

SNAPS

60 hurt in B'baria villagers' clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

At least 60 people including four women were injured in a clash between two groups at Suhilpur market in Brahmanbaria Sadar upazila on Saturday.

According to police and locals, the clash ensued when Siddik Mia, a rice trader of Kendura village asked Yasin Mia of the same village to pay the money for the rice he had taken.

Fourteen of the injured including three women were admitted to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital, police and hospital sources said. The rest were treated at different private clinics. Police later arrested two persons.

BDR opens fire on smugglers: 5 hurt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

At least five smugglers were injured when members of the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) opened fire on them on Saturday.

BDR resorted to firing when the smugglers tried to snatch seized smuggled goods from them near Bhatshala border outpost (BOP) in Debhata upazila.

BDR jawans spotted two boats loaded with contraband motor vehicles and electronic goods in the bordering river Ichhamati. BDR seized the contraband worth about 15 lakh taka. But the smugglers tried to take back the seized goods from BDR. At this stage BDR opened fire on them.

However, none was arrested as the smugglers fled to India.

9 fishing boats seized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Nine fishing boats were seized by a special team of the Mercantile Marine Department (MMD) on Saturday.

The boats were seized in a raid conducted by a two-member special team of the MMD along Chittagong Port channel in the Karnaphuli.

At present around 20,000 illegal vessels are plying across the country.

A great success in safe motherhood

No deaths during childbirth at Syedpur last year: Joint efforts by municipality, CONCERN

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

There was no death of baby or mother during childbirth, pre-natal and post-natal periods at Syedpur municipality last year for lack of treatment.

The credit goes to the municipal authorities and CONCERN, a foreign voluntary organisation.

They jointly launched a pilot project styled 'Child Survival Programme' (CSP) for healthcare and creating awareness among people, particularly mothers. It was launched in the town in September 1998 with financial assistance from USAID.

"Though it was initiated by CONCERN, it was successfully implemented by health workers of Syedpur municipality", CONCERN Project Manager Dr AFM Mostafa Sarkar told this correspondent yesterday.

Following the success at Syedpur, CONCERN has decided to expand

the programme to seven more municipalities-- Rangpur, Dinajpur, Bogra, Nilphamari, Kurigram and Joypurhat.

Syedpur municipality will be the 'learning centre' for others, he said.

Under this programme, Syedpur municipality health workers and midwives, trained by CONCERN trainers, take care of mothers and babies during childbirth, prenatal and postnatal periods. CONCERN also supplies logistics. Together, they also organise programmes to create awareness among people.

According to statistics conducted by CONCERN and the municipality, the percentage of child-bearing mothers coming to health centres for regular checkup rose to 72 last year from 58 earlier. The rate of delivery at maternity centres rose to 53 per cent from 25 per cent. Attendance by trained nurses during child birth either at houses or at maternity centres rose to 74 per cent from 38.06 and 53 per cent of expected

mothers are now taking Titenus injection against 48 per cent earlier.

The most significant aspect of the programme is the formation of 'ward health committees' in 15 wards in the municipality.

Each committee headed by the ward commissioner comprises 13 members drawn from people of different professions including newsmen. The committee monitors healthcare and sanitation in the ward.

Activities of the committees are co-ordinated by the municipal chairman as the Chief Co-ordinator.

Besides, 509 volunteers are working in all the mohollas (a ward consists of a number of mahallas). They give information to the committees on healthcare and monitor the sanitary situation in their respective areas.

The ward health workers, committees and volunteers jointly organise meetings, seminars, health fairs to make the people aware of dangers during childbirth and facilities.



Officials of CONCERN and municipal health workers screening a film on safe motherhood (left) and holding a meeting (right) at a ward to create awareness among people.



PHOTO: STAR

Mindless arrests in Barisal before Apr 30

274 including school students held in 3 days

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A total of 274 people were arrested in six districts of the southern region in three days.

Three meritorious students of Barisal Zila School were not spared. They are Apu, Pavel and Imon, of Class X. The three were arrested from the Sher-e-Bangla Medical College (SBMCH) area on Saturday.

Headmaster of the school Nomita Shorkhal told this correspondent that the three are brilliant students. "I hope they will get Grade Point 5 in the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination".

The break-up of the arrested is as follows. Two hundred and nineteen were arrested from Barisal, 27 from Patuakhali, 21 from Pirojpur, 17 from

Bhola and 12 from Jhalokati in three days till Sunday afternoon. All were arrested under Section 34 of CRPC.

Barisal Kotwali police started their drive of mass arrest from Friday afternoon.

Police claimed the detainees as drug addicts or drug peddlers, extortionists and criminals though they admitted that none of the arrested were included in the criminals' list.

According to police and victims, raids are being conducted at all the entry points of the city including bus stands, tempo stands, launch terminal, steamer terminal, slums, parks or recreational spots.

Except the females, aged and sick, all the arrested were taken to Kotwali police station. Most of them

were found to be innocent and released after interrogation on Saturday. Security was beefed up in the city by introducing check posts at different city points.

Apparently the crackdown has been aimed at foiling the ongoing agitation programme of the main opposition Awami League.

Barisal Kotwali thana officer-in-charge (OC) Nurul Amin told this correspondent that all were arrested in a joint operation from Friday which will continue for eight to 10 days.

Arrested persons and their relatives alleged that the situation had brought a golden chance for members of the law enforcing agencies to collect bribe from innocent people.

Extortionists stop DANIDA road project in Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Toll collectors stopped construction of a DANIDA-assisted road in Dashmina upazila as the construction firm did not pay Tk five lakh toll.

Failing to file a case with Dashmina thana, the construction firm -- SBL -- has submitted complaints to the Patuakhali Police Superintendent and the DIG of Barisal against the OC, sources in the firm said.

The 7.5 km Dashmina-Bara Gopaldi road is being built by the Local Government and Engineering Department (LGED) under its Rural Development Project (RDP-16) at a cost of Tk 2.5 crore.

The work began last year and about 25 per cent work has been completed.

On April 16, 15 to 20 young men led by one Liton went to the site and demanded Tk five lakh from Nasir Uddin, an engineer working for the firm. As he refused, they assaulted him, took away two motorcycles and stopped the work.

Advocate Abdus Sabur, legal adviser to the firm, submitted a written complaint to Dashmina thana on April 19. But OC Abdul Mazid did not recorded it. Instead, the OC told Sabur that he would settle the matter amicably and asked the engineer to resume work.

The firm resumed the work the

next day. Liton and his companies again went to the site and demanded Tk five lakh toll from Nasir Uddin. He refused. The criminals assaulted the engineer and some workers and looted some construction material.

Nasir Uddin went to the thana again and informed the OC. The OC sent a constable to the site to ascertain whether the complaint is true.

As Nasir Uddin was going back to the site from the thana, the criminals took him and four workers to a room at the Dashmina Upazila Parishad and assaulted them.

They were later freed at the intervention of a DANIDA engineer.

Town's lone outlet gobbled up

Re-excavation, restoration of Shyma Sundari Canal can keep Rangpur town clean, reduce death from diseases

A CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

The Shyma Sundari canal running through the town has largely been gobbled up by land grabbers, disrupting sewerage and drainage systems.

The 16 kilometre canal was the

lone natural outlet which kept the town clear of waste and garbage for about 150 years. But now it is almost dead and has become a breeding ground for mosquitoes and germs, spreading diseases round the year.

The canal was originally 20 to 30 feet wide. But now it is hardly five

feet at many places due to encroachment.

About one fourth of the canal has been grabbed illegally by land grabbers.

Different socio-cultural organisations have long been demanding re-excavation of the canal but the cries

fall on the deaf ears of municipal authorities.

A slight rain now clogs the canal with waste and garbage, making water stagnant. Mosquitos breed and spread malaria.

A downpour overflows the canal at many points.

The stagnant water creates pollution round the year, spreading stench.

During dry season, it is an ideal place for dumping garbage by residents living on its banks.

Sohorab Ali Dulal, an Assistant Professor at Mahiganj College living at Mulatol beside the canal said about 2000 families in the area have to stay there amid health hazard.

Mehedi Hassan, a resident at Sen Para said a slight rain overflows the canal there and inundates at least 150 houses. The water remains stagnant for long.

The authorities concerned have not taken any initiative to restore the canal by evicting the land grabbers.

When contacted, former municipal chairman and a central leader of Gonotontri Party Afzal Hossen said during his tenure from 1982 to 1997 he re-excavated a few kilometres of the canal at Kukrul.

The work could not be completed

due to shortage of fund, he added.

Municipal Chairman Kazi Mohammed Zunnun said a big amount of money is needed for re-excavation of the canal, which the pourasava alone can not provide.

"I sent a proposal in 1999 which involves Tk 10 crore. The Planning Ministry is sitting on it", he said.

Rangpur Water Development Board Chief Engineer Abdul Aziz said the proposal was forwarded to the Ministry of Planning for approval by ECNEC.

The canal was dug in 1988. According to history, small pox and diarrhoea in consecutive years in late nineteenth century took a heavy toll in the town.

Residents thought that lack of proper drainage system was the main cause of the diseases.

The then Jaminder Janoki Bollov decided to create a natural outlet and dug the canal after his mother Shyma Sundari. He had also dug small drains so that waste and dirt from different areas could flow into the canal and washed away.

But the canal has not been re-excavated since it was dug, residents say.



PHOTO: STAR

Land grabbers have made the Shyma Sundari Canal virtually dead and a breeding ground for mosquitoes and germs.

BNP factions clash: 20 hurt in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

At least 20 persons were injured in clash between two factions of the ruling BNP in Daulatpur upazila on Saturday.

The clash ensued between a group of BNP leader Reza Ahmed Bachchu Mollah MP, and their rivals over gambling at a fair organised locally by the party.

Two persons named Sukchand, 25, and Jalli, 42, were admitted to Kushtia General Hospital with serious injuries.

Police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control. After the clash the MP asked police to stop the fair.

A tense situation prevails and additional police force was deployed to quell the situation.

Outlaw slaughtered by rivals

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

An outlawed party cadre was slaughtered by 'rivals' in front of family members at Charpara village of Alamdanga upazila in Chuadanga district on Saturday, according to police.

The victim is Aminul Islam, 40.

Police sources told this correspondent a gang of 10 'outlaws' stormed into the victim's house at about 10 at night and called him out of his room and slaughtered him with sharp weapons. His wife and 22-year-old daughter witnessed the tragic scene of the murder. The murder is the result of internal row.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Sadar hospital for autopsy.

80,000 acres of Boro land under water in Kishoreganj

JAHANGIR ALAM, back from Kishoreganj

Netrakona: IRRI-Boro paddy on about 80,000 acres of land have gone under water in five upazilas of Kishoreganj district.

According to sources in the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), Kishoreganj standing IRRI-Boro crops went under water in the vast haor area of Itna, Nikly, Astagram, Mitamain and Tarail upazilas due to flash flood caused by onrush of hilly waters from across the border and heavy rains during the last few days.

The break-up is as follows. Itna-40,000 acres, Mitamain-10,000, Nikly-4,000 acres, Astagram-6,000 acres and Tarail-20,000 acres.

A farmer at Barohatkabila in Itna informed that last year he got 250 maunds of boro paddy but this year he harvested only 50 maunds of paddy.

Another Amir Ali of Nikly village disclosed he cultivated IRRI-Boro crops on 20 acres only which was totally damaged by flood.

Minister for Education Dr Osman Faruque and Minister for Housing and Public Works

Mirza Abbas visited the affected area.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Advocate Abdul Hamid demanded of the government to declare the affected haor area of seven upazilas as a calamity area. He also demanded exemption of farmers' agriculture loan in the affected area.

Modern slaughterhouse in Thakurgaon

STAR NATIONAL DESK

A modern slaughterhouse will be formally opened in Thakurgaon in May this year.

The abattoir, the first of its kind in Bangladesh, aims at producing quality and hygienic meat with the brand name of Premium Halal Meat, says a press release.

Premium Seed Ltd has established the slaughterhouse with support from ATDP (Agro-based Industries and Technology Development Project).

Victory Pillar opened at Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

State Minister for Cultural Affairs Begum Salima Rahman on Saturday inaugurated the Victory Pillar at Gaibandha public library ground, built after 33 years of independent.

The memorial was built at the place where the National Flag of the then Pakistan was set on fire in 1971.

It was built by the Zilla Parishad at a cost of Tk 14 lakh.

On this occasion, a meeting of freedom fighters was held. Begum Salima Rahman and State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Md Rezaul Karim attended the meeting, addressed by, among others, MA Mottaleb Akanda MP, former lawmaker Kabir Ahmed Khan, Additional Deputy Commissioner Abedur Rahman, Police Superintendent Lokman Hakim, Saiful Alam, Sudev Chandra Sarkar, Abdul Mannan and Khalilur Rahman, Mujibul Haq Chhanna, Convener District Mukti Joddha Sangsad, president.



PHOTO: STAR

Who is to blame? The four --Suhel, Noor Mia, Ibrahim and Rahim --all blow 14, were caught with knives by Brahmanbaria police on Thursday while they were snatching money from pedestrians. Crimes by juveniles increased in the town in recent days.