

PHOTO: STAR

A new phase of excavation starts at the ancient fortified city of Bhitargarh in Panchagarh Sadar upazila marking the first observance of Bhitargarh Day yesterday. Inset, a photography exhibition arranged on the occasion attracts a good number of visitors.



BHITARGARH DAY OBSERVED IN PANCHAGARH

'Preserve country's largest ancient city'

QUAMRUl ISLAM RUBAIYAT, Thalergaon

The archaeological site at the ancient city of Bhitargarh in Panchagarh Sadar upazila assumed a festive look as Bhitargarh Day was observed for the first time yesterday.

Bhitargarh Promotional Society in cooperation with the Department of Archaeology organised the event to create awareness about promotion, protection and preservation of the heritage site covering the ancient fortified city, the country's largest one of the kind.

Procession, discussion, and photography exhibition marked the day while a two-day fair was held with playing of Satya Purer Gaan (a form of local drama), game with sticks, snake charming, pitha (indigenous cake)

festival.

Cultural Affairs Minister Asaduzzaman Noor MP inaugurated the event as chief guest.

The speakers there urged the government to take immediate steps to protect the ancient site.

A team of General Education Department of University of Liberal Arts headed by Dr Shahnaz Husne Jahan, professor of general education department of the university, started an archaeological excavation in Bhitargarh in 2009, Dr Shahnaz said at the programme.

"The excavation brought to light some interesting features of post Gupta period structures at Bhitargarh. The team also found a cruciform temple of post Gupta period along

with other artefacts like copper and iron made objects and a black stone statue of goddess Manasa.

"Recently found brick built structures belong to a temple of 7th century AD. Our findings show that the 25-square-kilometre city was part of Kamrup state. The city was protected by four fortified walls and surrounded by moat. The city planners had developed engineering and technological knowledge.

"The people constructed three stone embankments on the Shalmara and Talma Rivers in the city to irrigate crop lands.

"The city people maintained good business relations with Mohasthanagar city as well as different places in India, Nepal, Bhutan, China and some

other South Asian countries through rivers," said Dr Shahnaz.

Secretary of the Cultural Affairs Ministry Akhtari Mamtaz attended as special guest at the programme presided over by Suhel A Choudhury, president of Bhitargarh Promotional Society, also a former secretary.

Meanwhile, several concrete structures are being built inside the fort area near Maharajadhighi, ignoring a High Court order.

"I have already issued order to stop the construction. Five sites of the fort have been declared protected while the proposal has been sent to declare 15 other sites as protected ones," said Nahid Sultana, regional director of the Department of Archaeology.

Two held for stabbing baby girl over land dispute

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Detectives yesterday arrested two accused in the case for stabbing a 17-month-old baby girl over land dispute in Nandail upazila of the district on March 13.

The arrestees are Johirul Islam, 20, and Shah Alam Sourav, 30. DB police arrested them from Gazipur district. They are nephews of prime accused Md Shahjahan, alias Puitya Shahjahan.

Shahjahan stabbed Bithi Akhter, daughter of his neighbour day labourer Deen Islam, at Chandipasha village in the upazila.

The victim is now undergoing treatment at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) and her condition has improved, said Md Ataur Rahman,

officer-in-charge (OC) of Nandail Police Station.

Deen Islam lodged a case with Nandail Police Station the same day, accusing Shahjahan and 10 others.

On information, a team of the detective branch (DB) of police led by Sub-Inspector Mofizul Islam raided Shahpara area in Gazipur district around 4:00am and arrested Johirul and Sourav, said Imarat Hossain Gazi, officer-in-charge of DB, Mymensingh.

The arrestees were being interrogated at DB office as of filing of this report at 5:00pm yesterday. Drives are on to arrest the prime suspect, the OC of DB added.

Police said there was a longstanding conflict between Deen Islam and Md Shahjahan over nine decimals of land.

Deen Islam built a tin-shed house on the disputed land a couple of days ago, but Shahjahan and his men vandalised it. When Deen Islam went to rebuild the house there around 11:00am on Sunday, Shahjahan and his men went there and locked in an altercation with him, police said.

At one stage, Shahjahan and his followers tried to hit Deen Islam with sharp weapons, but he fled the scene.

As the attackers did not find Deen Islam, they entered his house and snatched his daughter Bithi from Sharifa Khatun, a neighbour of Deen Islam, and took her outside the house. Shahjahan then stabbed the girl in her abdomen, leaving her critically injured.

Tornado damages 50 houses, pry school

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

At least 50 thatched houses and a government primary school were damaged by a tornado at Bakterpur village in Ashwadia union of Sadar upazila early yesterday.

Md Abul Kalam, headmaster of Bakterpur Government Primary School, said the school-house and nearly 50 thatched houses were destroyed by a tornado that hit the village at around 4:00am. A lot of trees were also uprooted.

The families who lost their houses have to live under the open sky. Students had to return to their houses without being able to attend the classes.

No one from the local administration visited the spot as of filing of this report at 5:00pm yesterday.

3 fishermen jailed for netting jatka

UNB, Shariatpur

A mobile court on Friday sentenced three fishermen to one year's rigorous imprisonment each for catching jatka (hilsha less than 10 inches long) in Sadar upazila.

The convicts are Md Shahin Hossain, 24, Md Taher and Abdur Rahim, 25.

Police launched a drive in Burirhat Bazar area of the upazila around 2:00am and seized a truck loaded with 45 maunds of jatka. They arrested three people while they were going to Dhaka from Gosairhat of the district along with the fish.

Later, they were produced before the mobile court that punished the three.

ABDUCTION OF 2 BRAC STAFF IN AFGHANISTAN

Worried families urge prompt steps for rescue

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Family members of two BRAC officials, who were abducted in war-torn Afghanistan on Thursday, have demanded that the government take effective steps to get them released.

Off the victims, engineer Md Shawkat Ali, 50, hails from Hangragari village in Faridpur upazila, and accountant Sirajul Islam Sumon, 37, from Dubulia village in Sadar upazila under Pabna district.

Unidentified gunmen abducted them from Kunduz on their way to Baghlan in Afghanistan around 4:00pm on Thursday.

"The have remained traceless for the last two

days. No criminal or extremist organisation claims the responsibility of the abduction or demanded ransom," said Md Rani Mirza, media wing officer of BRAC.

"BRAC officials along with the foreign ministry officials in Afghanistan are trying to rescue the victims. The Bangladesh government is determined to rescue the victims," he added.

This correspondent yesterday visited the houses of the victims and talked to the family members.

"My husband went to war-torn Afghanistan for earning money so that the family gets solvent. But the news of his abduction has come as a bolt from the blue. Now all we want is his safe return," said Lota

Khatun, wife of kidnapped Sirajul Islam.

Shahnaz Parvin, mother of the victim, was seen crying at the house.

"I urge the prime minister to take initiative for safe return of my son," she said.

Md Abu Bakar Siddique, brother in law of engineer Shawkat Ali said, "We are passing time amid worry, fearing that Shawkat might have been kidnapped by the extremists in Afghanistan. Tension has gripped the family members as he could not be traced two days into the incident."

Shawkat's elder daughter Fatematuz Zohora, also an engineering student, urged the government to take effective steps for return of her father.

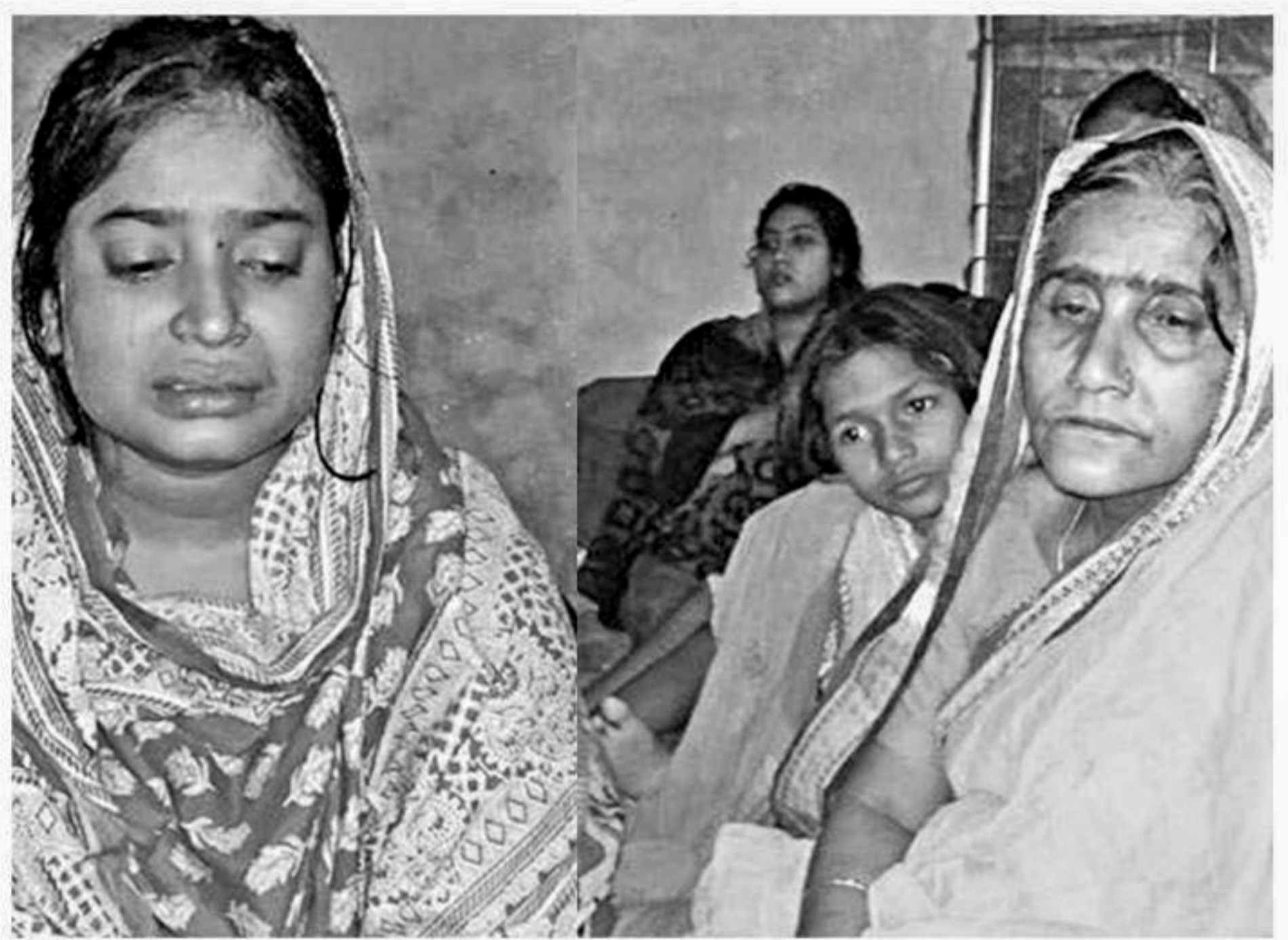


PHOTO: STAR

Abducted Sirajul Islam's wife, left, and mother, right, among others, weep at their Dubulia village house in Pabna Sadar upazila yesterday.

10 municipalities go to polls today

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Ten municipalities in nine districts are going to polls today with the participation of two major political parties -- Awami League and BNP.

The voting will open at 8:00am and continue till 4:00pm without any break.

The 10 municipalities are Haragachh in Rangpur, Kaliganj in Jhenidah, Jhalakathi, Bhanga in Faridpur, Brahmanbaria and Nangalkot in Comilla, Kabirhat in Noakhali, Sonagazi in Feni, and Chakoria and Maheshkhali in Cox's Bazar.

The Election Commission has completed necessary preparations for the election, Rajib Ahsan, assistant secretary at the EC Secretariat, told UNB yesterday.

More than 35 lakh voters are expected to exercise their franchise at 176 polling centres in the 10 municipalities.

As many as 42 mayoral candidates, including 10 each from Awami League and BNP, are contesting the polls.

Besides, there are 293 candidates in the election

race for 93 general councillor posts, while 106 are contesting for 31 reserved seats for women.

Elections to 234 municipalities, out of the country's 323, were held with the participation of 20 political parties on December 30, 2015.

Our Jhenidah correspondent reported that Moksed Ali Mandal from ruling Awami League (AL), rebel candidate (now independent) Masudur Rahman Mantu, BNP candidate Atiar Rahman, BNP rebel candidate Ashrafuzzaman Lal and Bangladesh Islami Oikyo Jote candidate Nurul Islam are contesting for the mayoral post.

Mantu said he is not a rebel candidate as he did not seek nomination from the party. The voters of the municipality will elect him as their mayor if a free and fair election is held, he added.

Returning Officer Jahangir Hossain said 18 polling centres out of 19 are risky, but all preparations were completed to make the election peaceful and impartial.

SNIPPETS

Jamaat leader arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Police arrested a Jamaat leader from Khamar Bazar area in Muktagachha upazila of the district yesterday. The arrestee is Maulana Abdullah Mohammad Mujahid, 45, ameer of Jamaat Tarati union unit under the upazila. Mujahid, a chairman aspirant in the upcoming election to Tarati Union Parishad, was arrested while distributing posters at the Bazar around 12:00 noon, said Abu Mohammad Fazlul Karim, officer-in-charge of Muktagachha Police Station. Mujahid, also an assistant teacher of Padurbari High School in the upazila, was wanted in three sabotage cases lodged with the police station, said the OC. Mujahid was being interrogated at the police station as of filing this report at 6:00pm, police sources said.

Four houses gutted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Four houses were gutted in a fire at Mehedi Mahal village in Rajnagar upazila of the district on Friday night. Mofiz Uddin, an officer at Moulvibazar Fire Service Station, said the fire originated from an electric short circuit at one Cherag Miah's house at the village around 8:00pm and soon engulfed the adjacent three houses. Being informed by locals, a fire fighting unit from the fire station rushed to the spot and doused the flames after a hectic effort of nearly two hours, said Mofiz Uddin. Affected villagers said the loss caused by the fire would be around Tk 50 lakh.

Woman electrocuted

UNB, Chuadanga

A woman died from electrocution at Boroputimari village in Alamdanga upazila of the district on Friday. Witnesses said Arzina Begum, 50, wife of Alam Hossain of the village, came in contact with a live electric wire at her house around 6:00pm. She died on way to Sadar Hospital.

Bomb-like object found

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Police recovered a time-bomb-like object from the playground of Collegiate School and College in the district town yesterday. Being informed by the authorities of the institution, police rushed to spot and recovered the object wrapped in red scotch tape at around 10:30am, said Badal Kumar, sub-inspector of Kotwali Police Station. Police took it to the police station and kept it in a bucket filled with water. They (police) will test the object to determine whether or not is a bomb.

Septuagenarian murdered

UNB, Bagerhat

A septuagenarian man was killed in an attack allegedly by a young man over a trifling matter at Barukhali village in Morelganj upazila on Friday night. Tarek Biswas, officer-in-charge of Morelganj Police Station, said Javed Ali Mallik, 70, of the village had an altercation with his relative Rajib Khalifa, 18, over a trifling matter around 8:00pm. At one stage, Rajib hit Javed Ali with a log, leaving him dead on the spot. On information, police went to the spot, recovered the body and sent it Sadar Hospital for autopsy. Rajib went into hiding soon after the incident.



PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

This freight train carrying 2200 tonnes of imported diesel from Numaligarh refinery in Indian state of Meghalaya reaches Parbatipur oil depot in Dinajpur district yesterday.