

SNAPS

Art exhibition in Ctg from Dec 19
CU CORRESPONDENT

A five-day annual fine arts exhibition of Chittagong Government Fine Arts College will begin at Abdur Rashid Auditorium at the college on December 19.

A painting competition will be arranged on the inaugural day.

Education fair held
CU CORRESPONDENT

A day-long education fair titled "qualifications @ UK fair 2003" was held at Chittagong British Council on Wednesday.

Chittagong University Vice Chancellor Prof JJM Nuruddin Chowdhury inaugurated the fair.

Twelve educational institutes at their stalls there distributed prospectus on different courses offered by them. A seminar and a quiz competition were also arranged on the occasion.

One killed by tiger
OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A fisherman was killed by tiger at Mathabhanga canal in the Sunderbans on Friday.

Eye witnesses said Ayub Ali, 16, of Kaluchia village in Shyamnagar upazila was taken away by a tiger while he was catching fish. Villagers later recovered his body from the forest.

Seminar on AIDS at RU
BSS, Rajshahi

A seminar on "Killer Disease AIDS and People's Awareness of the Catastrophe" was held at Rajshahi University Senate Bhaban on Wednesday.

Population Science and Human Resource Development Department of the university organised the seminar.

Prof Faisal Islam Faruqi, Vice Chancellor and Prof KAM Shahadat Hossain Moudud, Pro-Vice Chancellor were present as chief guest and special guest.

Presided over by the departmental chairman Dr JAM Sakilur Rahman, the seminar was addressed, among others, by Prof. Nurul Absar, Dean of the Science Faculty, Prof M Fajlur Rahman, Principal of Rajshahi Medical College (RMC), Prof Ashrafur Islam and Prof Mahmudul Hasan.

A little support can give a big boost

Govt's blind eye to prospective Moulvibazar orange growing areas



PHOTO: STAR

Nobody knows when orange cultivation started in Moulvibazar. But there has been no effort by any government to help increase the output while smuggled orange floods the country's markets every year. Picture shows (from left) an orange plant in a garden raised in an unscientific way, farmers with the harvest and the tedious road to Juri bazaar. Growers say the yield can be increased at least five times if scientific method is applied and government provides some infrastructure facilities.

RAJAT KANTI GOSWAMI, Moulvibazar

Orange growers Abdul Jalil, Abdul Gofur and Md Suleman of Hawachhera village are happy as they can market their products without any "harassment" by law enforcers this year.

They have identity cards as 'orange grower'. The district administration has given identity cards to all orange growers in Goalbari union in Kulaura upazila.

Earlier, BDR and police used to take them to custody, saying they smuggled orange from across the border.

"I was arrested six times in the past while marketing orange grown in my garden", young Abdul Jalil told this correspondent during a recent visit.

"They (BDR) physically tortured me falsely branding me an orange smuggler."

"Harassment by BDR and police was a great problem for orange growers... Now they are happy", a smiling Jalil said. All the orange growers are earning good amounts.

But Nurul of Kachurgool village said some dishonest BDR and police men still disturb them, saying the identity cards are faulty. They demand money on this plea.

All the villagers in Shukra Chhera, Hawachhera, Rupachhera, Lal Chhera, Jori Chhera, Lathitila, North Kachurgool, East Kachurgool, West Kachurgool, Domabari, Penagool, Vander Gool, North Kuchaitol and Cheragi under Goalbari union in Moulvibazar district cultivate the popular winter fruit in large scales. Villagers in Shahbajpur and Niz-bahadurpur areas in Baralekha upazila of the district also cultivate the attractive winter fruit.

Almost every family has orange gardens, having 100 to 500 plants each. Each plant produces 300 to 1500 oranges if the weather is favourable, they said.

Hilly Goalbari, the main orange producing area in the district, is adjacent to the Indian border, 58 kilometres from Moulvibazar district town.

They said at least one crore pieces of orange are grown in over 50 small and large gardens in the 15 hilly villages in the area.

The area has great potential. The yield can be increased at least five times with a little care, planning and government patronisation.

The number of plants in gardens is much less than the optimum. The owners grow plants in a scattered way due to lack of knowledge.

They know nothing about scientific method of orange culti-

vation as there was no motivation. None of garden owners even took any initiative in the past to increase the yield as they knew they would be branded as smugglers and harassed while marketing their produce.

A story on orange growers of Moulvibarar was published in The Daily Star last year. After that the Department of Agriculture Extension (AED) took up a project to promote orange and pineapple farming. Distribution of identity cards among growers in Goalbari is the first step by the government, officials said.

Rahim Miah of Sheknachhera village said locally produced orange is now selling at between Tk 200 and 500 per 100 pieces at the nearest wholesale market at Juri bazaar. The price depends on size.

Their main hurdle is transportation problem. Orange is carried manually from remote gardens to

the market because there is no road. Abdul Jalil said carrying 1200 oranges from garden to Juri bazaar costs Tk 275.

It was a great surprise to this correspondent when he came to know that the Moulvibazar district AED office has no "complete information" on how much land is now under orange cultivation and the number of gardens. The official in charge of the Orange and Pineapple Farming Development Project was not available as he went to Comilla for "official purpose". A staff there said, the office is collecting data on orange cultivation in the district.

He however said prospect of commercial cultivation of orange is very bright in Moulvibazar.

Vast hillocks including government lands suitable for large orange gardens are fallow.

Arson at Naogaon aborigines' village
Memo to Divisional Commissioner for rehabilitation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A team of National Aborigine Council (NAC) met Rajshahi Divisional Commissioner Mian Mustaque Ahmed on Wednesday and handed over a memorandum demanding rehabilitation of the 17 aborigine families whose houses at Bhatrandra village in Niamatpur upazila in Naogaon district were set ablaze by miscreants on December 2.

The houses on government lands were torched to evict them from the village, the memorandum said. They are now living under the sky.

The NAC team also informed the Divisional Commissioner that another aborigine woman -- Bhagabati Saren -- was evicted from Balator village in Niamatpur in Naogaon by Gram Sarkar leader Abdul Kuddus Biswas.

The Divisional Commissioner assured the team of steps to rehabilitate the aborigine families and

actions against the culprits.

The team included NAC President Anil Marandi, General Secretary Rabindranath Saren, Organising Secretary Ganesh Majhi and Workers Party leader Fazle Hossain Badhsa.

On December 2, a gang of about 30 people swooped on houses of the 17 families, looted and torched those allegedly in presence of police.

Brajen Barman, a local influential had claimed ownership of the land and was threatening the families for long.

The affected families filed a case on December 6.

After the incident, Niamatpur police citing official records of 1962 told newsmen that nine acres of land at the place of occurrence belonged to forefathers of Brajen.

On December 8, NAC leaders visited the spot and said the attack was made to evict the people from the village.

Inland water transport owners to go on strike from January 1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The inland water transport owners have decided to go on strike from January 1 if their demands to revitalise Mongla Port are not resolved by December 31.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Inland Water Transport Owners' Association (IWTOA) with its leader Sardar Moinuddin in the chair on Friday.

Their demands include abolition of Mongla Dock workers' Management Board, construction of Padma Bridge at Mawa, dredging of the Passur river, measures to increase arrival of foreign ships at Mongla Port and improvement of the law and order.

The IWTOA leaders urged the government to provide all facilities to Mongla Port as that of Chittagong Port with a view to increasing revenue earning.

They sought drastic measures to stop terrorist activities, piracies,

illegal toll collection and political unrest to restore the lost image of Mongla Port, the second biggest port in the country.

4,000 Phensidyl bottles recovered in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Joint forces recovered 4000 bottles of phensidyl from a truck at Patkelghata in Tala upazila Wednesday night and arrested one drugged peddler.

Tipped off, joint forces seized a truck (No. Jessore Ta 02-0614) standing beside a bush near a filling station and seized the contrabands.

The arrested person is Bepul Bairagi of Baiguni village in Tala upazila, police said. A case was filed with Tala thana.

'Discrepancies can be overcome thru' understanding'

Gaibandha dist BNP chief 'hurt' at press reports

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Leaders of Gaibandha district BNP held a 'courtesy meeting' with newsmen at Gaibandha Press Club on Thursday after formation of the new district committee.

Referring to some press reports on the new district committee, president of the new district body Hamidul Huq said, "I was hurt at the (press) reports".

He said there might have been some discrepancies in forming the district body but those can be overcome through understanding.

The Daily Star in a recent report said formation of the new district body evoked sharp reaction from a section of leaders and workers,

who demanded its reconstitution. They held protest meetings and sent messages to the party high command in Dhaka protesting exclusion of "dedicated" leaders and workers from the new committee.

Huq told journalists that he was ready to sit even with Awami League and Jatiya Party in the interest of local development.

He sought journalists' cooperation in this regard.

The meeting was addressed by, among others, BNP central leader Saiful Alam Saja, its former Gaibandha district president Sheikh Samad Azad and former vice-president Abdul Mannan Sarker.

Shikder also blames journalists!

Security tightened at Khulna jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Security in and outside Khulna district jail has been further tightened after the Supreme Court last week upheld notorious criminal Ersha Shikder's death sentence.

Lodged in a heavily guarded condemned cell, the dreadful terrorist, given death sentence earlier in seven murder cases, sharply reacted after hearing the SC verdict in Jubo league leader Khalid Hossain murder case.

"I blame journalists for my fate. Because, they wrote against me one after another," Shikder told the jail doctor Wednesday night.

None but jail guards in front of his condemned cell is being allowed to talk to him since Wednesday.

Under Article 105 of the Constitution, Ershad Shikder can submit a view petition to the Appellate Division of Supreme Court and finally beg Presidential clemency.

The execution of death sentence must take place within 7 to 15 days from the date the jail authorities receive the order negating clemency, senior lawyers SM Amjad Hossain, Syed Shahidul Alam, SM Manzoorul Alam and Rajeb Ali Sarder said.

Other criminal cases pending for trial or under trial will be no bar to execution of death sentence in Khalid murder case, said advocate Rajab Ali who pleaded for the state during trial of the case.

Meanwhile, Towhid Hossain, younger brother of slain Khalid Hossain, has demanded quick execution of the death sentence. "We are happy that Shikder's death sentence has been upheld by the Supreme Court", said another younger brother Khaled Hossain.

Khalid Hossain was killed by Ershad Shikder on the night of May 16, 1999 in an ice factory at Skidghat uner Khulna thana.

Student bodies protest price hike of CU

admission form
Forms to be available from Dec 20

CU CORRESPONDENT

Samajtantrik Chhatra Front (SCF) and Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) have protested the rise in price of first year admission forms of Chittagong University to Tk 300 from Tk 250 earlier.

SCF held a rally and brought out a procession in the port city demanding reduction of the price of admission forms.

The rally was addressed by, among others, SCF president Monzurul Haque Monzu and general secretary Mehedi Hasan Tamal.

BCL President Mahbub Elahi in a statement also urged the CU authorities to revert to the earlier price.

First year admission forms will be available at three Agrani Bank branches in the city and one in the CU campus from December 20.

The Progressive Student Alliance (PSA), an alliance of three left student organisations at CU will hold a rally, bring out a procession on the campus on December 15 and submit a memorandum to the Vice Chancellor on December 17 protesting the enhancement.

It also threatened to obstruct sale of admission forms if the enhanced price is not withdrawn.

The decision was taken at a joint meeting of the student bodies, held at Bangladesh Chhatra Union (BCU) office.