

SNAPS

CU to accept admission forms on Friday

CU CORRESPONDENT
The Chittagong University (CU) authorities will receive forms for admission into first year honours courses on Friday next.

Admission seekers may submit their forms to all faculty deans and institute director offices on the holiday due to inconvenience created for 10-day Eid-ul-Azha vacation.

Applicants will have to collect admit cards from the respective dean offices by today.

Admission forms are available in four Agrani Bank branches. These are Campus branch, Agrabad branch, Kapashgoal branch at Chawkbazar and New Market branch.

Rangpur Sugar Mills workers stage hunger strike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha
Cane growers and Rangpur Sugar Mills workers here observed a four-hour token hunger strike and staged a sit-in demonstration on Friday in front of the mills gate protesting layoff of the mills from March 31.

A meeting was held which was presided over by Abdul Matin, President, Sugar Mills Labour Union. Abdus Salam, Vice President of the union, Tabibur Rahman, Secretary, Mohammed Ali, a labour leader, Altaf Hossain, local Awami League Secretary, Mohammed Hossain Faku, a labour leader and Abdur Rashid, a labour leader of Cane Growers' Association addressed the meeting.

Speakers announced an ultimatum of mass suicide for government's failure to withdraw the layoff decision.

Cop 'closed' for selling hemp

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia
A camp-in-charge under Daulatpur Police Station has been closed for his alleged involvement in selling hemp in the area.

According to police, Sub-Inspector (SI) Kamruzzaman, in-charge of Digholokanti camp recovered a huge amount of hemp from Daulatpur upazila. But he did not deposit the same to the district Narcotics Department and sold those to addicts.

Kushtia Police Superintendent (SP) Abdus Salam went to the camp on Friday and recovered about 25 kilogram of hemp from the camp. He ordered Kamruzzaman's closure.

A department case is underway, the SP said.

Bird killing at Hakaluki haor UP chairmen asked to prepare list of hunters

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Chairmen and members of the Union Parishads (UPs) adjacent to Hakaluki haor (a water body) in Kulaura and Baralekha upazilas have been asked to prepare the lists of bird hunters.

Upazila and police administrations have been instructed to take drastic action against the culprits.

A group of bird hunters killed about 30,000 guest birds by throwing poison in the haor in the last week of January. After Publication of the news in different dailies, people of the country have demanded an exemplary punishment to the killers.

Kulaura Police told this correspondent that the criminals went underground. Police are trying to nab them.

Meanwhile, police have collected 22 names of bird hunters from different sources and one person was also arrested.

Moulvibazar Deputy Commissioner (DC) M Mukhlisur Rahman already visited the haor.

Kulaura thana Officer-in-Charge (OC) Touhidul Islam Chowdhury told this correspondent that at present people of the villages near to the haor have become conscious about protection of winter birds after the incident. Such incident did not take place again.

An export potential ignored

Monipuri handloom items can earn foreign exchange with a little govt help

RAJAT KANTI GOSWAMI, Moulvibazar

Sumargola Sinha, Mondakini Sinha and Trishna Devi of remote Tilakpur village in Kamalgonj are now happy and enthusiastic. Their handloom items like colourful sharees, bedsheets, napkins, lungis and wrappers are in good demand in Dhaka, Chittagong and other cities and urban areas.

Monipuri clothing items are sold everywhere-- from footpath shops to posh shopping malls in cities and are acclaimed by fashion conscious urban people. Urban ladies like Monipuri sharees as those are not only fashionable but also cheaper.

Having a glorious tradition in handloom, Monipuri community is different from other tribesmen. They are the only tribal community in the country who live in plainlands.

Though Monipuri women are traditionally specialised in producing handloom items, the picture was not like this even a few years back.

They are grateful to internationally known Bangladeshi fashion designer BB Russel. She went there in 2001 and encouraged them, displaying various designs.

There is at least one handloom in each family. These are simple in design and cheap.

The Daily Star Correspondent visited Adampur, Tilokpur and Madhabpur villages in Kamalgonj recently. Women were busy on handlooms and men were working in fields.

Rajeswari Devi of Madhabpur village recalled her past days when there was no demand for their knitting items. Their market was limited to local areas. Days were very hard then.

Arita Sinha said BB Russel inspired and advised them on various designs.

"Russel's visit encouraged us

and we started weaving special types of sarees and bedsheets with colourful design. Now these are in good demand in cities and towns", she said.

Being encouraged by the good demand, they formed an association to market the products.

But there are problems as well. Fund crisis is the major problem. There is no bank loan facility.

Some NGOs working in the area give them short term micro credit. But the interest is high.

All of them said if soft loan and adequate supply of yarn are provided, the attractive handloom products can be exported to earn foreign exchange.

Monipuris have been living in the district since the 18th century.

Most of the Monipuri population in Bangladesh is concentrated in Moulvibazar district. About 60 villages in five unions in Kamalgonj upazila of the district are predominantly Monipuri areas. There are three Monipuri villages in Srimongal upazila, 11 in Baralekha, two in Kulaura and one in the Sadar upazila.

There is no correct census on Monipuri population in the country.

A leader of the Monipuri Samaj Kalyan Samity (MSKS) at Kamalgonj said they enumerated about one lakh 40 thousand Monipuris across the country.

There are mainly three tribes in Monipuri community-- Vishnupuria, Meithei and Meithei Pangon. The Vishnupurias and the Meithei believe in the Hindu religion. The Meithei Pangons follow Islam.

They have two separate languages-- Vishnupuri and Meithei--with their own alphabets. But Bangla alphabets are now being used in both the languages.

Their literacy rate is over 60 per



Two Monipuri woman on their handlooms made with bamboo. The photo was taken from a village in Kamalgonj on Wednesday.

PHOTO: STAR

cent now. A High Court judge was appointed from the Monipuri community in 1999. Besides many Monipuris in civil service, there are doctors, engineers, teachers and lawyers from among them. Monipuris have a rich music and

Abduction scare in Kushtia

20 kidnapped for ransom last month: College teacher named his captors but police did not arrest them

AMANUR AMAN, Kushtia

Incidents of abduction for ransom have increased alarmingly following deterioration of law and order in Kushtia, creating a scare among people.

At least 20 people were abducted in six upazilas in January this year, according to police records, newspaper reports and victims' families. Many incidents remained unreported for fear of reprisal.

Of those abducted, two were killed and one is still missing, believed to have been killed for non-payment of ransom. Ransom was realised from the rest. Police could rescue only one of the victims.

Police sources and the victims families said some identified organised gangs including outlaws are involved in abduction.

In most of the incidents, police were informed but they could neither rescue the victims nor save their families from paying ransom. In most incidents, victims' families did not file case fearing reprisal by the criminals.

Allegations have it that in some cases, police asked victims' families to pay ransom to save lives of the abducted persons.

On January 1, cadres of outlawed Gono Mukti Fouz (GMF) of Sromojibi Mukti Andolon abducted schoolboy Bipul Hossain, son of Azibar Rahman, from Alampur village in the Sadar Upazila and released him after two days on payment of Tk 1.20 lakh.

On the next day, one Akhil Kumar Ghosh of Dayarampur village in Kumarkhali upazila was abducted by members of outlawed New Biplobi Communist Party (NBPC). He was released after payment of Tk 50,000 through a media.

On January 3, young man Khokon Joardar, son of Ansar Joardar of Panti in Kumarkhali upazila was abducted by NBPC and released after payment of Tk 1 lakh.

On January 4, schoolgirls Sabita Rani Bagchi, 12, and Shusmita, 12 of Birikaya village were abducted by NBPC while they were going to Panti Girls High School in Kumarkhali. They were released after on payment of T. 50,000 on the same night.

On the same day, one Firoj, 18, son of Shajahan Ali of Malihad village in Mirpur upazila was abducted. He was released two days later after payment of Tk 30,000.

On January 8, college teacher lecturer Shahidul Islam was abducted from Kushtia town by a gang, who demanded Tk two lakh ransom.

He escaped from captivity at a Meherpur village after two days. He told police the name of abductors but police did not do not arrest them, he told this correspondent.

On the same day, businessman Safayat Hossain, 42, who is also president of Jhoudia Traders Association, was abducted by Gono Mukti Fouz and released on payment of Tk one lakh ransom.

On January 13, PBPC abducted young man Kibria, son of Sagir Hossain of Munshiganj. He was taken to India and later released after payment of Tk 50,000.

Abductors killed Saidur Rahman, 29, son of Abdus Sattar of Niyamatbari in Kumarkhali as a ransom of Tk two lakh was not paid within two days of abduction on January 2. It was alleged that he was abducted by Gano Bahini, which claims links with a faction of Jatya Samajtantrik Dal.

Even farmers are not spared. On January 16, farmer Arjan Ali of

Daulatpur was abducted allegedly by outlaws belonging to Biplobi Communist Party (BCP) and released on payment of Tk 40,000.

Businessman Mazibur Rahman, 29, son of Zillur Rahman of Daulatkhal, abducted on January 19 for Tk two lakh is still missing.

Mozibul Haq Kalu, 32, of Halsa village in Mirpur, abducted on January 25 for Tk 1 lakh, is missing as his family failed to pay the money.

The only victim rescued by police is college student Miraj. He was kidnapped from Ujagram village in the Sadar upazila on January 29 for Tk two lakh. Police rescued him on February 11 and arrested three of the captors.

Lone pry school in Galachipa shoal closed

A CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Five hundred fifty children are being deprived of primary education due to closure of the lone Satellite Primary School at Char Lata in Galachipa upazila on January 1 this year.

About 2,000 people live in the shoal where a satellite school started for education of the children on January 1 in 2000.

Upazila Education Officer Md Belayet Hossain told this correspondent that the school was closed, according to a government order.

Kuddus Bapary, 40, Vice-President of the school managing committee said our children are being deprived of education as there is no other school in the shoal.

Loot of Pubali Bank's Tk 22 lakh

IO changed, prime accused at large

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet.

Police are yet recover Tk 17 lakh out of Tk 22 lakh looted from a vehicle of Pubali Bank on Saturday last.

The prime accused, Ward Commissioner Ashique Ahmed, also remained at large.

In a mysterious move, the Investigating Officer of the case has been changed. Sub-Inspector Bashir Khan of Kowali thana has been replaced by ASP (North) Siddiqui Tanjilur Rahman as the IO.

Two of the arrested persons -- SM Rubel and Munim, a cleaner of the bank, in their confessional statements under Section 164 before a magistrate on Thursday gave a detailed description on how the money was looted.

Rubel said City Corporation

Ward Commissioner Ashique Ahmed and Union Parishad Chairman Usman Ali were directly involved in it.

Munim admitted that he had passed on information to the miscreants over mobile phone just after the vehicle had left the bank.

Police said interrogation of the rest of the remanded accused in on.

Remand of the bank's cashier Syed Faizur Rahman ended on Thursday.

The money, packed in a gunny bag, was looted when the microbus was on way to Sylhet Corporate branch of Pubali Bank.

Soon after, police recovered Tk 5 lakh from the house of a Union Parishad chairman. Three motor-bikes and the Stengun looted from

the bank's guard were also recovered from the same house.

Later, the private car used in the looting which belonging to a Ward Commissioner was also found abandoned at a filling station, about 15 Kilometres from the spot.

Havilder Abdul Quaiyum has been awarded Tk 10,000 for his laudable role in catching the miscreants just after the incident.

Police said the UP chairman and the Ward Commissioner were directly involved in the looting.

The case was filed next day, accusing 15 people including Ward Commissioner Ashique Ahmed as the number one accused. The other accused include UP chairman Usman Ali and his two stepbrothers.

Govt forms vigilance team

Clash over high fertiliser price in Nilphamari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

The district administration has formed a vigilance team to contain price rise of fertilisers in the district.

The six-member team comprises officials from the administration and departments concerned and representatives of fertiliser dealers.

The team was formed amid clashes between traders and farmers at Chilahati in Domar upazila over high price of fertiliser.

The clash ensued as one of the traders--Raziur--at Chilahati Bazar declined to sell per 50-kg bag of TSP below Tk 1000 against its original price of Tk 600.

Being informed, Magistrate SM Abdul Latif of the vigilance team rushed there with a police team from Domar thana. They brought the situation under control.

It is also alleged that some big traders have purchased all the allotments from dealers in the district. They are controlling the market. They are also cheating farmers by re-packing imported TSP and selling those as Bangladeshi TSP, which is of better quality.

When contacted, General Secretary of Nilphamari unit of Bangladesh Fertiliser Dealers Association Biswajit Bhoomik denied the allegation that the prices have increased due to market manipulation by the dealers.

Two railway staff suspended

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Two railway staff have been suspended for negligence in duty which caused a train accident near Sonatola Railway Station on Lalmonirhat-Santaher route on February 8.

They are Shahidul Hasan, a loco master and Jahurul Islam, a fireman.

Outlaws kidnap two sisters in Khoksa

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Outlawed party cadres abducted two sisters at Osmanpur village in Khoksa upazila for failing to pay Tk 2 lakh as ransom on Wednesday.

The victims are Sonali Khatun, 16, and Rupali Khatun, 14, daughter of Abdul Aziz of the village. Both of them were students at Osmanpur Bilateral High school. Their father Abdul Aziz was staying in Dhaka in connection with employment.

The incident happened when the sisters along with their mother left home for Dhaka to save themselves from the clutch of miscreants.

Police said the cadres belonging to the outlawed New Biplobi Communist Party (NBPC) picked up them in a microbus at Osmanpur GK (Ganges-Kabadak) Bridge at gun-point as victims' mother Aleya, 40, declined to pay them toll.

Aleya filed a case with Khoksa Police Station.

Syedpur Uttara Housing Complex Protest against move to allot houses only to Biharis

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

About five thousand Banla-speaking distressed people on Thursday marched towards government's Uttara Housing Complex Housing at Dhelapir on the outskirts of saidpur town protesting a move to allot the houses there only to Biharis (Urdu speaking people).

Army and police moved swiftly and stopped their procession at a short distance from the project area. The processionists staged a sit-in there for about three hours. Police have been deployed there.

The march followed several rallies, held by the Bangla-speaking local people in the last one week.

Army built the four crore taka government housing project comprising tin-shed houses in barracks to house 1000 families. The project was completed one month back.

There has been a controversy about allotment of houses. A government gazette published on May 12, 1997 had said the houses would be allotted to Bangladeshis of seven categories. Those eligible to apply are i) distressed freedom fighters, ii) land erosion victims, iii) divorced women, iv) landless farmer families, v) victims of land acquisition by government and vi) homeless people.

But the Saidpur Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) in an announcement invited applications only from 'Urdu-speaking' people for the allotment.

This created resentment among Bangla-speaking local people.

About 4,000 applicants have been received so far. Some Bangla-speaking people alleged

that their applications were not accepted. The officials concerned told them that only Urdu-speaking people were eligible for the houses.

It is also alleged that a large number of standard Pakistanis living in 20 Zeneva Camps in Saidpur and waiting repatriation also applied for allotments.

Saidpur UNO Shamsul Alam, who heads the allotment committee, later told newsmen that applications are being received from non-Bangalees as per a directive from the Prime Minister's office.

The opposition political leader of Saidpur, Mrs Rabe Alim, said the government cannot give permanent allotment to standard Pakistanis. "It is illegal".



A partial view of the Uttara Housing Project near Saidpur town.

PHOTO: STAR