

# Save our life, property from grabbers

## Demand Dalits; say three murders aimed at occupying their land

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Habiganj

Poor people belonging to the Dalit community living on 10 decimals of land at Sutang Bazar in Habiganj Sadar upazila have demanded proper steps for protection of their life and property from land grabbers.

Three murders and several incidents of attacks and rapes were committed by some locals trying to oust them from the land in last eight years, alleged the relatives of slain Sukhia Rabidas.

Sukhia's sister Suma Rabidas filed a case on June 11 against Sailu Mia, 25, son of Abdur Nur of Suroboy village in the upazila and five to six unnamed people on charge of killing her after failed attempt to rape her on June 10 and police later arrested Sailu Mia.

"Sailu and his accomplices often stalked our women. Now Sailu's relatives are threatening me," Suma said.

"Sukhia's husband Monilal Das was murdered eight years ago in the same house. My uncle Arjun Rabidas, 50, president of Bangladesh Rabidas Unnayan Parishad's Habiganj district, was killed in 2013. Shailu Mia is the main accused in the murder case," said Sukhia's cousin Jibon Rabidas.

"Sukhia Rabidas was the main witness in

the two murder cases. She was murdered so that the cases are easily dismissed and it becomes easier to occupy our land," he added.

"It seems that the three murders were committed by those who want to grab the Dalit people's land, which is now very pricey," said a resident of Sutangbazar area seeking anonymity.

OC Md Nazim Uddin of Sayestaganj Police Station said, "Arrestee Sailu Mia, is accused in 18 cases. The case for killing Sukhia Rabidas was transferred to Habiganj DB 16 days ago."

The case is under investigation, said Hosain Khan, OC of Habiganj DB.

Milon Rabidas, central vice-president of Bangladesh Dalit Parishad, said, "Our ancestral lands in different places were secretly recorded in the names of others. It will be difficult for us to survive if the government is not serious about our protection."

Faruq Mahmud Chowdhury, president of Sushasoner Jonno Naborik's Sylhet chapter, has urged the government to take steps for ensuring social, economic and political rights of the Dalit people.



Dalit people gather in front of Habiganj DC office recently demanding punishment of the criminals who killed Sukhia Rani Rabidas on June 10. Inset, a 10-decimal land belonging to the underprivileged community at Sutang Bazar in Habiganj Sadar upazila is apparently the target of some land grabbers.



PHOTO: STAR

## Indian envoy inaugurates Bagerhat puja

A CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Harsh Vardhan Shringla said,

"Religion could be different, the festival is for everyone."

"This is the biggest arrangement of Durga Puja outside Dhaka and I liked it very much," the Indian envoy said while inaugurating the Maha Shashthi Puja at Hakimpur village in Bagerhat Sadar upazila yesterday.

Thanking the organisers, the Indian High Commissioner said Durga Puja is one of the biggest festivals in India and it is celebrated peacefully in Bangladesh as well.

## Elephants create panic

### The animals become impatient to mate during this time of year

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Panic still haunts the villagers after two people were trampled to death by an elephant in Kulaura upazila of the district recently.

The deceased are mahout Goni Mia and Mangal Kharia.

During this time of the year, male elephants become musth, a period of about a month and a half when they are impatient to mate, said Divisional Forest Officer of Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Department Mihir Kumar Doe.

In the musth period, the elephants become angry when they see any people around them, added the forest officer.

Saju Mia, son of deceased Goni Mia, said his father was heading towards his workplace at Marina Tea Garden when suddenly the elephant became angry, grabbed him with its trunk and trampled him to death on Saturday.

On September 3, the same elephant killed Mangal Kharia in Pootichara area.

Local people said after Mangal's death, Moin Uddin, owner of the elephant, agreed to settle the matter with Tk 1 lakh compensation for the deceased's family.

Moin said he employed the animal for carrying logs, adding that he failed to control the elephant as he could not manage any mate for the animal.

## Mason stabbed to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A mason was stabbed to death at Chikna Monohor Digaliapara village in Trishal upazila on Monday.

The victim was Abdul Malek, 32, son of Amiruddin Munshi of the village.

Md Zakiur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Trishal Police Station, said Malek and his neighbour Masud, 30, an alleged drug addict, engaged in an altercation over a trifle matter in front of a grocery shop at the village.

At one stage, Masud stabbed Malek, leaving him critically injured and fled the scene. He later died at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

Police arrested Masud's father Nurul Haque early yesterday. He was then produced before a court that sent him to jail.

The victim's elder brother Abdul Barek filed a case, accusing four people including Masud and his father, said the OC.

## Quell evil power

### Worshippers urge people on Durga Puja

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Focusing on martyrs' dreams with the slogan "Quell the evil power through implementation of the martyrs' dreams," a youth organisation in Pabna town organised Durga Puja beyond the typical festivity.

Like the previous years, Shaheed Poltu Club organised the five-day festival at Gopalpur village and commemorated the martyred freedom fighters in Pabna.

The club started celebrating Durga Puja from the '90s with call to establish communal harmony among people of different religious communities and beyond typical religious festivity, said club President Swapan Saha.

One of the key organisers Pradip Sanyal Gopal said, besides offering prayers to the gods and goddesses, different cultural programmes and children's competition, focusing the spirit of Liberation War, will be held on the club premises.

Idris Ali Bishwas said the villagers, irrespective of religion, contributed to organising the Durga Puja every year.

On October 14, 1971, Pakistani army caught Poltu and his two friends -- Matiur Rahman and Abdul Mannan -- while they were going for an operation. Later, they killed the three freedom fighters.

## Man held for killing wife

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Police arrested a man yesterday on charge of killing his wife in Nasirnagar upazila of the district on Monday.

The dead was Razia Khatun, 45, wife of Motiur Rahman of Gutma village. She was mother of nine children.

Police and family sources said arrestee Motiur and Razia engaged in an altercation over a family issue around 10:00pm.

At one stage, Motiur hit Razia on the head with an iron rod, leaving her dead on the spot.

During primary interrogation, Motiur confessed to killing his wife, police said.



A farmer works at his floating seedbed of Jalalpur village in Kotiadi upazila under Kishoreganj.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

# Floating seedbeds a win for Kishoreganj farmers

MD AMINUL ISLAM with ANDREW EAGLE

Sometimes the best technology comes from the past. Floating seedbeds are a traditional agricultural method used in parts of Barisal for many generations. Recently the farming system has been introduced to Kishoreganj. There, farmers in the haor wetland areas are struggling to cope with unusually high water levels resulting from this year's flooding. Floating seedbeds are proving invaluable in helping farmers to adapt.

"I have prepared two floating seedbeds," says Mollick Mia, a farmer from Sekepara village in Kotiadi upazila. "It cost around Tk 1,000 to carry the mud for the beds. I have planted vegetables and so far the seedlings are healthier than the ones grown in the usual way."

Landless farmer Fayez Uddin from Chang Sholaki village in Kishoreganj Sadar upazila has also adopted the system. "I started with a floating vegetable garden this year," he says, "and the vegetables are growing really well."

The benefits of floating seedbeds are potentially even greater with

respect to Aman rice crops. In the haor areas it is often difficult for farmers to prepare regular seedbeds in time for the Aman season, due to excess water. The floating beds, made of banana plants, mud and rotten hyacinth have the potential to ensure Aman seedlings are ready for transplanting in time, when regular paddy fields are no longer fully submerged.

"Aman saplings are in high demand in Kishoreganj," says farmer and neighbour, Dulal Mia.

"These could also be grown commercially on the floating seedbeds for good profits."

"With the support of agriculture department officials," says Mongol Mia, another farmer from Kotiadi upazila, "I am thinking of trying cultivation of Aman rice as well as vegetables on floating seedbeds from next year."

According to the Department of Agriculture Extension, as many as 67 Kishoreganj farmers across eight upazilas have prepared 146 floating seedbeds this year, with Aman seeds

provided for free under the environment ministry's 'Climate Change Agriculture' project.

The seedlings grown on floating beds take only twenty days to be ready for transplanting, a process that would require up to thirty days in a regular farm field.

"During the rainy season farmers in Kishoreganj usually have very little work," says Kotiadi upazila's sub-assistant agriculture officer Mohammad Moezuddin. "The floating beds have changed that. They are being used to grow vegetables and spices prior to the Aman paddy season, and because the hyacinth in the beds is good manure, farming on floating seedbeds does not require chemical fertiliser."

"Floating seedbeds have commercial potential in flood-prone areas right across greater Mymensingh," says Dilruba Yasmin, the agriculture officer in Kishoreganj Sadar upazila. "This technology could provide work for many landless farmers and other unemployed locals."

## Female Neo JMB member arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Police arrested a female member of Neo JMB from Mahishakundo village in Sadar upazila yesterday.

The arrestee is Rubina Khatun, 28, wife of militant Abdullah, who killed himself with a suicide vest during a raid by Rab at Bazrapur village in Moheshpur upazila in May.

Officer-in-Charge of Sadar Police Station Emdadul Haque Sheikh said, acting on a tip-off, police raided Mahishakundo village around 4:30am and arrested Rubina.

Rubina went into hiding soon after her husband's demise.

# Polythene sheet to protect students from rain

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At least 100 primary school buildings in Barguna are in bad shape due to lack of renovation for long, worrying the guardians and teachers about the safety of their children as some of the structures may collapse any time.

Dakkhin Amtali Adarsha Government Primary School in Amtali upazila began its journey in 1988 in a tin-shed. A one-story building with four rooms was built there in 1995-96 fiscal year at a cost of Tk 5.95 lakh.

The building has become unfit for use as it has not been renovated since its construction. Plaster from the walls and ceiling has dropped off and the iron rods have become exposed. Rainwater from the roof enters the rooms, damaging the books of the students. Even official papers and documents are also being damaged due to rain.

During a recent visit to the school, this correspondent found that polythene sheets had been hung under the ceiling to prevent

rainwater from falling into the room.

Kakoli, a Class V student, said they have to suffer a lot as rainwater enters their classroom while another student Siam said they are always worried that the building may collapse any time.

Guardian Belal Gazi said condition of the school building is very bad and a new building is badly needed considering the interest of the students.

Acting Headmaster Md Omar Faruq said the building is unfit for use, but they have to continue activities in it as there is no alternative.

Amtali Upazila Primary Education Officer Md Majibur Rahman said at least 36 school buildings in the upazila need renovation. Wapda Government Primary School and Begum Nurjahan Government Primary School in the upazila are running under tin-sheds, he added.

Barguna Primary Education Officer Md Majid Mia said 100 out of 814 primary school buildings in the district are in very bad shape.



Large polythene sheets are set under the ceiling of a classroom at Dakkhin Amtali Adarsha Government Primary school in Amtali upazila of Barguna as rainwater often seeps through the damaged structure.

PHOTO: STAR