

## Physically challenged indigenous girl raped

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

A physically challenged indigenous girl was raped allegedly by one of her neighbouring youth in Yangcha area of Lama upazila on Wednesday.

Victim's mother filed a case with Lama Police Station accusing one Altaj Uddin, 30, the same night, OC of the police station Shahidul Islam said.

According to the case statement, Altaj raped the Marma girl, aged around 24, when she was alone at her house on Wednesday noon, the OC said, adding that the victim girl was sent to Bandarban Sadar Hospital for medical test yesterday.

## LAND DISPUTE

### 3 to walk gallows for murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A Joypurhat court yesterday sentenced two brothers and their cohort to death for killing the siblings' elder brother over land dispute in Joypurhat's Akkelpur upazila in 2007.

Joypurhat District and Sessions Judge Nur Islam delivered the verdict in presence of the convicts -- Sekendar Ali, 42, and his brother Shahidul Islam, 44, of Akkelpur upazila, and Babu Mia, 48, of Khetlal upazila.

According to the case statement, there had been a feud between the convicted siblings and their elder brother Abu Taher, 46, over the ownership of ancestral property.

On March 1 in 2007, Sekendar and Shahidul along with the other convict entered Taher's room and stabbed him to death.

Police arrested the trio after Ashraf Ali, Taher's father-in-law, filed a murder case with Akkelpur Police Station the following day.



A view of the illegal structure built on the land of the Water Development Board along the flood bypass road next to the Teesta Barrage in Doani area of Lalmonirhat's Hatibandha. A local Awami League leader claimed that he was building the structure on his own land but failed to show any document in favour of his claim. PHOTO: STAR

## AL man building market grabbing WDB's land

No action yet even after lodging complaint with the police

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A local leader of the ruling Awami League (AL) is building a market grabbing the land of the Water Development Board (WDB) in Doani area of Hatibandha upazila in Lalmonirhat.

Abu Bakkar Siddique Shyamal, the organising secretary of Hatibandha upazila unit Awami League and chairman of Gaddimari Union Parishad, has been constructing structures on some 30 decimals of land along the flood bypass road next to the Teesta Barrage in Doani area of Hatibandha.

Meanwhile, the WDB authorities on September 1 lodged a written complaint with Hatibandha Police Station against the illegal construction on the land. WDB authorities also issued a notice to the AL leader on September 15 asking him to stop building permanent structures on its land. But the construction work has not stopped yet.

Abdur Rob, assistant revenue officer of WDB in Dalia, said that although they had lodged a written complaint with the police on September 1, the police have

yet to take any action for unknown reasons. Police assistance has been sought over again and again but to no avail.

"We have issued notice to Abu Bakkar Siddique Shyamal too," he said.

"I have informed the higher authorities of the matter," he said adding that the flood bypass of Teesta Barrage will be threatened due to the illegal construction on the land.

Several ultra-poor people have been living on the WDB's land in Doani area for a long time building makeshift structures.

"We have never dared to build any permanent structure here. But the AL leader has been building structures occupying the WDB's land," said a resident of the area seeking anonymity.

The WDB authorities have failed to take any stern action against him. If no action is taken against this illegal occupation, others will start occupying the WDB's land and start construction, locals said.

Contacted, Abu Bakkar Siddique Shyamal said that he was constructing the structures along the flood bypass road as per the rules.

He claimed that he purchased the land from the land owner but he could not give any information about who had sold this land to him.

"WDB authorities have illegally lodged a complaint against me with the police station. The notice issued to me is also invalid," he said.

"I will remove the structures from here if the court orders so; otherwise not," he also said.

However, WDB official Abdur Rob said there was no privately-owned land around the Teesta Barrage and the Flood Bypass Road. The landless people have been living temporarily on WDB's land.

Nobody can build any permanent structures on it, he said.

Hatibandha Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Ershadul Alam said that Abu Bakkar Siddique Shyamal was asked to stall the construction work on WDB's land following the written complaint lodged by the WDB authorities and he was also asked to show his documents.

"As per the rules, if WDB seeks police assistance, we are ready to cooperate," said the OC.

## Early variety of potato a boon for farmers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

An early potato harvest has brought fortune to the farmers in Nilphamari district as traders are paying exceptionally high prices for the kitchen staple amid increased demand in the country's major cities.

The situation is unlike the previous season when the farmers incurred huge losses due to preserving their produce in cold storage.

"Farmers in Nilphamari are the pioneers in producing the early variety of potato that can be harvested only 60 days after sowing," said Kishoreganj Upazila Agriculture Officer Habibur Rahman adding that the soil of the region is highly conducive to potato cultivation.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Nilphamari, it set the target to cultivate potatoes in 22.5 thousand hectares of land and the production target was 4.5 lakh metric tonnes. However, the early variety of potatoes has been cultivated on 8.1 thousand hectares.

In the meantime, 25 per cent of early potatoes have already been harvested and sold instantly as traders from Dhaka, Chattogram and other cities came to the farmers' doorsteps to purchase the product directly from fields at a competitive rate as this new potato has a high demand in the markets.

Selected villages in the district's two upazilas out of six are blessed with the bumper yield of the variety and they are Panialpur, Porakot, Putimari, Kalikapur, Nitai, Uttar Durakuthi, Dakkhin

Durakuthi, Uttar Bahagli, Dakkhin Bahagli of Kishoreganj upazila and Chapra, Natib Chapra, Zadorhaat and Panchapurkur of Sadar upazila.

Shamim Hossain Babu, 45, a potato farmer of Uttar Durakuthi village in Kishoreganj upazila, said, "I cultivated the early variety of potato in 10 bighas of land spending Tk 2.30 lakh as production cost and got 15,000 kg yield in the third week of November, which was sold at Tk 6 lakh and my net profit stands at 3.70 lakh."

These potatoes after reaching the kitchen markets of Dhaka are usually sold at Tk 80-Tk 100 per kg, he added.

"For an early harvest, we sow potato varieties like Grula, Karez, Diamond etc in September-October and harvest in November-December," said farmer Zohurul Islam of Kalikapur village in the same upazila adding that late varieties of potatoes are usually harvested in the February-March period.

Farmer Sirajdouda of Chapra village in Sadar upazila said that after harvesting of early potato, they can sow the same crop again in the same land to harvest in the February-March period giving them the opportunity to make extra bucks.

Deputy Director of Nilphamari DAE Abu Bakkar Siddique said, "Early varieties of potato are a blessing to the district's farmers as they bring sure profit. As farmers can cultivate potatoes twice in the same land, hopefully, the production target will be reached by February-March period."



A farmer of Putimari village in Nilphamari's Kishoreganj upazila along with others is seen harvesting potatoes from his field. Most of the farmers in the district are happy as harvesting of the early varieties has given them opportunity to earn quick bucks. PHOTO: STAR

## PM's comment

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so much humanity [to Khaleida Zia], and asking what else is left to do? This cannot be expected from a leader of a civilised country."

Hasina on Wednesday said they have already shown great generosity to Khaleida though the latter had always intended to hurt the Bangabandhu family.

Fakhrul said Khaleida is not being allowed to receive advanced treatment abroad although she struggled during the Liberation War and fought to restore democracy and people's rights in the country.

Convicted by a court in a corruption case, the BNP chief landed in jail on February 8, 2018.

Amid the coronavirus pandemic, she was freed temporarily on certain conditions on March 25 last year. The term of her release have so far been extended four times.

## 4 students

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Later, the two called the families and demanded a ransom of Tk 5 lakh for the release of each of the students.

The two Rohingya are residents of Teknaf's Nayapara Rohingya camp number 26. They work at "Batighar cottage" on Cox's Bazar-Teknaf Marine Drive in Himchhari Panchardwip area, the families said.

Sonarpara High School Head Teacher Milon Barua said, "I've heard about the incident. We want our sons back."

Kaysar's father Abdur Rahim said the four students knew Jahangir and Ibrahim. After abducting them, the two beat them and threatened to kill them. "We have informed Ramu police about the incident," Rahim said.

Ramu Police Station OC Anwarul Hossain said, "We received a complaint from the students' families on Wednesday. Ramu police along with Teknaf police have been conducting drives to rescue the abducted students."

## Last respects paid to Rawat

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data on the chain of events, including the last-minute conversations, if any between the pilot and the ATC before the tragedy unfolded on the hills.

Group Captain Varun Singh, the lone survivor among the 14 on board the Mi-17 V5 chopper, is battling for his life in the military hospital at Wellington in Tamil Nadu.

"All efforts are being made to save his life," Singh said.

Rawat, 63, was appointed as India's first chief of defence staff by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government in late 2019. The position was set up with the aim of integrating the army, navy and air force.

Singh said the Mi-17 V5 helicopter took off at 11:48 am (06:18 GMT) on

Wednesday from the Sulur Air Base. The base lost contact with the aircraft seven minutes before it was scheduled to land at a hillside military area at 12:15 pm.

"Locals spotted a fire in the forest near Coonoor and rushed to the spot where they observed the wreckage of military helicopter engulfed in flames," Singh said.

At a colonial-era barrack in Wellington, the military cantonment town where Rawat and his entourage were headed, uniformed soldiers carefully laid out the coffins, in the presence of officers from all three services of the Indian armed forces.

Military personnel, veterans, politicians and others then paid their last respects, offering floral wreaths and flowers by the coffins, reports Reuters.

## Death reference

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Two days after the incident, Al Amin narrated the horrific night to The Daily Star.

He said he along with his friends Towhidur Rahman Palash and Kamruzzaman Kanto offered prayers at Darussalam Furfura Sharif Mosque and met Shams Rahim Shamam, Ibrahim Khalil, Tipu Sultan and Sitaf Jabi Munif at the main road.

The seven decided to have tehari at Gabtoli and took two rickshaws. Reaching there, they changed their mind and decided to spend the night roaming the area. They crossed Gabtoli bridge on foot and went along the Turag river up to Keblarchar.

"We split into two groups and sat by the river. Palash, Kanto and I were together while Shamam, Tipu, Ibrahim and Munif were about 200 yards away. Suddenly, we three heard the other four screaming for help. We thought they were being attacked by muggers or robbers.

"We rushed to help them but found hundreds of villagers beating them indiscriminately while about 50 others were coming to attack us, calling us robbers," Al Amin continued.

"We tried to tell them that we were students, not robbers and had come from Darussalam. But by then, several people swooped on us and started beating us up. I heard the assaulting villagers say they had already killed four of us."

He continued: "Fearing for my life, I grabbed the legs of an elderly man and begged for my life but he kept hitting me. Then I spotted plainclothes policemen with shotguns standing nearby and watching the mob go crazy. I begged them to save my life."

A policeman then stopped the attackers, he said.

"All of your friends are dead and you will be soon unless you agree to say whatever we want you to say," said Al Amin quoting the "saviour" police official as saying.

Al Amin was then sent to a hospital under police arrangement.

The six students lost their lives. Although Al Amin survived the brutal attack, he and the six other victims were accused in a robbery case filed by local trader Abdul Malek.

Later, Al Amin was cleared of the charges after police found that the victims were not robbers.

Following the development, Anowar Hossain, sub-inspector of Savar Police Station, filed a murder case against Malek and several others in connection with the incident.

During the investigation, 14 accused, including Malek, confessed to different magistrates about their involvement in the killings.

A judicial probe body submitted its report on September 8, 2011 saying they had found negligence by police in protecting the students who had gone to Bardeshi village from the capital's Darussalam.

Eight policemen were suspended after the filing of the judicial probe report. On January 7, 2013, Investigation Officer Sharif Uddin Ahmed, an additional superintendent of police at Rab, pressed charges against 60 people in the case, excluding the eight suspended cops.

The court on July 8 framed charges against the 60 accused.

After 10 years of legal battle, Judge Ismat Jahan of the Second Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka delivered the verdict.

Officials of the Dhaka court concerned brought the documents of the case, including the judgment, to the HC on Tuesday, Supreme Court Spokesman Saifur Rahman told The Daily Star.

If a lower court sentences any person to death in a case, its judgment is examined by the HC through hearing arguments for confirmation of the death sentence. The case documents and judgment reach the HC as death reference from the lower court after the latter delivers the verdict as per relevant provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC)

## Mitro Bahini closing in on Dhaka

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initially indicated strong objections because "Russia is giving India everything she wants."

ON THE WAR FRONT Mitro Bahini was poised for a final drive on Dhaka today, according to Indian military officials.

A spokesman for the Indian Army's Eastern Command said at a briefing in Kolkata tonight that the Indian forces were consolidating near Bhairab Bazar, on the Meghna's western bank, and had not yet begun the drive. The spokesman added, however, that "from here, Dhaka is directly threatened without any major obstruction."

Mitro Bahini had bypassed or encircled major border towns, including Cumilla, Rangpur, Dinajpur and Sylhet, in the drive towards Dhaka. At least one Pakistani brigade was cut off in the Chattogram area. A brigade at Jessore reportedly retreated to the Kushtia area in the north.

On the western front, Pakistanis launched a large attack in the Chhamb area of southwestern Kashmir.

OUR GOAL FREEING BANGLADESH: GANDHI Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi said today that India would keep fighting until Pakistani troops were

driven out of Bangladesh. She was addressing a student rally in New Delhi.

The Indian prime minister said that her government was considering the United Nations ceasefire resolution but that "nothing can deter us from driving the occupation forces out of the region and helping the Bangladesh people live in peace and prosperity."

Indira Gandhi, apparently aiming at the US, told the students that "certain countries giving us aid are angry with us because we could not possibly act on their advice, which we thought was not in our country's interests."

Later, in a broadcast to the armed forces, the Indian prime minister said, "Fight well, my countrymen. Victory will be ours."

"NOTHING SHORT OF INDEPENDENCE": JUSTICE CHOWDHURY

In an interview at the UN Headquarters in New York, leader of Bangladesh delegation Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury said today, "The government of Bangladesh alone can speak for our people; no other government can do so, not even India, because our people will accept nothing short of independence."

Even though most of the UN

member countries, 104 of 131 United Nations members, voted in the General Assembly for a resolution that was supported by Pakistan and opposed by India, Justice Chowdhury expressed the hope that majority of the world's governments would decide to recognise Bangladesh.

He added, "The most basic principles of the United Nations Charter is self-determination, and this is what is involved in the creation of Bangladesh."

"We are a separate people, a different ethnic group with different language and customs, and we have been ruled by people a thousand miles away. This is the classic definition of a colony."

Indian delegate to UN, Samar Sen, today said that India would not negotiate a ceasefire unless a representative of Bangladesh was present.

He pointed out that the assembly merely called for a ceasefire, withdrawal of Indian and Pakistani armed forces and restoration of order. It had not pronounced itself for or against Bangladesh, he emphasised.

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## Booster doses likely from next month

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While Maleque did not give a timeline for the rollout of the booster dose campaign, The Daily Star has learnt from health ministry officials involved in vaccine management that two weeks is needed to complete the technical tasks.

The campaign for booster shots will start in January at the earliest, they said on condition of anonymity as they are not authorised to speak with the media.

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) has been preparing the protocols for giving booster doses, which is a supplemental vaccine dose given to people when the immune response to a primary vaccine series is likely to have decreased over time.

People aged 60 years and above who have received the full dose of the Covid-19 vaccine will get the same vaccine as the booster dose, according to the officials.

The background tasks to roll out booster doses are underway, Toufiq Hassan Shawon, medical officer at the DGHS engaged in Covid-19 vaccination management, told The

Daily Star yesterday.

"We will stay prepared and will start giving booster dose once the higher-ups take a call," he added.

The government's move to proceed with the booster dose campaign for the elderly goes against the National Immunisation Technical Advisory Group (NITAG).

When the majority of the target people has not received full doses of Covid-19 vaccines, it is unscientific and discriminatory to give booster doses, Benazir Ahmed, a member of the NITAG, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The government has targeted to inoculate 80 percent of the population. As of yesterday, 22.95 percent of the population has received the full dose of the Covid-19 vaccine, according to the DGHS.

"So we have advised not to start booster dose right now," Ahmed said.

The NITAG -- whose earlier counsel to not begin Covid-19 vaccination for children was unheeded by the government -- gave the advice in its latest meeting held earlier this week.

Meanwhile, the country witnessed another day of zero fatality from

Covid-19 in the 24 hours to 8 am yesterday, the second since November 20 -- an encouraging development at a time when many countries around the world are experiencing a fresh wave of cases and fatalities.

With this, the total number of deaths due to Covid-19 remained at 28,016. This is about 1.77 percent of all confirmed cases.

During the period, a total of 262 new infections from Covid-19 were recorded to take the tally to 15,78,550. The positivity rate was 1.22 percent from a total of 21,496 samples tested across the country.

Meanwhile, a total of 287 Covid-19 patients have recovered during the 24 hours.

The total number of recoveries now stands at 15,43,491 and the recovery rate at 97.78 percent, the press release added.

## Restorers discover

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The sketch reveals that the artist initially planned to paint feathers on one militiaman's helmet, and that he decided against including a sword that he had drawn between the two main figures.