



Although mango trees usually start blooming in the spring, surprisingly a tree at Hajiganj in Chandpur district gets adorned with the juicy summer fruit in the winter.

PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

PATGRAM, SATKHIRA AND OTHER PLACES

Fear of insecurity haunts Hindu voters

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Hindu voters in different places including Patgram in Lalmonirhat district and Kalaroa upazila in Satkhira district have expressed doubts whether they can go to polling centres and cast votes peacefully today as fear of insecurity still haunts them against the backdrop of Jamaat-Shibir men's recent attacks on the community.

Our correspondent S Dilip Roy visited the Hindu voters in two constituencies under Lalmonirhat district yesterday on the eve of national elections.

"Jamaat-Shibir men attacked the local Hindus on October 27 last year. Criminals again attacked the community people today [Saturday] morning and torched the traditional temple, creating panic among the local Hindus. We are now too afraid to cast our votes," Harendra Nath Roy, 65, caretaker of traditional Parapukur Shwasha Mandir at Shafinagar village

of Patgram upazila, said.

"The Hindu voters in general are apprehensive about going to polling centres as Jamaat-Shibir men still pose threat. There are at least 35 thousand Hindu voters in Patgram upazila but only small portion of them, who are involved with Awami League politics, may cast their votes," said Rajani Kanta Ghosh, a local Hindu community leader at Ghoshpara village of Patgram upazila.

Schoolteacher Suchitra Rani Pal, 45, a Hindu voter at Jagotbar village of the upazila, said she is unsure about casting her vote as there is high threat to Hindu people at the village.

"I talked with over a hundred of Hindu women who are not interested to go to the polling centres," she said.

The administration has classified 145 of the 220 polling centres in the two constituencies as 'vulnerable', as Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Islami

Chhatra Shibir have a good number of activists there.

Habibur Rahman, returning officer of Lalmonirhat, said the administration has made all preparations to keep the election free from violence and so, the Hindu voters can cast their votes without any fear.

Our Satkhira Correspondent reports: Panicked Hindus in Kalaroa and Satkhira Sadar upazilas are still unsure about going to the polling centres for casting their votes in the parliament election today.

Several hundred Hindu families of Satkhira Sadar upazila, who left their homes during recent violence committed by Jamaat-Shibir activists, are yet to return home, even after joint forces' drives in the area.

Masked men brought out procession in Jalalabad union under Kalaroa upazila on Friday night asking people not to cast their votes, much to the worry of the Hindu voters,



Worried faces of a Hindu family of Bawra village in Patgram upazila of Lalmonirhat. Can they cast their votes peacefully today?

PHOTO: STAR

Two 'robbers' killed, one in 'shootout', another by mob

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Two alleged robbers were killed, one in 'shootout' with police, another by mob, yesterday.

A suspected robber was killed in a 'shootout' with police at Jhaoil in Kamarkhand upazila of Sirajganj early yesterday, reports our correspondent.

The identity of the deceased, age about 30, could not be known immediately, said police.

Aminul Islam, officer in-charge of Bangabandhu Bridge (west zone) police station, said on information that a gang of robbers were committing robbery in Jhaoil area, a team of police rushed to the spot around midnight.

As the police team tried to nab the highway robbers, the gang opened fire on the law enforcers, forcing them to retaliate.

At one stage, a member of the gang was caught in the line of fire and died on the spot.

Two cops -- Sub-Inspector Motaleb

Hossain and constable Oliur Rahman of the PS -- were injured.

In Noakhali, an alleged robber was killed in mob beating at Keramatpur Bazar under Char Clark union in Subornachar upazila early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Mintu, 30, son of Kala Mia of the same upazila, reports our correspondent.

Quoting locals, Hatiya police officer in-charge Syed Fazleh Rabbi said that Mintu and his cohorts went to commit a robbery at Keramatpur Bazar around 3.30am yesterday.

Sensing the matter, a shop owner started shouting.

Hearing his screams, locals and other shop owners besieged the market. They caught Mintu and gave him a good beating.

On information, police went to the market, rescued Mintu and took him to Noakhali Medical College Hospital where he died after some time.

2 schoolboys murdered in Nilphamari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Two schoolboys have been murdered in remote Naurhat village in Domar upazila.

The deceased were identified as Shanto, 13, son of Abdul Alim of Dakkhin Ambari village and Sumon, 15, son of Mozaffar Hossain of Uttar Ambari both under Gomnati union in the upazila.

Both were students of Class IX at Domar Bangabandhu High School.

Police said criminals killed Shanto by slitting throat and Sumon by suffocation.

Locals spotted the bodies of the boys beside a water body of the village around 11am and informed police.

The bodies were recovered from Elengar Dara water body at Naunharhat village in Jarobari union, police said, adding they recovered the bodies and sent them to hospital for autopsy.

The two friends had come out of their houses in the morning 'to join a function' in a nearby village, they said.

We are yet to ascertain the reason behind the murder, said Kafiluddin Ahmed, officer in-charge of Domar police station.

In Moulvibazar, a minor girl drowned in a pond at West Singu village in Kulaura upazila of Friday.

The deceased was identified as Promi Akter, 3, daughter of Abdul Ahad of the village, reports UNB.

Locals said, Promi slipped and fell into the pond while playing near its bank at noon.

Later, locals recovered her body after a frantic search.

Houses, shops gutted in fire

STAR COUNTRY DESK

At least seven houses and 15 shops were gutted in fire incidents in Chittagong and Habiganj districts yesterday.

Seven dwellings were gutted in a fire in Chandanaish upazila of Chittagong early yesterday, reports our correspondent.

Police and locals said, the fire originated from an electric short circuit at a haystack at a residence and soon engulfed the adjoining houses.

The extent of loss caused by the fire could go up to Tk 6 lakh, said fire service sources.

In Habiganj, at least 15 shops were gutted in a devastating fire at Bullah Road Bazar in Lakhai upazila early yesterday, reports our Moulvibazar correspondent.

The shops include Muhibur Store (bakery and general store), Maa Pharmacy, Janoni Pharmacy, Al Amin Store, Mohi Uddin Telecom, M/s Samim Traders and M/s Hafiz Traders.

Locals said the fire originated at a shop and soon engulfed the adjoining shops at midnight.

The affected shop owners claimed that the damage caused by the fire could go up to Tk 1 crore.

Dense fog damaging boro seedbeds in Lalmonirhat

Farmers worried, fear sapling crisis

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Saplings on boro seedbeds in many areas of the district are turning whitish and yellowish due to the persistent cold and fog, much to the worry of farmers.

If the situation continues for the next one week, farmers will face sapling crisis as most of the saplings will be damaged, farmers at several villages told this correspondent during the last couple of days.

"My 25-day-old BR-28 saplings have turned yellowish due to severe cold and fog for the last few days. We will suffer great loss if damage continues," said Helal Uddin, 55, a farmer at Karnapur village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

"About one-third of the boro saplings on my 30 decimals of land are turning yellowish. If most of my cultivated saplings are damaged I will not cultivate boro on my land this season," said Nazrul Islam, 60, at Mogholhat village.

Farmer Jaldhor Chandra Sen, 48, at Dighaltari village of Aditmari upazila, said he bought boro seeds at high cost and prepared seedbeds on 35 decimals of land but the saplings are getting damaged in absence of

adequate sunlight due to dense fog and cold.

Golam Mostafa Swapan, chairman of Gokunda union parishad in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, said the boro farmers in his union are worried as severe cold coupled with daylong dense fog in the area affected their saplings,

making those yellowish.

The Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Lalmonirhat has set a target of cultivating boro on 53,600 hectares of land, including high yielding varieties on 42,500 hectares. Starting mid-November, seedbeds have been prepared on 2,287 hectares of land in the district for boro saplings

this season.

DAE officials said the boro cultivation will not be affected if the temperature rises and fog clears within a short time.

Abdul Mazid, deputy director of Lalmonirhat DAE, said farmers should use polythene over the seedbeds to save the saplings from cold and fog,



Saplings on boro seedbeds in many areas of Lalmonirhat district are turning yellowish due to persistent cold and dense fog. Photo shows a number of affected seedbeds at Kamapur village in Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Gang shoots UP chairman dead, cops gun down gang member

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A Union Parisad (UP) chairman was shot dead by a gang in Dumuria upazila of the district on Saturday night and one of the gang members arrested on the spot was killed in a 'shootout' with police early yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Shahidul Islam, 45, acting chairman of Dhamalia Union Parisad, and Sohan, 21, son of late Daud Sheikh of village Dahukona under Phultala upazila of the district.

Police and locals said a gang of 3-4 criminals led by Sohan opened fire on Shahidul near a pond at Tolna village while he was returning home at the village at around 11.00pm.

Hearing screams, locals rushed to the spot and caught Sohan with a pistol while his accomplices managed to flee.

Shahidul was rushed to Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) where the doctors declared him dead.

On information, police rushed to the spot and arrested Sohan. They started a drive in different areas of

the upazila along with Sohan to arrest his accomplices

As police reached Shahpur village in the upazila at around 3.00am, Sohan's cohorts opened fire on the law enforcers, prompting them to retaliate.

Sohan received bullets during shootout. He was taken to the local health complex where the doctors declared him dead, said Awlad Hossain, officer-in-charge (OC) of Dumuria Police Station.

Two policemen--Al-Mamun and Israfil--also sustained bullet injuries during the gunfight that continued for half an hour, the OC said, adding that police recovered a pistol, two shotgun and four bombs from there.

Shahidul Islam, son of late Abdur Rahim, was a supporter of Awami League, the OC further said.

Assistant police Superintendent Abdul Kader Beg told this correspondent that Shahidul might have been killed by his rivals over a land dispute.

SNIPPETS

2 Indians held on border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) arrested two Indian citizens at Lathicherra border point in Juri upazila early yesterday while they were entering into Bangladesh territory illegally. The arrestees are Foizur Rahman, 45, and Piyara Begum, 30. Both hailed from Kathaltoli village in Badaricherra upazila of Karimganj district in Paschimbanga. Office in-charge of Juri police station Md Mahubur Rahman said, the duo might have been involved in human trafficking.

Rail link restored

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Rail communication on Lalmonirhat- Burimari route resumed yesterday hours after the derailment of a freight train at Aditmari railway station. The stone-laden train skidded off the track around 9:00am due to excessive load. The rail communication was restored after a rescue train cleared the line at noon, said assistant traffic superintendent of Lalmonirhat railway division Sazzad Hossain.

BAU freshers' classes from Jan 9

BAU CORRESPONDENT

Classes of level-1 and semester-1 students at Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) will start from January 9. The orientation programme will be held at Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin auditorium of BAU on January 8, said students' affairs advisor Prof Md Sultan Uddin Bhuiya. Faculty based orientation will be held in the afternoon while hall based orientation to be held in the evening, he said.

New vice-chancellor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

AL Nakib Chowdhury has joined as the vice chancellor of Pabna University of Science and Technology. Earlier, President Abdul Hamid, chancellor of the university, appointed Nakib as its VC, said a press release signed by the university authorities. AL Nkib Chowdhury, former chairman of Chemistry department at BUET, took over the charge on January 2.



BCL men vandalise banners and placards of the 18-party alliance in Satmatha area of Bogra town after a cocktail was hurled at a procession they brought out in the town yesterday, marking the 66th founding anniversary of the Awami League-backed student body.

PHOTO: STAR

Cocktail attack on BCL procession: 8 injured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Criminals hurled a cocktail at a procession brought out by district unit BCL in Bogra town yesterday, marking the party's 66th founding anniversary.

At least eight leaders and activists of the AL student front and Jubo League were injured in the attack that took place on Kazi Nazrul Islam road near Sadar police station.

Of them, BCL town ward unit secretary Shaon Ahmed, its Shariakandi upazila unit organising secretary Tofazzal Hossain Maya, Shamim Ahmed, convener of BCL Commercial College unit and member of district BCL

unit Shamim Ahmed, its activists Ainal Haque Nayan and Millat Hossain were admitted to Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College and Hospital.

Enraged by the incident, a group of agitating BCL men damaged a few banners and placards of BNP-led 18-party alliance in Shatmatha area of the town. However, they were resisted by police.

BCL Bogra district unit general secretary Mashraf Heryo blamed BNP and its allies for the attack.

Officer in-charge of Sadar police station AHM Foyjur Rahman said, police fired at least 11 rubber bullets to disperse the attackers but they managed to flee the scene.