

SNAPS

Concert for acid victims termed 'unislamic', postponed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet
The open-air concert, scheduled for February 19 at Sylhet Stadium, organised by the 'Acid Santrash Nirmul Committee (committee for eradicating acid attacks), has been postponed.

The district administration at a meeting on Monday cancelled the programme because of "uneasy situation" prevailing in the city for the last three days.

Some leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami, Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) and some other local Islamic groups had been opposing the programme, calling it 'unislamic', sources said.

One of the protesting organisations also threatened to lay a siege to the venue, the sources said.

About 30,000 tickets had already been sold, sources claimed. Artists like, Hasan, Biplob, James and Montaj were to join the concert.

Two 'outlaws' nabbed in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia
Two outlawed Biplobi Communist Party (BCP) cadres were nabbed with one shutter gun and two rounds of bullets on Monday.

Police told this correspondent that the cadres were hiding in Mirpur area. Both of the arrested are accused in Jatiba Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) activist Solaiman murder case. He was killed on February 5.

Arrested UP member freed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna
Dumuria police on Friday freed a member of Gutudia Union Parishad as people laid a siege to the police station demanding his release.

Pranab Kanti Tarafdar, Pranab was freed after he gave an undertaking to police to help them nab Khan Alamgir, a Jubo League leader and Chairman of the same UP, now absconding. He is wanted in 19 murder cases.

BCP cadre killed by PBCP rivals

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia
A cadre of outlawed Biplobi Communist Party (BCP) was shot dead by rivals at Raghunathpur village under Harinakundu upazila in Jhenidah on Monday.

The dead is Sarwar Hossain, 30, son of Farid Mondol of the village.

Police told this correspondent outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) cadres called Sarwar out of his house adjacent to Teherhuda village. They took him to a nearby filed and shot him dead.

Police recovered the body and sent to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

Police arrested 25 persons from the village. But all the arrested are innocent, claimed villagers.

Microbus owner lodges complaint against BNP leader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal
A microbus owner has lodged a general diary (GD) with Barisal Kotwali police against a BNP leader for damaging his vehicle and assaulting its driver on Sunday.

Microbus owner Kabir Hossain complained against Jhalakati district BNP Vice President and central Jubo Dal Assistant Organising Secretary Mahubul Alam Nannu. In his complaint he said that Nannu ordered to park the reserved microbus in front of his hotel, but the driver delayed to reach there.

At this Nannu got angry rushed to the microbus stand in front of Barisal Central Shahid Minar, assaulted its driver and damaged the vehicle.

Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) of police Mahbubur Rahman will investigate the allegations.

Even PM's Award fails to draw officials' attention

Exportable textiles produced by Garo women can be boosted with a little assistance

JAHANGIR ALAM, Netrakona

They got the Prime Minister's Award last year for their initiative and splendid performance and applied twice to the textile ministry with the local lawmaker's recommendation for assistance.

But their uplift efforts have fallen on the deaf ears of the authorities.

They are a group of 72 women at a remote village, producing textiles using Bangladeshi yarn. Their products are exported to China and Korea, bedsides having a good domestic market.

"We started with empty hands in 1990 with only two handlooms. Now we have 15 including two Japanese powerlooms. We are honest and hard working and can bring about radical changes in the area with a little support", Binodini Rema, executive director of Birisiri Multipurpose Women's Cooperative Society told this correspondent during a recent visit. Birisiri is a Garo village along the border, about 50 kilometres from Netrakona town.

The 15 looms are housed in several small factories.

"We can expand our factories right now, employing more people and helping them change their life. But this needs finance, she said.

It was a different scene. Besides the 72 Garo women who are members of the Society, at least 100 people are involved, doing various jobs. All were busy.

Binodini said their textiles and garments are in good demand in cities like Dhaka and Chittagong. They make wholesale supplies to traders there.

But the traders are making high profit at the cost of their hard labour.

"We should have our own display centers in the cities, but that needs money.

"We moved to banks but could not draw their attention", she lamented.

Some very positive things about Garo women came to light during the visit.

The Garo women are quite different from women of other races and religions.

Sources at Birishiri Tribal Cultural Academy at Durgapur said, about 65 per cent of Garo women

are educated against 20 per cent among men. About 40 per cent of the women are in service against only about five per cent among men.

Garo women work with NGOs, foreign embassies, missions and airlines. A good number is in nursing profession also.

They are very hardworking. Women also work in fields with males in their spare time, producing food.

Suchoreta Mankin of Modhupur who works at a CARITAS (a foreign NGO) silk factory at Modhupur said, "Our success lies with out hard work, honesty and sincerity".

Garo women were drawn to nursing decades ago.

Monorama Sangma of Ranikong village in Durgapur upazila working at a private clinic said, "I feel happy if my nursing gives comfort to a patient. It is my duty".

"They (Garo women) are always smiling and energetic. This is their distinctive feature", said Rakhi Mrong, Community Development Officer of CARITAS at Fulbaria in Mymensingh.

This makes them different from women of Muslim and Hindu com-



PHOTO: STAR
A Garo woman on her handloom at a factory of Birisiri Multipurpose Women's Cooperative Society.

munities in their neighbourhoods.

About one fifth of the world's half a million Garos live in Bangladesh's bordering hilly areas. These are Haluaghot and Dhubaura in Mymensingh; Modhupur and Ghatail in Tangail; Kalmakanda and Durgapur in Netrakona; Nalithabari and Jinaigathi in Sherpur; and Darmapasha, Tahirpur and

Bishambazpur in Sunamgonj districts. The rest are in north-eastern India.

Though the Garo society is matriarchal, their women were confined to houses and croplands two decades ago. The present high rate of literacy and employment among women are due to efforts by foreign and local NGOs.

Five NBCP outlaws held, 3 arms recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Joint forces arrested five alleged activists of outlawed New Biplobi Communist party (NBCP) from Patkelghasa overbridge in Tala upazila on Sunday.

They are Bidhan alias Jewel, 25, of Raipur village; Rahim, 20, of Khareddanga and Sofhan, 28, of Majhihara in Tala upazila; Rahmat Sama, 30, of Maynkasi village in Paikgachha in Khulna and Shariful, 28, of Chandra Prasad village in the Bhola Sadar upazila. Police said they are members of NBCP killing squads.

They shot Bachchu Member of Kachhidanga village in Paikgachha upazila at Kachchikasa on Saturday night, who died later at a hospital.

They were arrested at about 4-30 am Sunday as they reached the overbridge after the killing.

Acting on their confession at Paikgachha thana, police recovered three firearms and 35 bullets.

Sugar mill lay off decision Half-day hartal observed at Mohimaganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A half-day hartal, called by Rangpur Sugar Mills Labour Union, was observed in Mohimaganj upazila yesterday demanding withdrawal of a decision to lay-off the mill.

A protest rally was held at the mill gate during the hartal hour. Speakers at the meeting said the mill earned profit during 14 crushing seasons. It incurred losses at times due to inefficiency and corruption of the mill authorities. Over 1120 people working at the mill and several thousand sugarcane growers will be affected if the mill is laid-off, they said.

Presided over by Abdul Matin, president of union, the rally was addressed by, among others, Tabibur Rahman, Mohammed Ali, Baduzzaman Dulu, Abdus Salam, Azizur Rahman, local Awami League leader Altaf Hossain and BNP leader Mohiuddin Mondal.

The workers employees also brought out a procession and held a rally also on Monday.

IRRI-Boro on 3.81 lakh acres to be affected in 3 districts

India withdraws water unilaterally: Teesta Irrigation Project releases only 700 Cusec against 15000 needed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

IRRI-Boro cultivation on over 3.81 lakh acres in 12 upazilas in three districts under the Teesta Irrigation Project will be severely affected due to unilateral withdrawal of Teesta water by India.

The river is now a narrow channel, allowing flow of only 700 Cusec water through the project against the requirement 15,000 Cusec needed for irrigating lands under the project's command area, according to Water

Development Board (WDB) sources.

The 1100 crore taka project covers about one lakh 20,000 acres of land in Nilphamari district, one lakh 50,000 acres in Dinajpur and over 70,000 acres in Rangpur.

Ten small rivers in the region have already dried up and their beds are tobacco fields. Tobacco does not need any irrigation.

Sub-divisional Engineer of Teesta Irrigation Project Rezaul Mustafa said told this correspon-

dent, "We need 15,000 Cusec water now but we are getting only 700 Cusec.

He said, a few years ago, Bangladesh and India reached a temporary agreement to share the Teesta waters. As per the agreement, India will utilise 40 per cent of Teesta water and Bangladesh 35 per cent. The rest 25 per cent will be left as normal flow.

But this is ignored by India. They are withdrawing almost the whole of the Teesta flow through the Gozaldoba barrage, 80 kilo-

metres upstream from Teesta barrage point.

In the backdrop of such a situation, Bangladesh is going on to start work of the second phase of the Teesta project in June next, he said.

The ECNEC (Executive Committee of the National Economic Council) has allocated Tk. 1,167 for the second phase of the project. It is designed to cover another 4,48,774 hectares of land in Rangpur, Gaibandha, Joypurhat and Bogra districts.



PHOTO: STAR
A man walks past the Teesta Irrigation Project barrage through the river's dried up bed (Left) and at another place nearby. IRRI cultivated on the bed along the narrow channel. The photos were taken on Sunday.



Women's volleyball 'unislamic'!

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Two women volleyball competitions were cancelled as local Jamaat-e-Islami leaders declared those 'unislamic' and the party activists threatened the organisers not to hold those.

Local freedom fighters in cooperation with sports fans planned the competitions at Champa Phool Acharya Prafullah Chandra Madhumti Bidyapith Kaligoni and at Sree Ramakanti Primary School grounds at Aassassuni on Friday.

Besides local teams, women volleyball teams from BJMC (Bangladesh Jute Marketing Corporation) and Rajshahi were scheduled to take part in the meets.

As the organisers announced the date of the competition through microphone in the area, local Jamaat leaders and activists protested.

They later informed the Jamaat high-ups including two party lawmakers from the area.

The party activists also made announcements through micro-

phone, urging the organisers not to hold it and the people not to attend those as women's volleyball is 'unislamic'.

They put pressure on the local administration not to allow it, which stopped it, the organisers said when contacted over phone.

The organisers said they informed the Minister of State for Sports and the Minister-in-Charge of Satkhira district, but to no effect. UNOs of Kaligoni and Assassuni could not be contacted over phone despite repeated attempts.

Attack on newsman protested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Pirojpur Reporters' Club on Monday protested attack on the district correspondent of Janakantha and demanded arrest and punishment to the attackers.

Club members protested the attack in a meeting held on the Pirojpur Press Club premises. Reporters' Club Vice President Dilip Kumar Halder presided over the meeting.

Among others, RSF Country Representative Salim Samad, BMSF Secretary Khairuzzaman Kamal, BCDJC Joint Director Mainul Islam Khan, ex-Secretary of Pirojpur Press Club Gopal Chandra Bose and incumbent Secretary of the club Jahirul Huq Titu, Pirojpur Reporters Club Assistant Secretary Noman Sarder, journalists Abdul Alim and Siddikur Rahman Lotan, Advocate Shahidullah Khan, Dr M A Salam, Pirojpur Government College Students' Union Vice President Mezbahuddin Mukta spoke.

Speakers lamented as the attackers on Pirojpur Correspondent of Janokantha Shaiful Huq Mithu were not arrested even after two months of the attack.

on December 28, 2003. They demanded immediate arrest and punishment to the attackers and their godfathers.

After the meeting, the protesting journalists met Abdullah Al Azad Chowdhury, Superintendent of Police (SP) of Pirojpur who assured them his prompt action in nabbing the culprits.

They want to get rid of Pourasabha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

There has been reports on people's agitation for declaring their area a pourasabha (municipality). But the people of Akhaura are doing just the reverse.

They are agitating for the last few days for dissolution of Akhaura Pourasabha, declared in 1999. They say rural areas have been included in the Pourasabha and new taxes imposed without any service whatsoever.

On February 14, Akawra Upazila Ngorik Adikar O Unoyan Committee (a committee for citizens rights and development) held a rally at the Motor Stand to press their demand.

The rally gave a July 30 deadline for its dissolution and threatened of tougher action programmes including rail-road blockade for non-compliance.

With Committee President Md Tajul Islam in the chair, the rally was addressed by, among others, Principal MA Muhammad Ishak (Bir Prothik), former Bhairab District Council member MA Taher, Committee General Secretary SM

Shahjada Khadem, Akaura BNP acting president Ranjan Ghosh and its secretary NM Hasan Khan, Md Yousuf Sarwar, Md Hasib Humayun; Abub Mansur, Akawra Jubo Dal President Sahadat Hossain Liton, Abul Farook, Chhatra Dal Secretary Jakir Hossain and Jamat-e-Islami leader Billal Hossain.

Local people say they had protested soon after formation of the pourasabha because they knew they would have to pay more taxes without any service.

However, the first chairman election of the pourashava was held smoothly on February 12, 2002. But agitation started in 2003 when taxes were imposed, they said.

But Pourashava Chairman Md Nurul Haque Buiyan, a local Awami League leader, says the agitation is a conspiracy against him by those who lost in the polls.

He said, after consultation with higher authorities, some taxes have been waived for three years. The people would be able to enjoy civic amenities without taxes for three years. "So the plea of taxes is not correct".

PCJSS' 4-point demand Tougher agitation in CHT after Feb 23

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Tougher programmes will be announced at a rally on February 23 here if the four-point demand is not met, leaders of Parattya Chaitagram Jono Sanghaty Samity (PCJSS) have said.

The PCJSS is holding a 'grand rally' at Rajbari in Rangamati on that day.

Bangladesh Adibashi Forum, Communist Party of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Shamajtantrik Dal, Chhatra Union Jubo Union and organisations sympathetic to PCJSS will join the rally, according to its leaders here. PCJSS chief Jiotrimdriya Bodhipriyo larma alias Santu Larma and other leaders will address it.

PCJSS has launched a mass campaign programme up to the grassroots level to make the rally a success, they said.

Their demands include appointment of an indigenous person to the post of Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB) by removing ruling BNP legislator Wadood Bhuiyan, full implementation of the CHT accord, withdrawal of security forces from the hills and inclusion of an indigenous person

as a minister in the cabinet.

PCJSS, an organisation of indigenous people, signed the landmark Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) peace agreement in 1997 with the then Awami League, which ended decades of insurgency in the hills. But the agreement is yet to be fully implemented, they said.

"We want peace and development of the area and so came on the open", a front ranking leader told this correspondent yesterday seeking anonymity.

Army, VDP (Village Development Police), ANSAR and APBN (Armed police Battalion) are now deployed in the CHT to maintain security.

In the last few days, security has been beefed up in the three hill districts following abduction of a hotel manager.

The PCJSS and its front organisations enforced a series of 'road blockade and hartal' programmes in the CHT since it started agitation after the arson at Mohatchhari in Khagrachhari district on August 26 last year that left one person killed, 25 people injured and nine women raped. About 400 houses of tribesmen were burnt. PCJSS blamed Wadood Bhuiyan for the attack.

Eight charge-sheeted in BCL leader Ali Mortuza murder case

Three ICS men excluded from murder charge

CU CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Eight persons were charge-sheeted in Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leader Ali Mortuza Chowdhury murder case here after two years of the incident.

But exclusion of three Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) cadres from murder charge has created resentment among students in the university.

The charge-sheeted persons are Habib Khan, Gittu Nasir, Baita Alamgir, Ismail, Taslim Uddin Montu, Hasan alias Bhagina Ramjan, Ayub Ali alias Rashed, Saiful Islam alias Chhotto Saiful.

Taslim Uddin Montu and Hasan alias Bhagina Ramjan are already in jail custody in connection with other cases.

Saiful Islam was excluded from charge after his appeal through the Home Ministry to withdraw his name from the case though his involvement in the killing was proved, sources claimed.

Names of ex-president and general secretary of ICS Didarul Alam Mojumder and Abdul Awal Mamun were also dropped from murder charge after police termed them innocent.

Four Investigation Officers (IOs) were changed in two years. Sub inspector-Aminur Rashid who submitted the charge-sheet is the fifth IO of the case.

Shibir cadres in Hathazari upazila and Foyeyabad areas gunned down Chowdhury at Chhararkul, 200 yards away from his house on December 29, 2001.



PHOTO: STAR
Eighteen youths have been selected from Dhaka region for participation in the national level "Mountain Dew Team X-Treme" competition. The selection test was held at Gopara Multilateral High School ground in Manikganj on Sunday.



PHOTO: STAR
Some of the children (left) who fell sick from poisonous fumes when the food department officials burnt over 5,000 pounds of date-expired methyl powder (right) on Barisal CSD Food Godown premises on Sunday.