

SNAPS

Bill for 45 women MPs protested

**RU CORRESPONDENT**  
The Rajshahi University (RU) unit of Bangladesh Mohila Parishad on Wednesday rejected a ruling party Bill to raise the number of women seats in parliament to 45.  
In a press statement signed by president Dr Shahana Hossain and general secretary Mahbuba Kanize, Bangladesh Mohila Parishad demanded direct election for women representatives.  
They lodged their protest by lighting candles at Jubere Bhaban in the university.

Tk 5 lakh property gutted

**CU CORRESPONDENT**  
Property worth about five lakh taka was gutted at Ilias Market in Khatunganj area of the port city on Thursday.  
The fire originated from a kerosene lamp.  
Furniture and other materials of the office of a welfare association were completely destroyed.  
Fire-fighters from nearby four stations extinguished the fire.

Jubo League leader killed

**Staff Correspondent, Khulna**  
A Jubo League leader and shrimp trader was shot dead near the International (Shahnewaz) Sea Food at Bagmara in Rupsha upazila on Thursday.  
The victim, Saiful Islam, 34, was also the vice president of Naihati union Jubo League.  
According to eye-witnesses, he was murdered when he was drinking tea at a restaurant there.  
Unidentified assailants first fired at his chest and then slaughtered him in front of many people. The assailants exploded four bombs while going away on foot after the murder.  
The body was brought to Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) morgue.

Load-shedding: SSC examinees worst sufferers in Rajshahi

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi**  
Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinees here have become the worst sufferers due to frequent load-shedding for hours together.  
Acute crisis of kerosene has multiplied their woes. Working journalists and other professionals also face professional hazards due to this phenomenon.  
Because of load-shedding the city areas plunge into darkness after setting of the sun.  
The Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) officials here have attributed the crisis to shortage of electricity supply from the main power grid. The demand of power in the city and adjoining areas is 60 megawatt (MW).  
However, the supply has been limited to an average of 30 megawatt (MW) during last several days.  
BPDB officials told this correspondent normal supply is being affected in urban areas due to unauthorised use of power coupled with electricity consumption in irrigation.

JCD leader freed on order from a deputy minister?

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi**  
Police on Wednesday released a Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader, caught after an exchange of fire by miscreants with police.  
Puthia thana officer-in-charge (OC) Anisur Rahman handed over the JCD leader, also NS Government College Students' Union general secretary Shahidullah Sohel to Natore Sadar thana SI Shahnuur.  
Later, Natore police set him free.  
Puthia police caught Sohel and his accomplice Nuruzzaman with firearms and bullets following exchange of gunshots for an hour with Naldanga police on Tuesday night.  
On a request from Sayed Nazrul Islam, superintendent of police (SP) of Natore, Puthia police handed over Sohel to Natore police.  
Natore SP admitted the fact, but did not elaborate.  
However, sources said that he had been released following a deputy minister's order.  
On arrival at Peergachha bazaar by a microbus, a group of miscreants led by Sohel and a deputy minister's nephew named Dambel, fired gunshots at people there.  
Police chased them and exchanged gunshots killing microbus driver Nazrul Islam.  
While chasing, Puthia police caught the two belonging to JCD at Sadhanpur village.  
A case was also filed with Naldanga police station.



A partial view of the big rally (left) at Domar and the fair displaying products made by underprivileged women (right).

Loud protest against women repression

5000 women join rally against dowry, acid attack, trafficking

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari**

The small Domar upazila head-quarter resounded with slogans against dowry, acid-attack and violence on women.  
The local people had a different experience as about 5000 women of all classes at a grand rally raised slogans and vowed to resist all sorts of violence against women. Many of them were from other districts.  
The rally venue was decorated with placards and fastoons reading various slogans against women's repression.  
An exhibition of products by divorced and underprivileged women was an added attraction, which drew a large number of visitors including officials, NGO men and the elite.

The programme styled 'Jagoron Fair' (awakening fair) and 'Jagoron Pada Jatra' (awakening march) was organised by Aassash Mohila Unnayan Sangstha' (assurance women development organisation), an NGO, in collaboration with USAID and IOM (International Organisation for Migration) concluded on Thursday.  
The theme of the programme was to spread a message to resist all sorts of women repression and to make underprivileged women self-reliant through vocational training.  
The chief guest at the programme, Children and Women Affairs Minister Khurshid Jahan Haque, in her speech said dowry is the main cause of women repression in Bangladesh.  
She called for raising voices

against the social curse and for creating awareness to eradicate this evil practice from society.  
Only a social resistance with participation of all can eradicate this, she said.  
The programme in Domar was part of a countrywide programme in phases that started from Rupsha in Khulna on February 24, the organisers said. The last programme will be held at Pathuria of Sunamganj district.  
Presided over by central president of the organisation, Nasrin Sayed, the rally was addressed by, among others, Nilphamari Deputy Commissioner Shaiful Islam and Police Superintendent Chowdhury Abdullah-Al-Mamun, Nilphamari district BNP President and Secretary General of EAB (Engineers Association of Bangladesh) Shahrin Islam Tuhin and IOM representative Nurul Islam.  
Handicrafts and various cottage industry products made by distressed women were put on display at the fair.  
In one stall at the fair, divorcee Fatema Begum narrated to this correspondent how she became self-reliant by making paper shopping bags from used cement bags.  
She started making paper bags after the government banned polythene shopping bags. Her bags have good market.  
"Now I can feed my three children and even have bought 10 decimal land to make my own house", she said.  
She thanked 'AASSASH Mohila Unnayan Sangstha' for raising new hopes in her.

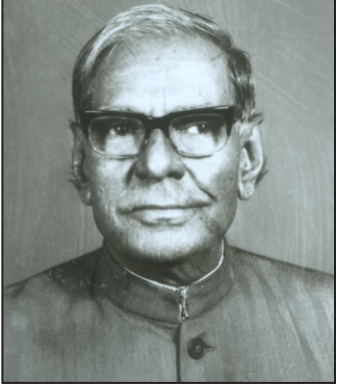
'A university can not be destroyed for a VC'

Minister blames VC for IU stalemate, will brief PM

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia**

Forest and Environment Minister Shajhan Siraj blamed the Islamic University Vice-chancellor for the present stalemate at the institution and assured of initiatives for his removal "as early as possible".  
"A university can not be destroyed for a vice-chancellor," Shajhan said while addressing a meeting of Kushtia district law and order committee, held at the Deputy Commissioner's office on Thursday. The minister presided over the meeting.  
The minister assured the meeting that he would draw the Prime Minister's attention to the stalemate at the university. The PM is the also the Chancellor of the university.  
The minister said VC Prof Mustafizur Rahman has failed to run the university and there are various allegations against him.  
Earlier, local ruling party MP and secretary of Kushtia district BNP Syed Mehedi Ahmed Rumi briefed the meeting about the present situation at the University and drew the minister's attention.  
Rumi said the Islamic University was a "dream of late President Ziaur Rahman for the people of this region".  
"Its glory can not be destroyed by an anti-liberation element. While all including teachers and students of all political opinions are agitating for about three months for his removal, a particular section is backing him (VC) and creating anarchy at the University.  
The ruling party lawmaker

demanding immediate removal of the.  
According to sources, another ruling party MP from the district is reportedly backing the VC to keep him in office.  
Meanwhile, Kushtia district BNP in a statement yesterday demanded immediate removal of the VC, terming him "corrupted and unfit to run the institution".  
The statement was signed by Sahidul Islam MP, president of Kushtia district BNP and its secretary Syed Mehedi Ahmed Rumi MP.  
They said, the VC "misappropriated" huge amounts of funds of the university and appointed a large number of teachers belonging to a particular quarter by violating UGC (University Grants Commission) rules.  
The leaders demanded the VC's removal and release of Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists arrested on Monday from Shikhpura Bazar near the university campus during an agitation.  
Eight JCD activists including two university students were arrested when they barricaded the Kushtia-Khulna highway demanding the VC's resignation.  
On the other hand, Anchalik Chhatra Oikya Parishad (ACP) and Chhatra Adhikar Parishad (CAP), two bodies of IU students, at a press conference at Kushtia Reporters Unity office on Thursday declared that they would go on a hunger strike soon if the VC is not removed.  
Classes are not held at the university since January 1 as teachers are also abstaining from classes for his removal.  
The vice-chancellor left the campus on Tuesday, reportedly for Dhaka, sources said.  
No university bus is plying as drivers denied to operate those fearing assault by agitating students.



Abul Mansur Ahmad's death anniversary observed in Trishal

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh**

The Writers' Front held at discussion meeting and a Milad Mahfil yesterday at Trishal, marking the 25th death anniversary of Abul Mansur Ahmad, a noted litterateur, politician, lawyer and journalist.  
Presided over by Abdul Khaleque, president of Writers' Front, the discussion meeting was addressed by, among others, Pronab Kumar Bhoumik, poet Farid Ahmed Dulal, Prof Ajhar Sarker, journalist Muklesur Rahman Subuj, Nizam Mollick, Khorshidul Alam Mujib, Alamgir Kabir, Rafiqul Islam Shamim, Humayan Kabir, Karuk Ahmed and Zobayer Hossain.  
They focused on the life and works of late Abul Mansur Ahmad. They said the country can boast of the prolific writer and veteran politician who protected the rights of Bangladeshis in the then Pakistan.  
Abul Mansur Ahmad was born at Dhanikhola village in Trishal in 1898 and died on March 18, 1979 in Dhaka.  
Trishal Reporters Club also held a Milad Mahfil and discussion meeting at its office yesterday on the occasion.

2 'outlaws' caught by mob in Magura

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura**

Two 'outlaws' were caught by mob along with two shutter guns and two rounds of bullet while they were trying to snatch a motorbike from Tito in Streepur village.  
The 'outlaws' are Mohabbat, Kabir and Rouf of Takhalpur village.

Ploy to restart Modhupur eco-park project alleged

Garo leaders tell The Daily Star

**JAHANGIR ALAM, back from Modhupur (Tangail)**

NETRAKONA: Garo leaders Albart Mankin and Rokhi Mrong have alleged that forest department officials in Tangail are hatching conspiracies anew to restart work on the Modhupur eco-park project.  
"They (forest officials) are playing tricks with the indigenous people", they said.  
The indigenous people are also being harassed by police, ruling party men and timber smugglers, the leaders alleged while talking to this correspondent during a recent visit to the area.  
On March 16, Modhupur police arrested Utpal Nokraak an indigenous teenager, from a clinic at Savar where he was undergoing treatment for bullet injuries he suffered in police firing during a Garo demonstration in January against the eco-park.  
Every night police enter Garo villages to arrest people accused in "false cases" filed either by police

or by the forest department.  
But there has been so progress in trial of the murder of Piren Sna, shot dead during demonstrations against the proposed eco-park, they alleged.  
On the other hand, forest area of Talki, Joynagacha, Luhuria Dukhola, Chunia, Pirgacha, Kabraguri, Sabupara, Gayra, and Gachabari are virtually open to smugglers for plunder of valuable trees, they alleged.  
This correspondent during a visit to the area on Thursday saw timber smugglers cutting trees from the forest area during day time.  
Talking to this correspondent, some indigenous people alleged that trees are being taken away in connivance with a section of forest guards and officials.  
"They (forest officials) give the scope to thieves on assurance that they would thwart the indigenous people's movement against the proposed eco-park", one indigenous man said.  
They said forest officials are also

giving the indigenous people false hope of longtime lease of forestlands.  
Ruling party activists often enter Garo villages and threaten them not to be involved in the movement against the proposed eco-park.  
Albart Mankin and Rakhi Mrong also alleged that forest department officials are filing false cases against tribesmen, implicating them in false cases for felling trees in the forest area. They demanded removal of the corrupted forest officials.  
When contacted, Zahirul Haque, Assistant Divisional Forest Officer in Tangail division, admitted pilferage of forest trees but denied involvement of any forest department employee in it.  
Abu Jafar Alam, officer-in-charge of Modhupur thana, said police go to Garo villages on orders from higher authorities to arrest persons accused in cases.  
But he could not say anything about trial of Piren Sna murder case.

Three PSTU students 'expelled' from campus 10 others served with showcause

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali**

Three Patuakhali Science and Technology University (PSTU) students were expelled for a week from the campus for a week by the university authorities.  
They are Sharif, Munna and Monir, final year students of the Agriculture Faculty, Acting Vice Chancellor (VC) office sources said.  
The decision was taken at a meeting of the teachers' council on Wednesday with Acting VC and Treasurer Dr Abdul Latif Masum in the chair.  
Ten other final year students of the Agriculture Faculty were served with show cause notice for their alleged involvement in attack on resident students of Shaheed Ziaur

Rahman Hall during 'Oust Vice Chancellor Movement' on Monday night.  
A three-member committee was formed in the meeting to investigate into the incident. The members are: Dr Akkas Ali, Chairman of Agro department, AKM Mostafa Zaman, Governor of the Teachers' Council and Nizam Uddin, Controller of Examinations. The committee will submit their report within seven days of its formation.  
Action will be taken against the students on receipt of the investigation report, acting VC office sources added.  
A group of 15 to 20 students who were supporters of former VC Dr Abdul Hannan attacked resident students of Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Hall on Monday.

Oil depots in Sylhet almost empty

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet**

Crisis of diesel and kerosene has deepened in Sylhet region as the four depots of Meghna, Jamuna and Padma oil companies in Sylhet and Srimangal are almost exhausted.  
Most of the filling stations have dried up. The four depots have a total storage capacity of 28 lakh litres.  
The Sylhet Division Petroleum Dealers and Agents Association demanded immediate steps for supply of diesel and kerosene.  
President of the Association Mohsin Rashid said the crisis is being persisting for the last few weeks, but no step taken. Even the buffer stock has been exhausted.  
He said the association in a fax message to Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) chairman on Tuesday urged him to take steps to

ensure supply.  
He said the crisis arose as the authorities did not take steps in advance to meet the increased demand during the current IRR-Boro season.  
The demand for diesel in the division is six lakh litres per day but only 4.5 lakh litres are supplied. Due to the short supply, some filling stations are selling adulterated diesel, sources alleged.  
When contacted yesterday, a BPC official on condition of anonymity said Padma and Jamuna each sent 1.7 lakh litres to Sylhet on Wednesday, which has been distributed. Supply has been increased but the demand can not be met because of IRR-Boro cultivation.  
Another source said any consignment of fuel from Chittagong is unlikely to reach within a day or two.

BAT awards computer training certificates to 48 at Moulvibazar

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar**

Golam Mohiddin in his speech said BAT has started the training course at Moulvibazar and Kushtia as part of its human resource development programme. More than 150 young people got basic training on computer at the two centres.  
Mahmudur Rahman thanked all involved with Disahri.  
Dialogue on wastage management  
**CU CORRESPONDENT**  
A dialogue on "Medical Waste Management in Chittagong" will be held at the Engineers Institution auditorium here tomorrow.  
Forum for Planned Chittagong (FPC) and Engineers Institution, Chittagong will jointly organise the dialogue.

One to die for murder

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal**

One Shah Alam (38) was sentenced to death and five others including four brothers were given three years RI for murdering fish trader Abul Hossain Pahloan (45).  
M A Matin Mia, Judge of Barisal Speedy Trial Tribunal, declared the verdict on Wednesday. Seventeen others were acquitted.  
Those given jail terms are Kashem Munshi and four brothers-- Khokan, Mosarraf, Alam and Jahangir Mridha.  
Abu Hussein Pahloan accompanied by some others were returning home at North Kazlakati village in Bakerganj upazila under Barisal district on October 13, 2002 after catching fish in Arial Kha-Karkhana river.  
Sha Alam and some others ambushed them at Bisharikati village and hacked Abul, killing him on the spot.  
Ajahar Ali Pahloan, father of Abul filed a case with Bakeganj thana. The case was transferred to Barisal STT on October 29 last year.

Three rapists get life in Rajshahi

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi**

Three persons were awarded life term imprisonment by Rajshahi Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal on Thursday in absence of a convict in a sensational rape case.  
The three convicts raped eight girls after alluring them to be provided with jobs in Panchagarh.  
The convicts are: Ataur Rahman, director of Panchagarh based non-governmental organisation (NGO)- Samaj Kalyan Sangstha, and his accomplices Anukul Roy and Laila Khatun. Of them, Anukul Roy has been absconding.

Ataur and Anukul raped eight girls in collaboration with Laila Khatun at Laxmipur in Debiganj upazila, Panchagarh on the night of August 1, 1998.  
Debiganj police detained the girls on the following day of the rape. But they recorded the case after 12 days of their arrest as unrest brewed in the area.  
On September 24, 1998, police submitted charge-sheet of the case which was shifted to Rajshahi Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal on December 27, 2002.  
Judge of the tribunal AFM Aminul Islam delivered the judgement in packed court room.