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WITH TODAY'S ISSUE

Star Showbiz



FLASH FLOOD IN NORTH

With rivers swelling, three districts go under water

PAGE 5

STRAUSS-KAHN CLEARED

French court acquits ex-IMF chief of procuring prostitutes for sex parties

PAGE 8

Nightmare voyage

Trafficking victims tell of horrific experience at sea

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

He had wanted to go to Malaysia for a better job. But he ended up falling into the hands of human traffickers who sold him thrice before he was rescued. He endured inhuman physical and mental torture in a boat for around two months at sea.

"We were sold the way cows and goats are sold in bazaars. Some were sold five times. We were treated as animals," said Milon Hossain, a resident of Khoynan village under Sujanagar upazila in Pabna.

The 35-year-old man was among the 150 victims repatriated from Myanmar on June 8. Three of them are Rohingya, according to police sources.

Milon and four other victims of the same upazila reached their village homes on Thursday. The other victims are Babu Ali, Nazmul Hossain, Haque Mallik and Alhaz Hossain. Aged between 30 and 35 years, they are residents of Khoynan and Vaina villages of Sujanagar.

Milon, who used to farm lands in his village, had come to Manikganj about four months ago for a better life. He found

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

18 return home from Indonesia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rescued from the Andaman Sea by the Indonesian authorities around three months ago, 18 Bangladeshi fortune seekers returned home yesterday.

They reached Dhaka from Jakarta on a Malaysia Airlines flight around 12:10am, Anindya Dutta of International Organization for Migration's Dhaka office told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the trafficking victims hailed from Narsingdi, Jessore, Chuadanga, Satkhira and Sylhet.

Talking to journalists at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, the returnees said they were beaten mercilessly and abandoned in the middle of the sea as they refused to

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5



Rain over the last two days has inundated parts of the DND dam area in Matuail of Dhaka. A number of canals, which used to drain the water out, have been blocked up by illegal structures. If rain continues, many more houses in the area may soon be submerged. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

TOP QUOTE

"We were sold the way cows and goats are sold in markets. We were treated like animals."

RESCUED TRAFFICKING VICTIM MILON HOSSAIN OF KHOYNAN VILLAGE AT SUJANAGAR UPAZILA IN PABNA

Last month, we ran a report on the bumper production of summer fruits and the government measures to check contamination of the produce. The report contained some encouraging developments. Recently, our correspondents visited different areas in the north to know about the situation on the ground. Today's report is on our findings on litchis.

Litchis not that safe

Growers still overuse pesticides despite some government measures in checking fruit contamination

PINAKI ROY with KANGKAN KARMAKAR, Dinajpur

The extent and incidence of applying pesticide on litchis in two Dinajpur upazilas looks alarming this year in the absence of government monitoring.

Following media reports for the past few years that farmers use excessive pesticides and harmful ripening agents on summer fruits, the government this season took some measures, however

inadequate, to check it.

But talking to about a dozen litchi growers in Dinajpur Sadar and Biral upazilas, it was found that there is no programme or monitoring mechanism to prevent unnecessary use of insecticide, growth hormone and ripening agent on this fruit.

"I sprayed insecticide only yesterday [last week]," said Abdul Aziz Sarkar of Auliapur in Dinajpur Sadar while plucking litchis at his orchard.

Aziz is happy to have spent around Tk 40,000 on fertiliser and pesticide for his 42 litchi trees. The yield is high and he has made about Tk 2 lakh from the sale already.

From flowering to harvest, the permissible limit of spraying pesticide is three times, according to agro officials.

But Aziz, 50 years a litchi farmer, applied it around 20 times. For him,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2



A man spraying pesticides on litchis at an orchard in Biral upazila of Dinajpur. Sales of pesticides go up by up to 60 percent in summer, according to traders. Inset, litchis with skins cracked open, a result of the overuse of pesticides.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



SHOOTING BY MP'S SON

Future bleak for victim families

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After the death of his wife, he devoted all his attention and energy to ensuring better life and education for his two little kids.

A rickshawpuller in Dhaka, Abdul Hakim never thought of getting married again.

He started spending more time pulling rickshaw to earn more. Every month, he sent Tk 3,000 to Tk 5,000 to Rangpur where the kids have been staying with their maternal grandparents since their mother died four years back.

But all his efforts came to an end just



Monwara Begum

because of a drunken rage of a ruling party MP's son.

Hakim and an auto-rickshaw driver Yakub Shikder were shot by Bakhtiar Alam Rony, son of Awami League lawmaker and Mahila AL General Secretary Pinu Khan, in the early hours of April 14.

Hakim breathed his last 16 hours later and Yakub on April 23.

Hakim had been pulling rickshaw owned by Shaheen Mia of the capital's Modhubagh Jhilpar for the last 20 years.

"He often cried in my garage for his wife and children. I advised him to marry again,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

SCUFFLE WITH COPS IN RAJSHAHI

2 Jubo League, BCL men held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police yesterday picked up two leaders of Jubo League and Chhatra League after they scuffled with the law enforcers at Binodpur in Rajshahi city.

Protesting the police action, activists of the two organisations blocked the Rajshahi-Dhaka highway near Binodpur for around 15 minutes, said witnesses.

Police fired gunshots and tear gas to disperse them. The two leaders are Mehedi Hasan Yamin, general secretary of city Jubo League's ward-30 unit and Ekhlashur Rahman Saddam, environment affairs secretary of the city BCL unit.

Witnesses alleged that the two leaders were trying to extort money from local mango trader Rakib around 12:30pm.

A scuffle broke out as Rakib refused to pay the two. Seeing this, some policemen on duty at Rajshahi University's Binodpur gate went to the spot and tried to calm the three down, but got involved in a new scuffle with

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

PM reaches London

BSS, London

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina arrived in London yesterday on a six-day visit to the United Kingdom.

A Bangladesh Biman flight carrying the PM landed at Heathrow International Airport at 3:47pm (local time).

Bangladesh High Commissioner to the UK Abdul Hannan, senior officials of Bangladesh mission and leaders of Bangladesh community received Hasina at the airport.

During her journey, the premier went to the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

China wants deal on Blue Economy

Dhaka receives draft memo from Beijing

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Four days after Bangladesh and India signed a deal on Blue Economy and Maritime Cooperation in the Bay of Bengal, China on Thursday sent a similar draft deal for Bangladesh's consideration.

Dhaka had approached Beijing a long time ago for the signing of a deal on maritime cooperation to facilitate capacity building, training, joint research and study, but it had not received any response from China.

"But all of a sudden, the foreign ministry

on Wednesday [June 10] received a draft document of Memorandum of Understanding [MoU] from Beijing ... to facilitate maritime cooperation in the Bay," a highly placed diplomatic source told The Daily Star.

China wants to sign the MoU during Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang's upcoming visit to Bangladesh.

A source told The Daily Star that the Chinese premier would have a two-day official visit to Bangladesh most likely on September 24-25, marking the 40th

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Petrol bomb victim dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One of the eight victims of a mindless petrol bomb attack on a running bus in Comilla on the Shab-e-Barat night died at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital early yesterday.

Sixty-year-old Ranajit Sharma, a teacher at Rangamati Government Women's College, died at the unit's Intensive Care Unit (ICU) around 3:00am, said Partha Sankar Paul, resident surgeon of the unit.

He had 45 percent of his body burnt and suffered inhalation injuries, he added.

On June 2 midnight, the Rangamati-bound Unique



Ranajit Sharma

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2



A relative tries to comfort the wife of Ranajit Sharma, who died early yesterday at the DMCH burn unit. Ranajit was injured in an arson attack at Chandina in Comilla on June 2. PHOTO: STA