

Tk 2cr cellphones seized in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Customs officials at Sylhet Osmani International airport on Sunday seized mobile phone sets worth Tk one crore 85 lakh brought illegally from Dubai.

In another incident on May 10, 4453 pieces of mobile phones, Konika films and other accessories of mobile phones, brought as unaccompanied luggage, were also

seized at the airport. Acting on a tip off Sunday morning, Customs Commissioner Firoze Shah Alam along with other officials had gone to the airport.

The London-Dubai Biman flight from landed at 10-45 am. The customs officials in presence personnel of other agencies seized five baggage and a polybags containing 2234 pieces of Nokia mobile phone sets, 1376 batteries, 336 Konika

films and other accessories. The baggage were booked as accompanied luggage in the name of three passengers. They are Md. Rafique, Mir Hossain and Nuruzzaman, said a customs official.

No one claimed the cell phones till 6 pm Sunday, the official said. The seized goods were sent to the customs godown at Shahjalal Upashahar.

DEMAND FOR HANGING BRIDGE OVER SURMA Hartal observed in Sylhet city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

An eight-hour hartal to press for construction of a hanging bridge over the Surma was observed here partially yesterday. Sylhet Bibhag Ganodabi Parishad called the strike demanding replacement of the dilapidated Keane bridge.

All sorts of transport vehicles remained off the streets although some rickshaws plied in the city areas during hartal hours. All business establishments also remained closed.

Ganodai Parishad chief Alhaj Turan Miah, also a leading busi-

nessman, who was arrested on Sunday night was released on bail yesterday afternoon.

Police did not give any reason but it is widely believed that he was held for calling the hartal programme.

To avoid arrest, other leaders of the organisation also went into hiding.

The speakers at a rally held at the Rangmohal point here said the hanging bridge project was approved twice in the Ecneec meeting and tenders were also floated. Even soil tests were done but the project was dropped

for unknown reason, they said. Terming it an eyewash, they said the authorities recently were trying to bluff the people in name of renovation of the age-old bridge.

People of Sylhet will not accept such a half-hearted move and go for tougher agitation to realise their demand, they warned.

The speakers said, if immediate measures are not taken and the project is not included in the June 9 budget, they will announce their programme from a mass rally on June 10.



Coffee beans being plucked from Abul Hossain's garden at Gubadia in Madhupu (left) and dried in the sun.

PHOTO: STAR

Baby show held in B'baria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

A baby show was held at the Park View Community Centre here on Sunday.

The show was organised by Junior Horlicks and it was presided over by Anukul Pal, distributor of Junior Horlicks, Brahmanbaria branch.

Songs and music along with dance and recitation by children were the main features of the show.

Sada Akter and Raiyan Ehab Sami were awarded the Cute Baby Prize while Pritom Acharya and Masnun Muntasir were awarded the Best Dressed Baby Prize. Atia Tabassum and Archita Roy were awarded the Best Smile Prize, Tanjin and Israt Ridom were awarded the Best Health Prize and Tanha and Munira Islam Mitila were awarded the Best Hair Prize. Other babies were given general prizes for participating in the baby show.

Fifty children aged between one to five participated in the baby show.

Akhtaruzzaman, deputy general manager (Marketing) of Mutual Food Products Limited was the chief guest while Dr Ahmad Al-Mamun and The Daily Star correspondent Sheikh Md Shahidul Islam, also vice-president of Brahmanbaria Press Club were special guests.

Bright prospect of coffee cultivation in 2 dists

AMINUL ISLAM, back from Gubadia, Madhupur (Tangail)

Coffee cultivation in vast fallow forest lands in Tangail and Mymensingh may open up a new horizon for people in the areas, thanks to the initiative by an NGO worker.

Its commercial cultivation is now in sight after experiments by Md Abul Hossain for over a decade.

He had started coffee cultivation in 1992 on 10 decimal land at his Gubadia village in Madhupur upazila in Tangail by bringing some plants from India. He plucked coffee beans after two years.

He then expanded his garden to one bigha (30 decimal) in 1995. He is preparing coffee dust from beans and supplying those to local markets.

Seeing his success, local agriculture officials visited his garden and tested the soil.

The agriculture officials now say

there is bright prospect of coffee cultivation in barren high lands and forests in Tangail Mymensingh. Soil and climate of this area is suitable for coffee, a drink used worldwide. The crop can be cultivated in sloppy lands where rainwater passes off quickly, they said.

"As it was experimental, I did not made it public at that time (1995), said Abul Hossain while talking to this correspondent during a recent visit. He is Executive Director of Mauchash Unnayan Sangstha (MUS), an NGO based in Charajani in Madhupur.

Now he has about 400 plants in his garden. All the plants are producing coffee beans.

It can be cultivated in light shady places and it needs no extra fertilizer, he said. Inter-cropping with other crops such turmeric and ginger is also possible.

Adul Hossain now supplies the coffee in small packets to local markets.

Now coffee is being cultivated by Mauchash Unnayan Sangstha (MUS), a non-government organization at Charajani in Madhupur and by some farmers related to MUS.

A total of 125 top 150 plants can be grown on n 10 decimal, which start bearing seeds after two years of plantation. A plant bears seeds from two to five kilograms.

One kilogram of processed coffee dust is sold between Tk 1000 and 1200, but the cost is negligible, said Abul Hossain.

"I have just started harvesting coffee. I am supplying those to local markets.

"Visitors enjoy it at some local tea stalls", he said. Though not properly processed, my coffee is not too inferior to the imported ones", he said.

Abul Hossain says his cultivation is now in preliminary stage. So he is not thinking about its profitability.

But it will certainly be much more

profitable than other crops because of its high price and minimal cost, he said.

Abul Hossain said he has distributed seeds to seven local farmers and they have started raising small gardens. More farmers are seeking seeds, but he can not supply.

Farmer Rafiqul Islam in the area said he planted 150 plants last year and hopes to harvest coffee beans next year. It grows with little care, he said.

Plants bear flowers in April and matured seeds are available in three months, Adul Hossain said.

Matured coffee beans are plucked and stored for some days. The beans are separated from shells, dried in sun and then crushed to make coffee dust, ready for preparing the drink.

Feud in Satkhira BNP intensifies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Internal conflict in Satkhira district BNP has taken a new turn as leaders of its Shyamnagar upazila unit at a meeting brought allegations against the district BNP secretary that he is sheltering criminals who are collecting tolls, looting shrimp enclosures and are involved in other anti-social activities.

At a meeting of Shyamnagar thana BNP held at the party's office on Saturday, they urged the party high command to take action against Satkhira district BNP secretary Rahmatullah Palash and threatened to boycott him for non-compliance, party sources said.

Serious disagreement between the two factions of district BNP has been prevailing, hampering party organisational activities, they said.

The meeting was held with joint convener of Shyamnagar thana BNP Abdul Wahed in the chair.

It was addressed by among others former general secretary of district BNP advocate Syed Iftekhar Ali, its former organising secretary Samsuzzoha Bablu, GM Abdus Salam, Masudul Alam, Monsur Sardar, Mokbul Hossain, Iswaripur UP chairman Sadequr Rahman, Prof Abu Sayeed, Prof Mahbulul Alam, Akram Hossain and Azizur Rahman.

They protested and condemned the false allegations brought against

district BNP President Habibul Islam MP and Syed Iftekhar Ali by Rahmatullah Palash at a press conference held on March 23.

To counter the allegations, former organising secretary of district BNP Samsuzzoha Bablu on March 24 held another press conference, where he refuted the allegations brought against.

The meeting adopted an unanimous resolution requesting the party high command to take action against Rahmatullah.

"The resolution will be sent to the party high command", Abdul Wahed, who presided the meeting, told this correspondent.

"Utter frustration and discontent is brewing among leaders and activists due to the internal feud between the two groups. This will affect the party's next general elections if the feud is not removed soon", said a senior leader of the BNP's district unit seeking anonymity.

The BNP high command in November last year formed a new committee of Satkhira district BNP with Habibul Islam MP, Alhaj Abdul Jalil and Rahmatullah Palash as its president, vice president and general secretary by dissolving the existing committee headed by Abdul Jalil and Sayed Iftekhar Ali as president and general secretary.



A partial view of the meeting held at Dhulihar UP office yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Fighting dowry, early marriage

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Union Parishad (UP) leaders, social workers, teachers, students, match-makers, marriage registrars and NGO activists in Dhulihar, a remote union in Sadar upazila, have joined hands with a noble aim-- to stop early marriage and dowry from the union.

Vowing to resist early marriage and dowry and to create awareness, they brought out a big colourful procession yesterday, participated

by people of all classes, carrying banners and placards.

Slogans like 'stop early marriage and dowry', 'it is a social vice' were written on those.

It started from the local office of CARITAS, an international NGO. The processionists paraded several village roads. It terminated on Dhulihar UP premises with a discussion meeting.

A citizens' body styled 'Sarbiik Manabik Unnayan Sangathan' (Overall human development

organisation) was formed at the meeting to fight the social vices.

Chaired by Sadhana Mallik, president of the newly formed organisation, the meeting was addressed by, among others, Dhulihar UP Chairman Prof Modasserul Haq Huda, Jalal Uddin, Monzura Khatun, Shamim Reza Chowdhury, Milon Chakraborty, Marzina Khatun, Menoka Mondal, Shahidul Islam, Aparna Majumdar and Tapas Ghosh.