



PHOTO: STAR

Workers pluck tea from Hobib Nagar Tea Garden in Sylhet district as the leaves become lively with the advent of rain during the last several days.

# Belated rain gives hope for tea in Sylhet region

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

The much awaited rainfall during the last one week brings hope of saving the tea gardens in greater Sylhet region from production setback that was feared due to the drought-like situation prevailing for the previous couple of weeks.

However, the situation remains far from being optimal.

"The plants started dying up as there had been no rain and we could not arrange irrigation from the natural streams that had dried up too. This year 271 mm rain has been recorded so far whereas it was 396 mm the

same period last year," said Humayun Kabir, manager of Hobibnagar Tea Estate in Jaintapur in Sylhet.

Although the situation sees some improvement now, it may take weeks to get the benefits, he added.

The recent rain is likely to help prevent the loss caused by lack of rain early summer, said Numan Haider Chowdhury, general manager of Khadim Tea Company in Sylhet.

"Nearly 95 per cent gardens lack artificial irrigation facilities. As it is a hilly area, it is difficult to get water even from deep tube wells. The natural streams, main sources of irrigation in

tea garden areas, are yet to have water," said Mohammad Shahjahan, general manager of Tea Estate Management Cell of Bangladesh Tea Board.

So far the gardens in Moulvibazar experienced 254 mm rain on average against last year's 288 mm rain the same time, he said.

Meanwhile, there are reports of red spider attack in some areas.

"The tea gardens require increasing the tea plantation area by 2.5 per cent every year as older plantations lose much of their production capacity. But, adverse weather situations like drought disturbs the pro-

cess," he added.

Of the 163 tea gardens in the country, 145 are in greater Sylhet region, 17 in Chittagong region and one in Brahmanbaria district.

Besides, around 200 small tea gardens, each covering one to five hectares of land, have been raised in Panchagarh, Bandarban and Thakurgaon districts during the recent years.

Of the 1.2 lakh hectares of land belonging to the tea gardens in the country, around 54,000 hectares is being used for tea farming.

The country produces over 60 million kg of tea every year.



A mobile court seizes huge quantity of spurious medicines from an illegal factory at Barabandar in Dinajpur town yesterday. The court led by Executive Magistrate Md Abdul Halim sentenced factory owner Debesh Chandra Roy to eight months' imprisonment, fined him Tk 50 thousand and sealed off the factory.

PHOTO: STAR

# AL men vandalise, loot house, shop of JSD leaders

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Activists of ruling Awami League vandalised and looted house and business establishment of the leaders of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-1nu) in Bheramara upazila on Tuesday night.

Police said a group of 20/25 AL men, allegedly led by Kutchiamora union parishad chairman Sohel Rana Paban, swooped on the house of Ashiqur Rahman Chhahi, president of Bahadurpur union unit of JSD at 9:30pm. At this, they vandalised windowpanes and furniture of the house and took away valuables.

The attackers then ransacked the shop of local JSD leader Sayeed, a member of Kutchiamora UP, at Kutchiamora Bazar and looted cash and other valuables. They also exploded two

bombs during the incident, said Parvez Islam, officer in-charge of Bheramara police station.

According to a source, the attack came after JSD Kushtia district unit held a rally in the town earlier on the day, demanding immediate arrest and exemplary punishment of the killers of party leader Ismail Hossain Panjer who was murdered on April 15.

The speakers at the rally blamed AL cadres for the killing. A large number of JSD leaders and activists from different corners of the district took part in the rally.

A case was also filed against eight people, including Sazzad Hossain Sabuj, general secretary of Kushtia district unit of Swechchasebak League. Sabuj is close aid to AL central joint general secretary Mahbulul Alam Hanif.

# Two to die, four get life for murder in Netrakona

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

A Netrakona court yesterday sentenced two people to death and four others to life imprisonment for killing a man in Durgapur upazila of the district in 2001.

Those awarded death penalty are Abdul Khaleque, son of late Umed Ali, and Abdul Gani, son of Abdul Khaleque of Mow village in the upazila.

The lifers are Abdul Karim, Abdur Rahim, Abdur Rahaman and Abdur Rob of the same village. Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court fined them Tk 50,000 each, in default they are to suffer five more years in jail.

The court also sentenced 14 others to 10 years imprisonment in the same case. They are Abdul Hekim, Abdul Hasim, Abdul Mazid, Hasimuddin,

Jalaluddin, Rahamat Ali, Sirajul Islam, Bachchu Mia, Ayub Ali, Mahtab Ali, Faruk Mia, Nur Mohammad, Abdul Rashid and Azizul Islam. They all are from the same village.

The court fined them Tk 20,000 each, in default they are to suffer another two years in prison.

According to the prosecution, the convicted people killed Abdul Kaddus, 65, of the village as a sequel to a previous enmity on December 19, 2001.

Kuddus' son Abul Hasim filled a murder case with Durgapur Police Station on the day, accusing aforesaid people. After investigation, police submitted a charge sheet to the court on May 16, 2002.

After examining the witnesses and evidence, Judge Abdul Hamid found them guilty and pronounced the verdict.

# Rescued Indian kid handed over to BSF

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) yesterday handed over an abducted Indian kid to Indian Border Security Force (BSF) at a meeting at Barshalipara village in Atwary upazila of Panchagarh district.

He was identified as Md Sadequ Islam, 6, son of Md Shah Mohammad of Dimti Mayabari village in Uttar Dinajpur district of West Bengal.

Lt Col Kamal Ahmed, commanding officer (CO) of 30 BGB battalion told this correspondent over cellphone that Alamgir Hossain, 35, son of Siraj Uddin of Nitoldoba village in Baliadangi upazila of Thakurgaon and his accomplices abducted the kid from the Indian village on Tuesday and brought him to Bangladesh territory through Paria border of Thakurgaon.

Acting on a tip-off, a BGB team conducted a drive in Chowrangi Bazar area of the upazila and rescued Sadequ early yesterday.

The BGB team also detained abductor Alamgir from the spot and handed him over to Baliadangi Police Station.

A company commander level meeting of the BGB and BSF was held at the zero line of Barshalipara village in Atwary around 2:40pm yesterday. At the meeting, Sadequ was handed over to the BSF members.

Solayman Ali, company commander of Balapara BGB camp led the BGB team while AC Kapoor, inspector of BSF Moragoti camp led the BSF team at the meeting.

# 10 hurt in Jubo Dal infighting

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Palma

At least 10 people were injured as the two rival groups of Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal clashed in Ishwardi upazila yesterday.

Of the injured, six were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital while the rest given first aid at a local hospital.

The clash was occurred between two factions--one led by Md Murad and the other by Md Abdullah--at the upazila headquarters at around 2:30pm.

Law enforcers recently arrested Murad with firearms. Supporters of Murad blamed the men of Abdullah for helping law enforcers arrest Murad.

Following an altercation over the matter, the activists of the two groups equipped with lethal weapons swooped on each other, leaving at least 10 people from both sides injured.

# 50 girls fall sick at school function in Pirojpur

Victims of mass psychogenic illness, they land in hospital

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Around 50 students of Karimunnesa Girls' High School in Pirojpur town landed in hospital as they fell sick at a school programme yesterday noon.

As per instruction from teachers, the students came to school around 8:30am yesterday as the annual prize giving ceremony of the institution was scheduled to start at 9:00am.

However, the programme stated much later as AKMA Awal, chief guest of the programme, also the lawmaker from Pirojpur-1 constituency, reached the school around 11:00am.

Although the school authority set colourful awning on the school premises, it was not enough to ward off the scorching heat

of a summer day and the students waiting there started falling sick.

At first school headmaster Md Abdul Halim Hawlader did not give much importance to the matter and took the sick students inside a classroom.

As the condition of the affected students deteriorated and the number of sick students increased, he arranged taking them to Pirojpur Sadar Hospital.

Around 50 students of different classes were taken there from 12:30pm to 2:00pm.

Seriously sick 15 girls were admitted to the hospital while others were given primary treatment.

"Around 11:00am, I felt vertigo and fell to the ground in the school field," said Nupur, a Class VIII student.

A few other students told

the same.

Asked about the incident, headmaster Abdul Halim Hawlader said, "Many of the students had come to school without taking any food. Added to this, scorching heat of the sun made them weak and sick."

"The affected students became victim of mass psychogenic illness. The problem, usually created from mental weakness spreads fast among fellow girls. However, such patients get cured after treatment," said Dr Sankar Kumar Ghosh, resident medical officer of Pirojpur Sadar Hospital.

Although the annual sports of the school ended in January when it was winter, the school authority arranged the prize giving ceremony for the winners yesterday, around four months later.



PHOTO: STAR

A student of Kamrunnesa Girls' High School in Pirojpur town being taken inside Pirojpur Sadar Hospital as the girl, along with around 50 others, became victim of 'mass psychogenic illness' at a function on the school premises yesterday.

# JUBO LEAGUE LEADER MURDER CASE 10 of 16 accused arrested in Lalmonirhat town

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Ten out of 16 accused in Jubo League leader Kabilul Islam murder case were arrested from a hostel in the town on Tuesday.

The arrestees are Apel Miah, 35, Shanto Das, 32, Razon Miah, 28, Alam Hossain, 38, Mahubul Islam, 26, Nur Alam alias Barud, 36, Manir Hossain Munna, 34, Ashrafuzzaman Islam, 30, Bablu Miah, 31, and Noor Hossain, 30.

Officer-in-Charge

Mahfuzur Rahman of Sadar Police Station said law enforcers, acting on a tip off, raided the students' hostel and arrested 10 of the 16 accused in the murder case. Drive is on to arrest the rest of the accused, he added.

Kabilul, organising secretary of Jubo League municipality ward No 7 unit, was stabbed to death by a gang led by district Awami League Publicity Secretary Sumon Khan on the night of April 23 following a dispute over supply of sand to a construction site at

Central Shaheed Minar area in the town.

Ohidul Islam Shanta, brother of the slain Jubo League leader, filed a murder case with Sadar Police station on April 26, accusing AL leader Sumon Khan and 15 others.

All the accused in the case are activists of the local units of AL, Jubo League and BCL, police and local AL source said.

Contacted, Police Superintendent TM Mojahidul Islam said police are conducting drives in different areas to arrest the



PHOTO: STAR

World Vision Bangladesh brings out a colourful procession in Pirojpur town yesterday, campaigning for steps to prevent maternal and child mortality marking Global Week of Action-2014.