

9 municipality polls held peacefully

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Elections to nine municipalities under Pabna, Patuakhali, Dinajpur, Nilphamari, Narail, Rangpur, Bogra, Tangail and Shariatpur were held peacefully yesterday amid incident of alleged vote rigging and poll boycotting by BNP backed candidate. The municipalities are Galachipa in Patuakhali, Bera in Pabna, Ghorhaghat in Dinajpur, Domar in Nilphamari, Lohagara in Narail, Pirganj in Rangpur, Sonatola in Bogra and Chatail in Tangail. The by-elections for mayor in Naria municipality under Shariatpur was also held yesterday. BNP-backed mayoral candidate Abu Taleb Mia boycotted the Galachipa municipality polls protesting vote rigging and forcing of his agents to leave polling centres. OC Firoz Ahmed of Bera Police Station said the law enforcers detained six people for casting fake votes at Sanila polling centre.



SHIFT RAMPAL PROJECT, SAVE SUNDARBANS

Tarunno Society, an organisation for youths, launches a mass signature campaign on the premises of Habiganj Town Hall on Saturday, to press for immediate step to save the world's largest mangrove forest Sundarbans and protesting the government decision to set up coal-based thermal power plants in Rampal upazila of Bagerhat. The society plans to collect 20,000 signatures.

PHOTO: STAR

Serial marriage fraud gets caught, finally

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Police arrested a fraud youth as he came to marry a college girl as his seventh wife at Satnai colony village in Dimla upazila of the district on Saturday night. Sirajul Islam Siraj, 35, son of late Taher Ali of Mohesha Mirbag village in Kaunia upazila of Rangpur, developed relation with a Class XII girl student of local Janata Degree College three months ago, police and locals said. Siraj had falsely introduced himself as an officer of narcotics control department and concealed his earlier six marriages. Siraj proposed to the girl to flee from home to get married with him but the girl persuaded him to marry her at her residence with consent of her parents. It was settled by both that their marriage would be solemnised simply at the girl's residence on Saturday evening. Siraj came to bride's house mysteriously at around 2:00am with a hired car along with an associate and said the delay was caused due to a disturbance of the car on the way. As the local marriage registrar asked the groom to show his national ID card the latter placed a photocopy shown as attested by a lawmaker from Dhaka, said Abdul Latif Khan, chairman of Satnai union parishad (UP). At this locals grew suspicious as Siraj hails from Rangpur. By verification through internet, they found the ID number to be false. Then they detained Siraj, his associate Delwar Hossain, 36, and car driver Sumon Ali, 25, and tied them to a tree. Informed by the UP chairman, police reached the spot that night and took the three to Dimla Police Station (PS). "During our interrogation, Siraj admitted to have married six times before coming to Satnai village for his seventh marriage," Moazzem Hossen, officer in charge of Dimla PS, said yesterday. It was also revealed that the youth is a peon in Jubo Unnoyon Office in Iswardi upazila of Pabna district, not an officer of narcotics department.

Flood-hit people in distress

Houses and roads lie ravaged, crops destroyed

STAR COUNTRY DESK

The now receding floods have left a trail of devastation, causing extensive damage to standing crops and rural communication system in different districts. Our Kurigram correspondent reports: Crops on 7,123 hectares of land were damaged by the recent flood, said sources of the district relief and rehabilitation department. "I planted T-aman saplings on seven bighas of land but the flood has damaged all. Now I am thinking of advance cultivating of mustard and pulse on the same land," said Samsul Haque, 62, of Nimkursharpar village in Kurigram Sadar upazila. Vegetable farmer Ashrafal Haque, 30, of Sardarpara village of Pachgachhi union under Kurigram Sadar, said, "I cultivated potol on three bighas of land but I could sell only a portion of it in local markets as flood destroyed the rest. I got Tk 70 thousand from the vegetable sale although I spent around Tk one lakh to cultivate it." Makbul Hossain, deputy director of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Kurigram, said, "We are advising farmers to sow paddy seeds of local varieties in the land within 30 days. Besides, farmers could cultivate advance vegetable like potato, mustard, and pulses to recoup their loss." Our Gaibandha correspondent reports: Roads and flood control embankments in different areas of the district lie in an awful state due to the floods. With the recession of water, erosion has turned serious in different areas along Teesta and Jamuna rivers. Within the last 24 hours over hundred people of Kamajani area in Giabandha Sadar upazila lost their homestead. During the last one week, around 450 families of Kuchkhali, Chandaneshwar and Khatiamari villages in Fulchhari upazila have lost their houses due to erosion by the Jamuna, said Jainul Abedin Jalal, chairman of Fazlupur union parishad in Fulchhari upazila. People who were staying on flood shelters and embank-

ments have started returning to their houses, mostly ravaged by floodwater. People are still using banana tree rafts and country boats to cross the breached points of roads and embankments. Many points small bridges and culverts also collapsed due to strong current. People of three unions remained isolated due to breaching of large portion of flood control embankment-cum-road at Tarapur in Sundarganj upazila. The surging water washed away 300 metres of the flood control embankment at Singria in Fulchhari upazila and 250 metres of Sonail flood control embankment in Badiakhali union under Gaibandha Sadar upazila. "We cannot carry goods to markets as roads are badly damaged," said Shariful, a small trader of Kamarpara village in Saghata upazila. Our Barisal correspondent adds: Most of the betel gardens in Ujirpur Upazila of the district went under water nearby rivers overflowed due to heavy rain and tidal surges. Most of the betel plantations in Shikarpur, Guthia and Sholak unions under the upazila got damaged. If waterlogging continues one week more, the betel gardens will be fully destroyed, said Abul Kalam Molla, chairman of Shikarpur union parishad. "I have raised three betel gardens but those have been badly affected by heavy rain and tidal surge. Most of the gardens have collapsed and the roots of plants are rotting," said Manoranjan Mitra, a farmer of Shikarpur village in Ujirpur upazila. Jamal Molla, a farmer of Guthia village in the same upazila, said most of the betel fields are damaged by water from the overflowing Sandhya River. "The government should sanction loan to help us as recoup the huge loss this year," he said. Ramendra Nath Mandal, DAE deputy director of Barisal, said betel plantations on 310 hectares of land out of 2353 hectares in the district have already been badly affected by waterlogging.

SNIPPETS

Day labourer electrocuted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A day labourer was electrocuted at Dalgacha village in Nandigram upazila yesterday. The deceased was Solaiman Ali, 45, of Nageshwaritola in Kurigram. Police and locals said Solaiman came to the house of Motiur Rahman of the area to plant paddy seedlings. In the morning, he was trying to keep his wet clothes on the roof and came in contact with a live electric wire. Hearing screams, two other labourers came to save him and got electrocuted. Later, Solaiman died on the way to a hospital.

Schoolgirl gang-raped

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

A schoolgirl was allegedly gang-raped in Kawkhali upazila of the district on Saturday. When the eighth grader was returning home from the school in the area, Asadul, 19, and Raju, 22, picked up her and took her to a nearby empty house. They later raped her, alleged the victim's mother. The girl was sent to Pirojpur Sadar Hospital for medical test, said police.

College student found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Police recovered the body of a college student from the Jamuna River in Dhigolkandi area under Shariakandi yesterday. The deceased was Rony Hossain, 20, son of Sarwar Hossain of Malgram area in the town, and a third year student of Government Shah Sultan College. Police said on Saturday, Rony along with his four friends went to take a bath in the river and went missing.

Tk 2.5 crore cosmetics seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) seized a truck carrying Indian cosmetics worth about Tk 2.5 crore from Amrakhali area on Benapole-Jessore highway yesterday. On secret information, the border guards raided the area and the cosmetic-laden truck. However, none was arrested in this connection, said Jahangir Hossain, commanding officer of BGB-26 Battalion.

Body recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Police recovered the body of a garment worker from Fatehpur Kandapara field area in Kendua upazila of Netrakona district on Saturday. The victim was Habibur Rahman, 22, son of Golam Mustafa of Fatehpur Kandapara village. A case was filed in this connection.

Woman burnt to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A woman, who suffered serious burn injuries in a fire in Phulbari upazila of the district on Saturday, died at Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH) yesterday. The deceased was Monira Begum, 30, daughter of Manik Mia of Madilahat village. Police and locals said a fire broke out at the shop of Manik Mia around 7:30pm on Saturday and soon engulfed the adjoining house of the shopkeeper. Manik's wife Rubiya Begum, 55, daughter Monira and son Rony, 25, sustained serious burn injuries during the incident. The three were rushed to RMCH where Monira died yesterday.

College girl loses legs under train

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A college girl lost her both legs after jumping under the wheels of a running train at Dinajpur Railway Station yesterday. The victim, Rikta Begum, 26, is a Masters student at Dinajpur Government College. Witnesses said Rikta jumped in front of the Dhaka-bound train to com-

SOLAR POWER INSTALLATION IN KAUNIA

Payment made, work yet to start

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Payment to a company hired for installing solar systems in 243 different establishments of Rangpur was allegedly made before completion of the work in the 2015-16 FY. Sources in the Project Implementation Officer's office said Abdul Aziz, Project Implementation Officer (PIO) of Kaunia upazila, disbursed the payment of Tk 71.65 lakh to the contracted company Rarimafrooz before the end of 2015-16 FY on June 30. The funds for the project came from Test Relief and Food for Work programmes. The company was to install solar power systems in 146 ultra poor households of 6 unions, 9 educational insti-

tutions, 82 mosques and 6 temples in Kaunia upazila. The work was to be completed before June 30 in the last fiscal year, but it is yet to be started, though another fiscal year has begun, said the sources. The PIO disbursed the payment allegedly showing 100% completion of the work, though the rule is that payment cannot be disbursed until completion of the work. Abdul Aziz said he disbursed the payment as there was some problem, but he declined to elaborate the statement. The payment was deposited in the bank on June 30 in consultation with Kaunia upazila administration. The contracted company was urged to complete the work within August 30,

otherwise it would be bound to refund the payment. Nadim Iqbal, area manager of Rahimafrooz in Rangpur, said they could not start the work on time, and there were several reminders from the PIO to start the work. Sources said some dishonest officials and ruling party men have been trying to embezzle the fund, but they can't as the company is not giving any money to anybody. Abdul Hannan, secretary of Kaunia upazila AL, said the allegation of embezzlement is not true. Syed Forhat Hossain, UNO of Kaunia, said his office, in consultation with Deputy Commissioner Rahat Anwar, tried to complete the work as early as possible.



A frustrated Ashrafal Haque shows flood-damaged potol plants of his field at Sardarpara village of Panchgachhi union under Kurigram Sadar upazila. PHOTO: STAR



Villagers in Kalabagan under Shivalaya upazila of Manikganj hung a fishing cat (locally known as mechho bagh) from a tree after killing the animal yesterday although killing of such wild animals is prohibited and a punishable offence. The animal had taken shelter at a guava orchard in the area due to flood.

PHOTO: STAR

Form land commission for plain land Adivasi people

Indigenous leaders demand

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Leaders of the indigenous people yesterday demanded formation of a separate land commission for the plain land indigenous people of the country to protect their land rights and defend their interests. They were speaking at an Adivasi Sanskritik Utshab in Muroi punjee area in Kulaura upazila town of the district, marking the upcoming World Indigenous Day on August 9. Human rights defenders and indigenous people's development services organised cultural functions and discussions on the rights and problems of indigenous people. Silvester Pathang, local union parishad member and chair of the programme, said

the land commission for plain land adivasi should comprise members of the communities. He demanded a national policy for all indigenous communities and a separate ministry for the indigenous people of the plain lands. Journalist Saleh Elahi Kutti, in his speech as the chief guest said, "We should learn more about the land issue to solve some of the problems. It is an issue for the higher authorities to settle." Joyanto Raksham, human resource officer of indigenous people's development services, said there should be a law banning transfer of land from indigenous people to non-indigenous people. The programme was conducted by Hiramam Talang.

10,000 Yaba tablets seized

A CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested a drug trader with 10,000 Yaba tablets from a passenger bus in Jessore Sadar upazila on Saturday. The arrestee is Kamal Hossain, 20, son of Abdus Salam of Teknaf upazila in Cox's Bazar. Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-6 intercepted Shohag Paribahan on Jessore-Magura highway in the afternoon and arrested the youth with the Yaba worth about Tk 9.88 lakh. A case was filed in this connection, said Illias Hossain, officer-in-charge of Jessore Police Station.