

ATTACK ON LUKE SARKAR IN ISHWARDI Church without pastor for a year

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Ishwardi Faith Bible Church in the district is yet to resume its normal activities, one year into the attack on its Pastor Luke Sarkar.

Three unidentified attackers injured Luke Sarkar, 52, on October 5 last year.

After investigation, police submitted charge sheet against seven JMB operatives on July 20 this year in connection with the incident, said Md Abdul Hai, officer in charge of Ishwardi Police Station.

Of them, Shahjalal alias Rakibul alias Towhid, 21, of Mirzapur, and Abdur Rakib, 19, of Nurpur in Pabna, Ziaur Rahman, 35, of Shinga, Sairiful Islam Tulip, 22, of Mazidpur, Alim Hossain, 36, of Tikori, and Amzad Hossain, 30, of Raghbaria village in Sirajganj are in jail while Hazi Kaium, 40, of Tikori village in Pabna remains absconding.

"On October 27 last year, Luke Sarkar left for his home district Satkhira and since then he did not come here due to security reasons. Amid the situation, the authorities could not appoint new pastor here and so, some 20 to 25 Christian families are deprived of regular religious functions," said Alok Majumder, secretary of Faith Bible Church in Ishwardi.

"Luke Sarkar is the complainant of the case. If he is not present during the trial, the fate of the case will face uncertainty," said OC Abdul Hai.



Established in 2003, this three-storey library on Uttar Bangla College premises in Kaliganj upazila of Lalmonirhat is named after Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism.

PHOTO: STAR

Gift of knowledge: From Scotland to Lalmonirhat

Glasgow's Sikh community donates library to remote college

BY S DILIP ROY with ANDREW EAGLE

There can be no gift of friendship truer than the sharing of knowledge. At the Uttar Bangla College in Kakina village of Lalmonirhat's Kaliganj upazila, Scotland's Sikh community has extended their hand of friendship across religions and continents through the donation of a campus library, named for the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak.

With a catalogue of 20,000 books in both Bangla and English covering history, science, literature and other fields of knowledge, the library has become an invaluable asset for the 6,000 students and around 200 faculty members of the college.

"Like other students, I sit in the Guru Nanak library everyday to read books and study," says Bangla department student Mousumi Akter. "Because of the library we don't waste our leisure time. Instead we read books."

Every day, from morning to evening, in excess of 500 students and teachers are drawn to the library, to read books, socialise and share ideas, with the library having also incorporated

a teachers' union centre.

"Many students come from poor families," says college Higher School Certificate student Helal Hossain. "Their families cannot buy books in the market, so they rely on the library. For us, it's a reading room, a source of knowledge and a place to share what we have read as well."

The College itself, which offers up to honours level study in several disciplines, has been funded since 1994 by Dr Mozammel Haque, a professor of Glasgow's Strathclyde University who originally hails from Kakina.

As college founder, Haque communicated with Glasgow's Sikh community to source donations for the library, which opened in 2003, initially with a single floor and literary assets of 5,000 books. Four years later a second floor was completed, with funding from Glasgow-based Charity Education International. A third floor was funded by the college itself.

"Many students are regular book-borrowers," says head librarian Nurul Amin. "Both students and teachers can generally find the books they need in our library."

Sohel Rana is a student of another college in Kakina village, but the Guru Nanak Library has proved an asset for him as well. "I use the Guru Nanak Library every day," he says. "Many teachers and students from other colleges use this facility."

Head of Uttar Bangla's Bangla department Abu Shahadat Rubel says the library is a great asset for gaining and sharing knowledge. "Our college founder Dr Mozammel Haque has made it possible in this remote village to gain knowledge, and knowledge is power," he says.

"Our teachers and students are very grateful to Glasgow's Sikh community for donating our Guru Nanak Library," says college principal ASM Monowarul Islam, "and of course we are also grateful to our college founder for his noble endeavour in making quality higher learning possible in this village." He says the educational environment of the college is better than other non-government colleges in the area, and that he makes every effort to ensure the library, which is a central part of that, runs efficiently and properly.

Idols vandalised in two districts

STAR COUNTRY DESK

An idol of Goddess Durga in Gaibandha and one of Buddha in Bandarban were vandalised.

Our Gaibandha correspondent says idols of Goddess Durga were vandalised by some unknown miscreants at Maa Bhabani Durga temple in Kushtari village under Sundarganj upazila yesterday.

Puja Udjapan Committee leaders recovered a letter by New Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) saying they carried out the attack.

Officer-in-Charge of Sundarganj Police Station Israil Hossain said steps would be taken against the miscreants involved, and assured the people there would be strict security measures during the festival.

Officer-in-Charge of Lama Police Station Md Iqbal Hossain, quoting locals, said criminals entered a Buddhist temple by breaking the door on Monday and vandalised a statue of Buddha, reports our Bandarban correspondent.

On information, police visited the temple in Banfur area under Lama upazila of the district and talked to the local leaders of Bangladesh Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikya Parishad (BHBCOP) and public representatives.

Meanwhile, indigenous people and local leaders of BHBCOP formed a human chain in Lama upazilla yesterday, protesting the incident.

Later, they submitted a memorandum to the prime minister through Lama upazila nirbahi officer (INO).

Speakers at the rally said BNP leader Zaker Hossain Majumdar, also chairman of Fashiakhali Union Parishad, was behind the attack. Zaker rejected the allegation and said members of the parishad illegally occupied his land.

Bid to occupy NGO house

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A Swetchhasebak League leader allegedly occupied a house of a non-governmental organisation (NGO) at Kavar Char area in Dhulashar union under Kalapara upazila of the district.

Md Parvez, area manager of Uttaron, a local NGO, said they built a tin-shed to sell medicine and food items for poultry farms.

Mohipur union Swetchhasebak League convener Harun Talukder offered to take lease of a part of the house a few days ago, but the NGO refused, he added.

Harun later forcibly hung the signboard in front of the NGO's tin shed to occupy it.

Locals said the NGO built the house on khas land.

Harun said that he had no connection with it, and some of his political enemies were spreading propaganda against him.

Tahshilder of Mohipur Md Salim Khan said he did not know about the matter.

Addict tortures wife for money

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A woman was admitted to a hospital with severe injuries yesterday after her drug-addict husband mercilessly beat her for money in Dhunat upazila on Monday night.

The victim was identified as Rozina Akhter Rosy, 22, wife of Raju Ahmed Muktar of Chandaikona village in Raiganj upazila of Sirajganj.

Rosy's father Abdur Razzak of Rudrbaria village said drug-addict Muktar, son of Sohrab Ahmed, used to torture her daughter for money since their marriage five years back.

Razzak said he had altogether given Tk 3.5 lakh to Muktar but he had been torturing his daughter for more.

Failing to bear the torture Rosy returned to her paternal house in Dhunat a week ago.

On Monday, Muktar came to visit his in-laws house. Later on the night, the couple locked in an altercation over the same issue.

At one stage, Muktar beat up Rosy with sticks and fled the house, leaving her seriously injured, Razzak added.

Tortured domestic help groans in pain

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

A brutally tortured girl, who worked as a domestic help at an influential man's house in Tangail, is crying in pain at Dimla Upazila Health Complex in Nilphamari for the last four days.

The victim is Arjina Akter, 14, daughter of day labourer Ansar Ali, 50, of neighbouring Araj Sheikh Sundor village in Hatibandha upazila of Lalmonirhat.

Due to threat by Shahinur Islam, a local associate of Arjina's employer, the victim's relatives could not file any case with the local police station as of yesterday, said the victim's cousin Abu Taher.

Nasima Khatun, field organiser of legal aid committee of Brac in Dimla, said she visited the victim in the hospital and they will provide her legal aid for getting justice.

Visiting Arjina at the health complex yesterday, marks of burn and beating injuries were found on her back, legs, hands, and other parts of body.

Dr Yazmin Islam, attending her there, said, "Victim's right hand bone is fractured and there are burn injury and wounds all over the body. We have suggested shifting her to Rangpur Medical College Hospital."

"When Arjina was seven years old in 2009, Shahinur Islam of neighbouring Goyabari village in Dimla upazila took her to the house of Tajul Islam, a transport businessman at Singnatpara village of Tangail Sadar upazila, to work as domestic help," said Arjina's mother Anju Begum, sitting beside her.

"Since then, all connection with my daughter was snapped. As we asked Shahinur, he assured us of her good condition," she said.

A tearful Arjina said, "Tajul's wife Amena Begum and daughter Lovely often tortured me. Lovely held my hands tightly and her mother burn my skin and flesh with hot iron, and pressed skin with plus. They broke my bones."

On September 30, victim's grandfather Nur Mohammad went to Tajul's Tangail house and managed to bring her to Dimla health complex that day.

Contacted over mobile, Tajul denied the allegation of torture and said, "Arjina's right hand was previously broken as she fell from a mango tree in her house and the wound signs were caused due to sores in her childhood."

Addict son sent to jail for trying to kill mother

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A Bogra court sent a drug addict to jail in a case for trying to kill his mother in Dhunat municipality area of the district yesterday.

The accused is Mehedi Hasan Shaon, 28, son of Anwar Hossain of the area.

The District Judicial Magistrate's Court sent Mehedi to jail when he was produced before it, said police.

Family sources said Mehedi used to torture his mother for realising money to buy drugs.

Yesterday morning, Mehedi tried to strangle his mother as she refused to give the money, said Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Dhunat Police Station.

Being informed by mother, police rushed to the spot and arrested the son, he said.

The arrestee was later produced before the court that sent him to jail, the OC said, adding that Mehedi's mother filed a case in this connection.

Meanwhile, a mobile court sentenced a drug addict to six months' imprisonment at Tanuapara village in Akhaura upazila of Brahmanbaria on Monday.

The convict is Kabir Mia, 30, son of Monu Mia of the village, reports our Moulvibazar correspondent.

Family sources said Monu Mia handed over his son Kabir to Akhaura police in the evening as he damaged furniture of the house for realising money to buy drugs.

Kabir was later produced before the court, led by Assistant Commissioner (land) Moin Uddin, which pronounced the verdict.



Consumers throng a clothes shop on North Circular Road in Thakurgaon municipality on Monday ahead of Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of the Hindus, as puja shopping gets momentum in the northern district.

PHOTO: STAR

Sale peaks on Durga Puja

447 mandops set up in Thakurgaon

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

With only a few days before the Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of the Hindus, shopping is gaining momentum in Thakurgaon.

The shop owners and employees are passing busy time amid rush of customers at their shops and boutique houses at North Circular Road, Old Bus Stand area and markets of Thakurgaon Railway Station in the municipality area.

"Like every year, clothing traders have stocked sufficient amount of popular items ahead of the Durga Puja. This year, sales have been better than the previous several years, and we hope to make good profit," said Santosh Agarwal, owner of Santosh Bosralays on North Circular Road.

Santosh said he thinks the recent salary hike of government employees a reason for the rise in sales.

Chandana Ghosh, owner of Karupanya, a popular boutique house in the town, said she made a good numbers of dresses for customers of all ages, and has already sold most of them.

"I bought dresses for my husband and two minor sons on the occasion," said Anita Rani, a teacher of a government primary school.

Dressmakers are also passing busy time ahead of the puja.

However, presence of rural people is low in the markets, said shopkeepers.

Less profit from paddy has kept most rural customers away from shopping, said Thakurgaon Traders' Association President Md Farid.

A least of 447 mandops have been set up in the district this year, said Tapan Kumar Ghosh, General Secretary of District Puja Udjapan Committee -- 197 in Sadar upazila, 113 in Piganj, 53 in Ranishankoil, 62 in Baliadangi and 22 in Haripur upazila.

The government has allocated 500 kgs of rice for each mandop this year in the district, sources said.

Our correspondent in Lalmonirhat reports that coconut price has doubled in local markets as there is high demand for it during the occasion.

Traders said a pair of coconuts is selling at Tk 80 to Tk 120, while it was Tk 45 to Tk 50 last year. Hindus buy coconut at high prices as they are a necessary element for performing the puja.

Bamboo bridge poses risk

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Local people, especially school going children of Chawk Lokman area in Shahjahanpur upazila of the district have to cross a bamboo-made temporary bridge over a canal in the area at huge risk.

Many students of different educational institutions, elderly people, patients, and visitors of nearby Chawk Lokman mass graveyard are using the risky bridge for the last couple of days.

Locals said on September 26 the culvert over the 30 feet deep canal collapsed due to heavy current of water caused by the recent rainfall.

Considering the suffering of the commuters, local people built a bamboo made

bridge over the canal at their own initiative to ease their sufferings, especially the school kids.

Besides, around 400 students of Bogra Technical and Business Management College cross the broken culvert as it separates the administrative and academic buildings of the college.

College authorities said they have already informed the Zila Parishad of the matter and appealed to them to erect a concrete culvert over the canal, said AKM Wahedul Islam, principal of the institution.

Shahjahanpur Upazila Chairman Sarkar Badal said he heard about the incident on Saturday and would send an engineer to visit the spot within a day or two to take necessary steps in this regard.