



Different political and socio-cultural organisations under the auspices of district administration brought out a colourful procession in Comilla on Tuesday in a campaign against the use of polybags.

Suman murder case

Housewife seeks security of her family

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Natore*

"Should I commit suicide along with my three children?" asked a panic-stricken housewife in her petition to the superintendent of police (SP) of Natore seeking security of life of her and her husband.

The family of Monwara Khatun of Arbab village in Kalpur upazila is now in tatters. Her husband, Jamal Uddin, a day-labourer, and her two brothers-in-law have been staying out of the village for fear of life. And Monwara herself is facing rape threat from the accused in the Sumon murder case, who are moving scot-free.

The fault of the three male members of the family is that they are among the eight witnesses in the case.

Sumon, an activist of Awami League, was killed at Arbab in Lalpur on October 6 last year.

Although a murder case was filed with Lalpur thana accusing nine BNP activists -- Jalal Master, Khajer, Esken, Kota, Moja, Faruk, Kuddus, Juel and Shamsul -- police could not arrest any of the accused yet. Rather,

the accused were allegedly making threats to the eight witnesses in the case.

Monwara, 27, and her three children are starving as her husband, the only bread-earner of the family, could not return home, she stated in her petition.

Jamal and his brothers left the village on February 5 when the alleged killers of Sumon attacked their house in a bid to kill them.

Three days later, the terrorists again stormed into the Monowara's house but their attempt to violate and kidnap her was foiled as the villagers rushed to the spot hearing the screams of her and the children.

Before fleeing the scene, the terrorists threatened to kidnap and rape her any time if she fails either to bring back her husband and brothers-in-law, or pay a toll of Tk 20,000, Monwara alleged in the petition.

Monowara has submitted her petition to the SP's office on February 10 as Lalpur police did not receive her complaint in this regard.

23 shops, three houses gutted in fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Barisal*

At least five people were injured and valuables and cash worth over Tk 11 crore were gutted in two fire incidents in Barisal and Pirojpur districts on Sunday.

Fire swept through the Hatkhola area of Barisal town, engulfing two godowns, an oil mill and a house. An electrical short circuit sparked off the blaze at around 10.30am, according to police and fire brigade sources.

Local fire brigade unit and another unit from nearby Jhalakati station rushed to the spot and brought the blaze under control after three hours of frantic efforts.

The loss was estimated at around Tk one crore.

Another devastating fire broke out at Inderhat Bandar under Swarupkathi thana of Pirojpur district.

The blaze started from an electrical short circuit at around 2.00am on the same day. Twenty-three shops and hotels and two houses were destroyed in the fire.

It took six hours for the fire fighters to bring the blaze under control. Local people said that valuables and cash worth over Tk 10 crore were destroyed in the fire.

A huge amount of money was burnt as the shopowners could not deposit the money with the banks because of Eid holidays.

Girl gangraped and killed in Bagerhat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Police could not trace the rapists, nor could they identify the teenage girl who was gangraped and killed even five days after her body was recovered from a bush near the Mollarkul Govt Primary School in Mollarhat upazila of Bagerhat district.

The body was found hanging from a tree in the bush on February 22.

The girl was killed after being gangraped, police said. They also found her clothes and shoes from the same place.

Mollarhat thana OC said the girl is not a resident of Mollarhat upazila. "She was brought in here by the gang. However, we are trying hard to identify the girl and trace the culprits."

Meanwhile, hundreds of men and women brought out a procession in Mollarhat upazila protesting the incident and demanding punishment to the culprits.

Shortage of funds, price hike hit fishermen in Cox's Bazar

ABDUL MONAYEM KHAN, *Cox's Bazar*

Thousands of fishermen in the Cox's Bazar district have been facing manifold problems in carrying on their age-old profession due to lack of financial and logistics support and price spiral of fishing materials.

According to a statistics, about 48,000 fishermen of Moheshkhali, Kutubdia, Teknaf, Chakoria, Ukhia and Cox's Bazar Sadar upazilas depend on fishing for their livelihood.

But the sudden price hike of fishing nets, boats and other necessary equipment and exploitation by a vested quarters have thrown them into a grave crisis.

Pisciculture in the six upazilas has also been hampered as the river and ponds are drying up, contributing to lower productivity in the region. Pollution and siltation of the Bakkhali and Matamuhuri rivers have also affected the pisciculture badly in the district.

Disposal of wastes of mills and factories into the rivers is the main reason of water pollution, it is learnt.

Local fishermen said they are passing their days in extreme hardship due to shortage of capital. In the absence of adequate loan facilities from the commercial banks, they are forced to borrow money from the money-lenders with a high rate of interest. And many of them have switched to other professions.

The bank loans sanctioned for the fishermen are inadequate and most of the genuine fishermen have

been deprived of the loan facilities. But the local fisheries department has failed to take necessary measures to solve the problems of the fishermen, they alleged.

They also alleged that some leaseholders in collusion with the local vested groups are leasing water bodies again to the fake fishermen. Moreover, most of the genuine fishermen are facing problems in catching fish even after taking out a lease on water bodies.

Another major setback for fish cultivation is lack of proper maintenance of ponds and canals, sources said. Hundreds of ponds have turned derelict and many others are full of water hyacinth.

As a result, supply of fish to the wholesale fish market in Cox's Bazar has drastically fallen nowadays.

Sea fishes and various other local varieties of fish are generally brought and sold in this market, an important centre in the southern region. Traders from various parts of the country have their local agents here to purchase and supply fish to different outlets in the region.

But the increased activities of the pirates in the Bay of Bengal and its adjoining areas made it difficult for the fishermen to catch fish in the Bay, resulting in a huge shortage of fish in the markets.

Traders urged the authorities to ensure security of the fishermen in the Bay and demanded adequate government support to raise fish production.

Tk 22.4 lakh looted from factory

UNB, *Comilla*

Robbers looted Tk 22.40 lakh from a factory at Alekharchar on Dhaka-Chittagong highway here on the Eid day.

Police said the robbers numbering eight entered into the factory premises of K Rahman and Company when security guard Nazrul Islam opened the main gate of the factory. They looted the money from the cash room of the factory.

Major (retd) Maruf Rashid, General Manager (Marketing) of the company, filed a case against six people, including the security in-charge of the factory.

Later, police arrested security in-charge Ali Ashraf, security guard Nazrul Islam, Kazi Abdul Latif, Aiyub Ali, Shahnawaz Khan and Zulfikar Miah in this connection.

Another report from Bagerhat adds: Robbers looted Tk 1.10 lakh from a petrol pump in Fakirhat upazila on Friday.

NEWS SNAPS

RU reopens today

RU CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

The classes of Rajshahi University (RU) resume today after a 10-day vacation on the occasion of Saraswati Puja, Amar Ekushey, Eid-ul-Azha and Teachers' Day.

All the administrative offices of the university will also reopen today. The vacation began on February 17.

Robbery at RU teacher's house

RU CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

Agang of robbers looted valuables and cash worth Tk one lakh from the house of a teacher of Rajshahi University (RU) at village Choddopaya last week.

Sources said five robbers posing themselves as police personnel entered the house of Abdur Rouf, Associate Professor of Chemistry department, at dead of night on February 18. They held the inmates of the house hostage at gunpoint and looted cash and valuables, including gold ornaments, and decamped with the booties. On information, police rushed to the spot and recovered a pistol left by the robbers.

50 injured in clashes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Magura*

At least 50 people were injured, 25 of them seriously, in separate clashes at four villages in the district on Eid day.

The clashes took place in Abalpur, Binodpur, Akchi and Bamonpara villages. According to police and local people, rival groups of villagers equipped with lethal weapons clashed over establishing supremacy at Eidgah, disrupting the Eid congregations. The critically injured villagers were admitted to Magura Sadar Hospital.

Madrassah teacher killed by brother

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Magura*

A madrassah teacher was stabbed to death allegedly by his younger brother at Doarpur area in the town last week.

Police arrested Azad, 22, on charge of stabbing his elder brother, Zahurul Islam, 40, who died on the spot on February 20. A row over monetary issue culminated in the murder, police said.

Death

annivers

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The 37th death anniversary of Alhaj Abdul Karim, a renowned social worker, will be observed today, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his residence at Panchdana village under Keraniganj thana after Asr prayers.