

SNAPS

CU admission forms submission date extended

CU CORRESPONDENT

The last date for distribution and submission of forms for admission into first year honours classes in Chittagong University for 2003-04 session has been extend till Tuesday next.

Admission seekers can collect forms from four Agrani Bank branches including the campus branch during banking hours till Tuesday. They will have to submit admission forms to the respective deans and director's offices within 5pm on the same day.

A trifle leaves 60 hurt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Clashes over a trifling matter left at least 60 people injured at Noorpur village in Nasirnagar upazila Sunday evening.

According to eye witnesses and hospital sources, Kawser Mia threw a glass of water to Nopu Mia. This sparked off an altercation, leading to a duel.

This drew their supporters, who fell upon each other. The intermittent clashes lasted for about two hours, leaving at least 60 hurt.

Thirty-nine of the injured were treated at the upazila health complex and six were admitted there in serious conditions.

30 held in B'baria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Brahmanbaria police in special drives in the district in the last two days arrested 30 people accused in different cases including four murder areas and 13 GR cases. During the drives, they also recovered 58 bottles of phensidyl from a house Monkoshai village under Kosbha thana and arrested one person.

Vow to resist extortion, drug

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Traders, joined by people from all walks of life brought out a procession and held a rally in the town on Sunday protesting extortion and other crimes including drug peddling.

Initiated by the Hawkers Market Trader's Association, it was supported by the Brahmanbaria District Traders Co-ordination Committee, Brahmanbaria Market Committee, Masjid (mosque) Committee and Jagat Bazar Trader's Association.

The processionists paraded the roads chanting various slogans against the crimes.

The rally held at Jagat Bazar was addressed by, among others, Md Jahirul Haque, Md Osman Gani, Md Nannu Mia, Md Abul Foyez, Md Alauddin, Al-Haj Md Sirajul Islam and Hafez Md Ahsan Ullah. Speakers at the rally vowed to build a movement against the crimes and called upon the people to join it.

On Friday, Jagat Bazar Traders Association brought out a 'whistle and stick procession' in the town against extortion.

They chanted slogans like 'apply sticks against criminals' and 'crush dens of drug peddlers'.

They also protested the murder of goldsmith Gautam Talpatra, killed by toll collectors on February 3.

Raj Punnah festival begins in Bandarban today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Raj Punnah, the biggest colorful traditional tribal festival of Bomoung circle in Bandarban begins here today.

This will be the 129th festival, which began in 1873 when Raj (King) Khong Hla Prue ruled the tribe.

The festival will begin when Bomoung King Aung Sue Prue Chowdhury will sit on the throne at 9-30 in the morning. Then all the 'headmen' (Mouza chiefs) will show their ceremonial respect to the King and deposit taxes.

After tax collection, a traditional dance will be in honor of the King and distinguishes guest. Grand feasts and other programmes are arranged on the occasion.

The colourful Raj Punnah festival attracts guests from home and abroad since its beginning.

Chiefs of Chakma, Bomoung and Moung tribes are widely regarded in the Chittagong Hill Tracts for their benevolent deeds.

Tanguar Haor to be opened for plunder again?

One group backed by a minister wants its immediate lease, the other for permanent steps to protect it

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet.

The fate of Tanguar Haor in Sunamganj, a Ramsar site and the country's second biggest waterbody with a rich bio-diversity, has become uncertain again because of a tug of war between two influential groups.

One group backed by a minister wants the haor to be leased to an investor within a "short time", which, sources claim, will give the scope for its plunder again.

The others, backed by a state minister, the minister in charge of Sunamganj district and the district administration says it is not possible to lease it within a short time because this will be arbitrary and open the door for plunder. They claim that the group which suggests its lease in a "short time" wants that to allow a local ruling party lawmaker to take the chance and lease it.

They said the suggestion to lease it in a short time has created a commotion among people around the haor and district officials, who stopped the plunder for the last few months by deploying BDR, police and Ansar under supervision of magistrates.

"It is not possible to do the job (leasing) within a short time because fresh tender has to be floated for selecting investor", an

official said.

"The other option is to select some one without any bidding, which will open it up again for plunder".

Besides, handover of the huge waterbody to a private investor is "contradictory to the spirit of preserving its bio-diversity", he added.

The official said the district administration has stopped indiscriminate plunder of fish and others resources by deploying law enforces with approval from the ministry.

Sources said the administration's steps has been highly appreciated by all quarters in the district as well by high-ups in the government, who want continuation of the vigilance till the end of current dry season and a permanent arrangement is made for preservation and development of the waterbody as a Ramsar site.

The district administration's step has stopped four years of plunder.

The people want that the authorities take strict measures to protect the over 3868-acre haor, a sanctuary for 60,000 birds of different species and 140 varieties of sweetwater fish. Besides, over one lakh guest birds flock there during the winter.

A three-member parliamentary sub-committee on the Ministry of

Forests and Environment, after visiting the haor last month, had suggested handover of the waterbody to an investor before end of the three-year period for which it was placed under the disposal of the environment ministry by the land ministry. The period ended on February 10.

The committee also put forward a 7-point suggestion to protect its resources.

Led by Nazimuddin Alam its other members were Hafiz Uddin Ahmed and Kolimuddin Ahmed Milon.

After its visit to the haor the sub-committee sat at a meeting with Sunamganj district administration officials and professionals' groups at Sunamganj Circuit House.

Speakers in the meeting opined for formation of a special force comprising BDR, police and Ansar to ensure proper supervision of the haor.

The committee's suggestions include selection of the highest bidder as the investor and inclusion of two representatives from the ministry in the proposed haor maintenance body, raising the investor's contribution from 7.5 per cent to 15 per cent to the haor development fund, planting of one lakh saplings by the investor instead of 25,000

planned earlier.

The committee also resented that an investor could not be selected even after floating of tenders three times earlier, making its fate uncertain during the last few years.

When contacted, the local ruling party MP, Nozir Hossain, who owns a fishery project, said the earlier decision of the Environment Ministry to select an investor is right because this is within the provisions of the Ramsar programme.

Tender was floated a year ago but the process was suspended as only three bids were submitted, reportedly by Nozir Hossain's men.

Talking to this correspondent over phone, Nozir Hossain said the haor was plundered in the last five years and demanded punishment of the plunderers.

Tagaur Haor was declared an Ecologically Critical Area (ECA) in 2000 and was taken up as a Ramsar site.

But, implementation of the Ramsar project remained uncertain due to indecision of policymakers and failure in selecting financial investors.

3-day CHT road blockade from Feb 22

CU CORRESPONDENT

"Fight for Equal Rights in Chittagong Hill Tracts," an organisation of non-tribals has taken up a 3-day road blockade programme in three hill districts from February 22.

This was announced at a meeting held at a community centre here on Saturday.

The programme will be held in Khagrachhari, Rangamati and Bandarban on February 22, 23 and 24 with a view to establishing equal rights for non-tribals in CHT. Bandarban Press Club President Professor Osman Gani presided over the meeting while CHT Development Board Chairman Wadud Bhuiyan MP, was chief guest.

The meeting demanded suspension of Regional Council Chairman Santu Larma and Deputy Minister for CHT Affairs Moni Swapan Dewan.

Ekushey book fair begins in Ctg

CU CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A nine-day Ekushey book fair marking the International Mother Language Day began at Laldighi maidan here on Saturday.

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury opened the fair organised by the corporation. Fair convenor M Monzurul Alam presided over the function. Noted Physicist Professor Dr Jamal Nazrul Islam was present as chief guest.

Among others, Professor Dr Shouran Biswas, journalist Ataul Hakim, Chittagong Bar Association President Ibrahim Hossain Babul and CCC Chief Executive Officer Md Abul Bashar addressed the meeting.

A cultural function followed the programme.

2 kidnappers get 14 years RI in Magura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

Two youths were sentenced to 14 years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) for kidnapping a girl from Jagdal village in Sadar upazila.

The convicts were Hasan, son of Alamuddin and Nasiruddin, son of Shafiuddin of Jagdal village.

They were also fined Tk 5,000 each, in default, to suffer one year more RI.

Swapna 13, daughter of Khabir Hossain of the same village was kidnapped from her house on May 20, 2003.

Judge of Woman and Child Repression Prevention Court No 2, Md Sayedur Rahman pronounced the verdict on Sunday acquitting two others of the charge.



PHOTO: STAR

Hemp plants ready for harvest at Kholabari Adarsha Gram under Fulchhari upazila, Gaibandha.

Hemp a cash crop in Brahmaputra shoals!

Tk 3000 to Tk 4000 earned from a single plant : 3000 kgs likely yield this year : law enforcers protect growers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Hemp (*ganja*), a banned narcotic, is the main cash crop for a large number of people in Brahmaputra shoal areas in Gaibandha Sadar, Fulchhari and Shaghata upazilas.

Unbelievable though, they earn Tk 3,000 to Tk 4000 from each of the hemp plants, now being cultivated in vast areas. Each plant produces two to five kilograms of hemp.

It is the peak season now for hemp (hashish) harvest, which continues during January-February.

Nature blessed them this year. They are happy with a "bumper production" because of less floods.

Narcotics traders and money-lenders provide the farmers with loan and buy the product.

They collect the plants from cultivators and sell those at Tk 8000 to Tk 10000 per kilogram.

During a recent visit by this

correspondent, the farmers said they earn many times more from hemp cultivation than from other traditional crops like paddy, jute and vegetables, which is also uncertain because of frequent flooding.

Cultivation of the illegal crop is more in shoal areas under Fulchhari and Shaghata upazilas.

According to a local assessment, farmers of charland are expecting a production of about 3000 kilogram of finished hashish worth about Tk three crore this year.

In remote shoals, hemp is now being cultivated almost commercially as a seasonal crop allegedly under the protection of law enforcers and local influentials, sources claimed.

The plants are sown in October-November.

Law enforcers and Narcotics Control Department men rarely visit the areas due to lack of adequate transport facilities and manpower.

The main areas of cultivation

are Kholabari Adorsha Gram, Shunjair, Baraikandi, Jamirer Char, Gajaria, Arendabari and Fazlupur under Fulchhari upazila; and Haldia, Kumargari, Patilbari, Digholkandi, Kanaipara under Shaghata upazila.

The farmers said they are compelled to cultivate hemp because of poverty due to recurrent floods.

Many of the landless and marginal farmers said they are encouraged by local influentials and money lenders to go for this illegal production.

Local chowkidars (guards) of Union Parishads look after the crops under monthly payments from traders.

This correspondent attempted several times to talk with district Narcotics Control officials, but the office was found under lock and key.

A security guard there said the district officer normally stays at Rangpur and comes to Gaibandha to attend office.

Appointment of BNP-backed teachers in CU demanded

CU CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong University (CU) unit of Jatityatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) has demanded appointment of BNP-backed teachers in different key posts.

JCD demanded this at a meeting with the university administration led by its Vice Chancellor Professor AJM Nuruddin Chowdhury at his office on Saturday.

JCD also appealed to the authorities to allot separate blocks for their activists at all the residential halls. Among others, Proctor Professor Mazibur Rahman Chhatra Dal President Md Selim, General Secretary MR Milton Chowdhury were present in the meeting.

Detainee escapes: Cop suspended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A police officer was suspended and closed to Khulna police line on charge of negligence of duty on Friday.

Sub-Inspector Abdur Rahman, a duty officer of Khulna thana was suspended and closed to the police line as Amir Hossain, an accused in a murder case escaped from the thana one hour after his arrest by the Detective Branch (DB) of police from Skidghat.

3 killed by bus

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

Three persons were killed and two others injured in road accidents on Magura-Mohammadpur and Magura-Langalband roads yesterday.

Police said a pickup van hit a rickshaw-van at Borochara on the Magura-Langalband road killing Bhadu Mian, 50, and his younger brother Kutub Mian, 25, of Nama village in Rajbari district. Two others injured are Alim, 22, and Saiful, 30, of Kamlapur village in Sreepur upazila. They were admitted to Dariampur Health Complex.

In the other accident, bicycle rider Akter Hossain, 35, of Baniabohu village in Mohammadpur upazila was knocked down by a bus at Binodpur. He died at Magura Sadar Hospital.