

In dark alley of early marriage

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

"At the age of 12, I was married to my cousin Zahurul Islam, 18, just to ensure that I would take care of my ailing father," said Ruma Khatun, now 16, who along with her husband have been living in her father's residence at Belgachhi village in Sherpur upazila of Bogra district since their marriage four years ago. Recently a baby was born to them.

"Guardians knew that early marriage is strictly prohibited according to the law of the country but they arranged our marriage," said Zahurul.

Many other couples in different upazilas in Bogra district have similar stories to tell.

"When I was 11 years old I was married to my neighbour Khokon, 14, as per arrangement by the guardians," said Mazeda, 15, now mother of a one-year-old girl.

"Guardians of both of the families knew that law does not allow early marriage but we had done it without any resistance. We arranged the marriage just for the sake of peace between the two families and having a lasting relationship between us," said Mazeda's mother-in-law Aleza of Garidaha village in the same upazila.

"One of the causes of early marriage in Bogra district, especially in Sherpur area, is eve teasing," said Md Abdus Sattar, executive director of Maitree Palli Unnayan Sangathan, a Sherpur-based NGO that conducted a baseline survey on the causes of early marriage at Kusumbi,



PHOTO: STAR

Married at the age of 12 four years ago, Ruma Khatun poses with husband Zahurul Islam and five-month-old baby at their Belgachhi village house in Sherpur upazila.

Khamarkandi and Khanpur unions and other areas of the district last year.

"Poverty, lack of awareness of the guardians and some other factors have been identified as causes for early marriage in the district. Even when local marriage registrars refuse to register marriage of underage girls, a section of guardians arrange marriage that remain unregistered," he said.

"Earlier local administration and NGO workers foiled attempt to marry off a 14-year-old girl of Amzad Hossain at Khamarkandi village in Sherpur upazila. But the guardians solemnised in a hurry two months ago," he said.

Md Ayub Ali, headmaster of Sahnanagar Girls High School, said, "At least 40 underage students of my school got married during 19 months from July 2007 to February this year. Eleven

students got married in last December."

"We failed to stop early marriage of Munira Khatun, a student of class X, as the local union parishad chairman issued a fake age certificate stating that she is 18 years and seven months old. But she is 14 years and two months old according to the school documents," said the headmaster.

He sent four letters to the upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) to take necessary steps to stop early marriage in the area, he said.

"Marriage of three minor girls of my school have been solemnised during last seven days," Ayub Ali said over cell phone on March 9.

The administration has failed to achieve 100 percent success in checking early marriage due to unfavourable socio-economic condition, said Bogra Sadar UNO Shefina Begum.

Ban on rallies on CU campus extended

CU CORRESPONDENT

The Chittagong University (CU) authorities have extended ban on rallies, meetings and processions on the campus for another two months.

Earlier, the university authorities imposed the ban for a month from March 13 following a clash between two rival groups of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) on the campus. The ban expired yesterday.

The authorities reimposed the restriction to maintain congenial academic atmosphere on the campus, said a press release of the university yesterday.

7 fishermen abducted from Sundarbans

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Pirates abducted seven fishermen for Tk 1 lakh ransom from Fatiker Canal in the Sundarbans Wednesday evening, according to a report received here yesterday.

Pirates have set seven days deadline for payment of ransom failing which the captives will face the dire consequences, a fishermen named Mominur Rahman, who managed to escape from the pirates told police.

The abducted are: Abdul Gaffar, 35, son of Asgar Ali of village Dhumghata, Ashrafur Islam, 25, son of Monsur Ali, Dolon, 38, son of Abdul Sardar, Kawwar Ali Gazi, 35, son of Kabir Gazi, Yasin Ali, 24, son of Kawwar Ali, Johor Ali, 50, son of Zahed Ali Gazi of village Tengrakhalai and Asgar Ali, 44, son of Zobed Ali of village Kewratola in Shyamnagar upazila.

They are now held hostage in deep forest, police quoted fisherman Momin as saying, pirates are sending messages to relatives of captives to pay ransom within the deadline or receive dead bodies of the fishermen.

Eight fishermen went to the Sundarbans by two trawlers. As soon as they reached Fatiker Canal, a gang of pirates swooped on them, looted cash and valuables and abducted the fishermen.

Relatives have urged the law enforcers to rescue the fishermen.

Contacted, Shyamnagar officer-in-charge (OC) Babul Akhtar said they are trying to rescue the victims.

CRIMINAL CHARGES: Jubo League leader held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Police have arrested a leader of Awami Jubo League from Kapsanda village in Assassuni upazila as he is accused in several cases for murder, extortion and abduction.

Assassuni Upazila Jubo League assistant secretary Romjan Ali Moral, 30, was arrested from a rural road at Kapsanda at about 10-30 pm on Saturday, police said.

Romzan is a wanted criminal, police said, adding that there are several cases against him including those for murder, loot, extortion and abduction with Assassuni Police Station.

Local Jubo League leaders tried to get him released from the police station but police refused to release him as he was a listed criminal, police said.

UNSCHEDULED CLOSURE: RU students to miss Pahela Baishakh

RU CORRESPONDENT

Teachers and students of Rajshahi University will not be able to welcome Bangla New Year on the campus due to unscheduled closure of the university.

The authorities closed the university indefinitely on March 13 following a clash between Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) that left one Shibir leader killed and 100 others injured.

Many students became frustrated to know that the student bodies, cultural organisations, fine arts and Bangla departments of the university will not take up any programme on the campus to celebrate Pahela Baishakh, the first day of Bangla New Year, tomorrow. Faisal Mahmud, a student

ASSAULT ON UNO ALLEGEDLY BY AL MEN

Govt staffs keep off office

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Government officers and employees at Kumarkhali upazila headquarters yesterday abstained from work protesting assault on upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) allegedly by some activists of the Ruling Awami League and its front organisations.

According to upazila administration sources, the incident took place on Thursday as UNO Nuruzzaman, also the Chairman of Kumarkhali Degree College, fixed a date for appointing a principal for the college

without consulting local lawmaker Sultana Tarun.

At least 12 activists of AL and its front organisations entered the UNO office and beat him up. They also ransacked the office and threatened to kill the UNO, sources said.

Before the incident, the lawmaker phoned UNO and warned him of serious consequences for his action.

The UNO filed a case with Kumarkhali Police Station the same day against nine ruling party men.

Police have so far arrested two of the accused. They are Bangladesh Chhatra

League (BCL) Kumarkhali upazila unit president Rabiul Awal and upazila Swechchasebok League general secretary Md Abdur Rafiq.

All government officers and employees at the upazila headquarters yesterday urged the higher authorities to ensure their security and demanded immediate arrest of the persons involved in the Thursday's incident.

Bangladesh Administrative Service Association Kushtia unit in a press release yesterday condemned the incident and demanded punishment to the culprits.



PHOTO: STAR

Indigenous people float flowers on river in Rangamati on the occasion of their three-day Biju festival that started yesterday. The traditional festival, known by different names in Chittagong Hill Tracts, is celebrated to welcome Bangla New Year.

Vow to eliminate inequality, fight dowry menace

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Around a thousand people at remote Boterhat village under Biral upazila in the district yesterday pledged to work together for elimination of all sorts of discrimination against women.

The audience that included a large number of women, also vowed to fight against dowry.

Local NGO Udyog organised the daylong programme in cooperation with 'Manusher Jonno Foundation' to 'raise voice against discrimination between male and female' in the society. Women of the country still have to fight for their equal rights while there is lack of awareness on the matter, speakers said at the meeting at Ranipukur school ground.

They called for immediate implementation of the National Women Development Policy, formulation of a 'uniform family code' and withdrawal of reservations to article 2 and 16 (1)(c) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

If all people in the society become conscious about the rights of women, a time will come when all kinds of discriminations against women will be eliminated and there will be no need for celebration of special day for the purpose.

Md Kalid Mahmud Chowdhury, lawmaker from

Dinajpur-2 constituency, who attended the programme as chief guest, said police and local administration should be careful in applying the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act as it is often used to harass people to avenge incidents due to personal enmity.

The audience present at the meeting vowed to protest any incident of violence against women and refrain from abusing women and taking dowry.

Md Ashrafur Alam, director (Finance and Admin) of Manusher Jonno Foundation,

attended as special guest at the programme presided over by Biral upazila Chairman Md Mokarram Hossain.

Udyog Chief Executive Officer Ummey Nahar presented the keynote at the programme.

Later the meeting honoured 16 couples who recently

got married without dowry. Besides, 482 more people promised not to take dowry during their marriage, the meeting was told.

On the occasion, a 'Gender Mela' was organised on the school compound to create awareness about bridging the gap between male and female.

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DHAKA POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY LTD
 (An Enterprise of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh)

INVITATION FOR RE TENDER

01	Agency	Dhaka Power Distribution Company Limited (DPDC)		
02	Procuring Entity Name	Office of the GM (T), Network Operation & Customer Service (South), DPDC, 12/1/B, Motijheel Commercial Area, Dhaka		
03	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka		
04	Invitation for	Engagement of Security Guards		
05	Invitation Ref. No	GM(T)N&CS(South)/DPDC/08/2/02/280		
06	Date	9/04/2009		
KEY INFORMATION				
07	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (Single stage two envelope)		
FUNDING INFORMATION				
08	Budget and source of Funds	DPDC's own fund		
PARTICULAR INFORMATION				
09	Tender Name	Engagement of Security Guards		
10	Tender Last selling date, Closing & Opening Date and Time	Last Selling Date	Closing & Opening Date	Closing Time
		13/05/2009	14/05/2009	12:00 Noon
11	Name & Address of the office for selling Tender Document, receiving & opening tender	Selling		Receiving
		GM, Network Operation & Customer Service (South), DPDC, 12/1/B, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka		1. GM (T), Network Operation & Customer Service (South), DPDC, 12/1/B, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka 2. Secretary, DPDC, 1, Abdul Gani Road, Dhaka
		Opening		GM (T), Network Operation & Customer Service (South), DPDC, 12/1/B, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER				
12	Eligibility for Tenderer	The Tenderer shall have minimum 05 years experience of providing security services to Govt./Semi-Govt./Autonomous bodies/ Multinational Companies/Public Limited Companies/ NGOs. Tenderer must have valid Trade License, TIN & VAT registration from concerned Authorities of Bangladesh. Requisite Document to conduct security service providing business must be enclosed. The Tenderer shall have minimum 02 (Two) Contracts within last 03 (Three) years for Security Services.		
13	Brief Description of works	Engagement of 130 + 25% Male Security Guards		
14	Price of Tender Document (Tk.)	Tk. 2000.00 only payable in the form of Pay Order/Bank draft form any scheduled bank in Bangladesh in favour of "Dhaka Power Distribution Company Limited (DPDC)"		
15	Description of Package	Location of Delivery	Tender Security Amount (Tk.)	Completion Time in months
		Engagement of security Guards	Deferent Areas under GM, (Tech.), Network Operation & Customer Service (South), DPDC, 12/1/B, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka	Tk. 1,75,000.00
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS				
16	Name of Official Inviting Tenderer	Engr. Md. Abdus Sobhan		
17	Designation of Official Inviting Tenderer	GM (Tech.), Network Operation & Customer Service (South), DPDC		
18	Address of Official Inviting Tenderer	12/1/B, Motijheel Commercial Area, Dhaka		
19	Contact details of Official Inviting Tenderer	02-7123133		
20	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any/all tender(s) without assigning any reason whatsoever.			
Engr. Md. Abdus Sobhan GM (Technical), Network Operation & Customer Service (South), DPDC				