

7 shot as AL factions clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Munshiganj

At least seven people were shot and two others were injured in a clash between two factions of Awami League (AL) at Amghata village in Sadar upazila yesterday.

Of the injured, bullet-hit Liza, 30, Mim 15, Khaleda Akter, 35, Falan, 35, Sajal Hossain and two unidentified people were admitted to Munshiganj General Hospital and then referred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital while the rest were treated locally.

Although police recovered a foreign-made gun from the spot, but could not arrest anyone.

Police said the clash took place between the supports of Mollakandi Union Parishad Chairman Mohsina Haque Kalpana and former chairman Ripon Patwari over establishing supremacy in the locality.

During the clash, they fired gunshots, blasted 100 crude bombs and vandalised several houses.

Youth found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Faridpur

The body of an unidentified youth, age about 25, was recovered from the river Kumar in the town yesterday.

Informed by locals, police recovered the body kept in a sack around 12:00 noon and sent it to Faridpur Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

The reason behind the death could not be known immediately, said Officer-in-Charge of Faridpur Sadar Police Station Md Najim Uddin.



The historic theatre at Bangladesh Railway's MT Hossain Institute ground at Babupara in Lalmonirhat town faces eviction threat as attempts are on to relocate LCCI Model School and College to the venue.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

Historic theatre at risk of eviction

S DILIP ROY with ANDREW EAGLE

Regular patrons of cultural events, along with performers in Lalmonirhat town, are in anguish over the likely loss of the historic theatre located on the Railway MT Hossain Institute grounds, in the town's Babupara area. They accuse the Lalmonirhat Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) of land grabbing, with plans to relocate the LCCI Model School in a new building to be constructed on the theatre site. The new school building's foundation stone has already been laid.

The theatre, for most of its history maintained by the West Zone Railway, was constructed on three acres of railway land in 1905. Initially called the Pears Institute, the theatre's current name was adopted in

1934. Due to its revolving stage and circle gallery seating, the theatre stood out as an important cultural venue in South Asia. It has hosted innumerable events over the years, celebrating the works of the Subcontinent's poets and authors as well as hosting plays and musical events. Until 1983 the theatre regularly held cultural discussions too, attracting participants from neighbouring countries.

"We still dream that the theatre can be renovated to save this unique venue for our performing arts heritage," says cultural activist Sayeed Taherul Islam Sufi. "Last year the director general of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy visited the premises and expressed a similar sentiment."

Locals state that wood, iron rods and bricks have already been pilfered from the theatre,

and now, they allege, it looks as if the LCCI is making a serious effort to grab the land.

"The LCCI Model School had occupied congested premises on Thana Road since 2010," says Quamrul Hasan Bakul, the chamber's president. "We want to relocate the school on currently abandoned railway land, in the greater interest of education."

He says that they have no valid document supporting any claim to the theatre site, but have taken verbal permission from railway estate officials; and that they are as yet trying to obtain documentary approval from railway authorities. "If formal permission is not forthcoming, we will not use the land," he adds.

The West Zone Railway's divisional estate officer in Lalmonirhat, Rezowanul Haque, refuted the claim that any verbal

permission concerning land use has been given to the LCCI. "In fact, we cautioned the LCCI not to attempt to relocate to the Institute's land," he says, adding that senior railway officials have inspected the theatre venue recently.

"The railway hasn't had the budget to maintain the historic site since 1983," Rezowanul admits. "But senior railway officials are considering taking steps to renovate it. There is no scope for a school or any other institution to be established on that land."

Nonetheless the town's literary and performing arts supporters want the matter clearly resolved in the theatre's favour. They urge the concerned railway and Shilpakala Academy authorities to ensure the historic theatre is preserved.

RUPA RAPE, MURDER Deposition of witnesses begins

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Tangail

A court here yesterday started recording deposition of witnesses in the case for gang raping and killing law student Rupa Khatun in a moving bus on August 25.

Aminul Islam, sub-inspector of Aronkhola Police Outpost in Tangail's Madhupur upazila, gave his statement before the court of First Additional District and Sessions Judge Abul Mansur Miah, also acting judge of Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal.

The court also fixed January 7 and 8 for recording deposition of the other eight witnesses.

Lawyers of the state side put attendance of nine prosecution witnesses before the court.

Police recovered Rupa's body in Tangail's Madhupur on August 25.

Housewife kills self

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Dinajpur

A housewife in Khansama upazila of the district committed suicide yesterday, allegedly after learning about her husband's extra-marital affairs.

The woman, Lata Akter, 19, wife of Sohel Rana of Kanchia-Shahpara in Khansama, locked her living room from inside. As she did not respond to calls, relatives broke open the door at noon and found her hanging from the ceiling," police quoted witnesses as saying.

Health complex in poor health

Patients, staff fear building collapse

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Physicians, patients and staff of Galachipa Upazila Health Complex in the district are worried that the old building might collapse any time as it has become unfit for use due to lack of repair work.

Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Md Monirul Islam said a two-storey building was built for the 31-bed health complex in 1992, and was later upgraded to 50-bed hospital on November 29 in 2005.

The Health Engineering Department built a two-storey building beside the old building in 2000. The women and children's wards were kept in the old building while the administrative and outdoor facilities were shifted to the new building.

The health complex is providing service in the old building at great risk. Chunks of plaster from the roof and walls often fall off and rods have become exposed in many places of the building.

Rahima Begum, 45, of Borobaisdia village in Rangabali upazila said she came to the health complex with her grandson, who is suffering from respiratory disease and fever, and is staying in the corridor.

"We are always worried as plaster

from the roof falls on the floor," she said.

Masud Alam, relative of a patient who is under treatment in the corridor, said they are afraid the building might collapse any time.

Nadira Begum of Kawkhali village said she came here with her son as there is no health complex in Rangabali upazila, adding that they are living in fear as the building is in a very bad shape.

Around 90 patients take treatment in the health complex daily. There are only 13 physicians for 39 doctors' posts and the rest have been lying vacant for around two years, the health and family planning officer said.

They are trying their best to provide service in the health complex but they and the patients remain anxious as the building is in a very bad shape, he added.

"We sent several letters to the higher authorities concerned seeking immediate steps for renovation of the building," Monirul said.

Health Engineering Department Assistant Engineer Md Masudul Alam said the old building should be renovated and they have informed the higher authorities about the matter.

"We can start renovation of the building after getting allocation," he added.



Galachipa Upazila Health Complex in Patuakhali is in a very bad condition, putting the patients, doctors and staff under threat of collapse. The photo was taken a few days ago.

PHOTO: STAR

RMG owner's agro initiative

Harun-ur-Rashid does farming of fish, cattle, poultry, organic fruits and vegetables – all in the same compound

SHYKH SERAJ

Welcome to the New Year, another year with new hope and promise. At the very beginning of this New Year, I visited Narayanganj's Dashergaon village, very famous for its agricultural heritage. The very first article of the New Year is about the success story of an entrepreneur, a businessman who has done fabulously well in farming sector. A few months back, I met Harun-ur-Rashid, a garments industry owner, who is doing rooftop farming over his industry building. Back then, he said he also has an integrated farm and that is gradually growing. I was really eager to visit his farm and met him for the second time. He started his farm out of passion for farming. He has great love for trees and nature. His farm is located beside the Shitalakkha river, where he's growing various kinds of crops, vegetables, fruits, fisheries, poultry,



Harun-ur-Rashid beside one of the five ponds at his 35-bigha integrated agricultural farm at Dashergaon village in Narayanganj.

many other crops," added Harun. He's earning pretty well from turkeys and goats.

In modern system, poultry farming, especially in Europe, is not done in closed cages. They have sheds. However, they are brought out of the shed during the day time to roam around freely in an open space. This is the main condition of poultry farming in the developed world. They are not kept captive. They are allowed to grow naturally.

They spend the whole day in an open space surrounded by net. They return to the shed after sunset. There was a time when poultry farming was done in closed cages. Even now, in some places of the world, they are raised like that. However, in the developed world, it is not like that anymore. It's amazing to see that Harun is doing it the same way and his poultry chicken have grown much bigger and look fresh due to this freedom of roaming.

On this side of the farm, I could notice fruit trees and pond.

"How many ponds do you have?" I asked Harun ur Rashid.

"Five and all of those are used for commercial purpose now," he replied.

Seeing another shed, I asked him, "What's the shed for?"

"Cows, fifty of them are there," he said.

"I'm also rearing some following beef fattening method," he added.

Harun-ur-Rashid also has a

mango orchard which is also giving him money during the season.

In his cow farm there are ten people working. He also has the great Brahman breed, which is famous for its meat. You probably have read the article in The Daily Star I wrote about Brahman. Harun is giving all his cows natural feed, no chemicals are used.

For the last four or five years, Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute (BLRI) has been trying to develop the Brahman breed. It is an ancient breed of Indian subcontinent. Later, it went to the USA. Harun ur Rashid is getting 50 maunds of milk and also has beef breed for meat in his cowshed. Moreover, he uses organic manure as fertilizer throughout his farm area which means each and every product in his farm is grown through absolutely organic method.

"I use the cow dung for agriculture. I store them in places and leave them to dry. I don't use any chemical fertilizer," boldly said Harun.

He has gourd, bean, arum, US bread pumpkin, grapefruit, mango, jackfruit, rambutan from Thailand, banana and many more. Besides growing all these vegetables organically, he's using the most modern pheromone traps across the farm.

I have also visited his fish farm. It's big and amazing.

"Your TV programmes since the 80s are my key inspiration; you are like my Guru," said Harun.

Harun has an amazingly diversi-

fied taste. He's also cultivating flowers. He has Amazon lily, gerbera, and many more.

His huge ponds have rui, katla and many other fishes. Their size is pretty big and he has dug these five ponds over 21 bighas of land and earns Tk 22 lakh a year.

Harun's 1,500 employees at the garments industry regularly buy agro-products from his farm at a very reasonable price, which was really great to learn.

"I'm calling out the big industrialists to join in farming beside their main businesses. By doing so, they can earn additional money with their intelligence and efforts and have peace of mind as well," says Harun ur Rashid, one of the most visionary entrepreneurs I have met thus far.

Dear readers, the opportunity of development and prosperity lies everywhere. Everyone can be productive in his/her courtyard. There are many garments industry owners like Harun-ur-Rashid in this country. However, only a few has such multipurpose farming activity. The love he has for agriculture is the ultimate peace he gets in return. And that is most important. The gift of nature always makes him grateful. I believe, following the footsteps of Harun, other industrialists will gradually get themselves involved in farming alongside any industrial trade, growing fresh fruits and vegetables, which will also play a great role in their commercial prosperity.