

12-year-old raped, 2 held in Naogaon

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Dinajpur

Police yesterday arrested two men on charge of raping a 12-year-old girl in Sapahar upazila of Naogaon.

The arrestees are Noresh Chandra Sarkar 35, son of Jogendra Sarkar, and Anwar Hossain, 35, son of late Golam Mondal. They hail from Haripara village.

Victim's father filed a case under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act on Tuesday night with Sapahar Police Station, accusing the duo.

According to the FIR, the incident took place on Monday. Family members said the girl was returning home at sunset from her friend's house when Noresh and Anwar took her to a nearby paddy field and raped her.

Locals rescued the girl and took her to Sapahar Upazila Health Complex. Police sent the girl to Naogaon General Hospital for a medical test yesterday.

80 structures on rly land demolished

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Chapainawabganj

The railway authorities yesterday demolished at least 80 illegal structures and other establishments on its land in Chapainawabganj municipality.

Divisional Estate Officer of Pakshi Division Younus Ali with the help of police and local administration launched the drive in Mahadanga area.

Younus Ali, also the executive magistrate, said grabbers set up the illegal structures, mostly houses, on seven acres of railway land.



Traders sort out their betel nuts at a wholesale market in Narail's Lohagara upazila.

PHOTO: MOHSIN MILON

Betel nut cultivation a blessing for Narail farmers

MOHSIN MILON with ANDREW EAGLE

Ten years ago, commercial production of betel nut in Narail was a small-scale affair. But good demand and healthy market prices, combined with the relative quality of Narail's betel nut crop, have encouraged more farmers to grow it. Currently around 2000 seasonal areca businessmen are active in the district, with markets for the nut to be had across the country.

"Since my father's time we have had betel nut palms around

our house," says farmer Noyon Sheikh from Aarendra village in Lohagara upazila. "Seven years ago, we planted betel nut palms on a further 22 acres. Some of those produced nuts from last year; this year almost all the trees are productive. It costs around Tk 17,000 to manage the plantation, but I hope to make around Tk 1.1 lakh from betel nut sales."

"Every twenty nuts sells for up to Tk 250," says Zainul Abedin, a local betel nut trader. "I buy them from various markets and farmers across Narail district and sell the nuts to other wholesalers from

elsewhere in the country. The profits are good."

"I have been trading betel nuts in Narail for fourteen years now," says a visiting businessman, Nowsher Ali from Charbari village in Lakshimpur's Raipur upazila. Every season he purchases more than fifteen truck-loads of the nut from Narail, he says.

According to the agriculture department, 645 hectares in Narail is currently dedicated to commercial areca production, with a harvest target set at 1,735 tonnes. Betel nut is also grown for

household consumption.

Commercial plantations are best established in dry soil from July to October, with new saplings producing nuts after around seven years, with trees productive for up to forty years thereafter. A tree will produce up to 500 nuts per year. The peak harvest season runs from September through to November.

Local farmers report that betel nut palms are not expensive to grow in comparison with other crops. While the first few years from planting are a little trying, principally in protecting saplings

from being eaten by grazing cattle, after that the trees are largely maintenance-free. A little fertilizer will help young betel nut palms, and some application of pesticide can prevent insect attack when the arecas are producing nuts.

"Narail's soils are rather suited to betel nut production," says the deputy director of the district's Department of Agriculture Extension, Sheikh Aminul Haque. "As the crop is profitable, many farmers are now establishing gardens on previously fallow land."

Youth shot dead by BSF

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Lalmorirhat

A Bangladeshi youth was gunned down by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) near Burimari border under Patgram upazila of the district early yesterday.

The BSF members then picked up the body and did not hand it over as of filing of this report around 4:00pm.

The victim, Faridul Islam Farid, 21, son of Shamsul Islam, was a resident of Ambari village in the upazila.

Subedar Abdul Baten, commander of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) Burimari Camp, said a patrol team of BSF 61 Battalion from BS Bari Camp opened fire on Farid while he was illegally crossing the border around 4:30am.

A company commander level flag meeting was held on the zero line of the border yesterday noon where BGB strongly protested the killing. Acting Commanding Officer of BGB 61 Battalion Major Mohammad Hasan said.

Charge sheet in Gomez murder case submitted

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Natore

Police yesterday submitted charge sheet before Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court in Natore, accusing 12 people in Sunil Gomez murder case.

Of the charge sheeted accused, seven were killed in different drives of law enforcing agencies.

Superintendent of Police Bijoy Biplob Talukder said Detective Branch of police placed the charge sheet.

On June 5 last year, Sixty-year-old Sunil Gomez, a Christian grocer, was hacked to death by unknown assailants in Baraiagram upazila of the district.

BID TO RAPE GIRL

Arbitrators come to the aid of accused!

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Violating court order, chairman and members of Dighi Union Parishad and some local elites arranged an arbitration where a youth, who allegedly tried to rape a schoolgirl, was fined Tk 2.5 lakh.

It was held at Bhatbaur village in Sadar upazila on November 10. UP chairman Motin Molla presided over the village arbitration.

Rakib Hossain, younger brother of accused Nobin Hossain, 35, said they gave Tk 1.50 lakh to the chairman on Monday. The rest of the money will be given after some days, he said.

However, the victim's grandfather said they did not take any money. They want trial of the culprits after proper investigation.

On October 31, Nobin, son of Ansar Uddin Kalachan, tried to rape the tenth grader. Hearing screams, locals rushed to the spot and caught Nobin red handed and beat him.

AL leader gets 17 yrs RI for keeping arms

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Tangail

A court here yesterday sentenced a local Awami League (AL) leader to 17 years' rigorous imprisonment in an arms case.

Tangail First Additional District and Sessions Judge Abul Mansur Miah handed down the verdict against Saiful Islam Talukder Suruj, 50, general secretary of Gupalpur upazila unit of AL, in absentia.

According to the prosecution, a team of Detective Branch (DB) of Police arrested Suruj with a foreign-made pistol and four bullets from his house at Nandanpur village in the upazila on August 4, 2016.

Suruj, an accused in several cases, including one for extortion, remained absconding after he was freed on bail on October 6.



Members of different organisations lit candles at Kalapara Press Club yesterday, recalling Sidr victims. The super cyclone hit the coastal areas in Patuakhali and Barguna on November 15 in 2007, killing at least 2022 people and damaging thousands of houses.

PHOTO: STAR

JUNE 13 LANDSLIDE

Collapsed bridge yet to be repaired

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

People of Kolabagan village in Kaukhali upazila of the district are suffering as a bridge that partially collapsed in a landslide on June 13 has not been repaired yet.

On a visit to the spot two weeks ago, this correspondent saw that a 75-foot section of the bridge over Kolabagan canal in Ghagra union had collapsed.

Immediately after the bridge broke down, the villagers voluntarily made a temporary bamboo bridge over the broken section.

More than 150 families of the village use this bridge every day with difficulty. A government primary school is situated near it. During the rainy season, around 20 students and villagers were injured while crossing the bridge.

Executive Engineer of Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB) Mohammad Mujibul Alam said the 150-foot-long and 6-foot-wide bridge was built in the 2005-2006 fiscal year at a cost of around Tk 1.5 lakh.

Headmaster of Kolabagan Government Primary School Jasmine Chakma said most

of the students come to school by crossing the bridge. The authorities should set up a new bridge as soon as possible, she added.

A Class V student at the school Muhammad Azizul Haque said he feels afraid when he crosses the bridge every day as some of his schoolmates were injured while crossing it.

Students Mita Chakma of Class II, Suman Chakma of Class III and Israt Jahan Mim of Class II said they cross the bridge with the help of their teacher.

Japan Chandra Chakma, 45, a villager, said there are about 150 families in Kolabagan village and their livelihood depends on the bridge as they use it to carry their produce and goods to the markets.

Ghagra Union Parishad Chairman Jogodish Chakma said he informed the CHTDB authorities about the broken bridge, but it is yet to get a response.

The executive engineer of CHTDB said they have submitted a letter to the higher authorities for repairing the bridge. They may get allocation in the next fiscal year and can start building a new one, he added.



People crossing the collapsed bridge at Kolabagan village in Ghagra union under Kaukhali upazila of Rangamati. The photo was taken two weeks ago.

PHOTO: STAR