

Ensure better education

Speakers urge Bandarban admin

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Speakers said the authorities of Bandarban Hill District Council (BHDC) should be more sincere to ensure better education in primary sector.

They said this at a view exchange meeting jointly organised by Kapaeng Foundation and Campaign for Popular Education in the town yesterday.

"BHDC have been recruiting teachers politically for the last few years and most of the teachers do not go to the appointed remote schools. They become attached with schools in the town after negotiating with the authorities of BHDC," said Aung Thoai Sing Marma, chairman of Ruma Upazilla Parishad.

How will indigenous children be educated in remote hills as most of the teachers there take classes in town in the name of deputation, the speakers alleged.

They also suggested educated indigenous people should be recruited as teachers in remote locations.

"Bandarban district council has to face many challenges while trying to ensure better education in remote places" said Singyoung Mro, member of Bandarban Hill District Council.

Deputy Commissioner Dilip Kumar Banik, Prof Shourav Sikder of Dhaka University, Sadar UNO Sujon Chowdhury, Thanchi Upazilla Chairman Kya Hla Sing Marma and executive member of Kapaeng Foundation Lalung Khumi were present.



Visually-impaired Pares Chandra Barmon at his shop at Kacharipara village in Bhada union of Lalmonirhat's Aditmari upazila. PHOTO: STAR

Begging is not a job

Says visually-impaired grocer in Lalmonirhat

S Dilip Roy with Andrew Eagle

Pares Chandra Barmon, 46, from Kacharipara village in Bhada union of Lalmonirhat's Aditmari upazila doesn't consider begging to be a profession. If he did beg, he would hardly stand out because Pares is visually impaired. Instead, he contributes to family expenses by running a humble grocery store.

"Many villagers encouraged me to beg," says Pares. "But I didn't listen. As I know, begging is a bad practice that can never bring mental satisfaction so I wasn't tempted." Having previously raised cows in the household yard, six years ago he opened his small shop with business capital of just Tk 1500. He sells cigarettes and bidis, betel leaf, chocolate, chanachur Bombay mix and biscuits.

"I pay Tk 200 monthly rent for the shop," he says, "and from selling around Tk 300 goods per day I earn a daily income of Tk 60 or so." It's hardly enough to cover the living costs of a family of four, and his wife Fuleshwari Rani, 28, also works, earning around Tk 120 per day, as a day labourer. But while the income from Pares's store might not cover the whole of the family's expenses, it's a welcome contribution.

He also receives a disability pension of Tk 500 per month which he spends on his son Pabiro Roy's education. Pabiro studies in class four at a local government primary school. The couple have another son, Goutom Roy, aged two.

"My dream is to invest around Tk 30,000 to enlarge my grocery business but I don't know if I'll ever be able to," says Pares.

"Pares has been visually impaired since he was four years old," says relative Manoranjan Barmon, 65. "He suffered typhoid and despite extended treatment never fully recovered. He can barely see but he is honest and sincere, which is the reason many villagers like to buy goods from his shop."

Indeed the villagers aren't solely his customers. They also help Pares when he has to buy stock from wholesalers.

"Of course I knew my husband was visually impaired when I married him twelve years ago," says Fuleshwari, "and since our marriage I have been working as a day labourer every day. But I never regret my fate. I love my husband too much and we have a dream to educate our sons, which we are working towards."

DOUBLE MURDER OVER OSMANINAGAR UZ POLLS Situation still tense

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A tense situation is prevailing among the people of Osmaninagar upazila of Sylhet fearing arrest and further clashes following death of two people in a clash between two factions of ruling Awami League on Sunday and Monday centring the upcoming upazila parishad elections.

Osmaninagar upazila parishad will go for polls on March 6. Earlier, Election Commission announced the schedule on February 1.

Mohammad Kamrul Islam, a resident of Uttar Kalnirchar village, said local people are passing their days amid fear of fresh violence as the double murder has completely changed the election atmosphere.

Nabin Das of Dakkhin Kalnirchar village said most of the villagers have fled their houses and are staying at relatives' houses or other places to avoid arrest.

Omaninagar Upazila Nirbahi Officer Shawkat Ali, also assistant returning officer, said the double murder incident will not affect the upcoming election.

Earlier, 17-year-old Saiful Islam, son of Saraf Uddin of Uttar Kalnirchar village, was shot dead and at least fifty others were injured in a clash on Sunday.

Police and witnesses said the incident occurred while six supporters of AL nominated chairman candidate Ataur Rahman were having tea at a stall on Saturday evening.

At one state, AL rebel candidate Jaglul Chowdhury's men approached them and wanted the six to support Jaglul, which they refused to do, triggering an altercation between the two groups.

As a sequel, Jaglul's supporters including Bahar Mia attacked the boys with firearms and sharp weapons on Sunday, said Officer-in-Charge Abdul Awal Chowdhury of Osmaninagar Police Station.

Saiful was shot dead on the spot during the clash that lasted for nearly two hours, the OC added.

Among the 50 injured, Sohel Mia, 30, son of Mahmud Mia of Kalicharan village, died at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital on Monday while undergoing treatment there.

5 Shibir men held in Bogra

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Five activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir were detained from a madrasa at Chandpur village in Bogra Sadar upazila yesterday while they were allegedly planning subversive activities.

The arrestees are Mehedi Hasan, 22, Atiqur Rahman, 19, Shafiqul Islam, 19, Nur Alam, 23, and Ahsanul Kabir, 20, of the village.

Inspector (investigation) Aslam Ali of Sadar Police Station said a police team, acting on a tip-off, raided Chandpur Ebtedayee Madrasa around 7:00am and arrested them while they were holding a secret meeting there.

Bamboo palings to stop river erosion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kurigram

Over two thousand people of four villages are constructing bamboo palings at their own initiative as protection against erosion by the Dharla river.

The people of Shatvita, Nunkarchar, Nandadulaler Bhita and Kayem Barayebari villages in Bhogdanga union under Kurigram Sadar upazila are constructing the palings on a 500-metre stretch on the eastern bank of the Dharla river at Nunkarchar village.

Labourer Habibur Rahman, 50, of Nunkarchar said, "Erosion devoured my houses and farmland in the last two years. If erosion is not controlled, more areas of farmlands and homesteads may go into the river this year."

In the last floods, erosion washed away many croplands, trees and houses of about ten villages in Bhogdanga union and now Nandadulaler Bhita Government Primary School is facing erosion as the river is flowing about 13 metres from the school building, said Ansar Ali, 70, of Nandadulaler Bhita village.

Mujibur Rahman of the village said they informed the chairman and ruling party leaders about erosion by the Dharla river, but they did not take any steps to stop it, though they provide rice and cash after erosion.

The villagers decided to construct bamboo palings on the bank of the river at their own initiative when the authorities did not respond, Mujibur said, adding that over two thousand people of the four villages joined in the construction of the palings.

Ward Member Ashadul Islam said villagers collected over 2,000 bamboos in two months and started the construction work in Nunkarchar village about 20 days ago, adding that they have completed 40 percent of the palings.

Bhogdanga Union Parishad Chairman Saidur Rahman said 11 palings will be constructed in a 500-metre stretch along the river, where the length of each paling will be 20 to 30 metres. Construction work is

The villagers decided to set bamboo palings on the bank of Dharla river at their own initiative as the authorities did not respond.

expected to be completed in March, he said, adding that the union parishad gave some financial support for the work.

Executive Engineer of Kurigram Water Development Board Shafiqul Islam said, "We are preparing some projects to prevent erosion in 12.5 km area on both sides of the Dharla river. We are also giving logistic support to the construction of the bamboo palings."

College girl's slit-throat body found

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

The slit-throat body of a female student of Khagrachhari Government College was found in the town on Monday night.

As the news of her death spread, students of the college staged demonstration yesterday, demanding immediate arrest and exemplary punishment to the killers of the girl.

The victim was Iti Chakma, 18, a second year HSC student of the institution, said Md Sujadullah, sub-inspector of Khagrachhari Police Station.

She lived with her elder sister Jonaki Chakma and brother-in-law at a rented house in Arambag area of the town for the last five years, said family members.

Informed by locals, police recovered the body from the house in the area around 11:15pm, said police.

When the incident occurred, Iti stayed alone at the house, said the SI.

Criminals might have killed her, the police official said, adding that Jonaki Chakma filed a murder case.



Farmer Jinnat Ali takes care of his chilli plants in a field at Rampur village under Sharsha upazila of Jessore as the area sees good yield of the essential item this season. PHOTO: STAR

Chilli price hike delights farmers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Green chilli growers in the district are delighted with fair price of the item this season.

Traders said now one maund of green chilli is selling for Tk 1600 to Tk 1800 in different local kitchen markets and Tk 1200 to Tk 1300 in wholesale markets, which is luckily lower than the production cost.

According Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Jessore, the spicy item was cultivated on 986 hectares of land in all the

upazilas of the district, which is 30 acres more than the actual target.

District Agriculture Officer Kazi Habibur Rahman said Jessore DAE provided all sorts of necessary support to the growers to make the farming successful this year.

Seeing the windfall of fellow farmers, many growers are now showing interest in green chilli farming, Habibur added.

Jinnat Ali, a farmer of Sharsha upazila, said he cultivated the item on two bighas of land spending Tk 3,800 this season and has already earned Tk

6,000 by selling the item and expecting Tk 9,000 more by selling the rest of the crop.

Korban Ali, a trader at Benapole Bazar, said he purchases green chilli for Tk 1200 per maund from the wholesale market and sales each kg of the item for Tk 40.

Sharsha Upazila Agricultural Officer Hiral Kumar Sarker said they have arranged special training programme on modern farming techniques to motivate the farmers and visited the crop fields regularly.



People of four nearby villages in Bhogdanga union of Kurigram Sadar upazila render voluntary service, setting bamboo stakes on the Dharla river at Nunkarchar to protect their farmlands and homesteads from erosion. PHOTO: STAR

Sand lifting unabated

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Unabated illegal sand lifting from the Sonai river has led to erosion of agricultural land and homesteads in Barlekha upazila of Moulvibazar and Beanibazar upazila of Sylhet.

Some influential people have long been using dredgers to lift sand from the river. Sobur Mia of Atua village under Barlekha upazila said, "We requested them several times not to lift sand from near our farmland but they did not listen to us."

Locals said they complained to the assistant commissioner (land) several times about the sand lifting, but to no effect.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found a dredger lifting sand from Dhopa Dahar near a Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) camp in Nayagram village under Beanibazar upazila.

Locals alleged that dredging is done at night without permission. Later, the sand is transported to other places on motorised vessels.

The locals whose lands have been eroded or are threatened with erosion keep mum in fear of reprisal.

Freedom fighter Totiur Rahman alleged that dredging during the last monsoon led to erosion of his half bigha of farmland. Locals alleged that two local political leaders have been lifting sand illegally for the last four months.

Dredger workers Jubair Hossain, Kala Miah, Russel Ahmed and Monir Hossain told this correspondent that local Awami League (AL) activists Faisal Ahmed and Kabir Ahmed hired them for sand lifting.

Kabir told this correspondent that they extracted sand after talking with the local AL leader and BGB.

Uttar Shahbazpur Union Parishad Chairman (acting) Selim Ahmed said the illegal dredging is causing erosion that affects farmlands.

BGB 52 Battalion Commander (acting) Major Ashikur Rahim said the statement that BGB was consulted and the allegation that sand lifting is taking place near a BGB camp are wrong.

Assistant Commissioner (Land) of Barlekha Upazila Samir Biswas told this correspondent that action will be taken against the illegal dredging.

Two jailed for drug peddling

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

A court here yesterday awarded jail sentences to two drug peddlers.

The convicts are Md Shafikul Islam of Shialkathi village and Md Jafor Howlader of Charkhali village in Bhandaria upazila.

Pirojpur District and Sessions Judge Md Golam Kibria pronounced the verdict after examining the evidence and witnesses.

The court sentenced Shafikul to ten years imprisonment and Jafor to five years. The court also fined Shafikul Tk 20,000 and Jafor Tk 10,000, in default, to serve six more months in jail.

The case statement said Rab-8 Battalion in Barisal caught Shafikul with 200 Yaba pills and Jafore with 100 Yaba pills from Charkhali on February 1 in 2016.