

Khulna jute workers boycott work protesting 'unjust' pay

Top BJMC official paints gloomy picture of 8 mills

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Production in sacking sections of four state-run jute mills in Khulna is suspended since Thursday as workers stayed away from work in protest against payment of Tk 80 instead of Tk 160 as daily wage.

The mills are Platinum Jubilee Jute Mills, Crescent Jute Mills, Star Jute Mills and Peoples Jute Mills.

Lay-off of the four jute mills was withdrawn early this month and sacking sections were reopened.

Workers alleged that the mill authorities gave them weekly wage slips at the rate of Tk 80 instead of Tk 160 per day, allegedly violating service rules. They refused to accept the wages slips,

blaming the mill's general manager for creating deadlock again after partial withdrawal of the lay-off.

The mill was laid off on April 19 along with three others in the face of agitation by workers in demand of payment of arrear wages.

The four-day violent agitation left one worker dead and over 100 injured in clashes with police.

The lay-off was partially withdrawn on May 28 and production only in sacking section was resumed. A total of 479 workers joined work on 'no work no pay basis'.

CBA leaders said the less payment was a new ploy to sack workers on any pretext.

Talking to this correspondent

yesterday, BJMC Zonal Coordinator Shamim Ahmed said he sees 'no future of the state-run jute mills in Khulna-Jessore industrial belt'.

"I do not want to bluff workers to increase their displeasure any more. Because, there is no indication from any quarter in the government about further allocation of funds to run the eight state-owned jute mills properly to restore them as profitable concerns", Shamim said.

The future of jute mills in Khulna-Jessore industrial belt is uncertain as BJMC can not shoulder the huge bank liabilities of over Tk 500 crore, he said.

"No mill has ability to repay the huge bank loan and pay arrear

wages of workers. No one now wants to supply raw materials on credit as their outstanding bills are yet to be paid even partly due to fund crisis", said Shamim, also general manager of Crescent Jute Mills.

He said workers are reluctant to work in the sacking section of the four laid off jute mills without payment of arrear wages and lay-off benefits.

"Besides, we are not in a position even to pay their daily wages in full for working in the sacking section", he said.

Shamim said the BJMC chairman is likely to take up jute mills issue with the Chief Adviser of caretaker government to devise ways to resolve the crisis.

ARMS CASE

Charge framed against former Baufal BNP MP

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The District and Sessions Judge Court here yesterday framed charge against former BNP lawmaker Shahidul Alam Talukder of Baufal in an arms case.

District and Sessions Judge Monjurul Ahsan fixed the date of hearing on June 27, Public Prosecutor (PP) Advocate Yunus Ali Mollah said.

Joint forces seized two magazines of a pistol from his residence in Baufal upazila town on February 15. Baufal Police Station Officer-In-Charge (OC) Mizanur Rahman filed the arms case against him.

Shahidul Alam, elected a lawmaker from Patuakhali-2 (Baufal) constituency in 2001 parliamentary election, is on the run since promulgation of emergency across the country, on January 11.

5 hurt in Pabna highway robbery

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

At least five bus passengers were injured in an attack by armed robbers at Chinakhorha in Shantia upazila on Dhaka-Pabna Highway in the early hours of yesterday, witnesses said.

Robbers looted cash and valuables worth Tk 5 lakh from the passengers.

A gang of robbers boarded the bus in guise of passengers at Narayanganj bus stand, passengers said. As the bus reached Chinakhorha at about 5 am, robbers took control of the bus injuring the driver. Then they looted money, gold ornaments and cell phone sets from passengers showing firearms. They left the bus with booty at Jalalpur in Sadar upazila, passengers said.

Harijan children meet Kushtia DC

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Leaders of Harijan Shishu Forum, a newly formed body of Harijan children, met Kushtia Deputy Commissioner (DC) Nurul Islam yesterday for equal right to education and jobs.

The team was led by its president Aduri Rani, 13.

They discussed discrimination in admission to schools. The DC gave them a patient hearing and assured them of steps to ensure equal right to education, sources said.

People of Harijan community, a low cast Hindu community, are socially deprived of various rights though the Constitution ensures equal rights to all.

Besides, those who get education do not get appropriate jobs because of social prejudices and discrimination, according to people of the community.

BSF abducts one in Chuadanga

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) yesterday abducted a Bangladeshi farmer when he was working on his field near Thakurpur border in Damruda upazila in Chuadanga.

Deputy Commander of 35 Rifle Battalion Maj Matin BDR said BSF personnel from Rangipatola camp in Mursidabazar entered Bangladesh territory at about noon and picked up Jambu, 25, son of Liakat Ali of Kupsudanga village on gun point when he was working on his field near border pillar no. 89.

BSF sent a protest letter but BSF did not respond to it till about 5:30pm.



Existence of C&B Ghat, the lone river port in Faridpur, is threatened due to erosion by the Padma.

PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Born under political clout they now suffer from bad health

34 schools under Sylhet Board to face action for poor SSC results

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Sylhet Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) has served show cause notices on 34 high schools in Sylhet division because of poor results in this year's SSC examination.

On getting replies, the authority will decide about action against the schools. The notices given on Saturday have to be replied within a week, Board sources said.

The Board is also contemplating sending proposals to the ministry for cancellation of affiliation of three schools, from which none passed the SSC examination. One of the three is Bara Chatul High School in Kanaighat from where three examinees appeared.

The rest two are Maijgram High School in Barlekhia in Moulvibazar and Ekota High school of Chhatak upazila in Sunamganj which had only seven examinees.

All the 34 schools will face punishment, the sources said.

The 34 institutions include 11 in Sylhet, 11 in Sunamganj, 8 in Moulvibazar and 4 in Habiganj.

The 31 institutions had below 20 pass percentage.

These include Saptogram High School in Beanibazar upazila; Farhana Hossain High School, Paton Abdullapur High School and Salam-Mokbul High School in Golapganj; Sajjad Majumder High School and Zakiganj Girls High School in Zakiganj; Rasulpur High School and CMP Academy and Sadrunnesa High School in Balaganj and Ganiganj High School in Sylhet Sadar upazila; Dhol High School and Tarol High School in Dera; Mahmud Nagar High School and Hafiz Ali High School in Sholla; Haji Abdul Khalique High School, Jalalabad High School, Haji Jamal Uddin High School and Ganipur High School in Chhatak; Abdus Subhan High School and Pailgaon TM High School in Jagannathpur upazila of Sunamganj.

In Moulvibazar district, the schools facing punishment are Shantikul High School and Kadomhatia High School in Rajnagar upazila; Ragna-Batuli High School and Rajnagar High School in Kulaura; Kechhrigul High School in Barlekhia; Abdul Mosobir Academy in Kamolganj and Raipur High School in the Sadar upazila.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib High School, Ekdala High School and SNP High School in Nabiganj upazila and JDN High School in Baniachang upazila may also face the same fate due to poor results.

The sources said schools in remote rural areas suffer from infrastructure problems, absence of qualified teachers. Most such schools have 'almost inactive' managing committees.

Though the schools do not have the minimum number of teachers they managed affiliation by using political influence, the sources claimed.

I am yet to understand what reform means: Ershad

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

"I am yet to understand what (political) reform means", Jatiya Party chairman said here yesterday.

If other parties do reform, then there will be reform in Jatiya Party also, was his terse reply when newsmen approached him on his way to Madhab Kunda.

Ershad went to see Madhab Kunda waterfall in Barlekhia in Moulvibazar district.

Asked about reform initiative by his wife and party leader Raushan Ershad, the former president said, "You ask Raushan and she will answer".

He came to Moulvibazar on a personal tour Saturday evening with two sons Shad Ershad and Erik Ershad and had an overnight stay at the Circuit House.

After visiting Madhab Kunda waterfall, he left for Dhaka at about 4:30 pm yesterday. Moulvibazar JP president Nawab Ali Abbas Khan and Baralekhia upazila JP vice-president Mijib Raja Chowdhury accompanied Ershad to Madhab Kunda.

3 children drown in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Three children drowned in ponds in two separate incidents in Shujanagar and Pabna Sadar upazila on Saturday.

Saikat, 7, and his cousin Naim, 6, were playing football near their house at Manikdor village in Shujanagar upazila in the afternoon. At one stage their football fell down a pond. When they went to collect the ball, both of them drowned as they did not know how to swim.

Another 3-year-old child, Touhid, son of Rafiqul Islam of Atua village in Pabna Sadar upazila drowned in another pond near to his residence.



Though banned, locally assembled three-wheelers called Nasimon ply busy highways in Jamalpur district, often causing accident and claiming lives.

Step to stop smuggling of hilsha from Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Joint forces have imposed restriction on bringing hilsha fish to wholesale markets (arats) at Rupsha in a bid to check smuggling of the fish, sources said yesterday.

The action has been taken to stop smuggling of hilsha out of the country by some dishonest traders through unauthorised routes at Rupsha fish market are being run.

The unauthorised wholesale markets in Rupsha fish market at Natun Bazar in Khulna city are being run by Khulna City Corporation.

Joint forces got allegations from

some genuine fish traders that trawlers laden with hilsha are being forced to land at Rupsha fish market by dishonest traders instead of unloading those at Skid Ghat.

Officials of joint forces met the Chief Executive Officer of Khulna City Corporation at his office last week to know why unauthorised wholesale markets at Rupsha fish market are being run.

The KCC CEO however blamed a group of influential political leaders in the area for running those unauthorised wholesale markets. He could not show any document in support of running the markets, the sources



PHOTO STAR

A colourful procession was brought out in Khagrachari town yesterday marking inauguration of a tree plantation week, organised by the divisional forest office.