

KALPANA CHAKMA ABDUCTION CASE No-confidence hearing today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

The hearing of no-confidence petition in Kalpana Chakma abduction case will start today.

On January 9, the Court of Rangamati Chief Judicial Magistrate Quazi Mohammed Mohsen fixed the date for the hearing, following a petition filed by Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust seeking judicial inquiry in the abduction case.

Earlier, on November 28 last year, Kalpana Chakma's elder brother Kalindi Kumar Chakma filed a petition rejecting the probe report of the case as the investigation officer had filed the report without identifying any abductor.

Hill Women's Federation in a statement yesterday demanded early steps for justice.

"Over 20 years have passed since the abduction but the investigation officers of the case have failed to identify the criminals. Women in the CHT do not feel safe due to incidents of rape and harassment," said the statement.

Kalpana Chakma, then organising secretary of Hill Women's Federation, was abducted by an armed gang from her Baghaichhari house in Rangamati on the night of June 11, 1996. Since then, she has remained traceless.



Before attending their school in the morning, two girls go to bring drinking water from a tubewell over a kilometre from their home at Padmaruitha village in Pathorghata upazila of Barguna. The people of the coastal area, affected due to massive salinity, are struggling to manage water for drinking and daily chores while the country along with the rest of the world observes World Water Day today.

PHOTO: ARIFUR RAHMAN

Woman killed in row over dues of Tk 20

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A female grocer was killed on Sunday night allegedly by a youth at Yakubpur village in Sadar upazila during a row over payment of dues of Tk 20.

The deceased is Hosne Ara Begum, 55, wife of Abdur Razzak of the village.

Quoting deceased's family members, police said Ismail Hossain, 22, son of Gias Uddin of the village, bought some commodities from Razzak's grocery shop and kept dues of Tk 20 several days ago.

Hosne Ara locked in an altercation with Ismail over payment of the dues which led a scuffle between Ismail and Razzak around 11:00pm, said Belal Hossain of Sadar Police Station.

Ismail hit Hosne Ara on the head with a stick when she tried to save her husband.

Villagers took Hosne Ara to Sadar Hospital where the doctors declared her dead.

Protect Rakhines from land grabbers

Rights activists urge Patuakhali administration

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A local influential gang is erecting tin sheds on the land they allegedly grabbed in Cha-anipara village under Kalapara upazila of the district, affecting at least 10 Rakhine families.

Locals said the gang led by Gazi Shamim, member of the upazila unit of Jubo League, started construction on Friday, and three sheds have already been built.

Community leader of Cha-anipara Ghanshe Matbor filed a complaint regarding the matter with Kalapara Police Station on Saturday, accusing Gazi Shamim, Organising Secretary of the upazila unit of Jatiayatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) Gazi Sumon and activists Gazi Reaz and Gazi Liton. They are relatives, said Chingdamo, son of Ghanshe.

A 13-member team led by prominent human rights activist and President of United National Awami Party Pankaj Bhattacharya visited the area on Saturday. Associate Professor of Mass Communication and Journalism Department of Dhaka University Robayet Ferdouse, Information and Publication Secretary of Parbatya Chattragram Janasanghati Samity Mangal Kumer Chakma, PCJS researcher Pavel Partho, leader of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum Dipayan Khisa and official of Caritas-run project 'Integrated Community Development for Rakhine' Myenthein Promila were in the team.

The team took part in a discussion organised by Caritas at Kalapara upazila auditorium on Sunday, in which local political leaders, public representatives, government officials, journalists and Rakhine people took part. Barisal Regional Director of Caritas Francis Bapari was in the chair.

The speakers urged the local administration to take immediate steps to protect the lands of the Rakhine community from grabbers and get the construction work stopped.

Gazi Shamim said they bought the land from Lusu Matbor, a Rakhine leader, while the other occupiers declined to make any comment on the matter.

Officer-in-Charge of Kalapara Police Station GM Shahnewaz said they visited the spot and stopped the construction work. "We will take appropriate steps in this regard," he added.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer ABM Sadikur Rahman said they are very sincere about protecting the rights of the Rakhine people and trying their best to avail all possible help under various development projects of the government.



A few local influential people are setting structures occupying Rakhine people's land at Cha-anipara in Kalapara upazila under Patuakhali district. Inset, rights activists led by Pankaj Bhattacharya visit the Rakhine-inhabited village on Monday.



PHOTO: STAR

DHARLA RIVER EMBANKMENT WORK BSF assures withdrawal of objection

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) assured their Bangladeshi counterpart that they would withdraw their objection over Dharla river flood protection embankment work after discussing with their higher authority.

Lt Col Golam Morshed (PSC), commanding officer of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) 15 Battalion, said this referring to a flag meeting between the border guards of the two countries held at Mogholhat border in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila on Monday.

About two months ago, BSF stopped the construction work of the embankment near Mogholhat border area, opposite to India's Gidaldah border in Cooch Behar district.

Golam Morshed led the BGB team, while Kamol Bhagat, second-in-command of BSF 124 Battalion, represented the BSF side.

During the flag meeting, they also discussed about increasing patrolling along the border to check smuggling, drugs peddling and other crimes.

Mohammad Al Mamun, sub-divisional engineer of Lalmonirhat Water Development Board (WDB), said the development work of 200-metre Dharla embankment protection got approval at a Joint River Commission meeting in the Indian state of West Bengal on January 20, 2015.

"We stopped the work following a directive from the BGB," he said.

The BGB Battalion chief said, following a protest letter from their Indian counterpart, they directed the WDB officials to stop the construction work.

"The BSF team leader assured us that he would inform his higher authority to withdraw their objection over the construction work," he said.

68 Jamaat men sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

The Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court in the district sent 68 leaders and activists of Jamaat e Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir to jail yesterday.

They were arrested from Kumarkhali and Khoksa upazilas in the district on Monday night. Of them, 65 are from Kumarkhali and three from Khoksa.

Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) in Kushtia Joyntul Abedin said police arrested 65 leaders and activists of Jamaat and Shibir from Dorikomorpur field when they gathered there at about 7:30pm.

Police recovered 20 cocktails, 17 jihadi books and two books of money receipt from them.

"They gathered there with the intention of carrying out subversive activities," the police official said.

The gathering was organised by Kamal Hossain, a Chhatra Shibir leader at Kushtia Islamic University, the ASP said.

Police in Khoksa arrested three Jamaat men, including its upazila unit Ameer Md Abdullah, from a hideout in the upazila at around 10:30pm.

Police also recovered three cocktails.

Hanif

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Demanding a fair investigation into Hanif's death, he said, "There are laws in the country and my brother was not above the laws. If he had committed any offence, he could have been tried and punished. Why has he been killed this way?"

Hanif's friend Sohail Hossain Montu, who was accompanying him at that time, was also picked up and he is still missing. Hanif's family and friends said on Sunday.

Halim filed a general diary with Siddhirganj Police Station on March 4 in this connection, saying that the two were picked up on February 27.

Mufti Mahmud Khan, director of Rab's Legal and Media Wing, claimed on Sunday that Hanif was detained near Rab's Ashkona barrack where a suicide bomber blew himself up.

The suspected bomber, who died instantly, is yet to be identified.

Indomitable Firoz

Born with ineffective hands, he uses mouth to hold pen for writing

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Defying the double challenge of inoperative hands since birth and parents' poverty, Ferdous Alam Firoz has successfully continued his higher study, using his mouth for holding pen to write with.

Firoz, 21, son of Shahab Uddin and Firoza Begum at Dharla River basin Kawamari village of Sreerampur union in Lalmonirhat's Patgram upazila, is now an honour second year student of political science in Patgram Adarsha College.

He achieved good results in Primary School Certificate, School Secondary Certificate and Higher Secondary Certificate HSC examinations.

"My classmates, teachers, and even outsiders look with appreciation when I write using my mouth for holding pen," said Firoz.

"As I can hardly hold anything with my hands, I face serious problem while eating, wearing clothes and bathing. I have to take help of my parents and younger brothers for daily chores. In

the college I get help from my classmates and teachers," he said.

Firoz is the first of four brothers. His younger brothers Khurshid Hossain, Parvez Islam and Fahim Hossain study in HSC, Class IX and I respectively.

Firoz's father Shahab Uddin, a poor farmer, said, "Our son Firoz is physically challenged but we never see any sign of frustration in him. He always encourages his younger brothers to study better."

"We are proud of Firoz. He wants to get higher education but we can't provide necessary support to him due to poverty," said Firoz's mother Firoza Begum.

Mobarak Hossain, 45, a resident of the village, said, "Despite physical challenge, Firoz always wears a smile. He has set an example how one can proceed towards achieving the aim by overcoming challenge."

Firoz is polite in behaviour and good at learning, said his college teacher Rashed Iqbal.

"We hardly see Firoz absent in classes," said his classmate Mashiur Rahman.



Tortured by traffickers

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country two years ago after working as carpenter in Singapore for a couple of years.

Several months into living in the village in Rajibpur upazila of Kurigram, "I realised I would have to go abroad again to be able to feed my two children." One of them is physically challenged.

Abdul then gave his passport and Tk 2 lakh to a manpower broker named Kalam in the village.

About a year later, the broker asked him if he wanted to go to Libya, which would cost him Tk 4 lakh. Abdul then gave him the money from what he had saved while working in Singapore.

"A man called me at night and asked me to come to Dhaka right away to go to Libya. I left home without telling my wife and parents that I was going [to Libya]. I just took a set of clothes in a backpack."



ABDUL HAI

He flew to Libya on November 8 last year.

On reaching Libya, traffickers seized his passport and drove him straight to a desert where he was confined to a tin-roofed structure.

"There was no window. The room was about 250 feet in length, looked like a warehouse."

There was another 15-20 Bangladeshis. The traffickers began beating him the next day and asked him to call home and tell the family to give Harun, a member of the

gang in Dhaka, money for his release.

There was a Bangladeshi named Ismail in Libya. Ismail beat up Abdul and made him talk to Harun and his family members.

"Sometimes when I told them that my family was broke they said they would behead me unless they got some cash."

"There was a small room inside. It was like a jail within a jail. They put me and four other Bangladeshis in that room. They beat us up and made us call home for money," Abdul said.

The traffickers, including Libyans, became increasingly cruel as weeks went by. "There was almost no food; just some boiled potatoes, chilies and salt. I began to stink after weeks without shower. They just gave a large bottle of water for five of us."

"I was knocked out by beatings last Thursday night. Ismail came and woke me up splashing water on my face and said, 'We'll send you home. You got lucky.'"

POLICE'S ROLE IN BRINGING HIM BACK

Harun, one of the gang members behind sending Abdul to Libya, used to contact his family frequently for money. At one point, Harun settled for Tk 4 lakh for Abdul's release.

Harun was recently arrested in a case. Police then came to know about Abdul and the way Harun had blackmailed his family as they answered a call on Harun's phone, said Shahidullah, deputy commissioner of the Detective Branch of police.

Law enforcers then forced Harun to call his gang members in Libya and ask them to send Abdul back.

"We learnt that there are at least 20 more Bangladeshis trapped in the Libyan desert. I hope we will be able to rescue more of them," the DB official said.

Kea parrot

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mischievous, often called "the clown of the mountain". But a paper published in the journal Current Biology on Tuesday argues the bird's playful reputation is not entirely anthropomorphic.

Austrian researcher Raoul Schwing found the kea has a "play call" distinct from its other vocalisations, which caused other parrots to start playing spontaneously.

Schwing, a doctoral student in animal behaviour at Auckland University when the research was conducted, said even birds that were by themselves began playing when they heard the call. "The fact that at least some of these birds started playing spontaneously when no other birds had been playing suggests that, similar to human laughter, it had an emotional effect on the birds that heard it, putting them in a playful state," he said.



Ferdous Alam Feroz with his parents on the premises of their home at Kawamari village of Sreerampur union in Lalmonirhat's Patgram upazila.

PHOTO: STAR