

Schoolboy electrocuted, potter found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushiya

A 13-year-old schoolboy was electrocuted in Gangni upazila of Meherpur yesterday. Victim Tony Hossain was Class VII student of Karamdi High School, and son of Gias Uddin of Sawratola village. Police and family sources said Tony came in contact with a live electric wire when he went to switch on the water pump at their house. He died on the spot. Meanwhile, police recovered the body of Krishna Biswas, 43, a potter of Juginda village from a field in the upazila the same day. Gangni police said Krishna went out of his house to bring a betel leaf from a nearby tea stall and did not return since then. The reason behind the death could not be known immediately, said the OC of Gangni Police Station. An unnatural death case was filed in this connection, said the OC.

Call to make Bangla UN official language

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

An online campaign demanding Bangla as the seventh official language of the United Nations Organisation (UNO) was launched in the district yesterday. Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Rasel Subrin inaugurated the campaign at Jamalpur Zila Press Club auditorium at 12:00 noon. Online news portal Jagonews24.com organised the event, which was presided over by press club President MA Jalil and moderated by Jagonews24.com district Correspondent Suvro Mahdi. In the context of historical, cultural and literary background and martyrdom for the language, the speakers pointed out the merits and acceptability of Bangla to be included as one of the official languages of the UNO. They called upon the people at home and abroad to cast their votes for the demand through the news portal's link www.jagonews24.com/MakeBanglaOfficial to create opinion across the globe in favour of the issue.



Shykh Seraj with Shah Alam Jahangir at Shah Agricultural Information Library and Museum at Kaligram in Manda upazila of Naogaon.

PHOTO: HRIDOYE MATI O MANUSH

A hub of knowledge for farmers

Shah Agri Info Library and Museum enlightens farmers in Naogaon

SHYKH SERAJ

For the past nine years, I have been observing the activities of a welfare oriented institution at a remote village. Every day something new is being added there. Its surrounding is getting covered with greenery. Inside, various agricultural tools are being added. Through a wide-range plan, sacrifice and dream, a dreamer named Shah Alam Jahangir is taking this institution forward. I am talking about Shah Agricultural Information Library and Museum at Kaligram in Manda upazila of Naogaon.

After its establishment in 2008, I went to see this initiative for the first time in 2009. Now, it has expanded its scope a lot. There is no commercial purpose here. Shah Jahangir, an assistant teacher of Rajshahi Collegiate School, is working on his own out of passion. Whatever help he is getting from here and there, he uses it for this institution. People of all ages can come here and dream for something more. For those who spend their whole day with the soil and crops, this is a sanctuary. Similarly, the children of Kaligram and nearby areas love to come here to get the touch of soil. It has a different kind of school for farmers' kids. Many children are also learning alphabets and getting tips on primary education from Shah Jahangir.

Farmers' kids have laid a mat on the ground to sit and study. You won't find such an amusing school anywhere else in this age. There is opportunity to study

there with utmost attention. These kids are being raised by the love of the soil. We have talked to the school teacher, Abdul Karim Pramanik.

"The time I spend with the kids is the richest part of my life," says Pramanik.

There is a crop calendar on a wall of the open school. It contains various items of information. Besides kids, farmers are getting enriched and aware. The whole

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house is full of rural and agricultural tools and technologies, which is regarded as the museum. There is also a seminar room in the museum. Over there, farmers discuss and share their problems to get a better solution. The interactivity is lively and very much effective.

What is not there in Shah Jahangir's museum? On the walls, there is a row of mathals (farming hats) of different models collected from different regions of the country. Various kinds of agricultural equipment like the toll for rope knitting,

mango collecting, fish catching, etc are kept here. There are rare books on farmers' health, education and agriculture in the library section. To be noted, Shah Jahangir's ancestral home has been turned into a museum.

At the seminar room, I have seen some farmers watching a video with great interest. This is a regular scene here. Everyday farmers from faraway places come here to learn something new. They come out of curiosity. Some come for their own needs. There are DVDs of various agro-documentaries of both home and abroad. I have seen DVDs of Hridoye Mati O Manush there too. After the evening, those are shown on the big screen to the farmers as farming awareness tool.

I was thinking about International Rice Research Institute's Rice Museum in Los Banos, Philippines. I went there back in 2004. As an international institution, it is not that hard to make such a museum. However, in a rural village, it is a huge thing to make such a museum with rare and traditional agro-equipment.

This library started its journey on April 18, 2008. Jahangir is expanding its scope and activities, like an original and creative work. Already, the reputation of this place is spreading worldwide. Shah Jahangir has also made a website of Shah Agricultural Information Library and Museum.

Shah Jahangir is a dreamer. He is a son of a well-off farmer family. For the sake of protecting his ancestral agriculture heritage, he started building this library as well

as the museum. However, its prospect has extended greatly now. He is thinking about all agricultural issues. Thus, he is trying to do something about the agricultural community as a whole.

Guests from different countries including Japan, India, USA and Canada have visited Shah Jahangir's library and museum. Students from across the country have also visited the place with keen interest for knowledge.

Dear readers, Bangladesh is a country of agricultural heritage. Today, knowledge science and information communication has brought a new balance among people. However, proper knowledge is not being available to the grassroots people equally. We cannot do away with agriculture. It is sad that an agricultural museum is yet to be nationally established in our country. Establishing libraries for farmers is needed to help them study and practise modern farming techniques. In this case, the initiative Shah Jahangir is taking forward step by step is a foundation of our future. To carry this initiative forward, government and private assistance is required. Following the example of Shah Agricultural Information Library and Museum, it is necessary to establish such libraries and museums in different places of the country. It will help people of all professions to learn and concentrate more on farming sector. At the same time, I believe it will play a pivotal role in providing current and latest agricultural information to the farmers and eventually Bangladesh will harvest the best out of it.

Tortured kid rescued at rly station

Police say the boy was being trafficked

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A 5-year-old boy was rescued from Joypurhat railway station platform on Tuesday night.

The boy, Omar Faruk Nayan, told police that his parents are Rubel Hossain and Fatema Begum of Parbatipur upazila of Dinajpur, but he could not tell the name of his village, police said.

Joypurhat Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Selim Hossain said the boy was crying in a corner of the platform in Joypurhat station when some people saw him and informed the police, who took him to the police station.

They found torture marks on Nayan's body and he was treated at Joypurhat Modern Hospital, the OC said.

Police suspect that a gang of human traffickers picked up the boy, but left him at the station.

The boy is now staying at Joypurhat Sadar Police Station.

None held yet for bank guard murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Over six months into the killing of a night guard of Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank's Teesta branch in Sadar upazila, police are yet to find out any clue to the murder or arrest anybody in this connection.

Bank officials and the victim's family members are getting frustrated over the slow progress in the case.

Bank guard freedom fighter Abdur Rashid, 65, of Ratipur village in Sadar upazila was hacked to death by unidentified criminals inside the bank in the early hours on August 16 last year. However, the gang could not take away money from the locker.

Contacted several times for the last six months, police only said they are investigating the case properly, said branch Manager Mohammad Al-Quarani.

The victim's son Masum Miah said police seemed reluctant to arrest the accused due to unknown reason.

However, Mahfuz Alam, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station, said the law enforcers have already identified some culprits but they have gone into hiding.

Flood makes vast farmland sandy

Hundreds of families migrate to distant villages in Nilphamari

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Around 1,000 acres of land in Dimla upazila beside the Teesta river have turned barren as a new channel of the Teesta opened up during the flood in 2016 and left a three feet to four feet high layer of sand on the land.

More than 10,000 people of seven villages in Tapa Kharibari union have been passing their days in untold suffering for the last two years due to loss of the land and jobs, compelling hundreds of families to migrate to distant villages.

"Whim of the Teesta is responsible for the adverse situation as its unwanted channel found its way through Purbo Kharibari, Char Kharibari, Uttar Kharibari, Jhinjirpar, Tapur Char, Mehertari and Dangapara villages during the flood of 2016," said Tapa Kharibari Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Rabiul Islam Shahin.

"The new one-km-wide channel flowed through the villages for 10-km to meet the main river again near Teesta Barrage. When the water receded, it was found that a three feet to four feet high layer of sand had covered a four-square km area, turning around 1,000 hectares of cultivable land into a desert constituting about 50 percent area of the villages," he added.

"This unprecedented calamity affected 2,380 families of farmers and compelled 300 families to migrate to other villages," Shahin said.



Some affected farmers of Purbo Kharibari village in Dimla upazila of Nilphamari sitting on the desert-like land caused by the sand that was carried by a new channel of the Teesta river during the flood in 2016.

PHOTO: EAM ASADUZZAMAN

"I was shocked as the sand covered my 20 bighas of fertile land overnight. Now I have only two bighas that are not affected," said Jonab Ali, 60, of Purbo Kharibari village.

Abdus Samad, 60, said he used to cultivate crops on 20 bighas of land, but the land is buried under sand, adding that he is worried as he cannot pay for the education of his son, who is studying for a diploma in marine engineering in Narayanganj.

Several hundred families have migrated to other villages or are living on different structures of Water Development Board (WDB) at Dalia.

"I had 10 bighas of fertile land, but thick sand layer ruined it, making me a beggar overnight. Now I maintain my family by pulling rickshaw van," said Shahar Kha, 55, who migrated to Dalia village with his five-member family and is living on WDB's silt trap.

"We get reports of damage caused by different kinds of calamities, but not about sand covering agriculture land," said district Relief and Rehabilitation Officer AKM Akhtaruzzaman.

"The situation was caused by flood and we'll arrange houses in our new cluster villages for the victims who migrated to different places," said Dimla Upazila Nirbahi Officer Nazmunnahar.

MANIKGANJ BAR POLLS AL, BNP panels share posts

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

The BNP-backed panel won eight out of 15 posts including the general secretary in Manikganj District Bar Association election while the ruling Awami League (AL)-backed panel won seven other posts including the president.

A total of 427 voters out of 455 cast their vote in the election held at the association's auditorium in the district town on Tuesday.

The elected office bearers are -- president: Abdul Mazid Mia Photo (AL), vice president: Abul Hossain (AL), general secretary: Mezbaul Haque (BNP), assistant general secretary: Subhash Chandra Rajbangshi (BNP), finance secretary: Kazi Sharif Uddin Mizan (BNP), library secretary: Bazlur Rahman (BNP), sports secretary: SM Mainul Islam Mintu (AL), literature and cultural secretary: Bazlur Rahman (AL), auditors: Shahnaaj Parvin Bachcha (BNP) and Rezaul Karim Raja (BNP), members: Selim Hossain (BNP), Badar Uddin (AL), Meherunnesa Chowdhury Pakhi (BNP), Sohel Dewan (AL) and Mainuddin Liton (AL).

Mug bean seed crisis in Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Mug bean growers in the district are facing a serious crisis of seeds as Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) failed to meet their demands, making achievement of cultivation target uncertain.

They have to buy mug bean seeds from local market at Tk 130 to Tk 150 per kg as BADC did not give allocation of seeds this year, farmers said.

"This year, we sent a demand letter to the authorities concerned requesting allocation of 25 tonnes of seeds to sell among local growers, but no allocation was given," said BADC (seeds) Deputy Director (DD) Md Asaduzzaman.

"We got only 7.04 tonnes of seeds and Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) distributed those among the poor farmers free of cost. Many farmers come to our office to buy mug seed but we do not have seeds," he said.

Local seed traders sell seeds at high price to the growers, who have to buy from them as BADC does not have seeds.

"I cultivated mug bean on one and a half acres of land last year and planned to cultivate it on two acres this year as it is very profitable," said Md Jafar Sikder, a mug bean grower of Shiali village in Bodorpur union under Sadar upazila.

Abdur Rahman of Moukaron village in Laukathi union said he is facing a serious crisis of mug seeds this year as BADC cannot supply those.

DAE Deputy Director Hridayeshwar said they set a target to cultivate mug beans on 82,480 hectares of land this year, and they have cultivated 63,985 hectares till February 26.

Mug bean farming is very profitable in the coastal region due to suitable soil, favourable weather and cheap labour, he said.

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