

SNAPS

French language course at Ctg  
CU CORRESPONDENT

An eleven-week French language course will begin at Chittagong branch of Alliance Francaise on September 25.

Students will be enrolled in Junior, Beginner and Intermediate courses. Interested persons have to be enrolled by September 23, says a press release.

Well-trained teachers will conduct the courses with audio and video methods.

Baby slips into Padma from mother's lap

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Manikganj

An eight-month boy drowned in the Padma as he slipped from the mother's lap while she was on board the ferry Bir Sheshta Motiur Rahman at Paturia terminal in Manikganj Friday night.

Shivalaya police said Shamsun Nahar Mitu of Kalikapur in Netrokona was going to Jessore from Uttar Badda in Dhaka with her child Mamun and father-in-law Abdul Malek.

The boy could not be rescued despite frantic search by people and police.

Bus strike in Chuadanga

30 hurt in ICD-transport workers clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

At least 30 people were injured in a clash between Jaritabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists and transport workers in Chuadanga town on Saturday, centring death of a JCD man on the day before.

Transport workers began a wildcat transport strike on different routes in the district after the clash. The strike continued till filing of the report yesterday afternoon.

Police said, JCD activist Jakir Hossain was killed in a road accident Friday night at Damurhuda. Angry JCD men then ransacked several transports.

On the next day (Saturday) JCD brought out a protest procession in Chuadanga town, clashed with transport workers and damaged several vehicles.

Police charged batons and brought the situation under control.

Police have been in different areas of the town. JCD activist Rony has been arrested, police said.

Trifle costs a life

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

One person was killed and four others were injured in a clash between neighbors over a trifle at Bangla village of Barthi union under Gournadi upazila Friday night.

Lipi Begum, 25, wife of Nuru Gazi and her neighbor Rahela Begum, 26, wife of Sagor Sarder, had a quarrel centring washing dish in pond in the afternoon.

As Rahela complained to her husband Sagor, he fell upon Nuru Gazi, when he was returning home from Ramshiddhi Bazar.

A hue and cry drew their relatives and supporters who swooped on each other with sticks and lethal weapons without knowing what actually had happened.

Nuru Gazi, his uncle Jamal Gazi and four others of both groups were injured.

Nuru and Jamal were taken to Gournadi hospital, where Jamal died and Nuru was admitted in a critical condition.

Mizanur Rahman, Additional SP of Barisal, visited the spot on Saturday. A case was filed but none could be arrested as all the accuse are fleeing homes, police said.

2 held for murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Police have unearthed clues to the murder of Aminul Islam, 14, son of Abul Hossain of Beuria village in Kalaroa upazilla, who was strangle at Kuti canal on the night of September 7.

Police arrested Ziaur Rahman, son of Matiur Rahman of Madra village and Sirajul Islam, son of Usuf Ali of Sonabaria village in Kalaroa upazilla, who were allegedly involved in the murder.

Amirul ran a mobile phone shop at Sonabaria bus stand in Kalaroa upazilla. Ziaur Rahman is the mastermind of the murder, police said.

He was killed following a quarrel over Tk 400 in mobile phone bills, police said quoting statement by Sirajul Islam yesterday.

He made a confessional statement before First Class Magistrate M I Siddique, police said.

All the arrested persons are on police remand.

Barapukuria coal still two years away

Operations contractor set to quit, probe body formed

RAFIQUE SARKER back from Boropukuria, Dinajpur

Rangpur: Coal extraction from Barapukuria coal mine will be delayed by about two years. This will also delay the coal-fired 250 MW power plant there, earlier scheduled to be commissioned next year.

Commissioning of the coal mine was scheduled for 2001 but about 25 per cent of the mine development work is still undone, sources there told this correspondent.

The China Machinery Corporation (CMC) which is developing the mine had suspended work for a long time after the mine was inundated with groundwater on April 5, 1998 allegedly due to faulty design. However the CMC is continuing the development work.

According to the extended time frame, CMC was earlier scheduled to hand over the "prepared mine" to Petro Bangla on October 1 for coal lifting from January next year.

But there has been a major setback in the planned operation of the mine. Shan Dong Lothy company of China, the operation contractor, informed Petro Bangla last month that it would not work in Boropukuria coal mine. The major cause it showed was that the nature of work is different from that described in the project profile.

The work is "more risky and costly" than outlined in the project profile, it said. Shan Dong was engaged as the operation contractor for five years through an international bidding. It was the lowest bidder.

The company now says an additional Tk 120 crore will be spent on equipment and manpower for the operation.

But the Petro Bangla can not take any action against the company now. Sources said that Shan Dong, with the help of some Petro Bangla officials, withdrew the bid



PHOTO: STAR

Coal extracted during mine development stockpiled on the yard but commercial operation is still far away.

bond of 50,000 Dollars after signing the contract form without placing performance guarantee.

The company has taken the advantage of "faulty tender document", sources at Barapukuria Coal Mining Company Ltd claimed.

"A clause in the tender document was not clear. It took chance of the obscurity", one source said.

Petrobangla has formed an inquiry committee headed by the Secretary of Mineral resources Ministry to probe the matter.

"It is now certain that the company (Shan Dong Lothy) will not work", one source said.

Petro Bangla will have to float an international tender, which will take at least one year because there are many stake holders including donors in the project, the sources said.

Another source however claimed that a section of Petro Bangla high officials are in favour of giving the

charge of operation to CMC until a fresh tender is called.

CMC was also one of the bidders in the earlier tender for operation of the mine.

Some sources also claimed that absence of the operation contractor would be a plea for CMC to prolong mine development work.

Asked by this correspondent, the officials could not give any satisfactory reply why the April 5 (1998) accident took place while everything was set before and the design was approved by a British consulting firm.

Some officials now ask why Petro Bangla did not demand compensation if the accident was due to faulty design.

The General Manager (Production) of Barapukuria Coal Mining Company said, "CMC is now working on a changed design. So the development work would not be completed within the time frame. We will not pay extra cost for the

additional time needed for preparing the mine."

Another source however claimed that Petra Bangla will have to pay several hundred crore taka more for the delay because of depreciation of Taka in terms of Dollar over the years.

The uncertainty in operation of the mine has worried Power Development Board officials who had targeted commissioning the 250 MW power plant by 2005.

"It will be delayed and we have nothing to do because it is a coal-fired project", a high official of PDB said. About seventy percent work of the power plant has been completed.

The power plant will consume 65 per cent of the coal extracted.

About 390 million mt high profile bituminous coal is deposited in the mine within 6'68 sq km of the area.

TERROR IN KAWKHALI HILLS

Victims still displaced, lax admin steps

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Rangamati

The administration has not taken any action against the armed UPDF activists who terrorised villagers in remote Kawkhali hills and forced about 300 of them to flee homes.

The villagers including women and children, sheltered at Ghagra Community Centre in Kawkhali for over a week, are in great misery.

Bono Kumar Chakma, former member of Fatikhkhari Union Parishad and a resident of Dolu Para village in Kawkhali, told a group of visiting newsmen at the community centre that he went to Kawkhali police station on September 11 to file a case after the attacks by armed men.

"But on-duty Sub Inspector Rahman told me to file a case naming some of the criminals and refused to accept the GD", he said.

Bono Kumar is at the shelter with his family.

He said the activists belong to UPDF (United Peoples Democratic Front) who oppose the CHT Peace Agreement signed in 1997.

The terrorists are active in the hill villages for about a month.

The gunmen killed an elderly villager in Dolupara and abduct two others, torched five houses and ransacked four others to create terror among villagers.

Some others there said the

UPDF men accompanied by criminals belonging to notorious Kashem Bahini of Fatikhkhari in Chittagong created a reign of terror in the hills since mid-August.

They realise money from indigenous people by force, loot domestic animals and threat villagers of abduction if any body opposes them.

When contacted, Kawkhali thana police however said they recorded a case on Saturday.

"An officer and some policemen have been sent to investigation whether there are armed men in the area as reported by the press", OC Ratan Kumar Das Gupta of Kawkhali thana told newsmen on Saturday.

Deputy Minister for Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Affairs Moniswapon Dewan, who is also Minister-in-Charge for Rangamati district, when contacted in Dhaka over phone on Saturday said, "I do not know anything. I ordered the Deputy Commissioner to provide humanitarian aid for the affected people who took shelter at Ghagra."

"I asked the DC to investigate the matter. The Home Ministry and others concerned will also act soon, I hope".

The district administration allocated two metric tonnes of rice and Tk 5000 for the affected people.

"I sent Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Farid

Ahmed Bhuiyan today with the relief", Deputy Commissioner Dr Jafar Ahmed Khan said on Saturday.

"A medical team will be sent" he added.

The Kawkhali hillocks with dense forest and chharas (streamlets), known as Kalapahar, are safe havens for criminals.

Three foreign nationals abducted from Rangamati by UPDF activists in February 2001 were kept hostage there.

The area is abode to more than 200 armed UPDF men and underground operatives from neighboring Chittagong, local people claimed.

The area is close to trouble-torn Fatikhkhari, Rawzan and Hathazari upazilas of Chittagong district and Laxmichhari upazila of Khagrachhari hill district.

When the UPDF men face any encounter, they slip into forests in Fatikhkhari, Rawzan and Hathazari.

Meanwhile, UPDF central leader and former convener of its Rangamati district unit Shachib Chakma told journalists over phone that they were not involved in the attacks on Kawkhali villages.

"We do not have any link with Kashem Bahini", he said.

Shachib alleged that PCJSS (Parbatya Chattagram Jono Sanghaty Samity) was trying to defame them.

BNSB to open centre for child eye patients

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Moulvibazar

A specialised eye treatment centre for children will be opened at Moulvibazar BNSB Eye Hospital in January.

The Moulvibazar unit of BNSB (Bangladesh National Society for Blind) has taken up the programme for children up to 16. It will involve Tk 60 lakh, to be jointly funded by BNSB and ORBIS International.

Preliminary work of the project has already started.

Dr Shah Nurul Islam,

Moulvibazar BNSB General Secretary and Director of Moulvibazar BNSB Eye Hospital, said the centre will be opened with the help and cooperation of Arabinda Eye Hospital in Madurai, India.

A memorandum of understanding was signed between the two hospitals during a recent visit of a delegation from the Indian hospital. The Indian delegation led by Dr Monoranjan Das visited the Moulvibazar BNSB Eye Hospital and lauded its activities, he said.

The Arabinde Eye Hospital will

provide training to doctors of BNSB Eye Hospital on treatment of child patients.

Three doctors -- Syed Kefayefullah, Shah Nurul Islam and Md Ehsanul Mannan -- will go to Arabinda Eye Hospital this month for training, sources said.

The project will benefit people of greater Sylhet district as Moulvibazar BNSB Eye Hospital would be the lone hospital in the region to provide such treatment facility, the sources said.

Education key to AIDS prevention

Seminar told

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Speakers at a seminar yesterday called for involving educated youths and adolescents in preventing HIV in the country.

NGOs have a great role alongside government efforts in this regard. They can successfully create awareness among people against the incurable disease.

"Give the youths a sense of pride and responsibility and they will accomplish great jobs", said, Md Emriazur Rahman, Executive Director 'Unnyan Dhara, a local NGO.

The workshop on 'Capacity Building Training for Youth and

Adolescent Volunteers on Trafficking and HIV/AIDS' was held at the CARE office in the town.

Education is vital for preventing AIDS, said Shah Alam, Programme Officer CARE, Bangladesh.

The main reason for low prevalence of the disease in the country is high rate of enrolment of female students in schools, he said.

The speakers apprehended that the situation may not remain the same because neighbouring India is very much vulnerable to the disease.

A massive campaign and all out efforts should be started right now to keep the disease at bay, they said.

"There is a need for strong political leadership in combating HIV threat in Bangladesh," said Delwar Hossain of Ad Din, a Jessore-based NGO.

Developing countries like Bangladesh are most vulnerable to AIDS onslaught due to poverty, ignorance, discrimination, sexual inequality, superstition and inadequate health service, they said.

Kazi Mukul of Unnyan Dhara also spoke at the workshop.

Thirty-four students including females, who took part in the workshop, vowed to work to combat AIDS and check trafficking, alongside their studies.

Demonstration for VGF cards

UNB, Chandpur

About 1,500 poor and distressed people staged demonstration in front of Matlab pourashava office on Saturday demanding Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) cards.

As per rule government allocates 1,600 VGF cards for each union but Matlab pourasava, which is consisted of two unions, got only 1,600 cards.

Being deprived of cards, poor people gathered in front of the municipal office and staged demonstration from morning to noon.

Later they left the place peacefully when poura chairman Enamul Huq assured them to provide the VGF cards after proper scrutiny.

One get life for selling heroin

UNB, Dinajpur

A Dinajpur court has sentenced a person to life imprisonment for selling heroin.

The court also fined the convict Fazlu Sheikh of Basudebpur village in Hakimpur upazila Tk 10,000, in default, to suffer two years more in jail.

According to the prosecution, a task force comprising members of narcotics control department and BDR led by a magistrate raided the house of Fazlu Sheikh and arrested him along with his wife Tultuli Begum on February 17, 2002 and recovered 30 grams of heroin from their possession.

After examining records and witnesses, the court found Fazlu guilty and handed down the verdict recently acquitting his wife.

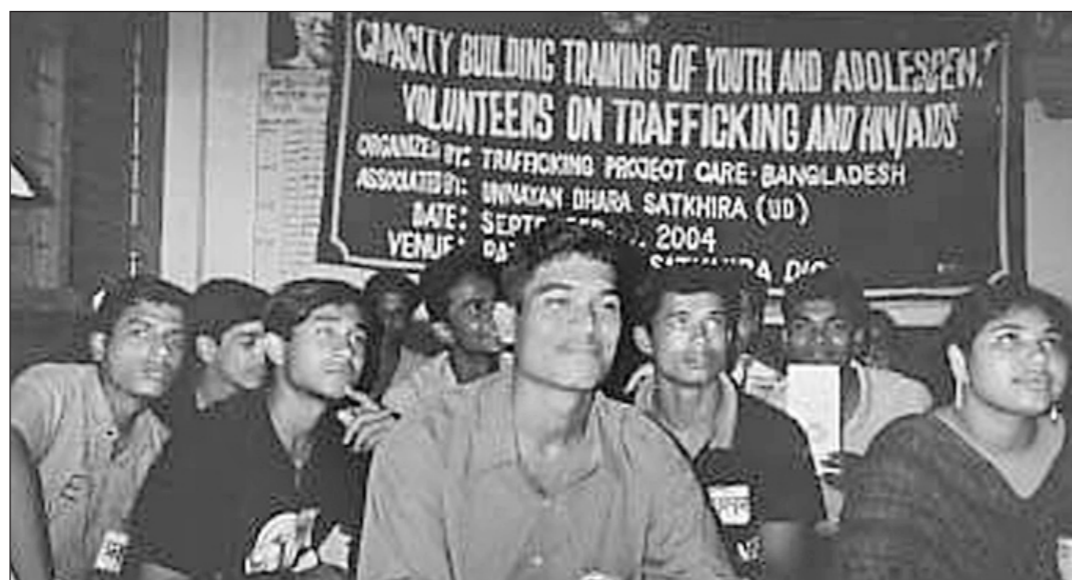


PHOTO: STAR

A partial view of the workshop on AIDS prevention, held at CARE office yesterday.

Healthy family can curb violence against women

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Gaibandha

Healthy family atmosphere can reduce violence against women to a great extent.

With this theme, Gano Unnyan Kendro, a local NGO, on Saturday launched a fortnight-long campaign in the district to campaign against violence on women.

The programme is part of a countrywide campaign by 148 NGOs, coordinated by Oxfam, an international NGO.

The programme in the district, announced at a press conference at Gaibandha Press Club, includes holding of rallies, discussion meetings and art competitions; staging dramas and cultural functions; and publicity through posters and video shows.

The press conference was

addressed by M Abdus Salam, Chief Executive of Gano Unnyan Kendro.

Presenting United Nations statistics, he said one woman out of three women in the world became victim of physical or mental torture by close relatives.

In Bangladesh, 47 percent married women suffer physical and mental repression by husbands. But this is kept secret.

Study shows that in Bangladesh, woman does 75 per cent of work in a house. On the other hand, they get only one per cent of the family income. Such a disparity is a great hindrance in overall development of a society.

According to UNICEF, 40 to 80 per cent of all physical abuse suffered by women and girls is caused by close family members.

SNATCHING OF APPOINTMENT LETTERS  
Police deployed at BSBMCH, probe team comes today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Police have been deployed at Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College and Hospital (BSBMCH) as tension mounted following snatching of 126 appointment letters from the authorities Thursday night by some ruling party activists.

A two-member team representing the Health Ministry and the Directorate of Health arrives here today to probe the incident.

Meanwhile SBMCH authorities hung a notice, saying all appointments has been suspended for 7 days as per order Mayor and Minister-in-Charge of the district Mazibur Rahaman Sarwar.

This created commotion among doctors and other hospital staff. They say the ministry or the Directorate of Health can issue orders for them, not the Mayor.

On other hand, a group of BNP-backed 3rd and 4th class employees of BSBMCH submitted memorandum to the BCC Mayor on Saturday alleging nepotism, corruption and irregularities by the BSBMCH authorities and leaders of Doctors Association of Bangladesh (DAB) and Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) in appointments. They requested to the Mayor to intervene.

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