

National

Two Beaten to death

CHITTAGONG, Mar 17: Two people were beaten to death by a mob while stealing electric wire at Hathazari thana Wednesday night, reports UNB/BSS.

They were identified as Abul Bashar and Mozammel Haq. Bashar died on the spot and the latter on way to hospital.

Another three people were also injured in the manhandling. They were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital. They were said to be in critical state.

Police said a gang of thieves, numbering 25 to 30, came to Saryia area of the thana in two micro-buses to steal electricity wire at midnight. Local people gheraoed and lynched them when another micro-bus came to take them away at about 4:30 am.

A case has been filed with Hathazari thana.

Pirates loot boat carrying fertilizer

From Our Correspondent  
GAIBANDHA, Mar 17: A gang of pirates looted a country boat loaded with 350 bags of urea fertilizer in river Brahmaputra near Kholabari under Fulchhari thana, recently.

According to report received here, one Jahurul Islam a fertilizer dealer of Kamarjani bazar under Gaibandha sadar thana released 350 bags of urea fertilizer from Jamuna Fertilizer Co. and despatched it to Kamarjani by a country boat. The pirates armed with sharp weapons tied up five boatmen and fled away with the fertilizer loaded boat. Next day Fulchhari thana police in a drive recovered the empty boat of pirates but they could not apprehend the miscreants. The missing fertilizer is yet to be recovered. A case was filed with Fulchhari thana.

One killed in road mishap

CHANDPUR, Mar 17: A young motor-cyclist was killed in a road mishap near Koyarpole of Hajiganj thana on Tuesday, police and hospital sources said, reports UNB.

The victim, Sohrab Hossain, 32, was a medical representative of Renata Ltd, who hailed from Chatkhil, Noakhali district.

Sohrab was seriously hurt when a bus hit his motor-cycle on Chandpur-Comilla road in the early morning. He was rushed to the Hajiganj Health Complex where the doctors declared him dead.

Smuggled goods worth Tk 10 lakh recovered

From Our Correspondent  
SATKHIRA, Mar 17: The jawans of 21 Rifles Battalion, Satkhira recovered smuggled goods worth about Taka 10 lakh from different bordering areas of the district during March 12 and 13.

According to local BDR source, smuggled goods amounting to Taka 5 lakh 51 thousand were recovered while being smuggled out of Bangladesh to India on March 13.

Satkhira faces threat of desertification

From Our Correspondent  
SATKHIRA Mar 17: Trees in Satkhira are on the brink of total destruction following the extensive use of fuel-wood in brickfields.

The number of brickfields in seven thanas of Satkhira district is 175. The entire fuel requirement of these fields is met from the local supply of fuel wood.

It is learnt that 25 maunds of fuel is needed to burn one thousand brick. An estimate shows that daily requirement by all the brickfields in over 70 thousand maunds. The figure however goes up by 100 per cent during the pick period from mid January to mid March.

Besides a sizeable portion of the stock is being consumed in domestic use. The indiscriminate felling of trees is going on unabated to meet the demand. The use of woods by carpenters is equally serious.

According to statistics, 16 per cent of the land surface of the district has forest covers. In the 70s and it was 10 per cent in 80s. Now the percentage is drastically reduced with no figure worth mentioning.

A sporadic survey to some rural areas held recently reveals that many villages has become desolate of trees of any kind.

This has been due to logging either by contractors or by the timber merchants.

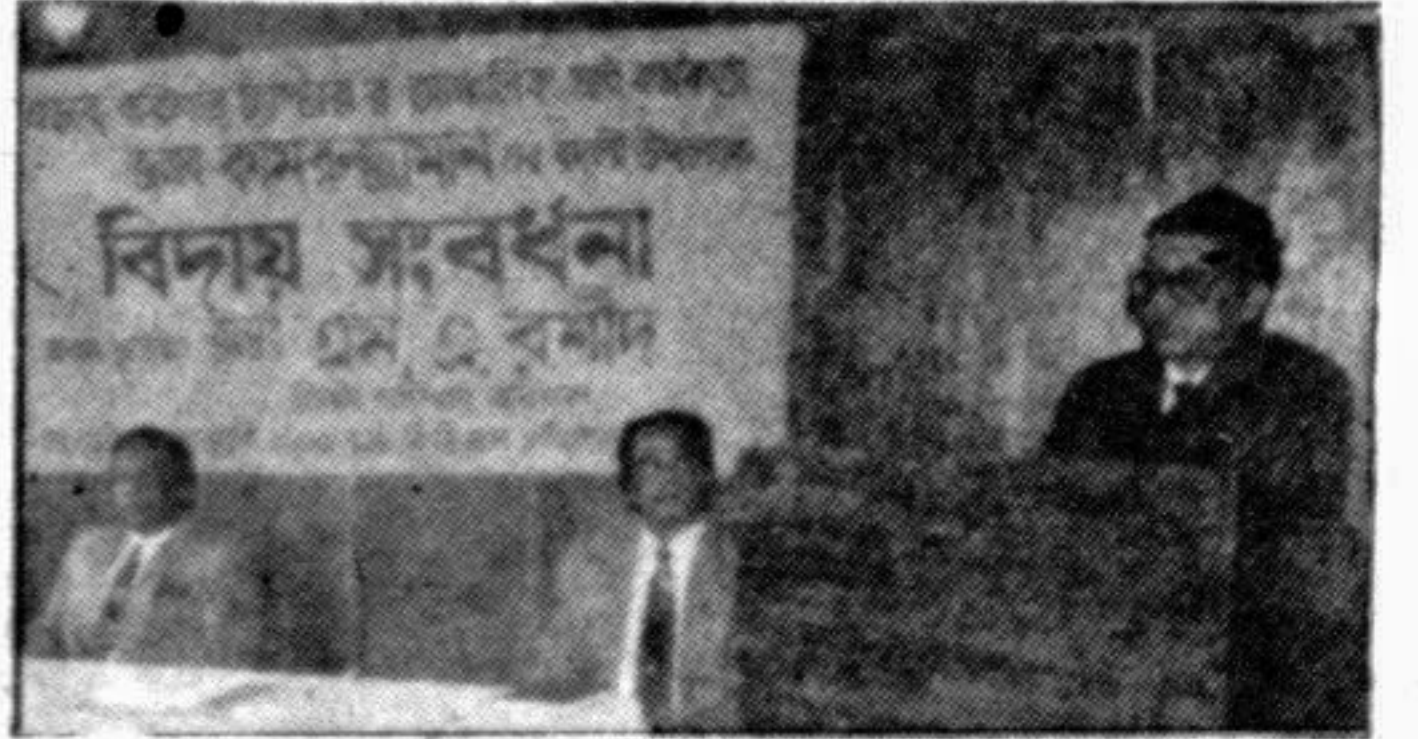
What is surprising is that nobody is found interested to go for afforestation nor they care for the tree plantation programme.

Another report, received here indicates that use of woods in brickfield has increased largely these days quite in defiance of the restrictions imposed by the authority. Departmental personnel are watching the situation as observers, the report said.

When contacted the brickfield owners told that they are fully aware of this order. But non-availability of coal in massive quantity compelled them to opt for wood.

Besides price of coal is exorbitantly high and cost of production would be 100 per cent bricks. The selling rate would be quite excessive and exceed normal purchasing capacity of buyers.

Now to stop the trend of burning wood and protect trees from indiscriminate felling coal in abundant quantity should be imported and its logistic supply ensured at a reasonable cost or else the whole of this part of the country will turn into desert.



BARISAL, M A Rashid, Divisional Commissioner, Barisal Division is addressing as chief guest at the farewell ceremony of the Regional Field Officer of ADAB, Kamruzzaman. — Star photo

Serious drinking water crisis in Gopalganj dist

From Our Correspondent  
GOPALGANJ, Mar 17: The people have been facing the worst crisis of drinking water in the Pourashava area and other parts of Gopalganj district due to failure of supply the minimum required water and proper implementation of "Programme for Pure Drinking Water."

Fifteen per cent of the urban people of Gopalganj Pourashava having one lakh and eight thousand population and 10 per cent of the rural people of thirteen lakh populated Gopalganj district are facilitated with free and tube-well water, respectively.

In different areas of Gopalganj Pourashava the street taps are found disordered for years and the poor urban people are deprived of pure drinking water. The only functioning water treatment plant can meet the demand of nineteen per cent of the poura people. No plan has yet been taken up to meet the crying demand. More over it is learnt that the present supply can be stopped at any moment due to lack of proper repair and maintenance.

There are no sign of tube-well in any villages of Gopalganj district. The worst condition is prevailing in Tungipara Thana. People are to depend on ponds and wells for drinking water and house hold works. As a result they have become vulnerable to water-borne diseases like diarrhoea, dysentery and jaundice. Most of the rural people especially the women has to travel long distance to collect drinking water from tube-wells.

Statistics show that the ratio of per tube well and persons was 1:400 in 1972, which stood 1:220 in 1994. The initiatives taken by the government and local bodies have totally failed to meet the actual demand. The next summer will further aggravate water crisis in the district.

Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) informed The Daily Star that the crying demand for pure drinking water can not be met in the near future as there had been no necessary government allocation.

Resignation of Opposition MPs  
Politics gains momentum in Kushtia

From Our Correspondent  
KUSHTIA, Mar 17: Political activities in Kushtia are gaining momentum with various political leaders busy trying to secure tickets of the major political parties for contesting the four parliamentary seats in the district in the next general elections.

Following the resignations by the opposition MPs, the political climate here has warmed with many new faces announcing their arrival on the political scene in the belief that Parliament elections are round the corner.

Out of four seats in Kushtia, Abdul Awal Mia from Awami League (AL) won the last election from constituency No. 4 and other three seats were secured by BNP.

Except Jamaat, three other main parties BNP, AL, JP are facing difficult time with internal strife. Leaders of these parties are yet to make decision on the nomination of their respective party candidates.

According to local leaders, Awami League is facing very difficult situation in giving nomination in four constituencies because none among the candidates seem to be fit to win the election.

There are two 'AL' candidates in constituency No. 4. If one is given nomination another will oppose and likely to work against him giving opportunity for others to win. In constituency No. 3, Awami League candidate is likely to be Anwar Yusuf, it is learnt.

was selected candidate in last election whose popularity was found to be very poor as he failed to get enough votes. Taking this opportunity a Tobacco industrialist has stepped in politics joining Awami League as his party though he is not at all popular nevertheless, he is still likely to get ticket from AL for contesting the coming parliament election depending on how much money he can spend.

There are different opinion on giving nomination to the industrialist. Many doubt that as he is not very popular he may not be able to compete with his rivals who ever she/he may be.

The choice of party for the nomination has been strongly criticised.

In Constituency 2 and 1 AL has not yet finalised candidates. However, in general it is likely that AL will not be able to go into strong competition as there are no active AL politicians working in the areas.

BNP is also facing difficult situation in giving nomination to candidate in Constituency No. 4. Mehdi Ahmed Rumi was defeated in last election with a big margin of votes. JSD candidate, Noor Alam Ziku lost the seat with a very low margin in the Constituencies. According to a source who asked not to be named, Ziku has not made up his mind whether to

join BNP this too. Md. Shahidullah who served T & T Board who is on retirement is reportedly trying to win nomination for the Constituency from BNP.

In Constituency No 4 there are 2 lakh 13 thousand 60 voters.

Advocate Rezaul Huq Mia of Jatiya Party, Shohrabuddin of Jamaat, Noor Alam Ziku of JSD, Abdul Awal Mia and Abul Hossain Tarun of Awami League are the likely candidates contesting for Constituency No 4.

In Constituency No 3 (Kushtia sadar) the present MP Abdul Khaled Chantoo of BNP is likely to get BNP ticket again. But the District BNP Organising Secretary, Alhaz Shorabuddin, District BNP Secretary Advocate Azizur Rahman may also seek BNP nomination, it is learnt.

Zafarullah Khan Chowdhury former upazilla Chairman is the likely candidate from Jatiya Party contesting for the seat. Besides, Barrister Amirul Islam of Gono Forum, Dr. Anisur Rahman of Jamaat, Kazi Raisul Huq Masuk of Ganantra Party, Noor Alam Bakul of Workers Party, Prof. Sirajul Islam of Khelafat Majlis are the likely candidates for this Constituency No 3. Awami League candidate is likely to be Anwar Yusuf, it is learnt.

In Constituency No 2 comprising Mirpur and Bheramara, there are 2 lakh 23 thousand 849 voters. There several candidates who are already seeking for nomination from AL. The Awami League Thana Secretary, Shaiful Islam Kubbas (Bheramara), Advocate Abu Zafar Siddique (Mirpur), District Krasak League Secretary, Liaquat Ali (Mirpur), former BNP Minister who later joined Awami League, Barrister Abdul Huq are interested candidates all of who wish to grab AL ticket.

The BNP Zilla President Prof. Shahidul Islam (Bheramara) and present MP Abdur Roud Chowdhury (Mirpur), both of whom are seeking BNP nomination for the seat.

The Jatiya Party possible candidate for the seat is former MP Ahsan Habib Lincin. The JSD (Inu) candidate is Hasanul Huq Inu (Bheramara). Jamaat candidate for this seat is former MP Amir Abdul Wahed (Mirpur). A former Ambassador, Rezaul Karim may also contest the election as an independent candidate from the constituency.

In Kushtia 1 constituency consisting of Daulatpur thana there are 2 lakh 5 thousand 340 voters. There will be close fight between Jatiya Party candidate, former State Minister, Korban Ali. Present BNP, MP Ashanul Huq Pacha Molla.

Two parties call meeting at same venue, same time, clash feared

From Our Correspondent  
GAIBANDHA, Mar 17: A tense situation is prevailing in Daryapur area six kilometre off Gaibandha over a prospective meeting of Jamaat-e-Islami and Ghatak Dal Nirmul Committee.

A meeting of Jamaat scheduled to hold on March 18 at Daryapur high school ground where Nirmul Committee has called a counter meeting.

Supporters of both groups are taking preparation to counter each other. The possibility of a fierce, clash has created a tense situation in the area.

Five hurt as students clash in Jhenidah

JHENIDAH, Mar 17: At least five students of Kotchandpur Government College were injured, one seriously, in a clash between the two rival groups on Tuesday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said, the activists of pro-government Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and left leaning Jatiya Chhatra Dal clashed over a previous enquiry.

Both the groups, equipped with lathi and iron rod attacked and chased each other in the campus for an hour. Later, police on information rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Of the injured, college unit president of JCD Aminul Islam was admitted to the local health complex.

Four drown in Betna boat capsized

SATKHIRA, Mar 17: At least four people drowned when a mechanised boat capsized in Betna river in Ashashuni thana of the district Thursday evening, reports UNB.

Local sources said the boat carrying at least 40 people sank near Bodhaha, about 9 kilometre from the district headquarters.

Four bodies has been recovered by local people, the source said.

They apprehended that the death toll from the mishap might be higher as rescue workers continued search for other passengers still missing. Rescue operation was going on till filling this report.

IDB chief visits IIT

GAZIPUR, Mar 17: Visiting Vice-President of Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Enam Ahmed Chowdhury visited the Islamic Institute of Technology, IIT (formerly ICTVTR) a subsidiary organ of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) on Thursday, said an IIT press release, reports BSS.

Director General of the Institute apprised him of the objectives and various activities of the institute and progress made so far for developing it as a centre of excellence for the services of the Islamic Umma.

During discussion, the IDB vice president showed keen interest in the programmes and activities of the institute. He noted with satisfaction that IIT was rendering a commendable service towards Islamic solidarity and cooperation.

The Director General requested the IDB vice-president to help the institute in improving its infrastructural facilities to increase its capacity and introduction of rare technologies, and in particular for the construction of one academic building and one residential hall.

The Director General also requested IDB to persuade the member states of the OIC to pay their mandatory contributions to the institute regularly.

Farmers' Police clash over sale of fertilizer

RANGPUR, Mar 17: Some 200 farmers were injured in a clash with police during a demonstration for fertilizer in station area of Rangpur Kotwali and Mithapukur thana headquarters, Wednesday, reports UNB.

Thirty seriously injured farmers were admitted to different hospitals while the rest were released after first-aid, witnesses said.

Police allegedly started to baton-charge the farmers, demonstrating on demand for fertilizer.

Huge farmers stood in line since early hours for fertilizer, but the dealers stopped selling after the sale to a few farmers.

The protesters said the dishonest dealers sell fertilizer in black market. Urea sells between Tk 430 and Tk 450 at present in different hats and bazars of the district against its fixed price at Tk 230 per 50-kg bag.

Seven held while removing cement from bags for marketing

CHITTAGONG, Mar 17: Seven person, including two businessmen were arrested Tuesday from Majhirhat in Doublemuring thana while repacking spurious cement, reports UNB.

Police said, in the godowns of Samata Traders and Nurani Enterprise, Chinese Bullhead cement was replaced with locally-made Rubi Cement with six kg cement removed from each bag.

Detective Branch police, on a tip-off, made a raid and nabbed Bashir Ahmed, the owner of Nurani Enterprise, and Akram Hossain of Samata Traders, along with five employees of the two shops.

A case has been filed with Doublemuring thana in this connection.

Arms recovered in Chittagong

CHITTAGONG, Mar 17: A special team of Raajan police recovered some arms and ammunition left behind by a group of miscreants at village Vinajuri in the early hours Thursday, reports BSS.

According to district police, when members of the team were returning from a drive they found a group of people sitting under a banyan tree. Sensing the police presence, the miscreants fled away leaving behind their arms and ammunition. Later police recovered one foreign-made single barrel gun, one country-made light gun, one country-made pipe gun and three rounds of bullet from the spot, the sources said.

Moslem murder case: Main accused granted bail

From Our Correspondent  
KHULNA, Mar 17: Ershad Ali Sikder, KCC Commissioner elected from ward no-15 and main accused in the sensational 'Moslem murder case' was granted bail by the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Wednesday afternoon.

The accused, reportedly a supporter of the ruling party and president of Skid ghat banding workers union, was at large after another KCC commissioner elected from ward no-15, Moslemuddin Khan, was shot dead on February 25 this year.

The deceased was a prominent labour leader and an activist of the Awami League.

The court also granted bail recently to two other BNP activists — Liton and Abdur Rahman — also accused in this murder case.



SYLHET: Begum Fatema Chowdhury MP, distributing sarees among poor women at Tajpur of Balaganj thana recently. — Star photo

Fate of Khowai project uncertain

From Staff Correspondent  
SYLHET, Mar 17: The Khowai project to save crop land from flood water of more than 50,000 acres of land and to provide additional irrigation facilities for 20,000 acres of land, remains abandoned for quite some time. The estimated cost of the project was about Tk 39.41 crore out of which Tk 39 crore has already been spent for the purpose and the concerned authorities are still not quite sure when would the project be completed if it ever starts.

Due to the incomplete stage of the project it has threatened about five lakh people and two lakh acres of Boro and Aman paddy fields of five thanas under Habiganj district every year. The misery goes extreme during the monsoon every year, as repeated floods caused by the heavy pressure of onrush of water from the upper stream of the hilly areas of Tripura across the border in India.

The works of the project began in 1970-71 with a view to saving fifty thousand acres of crop land from the floods and for providing additional irrigation facilities for twenty thousand acres every year. The targeted expenditure of the project was fixed at Taka 39 crore 41 lakh 25 thousand. It was scheduled to be completed by the year 1981-82. But, works could not be started properly due to the liberation war and the crippled economy during the post-liberation period.

Later, in 1976 it was decided to complete the project works with financial assistance from the Asian Development Bank by 1981-82. Accordingly the works in the second phase began and progressed to a considerably stage, however, it could not be completed. The ADB extended the time-limit and asked for completing the works by 1986-87 fiscal. Unfortunately, this time, too the authorities concerned failed to complete the works of the project. ADB then stopped its aid for completion of the project. Since then, the project remained abandoned.

Later, the Water Development Board (WDB) reviewed the project and estimated Taka 171 crore 8 lakh as expenditure for the project. But, execution of project remained uncertain as the government is yet to arrange necessary funds for the project.

The Water Development Board allegedly performed a very poor maintenance works on the project, until 1992-93. Official sources informed that, the total amount spent for the ambitious project so far stands at over Taka 30 crore from the new estimated budget. It includes construction of 84 kilometres long embankment, acquiring of 605.3 hectares of land, protection of six kilometre-long river bank and loop cutting at eight points. Whereas, it was in the original plan to construct 126 kilometre-long embankment. Besides, 1,424 hectares of land were also to be acquired for the project. Works of the targeted 59-kilometre long irrigation drains, 105-kilometre long irrigation water outlet drain, and establishment of an irrigation pump is yet to begin.

Works on this vitally important project has remained totally abandoned since July 1993. It causes large-scale damage to the standing crops on at least two lakh acres of land in Chunarughat, Bahubal, Banichang, Habiganj and Lakhal thanas every year.

Fertilizer prices up in Kushtia

KUSHTIA, Mar 17: Prices of chemical fertilizers have shot up despite satisfactory stock with the traders in the district, reports UNB.

According to local farmers per bag urea is being sold between Tk 350 and 400 at different hats and bazars as against its fixed price Tk 230. Similarly, TSP is being sold between Tk 425 and 450 and MP between Tk 350 and 370. Prices of Zimsum is also doubled from Tk 100 to 200.

It is alleged that a section of dishonest traders and stockists have enhanced the prices of fertilizers creating artificial crisis in the advent of Iri-boro season for grabbing more profit.

The soaring price of fertilizers is hampering the cultivation of Iri-boro in the current season as most of the farmers cannot afford to buy the fertilizers.

One killed as tempo plunge into ditch

From Staff Correspondent  
SYLHET, Mar 17: One person was killed and 12 others were injured when a tempo turned turtle into a road side ditch on Shahbajpur-Barlekha road on Tuesday.

The victim Ashraf Ahmed hailed from Golapganj thana. Among the injured, nine have been admitted into the Barlekha Thana Health Complex. The driver of the tempo had been absconding. A case has been registered with Barlekha thana.

10 kw radio station in Barisal soon

From Staff Correspondent  
BARISAL, Mar 17: A 10 kw medium wave radio station will be constructed in Barisal soon.

Two crore taka has been already been allocated in the Annual Development Programme (ADP) for this project during this financial year official sources said.

Meanwhile for this project 18.77 acres of land has been acquired at Rupatali along the Barisal-Jhalakathi highway.

According to official sources, to complete the project 18.50 crore taka will be spent in total including 6.50 crore taka foreign exchange component.

Tk 4.2 lakh for development of nurseries in Bhola

BHOLA, Mar 17: The government has sanctioned Tk 4.20 lakh for the 'thana agriculture nursery development project' of the district during the current fiscal year, reports UNB.

According to the local Agriculture Extension Department (AED), agriculture nursery project of sadar, Tojumuddin and Charfashion thanas would be developed in three phases under Southern District Agriculture Development Project.

About 50,000 new saplings will be produced in each thana under the project. The saplings include fruit-bearing trees, teaks and other trees for use as firewood.



JESSORE: Civil-Surgeon M Amjad Hossain, distributing fruits among patients of Jessore General Hospital on 132th birth anniversary of Swami Vibekananda.

Bees fleeing Sundarbans

From our Correspondent  
SATKHIRA Mar 17: Swarms of bees have been crossing the border from the Sundarbans in quest of safer place. This is due to extensive extraction of honey without proper steps for conservation.

As a result honey output in the Sundarbans has dropped significantly.

According to an estimate about 5000 maunds of honey is produced in the Sundarbans annually.

A part from being nutritious food, honey is a basic raw material for pharmaceutical industry. When contacted a veteran honey collector regretted that unchecked destruction of forest through felling of trees was mainly responsible for considerable decrease in the number of honey combs. He said honey combs are mostly found in the dense forest. As

bees do not like to be disturbed.

The expert said that rock bees known for their poisonous stings find it convenient to build hives in the branches of trees, ceilings of building and in gardens and groves. People due to their ignorance drive these bees away from their honey combs.

The Sundarbans is abundant in wild bees.

But due to shortage of suitable accommodation for building colonies in the Sundarbans bee have migrated in swarms for forest of West Bengal India.

Experts have suggested that part of the forest should be reserved for developing apiculture scientifically.

The primitive methods of extracting honey from the hives by using smoke should be strictly prohibited, he added.