

SNAPS

Fake BDR man arrested in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira  
Local people caught an imposter posing as a BDR (Bangladesh Rifles) personnel at Reyni in Sadar upazila Monday.

Rezaul Karim, 32, of Harishpur in Sadar upazila, was caught by villagers when he, dressed in BDR uniform, demanded bribe from local people, allegedly smugglers. He was handed over to police. A case was filed with Sadar Police Station.

Dacoity in Rajbari

BSS, Rajbari  
Armed robbers looted cash and valuable worth about Tk one lakh from three houses at Bhabdia village under Sadar upazila on Saturday night. Police said a gang of dacoits numbering 5 to 8 entered the houses of Latif Sheikh, Sahid Sheikh, and Monufakir of village Bhabdia and took away cash and golden ornaments with gunpoint. None was arrested. A case was filed with Sadar thana.

Rotary Club distributes warm clothes

BSS, Faridpur  
Rotary Club of Faridpur has so far distributed 600 pieces of winter clothes among the river erosion affected poor people.

According to club sources, president of the organisation Dr Jalaluddin Ahmed distributed winter cloths among the erosion-hit families living in Baitul Aman area of the town. These people have taken shelter in the area after their homesteads were devoured by the Padma during the last season.

About 4,000 families have been affected this year by river erosion. The Rotary Club president said the distributed winter clothes included 500 pieces of old clothes and 100 new sweaters. These were purchased from the fund contributed by the club members.

Earlier, the district administration distributed winter clothes worth Tk one lakh among the poor people.

Meanwhile, the police administration has distributed winter clothes worth Tk 10,000 among the poor people of the town.

Workshop on FP, gender issues in Netrakona

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

The IEM unit of the Family Planning (FP) Directorate in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFP) jointly organised a workshop here for working journalists to make them aware about Family Planning Procreation and Gender issues.

It was held at the Sabolombi Unyan Samity office and sponsored by The Zila Paribar Parikalpana office, Netrakona recently.

Tongi fair to make slum dwellers aware about rights

STAR NATIONAL DESK

A five-day Tongi Puro Mela will begin on the Kaderia Textile Mill premises from today, says a press release.

Former Adviser of the Interim Government of Bangladesh Hafiz Uddin will open the fair at 3 in the afternoon.

The fair is being organised jointly by CARE Bangladesh, Tongi Municipality, local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and SOMIK, an organisation of slum dwellers.

The fair aims at making slum dwellers aware about their rights and various social issues and to establish linkage with local service providers.



PHOTO: STAR

An official of the Family Planning (FP) Directorate speaking at a workshop on Family Planning Procreation and Gender Issues organised for the journalists in the district town by the FP Directorate in collaboration with the UN Population Fund recently.

Abductions for ransom up in Nilphamari

No report of major crimes like political killing, robbery in last two years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

There was no political killing in the district during last two years although it increased in the southern part of the country.

The phenomenon indicates political harmony in this horizon.

During monga period (mid August to mid Nov) this year no armed robbery was committed. Incidents of burglary were also negligible.

A responsible police source claimed that because of nabbing of notorious bandits like Mohammad Ali, Dulal and others crimes reduced to a great extent.

Incidents of cow lifting also decreased. Thirty six cow lifting cases were recorded both the previous years. Police sources claimed it to be a success as they prevented its growth even during bad days of monga this year. But it is also true that most of the cow lifting incidents were not recorded in thanas by the cow owners in apprehension of further harassment by cow lifters. In fact the actual number of cow lifting may be much higher than the record.

However, the trend of crime has changed in the district. Incidents of kidnap, blackmailing, mugging and piracy are on rise instead of traditional robbery and theft. Women and children repression also marked a sharp rise.

In a statistics of cases filed in

different thanas of the district it was found that 1,419 cases were filed last year while 1,414 cases were filed in 2002. Out of which rape cases were 122 and 106 last year and in 2002. Incidents of child repression cases were 15 last year which included rape of a three-year old baby. But such cases were four only in 2002.

Incidents of murder decreased significantly last year. It was 26 in comparison with 40 in 2002. Observers believe that capital punishment given by the Rapid Trial Tribunal in the recent days in different districts resulted in its reduction.

Incidents of kidnapping increased alarmingly in the district. Kidnapping for ransom has added anew dimension in the field of crime. The number of kidnap cases were 10 last year while it was one in 2002.

Incidents of robbery decreased notably last year. It was four last year, but 11 in 2002.

Though robbery has decreased but piracy increased. Incidents of attack on people on the streets and mugging raised a great concern. The number of piracy case was 16 last year while it was nil in 2002.

Despite of 'Jihad' (crackdown) launched against use and sell of all kinds of drugs by the present Superintendent of Police (SP) Abdullah Al-Mamun, use and sell of Phensidyl, hemp and various

toxicated injections increased.

However, police checked spread of heroin to some extent. Last year 54 drug-related cases were filed while it was 64 in 2002.

Only one illegal arm was recovered last year but seven arms were recovered in 2002.

Police are yet to unearth the mystery of recovery of high power explosive from Sholmari in Jaldhaka on December 24 in 2002.

Police failed to find any clue to it throughout the year. Explosive experts of Bangladesh army examined the explosives and commented it to be destructive.

Police also failed to find the mystery of Fazlu's unnatural death in the district jail. Many believes that Fazlu was killed by some quarter inside the jail. A humanitarian organisation of the capital also investigated the matter.

Police authorities told the correspondent that both the incidents were under investigation.

However, Nilphamari SP claimed the overall law and order situation to be positive.

When asked about the changing trend in crimes, an ex-teacher of Nilphamari Government College Khorsheed Alam said that it was the influence of Satellite channels and illegal commercial shows of Blue films.



PHOTO: STAR

Leaders and workers of Rajshahi unit of Ghatat Dalal Nirmul Committee brought out a procession in the divisional city to mark the 12th founding anniversary of the organisation on Monday. Participants called upon the patriots to get united to save the country from ruination.

Another sugar mill closed down in Gaibandha

Labourers announce agitation programme

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

The Rangpur Sugar Mill in Gaibandha was closed down from Tuesday due to short supply of inputs.

Labour leaders of the mill announced an agitation programme against the lay off with immediate effect.

According to an official source, the mill went into production on December 5, 2003 with a target of production of 7,100 metric tons of sugar by crushing one lakh 10 thousand tons of sugarcane. But the mill authority compelled to close down its production due to short supply of sugarcane.

The source further said the mill produced 4,000 metric tons of sugar by crushing 60,000 tons of sugarcane within only 45 working days.

In this season the rate of sugar extraction was estimated to be 6.70 per cent. The mill will incur a loss of about Tk 3 cr this season, said an

official preferring anonymity.

Besides the mill would have to pay an interest amounting to Tk 4 cr or 84 lakh annually as interest against loan of Tk 39 cr 48 lakh taken from World Bank, Industrial Bank and Sonali Bank. So the mill suffered a loss of nearly Tk 75 cr since its inception.

Abdul Matin, President of Rangpur Sugar Mills Workers' Union told this correspondent that this season labourers of the mill sacrificed their overtime allowance

and rendered selfless service to make the mill profitable. But because of bad management of the mill it was closed. As a result nearly 1,200 labourers turned jobless.

While contacted Ashraf Ali, Managing Director of the mill told this correspondent that this season growers cultivated sugarcane on limited plots fearing privatisation of the mill. As such the authority was compelled to close down the mill due to acute shortage of sugarcane.

Stone extraction Unabated in Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT Bandarban

Unabated extraction of stones are going on by unscrupulous people from hillside of the district resulting in environmental degradation.

However, the local administration or the forest department authorities do not take measures to check the practice.

This correspondent visited Paitong, Phansikhal and Kumari area in Lama upazila, Chaikhong of Alikadam and Kachhaptali of Roangchari and saw that the stones are being extracted in large scale by dishonest persons.

Local sources told, Jhum field and rural roads are also being damaged due to unplanned extraction of stone from the hilly land and beside hilly springs. As a result, cultivable land is being reduced day by day. Rivers and canals are also silted because of this phenomenon.

Extracted stones are being piled up on the Ruma-Bandarban road in Bandarban Municipality before the law enforcing agency personnel.

Rajshahi housewives want gas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Several hundred housewives agitated in the divisional city on Tuesday afternoon demanding gas supply to Rajshahi.

The Rajshahi Protection Movement Council (RPMC) organised a big procession of housewives. Following the procession a public meeting was organised at the Shaheb Bazaar Zero point with RPMC convener Zamat Khan in the chair.

Rajshahi Mohila Parishad leader Bulbul Rani, Haripur union council member Sufia Begum, Weekly Duniya editor Sharmin Sultana, Farzana Afroze, Manjuara Khatun and many others addressed the meeting.

Speakers expressed their anguish over the government's decision to exclude Rajshahi city from the national gas network.

They demanded immediate gas supply to Rajshahi for ecological equilibrium.

Transport strike in Gaibandha withdrawn

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Gaibandha Motor Owners' Association and Motor-Truck Labour Union called off their indefinite transport strike from Thursday.

In a meeting held at Gaibandha Deputy Commissioner's office on January 19 the transport leaders withdrew their strike.

Presided over by ADC Abu Hena Mostafa Mala, the meeting was attended by the leaders of both the associations and BRTC representatives.

RU bus damaged by unidentified miscreants

A RU CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified masked men damaged a Rajshahi University bus leaving its helper injured in front of the main gate of Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology on Monday morning.

Miscreants' bid to set the bus on fire was foiled as police reached the scene on time.

Helper of the bus Azizul Haque, 27, was admitted to the university medical center.

Transport director Prof Motiar Rahman said two buses were running everyday for transporting the admission seekers as the university was closed till February 7.

Acting proctor Enamul Haque confirmed the report and said the miscreants were yet to be identified. But no case was filed in this regard.

More time for shrine blast probe body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The probe committee to investigate the bomb blast at the shrine of Hajrat Shahjalal was given an extension of 10 days on Monday to submit its report.

The five-member body, headed by the superintendent of police (SP) of Sylhet, sought 15 more days, but the deputy inspector general (DIG) of police of Sylhet Range approved 10 days.

The DIG formed the body the day after the blast on January 13. The other members on the committee are the additional SP (North), ASP Special Branch, ASP Sadar Circle and ASP of Criminal Investigation Department.

The committee was asked to file its report on the aforementioned day. But as it did not get the report on explosive from the armed forces, it asked for more time.

The investigators said they believe the bomb was set moments before the blast and it exploded as someone pressed or stepped on it.

The blast has claimed five lives so far, while about 50 others are injured.

The six arrestees of the case were produced before a magistrate's court on Sunday that rejected their bail and sent them to jail.



About 5,000 landless paraded the streets of Rajbari town protesting attack on landless farmers and staffers of Samata, an NGO working for the landless, at Char Kashimpur in the district on January 14. They demanded arrest and punishment to the attackers immediately.

Arsenic threatens 48,8,650 in Brahmanbaria

SK SHAHIDUL ISLAM, Brahmanbaria

Two hundred and sixteen persons were affected with arsenic-related diseases in Nabinagar upazila.

This is because of consumption of arsenic contaminated water.

Water of 23,663 tube wells in 195 villages were detected to be arsenic contaminated.

Only one village named Rasulpur under Natghar union in the upazila remained out of arsenic contamination.

Water of all tube-wells in 34 villages of the upazila are highly contaminated with arsenic.

The most severely-affected villages are: Chander Char, Das Kanda, Sadekpur, Daponia, Islampur, Kamalpur, Lakhawra, Radhanagar, Bangaura North, Asrabpur, Pandabnagar, Padmanagar, Bhatpukur, Kajzila, Barashikonika, Chalikhula, Chakrakhukla, Buldi Bari, Gunpukuria, Bajebishara, Pira Kandi, Char Manik Kandi, Dawlathpur, Kazirgong, Sampur, Kazimabad, Damkandi, Manipur, Nandua, Badruksa Bari, Bandukhar, Nasrabari, Ghiara and Rasulpur.

Water in all tube-wells of 58 villages are not worth consumption.

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There are 48,8,650 people in 195 arsenic affected villages. They are living in a very vulnerable situation. The Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), Brahmanbaria district conducted a survey and examined all 28,068 tube-wells and found water of 23,663 tube wells were highly contaminated with arsenic. About 1,518 tubewells were completely out of order. The DPHE also detected 154 arsenic patients there.

The DPHE staffers marked red the arsenic contaminated tube-wells so that none consumes water of the tube-wells.

But as there was no alternative, people were found to drink arsenic-contaminated water from the red-marked tube-wells.

Even people used to drink water of the Titas river and other ponds. As a result, more than 300 people were attacked with diarrhoea and other water-borne diseases, local people and hospital sources said.

Arsenic-related diseases usually damage kidney, liver, skin and nervous system. Arsenic poisoning can cause also death of patients, an expert told this correspondent.

Because of drinking arsenic-contaminated water, the number of arsenic patients were increasing

regularly.

According to a DPHE survey report, the layer of arsenic contaminated water was found at 30 metre depth. Brahmanbaria DPHE undertook a plan to instal 125 deep tube-wells above 210 metre depth in different parts of the affected areas. They also installed 11 ring tubewells there.

Besides, under the arsenic mitigation project of Bangladesh, the UNICEF took steps to construct two structures in the affected areas to preserve rain water for human consumption.

While this correspondent visited the spots, Abdul Kadir of Biddaya Kut Village told him that they were suffering from arsenic pollution for more than three years. But the authorities did not take step to mitigate their sufferings.

Another villager, Abdur Razzak told that they were asked to preserve rain water for consumption. But people were not keen to use rain water.

On contact, Executive Engineer of Brahmanbaria DPHE Fazlul Haque informed that he received a full-fledged report of Nabinagar upazila at field level in October last year and undertook a plan to mitigate the suffering of victims.

Three get life for killing girl in Rajshahi

BSS, Rajshahi

The Speedy Trial Tribunal, Rajshahi, on Monday sentenced three youths to life imprisonment for killing a girl at Panka village in Godagari upazila in 2002.

The convicts are Abdul Malek, 18, son of Ayesb Uddin, Ratan Ali, 19, son of Kayem Uddin and Khairul Islam, 17, son of late Robu Mondal. Khairul has been absconding since the murder.

The court also fined the convicts Tk 5,000 each, in default, they will have to suffer six more months in jail.

Judge AFM Aminul Islam read out a 43-page judgment in a crowded courtroom in the afternoon.

The victim, Somija Khatun, 11, daughter of Bulu Mohajan of Panka village, came out of the house in response to a call of nature at about

Three snatchers jailed in Bogra

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Three snatchers were awarded three years rigorous imprisonment (RI) by a court here on Sunday.

First Class Magistrate of Bogra S M Ferdous Alam convicted Shahidul Islam, 22, son of Hazrat Ali of Kazi Nurul village, Palash, Mahmud Pasha, 26, son of Fazlul Haque of Gokul Uttarpura village in Bogra Sadar and Shahjahan Ali Momin, 23, son of Alzal Hossain of Kamarpara village in Sonatola upazila under Speedy Trial Act.

Another accused of this case, Liton, 26, son of Fazlul Haque of Muradpur village in Shibganj upazila has been acquitted of charges.

The court also fined each of them Tk 5,000, in default, to suffer six-month more simple imprisonment. The punishment of Shahidul and Pasha would be executed from the date of their arrest on November 8, 2003 and that of Liton from January 18, 2004.

Fazlur Rahman, caretaker of R & R Cold Storage of Rahbal in Shibganj and peon Abdur Rouf were going to Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank (RAKUB), Rahbal branch to deposit Tk 5 lakh 50 thousand on November 8, 2003 by a motorcycle. When they reached the Bogra-Rangpur highway in front Soptorshi Brick field at about 11:45am four miscreants including the three accused waylaid and snatched away a plastic sack containing the money. Hearing their hue and cry people rushed to the spot and caught Shahidul and Shahjahan red-handed with the money. Another alleged snatcher Liton and Pasha managed to escape.

(police) seized a knife by which the victim was slaughtered. The first class magistrate also recorded their confessional statements in the court.

After investigation, Godagari police pressed charges against the youths on January 1, 2003.

The tribunal examined 29 prosecution witnesses and completed the trial within 55 working days.