



Jobless farm labourers and ultra poor people start working under a government-sponsored 40-day job scheme at Sarpukur village in Aditmari upazila under Lalmonirhat district on Monday.

40-day job scheme starts in Lalmonirhat

Late start makes the programme for poor people futile as aman harvest begins

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

The government-run 40-day job scheme meant for providing employment facility to the seasonally jobless farm labourers and ultra poor people during Bangla months of Ashwin and Kartik (mid-September to mid-November) started in the district yesterday, making an unusual delay in implementing the programme this year.

Under the programme 7,946 labourers, including 1,660 in Lalmonirhat Sadar, 1,565 in Aditmari, 1,671 in Kaliganj, 1,730 in Hatibanda and 1,320 in Patgram upazila under the

district will get job facility for daily wage of Tk 200 each.

The government has sanctioned Tk 6.35 crore 68 thousand for the purpose, said sources at the District Relief and Rehabilitation Office.

But too much delay in starting the job scheme this year makes the programme futile for the beneficiaries as they need the job opportunity from early October to mid-November when they face job crisis before start of harvesting aman paddy, local farm labourers said.

"If the programme had started early October it would be of great benefit for us. But we have been given work under the government-run 40-day job scheme when harvesting of aman paddy has started, making job available," said Mahsin Ali, 50, an ultra poor labourer at Char Sholmari village of Kaliganj upazila.

"We can earn Tk 350 to 400 daily by working for harvesting paddy but we are getting only Tk 200 a day under the government job scheme," he added.

"When job is available in the crop fields, we have to work under the government project as we are already listed for it," said Nabru Islam, 45, a farm labourer at Bhotmari village of Kaliganj upazila.

"We are getting earthen roads repaired by the listed labourers under the 40-day job scheme. The jobless farm labourers and ultra poor people would get more benefit if the programme could be started early October," said Rashedul Islam Rased, project implementation officer in Kaliganj upazila.

District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer Mohammad Hossain said he sent letter in time to the ministry concerned, seeking fund for the 40-job scheme, but there was delay in sanctioning the fund.

Language pioneer's museum, Sylhet's cultural wealth

ANDREW EAGLE WITH MOHI UDDIN

There existed long years before contemporary footwear, when the *khoram*, the wooden sandal was a royal symbol. There were days when any wooden shoe could be bestowed with additional dignity through the embellishment of ivory trimmings. In a time much before the 'Londoni' expats from the country's northeast had colonised parts of Britain, Sylhet had its own alphabet. The Sylheti Ngarai script was unique.

Given the strength of Sylhet's regional culture and longstanding linguistic tradition, it's barely conceivable that any Bengali language movement could begin without noteworthy Syheti contribution. While the Language Movement with its aim to install Bangla as the state language of East Pakistan would reach its pinnacle in 1952, events in Sylhet began earlier.

On September 9, 1947, with a month yet to pass from the births of independent India and Pakistan, the first meeting to discuss the state language was arranged. It was convened by two leading figures: prominent comic litterateur Syed Mujtaba Ali, and local advocate, bureaucrat and writer Matin Uddin Ahmed.

In retrospect it's unsurprising that Ahmed was a Language Movement pioneer. As the author of 58 published and unpublished, mostly children's books, Ahmed's love of the written word and of learning is aptly demonstrated. As a lawyer and from his civil service career, Ahmed held an awareness of matters of state. Indeed, his



A myriad of artefacts at Matin Uddin Ahmed Museum in Sylhet city. Inset, late Matin Uddin Ahmed, whose valuable collections later formed the mainstay of the museum founded in 2004.

official career led to criticism of his being involved in the Language Movement; yet at a second meeting held on August 30, 1947, at the Sylhet Ali Madrasa Ground, Ahmed was the chair.

These two meetings were surely among the first to raise the issue of the state language anywhere in East Pakistan.

Ahmed frequently wrote in periodicals, including the monthly *Saogat*, *The Daily Azad*, *Ittefaq* and *Ittehad*. According to late Professor Dewan Mohammad Azraf, Ahmed's writing career began early, in Kolkata in the days before Partition. Yet

notwithstanding his writing and activism, Matin Uddin Ahmed is probably best remembered in Sylhet for the museum that bears his name.

The museum visitor can observe an eclectic mix of old coins and notes from various dynasties; the preserved muslin saris of Ahmed's wife and daughter who held landlord status; a cannonball from the Second World War; an idol of Cleopatra; an ivory chess set; an early edition typewriter. The museum also contains more than four thousand archaeological assets.

"Ahmed collected many of the exhibits himself," says current director Dr Mustafa Shahzaman Chowdhury Bahar, who was among those to establish the museum in 2004, now located on the fourth floor of the Central Muslim Literary Council building.

Inside, among the many artifacts that serve to paint a picture of Sylhet's rich cultural heritage, one might even find a pair of those old wooden shoes, the *khoram*, and portfolios written in eloquent Syheti Ngarai script.

5 Indian kids handed over to family members

UNB, Noakhali

Five Indian children, who were detained by police in Basurhat municipality area in Companiganj upazila of the district on October 24, were handed over to Indian authorities on Monday.

The children are Shamim, 8, Shahin, 7, Tawkin, 3, Nasrin, 3 and Obayed, 1. They hail from Bhangarpur and Khilpara area of Tripura.

They were sent back to India through Mojumdarhat border area in Feni district around 5:30pm, said Abdur Rahman, deputy director of Social Service Department of Noakhali.

The children were handed over to their family members in the presence of high officials of police and Social Service Department and members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and of Indian Border Security Force (BSF).

On information, police detained five Indian children and a woman named Rehana from Basurhat municipality area in Companiganj upazila on October 24 when they were moving suspiciously in Basurhat Modern Hospital road area around 11:30pm.

Farjahan Bhuiyan, judge of Noakhali Companiganj Cognisance Court-3, asked police and the social service department to hand over the five children to the BSF when they were produced before the court.

Worker killed in landslide

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulibazar

A worker was killed in a landslide while lifting stones in Companiganj upazila of Sylhet district on Monday.

The deceased was identified as Anwar Miah, 35.

Officer-in-Charge (Investigation) Md Ruhul Amin of Companiganj Police Station said a chunk of mud fell on Anwar while he along with other workers was lifting stones from Shah Arefin Hill, leaving him critically injured.

He was rushed to Companiganj Upazila Health Complex where the doctors declared him dead.

Two held with arms, ammo

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Police arrested two people and seized arms and ammunition from their possession at Sonaichondi Bazar under Nachole upazila of the district yesterday.

The arrestees are Enamul Haque, 30, son of Abdus Salam of Begpur village, and Jamaluddin, 35, son of Azizur Rahman of Teghoria village in Gomostapur upazila.

Sub-Inspector Shahidul Islam of Nachole Police Station said, law enforcers, acting on a tip-off, went to Sonaichondi Bazar at around 2:00pm and intercepted a motorcycle.

Searching the riders, police found three pistols, six magazines and 15 bullets in their possession. They (police) also seized the motorcycle.

A case was filed against the two under the Arms Act with Nachole Police Station.

Liquor kills one

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A man died after taking spurious liquor in Nilokkhia Bazar area under Nilokkhia union in Bakshiganj upazila yesterday.

The deceased, Robi Das, 35, son of Kashekandi Das of the Bazar area, was a cobbler.

Police said Robi Das took liquor at Harijan Palli of the Bazar area on Monday night.

He fell sick after returning to his house and died at around 9:00am, said Mostasirul Rahman, officer-in-charge of Bakshiganj Police Station.

SCHOOLBOY SAYEED KILLING CASE

Charges framed against four in Sylhet

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulibazar

Sylhet court yesterday framed charges against four accused in the case for killing schoolboy Abu Sayeed.

Judge Abdur Rashid of Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal passed an order for starting the trial of the case on November 19.

The four against whom the charges were framed are Ebadur Rahman, constable of Airport Police Station, Mahib Hossain Masum, publicity secretary of the Sylhet district unit of Olama League, Abdur Rakib, general secretary of the district Olama League, and Ataur Rahman Geda, a police informant.

Of them, Masum, who had been absconding, surrendered before the court on

November 10.

On March 14, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel recovered the decomposed body of Abu Sayeed, 9, a Class IV student of Shahi Eidgah Hazrat Shahi Mir Government Primary School, from Ebadur's house at Jharnapar in the city. Sayeed was kidnapped on March 11.

Police arrested Ebadur Rahman, Rakib and Geda in connection with the killing. The arrestees confessed to killing the schoolboy.

Ebadur Rahman made a confessional statement under Section 164 before Judge Shahedul Karim of Sylhet Metropolitan Magistrate Court-1.

Abdul Matin, victim's father, filed a murder case against the arrestees and three other unidentified



Four accused in the case for killing Class IV student Abu Sayeed being taken to jail from the court after charge framing against them yesterday.

Three Hoshi Kunio murder suspects remanded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

A court here yesterday placed three people, arrested from the district town on November 13 in connection with the murder of Japanese national Hoshi Kunio in Rangpur on October 3, on a two-day remand.

The suspected accused are, Rajib Hossain alias Meril Sumon, 25, of Shalbon Shahipara area in Rangpur town, Nowshad Hossain alias Kala Rubel, 27, of Jummapara and Kajol

separate drives detained the three from different areas of Chapainawabganj town for their alleged involvement with the killing.

Chief Judicial Magistrate Nur Mohammad Shahriar Kabir granted the remand prayer after police placed the trio before the court seeking seven-day remand for each, Kamrul Islam, sub-inspector of Chapainawabganj Sadar Police Station, also the investigation officer of the case, said.

On November 13, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in



EDUCATION FIRST, NO TO CHILD MARRIAGE: Girl students of several schools in Bhamra union under Satkhira Sadar upazila show red cards, pledging continuation of study and prevention of child marriage at a programme organised by Bhamra union parishad on the premises of Shakhra-Komorpur AG High School yesterday.