

MJF condemns Longadu attacks
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Development organisation Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) and its associate partners yesterday strongly condemned the arson attacks on houses and shops of indigenous people at Tintila and Manikjhorchhara in Longadu upazila of Rangamati.

MJF in a press statement said over 200 houses and shops in Tintila, 40 houses in Manikjhorchhara and 40 in Baittapara were completely gutted by the blaze.

The attack, which started centring recovery of the body of a Bangalee settler in Khagrachhari, cannot be supported at all, it added.

The body of local Jubo League man Nurul Islam Nayan was recovered by police from beside the Khagrachhari-Dighinala road at Charmile on Thursday. Later, several hundred people from

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2012 ARSON CASE

34 BNP men including Alal indicted

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday framed charges against thirty-four BNP leaders and activists, including BNP Joint Secretary General Moazzem Hossain Alal, in connection with a case filed over vandalising and torching vehicles in Paltan in 2012.

Earlier in the day, the same court issued an arrest against Alal after canceling his bail as he was absent in the court yesterday.

BNP leader Habibunnabi Khan Sohel and 22 others, now on bail, pleaded not guilty and demanded justice after Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Kaisarul Islam read out the charges to them.

BNP leaders—Sultan Salauddin Tuku, Sarafat ali Safu, Saiful Alam Nirob and seven others—have been absconding since the case was filed against them.

The court fixed September 3 for starting trial of the case.

According to the case statement, it was alleged that a group of BNP leaders and activists led by Alal brought out a procession and vandalised and torched vehicles in the city's Paltan area about 6:45pm on April 23, 2012.

Later, the case was filed against Alal, Tuku, Nirob, Safu and 30 others with Paltan Police Station. Police on October 5 of 2013 pressed charges against them.

SC extends govt decision to hike gas price
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday extended its order that upheld the government decision to hike the gas price in the second phase from June 1.

The apex court, however, asked the High Court to hear and dispose of its (HC) rule issued over the legality of the government decision to increase the price in the second phase from June 1.

Following a plea moved by Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) seeking a stay on the High Court order, it asked the HC bench led by Justice Zinat Ara to hear and dispose of the rule by July 31.

On May 30, the SC stayed until yesterday a HC order that stayed the decision of increasing the gas price from June 1.

The HC on February 28 stayed for six months the

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THE ROAD FORGOTTEN... This unmaintained road, Tally Office Road near Wasa old pump in Rayer Bazar, is used by thousands who live in the low-priced housings on both sides of Beribadh (embankment) road near the martyred intellectual memorial. The decaying of the road started about 15 years ago when the authorities replaced its perfectly-working open drain with a narrow underground pipeline. Over time, indiscriminate dumping of garbage clogged up the pipeline. Now, with no drainage system in existence, the road is dotted with hundreds of small to medium potholes where ankle-deep puddles of water are created even after a light shower. During the dry season, the road is blanketed with a cloud of dust -- a source of respiratory diseases common in almost every household in the area. The photo was taken on Wednesday.

PHOTO: FIROZ A MUZHAFID

PLIGHT OF LONGADU ARSON VICTIMS



1) Seventy-five-year-old Panthamukhi Chakma of Tintila village is being carried in a makeshift stretcher by her relatives to a safer place in Mahajanpara. Unable to walk due to old age, she used to move around in a wheelchair. When the attackers torched her house on Friday morning, the elderly woman crawled out of the wheelchair and hid in a nearby jungle to save her life. Her relatives rescued her the next morning when they also found the charred wheelchair in the burned down house. 2) Members of one of the families that took shelter at Tintila Ban Bihar, a Buddhist monastery. 3) A deserted Rangamati College Gate area during a half-day blockade called by United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) in Rangamati protesting the Longadu attack. 4) Several of the indigenous people inside the Tintila Ban Bihar.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

HC questions NSTU VC's qualifications for appointment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday questioned the legality of appointment of Prof M Wahiduzzaman as vice chancellor of Noakhali Science and Technology University (NSTU) following a writ petition claiming that he has no degree in science and technology.

It issued a rule asking the authorities concerned of the government to explain why the appointment of Wahiduzzaman as VC of NSTU should not be declared illegal.

In the rule, it also asked the respondents to show cause under what authority Prof Wahiduzzaman has been holding the post of VC.

The secretary to the secondary and higher secondary division of the education ministry, registrar of NSTU and Prof Wahiduzzaman have been made respondents to the rule, Advocate Monjur Alam, a lawyer for the writ petitioner, told The Daily Star.

The bench of Justice Md Ashfaque Islam and Justice Ashish Ranjan Das came up with the rule following the writ petition filed by Dr Md Anwarul Bashar, an assistant professor of NSTU, challenging the legality of the appointment of Prof Wahiduzzaman as VC.

Advocate Monjur said Dr M Wahiduzzaman was appointed VC of NSTU on May 31, 2014, although he has not any degree in the science and technology.

Under the rules of Noakhali Science and Technology University Act, 2001, the VC of the university must have a degree in science and technology, he added.

Advocate Shahdeen Malik appeared for the writ petitioner.

A green treat for nature lovers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A strange bloom immediately captures visitors' attention. It uncannily resembles a human-hand blooming on a plant. The curiosity piqued, one is compelled to ask what this plant is. Meet the fingered citron, also known as the Buddha's hand. Brought from Thailand, this is just one of many rare species of plants adding a further shine on the on-going National Tree Fair 2017.

The fingered citron is available at the stall of Barisal Nursery of Savar. Nursery employee, Nazrul Islam, said the fruit tastes like lemon and is used in salad dishes to add flavour. Each is priced between Tk 300 to 350, Nazrul said.

"We keep rare species at the nursery as people want to have those in their gardens and orchards," he said, informing that they



Visitors at the National Tree Fair in the capital yesterday. Inset, a fingered citron.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

are displaying over 600 different types of plants. The price range at the stall is from Tk 150 to 15,000.

Another star of the fair is found at Rashed Nursery from Ashulia, currently displaying a rare species of cactus which costs Tk 3,00,000.

Several tree lovers have already showed interest in buying the cactus for Tk one lakh, said Nazmul, an employee of the nursery.

To the delight of all tree lovers, numerous species of plants are being showcased at the month-long National Tree Fair 2017, going on at the capital's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, since Sunday.

The forest department is holding the fair which was formally inaugurated by Prime

Two AL MPs oppose additional excise duty on bank deposits

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two Awami League MPs yesterday in parliament urged the finance minister to reconsider the proposed additional excise duty on bank deposits, saying it would create mistrust among people over banking services.

Whip Shahiduzzaman Sarker and former chief whip Abdus Shahid made the call during a discussion on the supplementary budget for the 2016-17 fiscal year.

"Panic spread among people over the excise duty. Rural people keep Tk 1 or 2 lakh deposited in banks but they now fear that their money will be deducted," Shahiduzzaman said, urging Finance Minister AMA Muhith not to raise the excise duty.

The proposed budget raised the

excise duty from Tk 500 to Tk 800 for accounts with balances between Tk 1 lakh and Tk 10 lakh at any time of the year.

The ruling party whip suggested that the minister increase the income tax or other direct taxes, reducing the VAT net. "If it is possible, people will get a respite."

He also asked the finance minister not to reduce the interest rate on national saving certificates.

Ex-chief whip Shahid said people had objections over the additional excise duty on bank deposits. "So I would request the finance minister to reconsider it."

Taking part in the discussion, Agricultural Minister Matia Chowdhury said 27 ministries or agencies sought only Tk 18,370 crore in the supplementary budget, which was not a big amount.

Noting that the government spent Tk

3.17 lakh crore from the budget of Tk 3.4 lakh crore, she said the government did not spend the public money whimsically. "It's the competence of the government," she said.

"The 27 ministries spent more than what was allocated. If we wish all the ministries could do so but we did not do so."

Matia cited the names of 10 ministries or divisions that placed the demands of large allocations in the supplementary budget. They are Technical and Madrasah Education Division, Security Service Division, Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Housing and Public Works, Road Transport and Highways Division, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, Local Government Division, Ministry of Environment and Forests, and Power Division.

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