



PHOTO: STAR
RESCUED FROM FORCED LABOUR: Rapid Action Battalion yesterday freed 27 people, including 23 children, who had been kept in captivity to work under duress at a brick kiln at Bangabazar village in Cox's Bazar Sadar upazila.

27 including 23 children rescued from brick kiln

A CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday rescued 27 labourers including 23 children from a brickfield in Bangla Bazar area under Sadar upazila of the district.

They were locked in a small room and forced to toil, Rab sources said.

The Rab men also arrested owner of the brickfield Abdul Shukur, its manager Shamsul Alam and leader of the workers, Joynal Abedin.

The Rab team raided the brickfield in the morning, after receiving written complaint from the fathers of two of the abducted children, on Wednesday, Abdus Sattar, deputy assistant director of Rab-7 camp in Cox's Bazar said.

Idris, one of the brokers, collected the

workers from Gabbur village of Jamalpur and tricked them into working at the brickfield by making false promises of good wages, he added.

Shukur, the owner said that he paid Idris Tk 20,000 per worker a month ago, on condition that they would work for him for six months.

Lal Miah, 12, and Shakil, 8, two of the rescued workers said that they were forced to toil from dawn to dusk. On top of that they were beaten up regularly and given very little food, they added.

The rescued children are under Rab's custody and would be handed over to their parents later.

Badrul Alam Talukdar, officer-in-charge of Cox's Bazar Police Station said a case has been filed against the three arrestees.

2 THAKURGAON ROAD PROJECTS

Work orders finally cancelled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Local Government and Engineering Department (LGED) cancelled work orders of two contractors for not completing their road construction work in Haripur upazila under the district even after extension of the time limit several times during last three years.

The authorities also forfeited their five percent 'performance security' in this regard a couple of days ago, said Shariful Islam, executive engineer of LGED.

M/S Rashida Sultan was given Tk 74.10 lakh work order for construction of two-kilometre Dhirganj-Thakurtala road and Tozzammel Haque was given Tk 73.56 lakh work order for a two-kilometre section of Dhirganj-Jadurani road in Haripur upazila on November 25, 2008 under Union Infrastructure Development Project, office sources said.

The two contractors were supposed to start the works on December 1 in 2008 and complete by May 1 in 2009.

But they suspended the works after completing sub-base (filling with sand and small pieces of bricks), showing cause of unavailability of construction materials and project funds.

As LGED issued them letters to start work, they submitted prayers for time extension several times.

After time extension three times, the deadline for Dhirganj-Thakurtala road and a section of Dhirganj-Jadurani road ended on January 31 this year.

When contacted, Tozammel Haque told

this correspondent over cell phone, "We failed to complete the project work due to price hike of construction materials and shortage of fund for the project."

Abu Sultan, owner of construction firm M/S Rashida Sultan, said, "We could not continue the work as the LGED is yet to pass the running bill due to shortage of funds even after three years of submitting it."

Md Shafiqul Alam, assistant engineer of Thakurgaon LGED, told this correspondent yesterday, "We have sent estimate to higher authorities for rest of the work of the roads. We will invite tender after the proposal is granted."

About 30,000 people of different villages in Bokua, Amgaon and Haripur unions under Haripur upazila have been facing untold sufferings as large potholes and rough surface make the incomplete roads difficult for running of vehicles, locals said.

Especially the villagers are facing problem to bring their agricultural produce through the roads connecting Jadurani Bazar, the largest village market in Haripur upazila, as rickshaw-vans that are main mode of transport for agriculture products, cannot easily ply the roads, they said.

During a recent visit to the roads in Bokua union this correspondent saw that removal of khasa (small pieces of brick) and sand caused many potholes on the roads.

"We have to count extra cost for carrying goods on the road to go to Jadurani Haat," said Shafiqul, 35, a small trader of Nayatoli village in Amgaon union.

SHARIATPUR-3 POLL Nahim of AL, Muhibul of BNP submit nominations

UNB, Shariatpur

Nahim Razzaq of Awami League and Muhibul Goni of BNP yesterday submitted their nomination papers to contest the Shariatpur-3 by-polls slated for March 15.

Nahim who got AL ticket filed his nomination to Damudda Upazila Nirbahi Officer Monirul Islam at about 11am while Muhibul Goni to Goshairhat Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mujibur Rahman at about 12 noon under the banner of Nagarik Samaj.

This will be the first election under the newly formed Election Commission.

On Sunday, Awami League Parliamentary Board (ALPB) nominated Nahim, son of late MP and veteran party leader Abdur Razzak, as the AL candidate to contest the election.

As the main opposition BNP did not make its position clear about the direct participation in the polls, no candidate filed nomination with its ticket till 4pm yesterday, the last date for submission of nomination.

The parliamentary seat fell vacant after the death of AL lawmaker Razzak. He died in London on December 23 last year.

Earlier, on February 1, the Election Commission announced the by-polls schedule.

Late Awami League candidate Abdur Razzak had defeated BNP hopeful KM Hemayet Ullah Aurangajeb in the December 29 general election with a big margin.

Razzak had bagged 1,029,252 votes while Aurangajeb polled 52,672.

Man gets life for wife murder

UNB, Kurigram

A court here on Wednesday convicted a man and awarded him life imprisonment for killing his wife.

The court also fined convict Ekramul, 25, son of late Montu of Bamma Chhara village of Ulipur upazila Tk 20,000, in default, to suffer one year more RI.

According to the prosecution, Hasena Begum, 18, daughter of Hasen Ali of Gouriballab village in the same upazila, got married with Ekramul in 2005. Ekramul used to torture Hasena for dowry since their marriage.

Over the issue, Hasena was beaten to death by her husband on June 05, 2007.

In Rajshahi, a housewife was beaten to death allegedly by her husband over a family feud at Rajbari Para Panbar in the metropolitan city on Wednesday night.

The victim was Nilufa Yasmin, wife of Mojahid of the village. Locals said Mojahid picked up a quarrel with Nilufa over a family dispute at about 9pm and beat her indiscriminately.

Later, he took Nilufa to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital where the duty doctors declared her dead.

Mojahid went into hiding immediately after the incident.

In Khagrachhari, hundreds of Bangalee people formed a human chain yesterday at Shapla Chattar in the town under the banner of Parbatya Bangalee Chhatra Parishad (PBCP), demanding immediate arrest and punishment of the killers of Rokhsana Aktar.

Rokhsana Aktar, 26, wife of Mahabub Hossain of Mohammadpur area under Panchhori upazila was stabbed to death by criminals in Jowthia Khamar area of the upazila Sunday night.

Police recovered the body from a bush next morning.

After the human chain, a rally was held at the same venue, reports our correspondent.

Farmers worried as aman price falls below production cost

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Price of aman paddy has slid below production cost in the district much to the disappointment and worry of the farmers.

Farmers are now selling a maund of paddy (40 kg) at Tk 500 to 520 as against Tk 680 to 700 only a month ago in the local markets.

Hasmat Ali, a farmer of Bhalabari village at Aditmari upazila, who came to local weekly market with five maunds of paddy told this correspondent that he was compelled to sell those at low price as he needed money to cultivate boro this season.

"I have sold the paddy for Tk 2525 at the rate of Tk 505 a

maund. I am too upset as the price is below my production cost", Hasmat said.

Like Hasmat Ali, many other farmers -- Zohir Ali, Budha Ram Barmon, Motiar Rahman, Nazmul Islam and Manoranjan Nath -- who came to Bhalabari market from different villages for selling paddy also expressed their frustration.

They were forced to sell their produce at poor rate as they had no alternative to managing money for cultivating boro paddy.

They said they are now losing interest in growing paddy in the next season.

Shamsher Ali, a farmer from Durakuti village in Sadar upazila, said "I came to Bhalabari Haat for selling

paddy at high price from the growers, he added.

Fazlul Haque, a merchant at Uttara Road in the town told this correspondent that there is huge stock of paddy in his godowns and also rice price fell recently in the markets.

As the traders from the capital and other parts of the country are not contacting us for paddy, the merchants in Lalmonirhat feel discouraged to purchase it from the retailers and growers," he added.

Farmers told this correspondent that they spent Tk 9,000 to 10,000 for growing paddy in each bigha (27 decimal land) and got 15 to 18 maunds of paddy. So, on an average they spent Tk 610 for each maund of paddy, they added.

Lalmonirhat agriculture extension department (DAE) officials said, the farmers of Sadar, Aditmari, Kaligonj, Hatibandha and Patgram upazilas got bumper output this season cultivating aman on 95,650 hectares against a target of 82,560 hectares.

Sadar upazila agriculture officer Mohammad Nuruzzaman said, due to favourable weather condition farmers got bumper production but are now worried at low price of paddy.

If the farmers are deprived of reasonable price of their produce, they will lose interest in growing paddy on their lands in the coming seasons, he said.

It is essential to create market facilities for agriculture items, Nuruzzaman stressed.



PHOTO: STAR
Aman farmers coming to sell their produce at Bhalabari Haat in Aditmari upazila under Lalmonirhat district are visibly frustrated as there are only a few customers. Bumper yield of the crop this season fails to make the growers happy as its low price is far from being adequate to recover even the production cost.

KAZI AREF MURDER CASE

Execution of verdict demanded

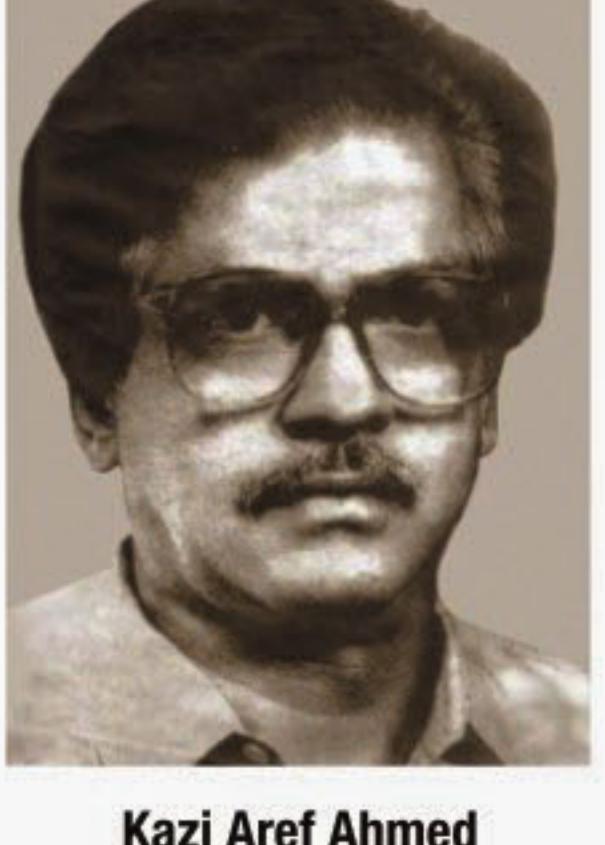
OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Freedom fighters and leaders and activists of different socio-cultural and political organisations yesterday demanded early execution of the verdict in the case for killing Kazi Aref Ahmed, one of the key organisers of the Liberation War and founder of the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD).

They made the demand at rallies and discussions arranged in the town and at Daulatpur upazila headquarters to mark the 13th death anniversary of the then JSD president.

JSD Daulatpur unit took out a silent procession in the upazila town in the morning and then arranged a discussion meeting at Kalidaspur village.

JSD Kushtia unit President Golam Mohsin, General Secretary Abdul Alim Sawpan, Daulatpur upazila Awami League Convener Sarwar Jahan Badsha, advocate Abdullah Al Mamun, Bheramara upazila JSD President AFM Golam Faruk, Daulatpur



Kazi Aref Ahmed

upazila Vice-Chairman Alki Hossain, Nirmul Committee Kushtia unit secretary Asit Kumar Roy spoke, among others.

Kazi Aref Smriti Sangsad and Yakub Ali kalyan Trust also arranged programmes at Philipnagar in the upazila.

Muktijoddha Oikya Parishad held a rally in Khustia town in the afternoon. Addressing the rally, the speakers urged

the government to execute the verdict in the Aref murder case without further delay.

An armed gang killed Kazi Aref, Kushtia district JSD president Lokman Hossain, general secretary Yakub Ali, local JSD leader Shamsher Ali and Israil Hossain at a rally in Kalidaspur village in Daulatpur upazila of the district on February 16, 1999.

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Agriculture and Nutrition Extension Project (ANEPE)

The Agriculture and Nutrition Extension Project (ANEPE), is a partnership between International Development Enterprises (iDE), the World Fish Center, CIMMYT, IRRI, Save the Children International, and CODEC and is funded by the European Union (EU). The project will seek to sustainably raise agricultural productivity and promote effective market linkages to improve the nutrition of poor rural and urban households in the south of Bangladesh and the Nepal plains. Project activities will commence from April 2012. The following positions are going to be recruited soon under the ANEPE in Bangladesh.

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