



Different organisations of the three hill districts formed a human chain in Rangamati district town yesterday, demanding a credible probe into the abduction of Kalpana Chakma, a women's rights activist, that took place 17 years ago.

17TH YEAR INTO KALPANA ABDUCTION

Credible probe, punishment to perpetrators demanded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS), Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Mahila Samity, Hill Women's Federation (HWF) and Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP) yesterday reiterated their demand for a credible investigation into Kalpana Chakma abduction case.

The organisations again raised the demand at a human chain formed in front of the new court building in the town, marking the 17th year of abduction of the women's rights activist.

On June 12, 1996, Kalpana Chakma, then organising secretary of HWF, was kidnapped from her house at New Lalyaghona village in Baghaichhari upazila of Rangamati district.

Addressing a rally at the venue of human chain programme, leaders of the four organisations blamed

the government for its failure to trace Kalpana and bring the abductors to book even 17 years after abduction.

They demanded a 'credible and transparent' investigation into Kalpana's abduction case and arrest and exemplary punishment of the culprits.

Though Rangamati District Judge's Court on January 16 this year ordered further investigation into the abduction case, no progress has yet been made, the

speakers said.

They also demanded full implementation of the peace accord and urged the jumma people to stay united to realise their demands.

Jorita Chakma and Suprobha Chakma, president and secretary of CHT Mahila Samity, Rimita Chakma, secretary of HWF, Trizinad Chakma, Tapas Chakma and Udoyan Tripura addressed the rally.

Immediately after Kalpana's abduction on June 12, 1996, her elder brother Kalindi Kumar Chakma filed a case with Baghaichhari Police Station, accusing Lieutenant Ferdous, the then camp commander of Kojoichhari army camp, Nurul Haque, then commander of VDP (Village Defence Party), and Saleh Ahmmmed, a member of VDP.

Baghaichhari police gave its final investigation report, dropping the names of the main suspects on May 21 in 2010. Later, the Criminal



Kalpana Chakma

Investigation Department (CID), Chittagong Range, was assigned to reinvestigate the case.

On September 26 last year, CID submitted its report to Rangamati District Judge's Court. In the report, CID dropped the names of the three suspects and stated that it could not be ascertained whether Kalpana Chakma is still alive or dead. The complainant of the case and the four organisations rejected the CID inquiry report and demanded further investigation.

Our Bandarban correspondent adds: A human chain was formed on the premises of the local press club yesterday, demanding a credible investigation into Kalpana Chakma abduction case.

Bandarban units of PCJSS, Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP) and several hundred adivasi students from different schools and colleges in the district joined the programme.

HARASSMENT ON HIGHWAYS

Rampant extortion in name of document checking

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Transport workers in the district have alleged random extortion and harassment by the highway police in name of checking documents.

Police often stop trucks, minibuses, motorbikes and pickups in Dashuria, Muladuli and Lalon Shah Bridge areas of Pabna-Kushtia and Pabna-Rajshahi highways and Mohendrapur, Kashinathpur and Bera areas of Dhaka-Pabna highway in the district for checking license and other documents of the vehicles, said relevant sources.

"Rampant extortion by the highway police, especially from the truck drivers, has become a usual affair. On several occasions we demanded that the administration takes steps to stop harassment on the highway but to no effect," said Shahidul Islam, president of truck drivers union in Pabna.

"Even when all the necessary documents are okay, they (highway police) try to find a fault. They force the

drivers to give money or file cases," said Bhulu, a car driver.

However, the passenger buses are generally exempted from such harassment by highway police, sources said.

Contacted, Pabna Superintendent of Police Md Miraz Uddin Ahmed said, "Highway police check necessary documents of the vehicles on the road. If there is any fault they file cases on the spot. But there is no official complaint of bribery against the highway police."



Frequent interventions by police on vehicular movement, in the name of checking documents, are allegedly aimed at extortion in most cases. The photo was taken on Pabna-Rajshahi highway a couple of days ago.

Pond grabbing on defying all protests, allegations

Follow-up

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

The authorities of Bidyaganj Rani Rajbala Bahumukhi High School in Mymensingh Sadar upazila have continued extension of a market constructed on a decades-old pond on the school compound.

The callous act is going on although the matter was reported in a few national dailies and allegations were filed with the Sadar upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) and the Department of Environment (DoE), said Abdul Mazed, a former member of local union parishad.

"The construction of 18 shops here is at the final stage and those have already been leased out at Tk two lakh each," said Md Manjurul Haque, headmaster of the school.

Earlier in 2010 and 2011, the school managing committee constructed 24 shops after taking Tk 1 lakh 30 thousand as advance money against each shop.

The headmaster repeatedly claimed that the school authority is constructing the market to bear maintenance cost of the school and save the pond from erosion as well.



This decades-old pond on the compound of Bidyaganj Rajbala Bahumukhi High School in Mymensingh Sadar upazila is getting squeezed as the school authorities have continued filling it up for extension of a market constructed there two years ago.

Local people, on the other hand, alleged that the school pond is being filled up to financially benefit a section of people rather than the institution.

The pond requires protection also because it serves as the only water source for nearby Bidyaganj Bazar, they said.

Md Abdul Azim, assistant director of the DoE, said they served a notice to the headmaster regarding filling up a portion of the school pond and but no reply was made yet.

Asked about the notice served by DoE, the headmaster said, "We will reply to it soon."

Mymensingh Sadar UNO Kamaruzzaman Miah said he assigned Rafiqul Islam Bhuiyan, Sadar upazila secondary education officer, to report regarding the matter couple of days ago but no report was submitted as of yesterday.

In 1946, Jibendra Kishore Acharya Chowdhury, a zamindar of Muktagachha, established Bidyaganj Rani Rajbala Bahumukhi High School on 3.78 acres of land that included a large pond. Now 839 boys and girls belonging to classes VI to X read in the school.



Left without any repair after serious damage by super cyclone Sidr on November 15 in 2007, this embankment on the Kacha River in Mathbaria upazila under Pirojpur district cannot save the nearby villages from flooding even during moderate rise in the water level of the river.

Woes of riverside villagers

Recurrent flooding as dyke not repaired for 5 years

HABIBUR RAHAMAN, Pirojpur

Riverside villages in Sadar, Mathbaria, Bhandaria and Nazirpur upazilas under the district see recurrent flooding especially during the rainy season as about 18-kilometre embankments in the four upazilas have remained virtually useless since their damage by super cyclone Sidr on November 15 in 2007.

Local people's repeated appeal for repair of the embankments to the authorities concerned have fallen into deaf ears while natural calamities including cyclones Aila on May 25 in 2009 and Mahasen on May 16 this year added to their misery.

Eight-kilometre embankment from Togra Ferry Terminal to Hularhat in Pirojpur Sadar, 6.6-km embankment in Boro Machhua and Sapleza unions of Mathbaria upazila, two-km embankment in Telikhali union of Bhandaria and 1.5-km embankment in Mathibhanga union of Nazirpur upazila have remained open since the onslaught of Sidr, said sources of Water development board (WDB) in Pirojpur.

As a result, nearby villages are easily flooded even with moderate rise in the water level of the rivers.

"More than one lakh people in my union are affected due to the situation. At least 1.5 km embankment at Bholmara village here need repair on an urgent basis," said Md Abdur Rahman Khan, chairman of Bara Machhua union parishad (UP) in badly affected Mathbaria upazila.

Md Jahangir Hossain, chairman of Sapleza UP in the upazila, has also demanded immediate steps to repair the damaged embankment at Khatachira village in his union.

"Damage of the embankment during Sidr has left us vulnerable to flooding. Cyclone Mahasen in last month damaged large areas of croplands as water entering through the open embankment flooded them," said Abdul Malek, a resident of Bholmara near the Kacha River in Mathbaria upazila.

Ahsan Habib, upazila nirbahi officer of Mathbaria, said the damaged embankments in the upazila need urgent repair to save the people from unbearable sufferings.

Md Bazlur Rashid, executive engineer of WDB in Pirojpur, said, "Although the World Bank had promised to reconstruct the damaged embankment in Mathbaria after Sidr, they have not started the work yet. And we could not reconstruct the embankments due to lack of fund. Lastly we have sent a Tk 38 crore estimate to the higher authorities for the work in the district."

Rain damages crops in Faridpur

UNB, Faridpur

Excessive rain and hailstorm have caused colossal damage to crops in five upazilas of the district.

Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) sources said, around 15000 farmers in five upazilas of the district incurred a huge loss due to damage of crops worth Tk 10 crore.

Rain and storms in May and June damaged boro paddy, jute, planted aush, chilli, vegetables and other crops.

DAE sources said the farmers cultivated various crops on 94,322 hectares of land in the current season. Crops on 6,424 hectares were damaged by excessive rain and hailstorms in May.

Crops on 152 hectares of land were completely damaged while on 6272 hectares partially.

The agriculture office has prepared a list of the affected farmers and submitted it to the higher authorities.

Boalmari farmers Solaiman Sheikh, Janik Biswas and Paritosh said excessive rain just before harvesting of paddy damaged their crops.

Jute growers said their jute plants were damaged due to waterlogging followed by rain.

DAE deputy director Bhaskar Chakravorty said they were giving advice to farmers to recoup their losses and motivating them to cultivate aush paddy and 'mung' pulses.

Besides, the affected farmers would be compensated under the winter rehabilitation programme, he said.