

SNAPS

Wife 'killed'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

A housewife and mother of two minor children was 'killed' by her husband at Dakkhin Ulai village in Shivalaya on Wednesday. Shukur Mahmud Tuku tortured his 25-year-old wife Nazma Akter several times on Tuesday night resulting her death on Wednesday morning, according to police. Neighbours caught the killer husband while he was dumping the body near his house. They handed him over to police. Quoting victim's eight year-old daughter Mimi, police told this correspondent, her father beat her mother to death. Her other son is three-year-old Daud. However, the reason behind the murder could not be ascertained.

Fugitive convict held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Brahmanbaria police on Thursday night arrested a convicted accused named Md Abdur Rahim, 45, from Meroshani Bazaar in Sadar upazila. Son of Abul Hasim of Melaborshipara in Champaknaga under Sadar upazila was absconding for several months, according to police sources. He was sentenced to suffer one month's rigorous imprisonment (RI) by a court here. The arrested convict was sent to jail, police told this correspondent.

22 months without pay

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Twenty-three officers and employees of the Social Welfare Department here are not getting their salaries for last 22 months.

As a result their families will not be able to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr this year.

The department undertook Palli Samaj Karma Project in the 1974-'75 of five-year duration. Duration of the project extended five times till 2002. Ill-fated staffers including Project Director, Assistant Project Director, Accountant and social workers of the project are not getting their salaries since January, 2003. Of them 17 under Sadar upazila, one in Bauphal, three in Dasmirna and two in Galachipa upazila.

They urged the higher authorities to mitigate their sufferings during the ongoing Ramadan.

Corruption in fertiliser supply investigated

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Corruption in distribution of fertiliser among flood-affected farmers in Fulchhari upazila on October 19 was investigated by Additional Deputy Commissioner (Gen) Abedur Rahman on Wednesday.

The investigation was held at Fulchhari food godown at Kalirbazaar where the ADC found many fertiliser sacks having lesser weight than the actual one.

Fulchhari Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Gautam Kumar Bahattacharya, PPM of the Department of Agriculture Extension Abdul Karim, Vice President of Bangladesh Fertiliser Association AKM Modifud Alam and concerned Union Parishad UP chairman were present during the investigation.

Barisal Jubo Dal leader's death condoled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Barisal units of BNP and Jubo Dal condoled the death of city Jubo Dal leader and Barisal City Corporation Ward Commissioner Mahub Alam Mehdi on Monday night.

Other leaders who condoled the death are Advocate Majibur Rahman Sarwar MP, BCC Mayor, district minister and BNP President, Syed Moazzem Hossain Alal MP, central Jubo Dal secretary general, Principal Rashid Khan, central BNP Organising Secretary, advocate Nazrul Islam Rajon, district BNP Secretary and commissioners of BCC.

They also expressed their condolences to the bereaved family.

Meanwhile, Anisul Huq, Deputy Assistant Director of RAB lodged a case without mentioning any name of accused with Barisal Kotwali police station for alleged attack and firing on them and injuring two RAB personal during their operation.

Tea output may reach target

Favourable weather in Sept-Oct offsets flood damage: 57 m kgs expected

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Despite a serious setback due to floods and inclement weather during June-August, the tea industry is likely to attain the production target this year because of favourable weather in last two months.

The target is 57 million kgs against 56.7 million kgs last year.

Officials involved in tea industry and sources in tea gardens said the average rainfall in September and October was very good for the highly sensitive crops. This has offset the setback caused by the unfavourable weather earlier, they said.

Bangladesh Tea Research Institute (BTRI) Director AFM Badrul Alam told The Daily Star yesterday that though the situation was a totally different three months ago, now we are hopeful of achieving the production target this year.

"The floods and unfavourable weather had caused substantial damage to the very sensitive sector, solely dependent on nature's

behaviour. But the favourable weather in the last two months did a miracle", Alam said.

Same was the view of a manager of an big tea garden in Sylhet. He said, the weather behaved totally different in the last two months compared to that in June-August.

"Now, tea industry people are confident of a good end of the season", he added.

The floods had caused large-scale damage to the industry this year, which was unprecedented in recent history. Excessive rains for days together and waters rolling down the hills swamped plantations and nurseries in many tea gardens. Many roads, labour colonies, small culverts and bridges were also badly damaged. Besides, there were incidents of landslide in many gardens. This excessive rainfall and insufficient sunshine were harmful for tea plantations.

Weather conditions from May to August is very important for tea plants.

The loss due to infrastructure damage in gardens this year has been estimated at over Tk10 crore, said an official source.

More than 50 tea gardens in Monu-Dholoi, Lashkarpur, and Balisera tea valleys were badly affected by the sudden floods. Several hillocks collapsed.

Tea production was a better last year compared to recent years due to favourable weather and even distribution of rainfall.

Tea is an important cash crop and the largest agro-based industry in the country. There are 160 tea estates producing about 55 million kgs of 'made tea'. Roughly two thirds of this quantity is consumed at home and the rest is exported, earning around Tk 1500 million in foreign exchange annually.

The tea sector accounts for 0.81 per cent of the GDP and employs about 0.15 million people, which is about 3.3 percent of the country's total industrial employment.

Magistrate compelled to leave court

Lawyers shout for bail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A first class magistrate here on Thursday left the courtroom hurriedly to evade 'untoward incident.'

His refusal to grant bail to an accused triggered a tense situation among the lawyers.

Advocate Abdul Majid prayed bail of his client, an accused in a case under sections 419/420 DPC, after appearing before the court of first class magistrate Md Idris Siddique. After the hearing the magistrate refused to grant bail and sent the accused to jail hajat. But the magistrate granted bail to accused in other cases of similar nature. At this the lawyers became annoyed with him. The lawyers repeatedly asked him to grant the bail but he remained firm his decision which caused an uproar in the courtroom. Being alarmed, the magistrate left the courtroom when the lawyers chased him.

LGED officials sued for corruption

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

The Bureau of Anti Corruption (BAC) has filed a case against three LGED officials, two former Union Parishad chairmen and two women UP members on charge of misappropriating over Tk 70,000 by supplying low quality steel almirahs to some educational institutions and submitting false vouchers.

BAC Inspector Wazed Ali Gazi lodged four separate cases with Kaligonj thana.

The accused are Kaligonj upazila LGED (Local Government Engineering Department) Deputy Assistant Engineers Samsul Alam and Zahid Mehedi, Designer Parvez; former UP chairmen Maulana Abdus Sattar and Abdur Rashid Gain of Krishna Nagar and Champaphul respectively, and women UP members Sufia Parvin and Chhaya Rani Mukherjee of Rotonpur and Dhalbaria.

The cases have been filed under sections 409/420/109 of CrPC and Section 5(2) of the Anti-corruption Act of 1947.

OMS fails to bring down rice prices

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Rice prices did not come down in markets here despite launching of the Open Market Sale (OMS) a few days ago.

It is alleged that only 87 out of 153 dealers got allotment of rice.

There are also allegations of 'politicisation' in OMS dealership, supply of low quality rice and sale of rice in black market in many areas.

In Singair upazila, only three dealers were brought under the OMS programme while at least 19 dealers should have been engaged to cover all the 11 unions, disclosed genuine dealers.

Moreover, most of the dealers are ruling BNP men, who are doing irregularities while selling rice.

The food department officials changed the list of OMS dealers under political pressure, alleged some dealers.

On contact, Manikganj District Controller of Food Muhammad Sirajul Islam said a team is supervising the distribution work of OMS rice and preventing black marketing of rice.

BSD demands test relief in Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) held a rally at Kamarjani Primary School ground on Wednesday demanding test relief and more VGF cards for *monga*-affected people in Gaibandha district.

It also demanded supply of adequate medicines to government hospitals to treat people attacked by diarrhoeal diseases from consumption of inedible food.

A famine like situation is prevailing in remote areas, but the government is inactive to combat it, speakers at the rally said.

Presided over by Azizur Rahman, the meeting was addressed, among others, by Ashsanul Habib Sayeed, Co-ordinator, BSD, Golam Sadek Lebu.

Shaghata Upazila unit of the Workers' Party also brought out a procession to resist the grave situation and called upon the government to take prompt action to overcome the crisis.

A local NGO, Gano Unnayan Kendro in collaboration with Nets Bangladesh started distribution of relief materials among 5,000 destitute families in four badly affected upazilas from Thursday. Under the programme, each family will receive 20 kg rice, two kg pulse, one kg salt and one litre soybean oil.



PHOTO: STAR

No work, food at home...several hundred people coming from different areas of Rangpur, Kurigram and Gaibandha gather at Panchpir Bazar everyday to go to other districts for work. They mainly go to Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet where they are engaged in odd jobs at nominal wages.

Driven out of home by 'monga'

8000 leave Panchpir Bazar in two months for work in other districts

KM REZAUL HOQUE, Gaibandha

Panchpir Bazar, a remote market in Sunderganj Upazila, is now a prominent labour market in Gaibandha district. Facing *monga* (lack of jobs during pre-harvest lean period, hundreds of day labourers from adjacent districts come here to go to other districts for work

They are transported to districts including Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet, where they are engaged in brick fields, hill cutting and construction work.

Seeing large gatherings of labourers every day, transport agencies have opened bus services from Panchpir Bazar to other districts.

A net work for supply of labourers has developed in the area. Some middlemen locally known as 'Sardars' are now engaged in collecting and supplying labourers.

These less-paid labourers are in good demand in Chittagong and Sylhet, specially for hill cutting and construction work because of high cost for local labourers there.

Every year during September-

October, people from employers come to the area and engage 'agents' to collect labourers. The agents get commission.

Local people and agents says, over 8,000 labourers coming from different areas of Rangpur, Kurigram and Gaibandha districts left Panchpiur Bazar in the last two months. All of them have been engaged in earth and hill cutting work in Chittagong.

For a month long contract, a labourer is given Tk. 1000 to Tk 1200 in advance. The amount may be Tk 2,500 for two months' contract, some Sardars said talking to this correspondent.

Manager of BRTC bus depot Shah Alam said hundreds of day labourers gather in Panchpiur Bazar for work during *monga*, flood, drought or any natural calamity.

But taking the opportunity of poverty, the agents deprive the labourers and realise hefty commission from the employers.

"I agreed with Quddus Sarder (agent) and received cash Tk 1000 on a month long contract as there is no work in my area ", said day

labourer Mozibar who came from Kurigram.

When asked, Kuddus Sarder said, "I am not depriving them. I have provided them work during crisis".

Woman killed in Manikganj road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

A woman was killed and 20 others were injured, seven of them critically, in a road accident on the Dhaka-Paturia highway on Thursday.

The victim is Feroza Begum, 42, of Bhandaria village in Pirojpur.

The accident occurred when a Dhaka-bound bus of Hanif Enterprise coming from Barisal collided head-on with a speeding truck from the opposite direction at Muljan in Manikganj Sadar Thana killing one on the spot.

The injured were admitted to Manikganj Sadar Hospital.



PHOTO: STAR

Molina at her tailoring shop at Bogra Bazar in Bauphal, constructed under DANIDA's RDP-16 Project.

Molina ignores social taboo for better life

DANIDA project rehabilitates many like her

MD SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

"It was a challenge for me when I started my tailoring shop", said Molina Rani Pal.

"I needed to do something to supplement my family income to ensure education for my son but many in the area opposed this".

Molina, a village woman, now owns a well-decorated tailoring shop with bundles of fabrics stacked inside at Bogra Bazar in Bauphal upazila in Patuakhali.

She got the shop for free. It is in a cluster of shops constructed under DANIDA assisted 'Rural Development Project-16 (RDP-16) only for women.

Molina who passed only SSC

(Secondary School Certificate) examination, earns Tk 4000 to 5000 a month from her shop and adds it to the income by her schoolteacher husband Shusil Kumar Pal. They are a happy couple with one teen-aged son, Sujan.

"I was inspired by an elderly man-- Shahjahan-- a supervisor of the DANIDA project when I met him at Bogra Bazar. He advised me to set up a tailoring shop".

"This will fulfil my dream-- higher education for my son", she told this correspondent during a visit to her shop.

Like Molina, Rina Begum, Aleya Begum, Purnima Rani, Sandha Rani, Rexona and Jinnatunnesa of the area have become self-reliant by

setting up shops at the same market.

Kabir Uddin Matbar, Assistant Structure and Market Engineer of RDP-16, said 33 rural markets, with 17 trading sheds for women, have been built in Patuakhali district under the project since 1994. These sheds with all facilities like lighting, attached bathrooms, and tubewells for pure drinking water have been allotted to women entrepreneurs.

The allotments have been made by a committee headed by the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO).

Distressed and unemployed women have been given preference. They have opened shops like tailoring, tea-stall, stationary, photo-stat, cell phone etc. in the markets.

Lemon lures educated youths

Tk 3 lakh a year from one-acre garden: Lemon of Tangail now exported

JAHANGIR ALAM back from Tangail

Netrakona: Lemon cultivation is now a profitable business for many in Tangail district. A farmer can earn around Tk three lakh a year from an one acre lemon garden.

According to Agriculture officials in Tangail, there are 15,000 lemon gardens in Madhupur, Ghatail and Sakipur upazilas. The lemon is exported because of its taste and flavour.

It has drawn many educated youths after the export began recently. To fulfill the demand for saplings, many nurseries have also grown.

At least 1000 plants can be planted in an one acre garden and 150 to 200 lemons can be plucked from one plant in a year. Different varieties of lemon are grown in the district.

April to September is the peak season of lemon. Plants also bear the fruit in off-season but the yield is far less than in the peak season.

But the farmers are deprived during the peak season. They have to sell lemon to traders at prices between Tk 1000 and 1500 per thousand.

According to Tangail AED, 300 small and big nurseries have sprang up in Modhupur, Ghatail and Shakipur upazilas to supply saplings to gardens.

The Deputy Director of Tangail



PHOTO: STAR

A partial view of Shafiqul Islam's four-acre nursery of lemon seedlings near Telki Bazar in Modhupur upazila in Tangail.

AED told the correspondent that lemon cultivation is increasing in the district after its export started.

On the other hand a farmer can earn much money by established a nursery of lemon seedling.

AED sources said there are 35,000 people engaged in lemon farming in the district.

Niren Hagidog, a lemon farmer in Pachismalle Modhupur upazila, said he earned about Tk eight lakh from his four gardens on five acres of land.

Niran said, this is the first duty far a lemon farmer to keep the garden cloudless and second duty is, use necessary fertilizer at the bottom of the lemon trees.

Abdul Wahed in Sakipur said exporters bought his lemon last year. He earned about Tk seven lakh from his four-acre garden.

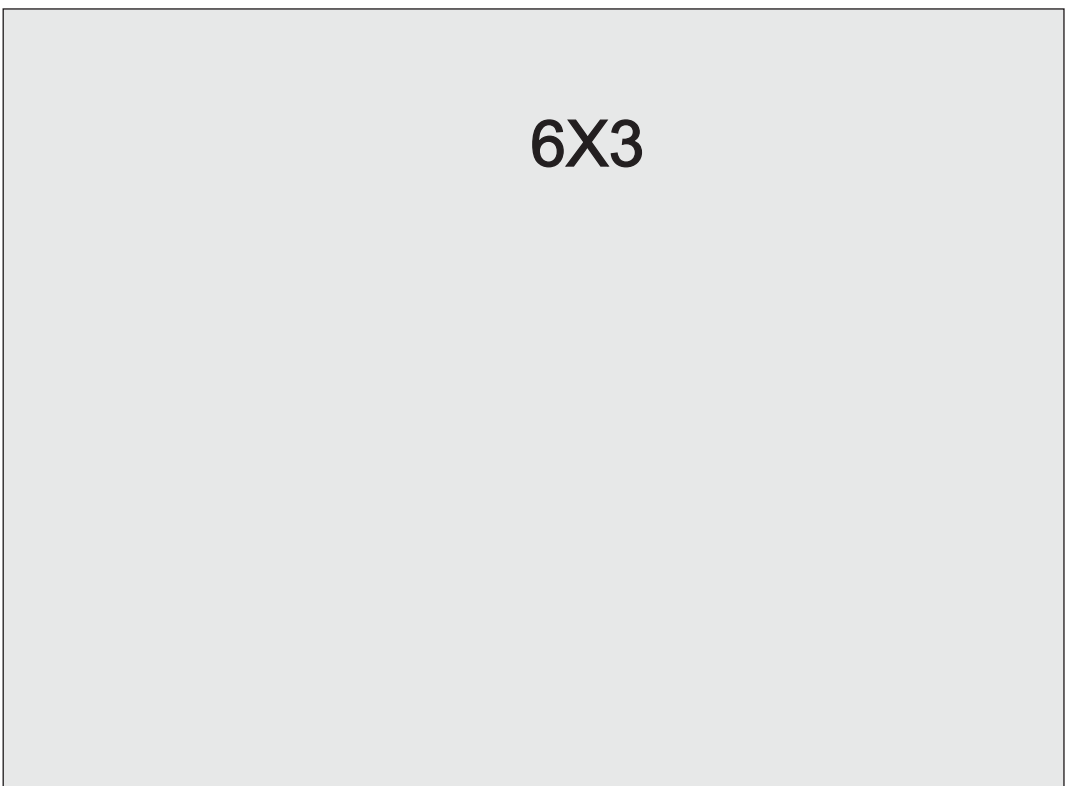
Many unemployed youths have become a rich by established lemon gardens and nurseries for lemon seedlings.

Shafiqul Islam of Talki village in Madhupur upazila was unemployed after graduation. He is now a rich man after he set up a nursery on four areas of land near Talki Bazar.

Shafique said, various kinds of lemon seedling found in his nursery. Every year, he sells about 30,000 seedling and earns about Tk three lakh, he said.



4X3



6X3