

NEWS SNAPS

3 Rakhain people drown as boat capsizes

UNB, Cox's Bazar

Three Rakhain people drowned and 10 others remained missing in a boat capsizing in the Moheshkhali channel Friday evening when the Buddhists were performing their religious rituals marking the Pubarana Purnima.

The victims were identified as Wang Wae, 24, Wangcha Wae, 23, and Mongcha Ching, 27, of Khusrukul Rakhain Para in Sadar upazila. Rescue workers recovered their bodies. Police said this incident took place at about 5pm when about 50 people of the Rakhain community were going to the channel boarding three boats for religious rituals. One boat suddenly sank as the devotees were singing and dancing on board. Police and witnesses said most of the people swam ashore but 10 remained missing. Two people, including a woman, were rescued by others and admitted to Sadar Hospital, said Officer-in-Charge of Kotwali thana.

One succumbs to injuries in Barisal

UNB, Barisal

A retired army personnel who was injured in an attack by miscreants on Wednesday died at a hospital in Gournadi upazila of Barisal on Friday.

Police said a gang of miscreants mercilessly beat up Ruhul Amin at village Chadshi in Gournadi upazila Wednesday morning leaving him critically wounded. He was immediately taken to Goila Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries on Friday. Ruhul Amin hailed from Muladi upazila. He went to Chadshi several days ago for settling a land dispute. Police arrested Dildar Molla for his alleged involvement in the incident.

Body of young man recovered

UNB, Pabna

The body of a young man killed by unknown assailants was recovered from Shakaripara area of Ataikula upazila of Pabna on Friday.

Being informed by the villagers police rushed to the spot, recovered the body of Moksed Ali Fakir, 35, and sent it to the hospital morgue for autopsy. Police suspect that Fakir was beaten to death, but the motive behind the murder could not be known. However, a case was filed in this connection. Another report from Bagerhat adds: body of an unidentified woman was recovered from Baleshwar river here on Wednesday. Police said unknown assailants killed the woman, slit her head and dumped the body into the river in a sack.

Youth dies after taking phensidyl syrup

BSS, Satkhira

A drug addicted youth died after taking poisonous Indian phensidyl syrup at Gobordari in Sadar upazila of Satkhira recently.

The victim was identified as Abdul Hamid, 30, of village Gobordari in Sadar upazila. Police source said Abdul Hamid bought a bottle of Indian phensidyl syrup from a drug seller at Bankdoha Bazaar. After taking the drug he fell sick at night and died on way to Satkhira Sadar Hospital. A case was filed with Sadar Thana police in this connection.

Half-day hartal observed in Satkhira

UNB, Satkhira

A half-day hartal was observed peacefully in Satkhira on Friday following the death of a CID constable and injury of two others in a road accident on Satkhira-Kaliganj road Wednesday night.

CID constable Sohrab Hossain was killed and local journalist Abdul Gofur and transport association leader Abdur Rouf were injured when a truck hit their motorcycle near Bakal Bridge. Protesting the accident a faction of District Minibus Owners' Association, led by Abdur Rouf, called the hartal on Friday terming it a pre-planned action. Rouf also filed a case against eight members of his opponent group.

Barricade on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway

UNB, Mymensingh

Bus and truck drivers put barricade on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway at Khiru Bridge for about two hours on Tuesday protesting collection of tolls to cross the bridge.

Witnesses said the drivers suspended the transport movement by parking the vehicles haphazardly as the toll collectors demanded toll for vehicles plying on local routes. Earlier, only long route vehicles plying on the highway used to pay the toll for crossing the bridge. The barricade was withdrawn after police assured the drivers of resolving the problem.

Armed terrorists attack filling station

UNB, Narsingdi

Armed terrorists attacked a filling station at Panchdona in Sadar upazila of Narsingdi Wednesday night leaving two people injured.

Police said a gang of 15-16 stormed into the Bhuiyan and Brothers Filling Station at about 9pm and looted Tk 50,000 injuring its two staff cashier Ismail Hossain and operator Abdul Aziz. They were admitted to local clinic. A case was filed.



PHOTO: STAR

Some members of Sachetan Nagorik Samaj, an association of conscious citizens, brought out a procession on Sunday last at Gouripur in Mymensingh protesting killing, terrorism, rape and oppression on political opponents.

'Monga' hits 8 N dists

UNB, Nilphamari

Like every year "Kartiker Monga" a famine-like situation, hit northern region throwing over 20 lakh poor and labourer section of people into great misery.

The situation is more acute is the shoal areas of Kurigram, Lalmonirhat and Gaibandha districts than the districts of Rangpur, Nilphamari, Panchagarh, Thakurgaon and Dinajpur.

"Monga" is a general phenomenon in these eight districts as poor people don't have work in this part of the year. Most of the farmers and day labourers become jobless and lead idle life.

The poor people also face crisis of food and many of them are turned into beggar. A large number of people also migrate to other parts of the country in search of work.

Mahmood, a villager of Sadar upazila told that the number of landless and day-labourers in these districts is relatively higher than other parts of the country.

"The reason is the huge gap between the rich and poor... some people own vast property while the poor don't have minimum land," he said.

Also crop production is good in this region. "But problem is that the landlords supply the foodgrains to other parts of the country," said a local businessman

who deals with food.

An NGO worker who has been working in this area in poverty eradication work said the "monga" was comparatively worse a decade back when people used to die in starvation every year.

"Fifteen or 20 years back we had seen poor people surviving on boiled roots and fruits like banana and arum. But the situation has improved," said Dr Hamidul Huq, an NGO executive in Fulchhari upazila in Gaibandha district.

Initiatives of NGOs, he said, have reduced people's sole dependency on agriculture work. Diversification of work opportunity and mobilisation of people have also played an important role in changing the situation.

Dr Hamidul, however, admitted that 'monga' still occurs in the region in between the gap of two crops starting from the end of the rainy season.

Due to want of food people especially children and infants fall in the deficiency of nutrition and calorie, and suffer from different kinds of diseases, said a local doctor.

Poor people in this region hope that they would overcome the situation as harvesting starts soon although farmers said they would not get expected harvests this season.

Tk 48.10 cr allocated from ADP fund for uplift projects

UNB, Sylhet

The government has allocated Tk 48.10 crore from ADP special fund for various ongoing development projects in Sylhet division.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman approved the allocation to complete 13 ongoing road development and bridge construction projects.

The projects include Sylhet-Tamabil road, Bhairb Bridge, Habiganj-Nabiganj road, Sylhet-Jakiganj road, Pagla-Jagannathpur-Raniganj-Auskandi road and Sunamganj-Netrakona-Mymensingh-Jamalpur regional road.

Flood damages Aman crops on 68,000 acres of land in Barisal

UNB, Barisal

Vast coastal area of Barisal region was submerged by tidal water damaging Aman crops on an estimated 68 thousand acres of land.

The strong tides also flooded 260 fish enclosures of Patuakhali and washed away about 200 thatched houses of fishermen alongside the seashore of Kuakata.

Following depression water from the sea and rivers submerged the coastal areas rising to five to six feet and the tide threatened a 15-kilometre embankment along

Golachipa, Kalapara and Baufal.

Local Agriculture office sources said water gushing through a breach in the embankment has already submerged standing crops on 68,000 acres of land in Galachipa and Baufal upazilas.

Unofficial sources claimed the damage would be much more than the official estimate.

Locals said more breaches might develop in the embankment any time and submerge vast areas of land and wash away standing Aman crops.

Musclemen in Shariatpur control cattle markets

UNB, Shariatpur

As law enforcers have failed to tackle the post-election law and order situation, musclemen hired by leaseholders took control of the cattle markets in six upazilas of Shariatpur.

The major cattle markets are located at Monohar Bazaar, Subchanirhat, Damudyahat, Kazirhat, Mollahat, Burirhat, Bhojswarhat and Gosairhat.

There have been reports that the musclemen are collecting tolls from cattle sellers and buyers five to six times higher than the rates fixed by the government as the law enforcers are giving them a blind eye.

They are realising Tk 200 to 300 from each cattle seller and Tk 100 to 150 from every buyer while Tk 80 to 100 each goat seller.

According to government rules, leaseholders are supposed to collect tolls from the buyers only. But tolls are being extracted from both the buyers and sellers without receipts.

Tolls are also collected from Dhaka-bound cattle-laden trucks and trawlers. The cattle traders have virtually become hostages at the hands of extortionists.

Allegations are also there against Angaria police as they are realising Tk 500 to 600 from each boat and trawler in the Kirtinasha river.

Sugarcane crushing begins in two Natore mills

32,500 MT of sugar output targetted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

With a burden of loss of about Tk 29.5 crore during the last three years, two sugar mills in Natore have started cane crushing for 2001-02 season on Friday afternoon.

About 32,500 metric tons of sugar production have been targeted in the two mills this season by crushing 4,15,000 metric tons of cane. The recovery rate has been fixed at 8 per cent and 7.50 per cent respectively.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman Patal and Deputy Minister for LGRD and Co-operatives Md Ruhul Kuddus Talukdar Dulu inaugurated cane crushing programme at North Bengal Sugar Mills and Natore Sugar Mills respectively.

During last three seasons, since 1998-99 season, the two sugar mills incurred a total loss of Tk 29,41,16,000. Of the total, Natore Sugar Mills incurred a loss of Tk 11,79,84,000 and North Bengal Sugar Mills incurred a loss of Tk 17,61,32,000. The two sugar mills could not achieve their respective cane crushing and production targets during the last three seasons.

Authorities of two sugar mills, once the highest profit-earning mills of the country, said massive use of power crushers for producing molasses and low recovery rate of the mills are responsible for failure in achieving the crushing targets.

However, authorities of the two sugar mills are optimistic about achievement of crushing and production targets this season though there are reports of

unabated use of power crushers in the mill zones.

Concerned sources say at least 938 power crushers are now crushing sugar cane in the two mill zones. Besides, there are about 150 local crushers engaged in producing molasses. The number of power and local crushers are increasing day by day. Under this situation, the two sugar mills may face a short supply of sugar cane.

The shortfall in supply of sugarcane to the mills would increase the amount of loss, it was widely apprehended.

UNB reports from Dhaka: Sugarcane crushing will commence phase-wise in 13 other mills within the current month with a target to extract a total of 1.83 lakh metric tons of sugar by crushing 22.89 lakh tons sugarcane.

Two AL activists succumb to injuries

UNB, Pabna

Two Awami League (AL) activists, who were injured in separate incidents nearly a month ago, died from their wounds at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital Tuesday.

The victims were identified as Abdur Razzak Rajai, 25, of Sujanagar upazila and Aminul Islam Tofai, 38, of Ataikulathana.

Police said Razzak was injured in a gunfight between supporters of Awami League and BNP while Aminul in an attack by terrorists in their respective areas a month ago.