

Women's Day observed in Chittagong

CHITTAGONG, Mar 10: The International Women's Day was observed in the city with a commitment for promotion and protection of the women rights Wednesday, reports BSS.

Besides the government programmes, different socio-cultural and women organisations held elaborate programmes in this connection which included holding of rally, discussion, seminar and cultural function.

The women affairs department here and the Jatiya Mohila Sangstha brought out a procession in which workers of ten voluntary and non government organisations participated.

The Jatiya Mohila Sangstha also donated some books and pencils to the destitute women as part of the adult education projects at Agrabad.

ADAB, a non-government organisation held a discussion at the city corporation auditorium with its vice president Enamul Haq in the chair.

City Mayor Ahaj ABM Mahiuddin Chowdhury attended it as the chief guest.

The city mayor in his speech urged all to make joint endeavour for ensuring the rights of the womenfolk of society.

Local dailies here also published articles highlighting the significance of the women day while Radio Bangladesh Chittagong centre aired a short story to mark the day.

3 muggers beaten to death

PABNA, Mar 10: Three muggers were beaten to death by the local people at a village in Satia thana when they were trying to decamp with valuables snatched from a BDR man, reports UNB.

Police said the miscreants riding on a motor cycle attacked the BDR man and his family members at Ataikulla village when they were going to Faridpur from Nagdemra by a horse driven cart and snatched gold ornaments and other valuables worth about Tk 50,000.

The local people rushed to the spot hearing hue and cry and caught the muggers with a shotgun, three round of bullets and a knife as their motor cycle went out of order. They later died in mass beating.

The miscreants were identified as Rafiqul Islam, 25, son of Buda Pramanik, Md Bablu Mia, 23, son of Nizamuddin, and Rafiqul Islam Rafiq, 25, of Raghobpur in the town. The bodies were sent to Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

Mass Wedding: 4 released on bail

NARSINGDI, Mar 10: The four people arrested on Wednesday for organising a mass wedding for 150 boys — mostly teenaged — were released Thursday after the District Court accepted their bail petitions, reports UNB.

Court sources said President of the Ummul Kora Madrasha Managing Committee Moulana Nurul Islam, vice president Abdus Sattar, accountant of the madrasha Delwar Hossain and its teacher Moulana Sirajul Islam were set free on bail.

The wedding was earlier scheduled for Thursday.

The organisers of the mass wedding were detained on Wednesday under Special Powers Act for allegedly violating laws against child marriage.

The relevant laws restrict wedlock of under-22s with women who are below the age of 18.

The organisers, who claimed support from International Islamic Relief Organisation, offered Tk 5,000 to each would be grooms and were again taking preparation for the much-publicised wedding. But the fresh date for the ceremony is yet to be announced.

"I see no problem with the mass wedding under Islamic law if the would-be brides and grooms are matured and an international organisations extended its financial support to it," said Moulana Nurul Islam, a graduate from Medina University in Saudi Arabia.

Earlier on Thursday morning, hundreds of madrassah and college students demonstrated in front of the SP and DC offices and submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner demanding immediate release of the four organisers of the mass wedding.

They also brought out a procession from the Ummul Kora Madrasha and held rallies in front of the SP and DC offices. The rallies were addressed by Moulana Shamsuddin Ahmed, Dr Wasuddin Ahmed and Shahidul Islam Shahid.



Farmers preparing to harvest rape-seed amidst enthusiasm and gaiety. This snapshot was taken from a rape-seed field at Sonargaon thana of Narayanjanj district a month hence.

—Star photo by Anisur Rahman

Sharp rise of fertiliser prices hampers cultivation

From Our Correspondent

JESSORE, Mar 10: Unprecedented price-hike of chemical fertiliser has seriously hampered IRRI, borro cultivation in all districts of the Khulna Division during the current season.

According to reports, non-availability of these fertiliser at normal price has deepened crisis, adversely affecting poor and marginal farmers particularly.

All kinds of chemical fertilisers in the division are supplied from Nowpara. It is the distributing centre of fertiliser for whole of Khulna division. The rate has been increased at this centre, arbitrarily all on a sudden creating abnormal price-hike all over. The fertiliser markets not only in Khulna division, but also Rajshahi and Barisal Divisions are controlled from here.

A source said that prices of chemical fertilisers including SSP (single super phosphate), TSP (triple super phosphate) and urea, have gone up by 100 to 150 per cent, recently at

their distributing centre.

Indian SSP, which is comparatively low in quality sells at Taka 260 per 50 kg bag, while that of Egyptian product sells at Taka 305 per 50 kg bag against the government rate of Taka 195 and 210 respectively.

According to source, Indian SSP contains 12 to 14 per cent phosphate, and that of Egyptian product contains 16 per cent phosphate. TSP containing 46 per cent phosphate, now is selling at Taka 415 to 425 per bag against govt. rate of Taka 345 per bag.

Similarly urea is selling at Taka 260 to 275 per 50 kg bag while government rate is Taka 18.25 only per bag.

It is learnt, a group of fertiliser importing agencies, are importing inferior quality of fertilizer at low rate, taking advantage of bank credit facilities. These agencies are very powerful, having command to control markets in entire areas and refixing rates at their own.

It is alleged that the importers are importing fertilizers for below annual requirement of the country to continue crisis in markets. This becomes their commercial policy to earn more profits at the cost of farmers.

According to source, annual requirement of TSP is 5 lakh tons while that of MOP is 1.50 lakh tons.

Government has, meanwhile, taken up steps to ease the situation and make fertilizer available to farmers at fixed rate. Accordingly, supply has been made through Thana Nirbahi Officers (TNO) for distribution to farmers. But it has been learnt that dishonest traders and muscle-men have, allegedly, taken chance to lift major quantity of fertilizers and sold it to farmers at high prices.

Reports say police have arrested some fertilizer traders from different parts of this district on charge of dishonest practice.

Daring dacoity in Savar

SAVAR, Mar 10: Valuables worth about Tk 5 lakh were looted and 10 people were injured, two seriously, in two daring dacoities committed at Savar and Dhamrai on Tuesday night, reports UNB.

Police said, a gang of armed dacoits stormed the residential quarter of Dr Habibur Rahman of Dhamrai Thana Health Complex at midnight.

The miscreants broke open the door and tied the inmates of the family and beat them mercilessly injuring five of them. They looted gold ornaments, cash and other valuables worth Tk five lakh and decamped safely.

In another incidents the dacoits entered the house of Afzal Ali of Rajfulbaria in Savar at dead of night.

On hearing the hue and cry of the family members, the villagers rushed to the spot. Then the dacoits opened fire indiscriminately wounding Hanif, 25, and Moslem, 38, grievously.

Another three villagers were injured during the scuffle with the dacoits. The injured were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Action to be taken against fertiliser hoarders: Saifur

MOULVIBAZAR, Mar 10: Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman said the present fertiliser crisis is temporary and artificial one, orchestrated by some unattractive self-seeking quarters, reports BSS.

The finance minister, speaking as chief guest at a public rally at Borelekha thana under Moulvibazar district Thursday, said in view of the low price of fertiliser here it is very likely that it is being smuggled out of the country. It said the government had reduced the price of fertiliser to keep it within the reach of the poor farmers.

Unfortunately, self-seeking dealers in connivance with the anti state elements are depriving the poor farmers of this benefit and trying to smuggle the most essential agricultural input out of the country, he added.

The Finance Minister said the government is aware of the situation and will take proper and drastic actions against hoarders and smugglers. He said the situation

will be brought back to normalcy within a few days.

Referring to the food situation, the finance minister said stock position of food is quite satisfactory in the country. He said in recent past two lakh seventy thousand metric tons of foodgrains had already been imported and another one lakh ton is on its way to reach the country within weeks.

Turning to the development programmes of the government, Saifur Rahman said despite hartal, unrest and politics of negation by the Opposition, unprecedented development had taken place in the country during the last four years and the nation is marching towards economic self reliance quite satisfactory. "If the present tempo could be maintained, inshaallah we will be able to achieve economic self reliance by the year 2000," he said.

Begum Khaleda Rabbani MP and Brigadier (Rtd) Masukur Rahman also spoke on the occasion.

Re-excavation of Nabaganga likely to be completed by month-end

From Our Correspondent

CHUADANGA, Mar 10: The re-excavation work of Nabaganga River under Chuadanga Sadar thana is now going on in full swing and is expected to be completed by the end this month.

The river Nabaganga is being re-excavated under the current "Khal Re-excavation Programme" of the present government. The re-excavation programme of the river Nabaganga began on December 31 last year.

Mia Mohammad Monsur Ali, MP from Chuadanga formally opened the re-excavation work of the river Nabaganga.

The government has sanctioned 152 metric tons of wheat for the re-excavation work.

According to the reports, on completion of the re-excavation, a total of 2,000 acres of land will come under irrigation facility and 8,000 metric tons of additional food-grain like aus-aman paddy and rabi crop will be produced every year.

Another 11,760 acres of land will become free from water stagnation.

A 4.35 kilometre embankment will be used as kutchra road when the scheme will be implemented.

Machinery parts seized in Satkhira

SATKHIRA, Mar 10: BDR personnel seized huge quantity of countryside machinery parts worth about Taka 15 lakh from the bordering area near Koyra river last week, reports UNB.

BDR men of Nildumar Battalion No 11 seized the parts while being smuggled out of the country to India.

The recovered goods are 1,146 kg copper, 258 kg brass, 26 pieces of various kinds of motor parts and a motor engine.

The goods are later deposited with Basantapur customs. A case was filed with Syamnagar thana.

Contraband seized

Contraband items worth about Tk 5 lakh were seized by the BDR in an anti smuggling campaign on Tuesday from different border areas of the district.

The seized goods include phensidyl syrup, cycle parts, saree, blouse piece and lungi.

Four people were arrested in this connection. The arrested Haroon, Majed, Khorshed and Shamsur were sent to the jail hajat and the seized goods were deposited with the customs godown.

Eye camp in Feni

FENI, Mar 10: Whip of the Jatiya Sangsad Mahbubul Alam Tara on Wednesday said it is the moral responsibility of all to stand by the physically retarded people of the society, reports BSS.

He said this while addressing the inaugural function of an eye camp jointly arranged by Rotary Club of Atlanta USA and Bangladesh Blind Welfare Association at Fazilpur Walla Islamia Senior Madrasah here.

The Whip said the present government under the leadership of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is adopting allout measures for the development of medical services through setting up new hospitals and equipping the old hospitals with modern facilities.

Farmers stage demonstration in Jamalpur

JAMALPUR, Mar 10: Several hundred farmers Wednesday staged a demonstration in front of the DC office to demand punishment of the people responsible for price-hike of rice and fertiliser in local markets, reports UNB.

The demonstrators handed over a memorandum to the District Magistrate in absence of the DC and held a rally there with acting president of district unit of Awami League Prof. Shahidullah in the chair.

The rally was also addressed by former MP Miza, Azam, General Secretary of the district unit Awami League Rezaul Karim Hira, and Jubo League President Bijon Kumar Chondan.

Speakers at the rally blamed leaders and workers of BNP to help traders towards creating price-hike of fertiliser and rice in the local markets.

Earlier, the farmers brought out a procession led by Prof. Shahidullah in the town to protest the price-hike.

Each bag of fertiliser is being sold at Tk 380 per bag instead of Tk 230 per bag while low quality rice is being sold at Tk 15.50 as against Tk 12 fixed by the government.

Gaibandha clashes leave 45 injured

From Our Correspondent

GAIBANDHA, Mar 10: At least 45 persons sustained injuries in three separate incidents at Sadullapur Thana in last week. Of them, eight persons are reported to be critical.

In the first incident on March 4, two rival groups clashed over the issue of cutting bamboo from the grove of one Sishir, Chandra of village Araji Jamalpur under Sadullapur Thana. During the clash, 20 persons were injured, of them three sisters of Sishir, Jainul Hossain and Rahmuddin were admitted to hospital in critical condition.

In the second incident on the same day, a fatal clash took place at Madergonj bazar between two opposing groups, at village Moheshpur.

During Eid prayer a group of Musulmees raised objection at the lecture of one speaker. Next day a carping debate took place between the rival supporters and soon the situation took a serious turn and the clash ensued. Both the groups used lethal weapons. During

the clash 15 persons received injuries, two of them admitted to hospital in critical condition.

On March 5, another clash occurred between bus conductors and passengers at Sadullapur. After an altercation, the situation turned to a clash in which 10 person injured. One Nurul Islam was admitted to hospital in critical condition.

One killed in Sylhet road mishap

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Mar 10: One person was run over by a speeding truck near the Kadamtali bus stand of Sylhet town, Wednesday morning.

The victim Nitai, 40, of Rashvati District, met his tragic end while he was waiting for a rickshaw. The driver of the truck managed to escape although the vehicle, police said, a case has been registered.

Biggest cold storage opens in Munshiganj

MUNSHIGANJ, Mar 10: Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman Wednesday said the government would always encourage and support any initiative by the private entrepreneurs to preserve agricultural and farm products, reports BSS.

The Finance Minister was inaugurating a newly-built large cold storage at Dhamaron here.

The 15,000 ton capacity cold storage, the biggest ever in the country, has been built with financial assistance from the Agrani Bank at a cost of Taka 12 crore, an official handout said.

Commerce and Information Minister M Shamsul Islam and Deputy Minister for LGRD Abdul Hye also spoke on the occasion.

The Finance Minister said agriculture is a vital sector of our economy and proper preservation of farm products following bumper harvest is equally important for the overall GDP growth of the country.

The Commerce Minister in his speech stressed the need for establishing a commercial bank branch in Dhamaron to bring in dynamism in the economic activities of this area.

Earlier, the Finance Minister also inaugurated the food for education programme at Sukhbaspur government primary school here. Commerce and Information Minister M Shamsul Islam was also present.

Folk festival ends in Barisal

BARISAL, Mar 10: A week long festival of folk culture and drama concluded at the central Shaheed Minar premises recently, reports BSS.

Organised by the local Kheyali Theatre Group, the concluding programme included recitation, folk dance, Lalan Getee, pathupath, discussion folk song, patriotic song and jaree gaan.

Eleven dramas were staged during the period. M A Rashid, Divisional Commissioner, Barisal, was present on the occasion. Kheyali Group, Brojomohun Theatre, Kirtankhola Theatre, Barisal Theatre, Shabdabali Theatre, staged dramas.

1609 tubewells out of order in Manikganj

From Our Correspondent

MANIKGANJ, Mar 10: Abnormal fall in ground water level due to the adverse effect of Farakka barrage and prolonged drought has been threatening the irrigation in seven thanas of the district, reports UNB.

Local Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) said meanwhile about 1609 hand driven, shallow and deep tubewells have gone out of order hampering the IRRI-borro cultivation in the current season.

Water level in Daulatpur, Satona, Hanampur, Shibabaya, Gheor, Shingair and Sadar thanas went 30 to 40 feet down from the normal level, official sources said.

The officials feared that if the water level falls further, almost all the tubewells of the district will be rendered inoperative.

Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation sources said, about 30 to 40 per cent tubewells, used for irrigation, in the seven thanas have already been rendered inoperative.

To solve the drinking water scarcity, PHED have started to sink hand driven tubewells.

18000 child labourers in Satkhira

From Our Correspondent

SATKHIRA, Mar 10: About 18000 child labourers under age 12 are at present engaged in different jobs in the district to help their destitute families, according to an estimate of official sources.

A random survey conducted recently in some rural areas of the district revealed that, most of the marriages in poor families break up for dowry and other reasons and no legal actions can be taken because the marriages are not registered.

Despite restriction, many people take more than one wife without taking permission from their first wives. The survey showed that the rate of divorce was going up recently.

Due to the high rate of registration fee, the poor parents are reluctant to go for registration.

Another report adds: Non-registration of marriage deeds was stated to be the main hindrance in the movement for the rights of women.

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2 arrested

SATKHIRA, Mar 10: Police nabbed two kidnappers and rescued one person from their clutches at Patkeighata Wednesday, reports UNB.



MOULVI BAZAR: Visitors at a three-day long Krishi Mela organised by the district agriculture extension department was held here recently.

—Star photo