



PHOTO: MD AMINUL ISLAM



PHOTO: ZAHANGIR SHAH



PHOTO: ABDUL WAHED

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Hindu devotees take Astami Snan, a holy dip in the Old Brahmaputra river in Old Ferry Ghat area of Mymensingh city, in the Kaliganga river at Bethua Ghat in Manikganj, and in the Brahmaputra river at Ramna Ghat in Chilmari upazila of Kurigram yesterday.

Rivals destroy bitter gourd field

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Unidentified criminals destroyed all bitter gourd plants of a farmer at Kuragachha village in Madhupur upazila early Friday, leaving the poor grower bewildered.

Victim Akter Hossain Kalu said criminals might have destroyed his plants centering previous enmity.

He cultivated highbred varieties of bitter gourd on 32 decimals of land of his brother after taking advance from wholesalers.

"I have been taking care of the plants after planting since Bangla month of Kartik (mid October to mid November) while the yields were looking good," Akter said.

"I have already spent around Tk 30,000 for the cultivation with a hope to sell the vegetable for Tk 1 lakh," he said.

"After waking up from sleep on Friday morning, I found all plants of my bitter gourd field were uprooted," he said.

"Now I am worried, thinking about how to feed my family," Akter questioned.

Akter also said he caned a local youth a few days ago after local people detained him red handed when he was stealing bitter gourd from another farmer of the village.

Schoolgirl 'kills self'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A schoolgirl of fifth grade in Tangail's Madhupur upazila is believed to have died by suicide early yesterday over her demand for a dress on the occasion of Pahela Baishakh, being celebrated in the country today.

The deceased was Hashi Akter, 13, daughter of farmer Haider Ali, of Chak Gangair village.

Abdul Hamid, uncle of the girl, said although her parents had assured her that they would buy her a dress yesterday morning, the girl apparently hanged herself with a scarf from the ceiling.

Madhupur Police Station OC Shafiqul Islam said the body was sent to Tangail General Hospital for autopsy.

Youth killed in clash of gangs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A youth was hacked to death and six others injured in a clash between two rivalling gangs in Hariabari area of Pabna Sadar upazila on Friday evening.

The deceased was identified as Shoishab Shaha, 20, a first-year student of Government Bulbul College in Pabna. His father is Bhojendra Nath Shaha from Singa Palpara village in the upazila.

Obaidul Haque, officer in charge of Pabna Sadar Police Station, said Shoishab and 10 to 12 members of his gang, riding on six motorbikes, came under attack of their

rival gang, led by Babu Hossain alias Kota Babu, when the former reached Hariabari area around 6:30pm.

Critically injured Shoishab died on way to Pabna Medical College Hospital where six of his injured friends were also admitted.

Shoishab belonged to a gang led by Abdulla Al Mamun and the two gangs had a longstanding rivalry over establishing supremacy in the area, the OC said, adding that police force was deployed in the area to bring the situation under control.

No case was filed in this connection as of filing this report yesterday.

Illegal jatka sale unabated, targetting Pahela Baishakh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Jatka (hilsa less than 10 inches long) is being sold openly at different local markets of the district ahead of the Pahela Baishakh, ignoring the ongoing ban.

Besides, the price of the popular fish has also increased by two to four times than the previous years, both in wholesale and retail markets, especially due to a high demand during this time of the year.

While visiting New Market area in the town yesterday, this correspondent saw jatka being sold openly at both the wholesale and retail shops.

Selim Hawlader, a resident of College Road area, said "I went to

New Market on Friday to buy some large size hilsa, but I found most of the hilsa in the market were less than eight inches long."

One kilogram of jatka is being sold at Tk 400 to Tk 500 in the market and many of the consumers were buying it as there was no alternative, Selim said.

"People know about the ongoing ban on jatka netting. But they wonder how such illegal act could go on openly in the local markets," said Abu Bakar Siddique of Telikhali area.

If netting and selling of jatka goes on unabated like this, our fish stock will face a huge shortage in near future, he said.

Authorities concerned should ensure strict vigilance and take necessary steps to stop netting and

selling of jatka, in the greater interest of the people of the country, he suggested.

Usually there is always an increase in demand for hilsa ahead of Pahela Baishakh every year, a fish trader at the market Shahidul Islam said, adding that they have never faced any difficulty in selling jatka.

Galachipa Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Shah Mohammad Rafiqul Islam said though some dishonest fishermen are continuing the illegal act, they were trying their best to control it.

District Fisheries Officer (DFO) Mollah Emdadullah said he will ask all upazila level officials concerned to monitor local markets and take necessary steps in this regard.



This photo taken from New Market area in Patuakhali town on Friday shows that random sale of jatka goes on unabated, defying the ongoing government-imposed ban.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

Rab seizes seven stolen motorbikes, arrests five

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) during raids on Friday and yesterday morning arrested five members of a motorcycle theft gang and seized seven stolen motorbikes from their possession in Naogaon and Chapainawabganj.

All the arrestees are from Shibganj upazila in Chapainawabganj. They are Monirul Islam, 32, son of Afzal Hossain from Biswanathpur; Sumon Reza, 33, son of Tipu Sultan from Kalupur; Mohammad Elias, 25, son of Humayun Kabir from Barik Bazar; Mohammad Ahsan, 30, son of Mostofa from Chandpur; and Sajib, 21, son of Ranjit from Saheb Nagar.

Squadron Leader Sayeed Abdullah Al Murad, commander of Rab-5 Chapainawabganj camp, said after receiving a tipoff, a team of the camp raided Hathkhola Bazar area in Naogaon's Porsha upazila around 4:30pm on Friday and arrested Monirul with a stolen motorbike.

Based on information gleaned from Monirul, Rab arrested the other four thieves of the gang and confiscated six more motorbikes from their possession after raiding Shantir More area in Shibganj upazila of Chapainawabganj around 1:50am yesterday morning, the Rab official added.

4 skeletons stolen from graveyard

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Panic set in Dobra village of Faridpur's Boalmari upazila after unidentified criminals dug out and stole skeletons from four graves in a graveyard early Friday.

Mujibur Rahman, a member of Satair Union Parishad, said locals on their way to their agricultural fields noticed that four graves were dug in the graveyard and four skeletons were stolen from the graves.

Villagers are now in panic over the incident, he added.

AKM Shamim Hasan, officer-in-charge of Boalmari Police Station, said, Nazrul Islam, in-charge of Joynagar police post, visited the scene following the incident.

Thieves of an organised gang are stealing skeletons from graveyards and later selling those at high price to different buyers, including students of medical colleges, he also said.

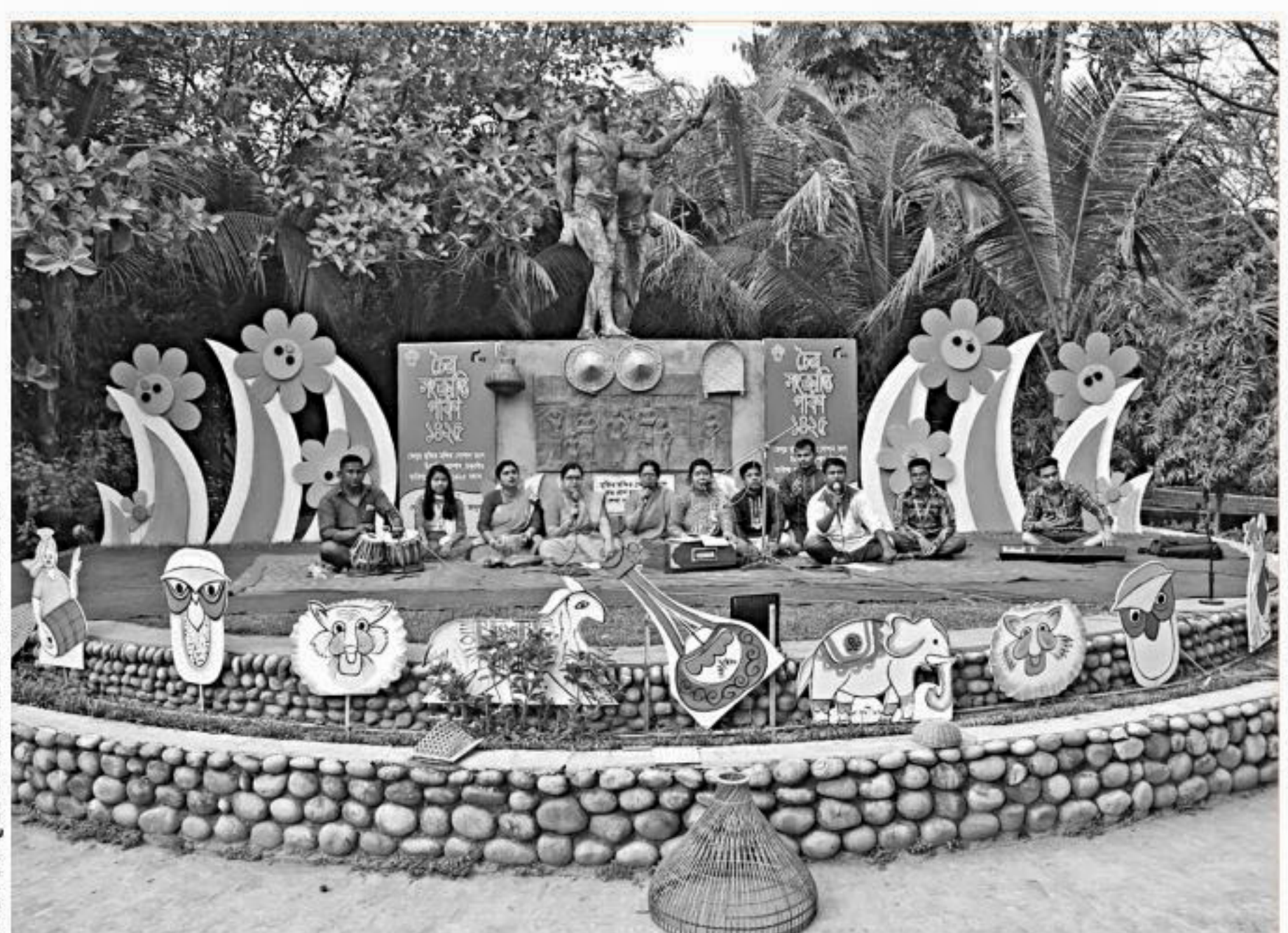
RANGAMATI 7-MURDER

Suspect held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Police claimed to have arrested a person in Bandarban on Friday night for his alleged involvement in the March 18 murder of seven people, including two polling officials and four Ansar personnel in Baghaichhari upazila of Rangamati.

The arrestee is Ranjit Chakma, 28, from Rangamati's Panchhari upazila, Bandarban Sadar Police Station OC Shahidul Islam said, adding that a 9mm pistol, four bullets and five mobile handsets were seized from his possession.



Lokayan Museum organises a cultural programme at Muktir Sopano Tale, a colourfully decorated stage on the premises of Eco Social Development Organisation office in Thakurgaon town yesterday marking Chaitra Sangkranti, the last day of Bangla year.

112 illegal structures on Khowai river demolished

Habiganj dist admin also frees 4-acre land from illegal occupiers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Habiganj district administration during the second phase of the eviction drive to free the Khowai riverbank demolished a total of 112 unauthorised structures yesterday.

During the day-long drive, the district administration in cooperation with the Water Development Board (WDB) officials also freed around four acres of land in Khowai mukh area in the town from the illegal occupiers, Habiganj WDB Executive Engineer Touhidul Islam said.

Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Shakhawat Hossain Rubel, also the executive magistrates led the drive, he said.

Earlier, during the first phase of the

eviction drive that started on March 30 and ended on April 1, they knocked down as many as 84 illegal structures on the riverbank stretching from Kamrapur to Chowdhury Bazar area in the town, he said, adding that a total of 7.6 acres of land worth Tk 7 crore were freed in the two phases of the eviction drive.

During a visit to the area yesterday this correspondent saw many illegal establishments have still remained intact.

Meanwhile, following objections from locals the authorities concerned had to step back from demolishing a mosque and a temple from the riverbank yesterday.

They didn't even touch the mosque and the temple as they do not want to hurt people's religious sentiment,

Touhidul said, adding that they are conducting the drive to protect the river from encroachment.

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon's (Bapa) Habiganj unit General Secretary Tofazzal Sohel said in the last 12 years they have observed numerous programmes, demanding to save the Khowai river from encroachment and pollution.

After a long wait the district administration has finally started the eviction drive to free the river from encroachment, he said.

Though there are over 1,000 illegal structures on the riverbank, WDB has prepared a list of 250 illegal structures to be removed in phases, Sohel added.



The district administration during an eviction drive knocked down many such illegal structures along Khowai riverbank in Habiganj town yesterday.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWAR