

Two outlawed party members killed in police fire

CHUADANGA, Apr 26: Two activists of outlawed Purabanga Communist Party were killed during exchange of fire between police and the activists on Saturday midnight at Pragpur village in Alamdanga thana, police said, reports UNB.

Police also arrested another two activists of the party and recovered one Belgian made DBBL gun, one British made revolver, one Indian made shutter gun, one country made gun, 16 rounds of bullets.

The deceased were identified as Comrade Moutu Azad, 35, of Hatubanga village in Alamdanga thana and Abdus Sattar Fouri, 30, of Jhutiadanga in Mirpur thana.

Acting on a tip, a contingent of police led by SP Jahangir Hossain assisted by Alamdanga thana police Officer-in-Charge Matlur Rahman raided a jackfruit grove of the village where the activists assembled.

Police said, fire between the police and the activists continued for half an hour in which two activists were killed on the spot. They later arrested Golam Bari and Abdul Mazid of village Khaura of Jhenidah district.

The bodies were sent to Chuadanga hospital morgue for autopsy.

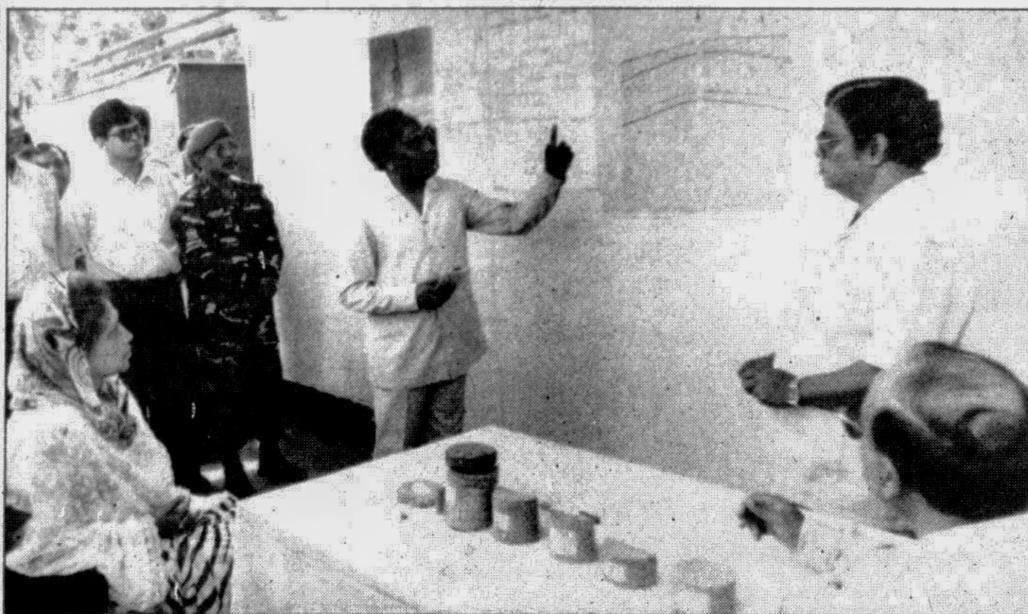
Clash with bridal party: 20 hurt

SAVAR, Apr 26: At least 20 people were injured, two off-then seriously, in a clash between extortionists and a bridal party at the Kazi Mokm-mpara area in the poura area today, reports UNB.

Police said the clash surfaced after a group of about 15 toll collectors, led by poura JCD president Prodid had demanded Tk 20,000 from one Mahadev Shaha who was holding the wedding ceremony of his sister.

The miscreants beat up Mahadev and his brother Dilip Shaha because they refused to pay the toll. The bridal party and the locals staged a counter attack and caught one of the toll collectors while they were retreating.

Mahadev and Dilip were sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital in critical condition.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleida Zia was briefed about the gas exploration project in Char Borhanuddin at Shahbazpur well site during her visit to Bhola yesterday. All necessary drilling equipment have been installed, she was informed. — Star photo

Drought destroys summer crops in Gaibandha, Kushtia

From Our Correspondent

GAIBANDHA, Apr 26: Continuous drought for the last three months severely hit the entire district affecting standing IRRI-boro and other rabi crops, mangos on a large scale consequently leading to huge losses of business.

According to a survey, production of crops during this season will decrease largely due to drought. There was scattered occasional rainfall which was too little that could hardly replace the need.

A vast tract of land went rockhard which obviously became unploughable. As a result, sowing of summer crop seeds are being delayed. At the same time most of the shallow and deep tubewells in different parts of the district have gone out of order as the ground water level has further fallen. Moreover canals, ponds and well have almost gone dry and most of the hand operated tubewells become inoperative

due to shortage of water in the ground.

Our Correspondent from Kushtia adds: The dry weather for the last few months in Kushtia and its adjoining areas has continued causing widespread damages to the standing crops including the vegetables worth crores of taka. Scarcity of rain except for a few occasions has helped trying up of ponds, canals, beels, wells, and other water-bodies. As a result, the marshy land through out the district have turned hard. It is now impossible to plough these land says one farmer.

Production target of rabi crops, including IRRI-boro paddy has been badly affected. Twenty five per cent of the standing crops of the district have already been damaged by the persisting drought.

The drought has also caused fall of ground water level in the area bringing scarcity of

drinking water as most of the hand tubewells have become inoperative. The abnormal fall of ground water level has left the deep and shallow tubewells throughout the district almost inoperative.

According to sources, 50 per cent of the tubewells installed in the district are not working and as a result the irrigation process to those areas has come to a standstill. The impact of drought has now severely affected harvesting of all summer crops which may be delayed until rain starts.

Drought has also damaged huge amount of mango sprouts which appeared in large number in almost all the trees of the area. All hopes and aspirations of the owners of these mango trees have been washed away.

Fall in river water due to drought has also affected the internal navigational routes. Hundreds of farmers have

fallen victim to this dry weather which has been persisting since early November last year. Farmers who were preparing to sow seeds now sit idle hoping rain can only rescue their wishes.

In the meantime, those farmers who had already harvested summer crops face huge losses due to loss of standing crops. Hundreds of farmers had received loan to cultivate summer crops but drought has crushed every hope they had. One farmer said, 'how do I repay the money I had borrowed from the bank?'

At the same time, vegetables worth crores of taka were damaged due to shortage of water in the ground. One farmer said, he had lost all his vegetables he had cultivated.

Meanwhile, dry weather may continue for at least a month.

Two killed in road mishap

MAGURA, Apr 26: Two people, including a child, were killed two road accidents here Monday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said Sajjad Hossain, 4, was crushed under the wheels of a speeding truck near his house at Kustindi village in Sadar thana while crossing the Magura-Kamarkhali road at around 9:30 am.

Fazlur Rahman, 30, of Kumurkola village in Shalika thana was run over by a truck on Magura-Jessore road at 2 pm.

The Jessore-bound truck coming from Magura around knocked Fazlur while he was crossing the road. Fazlur died on the spot, witnesses said.

Both the drivers, however, managed to escape with their vehicles.

Beheaded bodies recovered

Another report says, Police Monday recovered two beheaded bodies from a beel in Sadar thana.

The dead were identified as Gurupada, 45, and Gajendranath, 40, of Kharichal village in Sreepur thana.

Police said, a gang of 20 miscreants attacked the victims residences on Sunday night and took them to a nearby beel.

The cause behind the killings could not be known immediately.

Local people suspected the miscreants were members of the outlawed Sarbahara Party.

The bodies have been sent to sadar hospital for autopsy.

District roundup

B'BARIA

Eight people arrested on various charges

Apr 26: Police arrested eight people from different areas of the Nabinagar thana and seized arms and Indian sarees from their possession last week, reports UNB.

Acting on secret information, police raided Bitghar village and seized 22 pieces of Indian sarees worth Taka 25,000 and rounded up one Suman Miah.

Police also nabbed seven other alleged dacoits and thieves from different places and recovered one pistol and a bayonet from their possession.

Another report adds: Three snatchers were caught by the local people of Abdullah Char village of Nabinagar thana recently.

According to witnesses, one Abdul Quddus was attacked by the snatchers at Birgaon village while coming back home from Ashuganj bazar.

But Quddus managed to flee and reached at the bazar. He sought help from the people there who rushed to the spot and caught the three snatchers red handed with a knife and a toy pistol.

SIRAJGANJ

Boat capsizes, two missing

Apr 26: Two people were reported missing when a mechanised boat capsized in the mid-Jamuna due to norwester that lashed two thanas of the district on Monday, reports UNB.

The Nishchintapur bound boat with eight passengers on board sailed from Meshra ghat that capsized in the river when the norwester with a velocity of 60 kilometres per hour swept over the district from 5:30 pm to 6:00 pm.

Six people swam ashore while the whereabouts of two could not be traced out, local people said.

Meanwhile, about 150 thatched houses of Meshra union in sadar thana and Shukgachha, Takani and Nishchintapur unions of Kazipur thana were damaged by the norwester, local UP chairmen said.

Sadar thana police told UNB that they've no news of boat capsizer.

FARIDPUR

Electricity supply not yet restored

Apr 26: Supply of electricity in the five thanas of the district was disrupted due to norwester on Friday which has not yet been restored causing great suffering to the people, reports UNB.

Meanwhile, production in mills and factories remained stopped, deep and shallow tubewells run by electricity for irrigation have become inoperative and normal public life has been shattered due to non availability of electricity in Sadarpur, Carbhadrason, Nagar-kanda, Boalmari and Madhukhali thanas. The SSC examinees are the worst sufferers.

Superintending Engineer of Faridpur PDB M A Rashid informed that a huge number of poles and towers were broken and uprooted at several places by the norwester. The rehabilitation works were progressing fast and electricity supply could be restored in the affected areas within next four days, he added.

However, the repair works on damaged electric lines and poles are greatly being hampered for non availability of sufficient transport facilities.

NAOGAON

Shortage of drinking water

Apr 26: Scarcity of drinking water is prevailing in five thanas of the district as most of the tubewells have gone out of order, reports UNB.

According to informed sources, about 80 per cent hand driven tubewells in Sadar, Niamatpur, Sapahar, Ranigorj and Atrai thanas have already gone out of order due to further fall of underground water level during the current dry season.

As a result, scarcity of pure water has turned acute in the district particularly in remote areas. Finding no other way out, the villagers are using water from ponds and beels.

Local people urged the authority to sink more tara pumps immediately in all the thanas to solve the problem.

MAGURA

20 injured in clash

Apr 26: About 20 people were injured in a clash between two rival groups at Bademalanet village in sadar thana.

Police said, the clash ensued last week between the supporters of Abdul Aziz and Sofi Master as a sequel to previous enmity.

At one stage supporters of Abdul Aziz attacked the men of Sofi Master with bamboo sticks and sharp weapons leaving 20 injured from both the groups.

Among the injured, six were admitted to Magura Sadar hospital. Police arrested five people.

Two separate cases have been filed.

NARSINGDIHI

Opposition parties criticized for negative attitude

Apr 26: Labour and Manpower Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan Sunday bitterly criticized the opposition for their anti-government programmes which hindered foreign investment, says UNB.

Hartals and strikes stood in the way of foreign investment and different development activities, he said while addressing a series of public meetings here.

Mannan alleged that some opposition parties were showing negative attitude since the democratically elected government assumed power.

Parliament is the highest forum to discuss the national and other issues and the opposition should join the parliament to resolve any problem through open discussion, he said.

Referring to foreign diplomats, Mannan said that hartals and strikes would shy away the foreign investors from Bangladesh, besides hampering overall development activities.

BARISAL

Massive boro harvesting scheme in Barisal Div

Apr 26: A massive scheme has been undertaken to bring 1.72 lakh hectares of land under boro cultivation in 11 southern districts, during current season, says UNB.

The districts are: Barisal, Patuakhali, Bhola, Barguna, Faridpur, Madaripur, Pirojpur, Rajbari, Shariatpur, Gopalganj and Jalakathi.

Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation will supply high yielding variety seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and other necessary inputs to the farmers at fair prices to make the scheme, a success.

With the implementation of the scheme, it is expected that a huge quantity of paddy will be produced in these districts.

KHULNA

Businessman murdered, 2 killed in road accident

Apr 26: A young businessman was murdered by some unknown armed assailants near Daulatpur Railway Crossing Sunday night, police said, reports UNB.

The victim, identified as Rezaul Bok Reza, 36, of Anjanam Road, was a businessman of Daulatpur bazar.

According to police, Reza was attacked and stabbed to death by the miscreants while he was returning home at about 11:30 pm.

A case has been filed with the police.

Another report says: A minibus plunged into Bhadra river in Dumuria thana after smashing the railing of a bridge on the Khulna-Satkhira road Sunday, killing two people and injuring 40.

One of the dead was identified as Sahar Ali, 35, of Kalliganj in Satkhira district. Another is a woman, aged about 60.

Police said, the minibus with 45 passengers on board heading towards Khulna from Satkhira when it lost control and tumbled into the river at about 12:30 pm after breaking the railing of Khornia bridge.

The injured were undergoing treatment at Dumuria Health Complex and sadar hospital here.

The driver and the helper of the bus fled the scene. A case has been filed with Dumuria thana.

BSCIC estates in crisis, new loan policy needed

From A Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Apr 26: The industrial estates of the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) in the northern region are having a great deal of operational problems.

Official sources said, of the 519 approved industrial units, construction works on 368 units have been completed so far, of which 268 units are now in running condition, 11 units remain idle or sick and 89 units were closed down in 16 northern BSCIC estates.

Official sources added the number of closed or sick units have increased to 29 during the current fiscal year.

A total of 84 units out of 150 in Rajshahi, 83 units out of 142 in Pabna, 23 units out of 31 in Bogra, 12 units out of 37 in Bogra (extension), 10 units out of 22 in Rangpur, 42 units out of 55 in Dinajpur, 13 units out of 36 units in Sayedpur and one unit out of six in Natore are now in production.

On the other hand, the numbers of closed or sick industries are 40 in Rajshahi, 18 in Pabna, seven in Bogra, eight in Bogra (extension), 10 in Rangpur and six in Dinajpur.

According to official sources, there are 2,236 plots in 16 BSCIC estates, out of which only 1244 plots were allotted, and 519 plots were used so far. Construction works on 56 plots are going on

and fate of rest of the plots is uncertain. The BSCIC authorities, however, in considering to use these huge number of plots as soon as possible by allotting these lands for establishing poultry farm, animal husbandry and similar other projects.

Entrepreneur sources said, the industrial units were closed down due to shortage of fund, frequent loadshedding, marketing crisis, high production cost, and lack of skilled manpower.

The National Association for Small Industries of Bangladesh (NASIB), Rajshahi unit President Mostaq Ahmed said that the industries in the northern areas could not compete with those in the eastern areas due to higher production cost of furnace oil and electricity. Cost of transport of both raw materials and finished goods is another crisis, he added.

Rajshahi Chamber of Commerce and Industries President Mohammad Ali added that lengthy and complicated process of loan allocation and distribution were further deteriorating the situation.

They demanded separate industrial policy for the underdeveloped areas of the country and urged the authorities to take immediate steps to remove the existing problems in running the industrial units smoothly.

Pisciculture projects fail Abnormal fall in fish output

From Our Correspondent

JESSORE, Apr 26: Scarcity of fish is prevailing in south western zone of the country.

Reports say that fish, both of native and exotic carp are virtually out of market. Those which appear in smaller quantity, in the markets, goes beyond purchasing capacity of common man due to abnormal price rates. Another source said that large size of Ruih, Mrigal and Katla, found in local markets are smuggled into the country from across the border.

Chanda, puti, jhia species of fish have almost vanished from the markets. Grass mirror and silver are also available in smaller quantity. Few years back they were available in plenty and in competitive prices.

Availability of hilsa depends on supply from Barisal, which is also sold at high rates. Siltation of rivers, beels, ponds, adverse impact of drought has further affected fish production in the region.

It is learnt that a total of 30 large waterbodies throughout the region were taken up for pisciculture cultivation in a bid to boost fish production to meet local requirement.

In the first phase, six baors, including Bergobindpur, Marjad, Katgora in Jessore and Fatepur, Joydia and Boluher

baors in Jhenidah districts were taken up under Fisheries Development and Management Project, funded by foreign donors. Another 24 such projects were taken up in the second phase of the programme. However, the production target was much below expectations, said a source. All the projects are running at losses because of lowest production.

Most of the large projects such as Bergobindpur, Baluher and Marjad, not to mention three others, have failed to achieve production target last year. It is also alleged that undersized fishes below 9" were being openly sold in local hats and bazars.

BSF intrusion, high tension

Tension has gripped border areas of Jessore and Jhenidah districts following recurrence of armed intrusion into Bangladesh by Indian BSF recently, said a source.

According to information, abduction of Bangladeshi nationals, plundering of public goods and lifting of cattle from Bangladesh by BSF men is causing insecurity to life and property.

According to sources, the BSF troops along with Indian

civilians took away five irrigation engines from Goira and Godadhepur villages, abducted two boatmen and a boat from Godadhepur baor and forced the people of Sorbananda Huda and Godadhepur under Mushila border to flee away in search of safety and security on April 12, last.

Reports received here also says that local people snatched away a loaded rifle (SLR) from an Indian BSF troop while he was chasing a Bangladeshi national by opening fire intruding into Bangladesh. He later managed to retreat.

Sources also said that BDR men had stopped BSF attempt to construct a road within 150 yards at Petrapole opposite Benapole check post.

There are many stories of abducting a Bangladeshi national from Kulia border area, lifting cattle from Andulia and Daulatpur border under Chowgacha thana and exchange of fire between BSF and BDR men.

When contacted, Commanding Officer, BDR, Jessore, Lt Col. Neaz-ur Rahim told The Daily Star that intrusion into Bangladesh territories by BSF troops is a regular feature. He said these acts are gross violation of border rule.

Diarrhoea claims 82, 12,830 more affected

BARISAL, Apr 26: Diarrhoea claimed 82 lives and attacked 12,830 other people in five southern districts of Barisal Division in last one and a half months, officials said here Tuesday, reports UNB.

Unofficial sources, however, put the death figure to over 100 and affected over 14,000.

The disease is being strictly controlled which has already shown improvement in five districts.

Of the total, 19 died in Bhola, 26 in Patuakhali, 23 in Barguna, six in Jhalakathi and 18 in Perajpur.

At least 2,448 people were affected in Bhola, 1,768 in Patuakhali, 5,753 in Barguna, 1,274 in Jhalakathi and 1,587 in Perajpur.

About 283 medical teams, including 26 temporary medical camps, have been working

round the clock in the affected areas of the five districts, officials added.

Tree plantation programme

Agriculture Extension Department has undertaken a tree planting programme in 800 unions of seven southern districts under Agriculture Development Programme.

A total of Taka 7.20 lakh has been sanctioned for the implementation of the programme during the current season.

Under this programme, each farmer will be given one coconut, mehagani, jackfruit and guava sapling free of cost.

The programme has been taken up with a view to increase the number of fruit bearing trees and to maintain ecological balance.



Md. Abdul Latif, Deputy Commissioner, Sylhet inaugurating the 45th branch of IFIC Bank at Subid Bazar, Sylhet on Sunday. Aminul Hoq Chowdhury, Director and AHM Shawkat Ali Chowdhury Managing Director were also present.