

BDR seizes 35 barrels of diesel in Meherpur border area

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) seized over 35 barrels of diesel worth Tk 1,40,000 from different border points of the district in the last three days.

They BDR also arrested three people for their alleged involvement in smuggling out diesel from the country during the period.

BDR sources said smuggling out of diesel through Meherpur border nowadays has been stopped.

Rangpur Sugar Mills Withdraw lay off decision, 11-Party urges govt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Gaibandha 11-Party Alliance has called upon the government to withdraw the decision to lay off Rangpur Sugar Mills.

It gave a deadline till March 21 for the withdrawal. Otherwise, a 6 am-2 pm will be observed in the district on March 22.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the alliance, held at the local CPB office on Monday. The meeting was presided over by Mihir Ghosh, district convenor of the alliance.

It was addressed by Aminul Islam Golsp, Mosadek Ahmed Bulbul and Jahangir Alam of Workers Party; Asir Rahman Rafel and Saikta Singha Goswami of CPB; Monjur Alam Mithu of BSD; Kader News of Conatantry Party and Mozafer Rahman Bablu of Gono Forum.

Digital telephone at a Manikganj union

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

A union in the district was brought under digital system telephone network on Monday.

Former Industries Minister Shamsul Islam Khan MP, opened the Tk 60 lakh 50-line digital telephone exchange of Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTB) at Charigram Shahadat (BTB) at Charigram Shahadat Khan High school ground.

Among others, Manikganj Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Abdul Bari, BTB Divisional Engineer Habibur Rahman, Assistant Police Superintendent (ASP) of Manikganj Mujibur Rahman, BNP leaders Fazlul Haque Khan, addressed the opening function.

SNAPS

Half-day hartal observed at Banaripara

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A half-day hartal, called by the local traders' association, was observed at Banaripara upazila Sadar on Monday. The hartal was called to protest filing of a "false" case against Sarwar Howlader and Mithu Molla, two leaders of that association. They are also local leaders of Jubo Dal.

Police said the case was filed as they allegedly hacked a local BNP activist, Milton, known as an extortionist.

200 fall sick due to food poisoning

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

More than 200 people fell sick due to alleged food poisoning at a marriage ceremony Sunday night at Kalapara upazila headquarter.

Twenty of them were admitted to the upazila health complex.

Police said one Amal Samddar of Kumar Patti area in the upazila headquarter arranged the ceremony on the occasion of his daughter's marriage. They said they visited the spot and probing whether it is a conspiracy.

Farmers' 'no' to imported hybrid seeds

Scientifically produced and preserved indigenous HYV paddy seeds give higher yield, open the door to prosperity for many

JAHANGIR ALAM, back from Bhaluka

NETRAKONA: Saying 'no' to imported hybrid paddy seeds, farmers in Bhaluka have started commercial production of indigenous high yielding variety (HYV) seeds.

The HYV seeds, scientifically produced and preserved with assistance from agriculture experts, are in good demand because they give higher yield and need lesser irrigation, the producers and users say.

This has opened the door to prosperity for many farmers. They produced about 800 maunds of seeds last year, bought by wholesalers from different areas of Mymensingh and Tangail districts.

Encouraged by local Agriculture Extension Department (AED) officials, a few farmers initiated this in 1999. Now, about 100 small farmers have taken to commercial production and preservation of HYV seeds. They are not contract growers of (BADC) Bangladesh Agriculture Development

Corporation.

The yield from HYV seeds is four to five maunds higher than from hybrid seeds. The producers and users are very happy now because this has freed them from dependence on imported seeds. They said paddy produced from imported hybrid seeds can not be kept for use as seed later, thus making farmers dependent on imported seeds.

"I got 26 maunds from one bigha by cultivating BR-29 (HYV seed) last year. Hybrid seeds yield 20 maunds at best", Kala Mia of Dhidpur village told this correspondent during a recent visit. He is cultivating locally processed BR-29 this year also.

The response from farmers to go for commercial production of local HYV seeds has also encouraged AED officials, who arranged an exhibition on seed preservation last year.

The great job was initiated by Block Supervisor Mohammad Mohiuddin. He convinced five farmers of Dhidpur village to produce and preserve HYV seeds. Kala Mia is one of them.

"At first I did not care what Mohiuddin said. As he requested me, I agree to produced HYV seeds. He (Mohiuddin) showed me how to preserve the seed. Last year I sold 45 maunds and earned Tk 45,000", Kala Mia said.

Abul Kalam, produced 150 maunds of Binashail (HYV) seeds on two acres last year and earned Tk 50,000 by selling 50 maunds. "Farmers prefer our seeds", he said.

Kalu Mia of Shantigonj village produced BREE-28 seeds. "BREE-28 gives better yield than hybrid seeds".

Block supervisor Mohiuddin said farmers can get three paddy crops--Amon, Aush and Boro--a year by using HYV seeds.

The farmers said their preservation method is very simple. They select the best quality paddy to preserve those as seed. After harvest they dry those in sunshine for four days and keep those in specially made air-tight containers made of clay or some other material, using preservatives which are also



(File photo) HYV seed paddy ready for harvest at Dhidpur village. The photo was taken last year.

cheap and locally available. They keep the containers in dry place.

They dry the seed in sunshine once in a month till their use.

Bhaluka Upazila Agriculture Officer Tofazzal Hossen said farmers can grow HYV seeds thrice a

Tk 6 cr public money down the drain

Bogra Spice Research Centre officials, contractors involved

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

An amount of Tk six crore of the Spice Research Center (SRC) at Shibgong in Bogra has been allegedly misappropriated or misused in the name of development work.

Some contractors swindled the SRC in connivance with some officials by submitting 'false' bills and voucher and quoting excessive rates, sources in the Bureau of Anti Corruption (BAU) have said.

The BAU is probing the matter flowing a written complaint.

The sources said preliminary investigation found that officials concerned and some staff were involved in the scam.

The misappropriated amount includes Tk 27,7000, taken in excess in an earth-filling work on the SRC premises, which allegedly violated the project proposal. The irregularity was done during the tenure of a former project director, according to investigation by the

Planning and Evaluation Wing of Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council (BARC) earlier.

A helipad was built unnecessarily in the compound at a cost of about Tk 12 lac for a "probable visit by the Prime Minister", sources added. The helipad was planned for the visit but the plan was implemented even after her visit was cancelled.

SRC authorities also spent Tk four crore for other works without proper approval by higher authorities, they said. These included construction of boundary wall, procurement of equipment and samples of spices from India.

Papers containing allegations of the financial irregularities were submitted to ruling party Whip and local MP Rezaul Bari by some local people including some contractors. The Whip sent the papers to the BAC and also talked to the Agriculture Minister over the matter.

3 day-ultimatum for PSTU VC's removal

VC yet to return to campus: Local BNP bars 8 new teachers from joining

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The local Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) on Monday gave a three-day ultimatum for removal of Patuakhali Science and Technology University (PSTU) Vice-chancellor Dr. Prof. AKM Abdul Hannan Bhuyan.

The ultimatum was announced at a rally held in front of a cinema hall in the town. The rally followed a procession on the PSTU campus.

They are demanding removal of the VC for his alleged nepotism in recruiting eleven teachers and officials. Most of them are from

outside the district, the protesters claimed.

The rally was presided over by Dumki upazila BNP President Prof Bahauddin Bahar and addressed by, among others Union Parishad Chairman Golam Moruza Sukkur, Jubo Dal leader Saiful Islam Miridha, Chatra Dal leader Tariqul Islam, Faruq Howlader, Shahidul Islam and Jalil Khan.

The speakers said tougher agitation programmes will be announced if the VC is not removed within the deadline.

The local BNP is agitating since January 17 demanding the VC's removal and cancellation of

appointments of the 11 teachers and officials.

The VC who left the campus during the Eid-ul-Azha vacation did not return till yesterday. After the Eid, he filed a GD (general diary) with police here by post alleging that he could not return for lack of security.

Meanwhile the local BNP did not allow the 11 teachers and staff to join.

Eight of the teachers were recruited for computer science and BBA departments. Students of the two departments are lazing away time without classes, campus sources said.

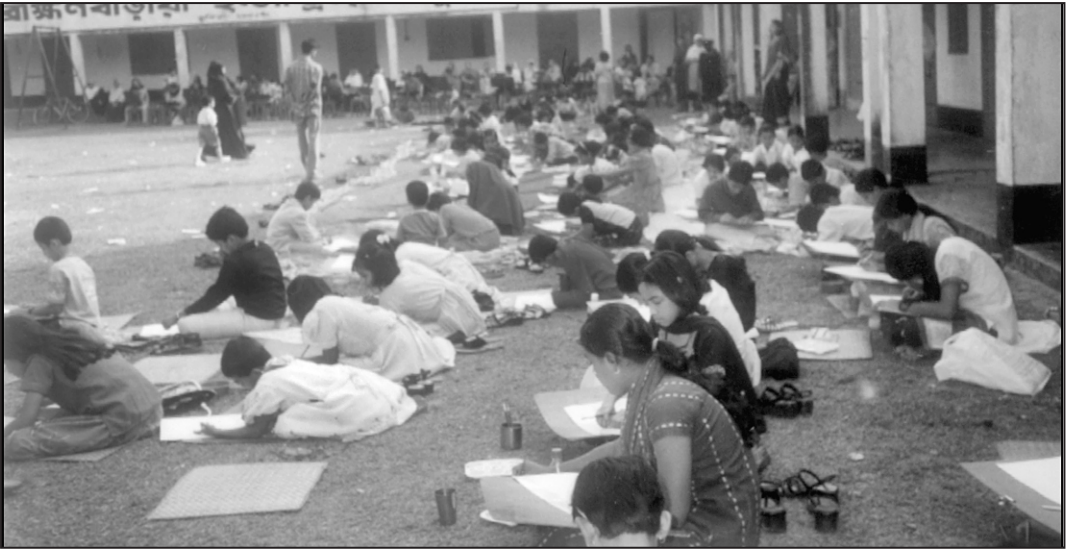


PHOTO: STAR

Shishu Nattyam, a children's organisation, organised a painting competition at Brahmanbaria Industrial School on the occasion of the Ekushey.

AL organising secy urges all parties at party council Unite to oust corrupt govt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Awami League Organising Secretary Abdul Mannan has reiterated his party's demand for immediate resignation of the government and mid-term parliamentary elections.

"There is no other alternative to dislodge the anti-people government to realise our 15 point demand", he said while addressing a triennial conference of Shyamnagar upazila AL at the upazila auditorium on Monday.

Days of the government are numbered he said and called upon party men to intensify their move-

ment.

He alleged that the Four-Party Alliance government has pushed the country towards ruination. Law and order has deteriorated and prices are spiraling, making people's life miserable.

They are trying to cling to power by repression on the opposition. Criminals are killing AL workers under the protection of the ruling party, he alleged.

He bitterly criticised he recent police actions in Dhaka which foiled AL's programmes on the Occasion of Ekushey.

AL's central leader S M Kamal

Hossain called for unity of all opposition parties to dislodge the government.

Chaired by Bakhtiar Ahmed, the conference was addressed by, among others, Engineer Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Monsur Ahmed, Nazrul Islam and Sheikh Abu Nasim Moina.

The conference formed a 67-member Shyamnagar upazila AL committee headed by S M Jaglul Haidar and S M Abdul Kader as president and general secretary respectively.

Two Khulna AL leaders arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The joint forces on Monday arrested Ferdous Hossain Labu, president of ward no 27 unit of the Awami League (AL) and Z A Mahmud Don, joint secretary of Khulna city unit of Shechchhashebak League in Bania Khमार area of the city.

According to police, they have been arrested on charges of extortion and subversive activities.

They are being quizzed at Shitalabari camp, it is learnt.

Meanwhile, leaders of the district and city units of the AL have strongly condemned the arrest of Labu and Don and demanded immediate release of the two leaders.

RAB to crackdown on Khulna outlaws

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) will be deployed in Khulna soon to crackdown on underground operatives and subversive activists.

According to Additional Police Commissioner Sajjad Hossain, arrangements are underway to deploy one battalion forces and set up a separate office in the city.

The police commissioner could not confirm if RAB will come here before or after February 28 country-wide hartal called by the Awami League (AL).

Vow to contain crime

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gopalganj

Leaders of the civil society assured local police administration of all-out cooperation to bring down crime rate in the district society.

They assured this at a discussion organised by Gopalganj police administration at Bedgram village adjacent to the town on Sunday.

Former Durgapur Union Parishad Chairman Emdadul Huq presided over the meeting while Gopalganj Police Superintendent (SP) Md Shafiqul Islam was chief guest. People of all walks of life attended the meeting.

Sit-in for better healthcare

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Several hundred citizens demonstrated yesterday demanding improvement of medicare facilities at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH).

Organised by the Rajshahi Protection Movement Council (RPMC), a citizens' body, the demonstration began at around 10.30am when people brought out a large procession and gathered at the hospital premises.

They staged a sit-in in front of the hospital director's office and held a rally on the hospital premises with RPMC conveynor Zamat Khan in the chair.

The rally was addressed by, among others, Rajshahi Bar

General Secretary Muhammad Yahia, Advocate Fedaus Zaman, journalist Hasan Millat, engineer Tajul Islam, Rajshahi University teachers prof Chowdhury Sarwar Zahana and Prof Sabbir Sattar.

During the demonstration, a team led by RPMC Conveynor Zamat Khan gave a memorandum to the Prime Minister through RMCH director Brigadier Abul Kalam Azad to meet their 19-point demand and problems of the hospital.

Copies of the memorandum were also given for the health minister, health secretary, Rajshahi divisional director of health and the civil surgeon.

The RPMC threatened to go for tougher agitation if the demands are not met immediately.

The 19-point demand includes

8 hurt, 42 vehicles damaged Bomb as tempo workers enforce strike in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

At least eight persons were injured and 40 autotempos and two buses were damaged in clashes involving transport workers, local people and police as tempo drivers tried to enforce a half-day transport strike in Barisal city and on two routes from Barisal on Monday.

The injured persons include three policemen. Two persons were abducted allegedly by tempo workers during the clashes.

A child was injured when hit by a tempo at Guachitra on Barisal-Banaripara road Sunday morning. Local people stopped plying of tempo on the road. The injured child was sent to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital.

Three leaders of Barisal Tempo Sramik Union went there for negotiation. The victim's relatives demanded Tk 50,000 as compensation. As the leaders refused, they were assaulted, injured and driven away.

The Union then called the half-day strike from Monday morning in the city and on roads to Banaripara and Babuganj.

Clashes with local people began at Guachitra when some tempo workers from Barisal went there Monday morning and tried to block the road with the help of fellow workers.

Tempo workers ransacked two buses and injured a passenger, Jaglu Mridha.

As police came, the unruly tempo workers assaulted SI Shamsul Huq and two others.

The agitated people then damaged about 40 tempos at the stand and chased the tempo workers.

While returning to Barisal, they

immediate restoration of the generator, X-ray machine, cancer detecting machine, eco-machine, Engeogram machine and stopping private practice by government doctors.

The memorandum said that lone generator of the hospital was inoperative for years for lack of fuel. Many other medical instruments including the Tk 5.50 crore Engeogram machine is also inoperative.

It was also alleged in the memorandum that most of the doctors of the hospital are engaged in private practice during office hours.

The RPMC also demanded expansion of the hospital building to accommodate increasing number of patients, filling up of vacant posts.

The 19-point demand includes

Bomb recovery: 7 quizzed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Seven persons including Phulbaria Degree College Principal Md Mujibur Rahman were interrogated by a three-member investigation team on Monday.

The team visited the spot near Phulbaria college Shaheed Minar where two powerful bombs were planted on Friday 20 night.

Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP South) Akkas Uddin Bhuiyan is leading the investigation committee while its other members are District Intelligence Officer Md Shamsul Kabir and Phulbaria thana Officer-in-Charge Afrabuddin.

A general diary (GD) was lodged with Phulbaria police.

Rift delays formation of Netrakona AL body

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

A full-fledged committee of Netrakona district Awami League (AL) is yet to be formed despite holding of its council on January 27.

As a result, party leaders and activists at the grass roots level have been frustrated.

Earlier, the central committee of the party indicated formation of the district body within February 14.

During the council Shamsujoha and Ashraf Ali Khan Khasru were elected president and secretary through an election where 256 councillors cast their votes.

The district AL is divided into two groups for a long time. Defeated Fazlur Rahman-Jinnatul Islam group has got a chance to create a conflict anew with the new leadership due to delay in formation of the district body.



PHOTO: STAR

A day-long workshop on disaster management, sponsored by the World Vision, was held recently at Mymensingh

Tk 35 lakh defalcation

4 Patuakhali Poursabha staff sued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Patuakhali Pourashabha authorities have filed a case against four of its staff for allegedly misappropriating about Tk 35 lakh.

They are accountant Dilip Kumar, assistant accountant SM Shahin, Abdul Latif and Md Forkan Mridha. Dilip and Shahin have been terminated.

Municipal Chairman Mostaq Ahmed filed the case on January 24 with the Sadar thana. Police said they sent the case to Anti Corruption authorities for action.

Police said they misappropriated Tk 34,54,987 from seven accounts of the pourasabha with different banks.

As per the case, Tk 22,79,221 was taken away from accounts with

Rupali Bank' New Town branch (savings account No. 163 and STD 25/1), Tk 2,07,67 from Agrani Bank's New Market branch (account No. 526), Tk 1,14,969 from Agrani Bank's Nutun Bazar branch (No. 189, STD 51 and 57), Tk 18,795 from Agrani Bank's Puran Bazar branch (current account No 162) and Tk 33,54,628 from Rupali Bank's Patuakhali branch (No STD 19).

The money was misappropriated from February 27, 2000 to July 12 last year.

Dilip Kumar and SM Shahin returned Tk 56,950 and prayed to the Pourasabha Chairman for pardon. But the two others fled could not be traced since January 20.



State Minister for Education Ehsanul Haque Milon presiding over a meeting in Sylhet on Monday to check cheating in the ensuing SSC examination.