

Upazila roundup

KUSHITIA

Function in memory of Lalon held

From Our Correspondent
March 7: Lalon Swarn Utsab-1991 was held here yesterday in a festive mood at Lalon Academy at village Ceuria two miles away from Kushtia town. Lalon research workers, artists and disciples of Lalon Shah called Bauls from various parts of the district attended the function.

It may be mentioned that twice in a year the Bauls, disciples of Lalon Shah meet at Lalon Mausoleum, once in the month of March during the full moon (Falguny Purnima) and again in the month of October during his death anniversary.

They pay rich tribute to their leader Lalon Shah through music and they play all the days and nights keeping everybody spell bound.

SHERPUR

Student commits suicide

From Our Correspondent
March 7: Musharrif Hosain (22) a second year student of Sherpur Agriculture College allegedly committed suicide by hanging in a room of college hostel recently.

It is learnt that financial problem was the reason of his committing suicide. He was hails from Trishal in Mymensingh district.

MAULVI BAZAR

Boy crushed under wheels

March 7: A boy was crushed under the wheels of a speeding truck near Shahabandpur area under sadar upazila, police said here on Monday, reports UNB.

The victim was identified as Syed Abu Taher (14), son of Syed Akkadas Ali of village Srinagar.

Eye-witnesses said Taher was crossing a road near the area while the Sylhet bound truck knocked him down killing the victim on the spot.

Police seized the vehicle but the driver fled. A case was filed with the local police.

DINAJPUR

Property worth Tk 7 lakh gutted

March 7: Properties worth about taka seven lakh were gutted when a fire broke out Tuesday in Baluadanga areas in the town and Satnala village in Chiriband upazila, police here said, reports UNB.

According to witnesses, seven houses were charred in the fire at Baluadanga area. Goods worth about Taka five lakh were destroyed in the fire.

The fire originated from the house of Suruj Mia while bidi was being burnt, they added. Fire fighters who arrived late at the spot finally put out the fire.

Newly-elected Member of the Parliament M.A. Rahim and Deputy Commissioner visited the spot and assured the victims of all possible help.

In another incident fire broke out at the house of Moslemuddin in Satnala village same day destroy in properties worth about Taka two lakh.

Local people said the fire originated from the kitchen of the house and soon engulfed the neighbourhood destroying 13 houses.

BARISAL

Kidney, venereal diseases rise

March 7: Kidney and venereal diseases have showed a rise in at least 14 south-eastern districts of the country, reports UNB.

According to a survey, there are more than 10 lakh kidney and 15 lakh venereal disease patients in Barisal, Borguna, Patuakhali, Pirojpur, Khulna, Magura, Jessore, Narail, Chuadanga, Meherpur, Kushtia, Bagerhat, Satkhira and Jhenidha districts.

Treatment to the patients of these diseases had been hampered due to lack of necessary arrangements in hospitals of the region, sufferers complained.

Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barisal which is more or less better equipped than other hospitals of the region, can not handle kidney patients due to absence of IVP x-ray machine and other necessary appliances.

The government earlier initiated a move to open kidney wards in all the medical college hospitals but nothing has so far been done in this regard.

PATUAKHALI

BRDB to disburse Tk 5 lakh among farmers

March 7: In a bid to augment Aus production, Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) has taken up a programme to distribute Taka five lakh among the farmers of the district during the current season, reports UNB.

Informed sources said about 3,000 acres of land will be brought under Aus cultivation under this programme.

After the implementation of the programme, it is expected that an additional 200 metric tons of paddy will be produced in the district.

Fish disease

Fish diseases have broken out in alarming proportion in seven upazilas of the district.

Fish like kot, shol, magur, singh, baim, puthi and gajar have been largely affected by the disease known as 'ulcerative syndrome'. The affected upazilas are: Patuakhali Sadar, Bauphal, Dashmina, Mirzaganj, Kalapara and Galachipa.

Local Fishery Department has advised the people to spray lime water in the waterbodies to contain the menace.

PIROJPUR

Work on uplift projects in progress

March 7: Works on 58 uplift projects are in progress in six upazilas of the district under food for works programme, reports UNB.

According to sources, about 3,300 metric tons of wheat have already been sanctioned for the schemes in Sadar, Nazirpur, Bhandaria, Kaukhali, Madhbaria and Nesarabad upazilas.

Of the total projects, eleven each will be implemented in Sadar and Nazirpur, nine in Bhandaria, four in Kaukhali, ten in Madhbaria and 13 in Nesarabad upazilas.

The projects included construction and reconstruction of roads, embankments and excavation of canals.

KURIGRAM

Soccer training course ends

From Our Correspondent
March 7: One month long training camp on football for the students up to the age of 14 years ended at the local stadium maidan arranged by Kurigram District Sports Association (DSA) recently.

A total of 104 boys from different schools of the district participated in the training course. The training course was conducted by Mr. Rezaul Karim Raju, Mr. Abdul Matin, Mr. Utpal Kanti Roy and Mr. Gobinda Banerjee.

On the concluding day, Mr. Khairul Alam, ADC, Kurigram gave away certificates to the successful participants as the chief guest. Presided over by Prof. Mostafa Bin Hossain Khondoker, Secretary, Kurigram DSA, the certificate giving ceremony was addressed, by Mr. Rezaul Karim, Mr. Tofail Hossain, Mr. Khairul Alam and Prof. Mustafa Bin Hossain Khondoker.

Drama staged

A Bengali drama 'Ontorey Ontirban' written by Mr. Mosharrar Hossain was staged recently under the aegis of 'Samprotik' a literary and cultural organisation of Kurigram town.

Among others, Mominur Rahman Mithu, Sanowar Hossain, ATM Arshad Hossain Dipon, SM Rafiqul Haque, Abdur Razzaque, Shahin Hossain Ronju, Masudur Rahman, Faridul Hasan and Hamidur Rahman Bulu participated in different roles of the drama.

The drama was directed by Mr. Shahanur Rahman which was enjoyed by a large number of local people.

BRAHMANBARIA

Couple stabbed by snatchers

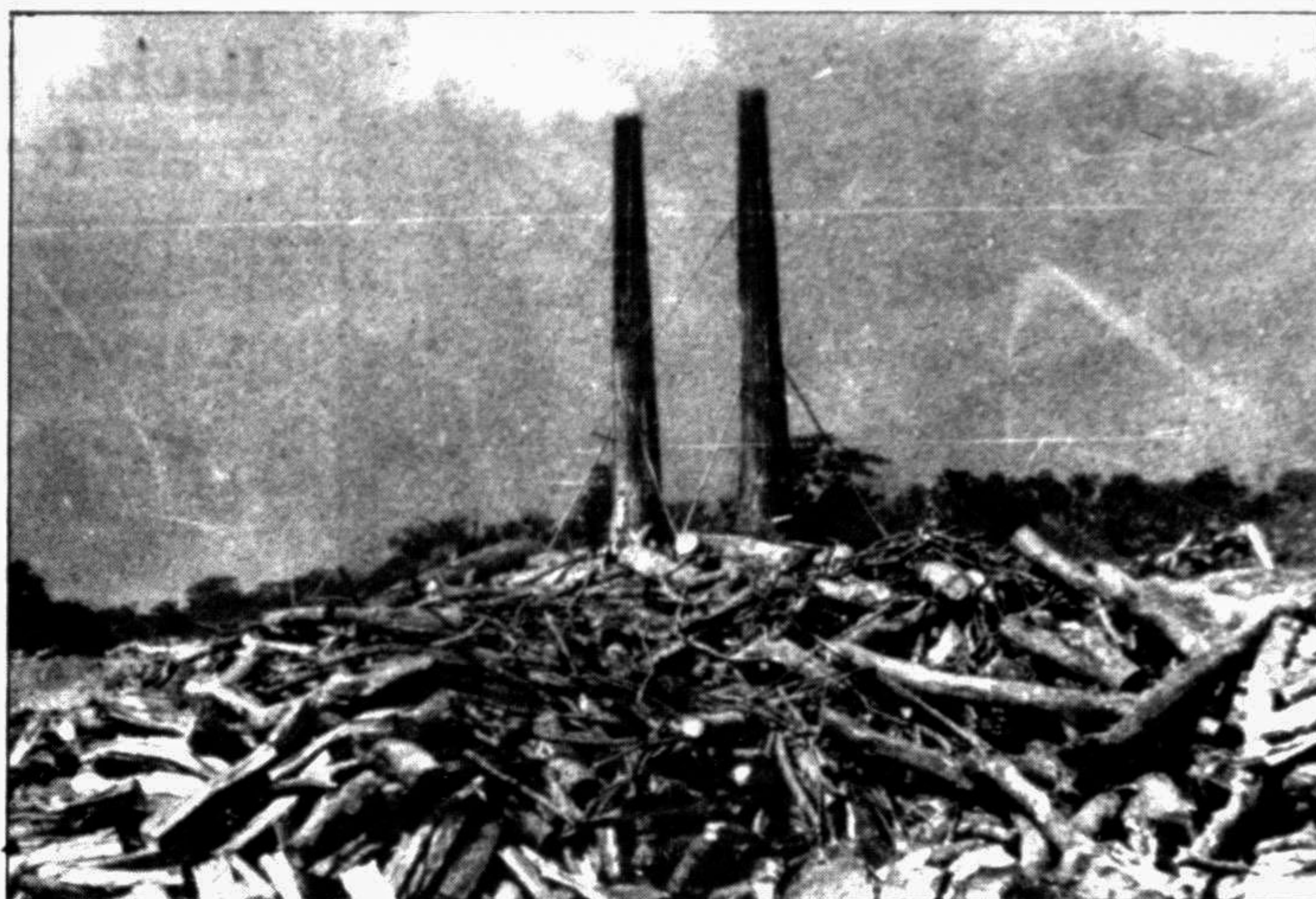
March 7: Snatchers Wednesday stabbed a couple at Madhaypara areas in the town, police here said, reports UNB.

Witnesses said, Jatindra Chandra Das and Rita Rani were attacked by the hijackers while they were on way to Brahmanbaria railway station. They were on a rickshaw.

Both the husband and wife sustained stab injuries when they tried to resist the hijackers from snatching Taka 500 from them.

Alamgir, one of the snatchers, was caught red-handed by passersby when the victims yelled for help. He was handed over to police while others managed to escape.

The couple was admitted to Sadar hospital and a case was filed with Brahmanbaria police in this connection.



Firewood stacked in a brickfield at Pagla in Narayanganj.

—Star photo by Mohsin

Soaring brick price hampers construction Brickfields use firewood: huge imported coal lying unsold

From Ehsanul Huq

NARAYANGANJ, Mar 7: Prices of all categories of bricks have recorded a fresh rise adversely affecting the construction sector.

The stock of bricks in the fields is quite satisfactory and there is no apparent reason for such price hike.

Per thousand first class bricks now sell at around Taka 2,000. Last year the price of the same was about Taka 1,700. Per thousand class-two bricks now sell at Taka 1,750. Last year the price was Taka 1,600. Last year's prices of inferior quality brick was around Taka 1,100 but now it is being sold at about Taka 1,300 per thousand.

There are about 2,200 brick fields in the country employing more than 11 lakh people. Most of the brick fields are located in and around Dhaka city, Keraniganj, Pagla, Fatullah, Bhulta, Zaytra and Savar.

Majority of these brickfields are small enterprises employing less than 50 persons per brick field.

It is learnt that the brick fields presently are using coal, wood etc. as fuel. Recently Titas Gas Company decided that it would give permission to about 85 brick fields to use gas, supply of which to all the 257 brickfields was stopped in 1988, causing increase in the brick price and reportedly making the owners bound to

retrench about one lakh workers. The gas company is now getting gas supply but the brickfield owners seem to be not very enthusiastic. The main cause of it is that many of the brick fields have huge arrears, and these defaulters were barred from getting gas supply.

It is reported that there was no big difference between the price of gas-burnt and coal-burnt bricks in the past. But simple calculations would reveal the production cost is a good deal lower in the event that gas is used. It is worth noting that in 1976, when gas was first introduced the gas company in its bid to give impetus to brickfields had also made provision of supplying gas free of cost for the first year and at 50 per cent less for the subsequent years. This provision was withdrawn on July 1, 1979.

When contacted, a spokesman of Brickfields Owners Association informed that they are now using coal, furnace oil, firewood etc. as substitute for gas.

Price hike of inputs

According to them price increase of inputs (coal, raw materials such as firewood, furnace oil), cost of labour and imposition of duties have greatly contributed to the high

price of brick. When asked about the price increase, a dealer said that the manufacturers were increasing it without any obvious reason.

The spokesman remarked that the Planning Commission recommended for using gas in the brickfields instead of coal and also suggested for adequate import of coal.

Steam coal required for burning bricks is now supplied by both public and private sectors at Taka 2964 and Taka 3000 per metric ton and the prices were same last year. The total requirement of single unit (kiln) in a brick field is roughly 400 tons a year and its capacity is about 20 lakh bricks per season.

25 tons coal needed for one lakh bricks

A brickfield owner said about 25 tons of steam coal is required for burning one lakh bricks while 7000 cubic feet of gas for 1000 bricks. The cost of production of 1000 coal-burnt bricks comes to about Taka 1600 excluding other charges whereas the cost of gas-burnt 1000 bricks is about Taka 800. The cost of per c.m. gas used for industrial purpose is about Taka 4.25. The requirement of coal is about six lakh 25 thousand metric tons for the brickfields operating in the country.

It is worth mentioning that a government ban on the use of firewood is in force under the Brick Burning Control Act, 1989. Surprisingly only one lakh three thousand metric tons of coal could be sold while about three lakh metric tons were imported by the government last year. Huge amount of coal also remains unsold in the private sector. Now without any import this season public sector stock is three lakh 20 thousand metric tons and the amount of coal sold in the period of November 1990 to January 1991 is 32000 metric tons which is quite unsatisfactory compared to corresponding period of last season (November-April).

The manufacturers blamed the Coal Directorate for not supplying good quality coal. They also complained that the coal from India had been imported at the rate of 55 US dollar per metric ton by the government, while coal was imported at the rate of 52 dollar per metric ton by the private importers.

A government source denied the manufacturers' statement and alleged they are so massively using firewood violating ban that coal sale is seeing an unprecedented decline. Evidently their misdeeds are responsible for upsetting ecological balance, the source added.

4 lakh workers jobless

Handloom industries face closure in Sirajganj

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, Mar 7: Handloom-oriented Cottage Industries in Sirajganj district face extinction following price hike of raw materials and fall in demand of handloom products.

It is learnt that the economic infrastructure of the district mainly depends on these cottage industries. But due to manifold problems about 80 per cent handlooms have been closed down rendering about 4,00,000 workers and their dependants unemployed.

There are 75000 handlooms in Shahzadpur, 20,000 in Chowhalli, 50,000 in Belkuchi and 15000 in

Ullapara upazilas and about six lakh workers, weavers including women and children are engaged in this profession. During the last devastating floods a large number of handlooms was badly damaged. Then after bringing the looms in operation fall of demand and abnormal price spiral of raw materials again threatened the existence of this sector. Cloth merchants from all over the country used to come to Shahzadpur and Enayaturpur hats to purchase handloom products but due to fall in demand sell proceeds in the weekly hats are so poor that the weavers hardly get their wages from the factory owners.

Big afforestation plan in greater Mymensingh

From Our Correspondent

KISHOREGANJ, Mar 7: About five lakh saplings of different types of trees would be planted under an afforestation programme in five districts of greater Mymensingh during the current season.

The saplings would be produced in 10 centres and four ranges. The centres are located at Kishoreganj Sadar, Karimganj, Gaouripur, Jamalpur Sadar, Sribardi, Netrakona, Sherpur, Bhaluka, Mymensingh Sadar and Agricultural University. The ranges are situated at Rangtia, Baitjuri, Rasulpur and Durgapur.

The saplings will be given to the people at cheaper rates. Besides, 31 miles of roads in 24 selected upazilas of four districts will also be utilised which includes eight miles in Kishoreganj, 15 miles in Mymensingh, five miles in Jamalpur and three miles in Sherpur district.

According to the sources, 16,000 saplings will be planted in each of 25 nurseries in different upazilas in selected areas under a special project undertaken by the government with the assistance from Asian Development Bank.

Science Week observed

From Our Correspondent

CHANDPUR, March 7: The 14th National Science Week was observed at Chandpur with great enthusiasm. On the occasion a science fair was organised recently at Chandpur Government College.

The science fair was inaugurated by Mr. Md. Abul Kashem, Deputy Commissioner, Chandpur. Different schools, madrasahs and colleges of the district participated in the fair. About two hundred new projects on Science were exhibited in the fair. A large number of people of the district visited the fair.

On the concluding day Principal Matur Rahman distributed the prizes among the best exhibitors in the fair. In this connection a meeting was held at Chandpur Government College auditorium and the meeting was addressed by Prof. A.K.M. Yunus, Prof. Badur Rahman Chowdhury, Principal Tarkullah and Principal Matur Rahman.

Our Netrakona Correspondent add: The 14th National Science Week began on Tuesday at Netrakona Government College premises. The week was ceremonially inaugurated by Mr Abul Kasem D.C



CHANDPUR: Mrs. Alta Kashem is distributing prizes among the students of Udayan Shishu Vidyalaya recently.

—Star photo

Political scene

They have now enough time to serve public cause

Star Report

A procession of the students and members of the public led by two local leaders at Bagerhat town last week demanded reconstruction of Bethkhal-Suparpatti road. Both the leaders were defeated in February 27 Parliamentary polls.

The processionists paraded different roads in the town and staged sit-in at the office of the Deputy Commissioner and submitted a memorandum urging the district administration to repair the road immediately. Constructed long ago the road is used by hundreds of people everyday. It is in a bad shape and the local people were demanding emergency repair for quite sometime past.

Addressing the sit-in demonstration the two leaders alleged that the upazila administration misused wheat allotted for reconstruction of the road. The upazila authority did not pay any heed to the repeated written complaints of the local people for early reconstruction of the road, they resented.

Both the leaders asserted that now that the election is over they have enough time to pursue the matter and shall see to the last.

Our Pabna Correspondent adds: Addressing a mass reception at Pabna Town Hall maidan last Saturday, Maulana Matur Rahman Nizami, Secretary General of Jamaat-e-Islami cautioned that in the event of attempts made by any quarter for thwarting transition to democracy by creating any constitutional crisis, his party would resist all such attempts at any cost.

Presided over by local Jamaat leader Abu Taleb Mandal, the mass reception was also addressed by Maulana Abdus Sobhan.

Moulana Nizami thanked the caretaker government, Election Commissioner and administration for peaceful and impartial holding of election on February 27 despite some sporadic incidents at several places. He assured the audience although only 18 members from Jamaat were elected, they will play a pivotal role in Islamising Bangladesh and hoped, if democratic process continued unhindered Jamaat would be able to capture power through next general election.

Moulana Abdus Sobhan thanked the people for voting him and warned Awami League in an oblique reference to stop terrorism and attacking Jamaat workers following defeat in elections. He further said Jamaat would retaliate if the administration kept mum in stopping such attacks on them.

Hartal observed in Kushtia

Our Kushtia Correspondent adds: A partial half day hartal was observed at Kumarkhali on Wednesday in protest against wrong counting of votes in three polling centres of Kushtia-4 constituency where Nur-e-Alam Ziku JSD (Rab) candidate lost the seat to Abdul Awal, an Awami League candidate, by 215 votes.

Nur-e-Alam Ziku demanded recounting of the votes in those centres, it was learnt.

Shops and other business establishments remained closed but rickshaws plied. A procession was brought out by the supporters of Ziku on Tuesday at Kumarkhali in support of their demand.

Meanwhile, in Kushtia-2 constituency nomination papers filed by eight candidates on Tuesday were scrutinised on Wednesday and all found valid. Two candidates who submitted nominations earlier before killing of Marfat Ali did not submit nomination on Tuesday. They were Abdul Jabbar (Oono Sakti Party) and Marfat Ali Master of JSD(Siraj).

The candidates who are contesting from Kushtia-2 constituency now are Ahsan Habib Linnon (JP), Md Abdul Wahed (Jamaat), Abdur Rouf Choudhury (BNP), Md Saderul Biswas Santu (Zaker Party), Hasanul Huq Inu (JSD-Inu).

Hasheem Ali was engaged in Hasimgur Centre as Ansar guard. When he cast vote in favour of his brother he was caught red handed.

Malpractice in land recording alleged

From Our Correspondent

PABNA, Mar 7: Malpractice and irregularities in land recording, surveying and re-fixing of land revenue in different places of the district have been alleged.

It is learnt that previously field work was done by the officials of the Settlement Department and the poor land owners spent a huge amount to satisfy them. Absence of land surveyors at the time of survey in the fields have created many irregularities and the village tauts taking this advantage deprived the real owners of their land.

According to the official sources, 1000 dispute cases were filed with the Settlement office but many cases were not registered because the officials were influenced by the village

tauts and pimps in exchange of illegal gratification.

4000 derelict ponds

About 4000 ponds in different parts of nine upazilas of the district are lying derelict due to lack of proper maintenance and renovation.

The ponds are silted and dried up. Some ponds are covered with water-hyacinth due to which pisciculture is being hampered.

Re-excavation of silted ponds, scientific process for cultivation, necessary training to the cultivators, provision of adequate loan can raise fish production to 70,000 tons worth Taka 10 crores annually.

People of the district and fish cultivators urged the concerned authorities to take appropriate steps