

ALLEGATION OF CORRUPTION IN VGD PROGRAMME

# Landless people besiege Natore UNO office

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Natore*

Hundreds of landless people from five unions yesterday formed a human chain in front of the upazila parishad complex, besieged the UNO office and submitted a memorandum to the UNO protesting alleged malpractice in preparing the list of beneficiaries of the VGD programme.

The protesters alleged that the ruling party activists and members of the VGD card distribution committee are being included in the list depriving the genuine poor people.

"We will be forced to launch tougher agitation if they do not stop corruption and nepotism in making the list of the VGD card holders in the area," said leader of 'Bhumihin Samity' Mira Begum.

The activists of UP chairman and

local Awami League leaders sold a huge number of cards of vulnerable group development (VGD) programmes among both distressed and solvent people in several areas of the upazila at Tk 1000 to Tk 3000 each, she alleged.

Kohinur Begum, 37, wife of Sanowar Ali of village Taltola under Dayarampur union said, the chairman and members enrolled the name of Helena Begum, who is not a resident of the upazila. Helena Begum is wife of Mukul Mia of village Patul under Natore Sadar upazila, she added.

Rehena Begum, another protester of the same village said, name of Joriman Begum was put on the VGD card list though she is financially solvent as her husband works in Malaysia.

Sambhu Sarkar of village Faguadiar said, most of VGD cards were distrib-

uted in exchange of money and the recipients are also from among the ruling party men who are financially sound.

Sanjita Begum, 27, wife of Mahatab Uddin of Faguadiar village under Bagatipara union said, she did not get the VGD card as she could not give money to the ruling party men.

Contacted, UNO Yamin Khan said, the formation of the committee and enlisting the names of the VGD cardholders are yet to be completed. He said an impartial list will be prepared after visiting door to door.

Abdul Aziz, chairman of Bagatipara UP said, there is no question of corruption in the list as the UP members, AL and JP leaders, NGO workers and the govt. officials jointly prepared and submitted it.

VILLAGERS CLASH

## 30 hurt, 12 houses damaged

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Netrakona*

At least 30 people were injured, 12 houses damaged and 4 shops looted as villagers clashed at Jagannathpur under Khaliajuri upazila yesterday over a piece of disputed land.

Police and locals said, there was a longstanding dispute between Almas Mia group and Biddaya Mia group over the land.

Yesterday morning, following an altercation between Almas and Biddaya over the disputed land, supporters of Biddaya attacked 12 houses belonging to people of Almas group with sharp and lethal weapons.

They damaged the valuables worth Tk 70 lakh at the houses. Within minutes, Almas group counter attacked their rivals leaving 30 people of both groups injured.

During the clash, 4 shops of Almas group at nearby Jagannathpur Bazar were looted by the Biddaya Mia group, sources said.

Seriously injured Shahin, Giashuddin, Rafiqul Islam, Dalim Mia and Dulal were sent to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

## Rival contractors clash over tender issue

*C'nawabganj office ransacked, damaged*

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Chapainawabganj*

District Contractors Association office at Swarupnagar in the town was ransacked as two rival groups of contractors locked in clash yesterday.

During the clash, brick-batting by the feuding groups also damaged the office building.

After the incident, one group of contractors locked the main gate of the building in a bid to take control of the office.

On information, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Contractors and police said, there was a longstanding conflict between two groups of contractors one led by president of the association Khairul Islam and the other by former president Touhidur Rahman.

Sources said, the conflict was a sequel to a dispute over the process of tender on repair work of the Padma left bank pro-



PHOTO: STAR

**District Contractors Association office at Swarupnagar in Chapainawabganj town lies vandalised after two groups of contractors locked in a clash over tender for a repair work of Padma embankment yesterday.**

tection at a cost of Tk 1.5 crore.

One group of the contractors wants lottery and the other wants rate quoting. Recently, a view exchange meeting was held at the office of the WDB executive engineer but it ended without any decision. The rival contractors exchanged hot words threatening each others, sources added.

After the incident, the leaders of contractors arranged an arbitration meeting at their office yesterday morning.

When Touhidur Rahman along with others reached there, a group of contractors started brick-batting from inside the office. Later, both groups locked in clashes chasing each other.

## Strike at Mymensingh Medical continues

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Mymensingh*

Interns and students of Mymensingh Medical College and Hospital (MMCH) continued their strike for the third day yesterday demanding arrest of the outsiders who vandalised hospital rooms and injured some students and interns on the campus on Thursday night.

The agitating interns and students staged a sit-in in front of the hospital building yesterday morning and then brought out a procession on the campus demanding immediate arrest of the attackers. They also burnt an effigy of Dulal, one of the attackers.

At a rally on the campus in the afternoon, the interns and the students vowed to continue their strike until the demand was met. On Saturday, they gave a 72-hour ultimatum to arrest the attackers. Otherwise, they threatened to go for a tougher agitation.

Contacted, Officer-in-Charge Golam Sarwar of Mymensingh Kotwali Police Station said they are trying to nab the attackers.

The attack was made following an altercation between some interns of the hospital and locals of nearby Charpara area over harassment of a female intern by a man of the area on Thursday night.

Immediately after the incident, a group of people of the area attacked the interns and students and vandalised some hospital rooms. Protesting the attack and demanding arrest of the attackers, the interns and students began an indefinite strike on Friday noon.

The interns, however, formed an 'emergency squad' for treatment of the critical patients at the hospital.

Meanwhile, Dish Arif, arrested on Saturday for his alleged involvement in Thursday night's attack, was produced in a court here yesterday. The court sent him to jail.

## Physically challenged kids raped

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kishoreganj*

A class one student, also physically challenged, was raped allegedly by a rickswapuller on Saturday in Kutkhail area of Sadar upazila.

Police later arrested rickshawpuller Chan Mia, 45, of Boulai Moishkhali village.

Police and locals said Chan Mia took the girl, daughter of rice mill worker Abdus Salam of Kutkhail village to a nearby bush and raped her.

Hearing the hue and cry of the girl, neighbour Harun-Ar-Rashid caught the rapist with the help of others red-handed and handed over to police.

Ruhul Kuddus Khan, sub-inspector (SI) of Sadar PS said a rape case would be filed against Chan Mia after medical test of the girl.

In Laxmipur, a speech impaired girl was gang-raped at Dakkhin Hamsadir Gangapur village in Sadar upazila on Saturday night and three youths were arrested in this connection yesterday, reports UNB.

Police said Shipon, 25, Suman, 25, and Belal, 32, of nearby Nandanpur area picked up the teenage girl on Saturday evening when she was on her way back home from Gangapur Bazaar and violated her.

Being informed by local people, police rescued the victim yesterday morning and arrested the culprits.

Victim's grandmother filed a case.

## Serafina's family brought to city for safe shelter

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

Follow-up

Jatiya Adivasi Parishad (JAP) leaders yesterday took Serafina's father Cornelius Mardi and sister Sabina Mardi to Rajshahi city from their Amtulipara village home in Godagari upazila for arranging safe shelter.

"They have been brought here as they were under pressure of the community at the village," JAP general secretary Rabindranath Soren said.

Gang-raped on April 4 last year, indigenous girl Serafina, 14, recently committed suicide following out-of-court settlement by own community leaders who decided her marriage with one of the rapists.

Local chapters of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association and

Bangladesh Mohila Parishad have started working to provide legal support to the victim's family members who are now facing ill-treatment by their own community.

Meanwhile, the authority of Rajshahi Catholic Diocese is defending Father Bernard Tudu of Surshunipara Catholic Church who was arrested by police on charge of provoking Serafina's suicide through illegal out of court settlement.

William Murmu, a Father of the diocese, told this correspondent that they employed lawyers to legally tackle the case of Father Bernard as he was not involved in the settlement.

He, however, said Bernard should not have

kept the deposit of the 'settlement money' to him and hand it over to the victim's family on behalf of the settlement committee.

Bernard also should not have allowed the settlement committee to hold the meeting on the church premises, William added.

Father William explained that they are defending the accused priest as the Bishop of the diocese who has authority to decide about Fathers is outside the country now.

"It was Father Bernard who gave us support for filing the case for rape of Serafina. But he did not support us later. Instead, he sided with other community leaders, pressurised us to follow the salish [out-of-court settlement]," Cornelius Mardi told this correspondent.



PHOTO: STAR

**Poultry owners block the approach road of Bangabandhu Jamuna Bridge near Pabna town yesterday protesting price hike of poultry feeds and medicines.**

## Poultry owners protest price hike of feeds, medicines

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Tangail*

Poultry farm owners in Tangail yesterday blocked Bangabandhu Bridge approach road protesting price hike of poultry feeds and medicines.

They formed a human chain keeping the highway blocked for half an hour and threw eggs on the highway.

The angry poultry farm owners held the agitation programmes on the busy Rabna bypass near the town

under the banner of Tangail district unit of Bangladesh Poultry Farm Protection Association.

They also held a rally there and Sayeed Azad, Tangail district unit president of the association, and general secretary Abdul Awal spoke at the rally.

Describing the miseries of the poultry farm owners due to recent abnormal price hike of poultry feeds and medicines they said reduction in prices of chicks and eggs

added to the situation.

The speakers at the rally also urged the government to take steps to save the industry.

They also threatened to go for tougher agitation if the authorities concerned did not take effective steps to solve the problem immediately.

The protesters later went to the Tangail deputy commissioner (DC) M Bazlul Karim Chowdhury in a procession and submitted a memorandum to the prime minister through him.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE SECTOR DIALOGUE

## Separate market for women in Sylhet city stressed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Sylhet*

Business leaders, women entrepreneurs and government officials at a dialogue here yesterday stressed the need for setting up a separate market for women in the divisional city.

Besides, they suggested creation of an open forum where public and private sectors will discuss and analyse the problems in a bid to develop an effective public-private partnership to resolve those. It would surely improve the environment for business and investment in the region, they noted.

The discussants called for strengthening the business information centre, set up at the city corporation. They also emphasised arrangement of skill development and business management training for women entrepreneurs.

A good number of government officials, business leaders and others joined the public-private sector dialogue organised by Sylhet Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCI) and Women Business Forum (WBF), Sylhet with technical assistance from Asia Foundation and others.

SCCI administrator Dr. Mohammad Abul Hasan moderated the dialogue while deputy commissioner of Sylhet Abu Syed Mohammad Hashim chaired.

Commissioner of taxes Abdul Jabbar, commissioner of customs & Vat Saiful Islam, Bangladesh Bank's general manager Nirmal Chandra Bhakta, WBF vice-president Swarnalata Roy and general secretary Runa Begum, former SCCI presidents MA Salam Chowdhury and MA Razzaque Chowdhury, Sylhet Press Club president Ahmed Nur, Bangladesh poultry farm protection committee president Foyez Raja Chowdhury, farmer Md. Syedur Rahman, SME Foundation's Shahin Anwar, Pubali Bank DGM Mosaddek Chowdhury, Asia Foundation's deputy country representative Shamim Siddique among others spoke at the dialogue.

Dr. Abul Hasan read out a report on the

achievements from the previous 4 public private dialogue held between the women business forum and the government officials during the last 2 years.

Issuance of trade licenses, TIN certificate, poultry farm registration certificate, dealing license etc. have now been made easier in Sylhet, Hasan said.

Besides, Pubali Bank has already started a separate desk for the women entrepreneurs in Sylhet while 50 women entrepreneurs were given loans with the WBF as guarantor in addition to another group of 40 Manipuri female entrepreneurs in the region, he informed.

Mayor Badaruddin Ahmed Kamran assured of taking measures for a separate market for the women.

Lawmaker Mahmud Us Samad Chowdhury said WBF, Sylhet through their activities in organising the women business people in the region would be a strong and effective organisation in the near future.

Special Economic Zone (SEZ) refers to a specially earmarked area with potential for extensive economic activities. With huge participation of the NRBs, the proposed SEZ in Sylhet would be the first of its kind in Bangladesh. It would be located in Habiganj, having a good communication through rail, road and river links with the capital as well as with the other parts of the country. Besides, connectivity with gas line from Bibiyana is also there, he added.

Deputy commissioner Abu Syed Mohammad Hashim said a programme for bringing the fallow lands in Sylhet division under cultivation is being taken at a cost of Tk 800 crore. He also assured of giving all-out assistance to women entrepreneurs in the district.

WBF Sylhet president Dr. Anwara Khatun urged the bankers to extend loan on easy terms and called for training of potential women entrepreneurs in the region. She also sought assistance from the business leaders for the women entrepreneurs for wider market access of their products.

## Lighting the children's way

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kurigram*

The children of remote Prothom Alo Char village in Ghogadaho union under Kurigram Sadar upazila are now lucky enough to receive schooling, thanks to the initiative of Prothom Alo Trustee Board.

Editor of Bangla daily Prothom Alo Md Matiur Rahman on Saturday inaugurated Prothom Alo School at the village as chief guest.

In 2001, a new landmass emerged from the Brahmaputra River, forming parts of Nunkhawa union under Nageswari upazila and Jatrapur and Ghogadaho unions under Sadar upazila of the district.

Then some people started living there but they remained deprived of government facilities.

After a visit to the char in 2004, Kurigram correspondent of the daily Prothom Alo Shafi Khan reported on the indigent condition of 16 families living there.

Then he along with members of Kurigram unit of Prothom Alo Bandhusava started giving supports to them. Later locals named the area Prothom Alo Char.

Following Shafi Khan's persuasion, Ghogadaho UP Chairman Md Abdul Malek recognised the char area as belonging to his union and more people started living there. Presently about 2,500 people of 250 families live there.

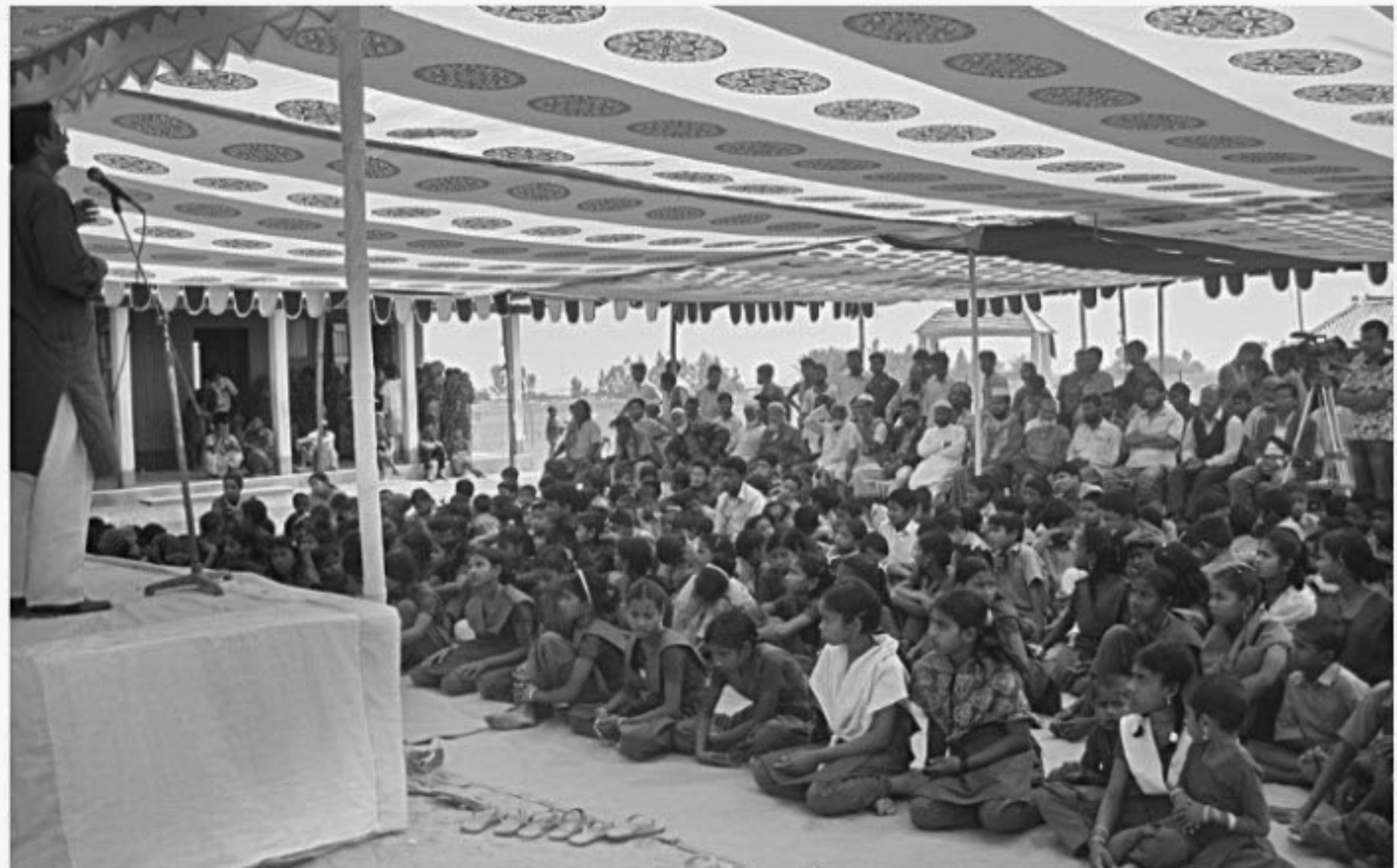


PHOTO: STAR

**Prothom Alo Editor Matiur Rahman speaks at the inaugural function of Prothom Alo School at a remote char in Ghogadaho union of Kurigram Sadar upazila on Saturday.**

But in absence of any school, most of the children of the char area remained deprived of education. Some children went to a primary school over two kilometres away, crossing the Brahmaputra River.

In response to locals' request, Shafi Khan in last year with the help of the Prothom Alo Trustee Board established a primary school named Prothom Alo School in two huts on 46 decimals of land in Prothom Alo Char village. The primary school informally started with 103 students in classes one to five and four teachers.

The trust provided furni-

ture, playing instruments and teachers' salaries while the upazila primary education officer arranged books and tiffin for students.

Chairman of Prothom Alo Trustee Board and former secretary Md Abdul Aziz Khan, Commanding Officer of 27 Battalion of Border Guard Bangladesh in Kurigram Lt Col Md Abdur Razzak Tarofdar, Kurigram Sadar Upazila Primary Education Officer Md Amir Hossen, Executive Director of local NGO Solidarity freedom fighter Harun Ar Rashid Lal and Chairman of Ghogadaho Unoin Parishad Md Abdul Malek were also

present during inauguration of Prothom Alo School.

Locals Fazlar Rahman, 42, and Moktar Ali, 64, said they feel proud to have the school there. They demanded extending the institution as a high school to facilitate education of about three hundred children in the char area.

"We are committed to working for betterment of the country and people. We will establish more schools in the char areas. We will draw government's attention for development of the char areas for greater interest of the people of Rangpur division," said Prothom Alo Editor Md Matiur Rahman.