

## ALLEGED SEXUAL ABUSE

## Strike at RU for teacher's removal

## RU CORRESPONDENT

Classes and examinations were not held at Rajshahi University as students of Botany department enforced a strike on the campus demanding removal of a teacher for alleged sexual harassment of a female student of the department.

The Botany students under the banner of General Students Council also locked the administrative building for several hours from about 9 am, staged a sit-in and held a rally there.

Speakers at the rally threatened of tougher agitation including an indefinite strike on the campus if the probe committee report is not made public within 24 hours and accused teacher— Prof Nurul Amanis not removed.

RU units of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Progotishil Chhatra Jote (PCJ) also brought out separate processions and held rallies on the campus expressing solidarity with the demand of Botany students and their programmes.

Agitated students ransacked four shops at the university stadium market and forced postponement of a scheduled examination in Fine Arts department. Two teachers of the department were allegedly assaulted during the melee, campus sources said.

Presence of students on the campus was thin as university buses did not play on any route.

On April 7, a fourth-year female student of Botany lodged a written

complaint to department's chairman Prof Shah Alam that she was sexually abused by Prof Nurul Aman inside the laboratory.

On Saturday, students of the department confined RU Vice-chancellor (VC) Prof Altaf Hossain at his office for six hours to press the demand for removal of the accused teacher.

Earlier, they boycotted classes and staged demonstrations and paraded the campus streets on several occasions.

When contacted, probe committee convener and science faculty Dean Prof Abul Hassem said he is still probing the allegation against Prof Nurul Aman.

## Nor'wester kills 2 in Sirajganj

## OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Two people including a child were killed and at least 20 others were injured, six of them critically, as a nor'wester lashed Chowhali Shahzadpur, Belkuchi, Sirajganj Sadar and Kazipur upazilas in the district Saturday night.

The dead are Dulal, 8, of Enayetpur in Shahzadpur upazila and Kawsar, 55, of Chowhali. The injured were taken to different hospital and clinics.

Dulal was killed as an uprooted tree fell on him and Kawsar was killed by lightning when he was returning home from market.

Sources in the district administration and agriculture extension department said the that nor'wester swept over 45 villages tore down about 1500 houses, uprooted at least 2000 trees and damaged standing Boro paddy on about 2000 acres.

While visiting some battered shol areas in Belkuchir yesterday, this correspondent saw several hundred families were under the open sky as the storm blew away their houses.

They said they did not get any assistance from the government.



A soothing sight in a concrete jungle... Once in plenty, the big flower tree locally called *shonali* is now rare in Comilla town. The lone tree at Kandirpar in the heart of the town was snapped by Zakir Azad.

PHOTO: STAR

## Tk 250 cr crop damage a year for Tk 39 lakh project

## Project to re-excavate 3 km of Chamti riverbed in Sunamganj awaits approval

## IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Boro crops worth about Tk 250 crore are damaged by early floods in four upazilas in Sunamganj district almost every as a Tk 39 lakh project is yet to implemented.

The four affected upazilas are Derai, Shulla, Jagannathpur and Jamaiganj.

The project involves re-excavation of three kilometres bed of Chamti river and repair of a breach in a haor (water body) pro-

tection embankment at Faizullapur in Shulla upazila. The breach at Faizullapur was created in 2001.

After crop damage in successive years and repeated appeals by Awami League lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta and local people,

Sunamganj Water Development Board (WDB) submitted the project last year but it is yet to get the higher authorities' nod, WDB officials said.

This year, farmers in the area are passing sleepless nights fearing flush flood as harvest of IRRI-Boro crops started days ago.

The three kilometre area of Chamti river from Brahmanaon to Mourapur has been completely silted. The silted river can not retain waters rolling from nearby Bhandra and Boram haors and upstream areas, which causes flush flood and damages crops in the low-lying four upazilas, people in the area said.

Suranjit Sengupta, a lawmaker from Derai-Shulla constituency urged the authorities this year also to implement the project. But there has not been any progress in its approval, WDB sources told this correspondent.

Only Boro can be cultivated in the area. Once flooded, the area remains under water for rest of the year and farmers can not raise any crop.

The WDB officials said the stagnant water also keeps vast lands in Derai and Shulla upazilas uncultivated even in dry season.

Immediate re-excavation of the four kilometre bed of Chamti river from Brahmanaon to Mourapur is necessary to save the area from recurring crop loss, they said.



PHOTO: STAR

The silted Chamti river in Sunamganj is now virtually a plain land during summer.

## 13 fishermen missing in Patuakhali

## OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At least 13 fishermen were missing as nine fishing boats capsized in the Paira following a nor'wester that lashed here Saturday night.

The fishermen are Manna, 30, Abdullah, 35, Mamun, 32, Gias, 36, Ayub Ali, Maleq, 29, Rafiq, 25, Nuru Mia, 28, Abdul Gani Jakir, 32, Salam, 34, Jalal, 37, Ratan Ali, 32 and Jabbar, 33, all hailed from different villages in Patuakhali Sadar and Mirzaganj upazila.

## RU JCD men loot cell phone shop

## RU CORRESPONDENT

A group of Jatayatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists in Rajshahi

University yesterday looted a cell phone shop in front of Munnujan Hall and beat its owner as he refused to pay toll.

Sources said, JCD activists allegedly by Romel and Shahin went to the shop at about noon and demanded a toll of Tk 500. Shop owner Raju refused.

The JCD activists then beat Raju, ransacked the shop and looted some cell phones.

Other students from the hall rescued Raju and took him to the university medical centre.

After the incident, all shop owners in the area submitted a written complaint to the university authorities.

## Bracing for floods

## Nine breaches in Gaibandha town protection embankment yet to be repaired

## REZAUL HAQ, Gaibandha

Gaibandha townspeople are bracing for floods and inundation of most areas of the town in the coming monsoon as breaches at nine points in the town protection embankment caused by last year's flood are yet to be repaired.

The whole embankment may be threatened as there are numerous cracks in it, besides the breaches.

Water Development Board (WDB) Executive Engineer Babul Chandra Shil said they submitted a proposal for renovation of damaged portions of the embankment but it is yet to be approved. Renovation work will start as soon as funds are made available, he said.

Local WDB constructed 25-

kilometre embankments along both sides of Ghagot river under Gaibandha town protection plan at a cost of Tk 20 crore. The work was completed in 2002.

Besides building embankments, the work included installation of two outlet sluice gates and 10 small sluice gates, construction of a 70-metre bridge and loop cutting at six points.

Prior to implementation of the project, most of Gaibandha town and adjoining areas went under knee to waist-deep water that remained stagnant almost during the whole rainy season.

WDB had been maintaining the embankment by petty repair work to protect the town from floods. But last year it had no allocation of fund for

emergency repair and as such flood breached the embankment at nine points at Paschim Kamornai, Chalkmamrospur and David Company Para in Gaibandha Sadar upazila; and in Salaipur, Mandayer and Hamidpur in Sadullapur Upazila.

According to an WDB sources, the surging flood waters from Ghagot damaged a total of 2,115 metres of the embankment. Those portions are now vulnerable. Water from Ghagot often overflow the breaches during flood.

If the breaches and cracks are not repaired before the monsoon, most areas of the town will be inundated townspeople said.



PHOTO: STAR

The breached embankment of Gaibandha town protection embankment at David Company Para, one of the nine vulnerable points yet to be repaired.

## A wonder filter that gives arsenic-free water

## Handy and simple Sono Filter made with easily available materials approved by WHO, government

## AMANUR AMAN, Kushtia

A simple and cheap filter made with easily available materials has worked wonder in supplying arsenic-free water to rural people.

Its use has stopped spread of arsenicosis in about 100 villages in Kushtia Sadar, Khoska, Daulatpur and Bheramara upazilas. No arsenicosis patient was detected in the villages in last two years after the people began its use, according to the innovators who are producing and marketing the filter.

Sono Filter, as it is called, is perhaps the first recognised successful indigenous technology to remove arsenic from water. It costs between Tk 1600 and Tk 2100 and a buyer do not have to use any ingredient or chemical to purify water.

This correspondent talked to several users in villages in Kushtia Sadar upazila, who said it is very simple and does not involve any recurring expenditure for purifying water.

It has been approved by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Bangladesh government and the local bureau of Isotope Hydrology Section of the Inter-national Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The government approved it after different scientific tests including ETV-AM (Environmental Testing and Verification Programme for Arsenic Mitigation), the innovators said.

Three Bangladeshis brothers innovated the system after seven years' experiment. They are Dr.

Munir, a physician in Kushtia, Bangladesh born US citizen Prof Abul Hussam of the department of Chemistry and Bio-Chemistry at George Mason University, USA and Prof Abul Barkat of Economics department at Dhaka University.

They did the experiments at a laboratory at Sono Diagnostic Center (CDC) in Kushtia town, owned by Dr. Munir. Prof Abul Hussam frequents Bangladesh several times a year.

A model of the filter was first made in 2000, basing on the principle of Composite Iron Matrix (CIM). Three pitchers were used then.

Later it was developed and remodeled. It is now made with two buckets by using iron dust, saw dust, coal and some other components, which the innovators declined to elaborate. But no chemical is used either in making the filter or using it to purify water, they said. It is easy to handle and use.

The innovators are producing and distributing the Sono filter with financial help from Die Licht Brucke and the Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development of German government.

Manab Sakti Unnayan Kendro (MSUK), a sister organisation of Sono Diagnostic Center (CDC), is supervising the production.

They said around 27000 Sono filters have been sold among people across the country so far. Different NGOs across the country are also marketing it. People in areas affected by ground water arsenic contamination disease are the main buyers.

The filter has been supplied for free to at least 825 schools in six upazilas in Kushtia under a Primary School Health Care Project (PSHP). MSUK also provides free treatment to arsenic affected people. Dr. Munir, chairman of MSUK, treats them at a six-bed hospital in Kushtia.

Talking to this correspondent, Dr. Munir said it is not possible to remove arsenic from ground water but use of treated water can be ensured in badly affected areas.



PHOTO: STAR

Hasina Begum of Bhadalia village, affected by arsenic, is gradually recovering from the disease after using filtered water and treatment by MSUK.

## All 9 land customs stations in Sylhet silent for 4th day

## STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Border trade through all the nine land customs stations in Sylhet region remained suspended for the 4th day yesterday due to strike by Indian customs officials following abduction of two officials of Bholaganj customs station.

They were kidnapped allegedly by an insurgent group from Meghalaya last week.

Indian customs officials had been protesting harassment by insurgent groups in Meghalaya and Assam states for long, sources added.

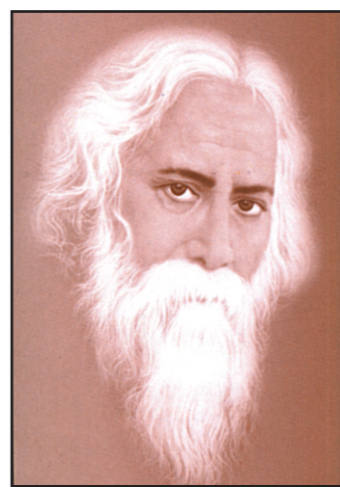
About 15,000 labourers in Tamabil, Sheola, Sutarkandi, Barchhara, Bholaganj, Jakiganj, Juri, Ichhamoti and Chela customs station in Sylhet are now without any work, sources said.

Usually, about 1500 tons of coal are imported through Tamabil customs station alone, where about 3000 labourers work.

Kolondar Ali, general secretary of Coal Importers Group, Sylhet, said if the situation continues importers will fail to fulfil contracts and incur losses.

He urged Bangladeshi authorities to hold talks with their Indian counterparts to resolve the crisis.

Customs officials here said they have urged officials in Dhaka to contact Indian officials to resolve the crisis. The government is incurring loss of a huge revenue as all export-import activities are stopped.



## Tagore's birth anniversary celebrations begin today

## OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

To celebrate Nobel laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore's 145th birth anniversary, Sirajganj district administration has taken up a three-day programme at Rabindra Kachharibari in Shahzad, beginning today.

The programme includes discussion on Rabindranath and cultural functions.

A fair on the Kachharibari campus will be an added attraction for the visitors.

Rajshahi Divisional Commissioner Moshleuddin will inaugurate the programme today.

Cultural personalities from across the country will participate in the programmes.

## 'Joy's homecoming to add a new dimension to politics'

## OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The homecoming of Awami League (AL) president Sheikh Hasina's son Sajib Wajed Joy will add a new dimension to national politics.

AL assistant secretary Afzal Hossain said this while addressing street corner meetings at Chandakhali Bazar, Khejurtala Bazar, Badghata, Dhankhali Bazar and Telikhali Bazar in Badarpur union organised as part of a 10-day mass contact programme which began on April 28.

On arrival of Joy, the 14-party led agitation would gain momentum, he said. He urged people to gear up the ongoing agitation led by Sheikh Hasina to establish good gover-

nance in every sphere of life by uprooting corruption which increased manifold during the Four-party Alliance rule.

Afzal said people have reached at a point of no return due to the Alliance misrule. Unprecedented price hike of essential commodities have multiplied people's miseries, he added.

Krishak League leader and Union Parishad (UP) chairman Golam Sarwar, AL leader Nuru Shikdar, Giasuddin Majhi, Goni Shikdar, Khalek Khan, Chhatra League leader of the Science and Technology University unit Md Amin Uddin and Milon Miah addressed the meetings.

## Removal of Mymensingh drug super demanded

## Corruption alleged by drug traders

## OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Medicine traders in Mymensingh have demanded removal of Drug Superintendent Aqib Hossain by may 14 for his alleged involvement in corruption and threatened of agitation including strike on May 17 for non-compliance.

At a press conference at the local Press Club on Saturday, leaders of Mymensingh unit of Bangladesh Chemist and Druggist Samity (BCDS)

alleged that the district drug superintendent demands bribe for renewing drug licence and often harasses them on different pleas even if they do not do anything illegal.

Recently, the drug superintendent in a drive in Muktagacha upazila headquarter seized some medicines terming those illegal. But later those were proved legal, they claimed. They also demanded an investigation into his activities by higher authorities.