

SNAPS

No hartal in Netrakona

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Netrakona*
Hartal (strike) was not observed here yesterday.

No procession was brought out and no picketers were seen on the streets. All government and non-government offices, shops and educational institutions remained open. Bus, tempo, auto-rickshaw and other vehicles plied normally.

However, hundreds of riot police were posted at different points in the town from Tuesday evening.

Tenage girl killed after gang-rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Netrakona*
Four rapists killed a teenage girl in broad daylight after gang rape at Islampur here on Tuesday.

Angry people caught three of them red-handed on the spot and handed over them to police.

Police and witnesses said four culprits named Dalilur Rahman, Mintu, Shafiqul Islam and Khorshed Alam of Changergor village strangled a 14-year-old girl named Banacha Begum, daughter of late Tajul Islam of Singbhanga village after gang-rape beside a secluded pond at Changergor village. As the victim screamed before death, local people rushed there and caught three culprits except Khorshed Alam who managed to escape. Victim's mother Fatema Begum filed a case with Islampur police.

Ershad Shikder's execution: Letter yet to reach jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

The Khulna district jail authorities are yet to receive an official letter relating to execution of the death penalty of condemned prisoner Ershad Shikder.

The letter addressed to the superintendent of the district jail was posted on April 4 from Mafizul Islam, assistant registrar of the Supreme Court, but the jail super did not receive it till Tuesday afternoon.

The letter contains information about dismissal of Ershad Shikder's review petition appealing for commuting death sentence given by High Court in the Jubo League leader Khalid Hossain murder case.

Meanwhile, two armed guards have been deployed inside Ershad Shikder's cell, the jail super said.

Three killed in Habiganj road accident

A CORRESPONDENT, *Habiganj*

Three persons were killed and two others seriously injured when a truck carrying them fell into a road-side ditch at Minajpur in Nabiganj upazila on Tuesday.

The dead are Khokan, 45, Kamal, 35, and an unidentified chili trader of Comilla.

Police said the truck was going to Sylhet from Comilla with chili. The injured were admitted to Nabiganj Upazila Health Complex.

Orchid export is in sight**BAU scientist evolves method for commercial production**

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Mymensingh*

The Department of Biotechnology of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) has developed a technology for commercial production of orchid plants, opening up a prospect for their export.

Dr Khondoker M Nasiruddin, Head of Department of Biotechnology, told The Daily Star that his department has evolved seven varieties of orchid seedlings from seed and leaf tissues.

These are Dendrobium, Vanda, Phaiues, Phaelanopsis, Aeredis, Rhynchostylis, Cymbidium and Arundina.

Now, orchid seedlings are nor-

mally purchased from Thailand at Tk 35 per piece, which can be reduced to Tk 5, he said.

Normally, orchids are grown both through vegetative means and seed breeding.

But seeds contain a very minute quantity of stored food and so there is less possibility of their germination in natural atmosphere.

Using the traditional vegetative method of propagation, only three or four plants can be produced in a year.

The new technology is called micropropagation, in which vitro seed culture, leaf culture and internode culture are used.

Tiny orchid seeds are placed on tissues for nourishment. After several

days, these germinate. These are re-cultured with hormone.

Dr Nasiruddin said standardisation of the varieties is near completion at BAU laboratories.

Several big nurseries trading in orchid have contacted them for orchid seedlings, he said.

If commercially produced, orchids can be exported, he said.

BAU Vice-chancellor Prof Dr M Amirul Islam recently handed over the first consignment of Dendrobium orchid seedlings to Micro Orchids and Plants of Savar. About 95 per cent of the seedlings survived, he said.



PHOTO: STAR

Dr. Nasiruddin working at the Biotechnology Department laboratory (left) and orchid seedlings grown by using the technology evolved by him (right).

50 hurt in Rajshahi pre-hartal clash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

At least 50 people including three policemen were injured in pre-hartal clashes involving its supporters and opponents and police at Puthia in the district Tuesday evening.

Among the injured, five bullet-hit persons belonging to Awami League were rushed to Puthia Health complex. They are Mizan, Joyanal, Awlad, Zahangir and Dulal.

The policemen injured with brick bats are Sub-inspector Dipok Kumar and constables Amirul Islam and Shahnur Rahman of Puthia thana. They were given first aid, police sources said.

The clashes ensued as police intercepted an AL procession in support of yesterday's hartal. Activists of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami also joined police. Some of the ruling party activists carried firearms, witnesses said.

Over a dozen shots were fired during the clash that lasted about an hour, they said.

Seven shops were also damaged during the clashes.

Puthia thana Officer-in-Charge Anisur Rahman said they fired two blank shots to disperse the clashing

groups and brought the situation under control.

He however claimed that the clashed broke out when BNP and AL processions confronted in front of Puthia Jame Mosque.

The district AL General Secretary Tajul Islam Md Faruk claimed that armed BNP-Jamat activists attacked their peaceful procession.

Stalemate at CU continues

CU CORRESPONDENT

Stalemate at Chittagong University (CU) continued for the fourth consecutive day on Tuesday.

Academic activities were completely stopped.

The stalemate was created on Saturday following enforcement of an indefinite siege by the left leaning Progressive Students' Alliance (PSA).

Meanwhile, a two-day work abstention programme of the Chittagong University Teachers' Association (CUTA) ended on Tuesday.

CUTA observed their two-day work abstention demanding punishment and expulsion of Shibir cadres allegedly led by its CU unit president Jahid Hossain Bhuiyan who attacked and injured Finance department Lecturer Akhter Hossain Piaru on the CU playground on Friday.

CUTA president and general secretary met vice chancellor Professor AJM Nuruddin Chowdhury at his office and gave an ultimatum to fulfill their demand by Friday next. CUTA would declare their next course of action at a general meeting on Saturday if their demands are not met.

PSA, a forum of three left-leaning student organisations, enforced a programme of siege protesting attack on their activists by Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal cadres on Thursday.

CONFERENCE TOLD**Develop grassroots women leadership**

A CORRESPONDENT, *Rangpur*

Development of women leadership at grassroots level is a must to eradicate the problems faced by the womenfolk in the country.

This was stated by speakers at a women's conference at the Baderganj upzila auditorium on Tuesday, attended by about 200 women leaders.

The conference with the slogan Women rights: Human rights was organized jointly by Nagonik Uddog (citizens' initiative) and Nari Netri Bikash Network (NNBN--network for growth of women leadership).

With Shusannya Toppa in the chair, it was Addressed by, among others, Baderganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Mahabubul Alam,

Upzila Social Welfare Officer Abdur Razzak, Baderganj thana officer-in-charge Golam Mostafa, Nagonik Uddog official ATM Saiduzzaman, Fatema Begum, Afroza Begum and Fuhaira Begum.

They called upon the womenfolk to resist adolescent and child marriage, violence against woman, dowry and fatwa (verdict by religious cleric) and other social taboos.

They also urged women to vote for women candidates in local body polls to send their representatives in those for their empowerment.

The conference formed a convening committee headed by Mohosina Begum and adopted a one-year working plan to create awareness among women about their rights.

Nor'wester lashes three Netrakona upazilas

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Netrakona*

Fifteen persons were wounded and about 1,000 kutcha houses were damaged in a nor'wester accompanied by hailstorm which swept over Netrakona Sadar, Atpara and Purbadhala upazilas on Tuesday evening.

The hailstorm damaged standing boro crops on about 500 acres of land.

According to the district administration, the 45-minute cyclonic storm caused widespread damage in the three upazilas.

The nor'wester which lashed with a velocity of 100 km per hour destroyed over a dozen educational institutions and uprooted hundreds of trees. Electricity and telephone connection was also snapped.

Kushtia Poura polls: BNP, AL declare candidates

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kushtia*

Ruling BNP and Opposition Awami League (AL) have declared their chairman candidates in the Kushtia Poursabha election scheduled to be held on May 8.

The main contest will be between the two parties.

BNP has selected Kutubuddin as the chairman candidate. Though inexperienced, yet he is very popular in the area.

Main opposition AL has declared Anwar Ali as the chairman candidate. He served for two consecutive terms as chairman since 1992 to 1999. He is also a popular figure in the municipality.

The candidates are seen moving from door to door to woo voters.

CASE FILED AGAINST RAJSHAHI NGO**Depositors want return of money**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

Several hundred field employees and members of a local NGO -- Samaj Unnayan Karma Shangstha (SUKS) - laid a siege to its office here and brought out a procession in the city on Tuesday demanding return of their money and arrest of its authorities for alleged irregularities.

SUKS, based in Rajshahi, started operation last year.

It enrolled members through its 70 branch offices in Dinajpur, Bogra, Joypurhat, Naogaon, Natore, Chapainawabganj and Rajshahi districts.

Its field employees collected money for it from members.

The demonstrators alleged that the NGO collected deposits offering them attractive benefits.

They have fulfilled terms of deposits but the NGO is not neither giving them any benefit not returning

their money. Sources said the NGO was operating without Bangladesh Bank's approval.

Talking to this correspondent, many of them alleged that the NGO have them cheques, which were dishonoured by banks.

The NGO has reportedly closed some of its branches in Natore, Naogaon, Chapainawabganj and Rajshahi districts after its members there assaulted some field workers for alleged irregularities.

Sources said, on March 29, Bagha upazila branch manager of the NGO Alamgir Hossain filed a case with the Rajshahi Chief Metropolitan Magistrate against its chairman SAQM Harun, managing director Nazrul Islam and director (accounts) Naimuddin for misappropriating Tk 13.65 lakh of depositors' money.

Boalia thana police said they are investigating the case.



PHOTO: STAR

Members and field employees of SUKS brought out a procession in the city on Tuesday demanding return of their money and arrest of its directors.

'Rebel' Bandarban BNP leader returns to party

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Bandarban*

'Rebel' BNP leader Sa Ching Pro along with a large number of followers has formally returned to the party.

"We have returned to strengthen the party with the ideals of late president Ziaur Rahman because this is the party which can save the nation from the present crisis", Sa Ching Pro told a rally organised by the party on the occasion. It was held on the Bandarban Press Club premises.

Several thousand party activists and supporters from all over the district attended the rally, followed by a big procession in the town.

District BNP convener and chairman of Bandarban Hill District Council Mrs Mamey Ching greeted them with flowers.

Speaking on the occasion Mamey Ching said return

of Sa Ching Pro will strengthen nationalist forces ahead of the municipal polls.

Sa Ching Pro had contested in the last parliamentary polls as an independent candidate failing to get party ticket. But he lost the polls to Awami League candidate Bir Bahadur and was ousted from BNP.

The rally was also addressed by, among others, BNP leaders Prof Osman Ghani, advocate kazi hamtul Hosein, Abdul Quddus, Abdul mabud, Jubo dal leader Mohsiur Rahman, and Chhatra Dal leader Jahangir Alam.

Barguna BCL leader held for 'desecrating' PM's photo

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barisal*

Barguna police have arrested

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leader Nasir Al Mamun on Tuesday of desecrating the photo of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at Barguna circuit house.

The photo at the circuit house conference room was turned round Sunday night during the stay of Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina there, police said.

Mamun was arrested when circuit house guard Shahidullah detected it and filed a case with Barguna police after Hasina left the circuit house Monday morning.

In the case, the guard said the photo was desecrated by "some unidentified persons".

Mamun is the son of Barguna AL General Secretary.

The photo was set right when the NDC and the OC of Barguna thana went there on information.

At a press conference at Barguna Press Club on Tuesday night, local AL leaders alleged that it was an "arranged drama" to arrest opposition leaders and workers to foil the anti-government movement.

Mamun was produced before court Tuesday morning, which sent him to jail.

In the afternoon, BCL activists brought out a procession in the town protest Mamun's arrest.

JCD, student front of ruling BNP, also brought out a procession demanding punishment of the persons who desecrated the prime minister's photo.

When contacted, Barguna police said Mamun was arrested on orders from higher authorities.

WDB dam in Bhola breaches a year after construction

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barisal*

Crops on about 300 acres of land reeled under water in Char Nuton in Charfession upazila in Bhola district following a breach in a dam there in the early hours of yesterday.

The dam was built by the Water Development Board (WDB) last year at a cost of about Tk 2.5 crore to protect the area from flooding by the Meghna river, sources said.

When contacted over phone yesterday, sources there said hundreds of panic-stricken people in the area including women were trying to repair the breached portion of the dam on voluntary basis.

They said crops including vegetables and newly sown IRRI-Boro fields have gone under water. More areas are being flooded as water is gushing through the breach, they said.

Anti-drug meet held at Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

The narcotics department held a discussion meeting in the town on Tuesday to create awareness among people against increasing drug use, particularly by youths.

People of all classes, including political party activists, teachers, journalists, social workers, religious leaders and students attended the conference, held at a local auditorium.

The speakers said a social movement should be built against drug use, which is increasing in the bordering district.

Shahjahan Talukdar, Inspector of Satkhira Narcotics Control department was in the chair and Additional District Magistrate Humayun Kabir was the chief guest.

The speakers included Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer AKM Ali Azam, Municipal Commissioner Shafique Uddowla Sagar, teacher Sudhangshu Sarkar, NGO official Musa Karim, journalist Ahsan Ullah, Sudarshan Banerjee, Abdul Jalil and Emanul Islam Sharif. Humayun Kabir said religions teaching could go a long way in checking drug use.

Phensidyl Queen arrested again in Ashuganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *B'baria*

The Detective Branch (DB) of police arrested Phensidyl Queen Ratna Begum in Ashuganj with 95 bottles of the drug again on Thursday.

Ratna Begum of Araihaaz upazila of Narayanganj district was arrested by police from bordering areas several times. But always she was freed on bail. Only a few days ago she was released on bail from the Brahmanbaria jail custody.



PHOTO: STAR

The newly constructed Sylhet railway station was ready for inauguration. But its formal opening became uncertain after a high powered team of railway officials from Dhaka during a recent visit detected fault in the tracks.