



Different areas of Sylhet district saw a bumper production of vegetables this winter. Unfortunately the growers cannot sell them in time due to the ongoing hartals and blockades. Photo shows farmers collecting 'lalshak' (red amaranth) from a field at Talibpur village in Biswanath upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

SNIPPETS

3 girls return from Indian jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Three Bangladeshi girls returned home on Tuesday on expiry of jail term in India. They were handed over to Bangladesh police at Benapole check post at 6:00pm. Indian police arrested them in January 2011 as they entered the country illegally. They were produce in a court that sentenced them to three years in prison. Mosharraf Hossai, officer-in-charge of Benapole Police Station, said process of bringing back the girls began after a meeting held between the home ministers of the two countries recently. The girls hail from Narail district, police said.

Rapist gets life in Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A Gaibandha court yesterday sentenced a man to life imprisonment for violating a girl. The convict is Aminul Islam of Domerhat village in Sundarganj upazila of the district. According to the prosecution, Aminul raped the girl, 8, of the village on July 10, 1996. Hearing scream, locals rescued the girl and took her to Sundaganj Upazila Health Complex. Victim's mother filed a case with Sundarganj Police Station the following day, accusing Aminul. After examining the witnesses, Judge Kazi AM Joynal Abedin of Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-2 in Gaibandha pronounced the verdict.

10 hurt in Shibir-BCL clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

At least 10 people were injured in a clash between the activists of Chhatra League and Islami Chhatra Shibir at Cox's Bazar Polytechnic Institute in the town on Tuesday. Of the injured, BCL president of the institute Sazzad Hossain was admitted to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital while the rest were given first aid. The clash took place centering freshers' reception programme on the campus, said sources.

Bombs, bullets seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in a drive seized 29 petrol bombs, 12 cocktails and four bullets from a ditch in Chatmohar upazila on Monday night. However, none was arrested in this connection, said Major ABM Farukuzzaman, company commander of Rab-12. Criminals might have kept the bombs and bullets there to create creating anarchy in the area, said officer in-charge of Chatmohar police station Md Asaduzzaman Munshi.

Shop gutted in fire

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Comilla

A sanitary store was gutted in a fire at a local market in Poura area under Daudkandi upazila early Tuesday. Locals said the fire originated from an electric short circuit at the shop. On information, fire fighters rushed to the spot and doused the blaze with the help of locals. The affected shop owner claimed that the loss damaged by the fire could go up to Tk 5 lakh.

BAU freshers' classes from Jan 11

BAU CORRESPONDENT

The classes of level-1 and semester-1 students at Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) will start from January 11. Earlier, the authorities had decided to start the classes from January 9. They made the fresh decision due to the ongoing political unrest, said BAU sources.

JCD leader beaten up

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Feni

A local leader of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) was beaten up allegedly by the activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) at Sonagazi upazila of the district on Tuesday morning. Witnesses said, a group of BCL activists swooped on Saiful Islam, 26, organising secretary of Matiganj union unit of JCD, student wing of BNP, at Darogarhat bazaar at around 9:30am. They beat up Saiful indiscriminately and fled the scene leaving him critically injured. The reason behind the attack could not be known immediately.

Over 9000 sued in five dists for poll violence

STAR COUNTRY DESK

More than 9000 people have been sued on charges of attacking and killing polling officers and the law enforcers, torching polling centres, snatching ballot boxes, exploding bombs and threatening voters in Jhenidah, Nilphamari, Khagrachhari, Thakurgaon and Dinajpur districts during the election violence.

Nine cases were filed yesterday accusing 3300 people for setting fire to polling centres and looting electoral materials in Moheshpur upazila of Jhenidah on the election day and the day before, reports our correspondent.

Nine presiding officers of the upazila lodged the cases, said officer in-charge Akram Hossain of Moheshpur police station.

In Nilphamari, at least 1500 people have been sued on Tuesday night on charges of hurling bombs at polling centres, snatching ballot boxes and assaulting presiding and polling officers in Dimla upazila on Sunday and the day before, reports our correspondent.

Ten presiding officers

filed the cases on Tuesday, said Azimuddin, OC of Dimla police station.

Away in Khagrachhari, six cases were filed with Panchhari and Manikchhari police stations against 120 BNP men for creating post-poll violence, reports our correspondent.

The AL activists of Panchhari and Manikchhari upazilas filed the cases on Tuesday, said police.

Of them, 78 activists were sued in Panchhari while 42 in Manikchhari, said Abdus Samad Moral and Keshob Chakrabarti, officers in-charge of the respective police stations.

According to our Thakurgaon correspondent, at least 4,300 people, including BNP-Jamaat men, were sued on Tuesday on charges of killing assistant presiding officer, torching polling centres, snatching ballot boxes, exploding crude bombs, threatening voters and polling officers, blocking roads to polling centres and attacking cops in Sadar upazila on January 5 and the day before.

Twenty-one cases were filed with Thakurgaon and

Ruhea police stations on Tuesday night, reports our correspondent.

Assistant presiding officer Zobaidul Haque at Molani Cheprikura Government Primary School polling centre in Sadar upazila was killed in an attack by BNP-Jamaat men on Saturday night, said acting officer in-charge of Thakurgaon police station Abdul Mannan.

In Dinajpur, two cases have been filed accusing over 500 people for killing an ansar man and burning electoral materials in Parbatipur upazila on the election day, reports our correspondent.

Presiding officers Nurul Amin Sarker and Paban Kumar Sarker presiding officer of Manmathapur Cooperative High School and of Uttar Salandar Government Primary School polling centres filed the cases with Parbatipur police station on Tuesday.

On Sunday, BNP and Jamaat-Shibir men attacked 18 polling centres in upazila, leaving an ansar man dead on the spot, said police.

Thousands use 'risky' bridge over Kaliganga for long

HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

Thousands of people including locals and visitors are using a risky bridge over the Kaliganga River connecting Nazirpur Sadar and Sriramkathi unions at Kalibari in Nazirpur upazila under the district.

Although there is another bridge at a short distance from the old risky bridge, people still use the old one as it shortens their way.

Recently the authorities removed several concrete slabs from the bridge to

discourage people from using it and save it from further damage.

However, goods-laden trawlers plying the river often hit the bridge, adding to its damage, locals said.

"Despite trying for long, Sriramkathi union parishad chairman MA Malek Bepary and I have failed to repair the bridge due to lack of financial support," said Mosharraf Hossain Khan, chairman of Nazirpur Sadar union parishad.

"A meeting of the upazila parishad on December 28

took a decision to repair the bridge. We have stopped vehicular movement over the bridge. Now only people use it for crossing the river," he added.

"We have decided to use Tk 8.5 lakh from the upazila parishad fund for repairing the bridge. It will take at least one and a half months to complete the process. To avert accidents, we will set some wooden support in the bridge for the time being," said Amulya Ranjan Halder, chairman of Nazirpur upazila parishad.



PHOTO: STAR

PICTURE TELLS THE TALE: People crossing the risky, dilapidated bridge over Kaliganga river in Nazirhat upazila of Pirojpur.

Cold spell tells on farm labourers, tea workers

STAR COUNTRY DESK

The poor people including farm labourers and tea garden workers are bearing the brunt of the ongoing cold spell that grips the northern districts for the last several days.

Our Lalmonirhat Correspondent reports: The biting cold coupled with dense fog has paralysed the normal life in the northern district while the ultra poor homeless people and farm labourers in the Teesta and Dharla River basin char areas are the worst sufferers.

Only a small number of farm workers now brave the chilling cold to go to the fields as the sun remained virtually invisible for the last four days.

Rangpur Met Office recorded the lowest temperature of 8.8 degrees Celsius on Sunday morning while it was 8.6 at 4:00pm yesterday, said officials.

"I and my family members are passing hard days at home as I could not go out for work due to heavy cold in last four days. A local land owner hired me for working in his potato field but I found the cold too unbearable due to lack of sufficient warm clothes," Abul Kashem, a farm labourer at Char Kulaghat village in Lalmonirhat Sadar, said yesterday.

Several other farm labourers including Mansur Ali, Zahurul Islam, Hasim Uddin, Malek Miah and Sudhir Chandra at Haziganj village of Aditmari upazila said they went to work in local croplands yesterday but they could not stay for more than one or two hours due to the heavy cold.

Some farm labourers are demanding Tk 360 daily against Tk 180 a week ago, showing the cause of serious cold, said land owner Meher Ali at Saptibari village of Aditmari upazila.

Many poor people are trying to combat this chilling cold with the heat from burning straw and old

rubber tyres. Animals in sheds are covered with old sacks.

Our Moulvibazar correspondent adds: Hundreds of children and elderly people, mainly in the tea gardens, are suffering from cold-related diseases amid bitter cold in the north-eastern district.

Srimongol Met Office recorded below 10 degrees Celsius temperature in the area during the last three weeks. The situation is similar in other upazilas of the district.

Over 300 children affected by cough, pneumonia, vomiting and diarrhoea came to Kulaura and Srimongol upazila health complexes last week, said health officials.

Many others are affected but they find it difficult to go out of the houses to bring their children to the doctors due to cold, they added.

"My seven-year-old boy is suffering from cold and fever for ten days. I took him

to the medical centre of the tea garden, but they gave him only paracetamol. I am suffering much due to the cold as I don't have enough warm clothes," said Kaloti Robi Das, a worker of Kaliti Tea Garden in Kulaura.

"All of my family members are suffering from cold and cough. I also cannot go to tea garden for work for dense fog and shivering cold for the last couple of days," said Kanai Lal Koiri, 62, at Rajghat village in Srimongol.

District Relief and Rehabilitation Office sources said they provided 2,955 warm clothes for distribution among the people in seven upazilas of the district but it is too scanty for the requirement.

About two lakh ultra poor people in the tea garden areas of Srimongol upazila have hardly got any help from the government during this biting cold, said Bijoy Banerjee, chairman of Rajghat union parishad and ex-central president of Tea



PHOTO: STAR

Workers at a tea garden in Kamalganj upazila under Moulvibazar district warm themselves in the heat from burning leaves as they cannot afford sufficient warm clothes during the ongoing cold spell gripping the region.



PHOTO: STAR

Two farm labourers in Moulvibazar Sadar upazila brave the severe cold and foggy weather as they have no alternative to work for earning their daily bread.

Fire kills woman, daughter

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

A woman and her daughter were burnt to death after a fire broke out at their house at Girichhaya colony in Sadar upazilla on Tuesday.

The deceased are Aklima Akhter, 25, and her daughter Megha, 4.

Quoting local people, Officer-in-Charge Imtiaz Ahmed of Bandarban Police Station said the fire originated from an electric short circuit at the house at around 4:30pm, killing Aklima and her daughter Megha on the spot.

On information, fire fighters and army personnel rushed to the spot and extinguished the blaze at around 6:30pm.

'Missing' witness to Tarun League leader murder rescued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A 'missing' Jubo League man, who was assistant to slain Awami Tarun League leader, was rescued from a house at Mogholhat village in Sadar upazila on Monday evening.

After rescue, Mogholhat union unit Jubo League member Swapon Kumar, also the witness to the killing, was later brought to Sadar police station.

There Swapon told police all about the killing and his 'going missing' after the incident. But police did not give further details for the sake of investigation.

Police were investigating the killing of Sabbir Ahmed Raju, 24, general secretary of

the union unit Awami Tarun League on the basis of information from Swapon, said officer in-charge of the PS Jamir Uddin.

On the night of January 2, Raju, son of Ahmmad Hossain of Durakuti village in the upazila, was murdered in presence of the Jubo League man and later his body was found at a potato field at Putimari Dola village. Swapon went missing after the incident.

Raju might have been killed following internal feud over trading of cattle brought from India, said police and family sources.

However, local AL activists and Sajju Ahmed, elder brother of Raju, blamed BNP men for the killing.