



The body of a victim of Friday's truck accident at a Cumilla brick kiln being taken to a crematorium at Mirganj village in Jaldhaka upazila of Nilphamari yesterday. Right, grieving relatives at the crematorium site.

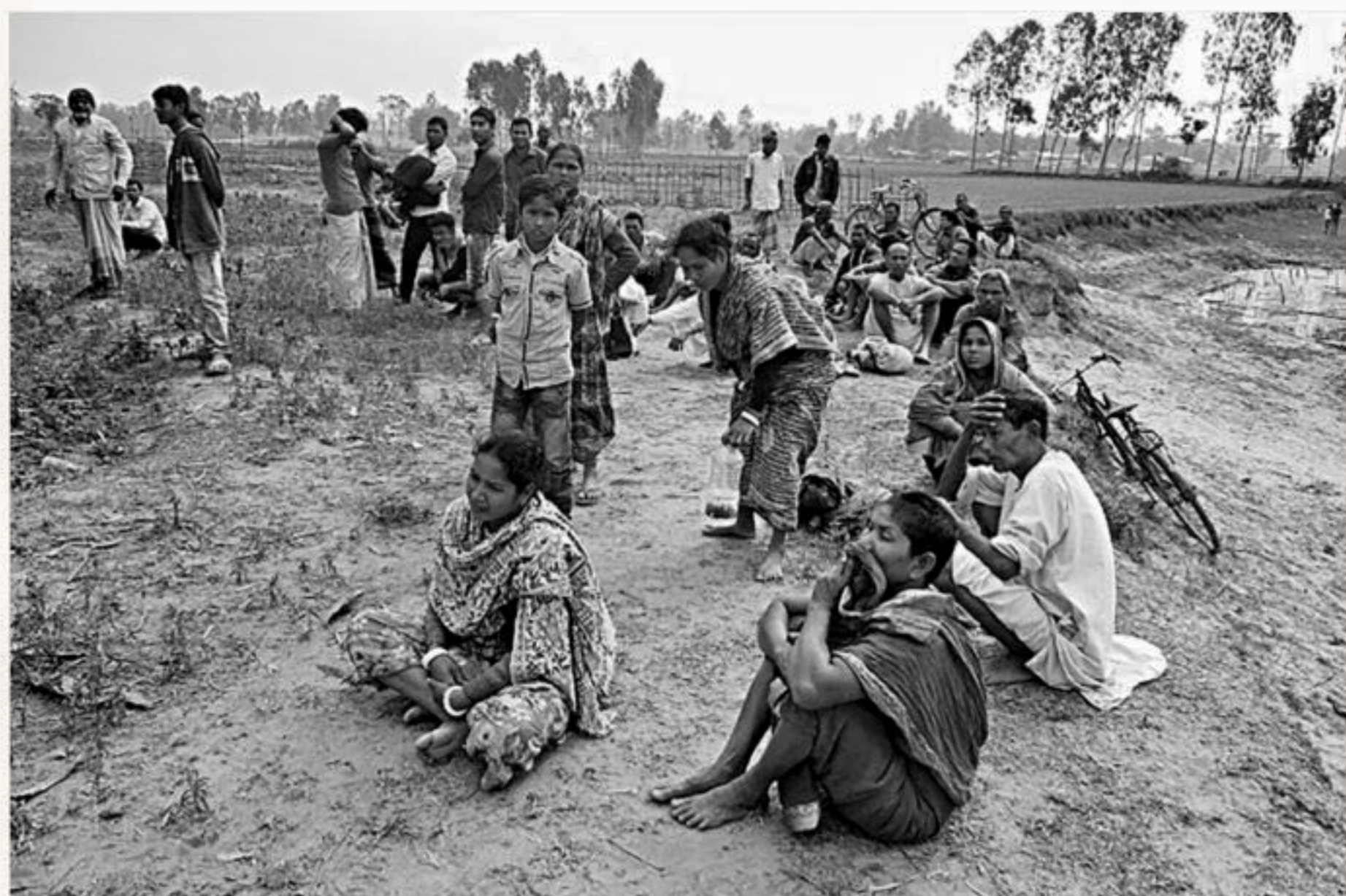


PHOTO: STAR

CUMILLA BRICK KILN TRAGEDY

Nilphamari villagers bid farewell to victims

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Amid tears and grief, people of Mirganj and Shimulbari unions in Jaldhaka upazila yesterday bade farewell to 13 workers, who were killed in their sleep when a coal-laden truck flipped over on a makeshift shed at a brick kiln in Cumilla early Friday.

Of the victims, mostly in their tender ages, 10 belonging to the Hindu community were cremated at two local crematoriums while the three Muslims were buried at their village graveyard.

Earlier in the morning, a covered-van, carrying the coffins containing the dead bodies, reached Jaldhaka Upazila Parishad premises after Cumilla district administration arranged the transporta-

tion, following completion of their autopsies on Friday evening.

The bodies were later handed over to victims' family members at Karnamoyee Government Primary School premises in presence of Nilphamari Deputy Commissioner Nazia Shirin and Jaldhaka Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mohammad Sujaudoula.

Later, out of the 10 Hindu victims, six were taken to Mirganj crematorium while four others, including Bikash Chandra, 28, and Kanak Chandra, 34, were cremated at Laxmimarai crematorium in Shimulbari union.

Meanwhile, the three Muslim victims--Morsalin, Masum and Selim--were buried

at Pathanpara graveyard in Mirganj union.

Headmaster of Mirganj High School Mostafizur Rahman said five of the victims-- Class IX students Tarun Chandra, 16, and Biplob Chandra, 15, and Class X students Proshanto Roy Dipu, 16, Amit Chandra, 19, and Selim, 15--were regular students of his school.

Besides, two Class X students of Shimulbari SC High School Monoranjan Roy, 17, and Mrinal Chandra, 15, were killed in the tragic accident, Headmaster Jyotish Chandra Roy said.

Authorities of both the schools yesterday hoisted black flags in the school compound and suspended their classes in honour of the victims.

A pall of gloom descended on the area when tearful Janakibala, 40, mother of Shankar, 17, was trying to touch her son during his cremation.

"I did the toughest task carrying my son's body on my shoulder today," Biplob's father Ram Proshad said.

In Cumilla, police filed a case against the truck driver and helper in connection with the death of 13 brick kiln workers due to their negligence, reports our correspondent.

Deceased Ranjit's brother Sanjit Roy filed the case with Chaudagram Police Station on Friday midnight, Inspector (Investigation) Shuvo Ranjan Chakma of the police station said.

Prisoners shifted to new jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Yesterday, prisoners were shifted from the old jail, established in Pirojpur town in 1918, to the new jail beside Pirojpur-Nazirpur road at Khumuria village under Pirojpur municipality.

The new jail is situated on 9.5 acres of land. It has capacity of holding 450 prisoners -- 420 male and 30 female.

Pirojpur Public Works Department built it at a cost of Tk 39.39 crore. Its construction work began in July 2011. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the new jail on November 1 last year with some other development works through a video conference.

The old jail had capacity to accommodate only 177 prisoners, but there would be more than twice the number in the jail all the year round.

"We have successfully completed shifting the prisoners to the new jail from the old one under high security," said Pirojpur Jail Superintendent Md Shamim Iqbal.

BGB detains 9 people from B'baria border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) detained nine Bangladeshi nationals from Salda Nadi border area in Kasba upazila of the district early yesterday while they were returning from India without valid documents.

Though they were detained in the early hours, BGB confirmed it to the journalists after handing the detainees over to police in the afternoon.

Lance Nayek Md Abdur Rahim of Salda camp of BGB 60 Battalion said two males, four females and three children were detained, adding that a case was filed against them with Kasba Police Station.

All the detainees hail from Baniachong upazila of Habiganj.

BGB also detained Khokon Mia, son of Alfaz Mia of Putia village under Bayek union of the upazila, on charge of helping the detainees to go to India illegally.



The lone child hospital at Charlaxmipur in Rajbari municipality has remained inoperative for over one year as there is no doctor posted there.

LACK OF DOCTORS

Rajbari's lone child hospital lies unused

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

The lone children's hospital in Rajbari has remained inoperative for the last one year and four months due to shortage of doctors, much to the suffering of child patients of the district.

"Rajbari Municipality Children Hospital under Rajbari municipality was established in 1996 at Charlaxmipur area. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare appointed one doctor for the hospital in 1998 and Rajbari municipality provided two staff to help the doctor. The municipality paid the salary of the doctor. At least 50 to 60 patients from different areas of the district usually came here daily to take treatment there. But the hospital has remained inoperative since the doctor left in September 2017," a Rajbari municipality official said.

During a visit to the one-storied hospital, this correspondent saw that the building had four rooms. One of the doors is broken and the three others are locked, while the windows are broken.

Locals said one room is used by Surjer Hashi Clinic for medical service on Tuesday every week. The two staff who helped the doctor, joined the health department of the municipality as the doctor left the hospital, they added.

"Rajbari Municipality Children

Hospital is the only child hospital in our district, so many child patients from different areas of the district came here for treatment. We urge the hospital authorities to appoint a doctor as soon as possible," said Aktaruzzaman, 35, a resident of Charlaxmipur area.

"We have been deprived of getting treatment from the hospital. It was very helpful for poor people as they got treatment at low cost," said Sriti Roy, 55, another resident of the same area.

"This hospital is only for children, but now all children patients have to go Rajbari General Hospital or Faridpur to get treatment, which increases their suffering," said Azaz Ahmmad of the same area.

"The doctor of this hospital is appointed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the municipality pays the salary of the doctor, but there has been no doctor for the last one year and four months. We have sent a letter to the ministry concerned to appoint a doctor for the hospital as soon as possible," said Mohammad Ali Chowdhury, Mayor of Rajbari Municipality.

"There is a shortage of doctors in Rajbari General Hospital, so we cannot appoint a doctor of that hospital to give treatment at the children's hospital," said Rajbari Civil Surgeon Rahim Box.

WDB worker dies in river

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

A man working at a Bangladesh Water Development Board (WDB) site died after falling into the Kacha river in Bhandaria upazila yesterday.

The deceased, Chapal Halder, 23, hailing from Charkhali village in the upazila, was dumping concrete blocks into the river at Nadmula village with a forklift from a barge when he accidentally fell into the river with the forklift, witnesses said.

Concrete blocks are being dumped on the banks of the Kacha river for building an embankment under Coastal Embankment Improvement Project.

A rescue team of Fire Service and Civil Defence from Barishal recovered Chapal's body from the river in the afternoon.

Drug peddler held with arms

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Detectives arrested an alleged drug peddler with a pipe gun from Khoyrakuri area in Haluaghat upazila early yesterday.

The arrestee was Al Amin Alam, 30, son of Md Abdul Mannan of Bhalukakura village in Haluaghat.

Police also recovered a pipe gun and a cartridge from his possession, said Shah Kamal Akanda, OC of Detective Branch of Police in Mymensingh.

Alam was handed over to Haluaghat Police Station. He was produced before the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court in Mymensingh, which sent him to jail, said OC of the police station Jahangir Alamgir Talukder.



A farmland lies bereft of topsoil as a brick kiln owner extracted earth with an excavator for making bricks at Pashchim Baniary village in Nazirpur upazila of Pirojpur. Inset, dust from a road causes nuisance for the locals as trucks carrying bricks regularly ply the road.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Brick kiln depletes topsoil, poses health hazard

HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

A brick kiln in Pashchim Baniary area under Nazirpur upazila has been causing suffering to the villagers for years, but local administration and law enforcers have not taken any steps to stop the nuisance.

The kiln was set up by Chitalmari Upazila Parishad (UP) Chairman Mollah Mujibor Rahman Shamim around ten years ago, occupying lands of villagers, locals alleged.

Shamim's men forcibly collect topsoil from croplands of farmers to use in the kiln. If anybody protests, Shamim and his cohorts harass and torture the protestor.

Besides, the smoke emitted by the low-height chimney pollutes the environment round the clock, creating health hazards and affecting crop production.

Villagers filed complaints with the deputy commissioner (DC), superintendent of police (SP) and Nazirpur upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) last year. But no action has been taken so far.

Establishing a brick kiln on farmland or in a residential area is completely prohibited, as per the Brick

Manufacturing and Brick Kiln Establishment (Control) Act 2013. Violating the law, the brick kiln was illegally set up on cropland adjacent to residential area.

Shamim is very influential and rich, and he maintains connection with other influential quarters. That is why he remains unpunished, despite committing these misdeeds, locals said.

"Shamim grabbed two acres of my land. I went from door to door seeking justice, but I could not save my land," said victim Mihir Biswas.

"Crop production has dropped drastically due to environment and soil pollution. Now it has become difficult for us to live in the village anymore," said Baburam Mondal.

"If we protest against the offenses, we are tortured in different ways by Shamim," alleged Aftabuddin Mollah.

This correspondent visited the area on December 6 last year and talked to around 30 victims at the village. Almost all of them made almost the same allegations.

Villagers said some families left the village, failing to survive after their

lands were grabbed.

Nazirpur Upazila Agriculture Officer Digbijoy Hazra said he had visited the area and found that the brick kiln is causing serious harm to crop production there.

"We have informed the issue to the UNO and requested her to take necessary steps in this matter," he told this correspondent.

Pirojpur Superintendent of Police (SP) Mohammad Salam Kabir told this correspondent that he could not remember whether any complaint was filed or not. He suggested talking with the DC on this issue.

DC Abu Ali M Sazzad Hossain also said he could not remember whether he received such a complaint or not.

"If such complaints come to me, I forward it to the UNO concerned to look into the matter. Let me check the issue," he told this correspondent.

UNO Rosy Akter said she had received such complaints and investigation into the allegations was going on.

Shamim could not be contacted over phone despite repeated attempts.

A farmer reaps Aman paddy at his field at Lakutia village in Babuganj upazila of Barishal. Twenty-one lakh 61 thousand and 95 tonnes of paddy has been produced in six districts of Barishal division against the target of 19 lakh 81 thousand 375 tonnes from 7 lakh 20 thousand and 365 hectares of land, said Arshed Ali, additional director of the Department of Agriculture Extension, Barishal.



PHOTO: STAR