

Man flees as docs declare wife dead at hospital

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Soon after confirmation of his wife's death, a young man fled the scene leaving the body at the emergency department of Saidpur 100-bed Hospital in Nilphamari's Saidpur upazila yesterday.

Being informed by the hospital authority, police recovered the body of Hasna Begum, wife of Rashidul Islam of Kamarpukur village in the upazila, also daughter of Abdul Hamid of neighbouring Kashiram village, said Officer-in-Charge Amirul Islam of Saidpur Police Station.

Deceased's father Abdul Hamid alleged that Rashidul, a fruit vendor, and his family members used to torture his daughter over trivial matter since their marriage four years ago.

Locals said yesterday noon, Hasna's in-laws started to beat her mercilessly at their courtyard over a trifling matter. At one stage of the inhuman torture, Hasna collapsed on the ground and fainted.

Rashidul and his family members later took Hasna to Saidpur 100-bed Hospital where the doctors declared her dead.

Ariful Islam, on duty doctor at the emergency department of the hospital, said Hasna died hours before she was taken to the hospital, adding that her body bore several injury marks.

An unnatural death (UID) case has been filed with the police station and if autopsy report suggests that she was murdered, the case will be turned into a murder case, added the OC.



This recent photo shows a blooming mustard field at Chandanbaisha village in Sariakandi upazila of Bogra.

PHOTO: MAMUN-UR-RASHID

Mustard reverses farmers' fortune

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Shefali Bewa of Altafnagar area in Dupchanchia upazila said she started mustard farming in her five bighas of land four years ago and bought two cows with the profit from selling the mustard.

Cultivation of mustard has brought good fortune to farmers in the district during the last few years.

Fariduddin, deputy assistant agriculture officer, on behalf of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), said 27,500 hectares of land had been targeted for mustard cultivation in the 12 upazilas of the district this year, whereas 25,555 hectares were actually brought under cultivation.

Around 38,333 tonnes of mus-

tard are estimated to have been cultivated in the district this year, the source said.

Three hundred hectares of land were brought under mustard cultivation in Sadar, 4,850 in Kahaloo, 1,005 in Shajahanpur, 1,900 in Sherpur, 1,980 in Dhunat, 4,000 in Nandigram, 3,300 in Dupchancia, 3,200 in Adamdighi, 450 in Shibganj, 700 in Gabtoli, 1,920 in Sariakandi and 1,950 in Sonatola upazilas of the district, the source added.

The DAE source added that mustard was cultivated on 28,770 hectares of land and 48,000 tonnes were produced in 2015, and on 27,210 hectares producing 41,090 tonnes in 2014.

Landless Arun Kumar of Talora

Paulpara area in Dupchanchia upazila said that he leased two bighas of land for Tk 12, 000 and earned a profit of Tk 76,000 from mustard cultivation last year.

Farmer Sushil Kumar of Talora village in Dupchanchia upazila said he has been cultivating mustard on six bighas of land every year, and gets a yield of around eight maunds per bigha. Raw mustard was sold at Tk 1,900 to Tk 2,200 per maund and dried mustard at around Tk 2,500 per maund, he added.

Farmer Mozahar Ali of Kundagram bazar area in Adamdighi upazila said mustard is cultivated from the month of Agrabayan to Magh.

Abdul Jabbar Mia of Chandanbaisha village in

Sariakandi union of the upazila said they lost aman paddy during the last flood and mustard cultivation can make up for the loss.

DAE officials said mustard cultivation also benefits the farmers engaged in apiculture.

Deputy Director (DD) of DAE in the district Protul Chandra Sarkar said that Bari-14, Tory-7, and Shompad are hybrid seeds of mustard that have been cultivated mainly in this district and give good yield.

Field level supervision and suggestions for applying fertilizers and insecticides by field level officers of DAE at yard meetings with the farmers have made it possible to reap large amounts of mustard every year, the DD added.

ATTACK ON NASIRNAGAR HINDUS Interrogate accused in jail gate

Court asks police
A CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A court in Brahmanbaria asked the police to interrogate the accused in the attacks on the Hindu community in Nasirnagar at the jail gate, rejecting the prayer by police for a seven-day remand.

Judge Ayesha Begum of the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court in Brahmanbaria passed the order when the police produced former Awami League leader Abdul Ahad before the court, said Court Inspector Md Mahbubur Rahman.

Nasirnagar upazila Awami League former joint secretary Abdul Ahad, also former union parishad chairman, was arrested in connection with the attacks on houses and temples of the Hindu community in Nasirnagar.

Police arrested Ahad from his residence at Ghosh Para yesterday.



A beaming Shykh Seraj videoing scenes of the traditional floating market at Boithakata of Pirojpur.

Boithakata floating market adds spice to life

SHYKH SERAJ

Dear readers, a few days back I went to the southern part of Bangladesh. A floating market in Pirojpur's Boithakata, selling diversified agricultural products including seedlings, and even fuels, on boats, specially attracted my attention.

It was a cold winter day and dense fog made the journey a lot more risky than I had thought. Meanwhile, the ferry came late and we finally started our journey.

We reached Dirgha terminal on Bekar canal. From there we took a small boat to reach Gaokhali canal and took another boat to take a ride on Boithakata floating market.

Finally, at 7:00am in the morning, we reached Boithakata, a unique representation of riverine Bangladesh. Here, the livelihood is deeply connected with the river.

As we go by the boat, we are discovering the farming and crop diversity of this area. From a far away village, a farmer's boat is heading towards Boithakata floating market.

"What is in there?"

"Puffed rice."

"Are these hand-fried?"

"Yes".

Another farmer was crossing my boat. Had a little chat with him as well.

"Hello brother, what are you taking to the market?"

"Bottle gourds."

Looking at the water body with its banks covered with water hyacinth, I felt like going back in time, to an age where rivers were the heart of life and livelihood, serving as people's most effective communication medium.

High and low tides, directly affecting the water level of rivers and canals,

have a profound impact on the lives of people in the area.

"Are these seeds of chilli, brother?" I asked another farmer.

"Yes, they are," he replied.

"Since when are you selling goods in this floating market?" I asked again.

"Since my childhood and now I'm 75 years old," he replied.

"An age-old tradition, truly. I see you're taking eggplants too," I said.

"Yes, I also take eggplant seeds for sale," he replied.

"That's quite interesting. So not

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".



only crops, fruits and vegetables are sold, even the seeds," I said.

"Yes, it's completely a unique and traditional agricultural market on the water," the farmer replied.

However, due to the cold and foggy weather, farmers are getting a little less price than expected.

Since 1962, Boithakata floating market is going on. During the Liberation War of 1971, many people came here as the Pakistani army launched attacks at the central zones. Those people started business at this market and helped to expand gradually.

This floating market doesn't have any structure. Flocks of boats arrive on the river, and the market buzzes with buyers and sellers. By noon, the sale stops and all the boats leave, giving back the river area its usual look. However, maintaining routine, every Saturday and Tuesday, the market starts again here at this same place and time.

Our southern part is filled with nature and life. River here is the centre of all diversity. There are traditional river-centred trade measures in many countries around the world. Australia, China, Thailand, Vietnam, even Myanmar, are running booming tourist trade focusing on river-based markets. Very recently, we had gone to a bordering water village of China's commercial city Shanghai. The thousand-year-old floating village is now a highly attractive place.

I would call out to the government and private institutions to turn the traditional floating market of the south into an agro-tourism aspect.

Dear readers, you all know that some parts of Bangladesh have been recognized as Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems for its traditional farming system in 2015 by FAO and GIAHS steering committee. The reason behind it was Bangladesh farmers had developed unique hydroponics system in which plants can grow on water on floating organic bed of water hyacinth, algae and other plant residues.

Floating market is a traditional market system that utilizes the farmers' resources and skill to sell agricultural goods almost all the year round providing numerous social, economic, agricultural and ecological benefits to the local population. Let our rivers and canals be the true destination of culture, productivity and prosperity.

BSF picks up grocer from Naogaon border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Members of Indian Border Security Force (BSF) picked up a Bangladeshi national from Naogaon's Dhamoirhat upazila yesterday as he mistakenly entered Indian territory while walking along the border.

The victim is grocer Dulal Hossain Mridha, 44, son of late Tayez Uddin of Batpur village in Khetlal upazila of Joypurhat.

Victim's family members said Dulal went to visit his in-laws at Khayerbari village on Tuesday afternoon.

A team of the Indian border guards picked up Dulal while he was walking along the border around 7:00am yesterday, said Lt Col Mohammad Ali Reza, commanding officer of Patnitola BGB 14 Battalion in Naogaon.

BGB sent a protest letter to its Indian counterpart, demanding return of the Bangladeshi national, the CO added.

A school with a vision

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT with ANDREW EAGLE

Dowel school in Lohagara village of Thakurgaon's Pirganj upazila is making genuine efforts to bring qualitative education outcomes to a rural environment. Along with pursuing an engaging and innovative teaching methodology the school aims to promote a wholesome Bangladeshi identity in its students by giving particular emphasis to the nation's history and culture.

The school, which began in a rented house in 2010 and currently caters to about 200 students from nursery to class five, has already earned a good reputation locally, according to villagers. Dowel recently held its first primary terminal exam. "We hope all the students will obtain a satisfactory result," says head teacher Tareq Hossain.

"We follow the style of teaching advocated by Brac's non-formal education programme," says assistant teacher at the school, Shimul Das. "It relies on educative games and songs that students find engaging."

"Our classes are very interesting," says class-three student Tanjila Akhtar. "We play and sing often." The school has a teaching panel dedicated to effective methodology and teachers are enlisted to provide additional tuition to individual students who are weak in any subject.

In addition the school makes special arrangements for national events like International Mother Language Day, Independence Day and Victory Day celebrations; activities that make Dowel stand out among rural schools.

"We organise different programmes to mark national days," says Tareq, "including colourful processions, discussions, competitions like story-telling, painting, reciting and essay writing. Our aim is to enrich the children's understand-

ing of themselves and the nation by drawing from the spirit of the Liberation War and celebrating Bengali culture."

The school authority also observes other Bengali occasions including Choitra Shankranti, Pohela Boishakh, Nobanno Utshab and more.

"The month of December is victory month," notes Tareq, "so, as we do every year, we started to recall the victory from the first day. We made a procession called the 'Bijoy Rally' from our school grounds that wound through village streets. After the rally we explained to the children the importance of victory month to our history. Since then we have held various competitions right through until Victory Day on 16 December."

On the final day, art, recitation and athletic competitions were held, with another procession and discussion about the war.

"These kinds of programmes not only help the children understand the significance of each national day but also serve to remind their guardians and villagers in general as well, so that we can all better understand our roots," says Tareq. "We are fortunate because the school's managing committee encourages us a lot."

"My son Sadman attends Dowel school," says local Ekramul Hoque who works as an assistant teacher at a nearby high school. "The teaching technique at Dowel is excellent; and the extra-curricular activities are invaluable. Not only do the children come to know our heritage but their young minds are being guided towards good. In this age of social menaces like drug addiction and militancy, it can really help them."

School management committee president Mohammad Iqbal expressed hopes the school will be expanded up to class eight, adding that they are thinking to purchase more land for the school but are finding it difficult to raise the money locally.



Students of Dowel School at Lohagara village in Pirganj upazila of Thakurgaon brought out a procession in the village on December 16 to mark the Victory Day.

PHOTO: STAFF