

SNAPS

Tree fair begins at B'baria

UNB, Brahmanbaria
As part of countrywide social afforestation programme, a weeklong tree fair began on the pourashava office premises here on Tuesday.

State Minister for Fisheries and Livestock Abdus Sattar Bhuiyan inaugurated the fair.
A colorful rally was brought out in the town to raise awareness about the National Tree Plantation Movement 2003.

District Forest Department and Department of Agriculture Extension jointly organised the fair and the rally.

Speaking on the occasion, the state minister said 25 per cent areas of the country would be brought under afforestation network by the year 2015.

'Listed' criminal arrested

BSS, Meherpur
Police have arrested 'listed' criminal Sadiban from the town and recovered a pipe-gun and two bullets from his possession.

Police raided a house in Gobindapur village Gangni upazila and arrested Sadiban, wanted in seven cases.

'Build Padma bridge at Daulatdia-Paturia point'

UNB, Rajbari

Students and teachers of different educational institutions formed a human chain on Daulatdia-Khulna highway on Tuesday demanding implementation of Padma Bridge Project at Daulatdia-Paturia point.

Nearly 2000 students and teachers of schools, colleges and universities and journalists took part in the programme.

Goalundo Padma Bridge Implementation Action Committee leaders also extended their support and called on the government to fulfill their long cherished demand.

Convener of the action committee and Goalundo pourasava chairman Sheikh M Nizamuddin, Awal Anwar, M Nazir Hossain Mollah and Shahidul Islam spoke at the demonstration.

Ambulance service from Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

The Rangamati Hill District Council (RHDC) has introduced ambulance service for patients on hire basis.

This was stated by RHDC Chairman Maniklal Dewan at a press conference here on Monday where he announced the council's budget for the next financial year.

The RDHC has two ambulances now, one donated by the prime minister and the other by the University of Science and Technology, Chittagong and the PHP Group.

The fare will be Tk 1200 from Rangamati to Chittagong and Tk 100 inside Rangamati town.

Fruit festival for children

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

A day-long fruit festival for children, organized by the Shishu Kalyan Foundation, Narsingdi was held on the Green Hill Laboratory School premises recently.

Deputy Commissioner Kazi Akhtar Hossain was the chief guest at the inaugural function, presided over by foundation's president H M Liton Khan.

Sixty-five categories of local fruits were put on display at the festival, attended by a large number of children and their parents.

Three new dormitories for 2 colleges in Bogra

UNB, Bogra

The government will construct three dormitories for the students of Government Azizul Haq College and Fulbari Majibur Rahman Government Women's College involving over Tk 3 crore.

Senior Joint Secretary of BNP Tareque Rahman laid the foundation stones of two 110-seat dormitories of Azizul Haq College and a 110-seat dormitory of Women's College on Tuesday.

Helaluzzaman Talukdar MP and government officials were present.

Each dormitory will be constructed at an estimated cost of over Tk 1 crore.

Privatisation of rubber gardens stalled

Tk 40 cr loss by 15 gardens in 8 years

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

A government decision to privatise state-owned rubber gardens has been stalled due to complexities over ownership of lands.

Instead, steps will be taken to make the 15 gardens in the public sector viable by improving their managements and raising productivity, official sources said.

The privatisation decision was taken in November last year as the gardens incurred a loss of Tk 40 crore in the last eight years. Those could not attain even half of the yearly production target of 4,000 in the last six years, sources said.

The complexity in privatisation arose over Bangladesh Forest Industries Development Corporation (BFIDC)'s ownership of gardens' lands, which were leased from the Department of Forests in 1960s for rubber plantation. The lease terms go against sale of the

lands, the sources said.

There are 85.00 acres of land in four rubber gardens in Sylhet region, 16,500 in seven gardens in Chittagong and 9,000 acres in Madhupur of Tangail.

Rubber plantation began in 1971-72 in Sylhet region, in 1969-70 in Chittagong and in 1999-2000 in Madhupur region.

More than, 50 per cent of the country's rubber production come from gardens in Sylhet.

But, since plantation, faulty planning, use of low quality seeds and plants, influence of trade unions, irregularity and corruption by the managements and bureaucratic tangles turned the public sector gardens loss-making.

On the other hand private sector gardens did well in the last few years.

Six out of seven gardens in Chittagong are almost shut for more

than three years. Looting of rubber trees by organized gangs has been going on unabated. Natural calamities also hit those gardens badly several times.

Gardens in Madhupur region are now getting out of the crisis as these are being run on contract basis, the sources claimed.

The four gardens in Sylhet with 7600 acres of plantation area also marked some improvement in recent years by raising production, reducing expenditure following some steps by the authorities.

The authorities are hopeful of making the situation better if those are run on contract basis instead of employing regular labourers. But for implementing a 'golden handshake' for 650 employees, Tk 10 crore is needed, they said.

The gardens in Sylhet earned Tk 5.5 crore profit in fiscal 1994-95 but started losing since 1997-98.

Two spurs in Jamuna washed away



A major portion of a spur in Jamuna river at Shimla in Sirajganj Sadar upazila has been washed away due to heavy rain and onrush of water from the upstream.

10 villages inundated

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Two spurs in Meghai in Kazipur and at Shimla in Sirajganj Sadar have been washed away as erosion by the Jumuna river turned serious following the recent rain and onrush of water from the upstream.

At least 800 people in Kazipur, Sirajganj Sadar and Belduchi upazilas have become homeless. They are passing days under the open sky.

Officials of the Water development Board said the Brahmaputra flood protection embankment and the Zia groyen at Soliary are now threatened by erosion.

They said they are trying to protect those by dumped sand bags and cement blocks.

At least 10 villages in the three upazilas have been inundated as water is gushing through the spurs, officials and local people said. The spur at Vatpiari was washed away earlier.

The Zia groyen was damaged last year. It is being reconstructed now with Tk 6.5 crore.

Seminar on local govt reform held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The Local Government Initiative (LGI) held a seminar on Local Government Policy Reform on Tuesday at a city hotel.

Findings of an earlier opinion poll on strengthening local government in rural areas with a focus on Union Parishad were presented at the seminar.

The poll was conducted on 3,000 households across all six divisions in the country.

At the seminar, civil society members, politicians, government officials, local government representatives, media personalities and NGOs presented their opinions on local government policy reform.

It was held in collaboration with RUPANTAR, an NGO. LGI is funded by USAID.

Seminar on Lalan

CU CORRESPONDENT

A seminar on "Fakir Lalan Shah and folk philosophy of Bangla" will be held on Chittagong University campus today.

"Bibarta Pathchackra" has organised the seminar on the second floor of CU Central Students Union office building at 11am.



Activists of a faction of JCD stage demonstration and burn effigies of party leaders in Chittagong city on Tuesday in protest against dropping of some genuine leaders from the new JCD city committee.

Protests mount against new Ctg city JCD body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Formation of the new city unit of ruling BNP's student front Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) has sparked protests by its leaders and activists at the grass-roots level.

Aggrieved leaders, dropped from the new committee, and their supporters alleged that the 81-member new committee is filled mostly by non-students, businessmen and 'criminals'. Dedicated workers and genuine students have been

ignored, they said.

Leaders and activists at different thanas, wards and college units have been staging protests since formation of the new committee on June 18 with Mosharraf Hossain Dipti and Ahmedul Alam Chowdhury Rasel as its president and general secretary respectively.

JCD leaders and activists of Kotwali, Bakalia, Bandar, Doublemooring, Chandgaon, Panchlaish and Baezid Bostami thanas and of at least eight colleges

have staged demonstrations and brought out processions on streets against the new committee.

They are demanding cancellation of the committee and formation of an 'acceptable' committee with 'genuine students'.

On Tuesday, Doublemooring thana JCD held a protest rally at Dewanhat intersection, burnt effigies of the new president and the general secretary. They also burnt motor tyres, disrupting traffic in and around the area.

'Enact law to stop vulgar films, piracy of local movies'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Cinema owners in Rajshahi division held a rally and brought out a procession in the city urging the government to check production, distribution and projection of indecent films.

They demanded immediate measures against video piracy of locally produced films, illegal projection of newly produced films by cable operators and showing of indecent videos in rural areas.

They also demanded formulation of a Video Act, a Video Piracy Prevention Act, amendment of the Copyright Act and easy import

'good foreign films'.

Organising secretary of Bangladesh Motion Picture Exhibitors Association Abdur Rahman presided over the rally, held on Monday. It was addressed by, among others, the association president Saiful Islam Chowdhury, vice-president Sudipta Kumar Roy, general secretary Mirza Abdul Khaleque, cultural secretary Mia Alauddin, Asif Khan Rabi, Afrauzzaman Khan Chowdhury and Shah Alam.

Many cinema owners from the 16 northern districts attended at the rally.

The rally over, they brought out a

procession in the city and handed over memoranda to the Rajshahi Divisional Commissioner, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner of Rajshahi.

Later, at a press conference they association leaders alleged that the movement against vulgar films slowed down after the present government came to power.

It is not difficult for the government to control production of vulgar films as it owns two of the four as out of the four film-developing laboratories in the country, they said.

They also questioned the effectiveness of the Censure Board.

Khulna BIT convocation Saturday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The convocation of Bangladesh Institute of Technology (BIT), Khulna will be held on Saturday.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is likely to be the chief guest at the ceremony, according to official sources.

This will be the second and last convocation of BIT, Khulna.

The first convocation of Khulna BIT was held in 1993 which was also attended by the then prime minister Khaleda Zia as chief guest.

The present government upgraded the BIT to Khulna University of Engineering and Technology. At the convocation, the prime minister will formally unveil the plaque of the new university.

A total of 1466 students of 12 batches will be given graduation certificates at this convocation. Twenty-nine students will be awarded gold medals for their outstanding academic feat.

SSC examinee gets 6-yr RI

UNB, Chandpur

An SSC examinee was sentenced to six years' rigorous imprisonment under the Speedy Trial Act on Monday for attacking a magistrate during the examination.

The convict was identified as Sohrab Hossain of Mohammadpur village in Matlab upazila.

According to the prosecution, Sohrab gave a blow to Magistrate M Nasir Miah when he expelled him (Sohrab) for copying in the examination held in 1999. The case was later transferred to the Speedy Trial Court of the district.

After examining the records and witnesses, Judge Abul Hasnat M Humayun Kabir pronounced the verdict.

2 get 10 years' jail term

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Two persons have been sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, one for creating panic at a polling centre in Barisal and the other for hijacking a motorcycle in Satkhira.

Our Barisal Correspondent reported that the Barisal Speedy Trial Tribunal sentenced a teenager Arif for creating chaos and panic with firearms at a polling centre on February 8 this year during the Union Parishad (UP) election.

Awarding the verdict recently, Judge Abdul Quddus Mia said the convict Arif was given lesser punishment considering his tender age.

Arif was caught by police with a revolver at Katakali Durgapasha Primary School centre under Bakerganj upazila.

A BSS report from Satkhira said Additional District and Session Judge Satkhira, Toposh Kumar Dev, handed down 10 years' jail term to Abdul Karim of Kachua village under Kotwali thana in Jessore district for hijacking a motorcycle from one Abdul Zabbar in Kalroa, Jessore on March 19, 2001.

Fish traders robbed of Tk 2 lakh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Armed dacoits barricaded the Stakhira-Khulna road near the Shakhadah bridge in Tala upazila Saturday night and looted about Tk 2 lakh from fish traders.

The traders were returning to Satkhira in a pick up van after selling fish.

Highest allocation for railway's Western Zone demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Bangladesh Railway's Western Zonal Interest Preservation Committee (WZIPC) has demanded "highest" allocation of funds for development of railway's western zone in the next budget.

Analysing previous railway budgets at a press conference here, the committee leaders pointed out that the Western Zone was usually given only 10 per cent of the total allocation and no extension and maintenance work could be done with the money.

WZIPC Conveynor Nawshadur Rahman read out a written statement the press conference held on Sunday.

They put forward an eleven-point

demand and said copies of the demands were sent to the Prime Minister, Communication Ministers, Local MPs and Director General of Bangladesh Railway.

The other demands include construction of a full-fledged Railway Bhaban in Rajshahi; setting up of dual-gage railway track from Abdulpur junction to Chapainawabnagaj via Amnura Junction; laying of Bogra-Bangabandhu Jamuna Bridge and Khulna-Mongla Port link tracks; direct rail link with Dhaka from Rajshahi, Khulna and Parbatipur; modernisation of Syedpur Railway Workshop; remodeling stations at Bogra, Khulna, Parbatipur, Syedpur and Ishwardi. The demands also include re-commissioning of

Kalukhali-Bhatiapara Ghat and Rajbari-Barapukuria, Rupsha-Bagerhat railway lines.

Tk 12cr budget for B'baria pourasava

UNB, Brahmanbaria

A surplus budget of over Tk 11.78 crore has been announced for Brahmanbaria pourasava for fiscal 2003-04.

Pourashava Chairman M Helaluddin announced the budget in presence of political leaders, journalists and pourashava members on Tuesday.