

Rice at Tk 10 a kg demanded

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Dinajpur

Demanding rice at Tk 10 per kilogram for the people in the country, Bangladesh Socialist Party (Marxist) staged a demonstration in Rangpur city yesterday. Bangladeshes Samajtantrik Dal (BSD), Rangpur and Rajshahi regional units, organised the programme. The leaders also placed a 13-point demand, including government jobs for every family, Tk 800 ration for every four-member family in the country and cancellation of extended tax on land. Later, they held a rally, presided over by Comrade Ahsanul Habib Sayeed, convener of Gaibandha BSD. Comrade Manas Nandi, member of central executive committee of BSD, and Anwar Hossain Bablu, district coordinator of BSD in Rangpur, spoke at the rally.

Man to die for killing wife

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Mymensingh

A Netrakona court on Sunday sentenced a man to death for killing his pregnant wife in 2016. District and Sessions Judge AKM Rasheduzzaman Raza handed down the verdict after examining the evidence and witnesses, said Court Inspector Md Ziaul Haque. The convict is Sowab Mia, 40, of Sadar upazila. The court also fined him Tk 20,000. The case statement said Sowab, a drug-addict, used to create pressure on Shilpi to bring money from her father. Following an altercation on April 26 in 2016, Sowab strangled Shilpi.

HOUSEWIFE MURDER Husband sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A Sunamganj court sent a man to jail in a case for killing his wife in 2017 rejecting his bail prayer after he appeared before the court yesterday. The accused, Abul Mansur Liton, 33, son of Abdun Nur, is a resident of Himmatergaon village in Chhatak upazila. Meanwhile, Liton's elder brother Abdus Shahid Bapon, 40, another accused has been absconding since filing of the case. Victim's family members said Liton used to torture his wife Isfa Begum, daughter of Azizur Rahman of Bichhana village in Jamalganj upazila, for dowry since their marriage in April 2015. According to the case statement, Liton and his brother Bapon set Isfa afire over the issue on May 6 in 2017. Isfa later died on her way to Dhaka Medical College Hospital the following day.



Migratory birds fluttering across the Hakaluki Haor in Moulvibazar offer a captivating sight for nature lovers. The country's largest marshy wetland, however, sees less than expected winter birds this year as last year's prolonged floods left some negative impacts on the natural foods of the creatures.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

HAKALUKI HAOR STILL UNDER WATER Winter birds' arrival decreases

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Hakaluki Haor, the largest marshy wetland area in the country, is now lively with the chirping and fluttering of flocks of migratory birds, much to the delight of the visitors. However, this winter the area sees decrease in arrival of the birds compared to last year's. "We counted 45,100 birds of 44 species in 40 water bodies of Hakaluki Haor during a survey done on February 3 and 4 while 58,289 birds of 50 species were counted last year," said prominent bird specialist Enam Al

Haque, who lead the team that conducted the survey. Bangladesh Birds Club organised the survey funded by USAID's Climate-Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods (Crel) Project. "Coming of migratory birds depend on the environment. Long-term flood and rain are other problems for guest birds, said Enam Ul Haque, also National Coordinator of Waterfowl Census in Bangladesh. In Hakaluki Haor, 34,264 birds of 56 species were counted in 2016 and the number was 21,631 in 2015, the organisers said.

Last year's lingering flood and rain in December badly affected the environment for the migratory birds, said Palash Sarker, regional coordinator of Crel Project. Fewer migratory birds are seen this winter because the aquatic plants that birds feed on mostly remained submerged due to the high water level of the wetland, said Motin Mia, a resident of Pusainagor village under Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar. Friendly aquatic trees like Hijal, Koroch, Boran and Murta are being planted in Chatalbil and Dohobil areas to create resting places for birds but the

initiative is much less than required, said several locals. Hakaluki Haor comprising 18,115 hectares is spread over six upazilas in Moulvibazar and Sylhet districts. In 1999, the Directorate of Environment declared Hakaluki Haor an ecologically critical area as its natural environment with aquatic trees and plants like Hijal and Koroch were being destroyed, resulting in decrease in the arrival of migratory birds. Later the situation greatly improved with timely initiative by the authorities concerned, along with motivational programmes for locals.



The Barokhata-Jaldhaka road is in an awful condition as Water Development Board cut it to make a bypass to allow the water to flow out during the flood last year, but did not repair it properly.

PHOTO: EAM ASADUZZAMAN

WDB work makes people suffer Jaldhaka-Barokhata road in bad shape as it was used as flood bypass last year

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

The 40-km-long Barokhata-Jaldhaka road connecting Burimari land port with Dinajpur-Dhaka highway is in an awful state. The road goes via Dalia's Teesta barrage to Paglapeer point of Rangpur. Chairman Ataur Rahman of Khalisha Chapani Union Parishad in Dalia upazila said a 700-metre segment of the road stretching from Sadhur Bazar to Teesta barrage is worst affected as Water Development Board (WDB) used it as a flood bypass. "During last year's devastating flood, WDB cut this segment to release excess water from the Teesta river, but did not repair it properly, making the road almost unusable," he added. Visiting the site on Saturday, this correspondent saw that the road had collapsed totally at different places, creating deep ditches and holes. As a result, the road has become narrow and risky, causing immense suffering

for people, particularly those using mechanised vehicles. Microbus driver Hafizur Rahman, 26, of Niz Sheikh Sundar village in Hatibandha upazila, who was repairing his vehicle, said his vehicle went out of order while crossing the road as its back wheels got stuck in a three-foot-deep ditch, almost making it turn turtle. Mini-truck driver Ainal Huq of Shutibari Bazar said parts of vehicles very often broke while passing over the bumpy road. Nilphamari Chamber of Commerce and Industries former president Shafiqul Alam Dablu said the road is important to the business community as it is the shortest way from Rangpur, Nilphamari, Dinajpur, Panchagarh and Thakurgaon to Burimari land port. "Many people of the five districts use Burimari transit point to go to India as it reduces 52 km of the distance compared to the Rangpur-Lalmonirhat-Burimari highway," he

added. Locals said the distance between Burimari land port to Rangpur via Lalmonirhat is 140 km, while it is only 88 km by the alternate Barokhata-Jaldhaka road via Teesta barrage. WDB's Dalia Division's Sub-divisional Engineer Hafizul Huq said they used a 700-metre segment of the road as flood by-pass during last year's flood by cutting it to divert the water of the Teesta, adding that they repaired it but it got damaged again. Atiar Rahman, chairman of Goddimari Union Parishad in Hatibandha upazila, through which the road passes, said they had requested the WDB authority in Dalia to repair the damaged road segment, but no step has been taken yet. Executive Engineer of Dalia WDB's Mechanical Division Shamsuzzaman said the higher authorities have been informed about the situation and repair work will start after availability of fund.

CHT body seeks rules of business

Land Commission chairman tells the first meet after his re-appointment

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Chittagong Hill Tracts Land Commission yesterday held its first meeting after re-appointment of Justice Anwar-ul Haque as chairman of the commission. "We will request the government to make rules of business for the Land Commission soon. So far, 22,000 applications have been submitted from three hill districts, seeking resolution of land-related problems," the commission chairman said after the meeting that continued from 11:00am to 2:00pm at Rangamati Circuit House in the district town. "We will open two branch offices at Rangamati and Bandarban very soon. At first we will start work for the refugee people, those who had gone to India. We will also work for all people of Chittagong Hill Tracts very soon," he added. Jyotirindra Bodhipriyo Larma (popularly known as Santu Larma), chairman of CHT Regional Council, said, "In today's meeting, we discussed ways to take forward the commission's work. For this purpose, the commission will take steps for appointment of sufficient manpower soon." "I hope that the commission will work for solving the problem of the people who lost their lands in the hill tracts region. The traditional customs have to be taken into serious consideration regarding the matter," said Debasish Roy, Chakma Circle chief. Among others, Chacing Prue, Mong Circle chief, Uchu Prue Chowdhury, Bomang Circle chief, and Brisho Ketu Chakma, chairman of Rangamati Hill District Council, were present at the meeting. Anwar-ul Haque was appointed the chairman of CHT Land Commission for the second term on December 11 last year, after expiry of his three-year contact at the same position. The Chittagong Hill Tracts Land Dispute Resolution Commission (Amendment) Act-2016 was approved in August, 2016.

Flower growers upbeat

Florists in Jessore expect Tk 30cr trade this spring

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Flower growers at Godkhali in Jessore's Jhikargachha upazila are passing hectic time ahead of celebrations of the first day of spring, Pahela Falgun, as well as Ekushey February, the International Mother Language Day, and Valentine's Day. They expect to sell flowers worth Tk 30 crore in this month-long festive season, said MA Rahim, president of Godkhali Flower Traders Association. The farmers are already supplying flowers to the market from February 10. They are working day and night at their gardens to meet the demand for a wide variety of flowers like roses, gerberas, gladioli, dahlias and sunflowers ahead of the celebrations. Flower cultivation has brought prosperity to many in the area. The wholesale flower market at Godkhali is the source of 70 percent of the entire flower supply of the country, said florist Hafiza Khatun. Traders said sale of flowers gears up with the celebrations, especially Valentine's Day. Farmers are also expecting to get good prices on the day, said locals. Local flower trader Ismail Hossain said, "We are getting orders from different places of the country. I'm ready to supply flowers as per their requirements."



A grower plucks flowers from his land at Godkhali village in Jessore's Jhikargachha upazila.

PHOTO: STAR