

Suspected JMB cadre arrested in Kurigram

A CORRESPONDENT, Kurigram

A suspected Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) cadre was arrested in Chilmari upazila on Monday.

Abu Bakar Siddique, 45, hails from Pura Bazaar in Nageswari upazila.

Police sources said, Siddique was arrested by police when the principal of Chilmari Degree College suspected him to be a militant during a conversation.

Police recovered a bottle of medicine, some books, pieces of clothes and syringes from Siddique's bag.

Heroin worth Tk 3 cr seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

Benapole port police on Tuesday seized about 3 kilogram heroin worth about Tk. 2 crore 80 lakh from a private car.

Police hired the car to carry under-trial prisoners to Jessore. While preparing to board the car, its driver Abdul Alam fled away abandoning the vehicle.

On suspicion, Benapole Port Police Station officer-in-charge (OC) Mostafa Kamal searched the car in presence of Sarsha Upazila Nirbahi Officer Bashir Ahmed, journalists and other security personnel and recovered heroin packed in 8 polythene bags.

Sit-in demanding punishment to acid throwers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Ambarkhana Girls' School and College students here yesterday staged a one-hour sit-in demonstration near their institution to protest against acid attack on one of their schoolmates on Monday.

Fatema Begum, 22, daughter of a school teacher sustained serious burn injuries when unidentified criminals threw acid at Shahpur village in Sylhet Sadar upazila.

Fatema is now undergoing treatment at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital.

The students demanded punishment to the culprits.

Police arrested Fatema's stepmother Poly Begum, stepsister Taslima and stepbrothers Abdulla and Mujib.

Zia Fertiliser resumes production

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

The Asuganj Zia Fertiliser Factory resumed production yesterday after three days' suspension.

The factory had stopped operation at about 7 pm on November 21 due to technical fault in the power plant.

During the suspension, the factory suffered a production loss of about 1,300 tonnes of Urea a day, sources there said.

Obituary

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Abdul Mazid Mollah, father of Md. Sohrab Hossain, Correspondent of The Daily Star, died on Saturday. He was 80.

He left behind wife, six sons and three daughters.

He was laid to rest at family graveyard.

Looting of sand from Surma threatens offices, bridges

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Indiscriminate and illegal extraction of sand from Surma riverbed in Sylhet region by using mechanised dredgers continue unabated, threatening riverbanks and bridges with serious erosion.

Even, important establishments like the Divisional Commissioner's office and the DIG's office in the city are now under threat, according to official reports.

The illegal work by some unscrupulous quarters continues despite government restriction and protests by local people.

At least 30 dredgers are engaged in sand extraction illegally from the river in the city and its outskirts.

The government is also deprived of huge amounts of revenue.

These sand traders, backed by powerful quarters and a section of corrupt officials, are lifting sand using so-called 'licenses' from the Bureau of Mineral Resources Development (BMRD).

But, sources said they are taking advantage of loopholes and lack of

transparency in the licences. Even, at places, they do not bother to renew the licences, the sources claimed.

To stop the illegal work, a committee was formed last year with the Additional Deputy Commissioner (Rev) as its convener. It includes officials of PWD and WDB.

The committee after visiting different affected areas submitted a report stating irregularities regarding issuance of lease and loss in government revenue, in addition to the serious environmental damage.

The report said, due to indiscriminate extraction of sand from Surma river, the historical Keane Bridge and offices of the Divisional Commissioner and the DIG of police may be in danger.

The Cabinet Division issued a circular on September 30 last year stating that an inter-ministerial committee headed by the Secretary of Inland Water Transport Ministry only can give permission for dredging. No other authority or department has the authority to issue permis-

sion for dredging, the circular stated.

But, the WDB and the BMRD without doing any hydrological survey, often issue licences for sand collection, sources said.

Acting on the committee report, the Sylhet Deputy Commissioner had sent a confidential report to the ministry's secretary with a request for action against the Acting Director of BMRD, which had issued the licences in December last year.

Meantime, the BMRD stated that no permission was given for using dredgers to collect sand from riverbeds or quarries. But, in all the places, random use of mechanised dredgers is going on.

Even, at places, several kilometres of pipeline have been laid to take the extracted sands to raise lands for commercial purposes. They have already filled up huge water bodies and low lands in areas like Mendibag, Sobhanighat, Khadim, Parairchak Rafipur, Mollagaon.

It has been observed that at times, sand lifting had remained suspended for some days at places after steps by the

district administration. But it resumed soon after.

In some cases, the lessees filed writ petitions for temporary injunction on orders for stopping dredging.

It is also alleged that government attorneys do not play their proper role, keeping the scope for looting by the licence holders.

The land ministry also ordered steps against real estate developers in Sylhet months ago, but no action has yet been taken by the local administration, it was gathered. The land developers continue to develop lands with sands collected from the Surma riverbed, using pipeline.

An official in the district administration seeking anonymity told The Daily Star that the government has incurred a huge amount of loss in royalty and taxes. The Assistant Commissioner of Sylhet Sadar issued notices to the licence holders for payment of government royalty, but to no effect.



Illegal sand extraction by mechanised dredger on in Surma river just below the Shahjalal Bridge in Sylhet city.

PHOTO: STAR



PHOTO: STAR

Traders in Tamakumandi Lane in Reazuddin Bazaar in the port city beating Sub-inspector Ismail Hossain yesterday for extortion. He was rescued by higher police officials and suspended.

Cop suspended in Ctg for extortion

Angry traders demonstrate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Sub-inspector of Chittagong Kotwali police was suspended yesterday for extortion and ransacking at a mobile phone shop at in Reazuddin Bazaar in the city.

Angry traders earlier confined the sub-inspector, Ismail Hossain, 32, and beat him before high officials of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) came to the scene to his rescue.

Witnesses and traders said SI Ismail along with police 'source' Helal Uddin and two constables, all in plainclothes, stormed into Pinky Stores at Tamakumandi Lane in Reazuddin Bazaar at around 12.30pm. They soon started ransacking furniture of the mobile shop and at one stage looted two mobile sets and Tk 45,000.

"As I cried out for help, other traders of the market rushed in and

confine the SI but his three companions managed to flee with the booty," salesman at the shop Jasim Uddin told journalists.

The agitated traders beat Ismail and later took him to the office of Tamakumandi Traders Association and confined him there until Assistant Commissioner (Kotwali Zone) Mahub Rashid and Officer in-Charge of Kotwali PS Mainuddin reached there, the witnesses said.

Seeing the two top police officials, the traders became more angry, chanted slogans against cops and demanded punishment of SI Ismail. The situation calmed down after the AC (Kotwali) assured them of action against the cop.

AC Mahub told reporters that SI Ismail was suspended as per order of CMP Commissioner M Mazedul Haque and departmental actions would soon be taken against him.

NGO owner missing with money

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

An NGO owner went missing from Chowhali upazila on November 15 with Tk 10.5 lakh.

Family sources said, Selim Reza, 40, chairman of the NGO, Chowland, was abducted while he was on his way to Dhaka.

They further said, Chowland managing director Shahidul Islam Talukdar and Chowhali upazila Chhatra Dal president Bakul went to Selim Reza's house. From there they went to Khas Kawlia branch of Sonali Bank together and drew the money. After drawing the money, Reza set for Dhaka, but he did not come back till filing this report.

Family members feared the abductors might have killed him after snatching the money.

When contacted, Chowhali Police Station officer-in-charge (OC) Shankar Kumar Das told this correspondent that an investigation is going on and drives are on to rescue the victim.

Great prospects for investment in CHT

UN mission tells trade bodies in Bandarban

MONIRUL ISLAM MONU, Bandarban

The United Nations Development Mission, now on a three-day visit to Bandarban, said there are great prospects for investment in different sectors in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) which can boost economic activities there and change life of hill people.

For that, the government should create an enabling atmosphere and foster a harmonious relationship among all classes of people and cooperation between domestic and foreign agencies.

The mission led by Hans Christian Heyn yesterday held a meeting with traders in Bandarban on investment opportunities.

Mission members Ester Marjan

Kauk-Varior Blonk, Morten Lehmann (ILO), Krika Hoffiman Kiess (UNDP), Imran Shaikat, Miss Robby Tulus (ILO), Khairul Alam (CHTDF/UNDP), Md. Mamunur Rahaman of FBCCI, Saroj Kumar Sarkar of LGED (Local Government and Engineering Department), Bandarban Chamber President Ayub Chowdhury, Narin Tongsiri (CHTDF/UNDP), Pushpau R a m b h a k l a M a t h e m a (CHTDF/UNDP) and Prasenjit Chakma (CHTDF/UNDP) took part in the discussions at the meeting. It was held at the Hill District Council conference hall.

The mission also held meetings with officials of Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry

(CCCI) and Bandarban Chamber of Commerce and Industry here Tuesday night. The meetings were held at Bandarban chamber office. The mission came to Bandarban on Tuesday. FBCCI and CCCI representatives are accompanying the UNDP team now on a 15-day tour of CHT.

Today, the UNDP mission will attend here a seminar on investment, to be participated by traders, professionals and officials.

At the meetings, Christian Heyn implored local traders and representatives of FBCCI and CCCI to utilise the investment prospects in the hills.

He said, "Tourism, agro-based industries and small tea holdings are better than any other sector in CHT. So, these sectors should get priority", Christian Hans said.

Opposition protests continue in dists

STAR NATIONAL DESK

The 14-party alliance led by Awami League yesterday continued protests in districts against the alleged government move to foil its grand rally in Dhaka on Tuesday.

They brought out processions and held rallies in several districts including Sylhet, Satkhira, Brahmanbaria, Manikganj and Sirajganj, condemning the move.

Our Staff Correspondent reports from Sylhet: The Sylhet city and district units of Awami League brought out a procession and held a rally at the city's central

Shaheed Minar yesterday afternoon protesting the 'government sponsored countrywide transport strike' and attack on Awami League activists and supporters on their way to Dhaka on Tuesday.

Addressing the rally, city AL chief and Mayor of Sylhet City Corporation Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran said the BNP-Jamaat government has created a dreadful situation in the country.

He called upon party workers to launch a tougher agitation as per the programmes announced at the Dhaka rally to dislodge the government.

He said the government protects militants who are responsible bomb blasts and killings in the country. These will not stop and peace and social order will not return so long the government remains in power, he said.

He called upon the people to make today's opposition-called hartal a success to express 'no confidence' against the government.

The speakers also condemned arrest of opposition leaders and activists in different areas to thwart their programme.

The procession started from the city's Court Point area and terminated at the

Shaheed Minar, where the rally was held.

Our Satkhira Correspondent reports: The 14-party alliance brought out a big procession and held a rally in the town yesterday protesting the government move to foil its Dhaka rally harassment of opposition men ahead of today's hartal.

The rally held in front of district AL office was addressed by, among others, district AL leaders Azibar Rahman, A. Ahmed, Azharul Islam, Sheikh Nurul Haque and Shahadat Hossain, Workers Party leaders Mustafa Lutfullah, Prof. Mahibullah and Sharifullah Kaisar Suman, JSD leaders Kazi Riaz and Obaidur Sultan Bablu, NAP leader Kazi Saidur Rahman and Gono Forum leader M Zaman Khan.

The speakers condemned the government for its undemocratic move and called upon the people to intensify agitation to hasten its fall.

The people are with the opposition because they joined the Dhaka rally despite harassment by the ruling parties, they said. They called for observing today's hartal peacefully.

Our Brahmanbaria Correspondent reports: The 14-party alliance brought out a procession in the town protesting the government move and to drum up support for its hartal today. Gono Forum held a rally in the town to protest the alleged harassment of its men while going to Dhaka on Tuesday.

With Dr. Farid Ahmed in the chair, the rally was addressed by, among others, Prof. Emdadul Hoque, journalist Md. Moshir Rahman, Md. Abul Bashar, Md. Mosleh Uddin, Md. Ishaq and Md. Bashir Ahmed.

Similar programmes were also held by the opposition alliance in Manikganj and Sirajganj, our correspondents reported.



PHOTO: STAR

Garo women presenting a traditional dance at Birishiri Cultural Academy in Netrakona on Monday as part of an annual cultural programme marking beginning of Aman harvest.

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