

REB offices attacked in greater Sylhet for power

Four generation units idle: 50 per cent load shedding

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Frequent power outage has triggered protests by people in different areas of Sylhet district since beginning of the Ramadan. At places, the protesters attacked and damaged REB offices and assaulted its staff, resulting in clashes with police. Sources said the power supply situation deteriorated as four generation units in three power stations in the region are out of order. Subscribers in upazilas are the worst sufferers. People in Balaganj, Golapganj and Jakiganj headquarters came out on streets and ram-paged RED (Rural Electrification Board) offices in the last few days. In all these places, cases have been filed against protesters for alleged vandalism, which has caused commotion among the people. In Jakiganj upazila headquarters people brought out a procession after the Tarabih prayers and held a rally on the premises of REB office Saturday night. They protested the frequent power outage and demanded power supply at least during Tarabih, Iftar and Sehri. At a stage, some of the protesters swooped on the offices of REB and

the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO). They also pelted brickbats on police who went to control the situation. Some policemen were also injured, police said. Three cases were filed for attacking police, damaging the offices of REB and the UNO. Prior to beginning of Ramadan in a memorandum to the UNO and others concerned had demanded uninterrupted power supply during the month of Ramadan and Durga puja. At Balaganj upazila headquarters on the same night (Saturday), devotees from two mosques in a procession went to the REB office. They physically assaulted the staff and damaged furniture. Being informed, the UNO rushed there and assured them of smooth power supply to mosques during prayer time, if necessary from generator at the REB office. In Golapganj, police had to go for action to control agitating people who attacked the REB office Saturday night for smooth power supply. Load shedding of electricity for hours together is an everyday affair in Sylhet for the last three months, causing great sufferings to people. Small industries and factories are also suffering a lot.

Seven bombs recovered from B'baria graveyard

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) on Saturday arrested a young man and recovered seven bombs (cocktails) from a graveyard at North Mourail Pukurpar in Brahmanbariapourasabha. The arrested is Jony Chowdhury, 22, son of Khabiruddin Chowdhury. Later, acting on his confessional statement Rab members recovered the bombs from the graveyard. Jony is likely to be interrogated by the Joint Interrogation Cell.

Bomb blasts at BNP office: 2 Jubo Dal men held in Jessore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

Two Jubo Dal activists were arrested in connection with bomb blasts at Keshabpur Upazila BNP office on Saturday night. The arrested are Bozlu alias Boma Bozlu of Mazidpur village and Rafiqul Islam of Bosundia village under Mongolkot union. They were arrested following filing of a case by Keshabpur Upazila Jubo Dal vice president Abdul Halim Atal. Nine BNP leaders and workers were injured seriously as unidentified criminals hurled powerful bombs at the BNP office at about 7.45 pm on the day. The injured include former JCD president Abdul Halim Atal, 32, BNP leader Moshir Rahman, 45, Jubo Dal leader Shamsul Alam Bulbul, 32, Akhthruzzaman Babul, 35, Abdul Jalil, 30, BNP leader Shakawat Ali, 45, JCD leader Liton, 28 and the caretaker of BNP office, Nuruddin. They were immediately rushed to Keshabpur Upazila Health Complex. Of them Abdul Halim Atal and Akhtaruzzaman Babul were shifted to Jessore 250-bed Hospital for better treatment. Keshabpur upazila BNP organised a protest rally on Sunday afternoon.

7 Indians held for illegal entry in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Seven Indian Manipuris including 4 women were arrested on charge of entering into Bangladesh illegally Saturday night. Kotwali police arrested them at about 12-10 am from a microbus on suspicion as they lacked legal documents for entering into Bangladesh on the eve of Durga Puja, police told this correspondent. During arrest, they were on way to Sylhet from Tamabil border. The arrested identified them as Apa Devi, 36, Namri Devi, 35, her sister Gyaneshwari Devi, 30, Ritabola, 30, Bim Sharma, 35, Jadu Singh, 35 and Inaochha Singh, 28. They claimed they hail from Kuityang in Imphal of Manipur. They told police, they were on way to Kamolganj upazila in Moulvibazar district to perform at various cultural functions of Durga Puja festival at Manipuri habitats there. They entered into Bangladesh with the help of Khashias, they claimed. A magistrate in Sylhet Sadar sent them to jail after police produced them before court yesterday afternoon.



A procession by students in Meherpur Sadar upazila to protect frogs (left) and tadpoles being released at Chandbeel in the area.



PHOTO: STAR

'Save frog save environment'

A unique initiative by Meherpur Sadar UNO, local journalists to protect frogs, promote farming

AMANUR AMAN Back From Meherpur

It was exceptional and perhaps the first such attempt in the country. Tadpoles of frog were released in two waterbodies in Meherpur under a slogan: Save frogs save environment. Meherpur Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Nabirul Islam took the initiative with the help of some local journalists. Besides maintaining balance in the environment, there is a good prospect for establishing frog farms in the country, which will earn huge amounts of foreign exchange, Nabirul said while talking to this correspondent during a visit there. The move was appreciated by local people as well. A large number of people joined various programmes to create awareness not to kill frogs. About 50,000 tadpoles of Sonabang,

a common variety of big size frog available in the country, were released at Chad Beel and Teghoria Beel on July 25. This correspondent during the visit saw local people taking care of the frogs, which have grown up to 400 grams now. Even illiterate people in the area are now aware of the good effects of having frog in fields. These kill harmful insects which damage crops, they told this correspondent. "We started after creating awareness about good effects of frogs in maintaining environmental balance", said Nabirul, also an agriculturist. A meeting of professionals including journalists, local NGO officials, teachers, businessmen, social workers and students was called. A good response was available from all sections. A coordination committee was

formed. Leaflets and posters were distributed and several processions brought out with participation of thousands of people. "This brought a good result. People of all classes extended cooperation to us and helped protect the tadpoles released", Nabirul said. "Local journalists also helped with money because I had no fund for this unusual programme", he added. A local hatchery owner—Hamidur Rahman—came with assistance. He produced 50,000 tadpoles in his hatchery and supplied those free of cost. Plash Khandakar, Meherpur Correspondent of national daily Amer Desh, said the programme has created a great awareness about maintaining environmental balance in the area. Other journalists who extended their helping hand are Abu Lache Lablu

of Ittefaque, Mizanur Rahman of local daily Desh Tathya, Mohosin Ali of Bhorer Dak and Kamruzzaman Khan of Daily Janata. According to environmentalists, frogs eat up different types of insects harmful for crops. An increase in frog population in fields can reduce use of harmful insecticides. Use of insecticides destroy fish fries and beneficial insects. This correspondent also saw frogs in large numbers in fields near the waterbodies. Local people said their population has increased with a good effect on crops. UNO Nabirul said some youths are now thinking of setting up frog farms. Frog legs are now exported and it has good markets abroad.



A group of children brought out of bidi factories on the premises of a pre-school orientation centre in Tangail.

From bidi factory to school

Two NGOs in Tangail take out 823 children for schooling

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Eleven year-old Sumon and 12 year-old Rpia no longer work in bidi factories. Taken out of the hazardous work at Kachi and Lucky bidi factories, they now go to school. They are among 823 children and adolescents taken out of bidi factories in Bhuapur, Kalihati, Madhupur, Mirzapur and Sadar upazilas of Tangail. Of them, 198 are now attending pre-primary centres and 560 are going to primary schools. About 400 of them have been enrolled at government primary schools in the district. About 170 adolescents have been given pre-technical and 300 given technical training on different vocations including tailoring, light engi-

neering and other income generating work. The laudable work is being done by two local NGOs-- Social Advancement Through Unity (SATU) and Society for Social Service (SSS). SATU launched the programme in November 2001 with financial assistance from ILO and USDOL United States Department of Labour). The first phase of its project ended in June this year. The two NGOs are also giving micro credit to parents of the children for various income generating activities so that they do not send their minor boys and girls for the hazardous work any more. Loans are given for small business, poultry, mat making, vegetable cultivation, fishery and weaving. They distributed Tk 41,48,55 loans among 22,337 families. The loan recovery rate is above 98 per cent. They also hold group meetings to create awareness among poor parents to send their children to school. SATU now runs 17 pre-primary centres in Tangail district. After orientation and primary lessons, children from the centres are enrolled in different primary schools. Sources in the two NGOs said there are 14 bidi factories in Tangail employing 1884 children. Talking to this correspondent, SATU Executive Director Shahadat Hossen said, "If we can create awareness and make the women self-dependent, they will not send their children to bidi factories and for other risky work."

ActionAid integrated farming kicks off

Trainers trained to ensure food security to 20,000 farming households in six districts

By BARNABY SKINNER

The ActionAid Bangladesh on Friday gave certificates to 69 agricultural trainers after two months' training, launching a four-year FoSHol: Action Aid", a project to be implemented in six districts to ensure food security to 20,000 farming households. "The trainers are key to the project's success", said Indu Bhushan, ActionAid farming systems coordinator and head of the training programme. "They have been taught and have developed an all embracing approach to farming - and now they are the ones to go out and reach the farmers." ActionAid distributed the certificates on farming on land leased from the government situated near the BADC training centre at Kakraid

under Modhupur upazila in Tangail district. Trainers from all over the country are taking part in the training. In the two-month training, the trainers established alternative ways of farming. They used dikes between rice fields to cultivate vegetables. They combined rice plantation with fish breeding. And, they created what they considered to be an ideal farming settlement on eight decimal land, consisting of living space for a household of four, two vegetable gardens, an open and covered hen cage, a pond and a beehive. During the closing ceremony of the two-month training course, the trainers showed much vigour to get started on working with the farmers. They chanted slogans like Crop is mine, decision is mine!" "Diverse agriculture is nothing

their houses while others set up latrines but did not erect fences. A few others erected weaves by coconut leaves, palm and banana leaves but did not make roofs. Even some others erected latrines but they are yet to use those. A team of the district administration led by additional deputy commissioner (ADC-General) Humayun Kabir visited different areas in the UP on October 3. The teamates expressed their dissatisfaction over slow progress of the programme. While contacted, Kaliganj UNO Sheikh Moniruzzaman told this correspondent an investigation is going on regarding the matter.

so that the chairman can not draw the money by cheating the government. A source said to this correspondent Kazi Ebadul Islam joined the BNP from the Awami League (AL) recently to get rid of the punishment. Local people also alleged that half of the families in the union got ring slabs from the UP. However, after the chairman's announcement, a group of journalists visited several villages in the union and conducted a survey on October 5. During the survey, they saw most of the ring slabs were piled up on the UP office premises. They found only a few villagers received the ring slabs and piled up those on the courtyards of

American Cultural Centre likely in Jessore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

An American Cultural Centre is going to be opened at Jessore Institute. November 16 has been fixed as a tentative date for inauguration of the American Cultural Centre. This was announced at a view-exchange meeting held here recently. A view-exchange meeting was organised jointly by the US embassy in Dhaka and the Jessore Institute. It was chaired by General Secretary of the Institute Sheikh Rabiul Alam and addressed by US embassy officials. The speaker said setting up of the proposed centre will help further develop Bangladesh-US relations in all fields. Representatives of the elite in the town also attended the programme.

Mushroom promises fortune for youth



Enamul Hoque at his mushroom farm at his Gangachara village.

RAFIQUE SARKER, Rangpur

Mushroom cultivation has opened up the door to fortune for Enamul Hoque. He has taken it as a profession after having a university degree. Three years ago Enamul Hoque started mushroom cultivation in a thatched room at his Bakshiganj village home in Gangachara upazila with an initial investment of Tk 40,000. With growing demand from Dhaka markets, he enlarged his farm that now produces mushroom worth at least Tk 3,300 a day. He produces at least three kilograms of fried mushroom every day and sells those at Tk 1,100 per kg. His net profit is around Tk 700 per kg. "After graduation from Dhaka City College in 1997, I looked for a job. I came contact with a mushroom trader in Dhanmondi area in Dhaka city. He inspired me to try mushroom cultiva-

tion." After a short course, Enamul came back home in 2001 and started cultivating mushroom at his house though his parents discouraged this. He said he grows Oyster species of mushroom at his farm. It has good demand in the country as it is a delicious and has high protein content. "I am selling mushroom at the local markets but we are planning to export it to Australia and some European countries as we have already got some foreign buyers over there," Enamul said while talking to this correspondent at his house recently. Enamul believes mushroom cultivation will expand in Bangladesh because of the suitable climate. It does not need much space and big initial investment. Any body, man or woman, can cultivate it after doing other work.



Trainers under ActionAid's integrated farming project during training at a field in Kakraid in Modhupur.

PHOTO: STAR