

WRATH OF INTRA-PARTY RIVALRY AL leader groans in hospital

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Jhenidah*

Freedom fighter and former union parishad (UP) chairman Moktar Mridha, seriously injured by rivals in Shaillakupa upazila under the district on October 18, is still undergoing treatment at BDM Hospital at Mohammadpur in Dhaka.

The victim's family members have demanded early steps for justice.

Moktar, 63, former chairman of Abaipur UP in Shaillakupa, also an Awami League (AL) leader, faced the wrath of intra-party rivals over tender dropping, said party sources and locals.

"Moktar Mridha was sitting at my pharmacy around 7:00pm on October 18 when some Awami League cadres beat him with iron rods and sticks and hacked him with a machete," eyewitness Jakir Hossain, owner of Jakir Pharmacy, told this correspondent on Tuesday.

"Cadres belonging to AL lawmaker Abdul Hye and Sona Shikdar, Shaillakupa upazila AL's president, beat and hacked my father, leaving him unconscious. He was given 18 stitches in different parts of his body," said the victim's son Sumon Mridha.

"My father was not spared although he is a freedom fighter and a senior member of district AL. At the time my brother Morshed Mridha, 32, was also hacked.

"I filed a case with Shaillakupa Police Station accusing Jadab Hossain, Ripon Hossain, Suman Hossain, Shawan Shikdar, Sachchu Mia, Shamim Hossain, Kornel Hossain, Rajib Bahadur and two others. They all are on bail from the court," Sumon Mridha said.

On October 27, nine days after the brutal attack, Shaillakupa upazila Chhatra League general secretary Shawan Shikdar, Swachhshabak League president Cornel Ahmed and organising secretary Shihab Molla were expelled from the respective organisations.



Students of Gabrol Deeperpar Dolapara Government Primary School in Jaldhaka upazila of Nilphamari attend classes under the open sky.

PHOTO: STAR

BGB-BSF meet on border problems begins

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Benapole*

A two-day conference between Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) started at BGB sector headquarters in Khulna yesterday to sort out problems at the border.

A 21-member delegation led by BSF Inspector General Kamol Nayan Chumbe reached Bangladesh through Benapole border checkpoint.

Brigadier General Khalilur Rahman, commander of BGB's south west region, is leading a 21-member delegation at the meeting.

Issues like killing of innocent Bangladeshis, illegal trespassing, smuggling of narcotics, firearms and explosives, and human trafficking on border will be given high priority during the conference, said Jahangir Hossain, commanding officer of BGB-26 Battalion.

A different move against child marriage

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Tangail*

Gopalpur upazila administration in the district yesterday started a different type of publicity to prevent early marriage, dowry and stalking with a slogan of 'educated girl is asset of the country'.

They also formed human chains at 10 important points in the upazila headquarters and showed red card to the social problems.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Masumur Rahman inaugurated the programme at Nandanpur Bus Stand in the municipality area where female students of local schools, scouts and public representatives joined.

They later pasted red stickers containing slogans against early marriage, dowry and stalking on all kinds of vehicles including buses, trucks, cars and three-wheelers.

Broken classrooms drive students outdoors

38 Nilphamari primary schools are largely unfit for use

BY EAM ASADUZZAMAN with ANDREW EAGLE

From students of 38 primary schools in Nilphamari's Jaldhaka upazila there can be few complaints of stuffy classrooms with poor ventilation. The classrooms at these schools are largely unfit for use, with many lessons taking place under the open sky.

"A survey on the physical condition of primary schools was conducted a few months ago," says upazila engineer Md Harun Ur Rashid. "And 35 schools were found to have infrastructure in too vulnerable a state to facilitate the smooth running of the school." The number of schools of concern subsequently climbed to 38, with an additional three added to the list by the upazila primary education officer.

These schools were nationalised three years ago in the second phase of the government's primary school nationalisation programme, apart from the additional three which were nationalised two decades ago.

"At our school some of the tin-sheet

classroom walls have disappeared," says teacher Sudipta Rani of Gabrol Deeperpar Dolapara Government Primary School, which is included on the list. "Cows and goats grazing in nearby fields sometimes enter the classrooms making them dirty."

"On account of the cow dung and animal urine, the classrooms are like hell, and most children are reluctant to attend school," she continues, "With no alternative we arrange lessons outside." The school has 190 students enrolled.

At Bhabon Chur Government Primary School the situation is little better, with leaking tin roofs allowing rainwater in during the monsoon months and intense sunshine during the summer. "Due to the poor classroom conditions," says headmistress Monwara Begum, "the students are seldom interested to listen to their teachers attentively. Sometimes we arrange classes outdoors instead."

At Ideal Para Government Primary School where 185 students are enrolled, the headmaster is kept busy

transporting all important papers to and from his home since the broken-walled classrooms also lack doors. Students there have no tube well for clean water and as there is no sanitary latrine, they go to a nearby clump of bamboo when nature calls.

"A good number of our students have left the school due to the prevailing conditions, says Masud Alam Beg, headmaster of Laxmimarai Government Primary School. "Some of them enrolled at other schools while others dropped out altogether."

Jaldhaka's upazila primary education officer Md Shahjahan says urgent requests have been made to his higher authorities to take measures to construct new academic buildings soon. "We've received a positive response," he says.

"The government will construct new buildings at the vulnerable schools in phases," agrees the upazila nirbahi officer of Jaldhaka, Rashedul Huq Prodhan. "Until then we hope the authorities of each school will make sincerest efforts to cope as best they can."

Women

FROM PAGE 16

The researchers interviewed 1,933 individuals from each of 460 households of the village. As many as 364 people or 18 percent reported having symptoms consistent with chikungunya between May 29 and December 1, 2012.

The research found that more than a quarter of human infections spread within the same household and that half of infections occurred in households less than 200 metres away.

"We had good reasons to suspect that women in Bangladesh spend a lot more time at home than men," Emily Gurley, co-senior author and director of the emerging pathogens programme at icddr, says.

"However, this study allowed us to quantify exactly how big this difference is and demonstrate how this could be responsible for increased risk of infection by some mosquito-borne pathogens.

"Outbreaks of viruses such as dengue and zika are likely to disproportionately affect women in such communities, too."

Repair road or face strike

Speakers tell Chapainawabganj rally

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Chapainawabganj*

Bus-truck owners and workers at a human chain programme in the Dariapara area here yesterday demanded repair of the dilapidated Chapainawabganj-Rajshahi Highway.

Several hundred people also joined the one-hour human chain from 10:00am.

The speakers at the rally said they would call a strike if the authorities concerned do not repair the road in 15 days.

They said the people have been suffering for the last two years as 16 kilometres of the 48-kilometre road from Chapainawabganj to Rajshahi remained in an awful condition. The road was damaged due to lack of repair work and water-logging in the rainy season, they added.

A good number of vehicles with imported goods from Sonamasjid land port to different destinations in the country and several hundred other vehicles use this road everyday, they said.

Speakers said carpeting on the road has eroded and cracks and holes have developed due to lack of repair for long, making vehicular movement highly risky.

District Bus Owners' Association President FKM Lutfar Rahman Firoz, District Truck Owners' Group President Aminul Islam Sentu and District Truck and Motor Sramik Union President Saidur Rahman spoke at the rally.

Chapainawabganj RHD Executive Engineer Suniti Chakma said a tender was floated that would be opened on November 15 in this regard. The repair work of the road would start in December, he hoped.



The remains of a felled tree in Madhabkundo eco-park of Barlekha upazila under Moulvibazar.

PHOTO: STAR

MADHABKUNDO ECO-PARK

Illegal logging unabated

MINU DESHWARA, *Moulvibazar*

Various kinds of trees including some rare species are being illegally logged in Madhabkundo eco-park allegedly with the backing of local influential people in Barlekha upazila under the district.

The 500-acre eco-park was established in 2000 in the western side of Madhabcherra forest beat to conserve biodiversity there.

There are many hillocks including famous 'Nagini Tila' around the park rich in segun, garjan, chapalish and many other species of trees and several kinds of animals.

According to beat office, officials seized 1100 bamboos and 17 cft of wood during the last one week while criminals looted two 50-year-old trees.

After cutting the trees, the loggers fill the area with land to hide any evidence of their misdeeds, said Selim Mia, a local tourist guide.

It also helps to plant new trees and change the total figure of trees, said a woodcutter.

"Different trees including some rare species are being illegally logged at Madhabkundo with the backing of local influential people. We informed the forest beat office several times but the illegal act continues unabated," said Aftab Mia, president of Samajik Bonayon Krisi Somobay Samity.

Locals alleged that UP member Islam Uddin of Madhabkundo village are backing the workers involved in the wood trafficking while Islam Uddin refuted the allegation.

Madhabcherra beat officer Shekhor Ranjan Das said, "A part of the Madhabkundo eco-park is under my supervision. Taking advantage of our manpower shortage, a gang often fell trees and send the logs to different areas for sale. If we find any way to recover stolen trees, we always take steps."

Abdul Karim Kim, general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon's Sylhet chapter, said Madhabkundo forest is rich in rare species of plants and animals and so, it must be saved from the loggers.

RFM Monirul Islam, divisional forest officer of Sylhet Forest Division, said, "We arrange patrol to check logging in the forest area but our manpower must be increased for success in the effort."

Urea production stopped due to technical glitch

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Jamalpur*

Urea production at Jamuna Fertiliser Company Ltd (JFCL) at Tarakandi in Jamalpur remained stopped due to mechanical fault yesterday.

The incident took place when the pump of ammonia gas plant of the factory exploded with big bang around 10:30am, said Mahbuba Sultana, general manager (technical) of JFCL.

"The repairing work is going on, but it may need two or three days," she said.

JFCL, the largest urea production company in the country, is able to produce 1700 metric tonnes of fertiliser per day, she added.

WATER AMBULANCE ABANDONED FOR 3 YEARS

Char patients suffer

A CORRESPONDENT, *Faridpur*

The lone water ambulance meant for carrying patients from char (landmass emerging from riverbed) areas of Harirampur and Dhaukhali unions in Char Bhadrason upazila under the district is getting ruined as it has remained abandoned for the last three years.

The health department gave the water ambulance to Char Bhadrason Upazila Health Complex in 2013 to help carrying serious patients from the two char unions to hospital, said sources of the health complex.

It was handed over to KM Obaidul Bari, the then chairman of Harirampur union parishad (UP), on May 12 in 2013.

During a recent visit, the water ambulance was found lying on a dry land at Jakarsura of Harirampur, with visible signs of damage to its engine and other accessories.

Sick people from char areas have to be carried to the bank of the Padma and then

brought to the other bank by boat for taking to hospital, said Sajjada Bagum, 40, a resident of Purbo Shalapur village under Harirampur union.

"Sometimes pregnant women give birth to their baby on the boat while crossing the river. Even a few serious patients died on the boat, before getting any treatment," she said.

Obaidul Bari, former chairman of Harirampur UP, said, "The upazila praishad handed over the water ambulance to me and I used it to carry patients for 15 days.

"As there was no permanent driver for the water ambulance I let a village policeman use it. But it was not able to cross the Padma during strong current. And so, I kept the boat on the land."

Parvas Chowdhury, upazila nirbahi officer of Char Bhadrason, said, "It is not possible to run the water ambulance as its engine has already got damaged and there is no driver for it."



The lone water ambulance lying on a dry land in Harirampur union of Char Bhadrason upazila under Faridpur remains abandoned for the last three years.

PHOTO: STAR