

Six months over, rapist scot-free

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Over six months into the incident, police are yet to arrest the alleged rapist of a 10-year-old girl.

However, a charge sheet was pressed against Zahidul Islam *alias* Azizul, 30, son of Habibar Sardar of Gunaritolta Purbopara village under Madarganj upazila in a case filed by the victim's father.

The girl is a student of class five at a local government primary school and resident of Purbo-Sabilapur village in the upazila. She used to sell milk in the area.

On June 9, Azizul riding a motorbike picked up the girl on excuse of purchasing milk. He then took the girl to a brick kiln at Saguna village and violated her, leaving her seriously injured.

She was rushed to Mymensingh Medical College and Hospital (MMCH), said family members.

The following day, the father of the girl filed a case accusing Azizul in connection with the incident. Police seem reluctant to arrest the rapist, alleged the father.

Contacted, Billal Uddin, officer in-charge of Melandah police station, said they were raiding different areas to arrest the charge sheeted accused.

Criminals kill drivers, take away vehicles

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Criminals killed a driver and took away his microbus in Santhia upazila on Tuesday night.

Police recovered the body from a field at Dhop-Majgram in Santhia upazila yesterday morning. They also recovered the snatched microbus from Pabna Sadar upazila.

The deceased, Md Amirul Islam, 25, son of Jabul Pramanik of Dhop-Majgram village was coming to Pabna with his microbus for refueling but he went 'missing' on Tuesday night.

Criminals slit his throat and snatched the microbus, police said, adding later they left the microbus at Rajapur after its fuel finished at the spot.

In Kishoreganj, a battery-run auto-rickshaw driver was found dead yesterday morning in a paddy field near Kodalia-Pulerghat road at Chandipasa union of Pakundia upazila, reports our correspondent.

The deceased was identified as Palash Chandra, 25, son of Ratan Chandra of Monipurghat village in the district.

Family sources said Palash went missing on Tuesday night after five passengers hired his vehicle to go to Pakundia.

Hedayatul Islam, officer in-charge, Pakundia police station, said they recovered the body with its mouth, hands and legs tied up.

Perhaps criminals suffocated Palash to death to take away his auto-rickshaw, added the OC.

Blasts at poll rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Criminals yesterday exploded two cocktails at the projection meeting of an Awami League candidate from Rajshahi-3 (Poba-Mohonpur) constituency.

The blast took place at a filed beside Rajshahi Sugar Mills gate in Poba upazila at 4:30pm, said Monir Hossain, acting OC of Motihar police station.

However, none was hurt in the blasts at the venue where local Awami League held the meeting for its candidate Ayen Uddin, he added.

The meeting continued for about two hours from 5:00pm, said Abdur Rouf, convenor of Katakhal municipal unit of AL.

Rouf blamed Jamaat-Shibir men for exploding bombs in a bid to foil the meeting, said Rouf.

Chemical-free vegetables from floating gardens

Farmers in 32 Lalmonirhat villages doing brisk business

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Around 300 marginal farmers at 32 villages in Teesta and Dharla River basin areas of Sadar, Aditmari and Hatibandha upazilas under the district are cultivating vegetables on floating gardens set up at water bodies this season, said sources of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE).

Aubergine, coriander, okra, white-goose-foot, green chilli, tomato, spinach, bottle gourd, mint, mustard, *lal shak* (red amaranth), *palong shak* (green amaranth), *napa shak* etc are cultivated on floating gardens pre-

pared with waste water hyacinth tightened between bamboos, growers said.

Tk 325 to 400 is needed to cultivate vegetables on a 100-square-foot floating bed, they said.

Mia Babu, 48, a marginal farmer at Kutirpar village of Aditmari upazila said, some marginal farmers at the village are selling vegetables grown on floating beds after meeting their family demand.

"I have cultivated vegetables on a 120-square-foot floating bed at an abandoned government-owned water body in the village early October this

year. The produce helps to meet the daily need for my family. Besides, I have sold vegetables worth Tk 1,000 and hope to earn Tk 3,000 more till the end of this month," he said.

Soleman Ali, 56, a landless farmer of the same village, said cultivation of vegetables on floating beds brings new hope for people like him.

Vegetables grown on floating gardens have high demand in the local markets, as these are cultivated without using any chemical fertilisers and insecticides, and mark higher prices than that of other vegetables, growers

said.

Rabiul Islam, a college teacher at Gobordhan village of Aditmari upazila, said he and many other local people prefer vegetables grown on floating gardens as these are free from chemicals.

"The agriculture department as well as local NGOs provide technical support to the marginal farmers for cultivating vegetables on floating beds in government-owned water bodies. Now some farmers have started cultivating vegetables on floating beds in their ponds too," said Abdul Mazid, deputy director of Lalmonirhat DAE.



PHOTO: STAR

Locals cultivate vegetables on some floating gardens set up on water bodies at Balapara village in Teesta basin area in Aditmari upazila of Lalmonirhat, inset, a woman collects vegetables from such a garden at Kutirpar village in the upazila.

Deadlock at hard rock mine on

Tk 4 cr loss in one month

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Rock extraction from Madhyapara hard rock mine has remained suspended since November 25 due to an indefinite strike enforced by the workers and miners to realise their five-point demand.

The demands include 20 percent dearness allowance, abolition of the system of employment of workers and miners through outsourcing companies, reinstatement of the jobs of eight retrenched miners, stopping of such retrenchment, and regularisation of the job of diploma engineers.

The authorities of Madhyapara Granite Mining Company Ltd [MGMC] held several meetings with the leaders of Miners and Workers Union in the last one month, but the meetings yielded no positive results.

Mine sources said the company incurred a loss of Tk.3.90crore in the last 30 days due to suspension of rock extraction.

Around 304 workers and miners have been staging

demonstration inside the mine since November 25 to mount pressure on the MGMC authorities to meet the demands, but the authorities are yet to take any positive step to end the deadlock, said Md Khairul Islam, president of Workers and Miners Union. "We will not join work without realising our demands," he added.

Two workers, employed through an outsourcing company, were removed in October due to the mine's security reason, following a report of National Security Intelligence. The incident triggered grievance among the workers and miners. The miners and workers are demanding reinstatement of the two workers.

Md Moinuddin, managing director of MGMC, said, "The company signed a contract on September 2 this year with a Belarus based company for the mine's maintenance and production. That company will look after the matter."

The demand for abolition of employment

Interns call off strike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Interns at Mymensingh Medical College and Hospital (MMCH), who went on an indefinite strike on Monday night, called off their programme after talks with MMCH authorities and leaders of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) here yesterday evening.

The interns went on strike after a relative of a patient on Monday night misbehaved with two on-duty interns at CCU.

Soon after the incident, 180 intern doctors at the hospital went on a wild-cat strike, suspending their activities including emergency services at the hospital.

Later, the interns demanded immediate arrest of the man responsible for the misbehaviour and security of the interns and staff working at the hospital.

Contacted, Dr. Mithun Sutradhar, president of Interns Doctors Association at MMCH, said that they had a fruitful discussion with MMCH director Brig Gen Md. Fasiur Rahman and BMA leaders.

We will join the work tomorrow (December 26) said Dr Mithun.



PHOTO: STAR

People of three villages in Munshiganj Sadar upazila form a human chain at Bakchar in the upazila yesterday, protesting mindless sand lifting from the landmass that emerged from the river Meghna by an influential quarter.



PHOTO: STAR

After offering special prayers, members of the Christian community cut a cake at Pabna Baptist Church in the district town on the occasion of holy Christmas yesterday.

Ringleader of forest robbers arrested

UNB, Satkhira

Police arrested the alleged ringleader and two members of an infamous forest robber gang from Gabura area near Sundarbans in Shyamnagar upazila early yesterday.

The arrestees were identified as Aminul Islam Khokon Molla, 50, ringleader of the notorious forest robber gang, 'Aminul Bahini', son of Jia d Mollah of Chandnimukha village, and his cohorts Rezaul Sheikh, 42, son of Moksud Sheikh of Kalinchi village of Shyamnagar upazila of Satkhira district, and Khokon Sardar, 38, son of Zahed Sardar of Koyra upazila of Khulna district.

Sagir Miah, officer in-charge of Shyamnagar police station, said on secret information, a team of police conducted a raid in the area and arrested the trio when they were demanding illegal toll from some fishermen at about 4.00am.

The arrestees are wanted by police in several cases, the OC added.

2 AL men killed in Meherpur, Natore

STAR COUNTRY DESK

An Awami League leader and an activist of the party were murdered in two districts yesterday.

A local leader of ruling Awami League was stabbed to death by criminals at Bansbaria village in Gangni upazila of Meherpur early yesterday, reports our Kushtia correspondent.

The deceased was identified as Nurul Amin, 37, general secretary of Gangni municipality ward No. 1 unit of the ruling party and son of Nasir Uddin of Bansbaria village.

Quoting family members, officer in-charge (OC) Gangni police station Masudul Alam said Nurul was attacked by a gang beside an Eidgah (a field to perform Eid prayers) near his house at about 2:30am.

He was returning home from Bansbaria Bazar after ending electioneering for local independent candidate Mokbul Hossain for the upcoming January 5 general election.

Mokbul, former MP of Meherpur-2 is a rebel candidate of AL.

The criminals stabbed

Nurul Amin indiscriminately with sharp weapons, leaving him dead on the spot.

Locals and family members said that Nurul was killed over political rivalry.

Police later recovered the body that bore marks of several stab injuries.

In Natore, a local Awami League activist was stabbed to death by his rivals at Bijoypur in Lalpur upazila yesterday, reports our correspondent.

The deceased was identified as Sakhawat Hossain, 35, son of Sutka Mollah of Dilalpur village of the upazila.

Police quoting witnesses said that a gang, armed with sharp weapons, way laid the motorcycle carrying Sakhawat and his friend Zakaria, 30, in the area around midnight and hacked them indiscriminately, leaving Sakhawat dead on the spot and Zakaria injured.

Zakaria was rushed to Rajshahi Medical College and Hospital.

Matiar Rahman, OC of Lalpur PS said Sakhawat was an accused in Swetchchasebok Dal leader Bhasan murder case.

Previous enmity might be the reason behind the murder, the OC said.

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