

NEWS SNAPS

One killed in road mishap

UNB, Jhenidah

An unidentified man was killed and at least 20 people were injured in a road accident at Aryakandi on Jhenidah-Magura highway in Sadar upazila on Sunday.

Police and witnesses said the accident took place when a bus fell into a roadside ditch at about 1pm.

The injured were rushed to sadar hospital.

Housewife killed**'by husband'**

UNB, Noakhali

A housewife was beaten to death allegedly by her husband at village Charmojid in Charjobbar Saturday.

Police said Arif Miah beat his wife Beauty, 22, to death as she went to see her ailing mother without his permission. Local people caught Arif and handed him over to police as he tried to set fire to her body.

Two 'muggers' arrested

UNB, Brahmanbaria

Two alleged muggers were arrested from Puniat level-crossing in the town Saturday.

Police said they arrested Jahangir, 21, and Ishaque, 19, while snatching purses from rickshaw passengers. A case was filed.

Cow traders robbed

UNB, Jhenidah

Highwaymen swooped on a truck and looted two lakh taka from cow traders on Jhenidah-Chuadanga road at Borai here early Sunday.

Witnesses and police said armed bandits halted the Chuadanga-bound truck blocking the road with logs and took away money, leaving three traders injured.

Seven injured by miscreants

UNB, Manikganj

Seven people were injured in an attack by miscreants at Natunbasi in Sadar upazila on Friday.

Witnesses said a gang of criminals, equipped with lethal weapons, swooped on the house of Dhala Mia and looted cash and valuables. Police arrested a youth named Raja.

Polls violence leaves 10 injured in Bhola

UNB, Bhola

Union Parishad (UP) election violence at various centres in five unions of Borhanuddin upazila on Saturday left at least 10 people injured.

Police and witnesses said a gang of trouble makers tried to capture Laxmipur Government Primary centre exploding bombs, leaving a number of people injured.

Besides, armed cadres of a chairman candidate of Gangapur union fired shots and exploded bombs at Gangapur Government Primary centre. They also attacked the house of their rival chairman candidate, leaving four people injured. Police arrested 11 people, including presiding officer Abul Kashem and assistant presiding officers Abdul Latif and Abul Bashar, from various centres. The presiding officers were

arrested on charge of stuffing ballots.

UNB from Manikganj says: A chairman candidate of Baira union in Singair upazila and his 13 supporters have been sued for violating election rules.

Rival chairman candidate of the union Dewan Mohammad Ali Babul lodged a complaint with police on Saturday.

Police later arrested two people named Lutfar and Aminul.

Marked enthusiasm among female candidates

Z A M KHAIRUZZAMAN

Fifty female candidates in 104 unions of Sathia upazila in Pabna district are landless.

They promised to work for landless people. They did not spend money in the Union Parishad (UP) election campaign. When some voters asked for money they regretted saying if they (voters) sell vote they would have no voice. They further told the voters that if they get elected, they would remain by their side at the time of need.

Even their rivals taunted them for being ambitious.

For many female candidates it was a family tradition. Some candidates' husbands were chairmen or members of their union during their lifetime. Now they now feel the void at their demise.

A female candidate in Kurigram is contending for chairmanship which her father-in-law held for many years. Manifestos of female candidates are full of promises to ensure women's rights and to eliminate social discrimination. Most of them would like to work for the distressed section of society, especially with dowry victims and divorcees.

In near past women cast vote to the candidates of their husband's choice. Now the situation has been changed. Now they cast votes not only to their selected candidates, but they compete in elections, especially in Union Parishad (UP) elections, the lowest tier of local government.

In the Jatiya Sangsad elections the entire country is divided into 300 constituencies. It is very difficult for an ordinary woman to cover. In UP elections there are 4,288 'constituencies' or 'Parisads.' More than 75

per cent voters of a UP are known to a candidate. This is because they live in the vicinity of a couple of miles.

However, this phenomenon does not guarantee women's direct participation in an election which is often riddled with violence and power-play. A lot of motivational aspects are involved in the electioneering.

According to Section 10, 28(2) & 28(4) of the constitution woman's participation is guaranteed in all spheres of life. In reality the participation of women in general elections or in local government or UP elections is very limited. Four ordinances were promulgated in 1976, 1977, 1982 and 1983 to ensure women's participation in the UP election. Still women's participation is very low. In 1973 only one female candidate was elected a chairman in a UP out of 4,353 UPs. The number of elected female chairmen were four each in 1977 and 1984 which came to one again in 1988.

However, when the people elected a female prime minister in 1991, the number of female UP chairmen became 19 in 1992, while the number was 20 in 1997.

Election monitors believe that the rising trend would continue in future.

Both the present prime minister and the leader of the opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad are the motivational factor to most of 39,419 female candidates contesting in this year's UP elections. Most female candidates argued that if a housewife-turned-politician can run the country and lead the main opposition party, why won't they contest in UP polls where women are discriminated and suffer from social injus-



PHOTO: STAR

Snehalata Ghosh, a 100-year-old woman of Ghoshpara in Mohammadpur upazila, Magura is taken to local Patitpaban High School centre by her grandson to cast vote.

tice like dowry, divorce and deprivation. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and rights activists working at the grassroots too worked as a motivational factor for greater women's participation in polls.

This year 1,98,704 candidates are contesting in 4,288 UPs. However, elections are being held in 4,222 unions due to last minute postponement of polls in 66 unions.

The elections began on January 25 and will end on March 16.

Kerosene price up in Moulvibazar

UNB, Moulvibazar

Kerosene price has marked an unusual rise at various markets in Komalganj upazila.

This is because of its short supply caused by stockpiling by a section of traders.

Market sources said a few shops in the upazila headquarters, Shamsheernagar, Adampur, Munshi Bazaar and Shaheednagar Bazaar have kerosene.

Taking advantage of the situation, the shopkeepers who have kerosene in their stocks are selling it at exorbitant prices.

"We are compelled to sell kerosene at a high price as a section of dishonest traders have stockpiled it seeing the possibility of its price-hike by the government," a shopkeeper said on condition of anonymity.

Life term RI for two in Tangail

UNB, Tangail

A court here sentenced two people, including a woman, to life term rigorous imprisonment (RI) in a murder case.

The court also fined convicts Dulari Begum, wife of police constable Bahajuddin Mollah, and her brother-in-law Shurja Mollah of village Goshabari Kumulli in Sadar upazila 10,000 taka each, in default, to suffer six months RI more.

The convicts stabbed Professor Abdul Jalil to death while he was returning home from Korotia Bazaar on October 31, 1996. Jalil was former head of the Zoology Department of Government Sadat University College.

After examining the witnesses and records, the Additional District and Sessions Judge pronounced the judgement Sunday.

Three 'rapists' arrested

UNB, Chapainawabganj

Three people were arrested on Saturday on charge of raping a life insurance company worker.

The arrested were Helal of Namoshankarabati and Nuruzzaman and Montu of Kaliganj Fulbagan areas.



(Top) A coal-loaded truck enters into Bangladesh territory from India through Jafong frontier of Sylhet, while labourers (bottom) unload a truck at a depot. Coals are imported from India regularly.

PHOTO: A K M MOHSIN

Smugglers active in northern region

UNB, Sirajganj

Smugglers have become active again in the country's northern region, including Sirajganj district ahead of holy Eid-ul-Azha.

Various Indian goods, including saree, sugar, cosmetics and drugs, are sent to different parts of the country. The goods are brought through different borders of the region in connivance with a section of police officials.

Most of the goods are transported via Jamuna bridge with the cooperation of concerned police personnel, alleged local people.

The anti-social elements were given "green signal" to restart their illegal business by the concerned police men. Police had asked them to temporarily suspend their business during the army-led anti-terrorism operation "Clean Heart".

The bootleggers, however, are

facing trouble as the army men posted at the Jamuna bridge started searching vehicles passing through the bridge from the beginning of this month.

Recently the army personnel recovered 712 bottles of Indian phensidyl and 3,001 pieces of Indian sarees from several buses.

Local people expressed their skepticism about role of the policemen in curbing smuggling.



Gunner Boo, Councillor Minister, Royal Norwegian Embassy in Bangladesh exchanges views with some landless people at Agpungli, a remote area in Pabna, during his recent visit to Bishnupur area office of Samata, a non-governmental organisation (NGO).

