

NEWS IN *brief*

19,170 textbooks seized, 5 held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested five people and seized 19,170 pieces of textbooks from their possessions at Durgapur in the district on Friday night.

The arrested were identified as Selim Hossain, Ershad Ali, Mohammad Rintu, Ibrahim Ali and Sazzad Hossain.

Maj HM Anwar Ali, commander of Rab-5 of Railway Colony camp, said they were bringing the books to Dhaka in a truck.

Rab officials said the arrested businessmen told them that they had purchased the books from one Alimuzzaman Ahmed of Bagmara upazila.

Four pirates arrested in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Bangladesh Coast Guard detained four pirates and seized an engine-run boat with lethal weapons from their possession at the outer anchorage of Chittagong Port on Friday night.

The pirates are identified as Abdul Kader, 50, Md Zaher, 35, Md Absar, 30, and Md Shawkat, 25. They are residents of Raypura union of Anwara upazila.

Coast Guard sources said acting on a tip-off, a team of Coast Guard led by Lieutenant Commander Arif halted the engine-run boat carrying the pirates and caught them with the lethal weapons.

Primary Edn Week begins Jan 9

BSS, Dhaka

The National Primary Education Week 2012 will begin on January 9 with the slogan of 'Hundred per cent Literacy; Pride for Nation,' said an official handout yesterday.

The inaugural ceremony will be held at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the city at 10:00am.

The country's distinguished personalities and institutions will be awarded on the occasion.

The education week will end on January 15, the release added.

Valuables worth Tk 1 lakh gutted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Valuables worth Tk1 lakh of a jute manufacturing factory were gutted in a fire in the port city yesterday.

Agrabad Fire Station sources said the fire broke out around 4:55am at Chittagong Jute Manufacturing Limited in Mohora area but the cause of the fire could not be known immediately.

Two units of Kalurghat Fire Station went to the spot and doused the blaze around 8:50am, the sources added.

UGC chief warns pvt universities

JU CORRESPONDENT

The government will act tough if those who have established private universities for commercial purpose do not change their view, University Grants Commission Chairman Prof Dr AK Azad Chowdhury said yesterday.

He said the university teachers had proposed establishment of private universities, as the government could not give higher education to a vast number of people. The proposal has been implemented, but in a different way, he added.

The students of private universities have to spend money many times more than that of public universities, and this situation should not continue, he said.

The UGC chief was speaking at the reception of the first year honours students of 2011-12 academic session of Jahangirnagar University at Zahir Raihan Auditorium yesterday.

Prof Azad said more than 50 private universities have been established in the country in an unplanned way, which is a problem both for the government and the UGC. He said the UGC is planning to bring equal standard in the education of private and public universities.

JU Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Shariff Enamul Kabir, Pro-VC (administration) Prof Dr Forhad Hossain, Pro-VC (education) Prof Dr Muniruzzaman, Treasurer Prof Dr Md Nasir Uddin, Registrar Abu Bakr Siddique, and Proctor Prof Dr Arzu Miah also spoke at the programme.

WEATHER TODAY

Light rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light rain and drizzle are likely in different parts of the country today when temperature may drop envisaging the second spell of cold wave of the season.

Met office forecast light rain and thick fog in Rajshahi, Rangpur, Khulna, Barisal and Dhaka divisions and the regions of Comilla and Noakhali. Elsewhere the sky will remain cloudy.

Satkhira experienced heavy downpour for few minutes in the morning and drizzles throughout Saturday with interruptions. Cold wave brought down the mercury. Day labourers were the worst sufferers.

In Dhaka city, residents experienced light rains for some time in the wee hours yesterday. The sky remained cloudy during the whole day. Similar situation was reported in most parts of the country.

The sunsets in the capital at 5:27pm today and rises at 6:43am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 28.5 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 10.7 degrees Celsius at Srimongal.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max:	Min:	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	24.0	17.0	72	67
Chittagong	26.8	17.0	91	72
Rajshahi	23.2	14.4	87	79
Rangpur	23.1	12.2	89	75
Khulna	21.0	17.0	96	94
Barisal	21.5	16.2	100	95
Sylhet	25.8	12.9	65	77
Cox's Bazar	28.5	18.0	72	73



A number of non-government organisations form a human chain before Jatiya Press Club in the city yesterday protesting installation of thermal power stations in Rampal, an area adjacent to the Sundarbans.

PHOTO: STAR

BUILDING UP YOUTHS

Utilise potential of South Asia

President urges Saarc leaders

BSS, Dhaka

President Zillur Rahman yesterday urged leaders of the Saarc member states to build up youths of the region as skilled human resources for proper utilisation of the potential of South Asia.

"Youths of the region can only remove the barriers that hinder socio-economic development of South Asia," he said while inaugurating the two-day convention of youth and business community of South Asia at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre (BICC) in the city.

The Saarc Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Saarc CCI) and Federation of Bangladesh Chamber and Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) organised the high-level convention titled "Lead 2012: Youth in Rising South Asia: Promises and Dreams".

Finance Minister AMA Muhith and

Commerce Minister GM Quader spoke as the special guests while Saarc Secretary General Fathimath Dhiyana Saeed spoke as the guest of honour.

Presided over by FBCCI President AK Azad, the inaugural session was also addressed by Saarc CCI former president Salman F Rahman and president Annisul Huq.

Zillur said around 150 crores of people, one fifth of the total world population, are residing in the eight countries of South Asia and of them a large portion are aged between 15 and 24.

"These youths are filled with full of vigor and they are main resource of the region," he said adding "they would have to be brought up with leadership quality."

He urged the Saarc leaders to contribute to flourishing talents of the youth as well as building them up with the spirit of secularism.

The president said Saarc had been formed two and half decades ago with the objective of improving socio-economic status of the South Asian people.

So far, he said 17 Saarc summits took place and various initiatives like Safta, Saarc development fund, Saarc food bank and Saarc seed bank have been adopted for poverty alleviation, facing natural calamities and bringing bridges among the South Asian nations.

However, he said it is true the expectation of forming Saarc for socio-economic development of the region is yet to be fulfilled till today.

"The doors of ample opportunity are open in front of us," he said adding "these opportunities would have to be realised through extending full confidence and cooperation among the member states of Saarc."

The president hoped that the

convention would provide further impetus and momentum to build a prosperous South Asia. "I believe this convention will also be a unique platform for exchanging views and ideas and providing ample opportunity for closer interactions among the youth of Saarc countries."

The objective of the convention is to bring together the leading figures from South Asia face-to-face to share the motivation behind the achievement whether in business, arts, social entrepreneurship, politics or charity and look to synchronise the future possibilities as a region.

A total of 400 young leaders of different sectors of the eight member states of Saarc Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are being participated in the convention.

Four arrested with stolen cars, arms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detective police arrested four members allegedly of a car-lifting gang along with arms and two stolen cars from the city yesterday.

Nur Alam alias Habu, 22, and Mohammad Abu Siddique, 25, were arrested from a house in Kalabagan while Mohammad Azhar, 45, and Alamgir, 32, were arrested from Ramna area.

Police recovered 20 rounds of bullets, three revolvers, three machetes and two walky-talkies from their possession.

During primary interrogation, the arrestees admitted to have been involved in mugging and lifting cars for the past few years, said Senior Assistant Commissioner Mohammad Mokhlesur Rahman of Detective Branch (DB) of police.

He said the gang lifted a private car after hacking its driver at Kalabagan on October 14 last year. The same gang snatched another car this January from a CNG refilling station in Tejgaon using the previously stolen car, he added.

Owners of both the cars filed cases in these connections.

DB police yesterday raided the garage of an apartment in section-10 of Mirpur and recovered both the cars and arrested Habu and Siddique from the spot along with two revolvers and 15 bullets, he said.

Later, the gang's other members were arrested with rest of the arms, he told the reporters.



Indian parliamentarian Mani Shankar Aiyar speaks at a convention of youths organised by Saarc Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) and Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre (BICC) in the city yesterday. Sitting from left are Awami League leader Tofail Ahmed and former SCCI president Tariq Sayeed. (Story on Page 20)

PHOTO: STAR

Mill staffer hit by steel bars, dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A staff of a steel mill died after being hit by a bundle of steel bars at the mill in Sitakunda in the district early yesterday.

The victim was identified as Sheikh Md Tantanah, 35, a customer service and delivery officer of BSRL Steels Limited at Fouzdarhat, said Havilder Pankaj Barua at Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) police outpost.

Mill sources said Tantanah, son of Sheikh Abdul Majid of Khulna, was badly injured as a bundle of steel bars hit him when an operator was lifting it from one place to another by a crane.

The accident took place when he was giving instructions to the crane operator, they added.

Tantanah succumbed to his injuries at CMCH at around 2:30am.

Digital info service now a problem solver

BSS, Dhaka

Billal Hossain, 45, is a farmer. He cultivates paddy, wheat, vegetables and fruits on the 15 bigha (1 bigha = 33 decimal) of land he owns.

Recently, he encountered some problems in his brinjal cultivation.

"I visited the Union Information Service Centre (UISC) in Mohajanpur looking for a remedy to my problem," Billal said.

Minarul, the center manager there, enquired about the problem in Billal's cultivated vegetables. Then, he searched for two key words in connection with the problem - "Sada machhi" (white fly) and "gora pocha" (root rot) - from Jatiya e-tathyakosh and so found the related content and the remedy to the problem.

Hossain applied the recommended insecticides using the method directed on the e-tathyakosh.

Today, Billal earns about Taka 70,000 by selling 100 tonnes of brinjal produced at a cost of Taka 30,000.

"It would never have been possible to solve the problem so rapidly if I were not

provided with right and timely information from UISC," said Billal.

Jatiya e-Tathyakosh plays a vital role finding the right information and ensuring government services to end users, said Minarul.

This is just one of the many positive stories that people of our rural Bangladesh have shared in appreciation of the digital information services made available in their locality by the government.

People said that even a year back they were not aware of the benefits they could get from using digital services like Jatiya e-tathyakosh and other e-services.

Today, the rural people are frequently visiting the district and upazila e-service centers and UISC to get information on various sectors, including agriculture, education and health.

Many visit the centres to get the results of different public examinations while many go there to get a remedy for their agricultural problems.

These services are helping people to solve their social, legal and work related problems at the districts, upazila and union level.

Fugitive Huji man caught in Sunamganj

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday caught an absconding activist of outlawed outfit Harkatul Jihad al Islami (Huji) at Gajlagur village of Chhatak, Sunamganj yesterday.

Md Muhibur Rahman, the Huji man, had been awarded life in prison in a 1996 case. The accused was handed over to Chhatak police after primary interrogation.

Lt Delwar of Rab-9 said the Huji man, during the interrogation, admitted that he had come in touch with the Islamist group in 1996 while studying in a madrasa.

Impressed by the group and to help the poor and oppressed Muslims in Myanmar, he joined a training camp at Ukhia upazila in Cox's Bazar that time, the Rab official said.

Muhibur and 40 others were caught by a joint team of law enforcers on February 19, 1996 while they were undergoing a training, he said, adding that a case was filed against the group later.

Lt Delwar said that although awarded lifetime imprisonment in the case, Muhibur was released on bail after about six months, and he went absconding afterwards.

Md Muhibur Rahman, 37, is son of late Azizur Rahman of Haritala village, Bahubal upazila, Habiganj, he said.

US diplomat stresses women's empowerment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

US Congresswoman Betty McCollum yesterday laid emphasis on women empowerment as she shared her views with the students of Asian University for Women (AUW).

If women are empowered, families will be empowered; if families are empowered, nations will be empowered; and if nations are empowered, the world will be empowered, she said.

The US diplomat said she came from a poor family and has come to the present position because of education. Saying that women are now leading politics in different countries, she advised the AUW students to nurture their dreams and go ahead to fulfil them.

Echoing McCollum, US Ambassador to Dhaka Dan Mozena, who accompanied the visiting diplomat to Chittagong, said the USA is working worldwide to empower women and is focusing on women education in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Cuet opens today

A CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (Cuet) opens today after a 13-day winter vacation.

The vacation started from December 24 in 2011 and was scheduled to be ended on January 1. But the university authorities extended the vacation without any prior notice up to January 5.

DHAKA TODAY

Rally
Gonotantik Bam Murcha will organise a protest rally. Venue: Before Jatiya Press Club, Time: 3:30pm.

Discussion
Bangabandhu Adarsha Mullayan O Gobeshona Sangsad will hold a discussion. Venue: National museum auditorium, Time: 3:30pm.

Human chain
Dhaka Mahanagar Taxicab Chalok Union will form a human chain. Venue: Before Jatiya Press Club, Time: 11:00am.

Workshop
National Federation of Youth Organisations in Bangladesh will arrange a workshop. Venue: Biam auditorium, New Eskaton, Time: 9:30am.