

SNAPS

Rajshahi city bypass road to be ready by June

BSS, Rajshahi
The 21-kilometre Rajshahi city bypass road is likely to be completed by June next year, according to official sources.

The Tk 48.28 cr project had been undertaken in 1993-94 fiscal.

In addition to construction of two bridges and 73 culverts of the bypass road three inter-sections will be created at Belpukur, Naodapara and Kasidanga.

The Roads and Highways Department Additional Chief Engineer Mukhtar Ali told BSS that on successful completion of the project, traffic jam in the city would be reduced. He further disclosed that the newly-built inter-district bus terminal at Naodapara would go into operation soon.

1,482 affected with arsenic in Satkhira

BSS, Satkhira
A total of 1,482 persons have been affected with arsenic in several villages under six upazilas.

The Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) sources said arsenic has been detected in water of about 59.07 per cent tube-wells.

The upazila-wise break-up of affected persons are 683 in Kalaroa, 450 in Tala, 256 in Assasuni, 65 in Debhata and 28 in Kaliganj. However, no patient has been detected in Shymnagar upazila.

BRCT treats trauma victims in Nilphamari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Bangladesh Rehabilitation Centre for Trauma Victims (BRCT), a humanitarian organisation, on Friday treated 18 people tortured allegedly by law enforcers or others at different times.

A 'mobile clinic' of BRCT provided the free treatment.

Talking to newsmen, BRCT Regional Co-ordinator Khan Md Rustom Ali said most of the victims who came for treatment said they were tortured in custody by police at different times including the Operation Clean Heart period last year.

The victims also included some activists of ruling BNP's student wing Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and opposition Awami League's student front Chhatra League.

Most of the political activists said they were tortured by law enforcers during the Operation Clean Heart, but declined to be named fearing reprisal, Ali said.

Some victims of torture by the then Rakhhi Bahini in the early 1970s also come for treatment, he said.

The BRCT will send some of the victims to Dhaka for better treatment, Ali said.

RU Golden Jubilee

Irregularities in Tk one cr expenditure alleged

ANWAR ALI and ABU KALAM, Rajshahi

Irregularities in expenditures for the three-day Golden Jubilee celebration of Rajshahi University have been alleged.

Many teachers and student leaders talking to The Daily Star on Thursday demanded that details of the expenditures and sources of money be made public.

Sources said Tk one crore was spent for the celebrations that concluded on Tuesday.

They alleged that all works for the celebration were done through 'secret tenders' without any open bidding.

The fountain of the Golden Tower, erected in front of the administrative building at a cost of Tk 15 lakh to mark the occasion, went out of order on the second day of its inauguration by the Prime Minister, they said.

The authorities showed that they spent Tk 6 lakh in publishing

5000 copies of souvenirs, but the sources claimed that the costs were shown doubly higher than actual.

Official sources said, the souvenirs were printed from Rajshahi Uttaran Press following bidding by Bengal Press, Shaheen Press and Uttaran Press. But when contacted, owners of Bengal Press and Shaheen Press denied their involvement in the bidding.

The university authorities showed Tk 5 lakh expenditure for "colouring" some buildings on the campus. The sources claimed that only visible portions of the buildings were coloured.

Nearly 5000 bags were given to participants. The authorities show that each bag cost Tk 270 while the sources claimed that such bags were available in the market at Tk 180 each.

The authorities said 5000 launch packets were given to

participants at a cost of Tk 110 each. They sources claimed that the launch packets should not cost

more than Tk 80 each.

Progressive Teachers' Group Convenor Prof Entajul Haque said, "The authorities should let us know where they spent the budgeted money and how".

Prof Sayen Uddin Ahmed of Rajshahi University Teachers' Association said the authorities "must clarify the expenditure" as the university is burdened with a deficit of Tk 22 crore.

Motiar Rahman, president of RU unit of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, ruling BNP's student front, told a group of newsmen that they also sense "mismanagement and irregularities" in the expenditure.

"The persons responsible should be brought to book for the irregularities", he said demanding a probe into the expenditure.

Former RU student Rabeya Khatun, now a 48-year old housewife, who came from Bagerhat said she and two of her friends came with families with great enthusiasm to attend the celebration.

"We are returning with despair. We spoiled money by for visiting Rajshahi University (this time)".

Rabeya's friend Dolly was not that pessimistic. "Our jubilation was limited to meeting old friends. It would have been more enjoyable had all our teachers joined the celebration".

A large number of teachers and students boycotted the celebrations, alleging politicisation of the celebration committees.

Students' Advisor Prof Rafiqul Islam, one of the organisers, however denied the allegations.

On the demand for scrutiny of expenditures, he said, "We will make public the entire expenditure soon".

Prof Sadequul Islam, another celebration committee member, said, "We are proud that the celebrations concluded successfully."

"The allegations against the authorities are mere propaganda," he said replying to questions by this correspondent.

'I am deprived of all constitutional rights'

AL MP Asaduzzaman Noor distributes warm clothes among poor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Awami League (AL) Central Publicity Secretary Asaduzzaman Noor on Friday alleged that he is being "deprived of all constitutional rights" entitles to as an opposition lawmaker.

He was speaking at a gathering while distributing warm clothes at Shishotoli Bazar in Laxmichap union under the Sadar upazila.

He also alleged that the present

government did nothing for the people of the area in the last two years as they voted for Awami League.

"Even they (government) do not feel pity for poor people shivering in biting cold", he said.

He called upon well-to-do people to stand by the poor.

He distributed warm clothes among 600 people from his own funds.

After distributing warm clothes,

he went to East Chatnai in Dimla upazila to attend the chehnum (religious rites after death) of school student Kazol, killed by a vehicle of Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina's motorcade during her on November 17 visit to munga-affected areas of the district.

Asaduzzaman consoled the bereaved parents of Kazol and passed some time with them.

Local MP Hamida Banu Shova was also present there.

Punishment for good deeds!

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A protest meeting was held at the Shaheed Miner in the town on Wednesday protesting the arrest of Gobindaganj Upazila Citizens' Committee Convenor Abdul Matin Molla.

Police said Molla was arrested on December 20 after some moneylenders filed an extortion case against him.

But other sources said the moneylenders filed the false case as the citizens' committee tried to save innocent people from harassment by local moneylenders.

The protest meeting was addressed by Gaibandha district citizens' committee convenor Aminul Islam Golap, labour leader Mohammed Hossain Faku and former upazila chairmen Shiekh Sadek and AFM Mojibar Rahman.

They said Molla's arrest was a conspiracy and demanded his immediate release. The rally was followed by a procession in the town.

Local political leaders also termed the case against Molla false and demanded his immediate release.

150 hemp plants recovered

BSS, Jamalpur

About 150 saplings of hemp were recovered from a Jamalpur village on Sunday.

A task force comprising BDR, Police, Ansar and Narcotics Control Department (NCD) personnel raided the villages of Uttar Bhat Khawa and Dakkhin-Bhat Khawa and recovered the saplings.

However, the hemp cultivators managed to flee.

Eight separate cases were registered with Dewanganj thana against 15 persons.



As mercury came down to 11.12 degree Celsius in Rangpur on Friday, demand for warm clothes increased in this munga-affected northern district. But the clothes are beyond the reach of the poor.

People will resist 'ploy' to oust elected govt, Nizami says

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

on Thursday.

He criticised Awami League, saying the party is "hatching conspiracy to dislodge the government and stop the development process".

Without naming any country, he said "some big powers are waging a war against Islam calling the Muslims fundamentalists and have attacked Iraq and Afghanistan".

Addressing the meeting,

People voted the alliance government to power for five years and they will resist any conspiracy to dislodge it, he said addressing a big public meeting at Satkhira Government High School ground

Commerce Ministry Advisor Barkatullah Bula said 'there is no Taleban or al-Qaeda in the government'.

Chaired by Abdul Khaleq, the meeting was addressed by, among others, Shah Mohammad Ruhul Qudus MP, Habibur Islam Habib MP, Maulana Abdul Khaleq MP, Maulana Riasat Ali MP, Gazi Nazrul Islam MP, Kazi Alauddin MP, BNP district president Abdul Jalil, Izzat Ullah, and Nurul Huda.

National convention of like-minded politicians underway: Dr Kamal

BSS, Narayanganj

Preparations were underway to hold a national convention of like-minded political leaders and activists in Dhaka in February next year.

Dr Kamal Hossain, convener of 'Oikya Prochesta' announced this here on Friday.

While exchanging views with the journalists at the Narayanganj Press Club, he disclosed they were going to float a new political party aiming at establishing democracy, ensuring rights of industrial workers, removing corruption, terrorism and injustice, restoration of law and order and establishment of rule of law in the country.

In reply to a question, he said the Four-Party Alliance is running the country in the name of Islam and added that religion-based politics is totally unacceptable in global politics.

He urged the journalists to depict the true picture of the society for the sake of national interest.

Earlier, Dr Kamal addressed a workers' rally as the chief guest at Ali Ahmed Poiria Pathagar, organised by the Narayanganj district unit of 11-Party Alliance.

Presided over by Bimal Kanti Das, the rally was addressed by Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, general secretary of Gono Forum, Rashed Khan Menon, president of Workers Party, Dilip Barua, president of Sammyabadi Dal and Delwar Hossain Chhunu, convener of the district Gono Forum.

Dr Kamal urged the government to set up an inquiry commission within 48 hours to probe the firing at BSCIC Hosiery Estate at Panchogar in which Amzad Hossain Kamal, a worker of Pantex Dress Ltd, was killed and more than 200 others were injured on November 3.

Govt staff in BCC agitate for allowance

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Government employees at offices in Barisal City Corporation (BCC) area yesterday began an 19-day agitation programme to realise city corporation allowance.

As per the programme announced on December 21 by Barisal unit of Bangladesh Ministerial Karmachari Samity (BAMIKS-government employees association), banners were raised at government offices yesterday.

The programme includes wearing of black badges and holding of meetings at office compounds, token work abstention from 11 am to 12 noon from January 11 to January 13 and a rally at the Shaheed Minar on January 14.

BAMIKS sources said Barisal and Sylhet city corporations were gazetted at the same time last year.

Government employees in Sylhet City Corporation area are getting city corporation allowance since December last year. But those in Barisal are not getting the same allowance even one year after the election.

Bad days ahead for Rajshahi coaching centres

Education Board to conduct admission tests: Evokes mixed reaction

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Rajshahi Education Board (REB) will conduct admission tests at public schools in Rajshahi city from next year.

This follows a recent directive from the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education in view of allegations of booming coaching centre business by a section of teachers of reputed schools, sources said.

Allegations have it that the teachers ignore their responsibilities at schools and run coaching centres, giving admission guarantee to students.

The admission test for 755 seats in Class One, Three and Six at different government schools in the city will be held at the same time with same questions, the sources said.

All admission seekers would have to face a written test of 100 marks. Successful candidates will be distributed among different schools in accordance with their merit and choice. The authorities concerned have already ordered collection of application forms for admission

test from Laboratory School from December 28 and January 7.

The move has drawn a mixed reaction from the schoolteachers and guardians.

Some teachers and guardians hailed the decision, saying it will check the "flourishing coaching center business" while some others apprehended "irregularities and increase in political pressure" for admission due to involvement of government officials in the admission process.

For the last 20 years, guardians have been sending their children and wards to coaching centers run by teachers of reputed schools to "confirm" their admission to the schools concerned.

This year also, nearly two dozen teachers of Government Laboratory School, Collegiate School, PN Girls' School, Shirol School and Helenabad School are running coaching centers with "guarantee of admission" to their schools.

Ismail Hossain, a guardian, said, "The reign of coaching centers will end if REB successfully implements the government

decision".

Sabina, mother of a prospective admission seeker in Upashahar area of the city said, "A teacher of Laboratory School guaranteed me of my son's admission, but now he is not sure whether he will be able to keep his promise".

Amina Khatun, headmistress of Laboratory School, said "We will get rid of the political pressure we face every year for admitting incompetent students if REB takes the charge of admission tests".

The heads of some other schools also echoed the same sentiment.

But Lutfar Rahman, a government official and guardian of an admission seeker said political pressure might take a new dimension in the new system.

REB Chairman and the Admission Committee President Prof Nazrul Islam said there is no chance of any irregularity in the new system as the committee includes representatives from the district administration, police, schools and some other government officials.

Disabled people hold rally in Manikganj

Memo to DC for arrest of rapist of disabled teen

A CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Several hundred disabled people yesterday marched the streets of Manikganj town and held a rally in front of Manikganj Press Club demanding arrest and punishment of the rapist of a teenaged mentally retarded girl.

They also submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner for immediate arrest and punishment of the rapist.

The 15-year-old girl (name not mentioned), daughter of Zillur Rahman of Dashara village in the Sadar Upazila was raped allegedly by her neighbour rice trader Roghu Shaha on December 16. A case was lodged with Manikganj Sadar thana on December 17 in this connection.

Manikganj Disabled People's Organisation for Development (MDPOD) organised the programme. The victim is a member of MDPOD.

The rally was addressed by Salma Akter, Basanti Rani Shaha, Abdul Khaleq, Md. Babor Ali and Entajul Haque; The Daily Star correspondent Mohammad Zahangir Alam Biswas and NGO activist Abul Kalam Biswas.

The speakers alleged that the rapist is now threatening the victim's family to withdraw the case and also criticised alleged police inaction.

Tender snatched

6 Rangpur Sugar Mill employees suspended

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Six transport employees of Rangpur Sugar Mills here have been suspended for allegedly assaulting the mill's General Manager (Agriculture).

The mill authorities floated tender for carrying sugar cane from procurement centres at Panichora, Jafarpara and Gopinathpur.

On Tuesday, the tender box was opened, some miscreants snatched some bid documents. The management cancelled the tender and invited fresh tender.