

Absence in school presence in book!

Two Sunamganj teachers sign attendance register in advance

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Two teachers of Bir Dakkhin Government Primary School in Sunamganj's Dharmapasha upazila have been accused of allegedly signing the school attendance register in advance.

They are assistant teachers Bazlur Rashid Chowdhury and Humayun Kabir.

Acting Headmaster Monwara Begum said the upazila primary education officer visited the school on Monday (September 18) and found that the two teachers had signed the attendance book till September 21.

One of the accused teachers Humayun Kabir said he did that mistakenly. Meanwhile, despite repeated attempts teacher Bazlur Rashid could not be reached over phone for his comment in this regard.

Lutfur Rahman, president of the school managing committee, said Bazlur and Humayun do not come to the school regularly.

Most of the time they remain absent in their classes, he added.

Dharmapasha Upazila Primary Education Officer Rokeya Akhter said departmental action will be taken against the two teachers for signing the attendance book in advance.

Sunamganj District Primary Education Officer Mohammad Bayezid Ahmad said advance signing in attendance register is illegal.



Women from this year's recurrent flood-affected haor areas stand in a queue for relatively cheap rice under the government's OMS programme at a sales centre of Bodipur in Doarabazar upazila under Sunamganj. Amid such hardship for daily living, most of the Hindus in the area will have to do away with the special arrangements for Durga Puja, their biggest religious festival, starting from Tuesday. PHOTO: STAR

Body to probe Munshiganj fire

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

A six-member probe committee was formed to look into the textile mill fire that killed six workers in Munshiganj on Wednesday.

The district administration formed the committee, headed by Additional District Magistrate AKM Shawkat Alam.

Meanwhile, the postmortems of the dead were held at Munshiganj General Hospital and the bodies handed over to their relatives yesterday.

The factory remained closed after the fire incident, said police.

Deputy Commissioner Shaila Farzana gave Tk 25,000 to family of each victim.

The deceased were Babu Mia, 22, Ratan Mia, 22, Mohammad Sajeeb, 23, Mohammad Israfil, 23, Nazmul Hasan, 22, and Hasina Begum, 50.

Five people, including the general manager of the mill, were detained, said Additional Police Superintendent Mostafizur Rahman.

The fire broke out during welding work on the ground floor of the six-storey warehouse of Ideal Textile Mills at Char Muktarpur around 10:00am on Wednesday and spread quickly after coming in contact with flammable chemicals stored there, said Jaynal Abedin, in-charge of Muktarpur Marine Police Outpost.

Joy of Durga Puja elusive

Flood-hit Hindus in haor areas of Sunamganj struggle for survival

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Sunamganj

Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of the Bangalee Hindus, is knocking at the door but people belonging to the community in the haor areas of Sunamganj are far from being in a festive mood, as this year's recurrent floods wreaked havoc on their livelihood.

"We the haor people celebrate Durga Puja with much zeal and fervour every year. But this year the situation is different as we are struggling for survival. I had planted Boro this year, taking loan from a local lender. But the flood ruined everything," said Subash Biswas, a farmer of Brojonathpur under Khorchar Haor of Bishwamvarpur upazila of Sunamganj.

Jamuna Das, 45, wife of a farmer hailing from Kurbanpur under Doarabazar upazila, came to Bodipur area for relatively cheaper OMS rice.

"After losing Boro, my husband cultivated Aman crops on one acre. But it was also washed away by the flood in mid-August. We are now

empty-handed ahead of Durga Puja. Our three kids are crying for new dresses while I am standing in the line for OMS rice," she said.

Similar stories are now common across the haor areas, where most of the farmers were left in despair after the floods destroyed their Boro crops, fish and livestock in a region where people depend on agriculture for their livelihoods.

The Hindu community people in the haor areas of the district are far from being in a festive mood, although their biggest festival Durga Puja starts on Tuesday, said Nurul Huda, chairman of Sunamganj district council.

Amid sufferings due to loss of crops in floods, arrangement of special delicacies and buying new clothes to celebrate Durga Puja seems an unaffordable luxury for the affected families, he added.

Kamruzzaman Kamrul, chairman of Tahirpur Upazila Parishad in Sunamganj, said, "Many people in the haor areas lost everything in floods. I have written to the authorities con-

cerned to take proper steps for providing all sorts of aid to these farmers. But the government assistance we have received so far is not enough."

Bindu Talukder, member-secretary of Haor Bachao, Sunamganj Bachao Andolon, said, "Half of the flood victims in the haor areas have not got any relief yet. The government should provide sufficient aid to save these farmers."

"We observed different programmes and submitted memorandum to the prime minister through Sunamganj deputy commissioner, demanding declaration of the district as a 'distressed area' and providing free rationing to save the affected people, especially in haor areas," he said.

According to the district administration, Boro paddy was cultivated on 154 haors comprising two lakh 23 thousand and 8 hectares of land in Sunamganj district. But the crop on one lakh 66 thousand and 612 hectares of land was damaged due to heavy rain and hailstorm in April, affecting 3,25,990 farmers in the district.

Girl found dead in septic tank

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Comilla

A teenage girl was found dead inside the septic tank of a local mosque in Laksam upazila of the district on Wednesday, three days after she went missing.

The deceased, Irin Akter, 18, was daughter of Rustam Mia of Koar village under Bakoi union.

Local people spotted the body, wrapped in a sack, inside the septic tank of Koar Pashchimpara Jame Masjid around 3:00pm and informed the police.

Bakoi Union Parishad Chairman Abdul Awal said Irin studied up to Class VIII but could not continue her study due to poverty. She was missing for the last three days, he said.

Officer-in-Charge of Laksham Police Station Abdullah Al Mahfuz said they recovered the body and sent it to Comilla Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

50 houses damaged as storm hits Jessore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

At least 50 thatched houses were damaged as tornado hit Jessore's Bagharpara upazila on Wednesday.

The villages are Paker Ali, Sreerampur, Ramnagar, Charabhita, Sukhdebnagar, Dashpakhia and Agra.

The storm that lasted for 30 seconds damaged the houses badly at night, said local people.

The affected house owners include Sharif Khan, Sohel Khan, Tofazzal Hossain, Inamul Sarder, Motalib Hossain, Jahangir Alam, Harun Mandal, Nasir Hossain, Atiar Rahman, Ari Hossain, Tariqul Islam, Afsar Ali and Abdul Wazed.



Farmers carry Aus paddy harvested from a field at Kodalkhata village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila. The district sees much less than expected yield this season as the recent floods caused serious damage to the crop. PHOTO: STAR

Aus production fall upsets farmers

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Farmers in the district are worried as their hope of getting bumper production was shattered due to the damage caused by the prolonged flood this season.

They are not getting even one-third of the expected production of Aus this year, though they got expected production last year, farmers said, adding that they cultivated Aus on more land this year with the dream of getting bumper production.

Manindranath Sarker, 48, a farmer of Kodalkhata village in Sadar upazila, said he got only 19 maunds (1 maund = 40 kg) of Aus paddy from three bighas of lands, but his expectation was at least 60 maunds. "I got 43 maunds from two bighas last year, so I cultivated Aus on one more bigha this year," he said, adding that the paddy was under floodwater for five days.

"If there had been no flood in the area I would have got 22 maunds to 25 maunds of Aus paddy from each bigha, but the flood has caused a fall in production," said

Surenranath Sarker, 52, of the same village.

Shamsher Ali, 55, of Basuriya village said standing Aus paddy on his five bighas of land was under floodwater for seven days and was badly damaged. "I got only 30 maunds of paddy, but I could have got 100 maunds to 120 maunds if there was no flood," he added.

"We could not recover even our investment from farming Aus this year due to flood," said Taleb Ali, 62, of the same village. "Aus is our additional crop and it plays an important role in our livelihood but the flood did not allow expected production this year," he added.

Lalmonirhat Department of Agriculture Extension Deputy Director Bidubhushon Roy said Aus was cultivated on 853 hectares of land this year, while it was 750 hectares last year.

Aus paddy was damaged by floodwater, so farmers will have to prepare their lands for cultivating different crops, especially paddy, to recoup their losses in the next season, he added.

Stop extortion

Demand auto-bike drivers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Auto-bike drivers in the district demanded an end to extortion by a section of pro-ruling party drivers.

The demand was made at a human chain in the town on Wednesday. Under the banner of Auto Sramik Odhikar Andolon, auto-bike drivers organised the programme.

The speakers alleged that the auto-bike drivers have to pay tolls at nine points, including Thakurgaon Road, Bhulli, Ruhea, Lahiri, Lohagara, Pirganj, Ranishankoil, Nekmarad and Baliadangi. Everyday a bike driver has to pay Tk 20 at each point.

Auto-bike Sramik Kalyan Society in Thakurgaon collected Tk 3.60 lakh as toll daily from the points. The society has been formed by some auto-bike owners and leaders of district truck and tank-lorry union.

The society also took Tk 120 from each driver in the name of giving identity card of the organisation.

To get relief from the toll collection, they urged the authority concerned to take immediate steps in this regard.

Refuting the allegation of toll collection, General Secretary of the society Siddique Hossain said auto-bike drivers pay an amount for their welfare fund.

Body of girl found hanging

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A 16-year-old schoolgirl was found dead at her residence at Bagdanga village in Monirampur upazila of Jessore on Wednesday night.

The deceased, Nila Khatun, daughter Abdul Halim, was a Class X student at Bagdanga-Dahokula Secondary School.

Quoting deceased's family members, Officer-in-Charge of Monirampur Police Station Mokarem Hossain said Nila's parents went to visit one of their relatives on Wednesday evening, leaving the girl alone at home.

After returning home the same night they found their daughter hanging from the ceiling of her room, he said.

On information, police recovered the body and sent it to Jessore Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

SCHOOL BUILDING IN BAD SHAPE

Classes under open sky

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Students of Dakkhin Bashbaria Government Primary School in Dashmina upazila of the district are attending classes under the open sky as the school building has become unfit for use due to lack of renovation and has been declared abandoned.

The school was established in 1993 in a tin-shed that was constructed with the help of the local people and a small government fund. It has not been renovated since then.

Some classes are being held at nearby Fishermen's Association building due to lack of space. During a recent visit to the school, this correspondent found that classes were being held in the open in front of the school.

Acting headmaster Md Helal Uddin said the authorities declared the school unfit and unusable two years ago, but they have to hold classes outdoors as they have no alternative.

The building is in such a state because the school is not in the upazila-level improvement or construction list, he added.

Parts of the building have developed cracks and rainwater easily enters the building, Helal said.

There is no safe place to even store the official papers of the school, he added.

Acting Upazila Primary Education Officer Md Zahid Uddin said he has informed the higher authorities about the matter and requested immediate steps in this regard.



Students of Bashbaria Government Primary School in Dashmina upazila of Patuakhali attend class under the open sky as their schoolhouse has turned too risky. PHOTO: STAR