

Two laid-off Khulna jute mills resume partial operation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

State-owned Crescent Jute Mills and Star Jute Mills, two of the four mills laid-off earlier, resumed partial operation yesterday.

Only their sacking sections resumed production, sources in the mills said.

Another laid-off mill--Platinum Jubilee Jute Mills--will also start partial operation of its sacking section from June 4.

Bangladesh Jute Mills

Corporation (BJMC) recently allocated Tk 1.5 crore for purchase of raw jute for Crescent, Star and Platinum jute mills.

Only about thirty per cent of total workers of each of the three mills will be required to work at the sacking sections, the sources said.

Seeking anonymity, the mills' managements said the Tk 1.5 crore raw materials will keep the mills running only for about a week. So far, there has not been any arrangement for further funding to purchase raw materials to keep the

mills running after a week, they said.

They could not say when full production in Crescent and Star jute mills might begin. The decision will come from the jute ministry and BJMC, they said.

There is no possibility of reopening of Peoples Jute Mills as it is heavily burdened with bank liability of over Tk 100 crore. Lay-off of the mill was extended by 45 days with effect from yesterday.

BJMC ordered lay-off of the four mills with effect from April 19

following agitation by workers and employees for payment of arrear wages and salaries.

BJMC Regional Coordinator Shamim Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday that he had asked for Tk 6.52 crore from government for payments for the laid-off period. "I am yet to get any response in this regard", he said.

Around Tk 20 crore out of a total of Tk 70 crore were so far paid against arrear wages and salaries of workers and employees of eight state-owned jute mills in Khulna-

Jessore industrial belt, sources said.

Meanwhile, security measures were further tightened at Khalishpur industrial belt as workers of Peoples Jute Mills decided to resume agitation demanding reopening of the mill. Workers' leaders at the mill said they would begin fresh agitation within 2-3 days for reopening the mill. They reasoned that their mill should also be reopened as Crescent and Star jute mills were reopened with heavy financial burdens.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

A mother fish of *katla* variety was caught by some local people from the Halda in Chittagong, a natural sanctuary for fishes to release eggs, on Friday. On information, police seized the 12 kg fish and handed it over to fish experts.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Parkl Char, a tourist spot in Anwara in Chittagoing, has become a 'grazing field' and gives a desolate look much ahead of the monsoon this year.

Nor'wester kills 4 in 3 districts

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Four people were killed when a nor'wester lashed Dinajpur, Thakurgaon and Kurigram districts yesterday morning.

Our Dinajpur Correspondent reports: At least one person was killed and several others were injured in a nor'wester that lasted for one-and-a-half hours in Dinajpur and Thakurgaon yesterday morning.

District administration sources said, Md Anwar Ali 29, son of Md. Abdul Khaleque, was killed while

working in a paddy field at Hajipara village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila.

The storm lashed three villages in Khanshama upazila in Dinajpur and two in Thakurgaon at a speed of 66 kilometre per hour, Dinajpur Met Office sources said.

Boro crops on thousands of acres of land were damaged during the storm. Many litchi and mango trees were also uprooted.

At least 300 thatched houses were damaged in three villages including Purba-Hashimpur, Nalbari and Dugunia of

Khanshama upazila in Dinajpur and two villages Chilarang and Akhanagar in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila.

About 1,500 people are now living under open sky in the nor'wester affected villages.

However, the extent of damage is yet to be ascertained, said Khamshama Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Md Atiqur Rahman.

UNB reports from Thakurgaon: A farmer was killed in lightning during a storm in Harinarayanpur village in Sadar upazila at about 7

am yesterday.

Rafiqul Islam, 30, was killed while he was working in a paddy field.

UNB reports from Kurigram: Two farmers were killed in lightning during a nor'wester in Rajibpur upazila yesterday morning.

Local sources said the thunderbolt struck Sonaullah, 40, of Madaner Char and Jonab Ali, 44, of Jauniar Char while they were working in paddy fields, killing them on the spot.

Another extortion case against Satkhira BNP leader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

An extortion case was filed yesterday against nine BNP men including detained Satkhira Sadar upazila BNP president Abdul Alim for allegedly demanding Tk 3 lakh as toll. Alim is also chairman of Labasa Upazila Parishad in the Sadar upazila.

Earlier, three extortion cases were filed against Alim with the Sadar police station.

Sudam Chandra Biswas of Magura village in Sadar upazila filed the case. Others sued are Abul Kashem, Nil Kamal Biswas, Biswa Nath Das, Rabindra Nath Biswas, Surendra Nath Biswas, Safiqul Islam, Sajul and Shahadat Hossain, head clerk of land registration office in the town.

Alim was arrested by joint forces on April 9.

In the case the plaintiff Sudam Biswas alleged that the accused led by UP Chairman Abdul Alim abducted him on October 8, 2003, forced him to sign some papers including revenue stamps. On the same night they attacked his house, beat him and demanded Tk 3 lakh from him.

In the case Sudam said he did not file any case earlier as they were ruling party men.

Arms seized from AL leader's house

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Joint forces recovered two revolvers from the house of Debhata upazila Awami League (AL) president Golam Mostafa at Kulia village in the upazila Saturday night.

Satkhira Police Superintendent Mirza Abdullahel Baki said, acting on a tip-off, joint forces raided the house and recovered the revolvers. Golam Mostafa was not at home during the raid.

Industrial waste turning croplands barren

No treatment plant in B'baria BSCIC estate

SHEIKH SHAHIDUL ISLAM, B'baria

Untreated waste released from industrial units in Nandanpur BSCIC industrial estate in Brahmanbaria is polluting the environment and damaging croplands in vast areas.

A team of markers led by local Union Parishad chairman Mubarak Munshi submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner demanding immediate steps to remove the pollution by industrial waste.

The DC assured them all possible measures to improve the situation, official sources said.

Earlier, farmers in nearby Sabuj Prokalpa (an irrigation project) made repeated appeals to the BSCIC authorities and owners of industrial units but to no effect.

On May 18, at least 10 people were injured in a clash between farmers and industrial workers centring the pollution due to industrial waste. Police arrested two persons. There was no further action.

Sources said, the lands are

gradually turning barren as toxic waste including Sodium Hydroxide and Sodium Silicate are flowing into the croplands. Besides, the waste from the industrial estate flows into canals and Titas river, destroying fish resources in water bodies.

The worst affected areas are North Shuhilpu, Nandanpur, Bedbaria, Hutiara, Chandiara, Malihata, Khatihata and Kuttapara villages under Sarail and Brahmanbaria Sadar upazilas.

BSCIC sources said 51 units are in operation and 16 more will be commissioned soon. There are 137 plots in the estate.

Locals alleged that the worst polluters are two medicine factories, two silicate industries, one chemical industry and three soap factories, which release harmful chemicals. These units are releasing toxic waters for over three years.

The farmers said they, along with local body leaders met the BSCIC authorities and industry owners several times in last two years.

Suruj Mia of Bedbaria village, Khayer of Chandiara and Farid of Bedbaria village said they are worried as their monocrop lands are losing fertility fast. The IRRRI-Boro yield in the current season would be hardly 10 maunds per bigha. Paddy plants turn yellow due to toxicity in the water, they said.

To protect Sabuj Prakashpa lands from pollution, villagers built a temporary small dam at Bedbaria. But the polluted water overflowed it, they said.

They alleged that, rather than trying to control the flow of toxic water, the BSCIC authorities requested them to protect their lands by raising small dams.

The affected farmers last month held a meeting at Shuhilpur village with local Union Parishad chairman Mubarak Munshi in the chair to protest the pollution.

When contacted, BSCIC Estate Officer Md Muktadir admitted that none of the industrial units has any treatment plant. A nine-member committee of industry owners has been formed to explore ways to install treatment plants, he said without going into details.

Nazrul varsity at Trishal begins classes June 3

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Academic activities at Jatiya Kobi Kazi Nazrul Islam Biswabidyalaya (JKKNIB) will start on June 3 with 180 students in the first batch.

Of them, 50 students each have been admitted to Bengali Literature, English Literature and in Music departments under the Arts Faculty and the rest 30 students in Computer Science and Engineering Department under the Science Faculty. Admission test was held on March 12 at Mymensingh.

Appointment of teachers for the existing departments has been completed. Five teachers--two in Bengali, one each in English, Computer Science and Engineering and Music departments--have joined. Another teacher appointed in English department is yet to join.

Official activities of the university is being performed at a rented house at Uttara in Dhaka city now.

Transport facilities for students, teachers and employees is yet to be arranged. A proposal for procurement of a vehicle for the vice-chancellor has been placed to authorities. But transport arrangement for teachers, students and employees is uncertain yet as there

is no fund allocation for such facility in the project, sources at the university told this correspondent.

Director (Planning and Development) of the university Md. Hafizur Rahman said work on infrastructures including construction of dormitories for male and female students, boundary wall of female students' dormitory and cafeteria would be completed soon for smooth start of the first academic session.

On contact on Friday, Section Officer Ashraf Alam Mukul said over 90 per cent of the construction work has been completed and the rest would be done in a few days.

Assistant Engineer Md. Raihan Badsha of local Facilities Department also hoped that the remaining construction work would be completed before start of the first academic session.

Vice-Chancellor of the university, Dr. Shamsur Rahman, could not be contacted over phone. He was on leave, sources said.

Prof. Anamul Hoque of Bengali Department at Government Ananda Mohan College said, with start of Nazrul university, a long cherished desire of Nazrul devotees in Mymensingh as well as in the country will be fulfilled.



PHOTO: STAR

The academic building of Kazi Nazrul University in Trishal.

8x6