

### Eight receive serious burn injuries in 2 fire incidents

BHOLA, Mar 19: A devastating fire that broke out at Char Kossopia village in Lalmona thana on Monday gutted property worth Tk 17 lakh, reports UNB.

According to police, six people who tried to extinguish the fire received burn injuries. The fire originating from a kitchen of one Ali Ahmad Bepari, soon engulfed the adjacent houses.

Twenty-one dwelling houses and 22 cow-sheds were charred. Of the injured, Tazal Islam, 35, has been admitted to Sadar Health Complex where his condition was stated to be critical.

In another fire incident at a hotel in Charfission Bazar on the same day, two hotel boys were seriously injured and property worth of Tk 25,000 was destroyed.

Police said, the injured people Kanai, 37, and Rashid, 27, were admitted to Charfission Thana Hospital.

### Sec 144 in Beanibazar

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Mar 19: Section 144 has been imposed at the thana headquarters of Beanibazar. It will remain in force till March 23. A tense situation had been prevailing there after a series of clashes between the activists of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (S-P) and the Islami Chhatra Shibir in the Beanibazar Government College during the last few days. At least fifteen persons were injured in the clashes.

The two sides convened protest meetings in the New Market area today. But the meetings could not be held as the police imposed Section 144 apprehending further deterioration in the law and order situation.

Police arrested the secretary, college unit of Chhatra Shibir and a first year BA student today with a dagger in his possession.

The Chhatra League has lodged a case against 21 activists of the Islami Chhatra Shibir while the Chhatra Shibir also lodged a case against the rivals.

### One killed in Barisal road mishap

BARISAL, Mar 19: A middle-aged woman was killed when a passenger-bus knocked her down near Shikarpur ferry ghat on the Barisal-Faridpur highway on Saturday, police and hospital sources said, reports UNB.

The victim Biva Rani, 45, died on the spot. The body has been sent to the Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital for post-mortem.

Biva was waiting by the side of the road to hire a rickshaw.

The driver along with the bus, however, managed to escape from the scene.

### Move to develop forest in Tangail

TANGAIL, Mar 19: Forest Department has taken up a programme to raise 830 hectares of woods and 520 hectares of agro-forests this year in the Tangail district at a cost of Tk 1.30 crore, reports BSS.

Official sources said that the forests will be developed in six forest ranges of the district.

The ranges are Hateya, Bashtail, Baheratal, Dhalapara, Madhupur National Garden headquarter range and Dhopakhola.

In Hateya, Baheratal and Dhalapara ranges both woodlot and agro-forest will be developed where as in Bashtail only woodlot while in Madhupur National Garden headquarter and in Dhopakhola ranges agro-forest will be raised, the source added.

### Three killed in separate road mishaps

BRAHMANBARIA, Mar 19: Two children and an old man were killed in separate road accidents here, police said, reports UNB.

According to witnesses, Altaf Ali, 80, was run over by a speedy truck at Chandura bus stand near the town while he along with his wife was waiting for a bus on Thursday.

In another incident on Friday Suman, 10, and Badai Miah, 9, were crushed under the wheels of a Brahmanbaria bound micro-bus near Radhika bus stand in sadar thana on Friday.

Police, however, seized the truck and the micro-bus, but both the drivers and helpers managed to escape.

Two cases were lodged with the police.

## Little chance of achieving boro output target in Rangpur-Dinajpur

From Our Correspondent

RANGPUR, Mar 19: Boro farming is facing a set back following acute scarcity and price-hike of urea and irrigation water all over the eight districts of greater Rangpur and Dinajpur zones.

According to the Agriculture Extension Department, there was a target to put three lakh four thousand hectares of land under boro cultivation in these zones during the current season. But, so far hardly 70% per cent land have been brought under cultivation, although the proper period for its farming has already elapsed.

The total requirement of urea for boro farming in these zones is around 60 thousand metric tonnes, but the government has so far supplied only 15 thousand metric tonnes, according to officials.

With the meagre supply of urea through government agencies and its faulty distribution procedures, the farmers could not purchase the urea bags at fair prices.

In the blackmarkets, urea is now found available at much higher rates between Taka 400 and 500 per bag (50 kg) as against Taka 215 per bag fixed.

There are at least 5000 to 6000 deep and shallow tubewells which are not functioning largely due to abnormal fall in ground water level. Moreover, innumerable ponds, canals and rivers have already dried up following sharp dropping of underground water level in the zone. The price of irrigation water in the meantime, enhanced in these districts.

All these bottlenecks have been threatening the prospect of boro crop production, as the poor and marginal farmers are facing much difficulties to arrange additional money for purchasing fertilizers and irrigation water at higher rates in the days of economic crisis.

It may be noted that with the failure of aman crop output in the same area due to drought, government undertook a massive boro farming programme to make up for the crop loss and meet food shortage in the northern districts.

But there are apprehensions that the target of boro farming would be in similar situation.

Our Correspondent from Gaibandha says: Fertilizer crisis has taken a serious turn in the district during this current season. Peasants are to procure urea fertilizer at much higher rates at Tk 420 per 50 kg bag.

Creating artificial crisis a section of student alliances and political activists appeared as middlemen for dealing fertilizer who allegedly are asking much higher rates for the bags of urea.

Facing acute necessity of urea fertilizer farmers who cultivated IRRi and boro crops launched protest procession, surrounded and barricaded roads in support of opposition political alliances demanding supply of fertilizer at fair price.

Assuming bleak future of IRRi-boro crop output due to fertilizer crisis a section of peasants became unruly and looted fertilizer creating barricade on highway and gheraod

DC and TNO offices to restore proper supply of adequate fertilizer.

This year, a total of 67,500 hectares of land was brought under IRRi-boro cultivation scheme in the district. Requirement of Urea fertilizer was estimated at 12,000 metric tons. Local fertilizer dealers placed requisite bank draft with BCIC for supply of 7,500 metric tons of Urea but he said quota is yet to be reached here in the district.

Besides, the Deputy Commissioner, Gaibandha put forwarded an emergency supply of 5,000 tons of fertilizer from BCIC to meet the existing crisis, however, until today, DC received only 1305 metric tons of urea. On high demand of Urea, the district administration could not distribute the said fertilizer due to over powering and undue interference by middlemen. As a result maximum stock of urea were sold out in the blackmarket at high prices.

Our Correspondent from Chuadanga adds: Severe fertilizer crisis is prevailing throughout Chuadanga district affecting boro cultivation in the district. The government is, however, trying hard to tackle the situation. At present urea is being sold between Taka 295 and 300 per bag while TSP is being sold at between Taka 440 and 450.00 per bag in the local markets.

The government rate of Urea per bag is Taka 235 and TSP Tk 379.00 per bag. The fertilizer is reportedly not available in the local markets in sufficient quantity. The government has supplied only 115 metric tons of urea and 640 bags of TSP in four thanas of the district between Feb 22 and March 5 this year.

During the current boro cultivation season the Agriculture Extension Department has fixed a target to bring 15071 hectares of land under boro cultivation in the district, but the cultivation of boro is facing severe setback due to fertilizer crisis.

Though the Agriculture Extension Department is expecting to achieve the cultivation target of boro crop but the farmers of the district are not at all confident saying a very poor yield of boro production is expected in the district.

Fertilizer crisis is one of the main factors hampering the boro production.

The cultivation of boro in the current season in Chuadanga district is near completion. In the meantime, the boro cultivators of the district have urged upon the government to ensure adequate supply of fertilizer throughout Chuadanga district to achieve the target of boro production and save the boro cultivators from getting poor yield.

The government has meanwhile made arrangement to supply fertilizer among the boro cultivators of the district through the respective Thana Nirbahi Officers (TNOs) of four thanas of the district. The fertilizer supplied by the government in the district is insufficient, it is alleged.

and other reputed places. Lacks of maunds of goods were carried by boats, launches and steamers through this river.

But with change of time, the fate of river Kumar changed too. Now-a-days during Bengali month 'Magh' Kumar goes almost dry. Launches, big-boats even small boats cannot sail in the river as big shoals (char) have developed at several places blocking the navigational routes.

Sources said, due to heavy siltation near Chapaigachhi beel, Kumar became waterless

as Dakua river has been silted long ago. The width of Kumar has been gradually decreasing. This was created for the benefit of Ganges-Kobadak (GK) Irrigation Project between 1963 and 1965, a source said. As a result, river Kumar is deprived of water from river Dakua and Kali, the main source of water for the river.

The source added that no dredging work was done in last 30 years. Siltation continued in the river. At least 25 to 30 feet water was available in Kumar. Though huge acres of land are used farming in dry

seasons but the total ecosystem of the region surrounding the river has changed due to drastic fall in water level.

Few years back when the river carried sufficient water there was joy of life all over the colourful boats running round the year, little children plying by the both sides of the river and the people living on the both sides of the river enjoyed catching fish from the river. But it seems lifeless now. Everything seem to have stopped — perhaps the river has died.

Harinakundu thana in Jhenidah district and Alamdanga thana of Chuadanga district.

'Kumar' later was joined with river 'Kali' near Garaganj in Saikupa thana of Jhenidah district. Kumar, once again much later was connected to river Chitra near Gazirhat in Narail district crossing Magura district.

Another branch of Gorai joined with river 'Dakua' at Jaduboyra in Kamarkhal thana in Kushtia district which ultimately joined with Kumar near

JHENIDAH, Mar 19: The river Kumar, once said to have very strong current, has almost vanished leaving little sign to identify it today. The river has been drying very fast over the years as water flow from two other rivers, the main sources of water, has almost stopped threatening navigation.

'Kumar river' once had the strongest current. It stretched more than one hundred forty-four kilometres in length. Originating from river Mathabhangha of river 'Padma, Kumar used to flow through Chapaigachhi beel in,

JHENIDAH: The dried up bed of river, Kumar as seen near Kalispur Bridge in Saikupa thana of Jhenidah district.

— Star photo

600 bags of urea seized in Khulna: 7 arrested

KHULNA, Mar 19: Police arrested seven black marketers and seized 600 bags of urea fertilizer from Pach Ghat area here today, reports UNB.

Acting on a tip, a vigilance team led by a magistrate seized a fertilizer-loaded burge M V Evana and two trucks containing 600 bags of urea this afternoon. Police arrested the seven people from the spot.

Sources, however, said some 500 metric tons of Urea was brought from Chittagong by the burge of United Stars Shipping Line five days ago. The fertilizer was sanctioned for the farmers of Noapara in Jessore.

The details of the incident could not be known immediately but police suspect that the rest of the fertilizer was sold in black-market. A case was registered with the Khulna Police Station.

Two killed, 32 hurt in road mishap

TANGAIL, Mar 19: Two persons were allegedly killed and 32 others were injured in a road accident occurred recently near Mirzapur bridge on Dhaka-Tangail highway, reports BSS.

The accident occurred when a Dhaka bound minibus fell in to a road side ditch. Mobarak Hossain, 40, a passenger of the bus was killed on the spot and Abdul Haque, 30, the driver of the bus died on the way to hospital.

Anwar emphatically said the elected government of BNP could never be dethroned from power by hatching conspiracy.

Presided over by Group Captain (ret'd) Habibur Rahman, the meeting was addressed, among others, by local BNP, Jubodol, JCD leaders. Earlier, the Shipping Minister formally inaugurated the new building of Dulalpur union family welfare centre built at a cost of Taka 14 lakh and the new building of Dulalpur Chandramani High School which costed Taka eight lakh. He also opened the office of Dulalpur Union Parishad and a Dakhil Madrassah.

Anwar also addressed a public meeting at the Rampur madrassah premises.

MANIKGANJ, Mar 19: Authorities of the Mohadevpur Degree College suspended all classes for the next three days following armed clashes between two factions of the JCD on the campus today, reports UNB.

The decision was taken after an emergency meeting with the Academic Council to avoid any further untoward incident.

The clash between the groups over establishing supremacy on the campus erupted at around 11:15 am which left at least 8 people injured.

The feuding groups shot at least 10 rounds of bullets and exploded crackers in the college compound.

Tension is prevailing on the campus. A GD was filed with Shibalaya thana in this connection.

## Space problem in Gaibandha Sub-Jail, prisoners suffer

From Our Correspondent

GAIBANDHA, Mar 19: Constnction of Gaibandha district Jail became uncertain as land acquired believed to be not enough.

The existing Sub-Jail situated in the heart of Gaibandha town has been facing multiple problems since long. The inmates of Sub-Jail are living in a congested space. The present capacity of the Jail is about 114 prisoners. Of that 107 are male and remaining seven are female prisoners. But sometimes the number of prisoners doubles multiplying the existing problems. Besides, shortage of space is acute for the Jail Super, Doctor, Pharmacist and Jail Subeder office. They have neither any office space nor any residential quarters. Jailor performs his duties in the visitor's corridor. Moreover the main gate and the passage is very narrow. A prisoner van cannot even enter the security gate. The van has to wait near the main road.

There is no scope of extension of the Sub-Jail in the present location as all the available space around the jail have already been occupied by the businessmen. So renovating Gaibandha Sub-Jail into a district Jail could not be possible.

The suffering of the inmates of Gaibandha Sub-Jail worsen during the rainy season. After a heavy shower, water accumulates in the Jail compound and remained stagnant for long time. Quite often rain and flood water enters the prisoner's cells which create much suffering for the inmates. Occasionally fire brigades has to be called to remove rain water.

The Sub-Jail of Gaibandha was first constructed on an acre of land with only one ward when the population of the area was negligible. Now the population of the district has increased over 22 lakh.

Due to space problem adequate handicraft or other work programmes could not be introduced for the prisoner of rigorous imprisonment. The town dwellers on different occasions have been placing demand for shifting of Gaibandha Jail and upgrading it to a standard district Jail.

In 1992-93 fiscal year Public Works Department (PWD) undertook a programme for the construction of Gaibandha district Jail. For this purpose a site has already been selected at Dhanghara, two kilometres from Gaibandha town. Taka eight crore 19 lakh was also allotted for the implementation of the programme. The same year a fund of Tk 75 lakh was sanctioned for the implementation of preliminary works. Of the total Tk 25 lakh fixed for the acquisition of adequate land and Tk 50 lakh earmarked for infrastructure of the programme.

As per existing rules, at least six acres of land is required for the construction of district Jail. But the district administration could not make the acquisition of the said land as it was beyond their jurisdiction.

Accordingly district administration made series of correspondences with the Ministry of Land seeking permission for the acquisition of six acres of land.

SATKHIRA, Mar 19: In an anti-smuggling drive on Monday Bangladesh Rifles seized smuggled Indian goods worth Tk 9 lakh from different border areas in Kalaroa and Debhata thanas of the district, reports UNB.

According to official sources, BDR jawans of 21st battalion also arrested two people in this connection. They were sent to jail hazat.

The goods including Indian cloth, phensidyl syrup, machinery parts were deposited with the local customs godown.

BSS adds, law enforcing agency has seized huge quantity of machinery parts worth Taka 15 lakh from Koyra river near the border recently.

A group of smugglers were carrying the items from Bangladesh to India. The items included motor parts and motors.

Local people urged the government to establish more primary schools in the district to eradicate illiteracy.

The progress in boosting literacy rate is very slow as the number of students and the attendance is very poor.

Due to poor communication facilities, school children can not regularly attend their classes.

On the other hand, most of the government primary schools have only one or two teachers who teach up to class two or three.

The Universal Primary Education Programme has not been started in remote areas of the district due to lack of proper direction and management.

Of the total 389 schools, 339 are government, and the rest are non-government primary level madrasahs, Pallitools and UNICEF assisted residential primary schools.

There are a lot of obstacles in the way of imparting education in the district. A vast portion of the district is covered with dense forest and remain uninhabited while the remaining areas of the district are so sparsely populated that it is very difficult to establish schools here on the basis of population.

The progress in boosting literacy rate in the district appears very poor as about two lakh people are unable to read and write their own names, reports UNB.

In the remote areas, there are no primary schools. Children of these areas have to receive elementary education from Pallitools attached to the Buddhist monasteries.

According to a recent survey conducted by a social welfare organisation, only 6.1 per cent people in Patharghata thana are literate.

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