

SNAPS

3rd bridge over Karnaphuli demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg
The Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) leaders here on Wednesday demanded construction of a third bridge over the Karnaphuli immediately for the river's smooth navigability.

Leaders of the party's Chittagong district unit demanded this at a meeting held during a sit-in programme at the foot of Shah Amanat Bridge.

Comrade Md Shah Alam was in the chair while comrades Abdul Nabil, Habibur Rahman Idris and Pradeep Bhattacharya addressed the meeting.

Lease of JU lake protested

JU CORRESPONDENT
The Jahangirnagar University Nature Study and Conservation Club on Thursday formed a human chain on the campus protesting the university authority's decision to lease a university lake.

The human chain was formed in front of the administrative building after a protest procession where about 50 club activists took part.

They also submitted a memorandum to Vice Chancellor Prof Jasim Uddin Ahmad demanding cancellation of the decision.

Tk 60 lakh smuggled clothes seized

BSS, Satkhira
Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) jawans seized Indian clothes worth over 60 lakh taka from a truck at Baganchra Bazaar in Sharsha, Jessore on Wednesday.

BDR sources said a team of 12 Rifles Battalion, Satkhira recovered the clothes from a Dhaka-bound timber-laden truck. Those were smuggled into Bangladesh from India en route to Dhaka. The clothes comprising saree, three piece and garments were hidden under the timber.

The clothes were deposited to Satkhira Customs authorities.

A case was filed with Sadar thana.

CARE to help promote child, woman rights

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

An agreement was signed between CARE Bangladesh and Community Development Centre (CDC), a local Non-Governmental Organisation, on Wednesday to implement 'Manusher Jonno' project in the coastal belt of the country.

The project aims at establishing child and woman rights.

CARE Bangladesh team leader Shahin Anam and CDC Executive Director Dr Khurshid Alam signed the agreement on behalf of their respective sides at a simple ceremony held in Dhaka, according to a press release.

The project will be implemented in the coastal areas of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Patuakhali, Barguna and Bagerhat.

Five programmes based on child and woman rights have been taken up for implementation under the three-year term project.

The programmes are: (1) Development of women organisations and solidarity with women, (2) Creation of alternative employment for women, (3) Local arbitration system and legal aid, (4) Raising awareness on child rights and (5) Technical and practical education for children and adolescents.

Diploma engns' demands

Token hunger strike in Rangpur

A CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

About 1,000 diploma engineers and polytechnic students under the banner of Bangladesh Diploma Engineer Chhattra Shikkhok Peshajibi Parishad observed a three-hour token hunger strike here on Thursday.

They also held a rally at the court square to press home their 4-point demands.

Their demands also include restoration of 750 diploma engineers in their jobs in Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC), Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC), Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC), fixation of time scale and selection grade for diploma engineers working in government and autonomous organisations.

Diploma engineers and polytechnic students of eight districts have been united to realise their demands. They threatened to go for a greater agitation if the government does not realise the demands immediately.

A jobless youth now raises hopes in many

Shaumen makes fortune from vegetable cultivation

ALIMUZZAMAN MIAH, Gopalganj

Life is now meaningful to Shaumen Bain, once a jobless and frustrated young man. He is now wealthy by cultivating vegetables.

Strong will and hard work made him successful. Son of farmer Chhatra Ramjan Bain of Raghunathpur village in the Sadar upazila, Shaumen could cross school due to poverty. He is now 27.

Fortune smiled on the family in 1999 when Gopalganj Horticulture Centre (GHC) selected

Raghunathpur village as their working area. Shaumen took part in a two-day training on winter vegetable cultivation. GHC set up a demonstration plot on his two-bigha land.

He earned a profit of Tk 2,50,000 by cultivating tomato, cabbage and cauliflower on his two-bigha land. This was beyond his imagination and a great surprise for the villagers.

Shaumen took more training.

Next year, Shaumen leased seven bighas of land from others. The horticulture officials advised

him to rotate crops. He grew cauliflower and earned about Tk one lakh profit.

In 2001, he grew tomato and earned around Tk one lakh.

Last year, he leased five bighas of land and cultivated tomato. He made a profit of Tk 1,50,000.

In the same year he also earned Tk 80,000 by producing vegetable seedlings in cooperation with GHC.

This winter, Shaumen brought eight bighas under tomato cultivation.

This correspondent visited Raghunathpur village recently. An enthusiastic and happy Shaumen proudly showed his tomato field.

Ten people were plucking ripe tomatoes. They were all alive with enthusiasm. They pluck about 50 mounds of tomato daily, which is sold at around Tk 10,000.

Shaumen said he has already earned about Tk 1,80,000. The total sale may be around Tk 2.5 lakh at current prices, he said.

He proudly said many villagers now follow him and come to him for advice on vegetable cultivation.



Shaumen, left, at his tomato field while a labourer plucks ripe tomatoes, right.



PHOTO: STAR

Rangpur Sugar Mills lay-off Rail blockade at Mohimaganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Several hundred workers and sugarcane growers laid a siege to Mohimaganj railway station on Thursday protesting the government decision to lay off Rangpur Sugar Mills at Mohimaganj.

The demonstrators detained Santahar bound 492 down train for one and half hours at the station. As a result, Padmarag Express coming from the opposite direction was also detained at the next station.

A police contingent led by a magistrate and Gobindaganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) restored rail communication.

A rally was also held at Mohimaganj station demanding cancellation of the lay-off decision.

The rally was addressed by, among others, Abdul Matin, President Rangpur Sugar Mills Workers Union; Mohammed Ali Jaharul Islam; Abu Taher; and college teachers Badiuzzaman Dulu, Abdul Baki, Anwar Talukder and Jinnath Ali.

They said a tougher agitation including hartal will be launched if the lay off decision is not withdrawn.

The government in a notice earlier declared the mill laid off from March 31.



PHOTO: STAR

Sugarcane growers and workers of Rangpur Sugar Mills lay a siege to Mohimaganj railway station on March 11 demanding withdrawal of the lay-off order.

ICS sweeps Barisal polytech polls

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Islami Chhattra Shibir (ICS), student front of Jamaat-e-Islami, won 11 seats out of 18 in Barisal Polytechnic Institute Student Union election held on Thursday.

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), ruling BNP's student wing got seven seats.

The posts bagged by ICS include those of Vice President, General Secretary and Assistant Secretary.

Masum Sheikh became VP with 341. His rival JCD candidate Maksud polled 27 votes. The GS polled 411 votes against his JCD rival's 220.

The election was held peacefully. Police were deployed on the campus during the election.

Bangladesh Chhatra League, student front of opposition Awami League, boycotted the polls.

Khulna mayor's plea for gas rejected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The government has rejected a plea of Khulna city corporation mayor to supply gas in the city through pipeline.

State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharaf Hossain informed this to mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman through a letter recently.

The city mayor wrote an official letter to him on February 25 for the greater economic interest of people in the south-western region.

Load shedding in Ctg to continue till month-end

SSC examinees worst sufferers: One unit of Raozan plant shut for overhaul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Menacing load shedding is back in the port city well ahead of summer. SSC examinees are the worst sufferers.

City areas plunge into darkness several times every night. Power Development Board (PDB) sources say immediate end to the crisis is unlikely.

PDB officials say there is an average load shedding of 40MW in Chittagong city since February 25 due to generation shortfall as one of the two units of 420 MW Raozan Power Plant is shut for overhauling.

Overhauling of an 210 MW unit began in the first week of January, bringing down average power generation to around 300 MW against the daily requirement of over 420MW, they said.

A portion of the shortfall is met by power supply from the national

grid. Load shedding is unavoidable as the shortfall is substantial.

The overhauling may be completed this month, they said.

When contacted, Chittagong PDB Chief Engineer Liaquat Hossain Barobhuiyan said, "We are trying to minimise the load shedding".

Around 580 MW power is generated in Chittagong when all the plants -- 420 MW Raozan Power Plant, 230 MW Kaptai Hydroelectric Power Plant and 60-MW Burge-mounted Power Plant -- are in full operation.

Power Secretary SM Shamsul Alam during a day-long visit to Chittagong on Tuesday last inspected the overhaul work of Raozan Power Plant.

He directed PDB officials and Chinese engineers engaged in the work overhaul to complete the work by March 31.

The Chinese engineers informed the Power Secretary that they were bringing a 15-member team of experts from China soon for the overhaul.

Shamsul Alam also visited Kaptai Power Plant and later held a meeting with officials of PDB and Power Grid Company of Bangladesh (PGCB) at PDB rest house.

At the meeting, the secretary directed all concerned to work sincerely to ensure uninterrupted power supply during the SSC (Secondary School Certificate) examination, sources said.

PDB Member (Distribution) MB Barua, Chief Engineer, Chittagong, Liaquat Hossain Barobhuiyan, Chief Engineer of Kaptai Power Plant Abdul Kader Khan and PGCB Deputy General Manager Rafiqul Alam were present at the meeting.

PM's March 14 Syedpur visit postponed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

The visit of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to Syedpur on March 14 has been postponed, district administration sources said yesterday.

She was supposed to inaugurate the 'Uttara Housing Project' at Syedpur. Sources at the office of Additional Deputy Commissioner (general) said they got a message from the Prime Ministers' Office in Dhaka on Tuesday postponing the visit.

Bangalees in Syedpur have been agitating against the local authorities' decision to allot houses in the project only to Beharis (Urdu speaking people) and are demanding houses for them also.

They have been holding rallies and bringing out processions in the town against the decision.

They also called for the Prime Minister's intervention in the matter.

Bangalees claim that the local authorities' decision violates an earlier government decision regarding allotment of 1000 houses in the project, the largest one built by the government for low income people.

A gazette notification published on May 12, 1997 had said that distressed freedom fighters, victims of erosion by river and land recursion, divorced women, landless farmers and Bangladeshi citizens were eligible to apply for the houses.

But the authorities did not accept any application from any Bangalee, they alleged.

The leader of the agitating Bangalees, Abul Hasan Bulu, in a statement thanked the Prime Minister for postponing the visit. He also urged the Prime Minister to intervene so that distressed Bangalees also get houses in the project.

BNP men chase LGED contractors out of Pirojpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

BNP activists in Pirojpur allegedly snatched tender documents from contractors who went there from Barisal to drop tenders at LGED office and made them leave the town on Thursday.

This was claimed by the contractors at a press conference held in Barisal city Thursday evening.

The Pirojpur Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) had invited bids for Tk 32 crore works under the Rural Infrastructure Improvement Project (RIIP), assisted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The last date for dropping tenders was March 11 till 1 pm.

Fourteen contractors from Barisal started for Pirojpur in four microbuses and two cars on Thursday in the morning.

They were Mahhub Alam, Mahfuz Khan, Shahin, Monir, Motiur Rahman, Obayed, Jahangir, Poly, Haider, Delware, Shafiq, Kalam, Sabuj and Zahid.

As they crossed Bekutia ferry terminal, BNP activists carrying shotguns, pistols and revolvers stopped them on the way.

The BNP activists included Md Alamgir, Pirojpur district BNP secretary; Riaz Hossain, nephew of Whip Shahidul Huq Zamal MP; Habibur Rahman Malek, president of Pirojpur Abahoni Club and Md. Mofakker, Banaripara upazila BNP Joint Secretary, the contractors claimed.

The BNP activists told them that they had 'managed' officials and none else would be allowed to drop tender.

There was exchange of words. At one stage, Riaz hit contractor Delwar

and Haider with the but of a revolver and others pointed their firearms.

They snatched their tender documents. Delwar and Haider were injured.

The contractors then went to Pirojpur town for treatment of their injured colleagues. They also went near Pirojpur LGED office and saw a large number of BNP men there. The BNP men chased and forced them to return to Barisal.

They said they will go to court and also lodge a complaint to BNP high-ups.

En masse resignation from Barisal BJP

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

All the leaders and members of Barisal district and city committees of Jatiya Party (Monju) resigned en masse on Wednesday night.

The resignation decision was taken a meeting chaired by BJP's district president Moniruzzaman Faruk. It was held at the party office.

All the leaders and members of district and city committees were present at the meeting. The resignation followed an "unanimous resolution" adopted at the meeting, party sources said.

When contacted, Moniruzzaman Faruk said, "Every body resigned showing personal reason".

There is a strong rumor in the city that all the leaders and members are going to join BNP.

Handicapped Salma crawls to school

MD HOSSAIN SERAJ, Magura

Indomitable mental strength has made physically handicapped Salma different from others. She is determined to be educated and not to remain a burden on her parents.

Now a student of class ten at Amalsar High School, Salma, daughter of a day labourer, has been struggling since her childhood.

"I want to be educated and self-reliant", 15 year-old Salma told this correspondent during a recent visit to her house at Amalsar village in Sreepur upazila.

She was attacked with polio at the age of two. Poor and illiterate Sohrab Hossain could not arrange her quick treatment. The disease

made her two legs and the right hand paralysed and deformed. Hell befell the family.

"As I am poor and illiterate I could do nothing for my daughter's treatment except shedding tears," Sohrab said.

At her insistence, he carried her on his shoulders to a primary school in the area. This was a turning point in her life.

She continued to go to school riding on her father's shoulder. Sohrab could not buy her a wheel chair till she was in class five.

In 2000, her father somehow managed to buy a wheelchair. She went to school alone using the wheelchair.

But one of its wheels broke this year. She now crawls to school.



PHOTO: STAR

Disabled Salma busy with studies. She can utilise only her right hand.

Expatriate contributes to Gaibandha dam construction

The Daily Star report encourages voluntary work

K M REZAUL HAQUE, Gaibandha

More people are spontaneously joining construction of a dam at Kuthibari on voluntary basis to protect Fulchhari upazila headquarters from erosion by Brahmaputra river.

Every day, more and more people irrespective of social status and political affiliations are taking up spades. Those who can not do physical labour are contributing in cash and kind to arrange food for the men-in-work.

Fulchhari upazila officials and employees also joined the work for a day and Gaibandha Deputy Commissioner Tapan Chandra Majumder during a visit assured the

people all possible help in their work.

The local initiative got a big boost after The Daily Star on March 1 published a report on their voluntary efforts in building the dam, its organisers told this correspondent.

The report also brought in tremendous response from abroad.

A London-based Bangladesh from Gaibandha -- Khorshed Alam Khushi -- was enthused by reading the report on internet.

"He sent Tk 45,000 for the project, thanked the organisers and assured more help", Shahidul Islam, one of the organisers, said. Islam is the convener of a body styled Self Help Implementation

Parishad has mobilised local people to build the dam voluntarily.

The money was handed over to him by Khorshed's father Al-Hajj Abdus Satter, Islam said.

"This is a great work done by The Daily Star", her said.

The report headlined 'Self help is the best help' has said that not getting any government help despite repeated appeals and agitation, local people have joined hands to build a dam on voluntary basis to protect Fulchhari upazila headquarter and vast crop lands.

Islam also urged journalists to highlight such initiatives because this encourages people to do good things, he said.

Satkhira Mohila Awami League body formed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A 31-member convening committee of Sadar upazila Mohila Awami League (AL) headed by Rabeya Khalid as convenor and Jesmin Ara Chowdhury, Halima Khatun as joint convenors was formed at a meeting held at Satkhira auditorium on Thursday.

Rabeya Khalid presided over the meeting while it was addressed, among others, by Rifat Amin, Sheikh Abu Nasim Moyna, Nazrul Islam, Shawkat Hossain, Safia Karim, Advocate Farida Akhlar Banu and Jasmin.

Obituary

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

Sayedra Safura Khanam, widow of late Serajul Islam, retired headmaster of Magura Government High School died at her residence in Parnanduali area of the district town due to old age ailments on Wednesday afternoon.

She was 85. Mother of Md Hossain Seraj, Magura district correspondent of The Daily Star, Safura Khanam, left behind seven sons, four daughters and a host of grandchildren to mourn her death.

She was buried after Esha prayers on the day at the municipal graveyard.

Her kul khwani will be held after Zohr prayers tomorrow (Sunday) at her residence. Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to attend the kul khwani and pray for her salvation.

Bodies of two outlaws handed over to Anjuman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Bodies of two slain outlaws Alamgir and Ismail were handed over to Anjuman-e-Mafidul Islam as nobody claimed those till Monday morning.

Village Defence Party (VDP) leader Shahidul Islam Howladar of Shingha village in Bagerhat Sadar thana filed an FIR on Sunday accusing none.

One woman identified as Khadeja Begum, 30, wife of Mostafa Nakib of Saerha village in the aforesaid thana was taken into custody for questioning.