

B Chy's civil forum to emerge this week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A new civil forum styled 'Bikalpa Dharar Nagorik Committee' (civic committee of alternate stream) is likely to surface sometime this week, apparently as an outcome of former president Badruddoza Chowdhury's recent move to establish a civil society platform to get the country rid of corruption and crime.

Sources close to formation of the forum told The Daily Star it would bring out procession in the city

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Khaleda condemns attempt on Musharraf

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has strongly condemned yet another attempt on the life of Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf on Thursday.

In a letter to President Musharraf, she said, "We are shocked to learn about another attempt on your life" at Rawalpindi that killed 14 and

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PHOTO: STAR

A nurse yesterday takes care of a four-year-old physically and mentally challenged boy, abandoned at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. He will be shifted to a private shelter today.

Deaf, dumb dumped at DMCH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An abandoned child at last finds a home at Uttara and a ray of hope shines for him to lead a normal life.

A private shelter has decided to adopt the child who had been abandoned at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) nine days ago.

The four-year-old physically and mentally challenged boy will be shifted to the home at Uttara today. The Social Welfare Department has arranged the accommodation for the boy.

The boy, weighing 12kg and in T-shirt, shorts and slippers, was left at the door of gynaecology ward No. 15 at around

11:30am on December 18. No-one claimed the child till date.

"His dress suggests he is from a well-off family," an attendant of DMCH children's ward said.

"The boy is blind, deaf and dumb. He cannot walk or

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Monga over, not misery

REAZ AHMAD and ANWAR ALI, back from Naogaon

The days of *Monga*, near-famine situation, are well over in the northern region with the harvest of aman paddy going on but the marginal and landless farmers are still smarting from its aftermath.

The poor farmers in Naogaon, Natore, Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj and adjoining districts are sharecroppers and they had sold their standing crop (aman paddy) and labour in advance and also borrowed from

money lenders at high interest just for survival during *Monga* in October-November.

The present market price of aman -- Tk 280 to Tk 320 a maund -- brought little relief to them as their crop was already sold at about half the price now.

Sharecropper Shyamol of Balator village in Niamatpur upazila of Naogaon said he cultivated aman in 10 bighas of land and harvested 16 maunds a bigha. He gave 50 per cent of the crop to the landowner and 33 maunds to the advance buyer (price Tk 150 a

maund) from his own share for taking Tk 5,000 from him.

"I spent about Tk 10,000 for production of the crop. Now I am left with only a few maunds for my family", Shyamol said sadly.

Another sharecropper, Motahar Hossain of Halghos Para village in Bakhtepur Union of Naogaon Sadar upazila, said he had borrowed Tk 500 from a well-off farmer during the *monga* and cultivated aman in two and a half bighas of land. He now works as a hired labourer of that farmer but gets no wages as he has to pay back

the loan first.

"Many are still smarting from the *Monga* plight as they had sold their paddy or labour in advance to survive. They had sold their aman crop at Tk 180-200 per maund in advance while the current price is Tk 260, making them lose by Tk 60-80 a maund. They sold their labour at Tk 30-35 a day in advance while the present rate is Tk 50-60," said the AGRO, a monthly agricultural bulletin of Syngenta, an agro-input producing and marketing company.

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Govt's graft, atrocities tarnish nation's image

Hasina tells Comilla rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition Leader and Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday accused the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition government of tarnishing the country's image abroad.

"The government's corruption, criminal activities and atrocities on political opponents are the main reasons for lowering the image of the country in the eyes of the foreigners. Certainly the opposition is not responsible for this," Hasina

said countering an allegation made against the opposition by the prime minister at a recent public meeting in Comilla.

The opposition leader was addressing a rally organised by Bangladesh Non-government Primary Teachers' Association at the city's Paltan Maidan.

Hasina said she never spoke ill of the country abroad, but criticised the present rulers for their bad governance. "Our prime minister has failed to differentiate

between criticism of the country and that of its government," the AL chief added.

"At this age of information technology, the government cannot hide its activities, replete with corruption, killings, rapes, torture and extortion," Hasina claimed.

The non-government primary teachers were demanding nationalisation of their schools at the rally and Hasina pledged to fulfil their demand if her party was voted to

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BNP men attack, foil AL council

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

The ruling BNP activists yesterday allegedly attacked and foiled a council session of the Awami League's Mahmudpur union unit, leaving at least 20 persons injured.

The AL leaders alleged that the BNP activists backed by the law enforcers attacked the council on Sinibardi Government Primary School premises and blasted at least five handmade bombs.

Of the injured, Ahsanuddin Mollah and Alek Chan were admitted to Dhaka General College Hospital.



PHOTO: STAR

Life could not bear her... Moushumi, deserted by her husband, did not give in to odds as she took up the hard job of pulling carts loaded with construction materials alongside male labourers at Manda in Dhaka.

ATTACKS IN RANGAMATI

Plan underway to wall elephants off

NURUL ALAM, Ctg

Rangamati district administration, to protect villagers, is planning to erect barriers around the areas where marauding wild elephants have killed 12 people and injured scores of others this year, sources said.

The frequent attacks by wild tuskers also damaged villagers' property, including homes and crops, to the tune of Tk 68 lakh, sources in the district administra-

tion said. Many panic-stricken residents of those vulnerable villages have also fled seeking safety elsewhere.

The backwoods hilly villages at Longadu and Rajastoli areas of Kaptai under Rangamati district are the ones that most frequently witness such attacks by ravaging wild elephants, forest department sources said.

"We are very much concerned at the frequent attacks by wild

elephants which storm into human habitats in search of food. The situation has now reached an alarming proportion forcing us to go for protective measures. If some barriers or barricades are not erected around the risk-prone villages, it will be too difficult to check such further attacks," Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Rangamati Jafor Ahmed

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3 UPDF men abducted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

In yet another incident of political violence in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), three activists of United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) were kidnapped by UPDF activists from Naniarchar in Rangamati, PCJSS claimed.

Police said the abducted persons are Sunitee Ranjan Dewan, 45, Rupjoy Chakma, 40, and Kalaiya Chakma, 16.

Earlier on Wednesday, eight supporters of Parbatya Chittagong Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) were kidnapped by UPDF activists from Naniarchar in Rangamati, PCJSS claimed.

Moreover, 20 family members

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Husband tricks wife into drinking acid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A husband was arrested for deceitfully leading his young wife to drinking acid at Mirer Sarai upazila Thursday night.

Police and sources said Jamir Uddin gave his wife and daughter of Ali Ahmad of Goramara under

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11 robbers nabbed in Ctg with AK-47

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police arrested three alleged criminals including a 'listed terrorist' Thursday evening in Satkania and recovered an AK-47 assault rifle along with huge ammunition.

In another raid the same night, police held eight alleged robbers with a firearm and other lethal weapons in Mirersarai upazila. Sources said, acting on a tip off, Satkania police raided a teak garden beside Dalu Khal at North Rampur under Satkania upazila at around 6:30pm and managed to arrest Enamul Haq alias Enam, 28, a 'listed terrorist' and alleged robber, along with his associate Faridul Alam alias Farid, 30.

According to their confession, police later recovered one AK-47 rifle and fifty rounds of bullets in two magazines from the house of

another alleged robber, Monir Ahmad alias Moinya Dakat, at Charpara village of West Dhemsha the same night.

A case was filed accusing Enam, who stands accused in two other criminal cases, Farid and Moinya Dakat in this connection.

In the other action, police in collaboration with local people arrested eight alleged robbers in Madhyam Wahedpur village under Mirersarai upazila at around 10:30pm.

The robbers, led by Md Shahadat Hossain, 25, were reportedly preparing for a robbery at a house of one Gopinath Das, 35, when local people caught them red handed. A locally produced gun and three daggers were recovered from their possession.

Prayer Timings December 27		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-30	6-00
Juma	12-15	1-20
Asr	3-40	4-00
Maghrib	5-26	5-31
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

2 Ijtima devotees die of heart attack, 14 more hospitalised

UNB, Gazipur

Two devotees died at the Biswa Ijtima venue in last two days.

Sources at the congregation said Hira Mia, 45, from Akhaura in Brahmanbaria, and Ratan Howladar, 45, from Rupatali in Barisal, died of heart attack.

Besides, 14 other devotees who fell sick were admitted to Tongi Hospital till yesterday. Two of them were sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital after their condition worsened.

Tk 22 lakh in cash, medicine looted from Pabna Mental Hospital

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A gang of robbers looted cash and valuables worth about Tk 22 lakh from Pabna Mental Hospital on Thursday night.

Some 20 robbers stormed into the hospital at about 2:00am and tied up four night guards -- Masud Rana, 42, Abdul Khaleque, 45, Mushfiqur Rahman, 38 and Sultan, 36, -- of the hospital at gun point, sources said.

The robbers took away about Tk three lakh in cash, Tk 16 lakh worth of medicines and bank draft valued at Tk three lakh. The value of the loot could be greater, hospital sources said.

The fact that police were on duty beside the hospital during the robbery has given rise to speculations about their possible complicity in the crime.

The four guards, who were also injured by the robbers, were hospitalised under police watch.