

Woman killed for land in Jhalakathi

Dulu's body was thrown into canal to ensure death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhalakathi

A woman was hacked to death at Pashchim Kanudaskathi village in Rajapur of the district on Wednesday, said Officer-in-Charge (investigation) of Rajapur Police Station Md Harun ur Rashid.

The deceased was identified as Dulu Begum, 45, wife of late Abdur Rahim of the village.

Dulu's sister-in-law Sufia Begum and Sufia's daughter Lakhi Akhtar hacked Dulu severely during an altercation over a trifling matter, police said.

"It was pre-planned killing for driving away my sister and her family from the house to grab her land. They had threatened her several times to leave the house," said Lizu Akhtar, younger sister of Dulu.

Dulu's body was put in a sack and thrown into a canal to ensure her death and hide the evidence of the murder, police said, adding that local people informed Lizu and the police as soon as they saw the body.

The body was taken to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital where she was declared dead.

It was sent to Jhalakathi Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy yesterday.

Meanwhile, police arrested Sufia Begum and her daughter Lakhi Akhtar in connection with the murder.



A tobacco dust factory, operating within a short distance from a clinic, a primary school and a bazar, poses serious health hazard for the locals at Gandhomaruya village in Durgapur union under Aditmari upazila of Lalmonirhat.

PHOTO: STAR

Seven jail guards closed in Jessore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Seven guards of Jessore Central Jail have been closed on charge of assaulting a union parishad chairman at the jail gate in the district.

The jail guards are Hiron Mridha, Faruq Hossain, Sagor Islam, Shahidullah Mir, Masum Billah, Liakat Hossain and Md Hossain.

Jailer Md Abu Taleb confirmed the matter yesterday.

The decision of closing the guards was taken on the basis of CCTV camera footage of the jail, he said.

A three-member probe committee was formed to investigate the assault on Jahurpur union parishad chairman Dilu Patoary of Bagharpara upazila, said the jailor.

Tobacco-dust factory causes havoc

Schoolchildren, patients and passers-by suffer

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

On the roadside in Gandhomaruya village in Durgapur union of Lalmonirhat's Aditmari upazila is the curious site of a tobacco dust factory. The illegal factory has been in operation for the last seven years, in the vicinity of a health clinic, a primary school and the village market, despite the pollution and public health ill-effects. For reasons unknown, no action has been taken by the administration to close the facility.

"I sell dusted tobacco to Pabna, Sirajganj, Bogra and Gaibandha," says the factory's owner Meherul Islam son of Afzal Hossain. He says the dusted tobacco is used to make the tobacco powder product called gul. "From around 80 maunds of tobacco leaves we produce up to 60 maunds of dust per day; and I provide daily employment for many locals."

"Our dust does not pollute the environment," Islam claims. His neighbours however, disagree.

"We can't stay long in our shops due to the bad smell of tobacco while the illegal dust factory is at

work," says Abu Bakkar Siddique, a shopkeeper from the adjoining market. "We have made strong representations against the tobacco dust factory on several occasions but because its owner has a reputation as a local powerbroker, we didn't get any satisfactory outcome."

Class-five student of nearby Gandhomaruya Government Primary School, Keya Khatun, says she and her fellow schoolchildren must hold their noses while passing the factory on their way to and from school so as to protect themselves from the wretched smell. "We have complained about this problem to our teachers but they have been unable to take any action."

Acting headmaster of the school, Belal Hossain, says he has personally requested the factory's owner to cease the activity due to the pollution it causes to the surrounding area and the suffering locals, and especially the schoolchildren, face. "But there was no response," he says.

Meanwhile expectant mother Taslim Begum, 25, says she requires regular checkups from the

community clinic near the factory. "But I can't stay here for long," she says, "due to the bad tobacco smell. If I stay for too long I really suffer."

Head of the clinic Rokonuzzaman Chanchol agrees that the centre's patients suffer due to the factory. "The entire area is dusty," he says, "Tobacco dust is sprayed everywhere while the factory is in operation." He says he has already informed health authorities about the hazard.

When asked if he took permission from the factory, Islam says he didn't take any permission from either the local administration or the department of environment because "no permission is required."

Rangpur division's deputy director from the environment department, Md Aktaruzzaman says he was unaware of this illegal tobacco dust factory, but now that he has been informed he will take necessary action to protect the local environment. Tobacco dust is a very harmful pollutant, he adds.

Officials visit bridge site to realise kid's dream

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A seven-member team from the Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges visited the proposed site of Payra bridge on Patuakhali-Mirzaganj road yesterday.

The decision to build the bridge on the Payra river came following the prime minister's recent assurance in response to the letter of a Class-IV student of Patuakhali Government Jubilee High School, requesting steps to build a bridge on the river.

The student, Shirshendu Biswas also wrote an essay on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's childhood at a programme marking the death anniversary of the Father of the Nation on August 15 this year and achieved the third position at the competition.

The seven-member team was formed on October 18, led by Alim Uddin Ahmed, joint secretary of the Bridges

Division under the ministry.

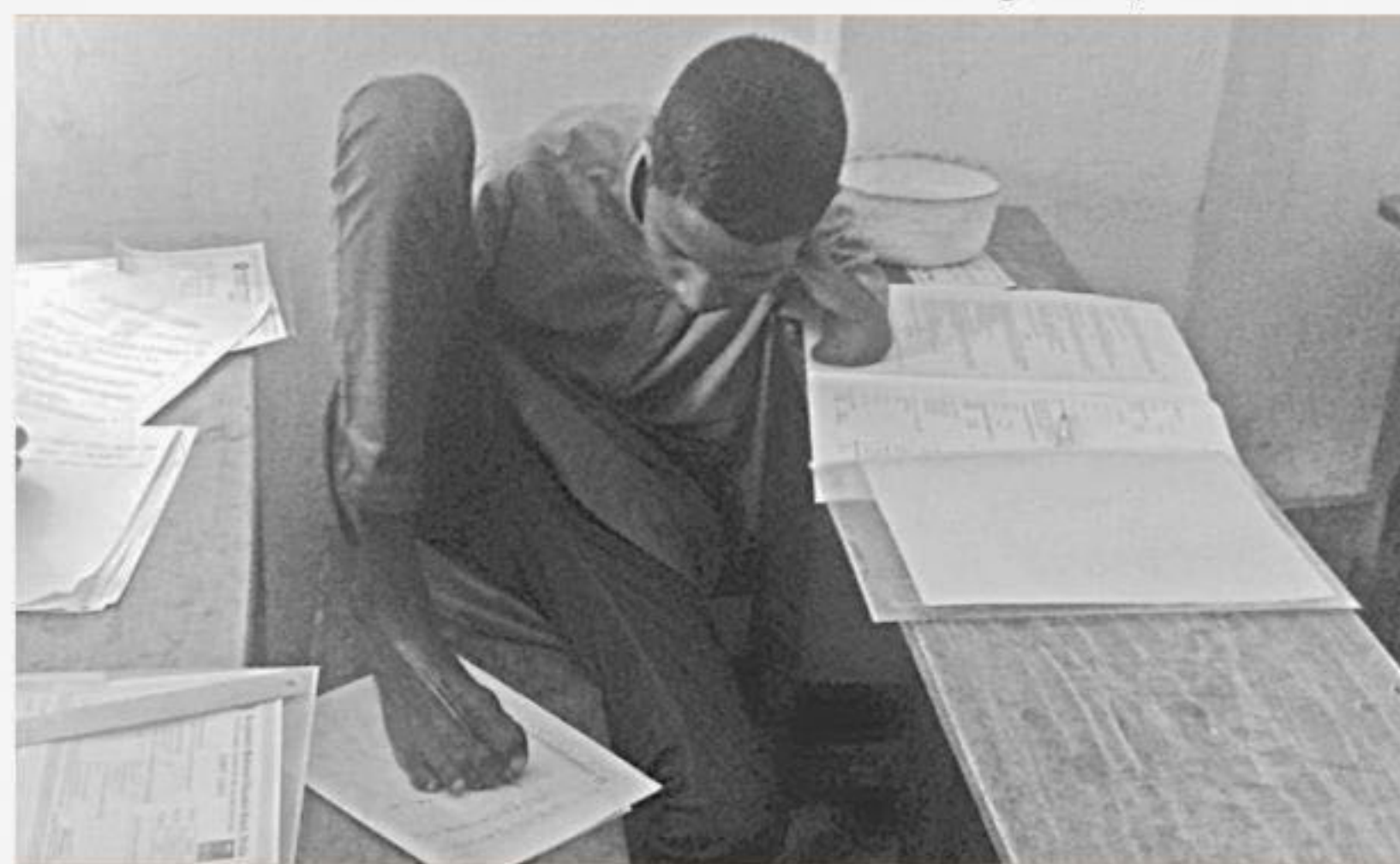
The team took part in a meeting with AKM Shamimul Haq Siddique, deputy commissioner (DC) of Patuakhali, and Roads and Highways Department (RHD) officials at the DC office at 9:00am and visited the proposed bridge site around 11:00am.

"We are trying to build the Payra bridge within a short time and looking for foreign aid for the purpose. The bridge would play vital role to communicate between Mongla sea port and Payra sea port," the team leader said after visiting the spot.

Ibn Alam Hasan, chief engineer of RHD, already sent a report to the road transport and bridges ministry on the proposed bridge, he said.

The two-lane bridge would be 1375-metre-long and 10.76-metre-wide and connect Patuakhali district headquarters, Kuakata sea beach, Payra sea port in the east and Mirzaganj upazila under Patuakhali, Barguna, Jhalakathi, and Pirojpur districts, Mongla sea port and Khulna divisional city in the west, RHD sources said.

Undaunted Rafiqul



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Physically challenged Rafiqul Islam, who defied all odds to continue his studies, is attending this year's Junior School Certificate (JSC) examinations writing his answer scripts with his right toes.

Rafiqul, son of Nasir Uddin of Pakerhat village in Khansama upazila, also a student of Pakerhat Kamil Madrasa has never considered his disability as a barrier for his studies.

While visiting his examination centre at Khansama Fazil Madrasa recently, this correspondent found him writing his answer script, holding the pen with his right toes.

"My son was born without hands," said Nasir Uddin, who runs a betel leaf

shop in front of Khansama Upazila Health Complex.

"Seeing his keen interest to learn and educate himself we enrolled him at a local madrasa at the age of five," Nasir added.

Reazul Islam Shah, principal of Pakerhat Kamil Madrasa, said many can get inspiration from the indomitable boy, who stood fifth among his classmates and is always attentive to his studies.

Rafiqul's mother Rubina Begum said besides writing Rafiqul is good at drawing. Her son needs help while bathing and wearing clothes only, she added.

Replying to a question, Rafiqul said despite his physical barriers, he wants to study at a university to stand beside the disabled like him.

One dies as compressor explodes in Munshiganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

A man died and another was injured when the compressor of an air-conditioner exploded at Mawa mixer point of the Padma Bridge project yesterday.

The deceased was Azmir Hossain Nipul, a labourer of the project and son of Shafiqur Rahman of Char Gosai village in Ramgati upazila of Laxmipur.

Mr Lee, a Chinese foreman, lost a leg in the explosion.

Officer-in-Charge of Louhajang Police Station Anisur Rahman said Azmir and Lee were working on the air-conditioner in the morning at Mawa mixture point when the compressor exploded. Azmir died on the spot.

As the condition of Lee became worse, he was sent to Dhaka for better treatment, he added.

Charcoal plant on waqf land

Jubo League leader runs it illegally

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

After illegally occupying a 1.57 acre plot of land donated under Islamic law for charitable purpose, known as a waqf estate, a Jubo League leader in Kalaiya village of Patuakhali's Baufal upazila has been operating an illegal charcoal plant on the site, resulting in significant pollution, it is alleged.

Md Mizan Mollah is the organising secretary of Jubo League's Kalaiya union unit. He established the charcoal plant south of Kalaiya bazar in November 2015, and according to worker Anwar Hossain, the six fireplaces can burn up to 300 maunds of local timber at a time. Each fireplace can produce 70 maunds of charcoal every seven to ten days, the worker says.

"I leased the land from Shahjada Mia, the waqf estate's custodian," says Mollah. "I have not taken permission for setting up the charcoal plant as the environment will not be polluted and it will not bring about any threat to health or the environment."

"It is illegal to produce charcoal from firewood," says Md. Nazrul Islam, Barisal's divisional director of the environment department. "We didn't issue any permission to set up a charcoal plant."

Moreover, sources at the Patuakhali waqf estate administrator's office said that there is no custodian, named Shahjada Mia, as claimed by Mollah. The legal managers of the estate where his charcoal plant is located are Md Jahangir Hossain and Solaiman Mia, according to the office.

One of the legal custodians, Md Jahangir Hossain, says permission should be taken from the waqf administrators to lease the land, "and we did not lease that land to anybody. Jubo League leader Mizan Mollah set up the charcoal plant after forcibly occupying the waqf property."

Locals report that nobody has protested against the charcoal facility, nor have any steps been taken by the administration to remove it, because Mollah is a politically influential man.

In the meantime smoke and ash pollution is affecting the area, with Ali Akbar Government Primary School just fifty metres from the site, both Kalaiya High School and Kalaiya Rabbania Fazil Madrasa are one hundred metres distant, while Idris Mia Degree College is a further fifty metres away. The charcoal plant also badly affects cropland productivity and has led to deforestation in the area, several of the college teachers say.

Medical officer at Baufal upazila

health complex Dr ASM Sayem notes that public health will suffer both short and long term consequences from the air pollution. "Local residents have to live with the threat of various respiratory diseases, and in particular children and expectant mothers can be badly affected," he says.

In the meantime, the charcoal, made from illegally collected local firewood, is reportedly sold to various industries in Faridpur district and to local brick kilns. Charcoal is a fuel that has a huge local demand during the active brickfield season which runs from December to April, sources say.

According to Barisal's divisional coordinator for the Bangladesh Environment Lawyers' Association, Lincon Bayen, the legal position in such circumstances is clear. "It is illegal to produce charcoal by burning firewood," he says, "and the administration including the Department of Environment (DoE) can take legal steps to stop the charcoal operation."

It is curious as to why no action has been taken thus far.

"We will take immediate steps to stop the operation as it is a threat to public health and the environment," the DoE's Md Nazrul Islam says.

Hill students block roads to free 3 leaders

A CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachari

Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP), student wing of United People's Democratic Front, observed a dawn-to-dusk road blockade in the district yesterday, demanding immediate release of three central leaders.

Police and army personnel recently arrested PCP vice president Biniyon Chakma, general secretary Bipul Chakma and organising secretary Anil Chakam.

Local activists and supporters of PCP broke windshields of some Dhaka-bound night coaches by throwing bricks in Sapmara Segunbagan area of Matiranga upazila.

Four PCP supporters were arrested during the blockade, said ASP Raich Uddin.

Abducted girl yet to be rescued

The tenth grader was picked up by her stalkers on October 31

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A schoolgirl, who was abducted in Gopalpur upazila of the district four days ago, is yet to be rescued.

The victim's father Mahmudul Hasan Talukder on Wednesday at a press conference at Tangail Press Club urged the district and police administrations to take immediate initiatives to rescue his daughter.

He also sought prime minister's interference in this regard.

He alleged that one Mizanur Rahman of Sohail village along with his accomplices used to stalk his 14-year-old daughter on her way to school.

Following a complaint filed by the father in this regard, police arrested Mizanur on October 16. He was later released after giving an undertaking.

On October 31, Mizanur along with his accomplices in a microbus picked up the tenth grader when she was returning home from the school.

The following day, the victim's father filed an abduction case with Gopalpur Police Station, accusing Mizanur and six others, said Sub-Inspector Hasan Jamil.

They are trying their best to rescue the girl and arrest the accused, said the SI, also investigation officer of the case.



An illegal charcoal plant built by a Jubo League leader on waqf land in Kalaiya village of Baufal upazila under Patuakhali.

PHOTO: STAR