



Tripura girls presenting a Garaiya dance at Rangamati yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Boishabi begins amid fanfare

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Boishabi, the prime festival in Chittagong Hill Tracts welcoming the Bangla New Year, formally began yesterday with great enthusiasm and fanfare among both indigenous people and Bangalee settlers.

All the ethnic tribes have different programmes highlighting their distinctive culture.

Our Rangamati Correspondent reports: The three major tribal communities—Chakma, Tripura and Marmas, joined by Bangalee settlers, yesterday began a three-day festival to say good bye to the Bangla Year 1411 and welcome the New Year.

All other ethnic communities are also celebrating the occasion through various programmes.

All hotels and guesthouses in Rangamati are packed with hundreds of tourists from all over the country to enjoy the programmes.

The celebrations began on Monday with a Boishabi rally in the town, participated by government and tribal leaders, followed by a Boli khela (wrestling).

Chakma, the largest ethnic community, celebrates the occasion through various colourful traditional programmes.

Young girls cleaned up their houses and floated flowers on water in groups yesterday.

Pazon, a traditional dish made with seven vegetables, is prepared in every house to entertain guests. They believe Pazon will protect them from diseases for a year.

The Tripura community began the programme by bathing the elders and offering them clothes. They believe this brings them good.

The most favourite programme among Marmas is 'water session' when young girls spray water on male youths. Before frisking in the water game, they offer Jalpuja.

Our Bandarban Correspondent reports: The indigenous people in Bandarban yesterday began a five-day programme Sangrai- to welcome the Bangla New Year.

The programme began with a colourful rally in Bandarban town, participated by a large number of indigenous and Bangali people.

The 'Sangrai' is the main festive of Marma tribe in Bandarban. The most attractive event of Sangrai is Maitree Pani Barshan (water festival), which will be held on Friday and Saturday at Rajbari ground.

The Chakma, the Mro, the Kheyang and the Tripura tribes also celebrate the New Year festival like the Marma tribe in Bandarban.

Princess praises fight against poverty

Victoria impressed by micro-credit, other programmes in north

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden has appreciated NGOs' micro-credit and other support programmes to empower women in northern districts.

She said she is impressed to see that a large number of distressed people, particularly women, in Rangpur and adjoining districts are becoming self-reliant with assistance from NGOs.

"Bangladesh is an example of poverty alleviation with micro credit support from NGOs."

The Crown Princess visited a number of villages in Rangpur, Kurigram and Lalmonirhat districts yesterday and the day before and talk to a large number women who became self-reliant with micro-credit.

She was on a two-day private tour of Bangladesh.

Earlier, she was received by Swedish Ambassador in Bangladesh Borje Mattson, World Food Programme Country Director Douglas Casson Coutts, Director of Church of Sweden Aid Christer Akesson, RDRS Executive Director Kamal Uddin Akber when she arrived at Syedpur airport at about 10 am on Tuesday.

The princess reached Balapara union complex in Kounia upazila in Rangpur at 11:00 am on Tuesday. She talked to a number of BRAC's

women beneficiaries who told her their past and present conditions.

They told her that three or four years back they were totally helpless as they had hardly any means but now they are self-reliant.

They also told her how BRAC and WFP supported them.

The princess also visited Nijpara Govt Primary School in Lalmonirhat Sader upzila to see WFP's Nutrition for Education Programme.

She talked to students, teachers, parents, NGO representatives and the local administration about the programme in schools.

She gave 'fortified' biscuits to poor students and donated sports materials to the school.

From Nijpara, she went to Mogholhat in Lalmonirhat to see how women acquired assets with resources they got as wages for excavating leased ponds under Integrated Food Security Programme.

During conversation, she called the IFS beneficiaries 'strong women'.

The princess also talked to women beneficiaries of RDRS at Balakandi and Thethrai in Kurigram district and inquired about their socio-economic condition.

The princess also visited activities under the Food for Asset Programme at Mogholhat in Lalmonirhat.

WFP supports RDRS to run the Food for Asset Programme for most vulnerable women in Lalmonirhat and other northern districts so that they can be included in mainstream programmes of NGOs.

After visiting different projects of WFP, BRAC, and RDRS, Princess Victoria met journalist at Begum Rockeya Auditorium in Rangpur in the afternoon.

She told newsmen that she was very delighted to see the greenery in Bangladesh.

She said, "Bangladesh is now in better position as regards education, nutrition, healthcare, and women empowerment."

Poverty will be alleviated fully in near future if development activities continue in this way, she observed.

The administrations in Rangpur and Lalmonirhat provided tight security during her visit.

Yesterday, the princess visited different women federations of RDRS at Ulipur Upzila in Kurigram district.

Princess Victoria is the main patron of the donor agency that funds RDRS and WFP in Bangladesh.

The princess left Syedpur for Dhaka yesterday afternoon in the same plane.



Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden talking to women at a village in Rangpur.

PHOTO: STAR

Schoolboy murder protested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

The students of Boali BL Chashi High School on Tuesday brought out a procession in Sakhipur town protesting killing of their schoolmate on Sunday.

They also submitted a memorandum to Sakhipur Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Mokabbir Hossen demanding immediate arrest to the killers.

Friends took Sujan, 18, to the house of one person named Hatem Shikder of village Jadabpur in the same upazila on Saturday night, according to police and witnesses. They requested him to lend them his mobile phone which he refused. When they tried to snatch his mobile phone, Hatem shouted for help. Hearing it, the villagers rushed there and beat up Sujan.

After the mass beating, they blind-folded him and kept him in captivity inside a room of Hatem. He died the next morning.

Sujan's parents termed the incident as a pre-planned murder and urged the authorities concerned to arrest the killers of their son without further delay.

Tk 3 CR DEFALCATION DETECTED AT NILPHAMARI: ONE MORE HELD

Savings certificates repeatedly shown 'sold' by culprits

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

The probe body so far detected defalcation of Tk two crore 86 lakh from depositors' accounts with Nilphamari Head Post Office.

This includes Tk two crore 30 lakh misappropriated from savings certificates, according to sources yesterday.

Postal Operator Liaquat Ali was arrested yesterday from Nilphamari Head Post Office following filing of a separate case by Post Master Torab Ali on the same day.

The misappropriation was detected earlier on the day by the inquiry committee headed by Additional Director General of Postal Department.

Earlier a case was filed with Nilphamari thana accusing three persons. They are Assistant Post Master Mir Nurul Islam Munna, Ledger Operator Ahamedul Islam

Raju and Postal Operator Toslimuddin. Munna and Raju are in custody and Toslimuddin is absconding.

Deputy Post Master General (DPMG) of Dinajpur Postal Region Rezaul Islam, who is now also in charge of Rangpur Region, was present when Postal Operator Liaquat Ali Khan was arrested.

He took the charge of Rangpur Region in addition to Dinajpur Region after suspension of former DPMG of Rangpur, Mahbubur Rahman on Sunday.

Rezaul Islam told this correspondent that the culprits drew money illegally against postal savings certificates which were not sold or not actually in existence.

A large number of savings certificates were shown 'sold' again and again to draw money repeatedly.

On Sunday, the Additional Post Master General of Rajshahi Division

told this correspondent that the culprits mingled all important papers and documents like savings, fixed deposit and current account.

He said the probe team was classifying the papers and documents.

Defalcation of Tk two crore 30 lakh was detected after examining only a fraction of postal savings certificates.

The five-member high-level probe team led by Additional Director General Mobasserur Rahman is working here since April 3.

Meanwhile, panicky account holders continued to crowd the Head Post Office yesterday either to withdraw money or check their accounts.

But there is liquidity crisis at the Head Post Office. Abdul Wahed (account No 13225) was moving in the post office yesterday. He told this correspondent that he had submitted his cheque on Saturday but did not get the money. Jahanara Begum, another account holder (No 626) also said she is facing the same problem.

When asked about this, DPMG Reajul Islam said monthly allotment for Nilphamari Head Post Office is Tk 16 lakh. This amount has been paid off because of rush for withdrawal.

"We have sent message to Dhaka asking for additional funds.

"We will get the required funds soon to meet the demands of our clients", he added.

He firmly said account holders have nothing to worry. Their accounts will remain intact.

Narail silo in-charge arrested for misappropriation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

A food official was arrested in Narail for alleged misappropriation of 70 metric tons (MTs) of rice from a silo on Monday night.

Police arrested the Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Naldi LSD (Local Supply Depot), Ismail Mridha from his village home at Noapara in Jessore district. The action followed filing of a case by Lohagara Upazila Food Controller (UFC) Sudhangshu Hawladar with Lohagara Police Station (PS). The rice was misappropriated during Ismail's tenure as OC of the silo. Ismail was transferred and replaced by Habibur Rahman Mollah on March 29. The matter came to light when Ismail submitted a report to the higher authorities before his departure for his new place of posting. According to his report, there had been a stock of 3.60 MTs of rice instead of 73.60 MTs of rice in the LSD, according to Narail district food officials.

The authorities sealed off the silo and ordered an immediate probe into the scam, according to sources in Narail district food office.

Narail District Food Controller (DFC) formed a 3-member probe committee, according to officials. Lohagara UFC Sudhangshu Hawladar visited the silo on Saturday. During his visit, he detected lesser quantity of foodgrains there. At once he informed the matter to the higher authorities. Later, DFC Monirul Islam instructed the UFC to file a criminal case against Ismail Mridha.

When contacted over phone, Narail DFC Monirul Islam admitted the fact and told The Daily Star, Ismail Mridha will face departmental action after proper investigation.

SUNDAY'S RU VIOLENCE

Progressive Teachers Assoc, BCL boycott probe body

RU CORRESPONDENT

The Progressive Teachers Association (PTA) at Rajshahi University yesterday rejected the committee formed by Syndicate to probe Sunday's violence on the campus, saying it's probe can not be fair as most of its members are supporters of Jamaat-e-Islami.

The committee began probe yesterday and sought cooperation from all.

The PTA in a statement expressed deep concern over Sunday's incident in which some teachers and students were injured and several offices ransacked.

They said the violence was allegedly done by activists of Jatayatlabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), ruling BNP's student wing, in presence of police was pre-planned. Some senior teachers had a hand in it, they alleged.

On earlier occasions, JCD attacked peaceful demonstrations by students and cultural programmes. Even female students were not spared. But the authorities did not take any action. Bangladesh Chhatra league

(BCL) and Progressive Students Alliance (PSA) also rejected the probe body and brought out separate processions held rallies on the campus yesterday demanding a fair probe by 'neutral' persons. The present committee members are 'controversial' persons, they alleged.

On the other hand, the anti-Jamaat factions of JCD, who are blamed for Sunday's violence, marched campus streets in presence of police protesting Jamaat supporters on BNP's VC panel. A JCD sources said, central JCD last night called all its RU JCD unit leaders to Dhaka for talks on the matter.

Talking to this correspondent, some RU teachers said Sunday's violence was due to the feud between Jamaat backed VC Prof Faisal Islam Faruki and BNP aligned Pro VC Mondol.

One of the teachers belonging to the VC group said they boycotted yesterday's Pahela Baishakh committee meeting, called by Pro VC KAM Shahadat Hossain Mondol.