

Ode to a fighter

FROM PAGE 20
He would not talk further, he said, as he had work to do. He then faded out in the field with fellow farmers.

Mostafa Kamal, superintendent of the madrasa, said Ranjit is the senior most English teacher there. "We don't get salary from the government, as we are not on the MPO (monthly payment order) list. Most teachers have land or other support to manage their families, but Ranjit has nothing."

"So unfortunately he has to work as day labourer," Mostafa Kamal said.

The madrasa authorities cannot pay any of the 13 teachers, two of them female, as they have no income. All the madrasa's 280 students, boys and girls combined, are offered free education since they come from very poor families.

To earn his living, Ranjit has adopted a unique work plan. He starts working in the field when it is still dark and continues till 10:00am.

After giving classes at the madrasa, he again joins his colleagues at the field after 4:00pm and continues till late in the evening.

On holidays, he works the whole day, said Joinul Hossain, a fellow labourer.

At times, Ranjit works at local brick kilns.

After completing graduation from Dinajpur KBM College in 1995, Ranjit started his career at the madrasa as an assistant teacher in 1999 when it was established by the local elite.

He had hoped that the institution would get MPO, he told The Daily Star at the madrasa.

Alongside his madrasa job, Ranjit wanted to do private teaching to feed the family. But he had to cancel that plan, as the students cannot afford to pay, he said.

So he preferred to do the hard work than to stoop.

"Ranjit's sense of self-respect is strong. Despite being in such dire straits, he never came for any help," said Shahadat Hossain Babu, chairman of the Goadihi union of Khansama upazila where Ranjit lives.

Talking about the monthly payment order from the government, Zakir Hossain, assistant superintendent of the madrasa, said the institution is deprived of this state benefit despite fulfilling all the criteria.

In recent years, their pass rate in Dakhil examination has been between 60 and 70 percent, he added.

The madrasa management committee has also been reformed this year dissolving the previous one as per the recommendation of the Madrasa Board.

Local lawmaker Asaduzzaman Noor visited the madrasa on several occasions and gave some donations to run it.

"We had submitted the application for MPO with his [Noor's] recommendation," Zakir said.

The recommendation, however, did not work.

Mozahar Hossain, secretary of the District Teachers' Association, said many promising teachers like Ranjit are serving schools and madrasas in the country without salary for years hoping to get someday the benefit of MPO.

"For some it never happens. It's frustrating," he lamented.

Sources in the district education office said the madrasa got academic permission in 2002, which is a prerequisite for being listed under the MPO. Students have been taking part in Dakhil examinations since then.

Roksana Begum, district education officer, said they have nothing to do regarding MPO, as it depends on the education ministry.

"The government has upgraded social and economic status of teachers by declaring a new pay scale for them. Government is also listing educational institutions for MPO in phases," she added.

Until that happens for Ranjit, he will go to the madrasa riding his bicycle to teach for free. And before and after his teaching hours, he will toil on the field to win bread for his family.

Little cheer

FROM PAGE 20
Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) Research Director Zaid Bakht said different factors including change of design of the Padma bridge might have delayed the availability of foreign aid.

Though power is the government's highest priority sector, it got second highest allocation, of which the Power Division could utilise only 18 percent.

A power ministry official explains, "Many of the power tenders did not make timely start. However, we have gained a momentum. For instance, the Power Development Board was allocated Tk 1,000 crore in the ADP. Between December and January, the PDB prepared invoices worth Tk 600 crore. The PDB is likely to seek 25 percent more ADP allocation this year."

Among the 10 major ministries or divisions whose performance was poor are the Bridge Division with 6 percent utilisation of its total allocation, Energy and Mineral Resources Division 15 percent, water resources ministry 15 percent, Roads and Railway Division 19 percent and health and family welfare ministry 23 percent.

However, performance of some ministries and divisions was impressive -- primary and mass education ministry used 41 percent of its total allocation, Local Government Division 35 percent, education ministry 32 percent, and agriculture ministry 31 percent.

"As the government has taken a bigger ADP, its implementation rate has to be faster," said BIDS Research Director Zaid Bakht.

He said the areas where there is problem in utilising foreign aid has to be detected and quick corrective actions should be taken.

Police found the two with bullet wounds after their associates fled the scene, added the SI. They also recovered one revolver and a bullet from their (the two) possession.

Anik, however, claimed he didn't know Shyamol before and saw him for the first time in police custody.

"Police picked me up from near Salambagh mosque at East Rampura on Friday around 2:00pm and took me to Rampura Police Station around 6:00pm," he told The Daily Star at the hospital.

Police blindfolded us with pieces of cloths and took us handcuffed to the Mahanagar Project area around 2:00am, he added.

Later they (police) claimed we have stocks of arms and asked us to hand over those. "Give us the arms or we will shoot you dead," Anik said, quoting police.

With their denial to having any arms, police shot them, he mentioned.

Shyamol came from Savar on Friday to visit me and police picked him up from a shop in the evening, said Khairul Bepari, brother of the deceased.



Long queues for open-market-sale rice at Kamrangirchar on the outskirts of the capital yesterday, an evidence of how people are in need of grains.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Mercury

FROM PAGE 1
Impoverished people in the northern districts and the urban poor are the worst-hit in the persisting cold bite.

Lalmonirhat Deputy Commissioner Mokhlesur Rahman Sarker said they have already supplied 6,000 pieces of blanket among cold-hit people in the district. And his office has asked for allocation of more warm clothes from the ministry concerned.

Ferry services on Mawa-Kawrakandi and Paturia-Daulatdia routes remained suspended for over 12 hours till yesterday noon due to thick fog.

Our correspondents in Munshiganj and Manikganj report that ferry services were suspended at about 10:45pm on Friday. Fog forced five ferries to anchor in the middle of the Padma on Mawa-Kawrakandi route, causing sufferings to more than 800 passengers.

Several hundred vehicles, including passenger buses, remained stranded on either side of the river, said Chandra Shekhar Roy, assistant manager of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (Mawastation).

Suspension of ferry and launch services on Paturia-Daulatdia route Friday night caused similar traffic jams on both sides of the Padma and sufferings to passengers.

Contacted, BIWTC Manager (Aricha section) Bidyut Kumar Saha said movement of ferry and launch was disrupted from 10:30pm on Friday and resumed after 10:30am yesterday as fog cleared.

Several thousand vehicles lined up at Paturia and Daulatdia at 11:00am yesterday. Passenger buses and vehicles carrying emergency goods were being ferried on a priority basis, he added.

Another killed

FROM PAGE 20
Chandra Talukdar, sub-inspector (SI) of Rampura Police Station.

The criminals opened fire on the law enforcers compelling them to retaliate.

Police found the two with bullet wounds after their associates fled the scene, added the SI. They also recovered one revolver and a bullet from their (the two) possession.

Anik, however, claimed he didn't know Shyamol before and saw him for the first time in police custody.

"Police picked me up from near Salambagh mosque at East Rampura on Friday around 2:00pm and took me to Rampura Police Station around 6:00pm," he told The Daily Star at the hospital.

Police blindfolded us with pieces of cloths and took us handcuffed to the Mahanagar Project area around 2:00am, he added.

Later they (police) claimed we have stocks of arms and asked us to hand over those. "Give us the arms or we will shoot you dead," Anik said, quoting police.

With their denial to having any arms, police shot them, he mentioned.

Shyamol came from Savar on Friday to visit me and police picked him up from a shop in the evening, said Khairul Bepari, brother of the deceased.

Pricier rice

FROM PAGE 1
500 on food for the baby.

Like Salma nearly a hundred men and women waited in queues for hours to buy a 5-kilogram pack of coarse rice for Tk 24 a kg.

It saved them at least Tk 55 every five-kg purchase as coarse rice now sells at a minimum of Tk 35 a kg in city markets.

Queues are now longer and more frequent in almost all OMS points with more people from fixed and lower income brackets thronging them to buy subsidised rice to save money for buying other essentials.

Nearly 125 OMS trucks with 3,000 kgs of rice each sell subsidised rice to 75,000 people every five days a week while many return home empty-handed in the city.

The latest picture is a sharp contrast to the one just three months ago when the OMS points drew small crowds.

But they started to see longer queues as the gap between the OMS and retail prices of rice, apart from other essentials, widened over the last few months.

Sixty-year-old Aleya Begum said, "It will save us some money to buy vegetables."

Another consumer Abdul Khaleque said he had no choice but to take a break from his daily work to buy rice at the OMS point on Tipu Sultan Road in Old Dhaka.

Prices of coarse rice, consumed mainly by people from the lower income bracket, went up by 33 percent to Tk 35-37 a kg in the last one year.

Other essentials also saw their prices rise. Prices of unpackaged palm oil soared 49 percent to Tk 90-

92 and onion 26 percent to Tk 38-44 a kg in city markets.

9 cops die

FROM PAGE 1
Rahman, 50, Krishna Kanta Barman, 50, Rezaul Karim, 40, Masud Parvez, 42, Narayan Chandra, 45, and Reaz Uddin, 40. Their bodies were later taken to the district hospital.

Constable Priyotosh, 50, the injured, was admitted to Combined Military Hospital in the capital.

Namaz-e-janaza of the dead was held at Narsingdi Police Lines in the afternoon. Their bodies were handed over to relatives.

Later, Inspector General of Police Hassan Mahmood Khandaker granted Tk 50,000, and Akkasuddin Bhuiyan, Narsingdi superintendent of police, Tk 10,000 each for the families of the deceased from the central and local police funds.

In a condolence message, President Zillur Rahman prayed for the departed souls and asked the authorities concerned to ensure proper treatment of the injured cop, reports BSS.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock at the deaths and conveyed sympathy to the bereaved families.

In a press release, Bangladesh Police Service Association leaders condoled the tragic death of their colleagues while on duty.

Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda condoled the deaths, and wished fast recovery of the wounded constable.

Contacted last night, Narsingdi Superintendent of Police Akkas Uddin Bhuiyan said a three-member committee headed by Additional Superintendent Bijoy Boshak has been formed to probe the accident, and submit its report within three days, reports our correspondent in the district.

2 injured in CNG station fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two people were injured in a fire at a CNG refuelling station on Dhaka-Aricha highway at Genda, Savar yesterday.

Fire officials suspect that the flames might have started from a leak gas pipe in the engine room around 8:15am.

Two fire fighting units from Savar rushed to the spot and doused the blaze in an hour.

The fire has gutted the engine room and an array of the station's infrastructure, said fire fighters.

Employees Shakhawat Hossain, 25, and Mokbul Hossain, 28, of the filling station received minor burn injuries in the incident. They received first aid at a local hospital.

Firoz Alam, shifting in-charge of the filling station, said the pump was operating when the fire broke. They immediately switched off the engine and moved the vehicles waiting for gas.

Better gas

FROM PAGE 20
Sylhet.

Advocate Manzill Musrhid sent the legal notice on behalf of Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) on the basis of reports published in different newspapers saying that many families living in Dhaka are unable to cook food due to irregular and insufficient gas supply.

None can survive without food and therefore supply of gas is related to right to life, which is guaranteed as per article 32 of the constitution, stated the notice.

It was sent to six government high officials -- secretaries to the ministries of power, finance and planning, chairman of Petrobangla, and managing directors of Gas Transmission Company and Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company.

Legal steps will be taken against the officials if they fail to take steps in this regard within seven days, the notice said.

Saarc to get

FROM PAGE 20
Kathmandu has confirmed that former lawmaker of the Maldives Fathimath Dhiyana Saeed will be appointed Saarc secretary general on March 1, said diplomatic sources.

The present chief, former Indian envoy to Austria Sheel Kant Sharma, completes his three years term on Feb 28.

Fathimath, 36, also a former attorney general of the island nation, will also be the youngest Saarc secretary general ever.

The 8-nation regional forum rotates its secretary general among the member countries every three years. It is the Maldives' turn to lead the organisation.

The Maldives will host the 17th Saarc summit scheduled for November 10-11 in the South Province.

Foreign ministry sources said the Maldives during 16th Saarc summit in Thimphu in April last year recommended Fathimath Dhiyana for the post.

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are the members of Saarc founded in 1985 in Dhaka. The regional bloc included its eighth member, Afghanistan, in 2007.

Stampede kills

FROM PAGE 20
The search for bodies and survivors was hampered by the remote location, heavy mist and the thick forest terrain.

Indian television showed pictures of casualties being passed over the heads of tightly packed crowds of pilgrims in a rescue effort that stretched deep into the night.

Defence Minister AK Antony called the incident "a tragedy beyond anyone's imagination" and the Southern Naval Command dispatched an emergency medical team to the accident site.

The stampede occurred on the final day of the pilgrimage at the Sabarimala shrine, located in Idukki district, about 200 kilometres from the Kerala state capital Thiruvananthapuram.

It is the second time in recent memory that the festival has been struck by disaster. In 1999 more than 50 Hindu devotees died after a landslide on a crowded hillside at the site.

Stampedes at public events in India are common as large numbers of people crowd into congested areas. Few safety regulations and absent or inadequate policing mean panic can spread quickly with deadly consequences.

The spark is often an accident but occasionally simply a rumour about a bomb or attack leads to a crush. Women and children frequently make up the majority of the victims.

The governor of Kerala, a popular holiday destination and spice-growing region with sandy beaches and lush green mountains, said he was

assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

"shocked and saddened" at the loss of life.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said his thoughts were with the relatives of the victims and announced compensation payments of 100,000 rupees (2,200 dollars) to the dead's next of kin.

Anxious pilgrims with missing relatives thronged local hospitals yesterday, as officials tried to identify the bodies brought down from the stampede site.

Most of the victims were from the neighbouring states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

Under the customs of the pilgrimage, hundreds of thousands of men and women set off on foot in groups for the Sabarimala temple, each carrying a cloth bundle containing traditional offerings.

But many of the elderly, or those short of time, opt to cram into overloaded buses and jeeps to travel as close as possible to the temple, which is believed to be where the god Ayyappa meditated.

The shrine is packed with devotees throughout the pilgrimage season from November to January.

In March last year, police in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh blamed lax safety for the deaths of 63 people -- all of them women and children -- in a stampede outside another Hindu temple.

At least another 10 people died in a stampede at a temple in the state of Bihar in October.

Hillary-Hasina

FROM PAGE 20
assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

Hillary Clinton said she was assured the prime minister of full-out support in fighting extremism.

New CNG

FROM PAGE 20
Owners' Association and the workers' organisation.

According to the agreement the government also re-fixed the daily deposit of the auto-rickshaw owner at Tk 600 from Tk 450.

The government warned of stern measures like cancellation of route permit and driving licence, if the owners and drivers of CNG-run auto-rickshaw violate the rules.

The deal also says the passengers should hand over those drivers to the traffic police if found charging additional fare, tampering meter or refusing to run on a short distance. In addition, passengers can inform the police control room over phone about violation of rules.

However, less than 5,000 of the total 12,000 auto-rickshaws have received 'meter ok' clearance from Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, sources said.

Ershad

FROM PAGE 20
seats in last parliamentary election while the alliance bagged 268," he said addressing a bi-annual conference of the party on the Bijoy Mela premises in Manikganj.

The JP boss said his party sacrificed a lot to join the alliance but gained little.

He warned that if the government fails to maintain law and order and contain the price hike of essentials, it would face great danger in the coming days.

Unity in the ruling combine is a must to overcome all obstacles and win the next elections, he added.

Ershad observed that though the ongoing municipal polls are non-partisan, their results are not bearing happy tidings for the grand alliance.

Jatiya Party Secretary General Ruhul Amin Hawlader and presidium member