

National

News snaps

1,520 identified as genuine FFs

MADRIPUR, Feb 27: The District Muktijuddha Selection Committee has identified 1,520 people of the district as genuine freedom fighters (FFs), reports UNB.

Muktijuddha District Unit Commander Nasiruddin Zamader said a total of 3,250 applications were submitted to the selection committee from four thanas. The thana-wise breakup of the genuine freedom fighters are: Sadar-420, Kalkini-380, Rajor-270 and Shibchar-450.

Work on TV centre to begin soon

COX'S BAZAR, Feb 27: Work on a 13.67 crore taka project for setting up a relay centre of BTV in Ukhia thana will begin soon, reports APB.

Official source here said that 3.75 acres of acquired land at Ghumdhumtala was handed over to the BTV authorities by the district administration on Monday. The relay centre is being built with French assistance.

Ring leader of terrorists arrested

PATUAKHALI, Feb 27: An alleged ring leader of terrorists, Shau Khan, was arrested from his house at Gerabunia village recently, reports APB.

Police said Khan was involved in extortion, dacoity and kidnapping in Galachipa, Amtali and Sadar thana areas.

Narcotics supplier arrested

COX'S BAZAR, Feb 27: A member of a ring allegedly engaged in supplying narcotics to prisoners in Cox's Bazar jail was caught red-handed by security men on Tuesday, police said, reports APB.

The arrested person was identified as Mohammad Jalil, son of late Ameer Ali Hajji of Pahartali near the town. The jail security men recovered some hemp, phenisidyl syrup and unocine tranquilizer tablets from his possession and handed him to Cox's Bazar police. Jalil later confessed to police that he belonged to a gang engaged in the illegal business on narcotics for long. He was produced in court which placed him on remand.

Contraband goods seized

JESSORE, Feb 27: Contraband goods worth about Tk 85 lakh were seized by BDR from different border areas here last month, reports APB.

Of these, goods worth about Tk 82.5 lakh were seized while being smuggled into the country. The rest were seized while being smuggled out, BDR sources said. Six alleged smugglers were apprehended during the period and three more are absconding, they said. A total of 166 cases were lodged with different police stations. The contraband goods included saris, wrappers, sweaters, garments, bicycles and spare parts, sugar, salt, phenisidyl, liquor, fruits, cosmetics, copper and brass ware, computer spare parts, fire-crackers and stainless steel utensils.

Man killed in road accident

BANDARBAN, Feb 27: A man was killed and three people were critically injured in a road accident in Jouthakhamar area on Bandarban-Chittagong road on Thursday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the mishap took place at about 10 am when a jeep carrying some employees of the District Council fell into a roadside ditch. Abdul Latif, Chief Accounts Officer of the council, died on the spot. The injured — Abdul Motaleb, Mahbub Alam and Mohammad Moshed — were rushed to Bandarban Sadar Hospital and later shifted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital. District Council Chairman Thoing Cha Pru, Deputy Commissioner Mohsin Ali Sardar and other political leaders visited the injured in the hospital.

Agri-fair concludes

SIRAJGANJ, Feb 27: A five-day colourful agriculture fair concluded in the premises of the Agricultural Extension Department (AED) office here, reports APB.

Besides vegetables and other crops, more than 100 improved technologies and methods were on display at the fair, organised by the local AED. Those included pest control under IMP system, pisciculture in paddy field, preservation of cow-dung, improved methods of vegetable cultivation and integrated fishery and poultry.

3 alleged terrorists held

SATKHIRA, Feb 27: Police caught red-handed three alleged terrorists and recovered one Indian-made revolver and one stolen motor-cycle from their possession from Kashimpur High School area in Tala thana recently, reports BSS.

Police sources said, three terrorists Mahabubul Rahman, 25, Rezaul Karim, 27, and Milon, 30, of Keshabpur thana of Jessoro district were caught red-handed by local people from Kashimpur High School area when they were taking preparation for snatching. One Indian-made revolver and one stolen motor cycle were recovered from their possession. Later they were handed over to Tala police.

Prices of onion comes down

MANIKGANJ, Feb 27: The prices of onion has come down in different wholesale and retail markets here with the arrival of early harvested onion in the market, reports BSS.

The supply of onions are increasing day by day in the onion selling hats. Onion was sold at Tk 1,800 to 2,000 per mound during the Ramadan, but at present in the wholesale markets onions are being sold Tk 250 to Tk 350 per mound. A large number of onion traders collecting onion from big hats at Thikha, Barrangali Uthul and Ghior for supplying in the wholesale markets in Dhaka. According to onion traders, prices of onion may come down further with the arrival of more onion in the markets.

Construction of roads starts

JESSORE, Feb 27: Construction of 35 roads of eight thanas here has been started on the basis of preference under the rural road development project in the current fiscal year, reports BSS.

The project, costing Taka two crore fifty lakh is being materialised by the Local Government Engineering Department. The total work includes construction of five roads in Jessoro sadar, two roads in Abhoynagar, five roads in Chowgacha, six roads in Jhikargacha, five roads in Keshabpur, four roads in Monirampur, three roads in Sharsa and five roads in Bagarpura. The official sources informed that the work will be completed by next June.

Press confce on uplift advocacy

LALMONIRHAT, Feb 27: A press conference on development advocacy and democratisation was held at RDRS office, Lalmonirhat premises on February 20, reports BSS.

The conference was organised by RDRS-Bangladesh a NGO supported by Asia Foundation. Abul Hossain Bhuiya, Adviser, RDRS Bangladesh summarised the programme of RDRS Bangladesh. He said, they are going for the development of poor people by organising union federations. Every union federation will be a development unit for poor people. Every federation will have an elected body to look after all function of group-members and have a community centre, education centre, foodgrain store and local banking facilities.

Library construction work in progress

TANGAIL, Feb 27: A three-storied building for Tangail Public Library is being constructed at a total cost Tk 59 lakh, reports BSS.

The library sources said that the construction cost will be borne from its own fund. With the construction of the building in its original place the accommodation problem will be solved soon, the sources added.

Flood damages crops

SUNAMGANJ, Feb 27: Crops worth crores of taka are damaged every year in the district due to flash flood and overflow of waters from the hilly areas, reports UNB.

According to the Agriculture Extension Department, crops worth over Tk 190.48 crore were damaged by natural calamities during the period from 1988 to 1991. But, unofficial sources here said on average crops valued at Tk 100 crore are damaged in the bordering district every year due to natural disasters, including drought and flooding. More than three lakh people in 2,889 villages depend mainly on agriculture. Haor encircles almost all the farmlands and in the rainy season most of the haor protection embankments are destroyed due to onrush of waters. Proper and planned construction of haor protection embankments, re-excavation of canals and dredging of rivers to ensure irrigation water and water outlet can save the farmers from the recurring losses, local agric experts said.

Allocation for govt pry school

PATUAKHALI, Feb 27: An amount of Tk 10 lakh has been allocated for setting up of a government primary school at Baidya Pasha and development of three others in Mirzaganj thana in the current financial year, official sources said, reports APB.

Of the amount, Tk 8.10,000 has been sanctioned for setting up the new primary school and the rest will be spent to buy furniture for three registered primary schools.



NATORE: Woman voters waiting in long queue at Kanaikhal polling centre here during the last municipal poll. — Star photo

Peaceful elections in Natore

From Anwar Ali

NATORE, Feb 27: Elections in two municipalities here have been completed amid tight security.

Despite the oppositions boycott and a 66-hour count-trywide hartal, the polling was by and large peaceful.

While visiting the polling centres of Natore and Gurudaspur municipalities this correspondent found a large number of enthusiastic voters in the polling centres. Presence of women voters was remarkable.

The administration here took a security measures to check disturbance during elections. Police, ansars, VDP men and armed forces were deployed at the polling centres while military personnel patrolled the town streets.

In Natore Pourasava, despite panic created by huge bomb-blasts by anti-election activists, the voting held at Natore Municipality on February 23, was virtually peaceful. Spadic incidents, however, left three persons injured.

At around 9.30 am while

voters were busy in joining the queues at Nababidhan Girls' High School centre, a sudden blast of cocktail left Rabi Kundu, 35, a voter, seriously injured.

Polling centres at Shaheed Rejaunabbi High School and Mollikhati Government Primary School were sent on fire. However, no major damage was reported. Cocktail blast at Tebaria polling centre left two voter injured.

During visits to the municipalities The Daily Star Correspondent found the polling as peaceful. The turnout of voters was also high. Some polling centres reported 50 to 60 per cent ballots cast by 2 pm.

Awami League leader advocate Quamrul Islam was elected as the chairman of Natore Pourasava securing 11,911 votes. Quamrul's nearest contender was Chitta Ranjan Saha who got 3,611 vote. The voters' turnout was 49.91 per cent while total voter of the municipality is 33,292.

In Gurudaspur Municipality,

the elections were as festive as Eid or 'puja'.

Asif Hossain, a 56 years old farmer at Shaheed Shamsozoha College centre told this correspondent that he enjoyed this election as happily as the UP elections.

Khondoker Abu Taleb, Presiding Officer at Nizamuddin High School centre told that he had never seen "such tight and such participation" of voters in his life.

Local Election Office recorded an unprecedented voters' turnout. About 85 per cent ballots were cast out of 14,310 voters of the municipality. This was the second elections of Gurudaspur Pourasava since its inception, that made the poura citizens very happy, commented a retired school teacher Sobhan Pramanik.

Awami League supported candidate Amjad Hossain was elected as the chairman. He got 6,126 votes. Amjad's nearest opponent Jatiya Party leader Aynal Haq secured 5,797 votes.

In Gurudaspur Municipality,

N'ganj-Narsingdi Agrani Irrigation Project becomes a bane for farmers

NARSINGDI, Feb 27: The Narayanganj-Narsingdi Agrani Irrigation Project, once a boon to farmers, has now become a bane for them, reports APB.

Most of the croplands in the project area now remain unproductive for lack of proper irrigation and drainage system and dumping of harmful industrial waste, farmers said.

The project's command area has come down to about 3,000 acres from 5,000, and most of that remains uncultivated either for water-logging or for lack of irrigation. Lands are becoming barren due to dumping of industrial waste, they told this correspondent during a visit.

Farmers said they complained to the Water Development Board to improve the irrigation system and to the Environment Ministry to stop disposal of industrial waste several times in the last few years, but to no effect.

Most of the canals in Block A/2 and Block-B which cover most of the area now under command have silted up and the irrigation system has become faulty and ineffective. Repeated complaints fell on the deaf ears of "corrupt and indifferent" project officials, they alleged.

They are losing about 27,000 maunds of rice worth about Tk seven crore every year, they claimed.

The main canal of the project has become useless because an organised gang of earth-sellers has removed soil from a stretch of its bank and made another stretch a road for truckers.

This has stopped flow of water and vast low-lying areas remain submerged under one to two feet water during most of the year and the rest are deprived from irrigation, they said.

Six of the eight sluice-gates

and the 25 canals which were damaged by last year's prolonged floods need to be repaired. The main canal in Block A/1 can not distribute water as it is blocked by heaps of brickbats and debris left by an abandoned brickfield.

A WDB team visited the project area and identified necessary repair work but nothing has been done, they said.

The areas in Rupnagar and Noapara, which are outside the coverage of the Agrani Irrigation Project, is completely different because they have remained waterlogged for over six months after recession of the prolonged flood of last year.

Indignant farmers alleged that the irrigation authorities have a secret pact with owners of numerous sizing, pressing, printing and dyeing factories which have been set up in the area. They allow the factory owners to release harmful chemical waste into the canals.

Proper planning will turn Saidpur Railway Workshop into a modern one

From E A M Asaduzzaman

NILPHAMARI, Feb 27: Saidpur Railway Workshop, set up 125 years ago in the district is now facing manifold problems.

During British rule, it was the main workshop of Assam-Bengal Railway. From British rule upto Pakistan period, its activities were remarkable. Non-Bengali people mainly from Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Bihar were its main technicians and workers at all levels of its set-up. They constituted the majority. After inception of Bangladesh in 1971, due to migration of skilled hands, a vacuum was created.

All the governments in Bangladesh took this workshop as a liability and none took any step for its modernisation and rehabilitation. As a result, 22 shops (sub-workshop) have been closed down until now. Works in remaining shops is also very slow. Main closed down shops are: Carriage Construction Shop, Locomotive Shop, Erecting Shop and Rail-

way Power House. Rail passenger carriages were manufactured in the Carriage Construction Shop which were once compared with world famous German carriages. But now by closing down this shop, carriages worth millions of foreign exchanges are being imported from abroad.

Import cost of one railway carriage from abroad in local currency is over Taka three crore, whereas production cost of the carriage in this workshop is not more than Taka 80 lakh at best.

The locomotive shop from this workshop has also been removed from here. The Divisional-in-Charge of Saidpur Railway Workshop, when contacted, informed that decision for removal of locomotive shop is from the highest level.

Its power house which used to generate power from coal as fuel, was also closed down in 1993 and all machines with spares, accessories were sold out to a local company at a nominal price, who is contemplating to put it into commercial production by using coal from Boro Pukuria.

Had the Communication Ministry been little active, this powerhouse could have been turned into a modern one having capacity to produce 500 megawatt power. Unfortunately, instead plans are being taken at government level to set up new power stations. By spending millions of foreign exchanges our poor nation is now bearing such burden, which is the outcome of improper planning, lack of far sightedness and patriotism of a section of selfish bureaucrats. At one time, about 10,000 men and women in different categories were employed in this workshop, which has now been reduced to only 3,000. Particularly during the past regime in the name of "golden hand shake," a large number of employees were removed.

Such a frustrating situation

has raised a question in the minds of local people whether Saidpur Railway Workshop is in the process of gradual closure, resulting in unemployment to existing work force.

Local conscious section of the people have raised a big question when North Bengal is far behind in development of industries from country's other regions, partial closure of Saidpur Railway Workshop is another stab in the back to deprive the people of this region from industrialisation.

It is the hope and aspiration of the people of Nilphamari district that through pragmatic plan, Saidpur workshop be turned into an ultramodern railway workshop through which needs of Bangladesh apart from fulfilling requirements of essentials of Bangladesh Railways foreign exchanges can also be earned by exporting latest railway carriages to many countries within SAARC.

Hartal's impact Revenue earning at Benapole falls

— Star photo

JESSORE, Feb 27: Revenue earnings at Benapole and Darsana customs stations during the first six months of the current financial year was Tk 298.86 crore against the target of Tk 353.97 crore, reports APB.

Earnings during the corresponding period of the last financial years was Tk 309.51 crore against the target of Tk 357.89 crore.

Official sources told that earnings fell due to recurring hartals and other political programmes.

Revenue from imports was Tk 218.80 crore, Tk 194.7 crore of it at Benapole and Tk 24.73 at Darsana, against the target of Tk 279 crore.

Increased import of cement from Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia drastically reduced the flow of the item from India, which affected revenue earnings under this head.

Tariff cut on certain items like cotton yarn and onion also affected revenue earning, they said.

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