

One sentenced to life for throwing acid on schoolgirl

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Feb 9: The Additional District and Sessions Judge of Habiganj Mohammad Ullah while passing his judgement in a case found one person guilty and sentenced him to suffer life-term imprisonment on charge of throwing acid on a schoolgirl.

The prosecution case in brief is that Nilu Rani Das, daughter of one Digendra Mohan Das of village Chakra Mohan and a student of Sukripura High School of Habiganj Sadar thana while was studying in her village house on May 9 of 1994, one Rafique Miah of the same village threw acid on her due to previous grudge. Being seriously injured, she was admitted into the hospital. Later a case was registered with the Habiganj sadar thana. The police after holding investigations submitted chargesheet against the accused person.

The court after examining all the records and witnesses, passed the said judgement.

Bus conductor killed in road accident

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Feb 9: A conductor of a minibus was killed in a road mishap at a place named Basina under Bahubol thana on Dhaka-Sylhet Highway on Saturday.

The minibus, Mitai Paribahan, the carrier of different national newspapers was on its way to Sylhet having started from the capital. Was hit by a speeding tractor. The victim, Syed Maksud Ali, 25 died on the spot.

A case in this connection was lodged.

12 houses gutted in Cox's Bazar

COX'S BAZAR, Feb 9: A fire which broke out at Airport Road near Mahila College here Friday gutted 12 houses including nine shops, reports BSS.

Ten persons also received minor injury in the incident. Local fire services personnel said that the fire originated from an oven in one of the houses.

Young housewife commits suicide

HABIGANJ, Feb 9: A young housewife allegedly committed suicide by taking poison at a village in Sadar thana of the district last week, reports UNB.

The victim, identified as Minu Begum, age 22, wife of one Faruqul Mia of Nagar village, poured poison into her mouth at the residence soon after her husband's death.

She was rushed to sadar hospital where the attending doctors declared her dead. The reason behind the suicide could not be known.

One killed in road mishap

MEHERPUR, Feb 9: A man was killed in a road accident at Bhatpara bridge in Gangni thana on Monday last, reports UNB.

Babor Ali, 45, of Kaliganj in sadar thana died on the spot when a Kathuli bound truck from Gangni hit his bicycle from behind.

Local people handed over the driver and the truck to the police. A case was filed.

Another report says: Anti-election activists damaged loudspeakers of a meeting which was being held for election campaign of BNP candidate Abdul Gani who is contesting from Meherpur-2.

Earlier on January 29, another loudspeaker was damaged by the anti-election activists and police arrested four of them in this connection.

Arms hunt 17 firearms recovered in Cox's Bazar

COX'S BAZAR, Feb 9: Law-enforcing agencies recovered 17 firearms from different parts of Chokoria thana Monday, the 47th day of the country-wide hunt for illegal arms, reports UNB.

Police said during the drive, they also arrested 143 people from seven thanas of the district.

Steamer Gazi salvaged, sent to dockyard

BARISAL, Feb 9: Rocket steamer PS Gazi has been salvaged from char Baushia and sent to Narayanangj Dockyard for necessary repair on Tuesday last, reports UNB.

Gazi ran aground at the sandy char and kept fog last January 20 when it was coming to Dhaka from Barisal with 100 passengers on board.

The body of the 235-metre-long steamer, which was built in 1950, developed a crack and water entered into it when it ran aground at the char.

Election campaigns in districts dull

By Mizan Ali back from Sunamganj

Feb 9: With less than a week to go for the forthcoming general elections, campaigns for the individual candidates seem to be very dull hardly showing any enthusiasm in Sunamganj town and its neighbouring areas.

The Bazar crossing of the town, a popular site for electioneering activities, stands desolate with no election speech, frenzied campaign by activists or loudspeakers blaring the names of the candidates.

The town's street-side walls are clean this time with no posters or graffiti portraying the election symbols of the local candidates. No candidates were seen to have established their election offices in the town and its adjoining areas.

In some places, workers of some candidates are seen canvassing for the candidates through loudspeakers and calling out the voters to cast ballots in their favour.

The canvassing was rather drab and colourless, said some student activists, pointing it out that no candidates so far had organised any rally or procession.

BNP, AL activists clash, 10 injured

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Feb 9: At least ten persons were injured in a clash between the activists of Awami League and BNP at Bishwanath thana headquarters yesterday afternoon.

A group of opposition workers attacked the BNP office in the afternoon. Police immediately reached the spot and dispersed the activists. After some time, the Awami League office also came under attack by the BNP activists. They also set the office on fire.

There ensued a clash, and counter-chasing between the rival groups. As many as ten persons were injured in the half an hour clash. Police has been deployed in the thana headquarters.

SSC vocational educational programme introduced

JHALOKATHI, Feb 9: Government has introduced SSC (vocational) educational programme in a bid to produce trained manpower to meet the growing demand in the mills and factories in the country as well as export, reports UNB.

The education, which includes general and technical aspects, has been introduced in 14 non-government schools of 61 districts, excluding Noakhali, Bandarban and Khagrachari, in the current session, official sources here said.

Of them, 55 are girls schools. Some 2,560 boys and 1,740 girls will get admission to these schools.

The division-wise breakup of the schools are: Dhaka-32, Chittagong-15, Rajshahi-28, Khulna-18, Barisal-12 and Sylhet-9.

Students will be admitted in five trade courses. These are General Maintenance, Agro Food, Dress Making and Tailoring, Food Processing and Building Maintenance.

Students who passed class VIII or Junior Dakhil will be allowed to get themselves admitted in class IX.

After completion of SSC course they will be able to get admission in higher class or start their professional carrier.

Two held with pipe gun

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Feb 9: The Sylhet police arrested two persons and recovered one pipe gun from their possession in the midnight following Friday last. An official source informed this correspondent that at about 11-30 in the night the said two youngsters while taking tea at a restaurant, a police party on suspicion challenged them. At one stage the police recovered a pipe gun from them. The arrested persons are Ahmed, 20 of Sonapara Sylhet town and Alim Miah, 17 of Sultan Mohammadpur of sadar thana.

A case under Arms Act has been registered with the Sylhet Kotwali police station.

Tribals urge govt to allot land

BANDARBAN, Feb 9: The leaders of Mro and Khumi tribes of the district last Sunday urged the government to allot five acres of land per family to maintain their livelihood recently, reports UNB.

The leaders in a grand conference held near the Chimbuk hill in Sadar thana said they were the most backward and poor tribes of the district.

They said the poor tribals cannot compete with affluent tribal and non-tribal people in getting lease of rubber and horticulture lands. They sought immediate intervention of the district administration in this regard.

The absence of traditional rival contestants in the respective constituencies has made the process of elections lifeless, he added.

In most of the areas the contestants were organising street-corner meetings and discussions with the heads of the localities.

"Spontaneity of the people is missing," said Mesbah, a student activist. "This is mainly because the elections have been rejected by the mainstream opposition parties," he said.

Residents pointed out that the enthusiasm of the people was missing because of the following reasons:

* First, the mainstream opposition parties were not contesting it;

* Secondly, because of the month of Ramadan people are unwilling to take part in canvassing or in the electioneering meeting;

* Thirdly, failure of the local leadership to provide any guideline of socio-economic activities following the elections.

Some political observers were apprehensive whether the outcome of the elections would be acceptable to the donor community.

According to them, the contestants of this 'dull elections' were stressing more on justifying the 'constitutional obligations' to hold the general elections, than putting forward any package of socio-economic development projects.

The strategy of the opposition political parties in this region seems to be on proving the disillusionment of the people from the electioneering process.

On the other hand, the ruling party is attempting to maximise the participation of the people to ensure the acceptance of the elections by the voters.

"We want to show it to the people that the elections under a party government can be free and fair," said Fazul Huq Aspia, the BNP convenor of the district.

People would resist any attempt of subverting the elections, said Aspia, adding that they were trying to ensure the participation of the people in the forthcoming elections.

According to the local Jubo Dal leaders, the number of polling stations in the district has been increased compared to the previous elections for the benefit of the people.

Zainul Jakerin, two times Upazilla chairman, said, "People have become hostage of uncertainty due to the lingering political impasse."

He expects low turnout of the voters, if the polls were held on schedule. According to him, people in general were peaceful and did not want to get themselves involved in conflicts.

"This is for the first time in the history of the sub-continent the elections are being held in Ramadan," said A T M

'Independent candidate stripped Posters burnt, loud speakers damaged

From Our Correspondent

GAIBANDHA, Feb 9: Loud speakers used for campaigning Freedom Party candidate of Gaibandha-3 Haroon-ur-Rashid and Motiar Rahman Tuku, independent candidate of Gaibandha-5 were damaged by anti-election activists.

The election office of the independent candidate Tuku was also ransacked by agitated opposition party activists in which huge quantity of posters and hand bills were burnt to ashes.

In Gaibandha-1 constituency huge amount of hand bills belonging to candidate Saidur Rahman were snatched away.

UNB from Comilla says: Anti-election activists stripped an independent candidate

Saleh the district chief of the JSD (Inu).

Out of five parliamentary seats in Sunamganj district the official BNP candidates in two constituencies are faced with the rivalry of their own party.

Few months back, the Sunamganj branch of the BNP was reorganised in which some of the founding BNP leaders were ousted from the party. One such former BNP leader Shaiful Chowdhury is contesting against the convenor and the official BNP candidate Fazul Huq Aspia in Sunamganj town.

Aspia, however, told this correspondent that the party at its local level would be taking disciplinary actions against the rivals.

In the meantime reports sent by our correspondent from Chuadanga says: Pre-election campaigns has totally died down since Wednesday evening. There

date contesting from Comilla-9 (Sadar-Laksmi) constituency at Ranirbazar area in the town Thursday.

Witnesses said a group of youngsters forcibly took off the clothes of Abdul Mannan Mujumder and beat him when he was campaigning for vote at about 11 am.

Police, however, could not confirm the incident.

Another independent candidate from Comilla-5 constituency Thursday withdrew from February 15 election race.

Advocate Golam Mostafa told local newsmen that he lost interest in contesting in the ensuing election in view of the deteriorating political situation in the country.

were no campaigns in favour of any candidates fearing attacks by the opponent group members. Loud speakers stayed off the streets as well as the processionists.

People in general are avoiding places like city centre and other busy areas fearing clashes.

Meanwhile, BNP candidates were not seen on the streets since last three days. Most of them chose to more about after dark trying to avoid meeting enemies. A tense situation has been prevailing following burning of the district election office last Wednesday.

Our correspondent from Jessore adds: Several rounds of bullets were fired, and six to 10 bombs were exploded Friday afternoon near Daratana Square by the members of the opposition group protesting the forthcoming elections to be held on February 15. No one was, however, hurt in the incident.

Police and other law-enforcing agents were deployed in the area to calm the situation.

In the meantime, election campaign in the district were almost stopped here. Miking, traditional processions and meetings were not noticed since last Wednesday.

Shoppers and shopkeepers are trying to stay away from the city centre fearing more violence in the coming days.

BNP candidates were not moving freely anymore. Most of the remain confined to their residence since violence erupted here last week.

In the meantime, anti-election procession is gaining momentum all over the district. Hundreds of supporters were seen giving anti-election slogans in and around the city centre Thursday evening.

Our correspondents from Jhenidah and Natore add: Election campaigns in the district in last two days turned out to be very dull as most activists stopped miking

ing and posting in the respective areas. In Jhenidah last night a meeting was held to discuss election day arrangement at polling centres by the school teachers. A number of teachers at the meeting reportedly refused to attend polling centre on the day in fear of lack of security.

Our correspondent from Natore says only BNP candidates were noticed to campaign in rural areas. Independent candidates stayed off the arena.

Our correspondent from Sherpur district adds: Two BNP candidates' vehicles were partially damaged while campaigning in Jheniagati and Nakla of the district Friday afternoon by opposition party activists.

No one was, however, hurt.

Police lobs tear gas shells to disperse anti-election processionists

From Our Correspondent

JESSORE, Feb 9: Police lathicharged and lobbed tear gas shells to disperse AL-backed students league's anti-election procession, when processionists reportedly threw bombs at police on duty at Daratana square today.

They also reportedly damaged three vehicles in the town, during procession. Police arrested five alleged student league activists from the procession.

Earlier, Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jama Islami, brought out anti-election procession separately in the town. Police security has been stepped up.

Tense situation was prevailing till filing of this report.

Projects taken to develop fisheries in Rajbari

RAJBARI, Feb 9: Two projects have been taken up for the fishermen of the district under Third Fisheries Development Programme, reports UNB.

World Bank will assist in implementing the projects costing Tk 10 lakh, officials said.

The projects included pisciculture in 38 ponds of Machhpara Fishermen Cooperative Society at Pangsha thana and 24 ponds of Kaziakanda Women Fisheries Cooperative Society at Sadar thana.

Some 100 members both male and female of the two cooperatives will get self-employment opportunities with the implementation of the projects.

Meanwhile, District Fisheries Department has taken up a programme to release about six tons of fry in both open and internal waterbodies costing Tk 6 lakh.

Shortage of doctors hampers work at hospital

BANDARBAN, Feb 9: Patients are being deprived of proper treatment due to inadequate number of physicians at the 50-bed modern hospital in the district town, reports UNB.

Posts of six doctors out of 12 are lying vacant for a long time. A high official of the hospital also admitted the medicare problem caused by shortage of physicians.

Closure of Gynecology Department due to lack of doctors are causing suffering to the female patients. Besides, the blood bank could not be started yet due to lack of technicians.

Post of three medical officers including one senior and one junior consultants remained vacant. Moreover, only one medical officer is working at the Pathology department.

Patients complained that their sufferings added further as they are compelled to go to Chittagong to get the treatment of complicated diseases.

Police attack on DU Jagannath Hall protested

JHALOKATHI, Feb 9: Different student organisations yesterday brought out a joint procession in the town protesting the police attack on the Dhaka University (DU) Jagannath Hall, reports UNB.

The processionists of pro-Awami League Chhatra League, Chhatra Samaj and Chhatra Oikya Samiti also held a rally at sadar road-crossing in the town.

Addressing the rally, the student leaders called on the people to boycott the February 15 election.

The rally was addressed, among others, by district BCL leader Tarun Karmaker, district Chhatra Samaj president Shobur Mershed Sohel and the convenor of Chhatra Oikya Samiti Delwar Hossain.

Sylhet customs circle earns Tk 22cr as duty in this fiscal

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Feb 9: A total amount of Taka 21 crore 95 lakh were earned as Customs Duty during the first six months of current financial year i.e. from the month of July to December '95 in the Sylhet Division. The Sylhet administrative division is a customs circle.

Of the total, Taka 8,48,15,578 were earned as import duty, Taka 1,34,75,971 as Land Customs permit fee, Taka 7,41,47,377 as VAT, Taka 3,01,825 as supplementary duty, Taka 2,11,50,000 as travel tax, Taka 2,15,08,725 as advance income tax, Taka 11,66,628 as sale proceed of seized goods, Taka 13,500 as fines and others, Taka 17,84,881 were realised from misc.

The total revenue collected in the Sylhet circle during the said period is about Taka 7 crore more than that of the corresponding period of the previous year, said an official source.

The said amount of revenue was mainly collected through the 5 Land Customs stations in the Sylhet circle. These are, Tamabil, Chhatrak, Sheela Jakiganj and Barchera, the source added.

One killed, another injured in attack by gunmen

HABIGANJ, Feb 9: A driver of a car was killed and its passenger, a ruling party leader, seriously injured when their vehicle came under attack by unidentified gunmen on Dhaka-Sylhet Highway near Madhabpur thana early Tuesday last, reports UNB.

The driver, identified as Rehu Miah, died on the spot at Islampur at 6 am when he lost control of the car and dashed with a roadside tree following a gun attack on it.

Seriously injured Abdul Qatium Talukdar, the only passenger of the vehicle, is now being treated at Habiganj Sadar Hospital.

The victim who is also the BNP secretary of Bahubol thana unit said they were fired from another car while returning from Bhairab in Brahmanbaria district.

Smuggled goods worth Tk 9 lakh recovered

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Feb 9: The BDR jawans recovered smuggled Indian goods worth about a total of Tk 9 lakh 92 thousand from Bhatrai border of Companyganj thana Tuesday night last.

Official source informed that the jawans of Kalairag border outpost in the Companyganj thana area while patrolling in the bordering areas seized the huge quantity of goods like bidis, wine, matches and other goods worth about a total of Taka 9,92,00,000. The alleged smugglers who were carrying the goods, however, managed to escape leaving behind the goods.

The seized goods were handed over to the Customs Department and a case had been registered with the Companyganj police.

Meanwhile, police of Bala-ganj thana recovered a pipegun and arrested one person from village Pachpara under Dewanbazar union Tuesday morning last. The police on receiving information went to the house of Abu Miah and recovered the pipegun from the pond of his house. They arrested the house owner Abu Miah. A case has been registered.

Prog for teaching Holy Quran free of cost starts in Magura

From Our Correspondent

MAGURA, Feb 9: Islamic Foundation, Magura has taken a programme for teaching the Holy Quran in the month of Ramadan, free of cost in Magura district, official sources said.

The foundation has been implementing the course in different mosques in the district since first of Ramadan.

According to Md Abul Kashem Khan, Deputy Director, Islamic Foundation, Magura, it was learnt that they have arranged the Quran teaching course in about 15 mosques including Parnadual, Byapirapara, Magura PTI Government College, Judge Court, Siddikis, Purana bazar, Doarpar, Stadium, Shalika bazar, Ghastara and Sripur bazar mosques in the district.

A large number of Muslim including men and women are learning the Holy Quran in 'Nuran' method by from the learned 'Moulanas'. The course is scheduled to be concluded by 3 Ramadan, sources said.

Confrontation over procurement of low quality rice: Food officials assaulted

From M A Ali Himu

Natore, Feb 9: A confrontation between the government officials of Shingra thana food department in Natore and a circle supported by the ruling party, over not purchasing about 64 metric tons (800 bales) of low quality rice under the government rice purchasing programme, has left all works of the food godown closed since 1st February. It is reported.

As a result, about three thousand labourers who worked under food for work (FFW) programme, are not getting their wages. At the same time, selling of 2,50 metric tons of rice every day under Open Market Sale (OMS) has been remaining closed. Local businessmen have increased the price of rice following the closing of OMS programme. On the other hand, the food officials of Shingra thana escaping under the threat of the circle.

On 31st January (the last

day of purchasing rice) suppliers of Natore thana food department brought 64 metric tons, 800 bales rice to the thana food godown. Abdul Kuddus technical food inspector examined the sample and identified insects, lively worms and dried worms into the sample rice.

The rice was also above the required humidity of 14 per cent. In this circumstances, officials of the food department raised an objection to receive the rice. Then Putu and his supporters assumed aggression on the officials - Rahman, Shingra Thana Food Controller, Abdul Kuddus, Thana Technical Food Inspector and Mershed Ali, Officer in Charge of Local Supply Department. They assaulted them and threatened to kill them. The officials refused to receive and some how managed to escape the spot later. An application was submitted to Shingra police station to file a FIR in this

connection but the application was reportedly taken as a general diary because of the influence of the circle. The officials of Shingra food office have been remaining absent from their office due to lack of security of life, the officials said in a letter to Kamrul Hassan, DC Food of Natore district.

When contacted, Abdul Jabbar TNO of Shingra thana, told this correspondent that the food officials should receive the low quality of rice because such quality of rice had been collected earlier. When contacted Kamrul Hassan, DC of Food in Natore told this correspondent that if low quality of rice as was collected earlier, the rice would be rejected and responsible persons for collecting such rice would be punished. He added that the food department was not bound to receive the supply of Putu and so the supply should be taken back from the godown premises.

Kamrul also disclosed that the target of rice purchasing in Shingra thana was 1000 metric tons of rice and 99.7 per cent of the target was already achieved till the last day of rice procurement.

However, the police and the thana administration has not taken any measures yet to smoothen the operation of the office and to ensure the security of the officials. The TNO and the OC of Shingra thana are allegedly playing a mysterious role while dealing this matter, a food official said on condition of anonymity.

On the other hand, Natore unit of Bangladesh Food Inspector Samiti (BFIS) in a meeting expressed deep concern over this unpleasant incident and have urged the higher authorities to take action in this matter. Otherwise, they threatened, they would be abstain from their work.

PCCI executive committee polls on March 30

PABANA, Feb 9: The election to the executive committee of Pabna Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) will be held on March 30, reports UNB.

The schedule was announced on Wednesday. The last date for submission of nomination papers is February 29.

Chamber sources said the nomination papers will scrutinised on March 2 while the last date for withdrawal of candidature is March 5.

Dispute over catching fish: One killed, 15 injured

KISHOREGANJ, Feb 9: One person was killed and 15 others were injured in a clash that took place at village Gobindpur of Dhakal union in Mitamoin thana over catching fish in a fishery on Feb 2.

The dead was identified as Minnat Ali Alias Menu Mia, 40. The injured person were given treatment at the Mitamoin hospital.

According to the police, there had been dispute over the sub-leasing of atpasha fishery between one Abul Mansur and the local up chairman Abdul Rouf. In the afternoon of the day of incident, people belonging to Abul Mansur's group were fishing in the disputed fishery while over 50 armed people reported to be the supporter of the UP Chairman swooped on them. At one stage Minnat Ali died on the spot after he was hit by a spear.

Crab export can bring huge foreign exchange

From Our Correspondent

SATKHIRA, Feb 9: By exporting crab, which is abundantly available in the districts coastal areas country, can earn huge foreign currency. Crab is a valuable and exportable aquatic life in Bangladesh which is a nutritious food item. According to experts, crab can add a new dimension as an exportable item to our national economy.

It is one kind of natural gift available in plenty in the south sea and there is no production cost for the crab cultivation. According to traders, if proper initiative is

taken in this regard, this can contribute enough to forex reserve every year.

The Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) sources said, there is a great demand of crab in the Asia-Pacific countries like China, Singapore, Hong-Kong, Japan, Canada, Australia and USA. The source further said, as a tasty food item crab is a good menu to the Europeans.