working on sewing machines at a mini garments factory, organised by Netrakona Integrated Development Project (NIDP).

Thwarting recurring floods

Dam built by CARITAS along Netai river in Mymensingh will protect 20 villages

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A long cherished dream of several lakh people Dhubarua upazila in the district has been fulfilled. Their crops and homesteads will not be washed away any more as a dam has been constructed on the eastern side of Netai river.

People in at least 20 villages are now free from worries following construction of the massive dam by CARITAS. The 640 metre long and 12.4 metre wide dam will protect crops worth over Tk 5 crore annually and human habitations in Goshgoan, Dhubaura, Gamaritala and Purakundulia unions.

Work on the Tk 1.2 crore project was started in December last year and completed recently. It will protect the area from floods caused by onrush of waters from Meghalaya hills in India, only three kilometres away.

CARITAS sources said they constructed the dam following appeals by local people. The dam will also protect the area from erosion by the river.

The dam, built with funds from its Luxembourg office is the biggest project taken up by CARITAS in Bangladesh, they said. The dam has been reinforced with concrete blocks and is likely to be durable.

Local people extended their

wholehearted supports in the work, they said.

People living in Bhalukapara, Joripapra, Siddipara and Purba Goshgoan villages were the worst sufferers due to erosion by the river. They will now be safe, said Goshgoan Union Parishad Chairman Shamsul Haque while talking to this correspondent.

Deposit of silt on croplands carried by flood waters made many affluent farmers pauper as their croplands were rendered uncultivable, said local BNP leader Prof Azharul Islam. This will stop now, he added.

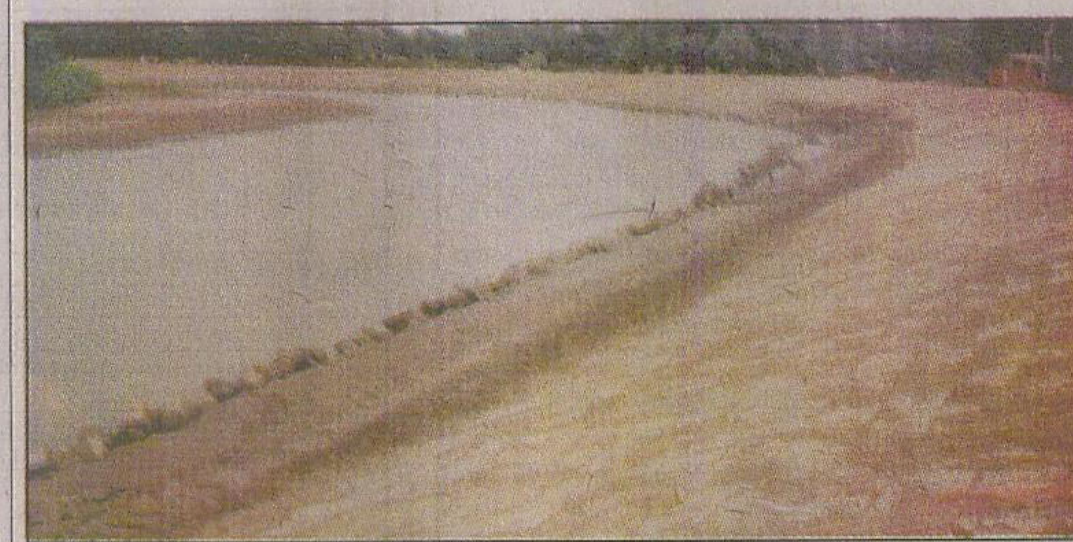


PHOTO: STAR
The newly constructed dam on the eastern side of Netai river in Dhubarua upazila in Mymensingh that will protect 20 villages from flood and erosion.

Santhia UP leaders boycott Nizami's meeting

A CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Santhia Poursabha chairman and nine Union Parishad (UP) chairmen have boycotted Industries Minister and Jamaat Ameer Moulana Motiur Rahman Nizami's programme in the upazila town on Saturday.

They boycotted the programme in protest against allocating government sanctions among Jamaat men depriving the UP chairmen and members.

Santhia upazila administration organised the programme for distribution of government sanction under the Department of Food and Disaster Management. Nizami was present there as chief guest.

Khetupara UP chairman Md Abdul Gofur told this correspondent that all the government allocations including TR projects, Food for Work projects, Money for Work projects were distributed among Jamaat men depriving the UP chairman and members in Santhia upazila.

They will continue their boycott programme, Gofur said further.

Local people brought the matter to notice of Pabna Deputy Commissioner who ordered a probe into the incident, Santhia Upazila Nirbahi Office sources said.



PHOTO: STAR
Youths on patrol in Akua Bangarpool area of Mymensingh town to guard against drug peddling.

Rangamati BNP demands removal of CHT Affairs secy

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and its front organisations jointly held a protest rally in front of Rangamati Deputy Commissioner's office and submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister through the DC demanding immediate removal of secretary of CHT Affairs Ministry as he is involved in a row with Deputy Minister for CHT Affairs Mini Swapan Dewan.

District BNP secretary M Zahir Ahmed, Senior Vice president Syed Ismail Hossain Nizami and leaders of Juba Dal and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal addressed the rally.

They said a deputy minister can not resign over a row with a secretary. They urged the prime minister to punish the secretary and remove from the ministry.

Otherwise, BNP, its front organisations and other component parties of the ruling four-party alliance in Rangamati will launch a tougher agitation, they said.

Rampant rubber theft from govt gardens

Culprits have links with officials, political leaders

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Theft of raw rubber from state-run gardens in Sylhet region increased in recent months.

Organised gangs enjoying blessings of political quarters are engaged in the theft for long. At least 30,000 kilograms of rubber was stolen from the four gardens in the region in last five months.

This could not be stopped even after filing of cases with different police stations, repeated meetings with local political leaders, people's representatives and officials.

Sources in the regional office of Bangladesh Forest Industries Development Corporation (BFIDC) at Srimongal said, in last five months, 14,600 kgs of rubber were stolen from Rupaichhara rubber garden; and 7,098, 5,850, 368 kgs from gardens in Habiganj, Srimongal and Moulvibazar respectively. Lack of adequate security men is

the main cause of frequent thefts, they said.

The organised gangs even looted rubber from gardens in Rupaichhara and Habiganj during day time. At Rupaichhara garden, Ansars opened fire to drive away miscreants.

As many as 41 cases were lodged with police stations during the period. Police recovered 25,000 kgs of rubber.

The lifted raw rubber after drying is sold in black markets at Tk 25 to Tk 30 per kilogram while the market price is between Tk 40 and Tk 60.

The gangs have links with local ruling party men and a section of garden officials, they claimed. In certain areas, even law enforcers remain silent out of fear.

A trader in Srimongal said the theft can not be stopped as a section of garden employees and political leaders are involved in it.