



Students attend a class at the risky building of Ganaka Government Primary School in Chapainawabganj town.

PHOTO: STAR

Man to die for killing girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A court here yesterday sentenced a youth to death for killing a seven-year-old girl after rape in the district in 2012.

Helal Uddin, the judge of Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal, Mymensingh, handed down the verdict after examining witnesses and evidence.

The convict was identified as Md Rafiqul Islam Kajol, 27, son of Abu Bakar Siddique of Churkhai village in Sadar upazila.

The court also fined Rafiqul Tk 1 lakh, said Court Inspector Nowjesh Ali Miah.

According to the prosecution, Sania Akhter, daughter of newspaper hawker Md Chand Mia of Dori Bhabokhai village, went missing around 10:30am on June 23 in 2012.

Chand Miah's wife Rashida Begum told him that their daughter Sania was missing when he returned home around 12:30pm on the day.

As a man of adjacent Nama Bhabokhai area informed Chand the following day that the body of a girl was lying in the jungle of his house, Chand along with his family members rushed to the spot and identified the body.

Police sent the body to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

On suspicion, local people caught Rafiqul and handed him over to police. A case was filed with Kotwali Police Station accusing Rafiqul.

Later, Rafiqul gave a confessional statement before a court that he killed the girl by hitting her on the head after raping and left the body in the jungle.

Special Public Prosecutor Advocate Kabir Uddin Bhuiyan pleaded for the state and Advocate Biswanath Pal for the accused, court sources said.

Classrooms risky, primary school students study in fear

RABIUL HASAN with ANDREW EAGLE

For many young students in Chapainawabganj, attending primary school is a risky business.

Many school buildings feature worn-out roofs, falling plaster and wall cracks, a state of disrepair that leaves students with one eye on textbooks and another on the building around them, fearful of sudden accident. Of 212 government primary school buildings in Sadar upazila, a total of 26 are classified as risky according to the upazila's primary education office.

"I'm really worried about my

child," says one guardian whose son is a student of Gonka Government Primary in Chapainawabganj town. "He doesn't want to attend classes because of the risky classroom. If classes continue to be held in that old building then how will my son ever concentrate on his study?"

Gonka Government Primary School runs classes in two shifts and employs six teachers to cater to around 182 students. It is housed in a one-storied building constructed in 1963. To observe the school's seven rooms is to see plaster fallen off, exposed rusty rods, rising damp

on the walls and dilapidated ceilings. No repair schedule has ever been maintained.

"We have no option but to hold classes in the risky building," says Osman Goni, a teacher at the school. But the structure's condition makes many students as well as teachers afraid, not surprising since chunks of plaster often fall from the ceiling.

The school's head teacher Johra Khatun says Local Government Engineering Department officials visited the school three years ago and declared one of the rooms abandoned back then.

Nowadays all of the rooms are unfit for classes due to cracks developed in the roof. "I have submitted a written petition to the upazila nirbahi officer and primary education officer in this regard," she says.

The upazila's primary education officer Shamim Ahmed Khan agrees they have been informed about the state of the building at the school. "Our office has already sent a proposal to the Local Government Engineering Department to either repair or construct new buildings at all 26 of the upazila's risky primary school sites."

40 cattle die of unknown disease

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

An unknown disease has killed at least 40 cattle in Kaliganj upazila in the last one week, creating panic among the farmers.

Twenty-two cows and 18 goats were killed by the disease at Pashuram village. Panicked cattle farmers have started selling their cattle at low prices in the local markets.

Farmer Hamidul Islam said the affected cattle first start trembling and then the stomach swells up. An affected cow dies within one and a half hours, while a goat dies within 15 to 20 minutes, he added. "I lost two cows and a goat due to the disease," he said, adding that he sold three cows and four goats at low price out of fear of losing those.

Shahjahan Ali said he lost three cows and two goats, adding that he has sent his four cows and six goats to a relative's house in a nearby village.

"My three cows were only my asset, but they died of the disease on Monday night,"

said Alamgir Hossain.

Akhtarul Islam said an unknown disease had broken out for the first time in the village in the middle of February in 2015 and at least 12 cattle died then, adding that the disease returned last year at the same time, and at least 23 cattle died. "The disease has come back at the same time, but it is more serious this year," he said, adding that 40 cattle have already died, and it is continuing.

"We don't know how we will save our cattle from the disease as we are not getting appropriate advice and treatment facilities from livestock officials," said Maminul Islam. "Livestock officials visited our village but they didn't give any advice on how to save our cattle," he added.

Livestock Officer Dr ASM Nasir Uddin Khan said, "We have collected samples from the affected cattle and they have been sent to the laboratory in Dhaka. We suspect it could be food poisoning."

Land acquisition tension grips students

MD AMINUL ISLAM with ANDREW EAGLE

In the shoal areas earmarked for land acquisition to facilitate infrastructure development for the new Mymensingh Division, continuing uncertainty and tension is making it very difficult for local students to concentrate on their studies, including their upcoming Secondary and Higher School Certificate exams.

"Education is an asset for my future, and important in helping me to achieve a decent life," says Ferdous Ahmed Rifat, an SSC examinee from Char Anandipur, one of the affected villages. "For the last four months it's been impossible in our village not to be stressed about the land acquisition process. It's hard to concentrate on my study."

Two other students, Kawsar and

Emdad, say their families are wholly dependent on agriculture and all of their farmland is on the proposed acquisition list. Their parents live in constant fear of eviction, they said, which makes it hard for them to study. It's a situation that prevails across the area. "Where will we go and how will we survive if we are evicted from our ancestral homesteads?" asks Kawsar.

According to local teachers some 200 SSC examinees are among the approximately 5,000 primary to university level students from the affected villages carrying the burden of extra tension that has arisen from the land acquisition process. "The prevailing uncertainty is a curse for students at all levels," says one local teacher. "Their bright futures are undoubtedly being compromised."

For four months protests to save their farms and houses have contin-

ued, with around 20,000 families living in affected areas, most being small-scale farmers and sharecroppers.

Along with Char Anandipur, the villages of Char Gobindapur, Char Ishwardia, Char Bhawanipur, Char Durgapur, Char Jelkhana and Char Laxmir Algi, all within Mymensingh Sadar upazila, are subject to the proposed acquisition.

Locals have urged administration to reconsider the land slated for acquisition to minimise the impact on local communities, with priority being given to using the vast tracts of public land on both sides of the Brahmaputra River before acquisition private landholdings. If the administration implements the proposed acquisition list as it stands, locals lamented, it will be a serious disaster for both human settlements and agriculture.



Homeless freedom fighter Shamser Ali gets red-green house called 'Bir Nibas' at Khatapara in Aditamari upazila in Lalmonirhat.

PHOTO: STAR



A road march of Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal reaches the central Shaheed Minar in Rangpur town yesterday morning, on their way to Teesta Barrage in Lalmonirhat. The two-day programme aims at creating mass awareness and pressing for fair sharing of the water of the Teesta and other rivers flowing to Bangladesh from India.

PHOTO: STAR

BGB jawan found dead in Dinajpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A Border Guard Bangladesh jawan was found dead at his home in Birampur upazila of the district on Wednesday.

The deceased, Al Amin, 26, was posted to BGB-47 Battalion in Kushtia.

Family members said Al Amin went to his room after lunch. As he was not responding to the calls of his family members, they broke into his room and found him hanging from the ceiling.

Police sent the body to Dinajpur Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Officer-in-Charge of Birampur Police Station Moklesur Rahman could not say whether it was murder or suicide.

An unnatural death case was filed with the police station.

Home for homeless war heroes in Lalmonirhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Only one year ago they were homeless and had to live in relatives' houses, but now 26 freedom fighters are living in their own houses in five upazilas of the district.

Their regret at not having their own houses has been removed as they are now proud owners of nice looking red-green Bir Nibas houses. All this has become possible only for the kindness of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, freedom fighters said.

"I was very sad that I and my wife had to live in a relative's house, but now we are very happy as we are living in our own house," said freedom fighter Shamser Ali, 70, of Khatapara village under Aditamari upazila. "I'm a bir (hero) as I fought against the Pakistan occupation army and so, I am proud to live in red-green Bir Nibas," he added.

Freedom fighter Md Atiullah, 69, of Khuniyagachh village in Lalmonirhat Sadar said, "If I didn't get a Bir Nibas house, I and my wife would have to live in relatives' houses forever. We are now living in our own house. It was possible due to the kindness of our Prime

Minister Sheikh Hasina," he said, adding that each house has four rooms.

"Dalil Uddin, 71, of Kashiram village in Kaliganj upazila, said now he sleeps peacefully in his own house. "Even if I do not have enough food to eat I will not worry much, as I have a safe and peaceful house," he added.

Executive Engineer of Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) in Lalmonirhat Al-Amin Khan said Tk 2 crore 24 lakh and 26 thousand were spent to build 26 red-green Beer Nibas houses for 26 insolvent freedom fighters under LGED's Construction of Housing for Landless and Under-Privileged Muktiyoddha Project in the district in the last one year, adding that all the houses have been handed over to freedom fighters.

Commander of District Muktiyoddha Sangsad Mezbah Uddin said landless and homeless freedom fighters were selected to get the government's housing facility, and more of them will get this opportunity in future.

State Minister for Social Welfare Nuruzzaman Ahmed MP said it is a great initiative of the Awami League government to provide housing facility to landless, homeless, under-privileged freedom fighters. As they have brought the country's liberation, they have the right to live in their own houses, he added.