

Stalked, stabbed schoolgirl needs better treatment

Father seeks support to save daughter

KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinajpur
Treatment of Class VIII girl Zakia Sultana, who got 42 stabs by a rejected suitor at Bochaganj of Dinajpur on September 7, is hampered due to financial crisis.
Zakia, 14, is daughter of Zomshed Ali, a nayek of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), and resident of Labour Linepara under Bochaganj municipality in Dinajpur.
"I have already spent Tk 5 lakh for her treatment. All my savings are finished. Now I hope the prime minister would extend help to save my daughter," Zomshed, posted at 38 BGB in Sakhira district, told this correspondent over phone yesterday.
"My daughter's both hands are still in danger. She would undergo another surgery on Thursday [today]," said the father, in a choked voice.
On September 29, Major General Aziz Ahmed, director general of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), took the girl to Pilkhana BGB Hospital for treatment after

the BGB nayek wrote to him, seeking help.
But a doctor of Dinajpur Medical College Hospital seeking anonymity said Pilkhana BGB Hospital is not capable to deal with such a critical patient.
Ibrahim Ali 21, son of late Kafil Uddin of Sugar Mill road, stabbed Zakia at her home on September 7. Ibrahim, whose marriage proposal to Zakia was rejected a year ago, had continued stalking the girl.
She was taken to Dinajpur Medical College Hospital, then to Rangpur Medical College Hospital and lastly to Orthopaedic Hospital in Dhaka on September 9.
"When doctors of Orthopaedic Hospital told me that her both hands would have to be cut off, I took her to a private hospital in Dhaka. Her condition was improving there but the treatment was too costly for me," said Zomshed.
Hamidul Alam, superintendent of police of Dinajpur, said, "Arrested accused Ibrahim Ali confessed to his crime."



Coastal areas with a large number of *jhau* trees planted under a social forestation project area getting devoured by the eroding Meghna at Boyar Char in Hatiya upazila under Noakhali.

PHOTO: STAR

PWD engineer sent to jail

A CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A Rangamati court yesterday sent a Public Works Department (PWD) engineer to jail in a signature forgery case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).
Executive Engineer of PWD Sukamal Chakma was arrested yesterday in Tabalchari area in Rangamati town and produced before the Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court.
Advocate Pratim Roy Pampu, president of Rangamati Ainjibi Samity, prayed for bail on behalf of Sukamal. Judge Sabrina Ali of the court rejected the bail petition and sent Sukamal to jail.
The court asked ACC to submit all the documents of the case to it on November 6.

Ex-principal beaten by extortionists

A CORRESPONDENT, Comilla

Former principal of Brahmanbaria Government College was beaten and stabbed on Tuesday by the extortionists in front of his house at Uttar Ashrafpur in Sadar South of Comilla.
Prof Kazi Mostafa Jalal, a retired principal of Brahmanbaria Government College and former teacher of accounting department of Comilla Victoria College, was beaten and stabbed by a gang of criminals allegedly led by Bishal and Arif as he refused to give extortion.
Prof Jalal alleged that Bishal, 25, son of Shahidul Islam Ratan of South Chartha Boro Pukurpar and Md Arif Hossain, 27, son of late Alauddin of Halua Para at South Chortha in Comilla Sadar, had been demanding Tk 50,000 from him as extortion as he was building a new house. He said he informed Bishal's father about the matter several times, but to no avail.
Prof Jalal said Bishal and Arif along with their accomplices started hitting him with iron rod as he failed to meet their demand for Tk 50,000. They also stabbed him on the head, he added.
Locals rescued Prof Jalal hearing his scream for help and took him to Comilla Medical College Hospital.
Arif was caught red-handed by the locals while others managed to escape. Later, they handed him over to the Sadar South Police Station.

6,000 jhau trees destroyed, 22,000 under threat by Meghna erosion

MD NURUL AMIN, Noakhali

About 6,000 yews popularly known as *jhau* trees at Boyar Char in the district have been destroyed while 22,000 more are in danger due to continuous erosion by the river Meghna during the last several years.
The trees planted by the Forest Department as well as the embankments, dwelling houses and croplands in Boyar Char and Tankir Khal areas on the west side of the char in Hatiya upazila are threatened by the erosion.
Noakhali Forest Department sources said a social forestation programme was taken up in 2010-11 by Noakhali Coastal Forest Department under a Water Development Board (WDB) project to protect the embankment and around 29,000 yew trees were planted on the banks of the river.
Abdul Jalil, Mannan Bhuiyan and Nizam Uddin, beneficiaries of social forestation, said an embankment was constructed about five

years ago to protect Tankir Khal of Boyar Char to WDB Char on the river bank.
The beneficiaries said the yew tree garden became vulnerable when erosion started in that part of the river about four years ago and tidal water has been uprooting the trees. Many dwelling houses and croplands have gone into the river, they added.
Harani Union Administrative Officer Mushfiqur Rahman said at least 500 families have been rendered homeless by the erosion at Boyar Char during the last four years. He said WDB, which was supposed to take action to stop erosion, took no effective steps in this regard.
Mushfiq said the union parishad has informed the Hatiya upazila parshad chairman, the upazila nirbahi officer and the local lawmaker of the matter.
Upazila Chairman Mahub Morshed said the upazila parishad in its monthly meeting discussed the issue of erosion at Boyar Char several times and letters have been sent to the

authorities concerned requesting them to take necessary steps in this regard.
Noakhali Divisional Forest Officer Amir Hossain Chowdhury on Saturday said about 6,000 yew trees have been destroyed due to erosion.
Amir said around 5,700 yew trees have so far been devoured by the river Meghna and more trees are being washed away every day. At present, the whole yew plantation is under threat, he said, adding that WDB has been informed about the matter.
WDB Executive Engineer Zahidur Rahman said they visited some erosion affected areas in Hatiya, including Boyar Char. Necessary data in this regard has been prepared and sent to its headquarters.
Zahidur said necessary action would be taken to prevent erosion in the area, including Boyar Char, after the WDB headquarters approved the plans.

Malta brings smile to growers

Agri office says there are 300 malta orchards in Narsingdi

SHYKH SERAJ

In the past three to four years malta cultivation has spread in different districts of Bangladesh -- starting from hill districts Khagrachhari and Rangamati to Pirojpur, Chuadanga, Rajshahi, Panchagarh, Mymensingh and Narsingdi. Many malta orchards are growing and farmers are making good profit by cultivating this juicy and nutritious fruit. Many others have cultivated it in their home yard in almost all districts, out of their extreme passion.
After BARI brought the variety BARI-1 malta, many people started growing the fruit. One of the main reasons people started growing this massively is because of the sweetness of this particular variety.
In February this year, I featured success story of malta farmer Reboti Sikder who lives in Pirojpur.



Shykh Seraj is a Media and Agriculture Development Activist. He is an Ashoka Fellow and recipient of Ekushey Padak, FAO A.H. Boerma Award and many other prestigious accolades. At Channel i, he is Director and Head of News. He is also Director and Host of the popular agro-documentary, "Hridoye Mati O Manush".

pening since our liberation and farmers have truly contributed to development up until today. That's how agriculture has become the spine of our economy.
According to DAE (Department of Agricultural Extension) in Narsingdi there are around 300 malta orchards. Each of these three hundred orchards has at least 100 malta trees inside. There are also some orchards where there are less than a hundred malta trees. Overall, there are around 800 malta orchards - small and big - in Narsingdi district.
"I follow all the right methods as shown by agriculture officers and also put some of my indigenous knowledge to grow healthy and fresh maltas," says Jahangir.
"I am a perfectionist and I don't want to spoil what I have started. I have to concentrate hard and think sharply everyday," adds Jahangir.
Jahangir affirms that he has been very much inspired by media as he has seen others growing maltas so abundantly and successfully. He paid his utmost gratitude to the agriculture officers and to Hridoye Mati O Manush for massive campaign on malta cultivation.
"My malta will surpass others, in taste and colour," confidently says Jahangir.
Jahangir's orchard is now regarded as one of the most successful orchards in the district to the local agriculture department and upcoming entrepreneurs.
"This is the model malta orchard and we're sending many farmers to visit Jahangir's orchard," says Nazmul Kabir, UAO (Union Agriculture Officer) of Shivpur, Narsingdi.
"The colour, quality and taste of Jahangir's maltas is just so perfect," adds the UAO.
I have also had the chance to talk with some interested entrepreneurs who would start growing maltas in near future.

"The way Jahangir has done it, it's superb and I am definitely thinking positively on doing one like him," says Baten, a young entrepreneur.
Echoing the same, many others said they look forward to reaching the peak of success, following what Jahangir has done.
Looking into the prospect of making great profits from malta, Jahangir has prepared six acres of land for future orchard.
"I regard this one bigha malta orchard as an experimental ground. The future is yet to arrive," boldly says Jahangir.
Jahangir invested Tk 50,000 in the beginning and he hopes he'll get at least Tk 3 lakh this season.
One funny thing is at the very beginning when Jahangir first started his malta orchard, he found some orange trees. Those are giving him round the year fruits. And, he dreams of starting an orange orchard in the coming days too.
"Looking at the great prospect of malta in the entire Shibpur upazila we have distributed 15,000 malta saplings two years back and Jahangir's orchard is also in our consideration," says Ariful Islam Mridha, local upazila parishad chairman.
Dear readers, after successful cultivation of high value crop baukul, Thai guava, dragon fruit and strawberry, malta has created a positive hype across Bangladesh. Farmers are now more keen to grow BARI-1 malta variety. They have seen positive outcome already and many others see great prospect in malta. I hope in a few years, with the great initiative of ideal malta farmers like Reboti and Jahangir, we would be able to cut the dependence on import of this juicy, nutritious fruit. And, Bangladesh will definitely spread its own maltas across the world.



Jahangir Alam takes care of maltas at his orchard at Shibpur in Narsingdi. The photo was taken a few days ago.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Spotted deer fall prey to poachers

MINTU DESHWARA with ANDREW EAGLE

In the northeast, the forests of Srimangal and Kamalganj in Moulvibazar are among the last vestiges of wild country. For many species of plants and animals the forests are a refuge; forest ecosystems are rich. But increasingly, the spotted deer which shelter in the forest face a daunting threat: poachers.
Poachers are proactive in the Lawachara, Adampur, Rajkandi and Kamarchara forest areas, with at least four organised gangs out to catch deer. Armed with guns and knives they often succeed.
On 22 September an injured deer, in a critical condition, was rescued by the forest department from Champarai village in the vicinity of Kurma Reserve forest in Kamalganj. "We gave primary treatment," says Rajkandi range officer Sakhor Chowdhury, "Some locals had been chasing the deer in an attempt to slaughter it."
The deer was sent to the Bangladesh Wildlife Services Foundation for treatment. Unfortunately, its injured leg required amputation. "The deer's right leg was broken and it had several other injuries," says foundation director Sajal Deb. "It will take time for the animal to return to normal life."
Just twelve days earlier another deer was slaughtered at Saitula village in Srimangal's Sindurkhan union. Despite forestry officer efforts it proved impossible to seize the venison; only its skin was recovered as evidence. In this instance a case has been filed under the Wildlife Protection and Safety Act.
However, according to wildlife conservation department officials there is often pressure from various sources not to proceed with prosecutions.
"Deer are very docile," says assistant conservator of forests Tabibur Rahman. "The killings are continuing unabated, causing the species to become endangered." He says the deer slaughtered in Saitula was killed by Aatur Rahman and Jia Uddin, with locals Monir, Nur Islam and Jamshed also connected to the incident. He says they will be prosecuted.
"They did it only due to a lack of awareness," says Sindurkhan union chairman Abdullah Al Helal, who confirmed the matter to The Daily Star.
Meanwhile another deer was rescued by Border Guard Bangladesh paramilitaries on 7 September in the Adampur area. They handed the injured animal to the wildlife



Law enforcers rescue this deer, injured during a chase by locals to catch it for slaughter, at Champarai village in Kurma Reserve Forest of Moulvibazar on September 22.

PHOTO: STAR

services foundation for treatment, but two days later it died. "The deer had been hacked in the throat by a knife and its breathing passage was seriously injured," says foundation chairman Sitesh Ranjan Deb.
Such incidents have become regular. There are many more. Locals allege deer hunters are active year-round. "Some of the locals earn their livelihood poaching deer and selling the venison," reports one villager on condition of anonymity. "They go to Lawachara, Adampur, Rajkandi and Kamarchara forests, often posing as visitors."
Other villagers allege the targets of the criminal activity are the deer horns and hides which are in high demand. Venison meanwhile, according to locals, is being sold openly in high range hotels in the area, with a single deer sold to the hotels for up to Tk 30,000.
Keeping watch over the forest to stamp out poaching is no easy task. "Our manpower is too small to cover the vast forest area, and they are not well equipped," says divisional forest officer Mihir Kumar Doe. "To be successful we would need more and better trained personnel."
The divisional forest officer for Sylhet, RFM Monirul Islam, confirmed to The Daily Star that the problem of poaching exists. "We will pursue legal action against the poachers," he says.