



Devotees observe Charak Puja, a festival celebrating Hindu god Shiva, on Chaitra Sangkranti (last day of the Bangla year, April 13) in a village under Banshkhali Upazila of Chattogram. As part of the ritual, a man is suspended from a Charak tree and revolves around the tree mid-air seven times. A village fair is also held annually surrounding the festival.

## PHOTO OF THE DAY

RAJIB RAIHAN

# Jute mills workers withdraw 96hr strike

Another round of talks between BJMC and labour leaders scheduled for May 8

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Jute mill workers have withdrawn their strike, protests and blockade, following a five-hour meeting with government officials held in Dhaka on Monday night around 11:30 pm.

"The government representatives have assured workers that they will pay them 10 weeks' arrears on April 25 and include all workers in the National Wage Commission attendance sheets by May 18," said Sarder Motahar Uddin, central president of Bangladesh Jute Workers' League.

"We will discuss other remaining demands and reach a consensus," he added.

"We requested workers to go back to their respective mills," he also said.

CBA-Non CBA Oikya Parishad leaders will have another round of talks with Bangladesh Jute Mill Corporation (BJMC) -- scheduled for May 8, Sohorab Hossain, convener of Bangladesh State-Owned Jute Mill CBA-Non CBA Oikya Parishad and general secretary of Crescent Jute Mill's CBA (Collective Bargaining Afents), said.

A press release issued by the Ministry of Labour and Employment on Monday night -- signed by BJMC chairman and leaders of different labour organisations -- confirmed setting of workers' wages by May 17 and

issuing of wage slips by May 18; clearing all arrears by April 25; and one-week's wages marking the occasion of Shab-e-Barat.

On Monday, workers of state-owned jute mills in different districts started their 96-hour strike from 8am to press home their nine-point demand that include payment of outstanding wages and implementation of the wage commission.

Demonstrators blockaded roads and railways, and staged protests at several points in Khulna, Jashore and Chattogram threatening to wage tougher movements if their demands were not met by April 18.

From April 2 to 4, jute mill workers observed a 72-hour strike by blocking roads and rail routes to press home their demands.

The workers' demands are: paying the gratuities of retired workers, providing arrears of life insurance policies for deceased workers, reinstating workers terminated or suspended during past movements, payment of arrears and other financial benefits to current workers, implementation of the National Wage Scale-2015, appointing workers and making their jobs permanent as per the law, allocating funds for buying jute during jute season, undertaking a BMRE (balancing, modernisation, rehabilitation and expansion) scheme to increase the productivity of factories and removal of corrupt factory officials.

## Two killed, one injured in Ctg cylinder blast

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two workers were killed and another was injured severely in a cylinder blast at an oxygen-filling shop in Nasirabad area in Chattogram city yesterday morning.

The deceased were identified as Mohammad Javed, 30, and Prabir Kumar Das, 60, said Assistant Sub-inspector Alauddin Talukdar at Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) police outpost.

Injured Nur Osman, 28, was undergoing treatment at CMCH burn unit, he said, adding that the accident took place at Siraj Anu Oxygen Limited under Khulshi Police Station around 7:30am.

An employee of the shop, preferring anonymity, told this correspondent at the accident spot that a fire broke out as a cylinder blasted when it was being filled up, leaving Javed dead on the spot and two others injured critically.

He also said they extinguished the fire instantly and rushed the three victims to the hospital.

Dr Rafiq Uddin Ahmed, assistant professor at CMCH burn unit, said Pabitra died after an hour of being brought to the hospital. He sustained 35 percent burns and severe inhalation injuries.

Osman sustained 10 percent burns, and is under observation, said the doctor.

Visiting the spot, Fire Service and Civil Defence officials told The Daily Star that there was not any personal protection equipment (PPE) in the shop. The walls of the shop were made of bricks instead of reinforced cement concrete (RCC), as required for such shops.

Jashim Uddin, assistant director of the fire department, said they would issue a show-cause notice to the shop owner, asking about the absence of safety measure.

The Daily Star could not contact the owner of the shop.

Sub-inspector Uttam Chakraborty at Khulshi Police Station said the bodies were taken to CMCH morgue for post-mortem. No case was filed regarding this till filing of the report at 3:30pm.

## Road crashes kill 3

STAR REPORT

Three people were killed in road accidents in three districts yesterday, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Gopalganj, a woman was killed and four others were injured, as a car they were travelling in hit a tree beside Dhaka-Khulna highway in Ghonapara area of Sadar upazila.

Shamsur Nahar Begum, 55, wife of Akram Ali from Saltha in Faridpur, died on the spot.

The accident happened as the driver lost his control over the steering, Gopalganj fire station officer Nur Muhammad quoted locals as saying.

The injured including the driver were taken to Gopalganj General Hospital, he said.

In Faridpur, the driver of a locally-improved vehicle called bhotbhoti, was killed after the sand-laden vehicle overturned in Chadibee area of Boalmari upazila.

The accident occurred while the driver -- Mamun, 22, from Kamleshwaradi village -- was making way for another vehicle, said locals.

In Rangpur, a tractor hit a boy on Rangpur-Pirgachha road in Gharoa village of Pirgachha upazila, leaving him dead on the spot.

Hasanur Rahman, 11, son of Nurul Amin from Tambulpur village in Pirgachha, was crossing the road, said police.

## Withdraw show-cause on Ar Raji

46 univ teachers urge CU STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forty-six public university teachers yesterday demanded withdrawal of show-cause notice issued by Chittagong University (CU) against Assistant Prof Khandokar Ali Ar Raji of Mass Communication and Journalism department.

In a statement, they said university authorities had no legal right to issue a show-cause notice over a Facebook post even if it is considered "defamatory", as every person holds the right to express their opinion on the current education system.

They claimed that university authorities had

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## Rohingyas, locals get skill training in crafts

UNHCR, Ayesha Abed Foundation scale up project in Cox's bazar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United Nations' refugee agency has teamed up with Ayesha Abed Foundation -- the humanitarian wing of Brac -- to provide income opportunities by developing skills of Rohingya and Bangladeshi women in craft production in Cox's Bazar.

The project that formally began in February is now being scaled up. At the recently-opened training facility in Ukhiya, local Bangladeshi women are taught silk screen printing, block printing and tailoring, according to a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) statement.

Eighteen sub-centres are being opened in other areas of Cox's Bazar as well as camps where refugee women will produce different designs of hand embroidery.

By the end of the first year, the goal is to train 50 women, half of whom should be refugees.

"The ambition, if the project is successful, could expand to train hundreds more. The women receive a small stipend during the six-month training period. UNHCR is funding the programme, but we hope the project will break even in the future," said UNHCR spokesperson Elizabeth Trossell in a press briefing at the Palais des Nations in Geneva yesterday.

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## Govt official gets life imprisonment for rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A Rangpur court yesterday sentenced an assistant agriculture officer posted in Kishoreganj upazila of Nilphamari district to life imprisonment for raping a teenage girl 14 years ago.

Judge Md Rokonzaman of Women and Children Repression Prevention Court-2 delivered the verdict, said Jahangir Hossain Public Prosecutor of the court.

The court also fined him Tk 1 lakh and ordered the prosecution to pay the amount to the victim.

The convict Jakirul Islam Milon, 38, was present in the courtroom during the verdict.

According to the prosecution, on July 4, 2005, Milon, then neighbour of the 13-year-old girl in Badarganj upazila, called her at his home to take care of his ailing mother.

Around 1:30pm, as the girl arrived, Milon tied her hands and legs and raped her.

Later, the girl informed her parents about the incident.

On July 13 that year, the victim's father filed a case with Badarganj Police Station accusing Milon of rape, after an arbitration initiated by locals to settle the matter, failed.

Charges were pressed against Milon on September 6, 2005.

## Police officer dies under train in Jashore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A police officer was killed as a train ran him over on Murli level crossing in Sadar upazila of Jashore yesterday.

The deceased is Selim Hossain, 55. He was posted as officer-in-charge of Armed Police Battalion at Jashore Police Lines, said Tariqul Islam, sub-inspector of Government Railway Police camp in Jashore.

Selim was standing near the level crossing when he fell onto the rail track as a Khulna-bound "Sagardari" train was passing through the spot, said the SI.

The body was sent to Jashore Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

## A hub for booklovers Batighar opens in Sylhet

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Imagine a place filled with rows and rows of books for readers to browse through while exploring different sections of knowledge.

With replicas of Keane Bridge and Ali Amjad's Clock Tower, the oldest clock tower located on the bank of Surma, this place -- Batighar -- also offers readers a trip down the rich history of Sylhet.

The bookshelves are painted green, depicting the district's serene tea gardens.

After successful ventures in Chattogram and Dhaka, the book superstore started its journey in Sylhet city's East Zindabazar on April 5.

Though Batighar has not been inaugurated officially, every day booklovers continue to flock to the store. Like the other two, this store is designed by painter Shahinur Rahman.

Abhijit Paul, an education officer, said while visiting the store yesterday, "We were eagerly waiting for the store to open. Batighar will quench our thirst for good books."

Sumankumar Das, a folklore researcher and writer, said, "Batighar has become a creative hub for writers and readers."

Batighar's proprietor Dipankar Das said, "Batighar is not only a bookstore, but also a publication house. It's a place for writers and readers to connect. Our vision is to open bookstores in every major city of the country."



Though not officially inaugurated, book superstore Batighar is already drawing the attention of bookworms in Sylhet.

PHOTO: DWOHA CHOWDHURY



Demanding arrears, RMG workers block a side of Dhaka-Aricha highway in Savar's Bazar Bus Stand area yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## RMG workers of 3 factories demonstrate in Savar

Demand arrears, reopening of factory

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Demanding arrears and reopening of the factory, workers of three RMG factories in Savar demonstrated yesterday.

In Savar's Bazar Bus Stand area, hundreds of workers of Azim Group blocked Dhaka-Aricha highway for an hour over last month's arrears. They blocked the highway's Dhaka-bound lane around 1:00pm, causing severe traffic congestion.

Workers withdrew their agitation following assurance from police, said AFM Sayeed, officer-in-charge of Savar Model Police Station.

Many workers alleged that they were demonstrating peacefully in front of the factory when police tried to disperse them by using water cannon. So they blocked the highway to realise their demand.

This correspondent could not get in touch with the factory authorities, despite repeated attempts.

Saidur Rahman, additional superintendent of police (Dhaka district), said, "We have talked to the factory authorities; they said they will pay workers within two days." He refuted the allegation of using water cannon.

Additional police have been deployed to avert any untoward incident, he added.

Meanwhile in Ashulia, around 1,500 workers of Yagi Bangladesh Garments Ltd demonstrated in front of the factory in Jamgora area, demanding arrears of holiday payment by this month.

Shohidul Islam, manager (admin) of the factory, said they had to shut the factory for the day. "We will pay the amount within this year."

In Ashulia's Kathgora area, demanding reopening of the factory, around 500 workers of Omorfu Sweater Ltd gathered in the morning.

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## Foodpanda now in Cox's Bazar

CITY DESK

Online food ordering and delivery service foodpanda is now operational in Cox's Bazar. The service was launched on April 10.

All the away from Dariyanagar Sea View Park in Marine drive to the Cox's Bazar Airport area, people will now be able to order and enjoy the food they love from over 70 restaurants with foodpanda, according to a press release.

One can choose food items from different varieties of restaurants with a minimum order value of Tk 50, with no additional delivery charge. As a special offer to celebrate the launch, there will be a 20 percent flat discount on all restaurants on the platform.

Since its creation, the service has grown to more than 30,000 partner restaurants across 10 Asian and Central European countries.