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Mango eating contest



A woman contestant to eat three kilograms of mangoes within three minutes yesterday during a mango eating contest in New Delhi, India, which is the world's largest producer of mangoes and grows 1,100 varieties, is now faced with dwindling exports because of growing competition. — AFP photo

Khulna rally 20 hurt as AL factions clash

From Staff Correspondent
KHULNA, July 8: At least 20 people were injured in a clash between two factions of Awami League near Bangladesh Bank while the grand rally of the freedom fighters was in progress at the Circuit House Maidan today.

The clash began when supporters of ward commissioner Asaduzzaman Litu chanted provocative slogans against the Jubo League activists supported by Whip.

Meanwhile, supporters of Whip Mostafa Rashidi Suja and State Minister Talukdar Abdul Khaleque chased each other at Picture Palace and Dakbungalow squares.

Police however managed to bring the tense situation under control.

Of the injured, two were admitted to Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH).

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today did not respond to several demands of the people of Khulna during her 40-minute speech at the grand rally.

The demands included restoration of the lost glory of Khulna Newsprint Mills by granting running capital to restart full production works.

She however reiterated her government's pledge to start construction work of Rupsha Bridge by the end of this year or early next year.

BCL-Shibir clash Ctg Commercial Instt principal's office ransacked, 10 injured

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, July 8: At least 10 people were injured while the office of the principal was ransacked during a gunfight between Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Chhatra Shibir activists at the Government Commercial Institute at Bakalia today, police and witnesses said.

The injured were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) and private clinics for treatment.

Police said the BCL and Shibir activists clashed for half an hour from 12 noon today to establish supremacy on the college campus. They traded gunfire. Three were hit by bullets during the clash.

At one stage BCL and Shibir activists ransacked the office of the principal of institute, police said. Police rushed to the spot and arrested five people. Additional police force were deployed on the campus.

Alleged dacoit beaten to death in Chittagong

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, July 8: An alleged dacoit was beaten to death by a mob in Muradpur area in the city last night, police said.

The victim was identified as Abul Kasem, 30. Kasem was caught red-handed a house at Muradpur at 3 pm.

The mob then took him outside the house and started beating mercilessly. He died on the spot, police said.

No headway in a number of sensational murder cases

By Staff Correspondent

The Detective Branch of police so far failed to make any headway in investigating a number of sensational murders in the city in which ruling party men or their relatives were accused.

The latest such incident was the killing of Bishra Islam Phool, a teenage college girl and daughter of a retired police officer, at their residence at Hajipara on July 2. Police and the victim's relatives suspect that a leader of the ruling party's city unit was linked with the killing.

Jewel Majumder, son of an Awami League MP, and two others were accused in the murder of cellular phone trader Iftekhar Ahmed Shipu at Banani. The case was recently transferred to DB.

But the accused reportedly left the country, allegedly with the help of police.

Kamal Pasha, a relative of another ruling party MP, is also accused in a double murder at Mohammadpur.

Two brothers - Ashfaq Hossain Jewel, 28 and Mohammad Ali Rebel, 24 - were called out of their house one after another within 15 minutes by Kamal Pasha on May 5 and shot dead, according to the FIR lodged with Mohammadpur police. Kamal Pasha is allegedly a professional killer.

The case was transferred to DB, but the only accused in the murder case could not be arrested yet.

The DB could not make any headway in investigating the murder of three young men near the Mahakhali police box on April 5. Gulshan police filed a murder case in this connection, giving the victim's family no scope to file case.

The family later filed a separate petition case with the CM-M's court Dhaka, accusing 11 people. Motahar Hossain, the main accused in the case, reportedly enjoys blessings of an influential ruling party leader.

PM tells FFs at Khulna rally Resist rajakars & their collaborators

By Staff Correspondent
KHULNA, July 8: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today urged the freedom fighters to foil conspiracy of the anti-liberation forces, reports UNB.

"We will have to resist rajakars and their collaborators. You will have to remain alert about the conspiracies so the evil forces cannot capture power," she told freedom fighters at a freedom fighters-people grand rally at Circuit House Maidan here in the afternoon.

In a veiled attack on the BNP-led opposition alliance, the Prime Minister said the rajakars, autocrats and vote dacois are plotting to oust the government by any means.

The grand rally was organised by Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Front in its move to mobilize the freedom fighters raising voice for establishing the spirit and values of Liberation War in every sphere of life.

Hasina urged the war veterans to foil all conspiracies and establish the spirit and values of Liberation War.

She said Golan Azam, who aided Pakistani occupation army in unleashing genocide, rape and torture, joined hands with autocrat Ershad and "voter-thief Begum Zia."

They are waging movement from one platform because they all do not believe in independence of the country. They united against the values of liberation war and to protect the killers of Bangabandhu who have been sentenced to death.

About control of terrorism, the Prime Minister said the government had taken tough action against terrorism and terrorists of the southwestern region and they surrendered arms.

Peace is prevailing in this region for timely action of the government, she said and warned that the government would take stringent action if anyone tried to disturb peace.

"Terrorists will not be spared, the government is taking tough action and will continue its effort for ensuring peace and security of public life," she said.

Prime Minister Hasina said a special allocation of Tk 15 crore had been kept in the current budget for the welfare of distressed freedom fighters.

The present government has increased honorarium for the freedom fighters and at the same time given state honour to the national heroes.



A launch anchored along the town protection embankment at Sirajganj. —Star photo

A potential tourist spot with panoramic view

By Morshed Ali Khan with Akhteruzzaman Bablu

SIRAJGANJ, July 8: The town protection embankment along the mighty Jamuna here has become a very popular promenade for thousands of locals and outsiders.

The entire area offers a panoramic view and holds the potential to become a bustling tourist spot. A three-hour journey from the capital through the Bangabandhu Bridge on the Jamuna, Sirajganj has many other attractions for tourists round the year.

During winter, thousands of migratory birds flock on the sandy shoals rising from the Jamuna, creating a spectacular scene. The river water during this dry season is clear and many people travel to isolated shoals for picnic and a dip in the water.

During rainy season, the town's early morning fish market on the river bank gets busy with hundreds of fishermen arriving to sell fresh catches on auction. The fresh water fish are much cheaper compared to those in the capital or elsewhere. Moving about in colourful sail boats on the river also brings joy to visitors.

The long and beautifully carved walkway is probably one of the most attractive features of the town. At night, the illuminated Bangabandhu Bridge, several miles away, gives a breathtaking view.

Despite all these potential, the area remains neglected. There has never been any initiative to build a decent hotel or an eatery for the tourists. The existing facilities are grossly inadequate for hundreds of people who come here to relax and pass their time close to the nature.

Left Front defeated: Trinamul captures mayoral post

By Staff Correspondent
CALCUTTA, July 8: Trinamul Congress won the coveted mayoral post of the prestigious Calcutta Corporation defeating the candidate of the ruling Left Front in polls held this afternoon, reports BSS.

Subrata Mukherjee of Trinamul Congress led by Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee won by 6 votes with councillors of Congress abstaining the polls.

Kanti Ganguly was the Left Front candidate.

The election for the 141 councillors of the corporation was held on June 25 where Trinamul its electoral alliance BJP and its independents with blessings of BJP and Trinamul Congress bagged 66, while Left Front got 62, Indian National Congress got 13 councillors. Mamata Banerjee described her party's win as victory in "semi-final" with final to take place next year in the Vidhan Sabha polls. In her instant report she said "our goal is next year's West Bengal Assembly polls and I hope today's result will be reflected there."

Anil Biswas, Secretary of CPI (M) West Bengal while admitting the defeat said such contest has been going on for long between Left Front and Congress. "This is a defeat, but not rout," Biswas stressed.

National Congress West Bengal President Abul Barkat



Dust storm greets people coming in or going out of the capital on Gabtali Aminbazar stretch of the highway under renovation for long. — Star photo by Anisur Rahman

Baitul Mukarram hawkers' demand

By Staff Correspondent
Hawkers doing business in Baitul Mukarram mosque area held a rally at Muktangan in the city yesterday demanding allotment of the newly constructed small shops there to 'genuine' hawkers.

They said the Islamic Foundation has constructed 98 small shops there for hawkers, but those are being allotted to 'rich' people.

The rally, organised jointly by the Baitul Mukarram Hawkers' Welfare Association and other small traders' associations, was presided over by AKM Mizanur Rahman, said a press release.

Addressing the rally, General Secretary of the Welfare Association Nurul Hossain Moral alleged that although the authorities constructed the shops for hawkers, those were being allotted to rich people at the influence of a 'gang of terrorists' led by one Hashem.

He said the Islamic Foundation was doing irregularities in allotting the shops.

10 hurt as BCL factions clash at SUST

From Staff Correspondent
SYLHET, July 8: Ten activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League were injured in a clash between two rival factions on the Shahjalal University campus this afternoon.

Of them, four with serious stab wounds have been admitted to the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital.

The authorities suspended all final examinations and semester examinations of different departments following the clash.

Additional police force has been deployed on the varsity campus and in all dormitories.

Today's clash was a sequel to previous rivalry between the two groups over collection of illegal tolls from the contractors engaged in construction work in the varsity.

Several gunshots were fired and crackers blasted during chase and counter chase between the two groups, sources said.

Dacoity at DGFI officer's house

By Staff Correspondent
Dacoits took away gold ornaments and cash from the house of an army intelligence officer at Kakrail in the city early yesterday morning.

Police quoting the FIR said, a gang of dacoits entered the government quarters of AB Jafar Ahmed, an additional director in the office of the Director General of Forces Intelligence at about 4 am and looted Tk 25 thousand in cash and 25 totals of gold ornaments at gun point.

Jafar Ahmed filed a case with Ramna police but none was arrested in this connection till writing of this report last night.

Fresh areas in Sirajganj, Kurigram flooded

By Staff Correspondent
Fresh areas in Sirajganj and Kurigram districts went under water today due to onrush of hill waters and heavy rains.

Our Sirajganj Correspondent reports: The low-lying areas in five upazilas of the district went under water due to flash flood triggered by onrush of hill water and rains.

About 10000 people of some 1000 families have been seriously affected by flood as river Jamuna swelled further.

The affected upazilas are: Kaziপুর, Sirajganj Sadar, Belkuchi, Chowhalli and Shahajadpur.

UNB adds: Flood situation deteriorated in Kurigram today inundating fresh areas.

According to sources, some 37,000 people of char and other low-lying areas have been marooned and passing their days in water hardship.

Water Development Board sources said, the river Dharla was flowing 12 cm above the danger mark at Ferryghat Point while Brahmaputra at Chilmari Point rose by 4 cm. But Teesta at Kownia receded by 23 cm and Dudkumar at Noonkhawa by 7 cm.

JCD calls hartal in dist today Gunfight leaves one dead, 50 injured at Cox's Bazar

By Staff Correspondent
COX'S BAZAR, July 8: A woman was shot dead and 50 including 25 policemen were injured in a gunfight between the activists of JCD and another organisation under the banner of 'Amara Muktiyoddhar Santan' in the town today, reports UNB.

The dead was identified as Begum Jan, 50, a maid.

Police said the trouble started at 4 pm while the activists of Amara Muktiyoddhar Santan swooped on the meeting place of Chhatra Dal, the student wing of opposition BNP, at Public Institute Hall (PIH).

As the organisation of the wards of freedom fighters announced to hold a meeting at the same venue, police and district administration earlier in the day had requested them to hold their meeting at Airport road instead of PIH.

The activists of the group today gathered at Airport road in afternoon. Suddenly they attacked the JCD meeting, defying police barricades, and locked in a fierce clash.

Both the groups traded gunshots during two-hour battle in and around the hall till 6 pm, killing Begum Jan on the spot and injuring 50, including 25 policemen.

The maid was hit by bullets in her chest and abdomen in crossfire while sitting nearby during the clash.

Police also fired several gunshots and teargas shells to disperse the warring groups.

Of the injured, Police Inspector Pranab Kumar Roy, SI Asif Ali and ASI M Taslim were admitted to Sadar Hospital while JCD workers Sayem, Rahed and Rahim to Dulahazra Memorial Hospital with bullet wounds.

Meanwhile, local people said the youths under the banner 'Amara Muktiyoddhar Santan' are activists of Chhatra League, ruling party's student wing.

Protesting the incident, JCD called a dawn-to-dusk hartal in the district on Monday and protest meetings in every thana tomorrow (Sunday).

Police patrols were reinforced to fend off further trouble.

New DMCH OT complex Tk 3 cr allocation for equipment lapses

Star report
An allocation of over Tk three crore for procurement of equipment and instruments for the newly built operation theatre (OT) complex at Dhaka Medical College Hospital has lapsed causing further delay in putting the complex into operation.

"It is a big blow to the plan for improvement of services at the hospital," said a senior doctor.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Sheikh Fazlul Karim allocated the funds in May on an emergency basis. But the allocation lapsed as the funds were not utilised by the end of the just ended financial year, sources concerned said.

"All formalities for procurement of equipment and instruments were almost completed. However, as tender for procurement of those could not be floated by the end of last fiscal year, the allocation lapsed, making it difficult to get a fresh allocation," one source said.

Construction of the OT complex was completed in 1996. The five-storey complex was built under an Asian Development Bank funded project -- Second ADB Assisted Health and Family Planning Project.

The ADB was also supposed to provide funds for procurement of necessary equipment and instruments for the OT complex but due to 'irregularities in awarding tender, it did not do that, the source said.

When fully equipped, 12 operations could be performed simultaneously at the complex. The equipment needed include overhead OT lights, anaesthesia and diathermy machines, suckers, ventilator machine, portable X-ray devices and

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