

Welcoming month of language with alphabet procession

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The month of February is marked with heroic tales of patriots laying down lives for the mother tongue. This month of language inevitably causes one to reflect on the martyrs of Language Movement in 1952, their valour, selflessness and love for motherland.

Imbued with its spirit, "Barnamalar Michhil" (a procession of Bangla alphabets) was organised in Sylhet city yesterday. Sammito Natya Parishad Sylhet brought out the parade from Sylhet Zila Parishad premises in the morning, which ended at Sylhet Central Shaheed Minar.

Afterwards, Chhanda Nrityalaya presented dance with inspirational songs of the Language Movement.

People of Sylhet have been organising the event for the last six years to recall the supreme sacrifice of the country's language heroes, said Rajat Kanti Gupta, general secretary of Natya Parishad.

Meanwhile, a 17-day theatre festival in light of the Language Movement, organised by the parishad, began yesterday at Kabi Nazrul Auditorium in Rikabibazar area of the city.



UPHOLDING THE SPIRIT OF AMAR EKUSHEY... Holding placards depicting Bangla alphabets and garlands, youths usher in the month of February at Central Shaheed Minar in Sylhet city yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

PM to inaugurate Ekushey book fair

Monthlong fiesta begins today

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the month-long Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela -- the marquee event of booklovers and publishers -- today.

The monthlong fair is arranged every year in February, commemorating the sacrifices of eight people who laid down their lives on February 21, 1952 to establish Bangla as the state language of erstwhile East Pakistan.

The fair will be held at Bangla Academy and its adjacent Suhrawardy Udyan till February 29.

The Bangla Academy Literature Award will also be handed at the opening ceremony.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued separate messages on the occasion.

In his message, President Abdul Hamid appreciated dedicating this year's book fair to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, on the occasion of his birth centenary.

"He was the first person to begin the movement for establishing Bangla as the state language in 1948. Later, Bangabandhu inaugurated national 'Bangla Literature Conference' for the first time on the premises of Bangla Academy in 1974," the president said.

In her message, the prime minister said, "I am glad to know that 'Amar Ekushey Book Fair 2020' is being organised like every year, and I send my greetings and felicitations to Bangla Academy, local and foreign publishers and all concerned."

Yaba peddler flees from police station

Three cops suspended in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Three law enforcers were suspended after a female yaba peddler fled from police custody at Patiya Police Station under Chattogram district early yesterday.

The three suspended police members are: Assistant Sub-Inspector Samsuddin, and constables Rijaz and Mamta.

"The three were suspended for their negligence in duty, as a drug peddler managed to flee from their custody after arrest," Additional Superintendent of Police Afruzul Haque Tutul told The Daily Star.

Chattogram Metropolitan Police sources said Patiya police arrested a drug peddler named Laiju Begum from the post office area of Patiya on Friday noon.

She was coming from Cox's Bazar, carrying yaba pills in her abdomen, they added.

"After detaining her, we confirmed that she was carrying the pills through an X-ray," said the official.

"The accused was then given medicine prescribed by doctors, and 1,900 yaba pills were seized from her later," the additional superintendent of police told this correspondent.

The police official added, "Afterwards, she was taken to the interrogation room just beside the officer-in-charge's room at the police station."

"She was kept under police custody with two constables keeping watch on her," he said.

"Around midnight, the accused said she wanted to use the bathroom. After going to the toilet, she fled through the vent of the toilet, dodging the on-duty police personnel," ASP Tutul said.

Asked why the accused was not kept in the female lockup after arrest, Tutul said, "The question paper of ongoing SSC examination was kept at the female lockup for security purposes."

For that reason, they had to keep the accused with police constables inside the interrogation room, the police official added.

"We are trying to arrest the accused and find out if she had any accomplice," he added.

A drug case was lodged with the police station in this connection.

Journo Mithun Mahfuz no more

CITY DESK

Mithun Mahfuz, senior reporter of Daily Amader Somoy, passed away at a hospital in the capital yesterday. He was 52.

Mithun was undergoing treatment at Birdem Hospital and breathed his last at 10:30am. He left behind his wife, daughter and a host of well-wishers.

Mithun's first namaz-e-janaza was held at his office, and another at DRUI.

He will be laid to rest today at his village home in Khulna's Paikgacha.



JU staff Nurul Islam passes away

CITY DESK

Nurul Islam, local newspaper agent of Jahangirnagar University, passed away of old age at his residence on Thursday. He was 78.

He was also a senior staffer of JU's chemistry department. He left behind his wife, five children and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

JU teachers, students and staff offered condolences to the family. Nurul had been working as an agent of the university since 1971.

Wazi Uddin laid to rest with state honours

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Wazi Uddin Khan, veteran politician and prominent freedom fighter, was laid to rest with state honours yesterday. People of all walks of life, including members of different political parties, joined his funeral in Pabna.

The 85-year-old former lawmaker, also chairperson of Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Association, passed away around 9am on Friday.

He was given state honours in front of Muktijoddha Sangsad district unit's building in Pabna city around 9am. Later, his body was taken to Baluchar field in Chatmohar upazila around 11am for his first namaz-e-janaza.

His second janaza was held at Pabna police lines premises around 2pm the same day, and he was buried in the city's Arifpur graveyard.

Born in 1936, Wazi Uddin entered politics in the 60s and played a vital role in all revolutionary movements. Later, he became president of Pabna district unit AL. He was elected lawmaker of Pabna-3 in 1986 and 1996.

ROAD ACCIDENT

Workers block highway after rumour of fellows' death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Garment workers yesterday blockaded Dhaka-Mymensingh highway at Bagherbazar point of Gazipur for around half an hour following a rumour that four of their co-workers died in a road accident.

Witnesses said four workers of Golden Refit Garments Ltd were crossing the highway around 2pm when a speeding motorbike hit them, leaving them injured.

Locals rescued and took them to Al-Hera Hospital. But a rumour spread among workers that the four had died. Workers took to the street and blocked the highway.

Vehicle movement was halted and the blockade caused long tailbacks. Later, police

went to spot and defused the situation after talking to the workers, said OC Manjural Islam of Mawna Highway Police Station.

Vehicle movement resumed around 2:30pm, said the OC.

Of the four victims, Sharmin Akhter's (35) condition was critical, said MA Hasan, administrative manager of Al-Hera Hospital. The other injured are Rubina Begum (30), Salma Akhter (30) and Sabina Akhter (30).

As Sharmin's condition kept deteriorating, she was referred to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

Talking to journalists, Golden Refit Manager Moniruzzaman said the authorities had halted operations of the factory for the day considering the untoward situation.

Dilapidated city streets spell misery for Khulna commuters

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Dilapidated roads in Khulna are causing immense sufferings to city dwellers, who say 60 percent of roads are in poor condition due to lack of reconstruction and repair after development projects.

During visits to different roads last week, this correspondent saw potholes causing traffic disruptions. Commuters -- including students, officegoers and patients -- and drivers shared the suffering while using those.

The roads -- including Sonadanga-Notun rasta, BIDC, KDA Avenue, Daulatpur Sabujanga Math, Islampur, Dolkhola Lane, Miapara, Tutpara Central, Rupsha Bridge, Bagmara Main, Nirala, Raipara and BK Main -- are in dilapidated condition.

Sankar Kumar Mollick, assistant professor of BL College, said, "Due to craters on roads, students sometimes lose interest to go to classes."

Vehicles, especially heavy ones, have to struggle to pass through the roads, often taking longer than usual.

Tank lorry driver Arman Sheikh, who uses a road in Khalishpur to load oil from three state-owned oil depots, said, "Commuters falling off rickshaws or easy bikes is a regular occurrence."

Locals termed BIDC Road a "deathtrap" in terms of its severity. Thousands of people use the road. Four state-owned jute mills and three state-owned oil depots are situated by



Vehicles getting stuck on roads has become a common situation in the city. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

the road. Commuters stay in constant fear of accidents at any time.

Milon, a resident of Khalishpur, said, "Khulna Wasa is working on some of the roads for over three years. Those were in poor condition previously; they have made the roads worse."

"The potholes are filled with rainwater during monsoon and dirt during dry season," he added.

Sornali Golder, a student of Khulna Government Girls' College, said a ride from Notun rasta to Boyra Bazar by rickshaws or easy bikes is unbearable.

"Wasa has been working to improve drainage but they are making the situation worse by leaving debris by

the roads," said Palash Das from Boyra.

"There is no good coordination between Wasa and Khulna City Corporation [KCC] to repair the dug up roads," he added.

Kamaluddin Ahmed, deputy managing director of Khulna Wasa, denied the allegations, saying Wasa has repaired some roads, and paid KCC more than Tk 9 crore to fix the rest.

Admitting the facts, Md Liaquat Ali Khan, chief engineer of KCC, said repair works are going on.

Asked about the other roads in bad shape, he said Tk 600 crore was allocated for a mega project, feasibility study for which is going on.

Death anniv of Mizanur Rahman

CITY DESK

Today is the 14th death anniversary of Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury -- former



prime minister, noted politician and a Liberation War organizer.

Today is also the 11th death anniversary of his eldest son Abdullah Mizan, said a press release.

Born on October 19, 1928 in Chandpur, Mizanur was a close associate of Bangabandhu. In 1966, he was elected the organising secretary of Awami League.

He discharged the duty of acting general secretary of AL in 1966-67 after the arrest of Bangabandhu, Tajuddin and other top leaders.

In 1984, he joined Jana Dal and later Jatiya Party of HM Ershad and became the prime minister in 1986. He joined AL again on August 27, 2001 and was a member of the party's advisory committee till his death.

A qukhawni and milad mahfil will be held today on the occasion, at his ancestral home in Chandpur.

GAS EXPLORATION IN BHOLA

BSD concerned over deal inked with Russia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Protesting the government's move of signing a contract with a Russian company for gas exploration in Bhola, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) formed a human chain in front of Ashwini Kumar Hall yesterday.

The protesters claimed that such a move will be against the country's interest and the government should have assigned a local company for it.

Bazar office in the capital on January 28. One was on strategic cooperation and other on conducting 2D/3D seismic surveys in Bhola in search of gas and oil.

There are two gas fields in Bhola at present covering an area of around 8,000 square kilometres.

During a visit to Russia in 2010, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina urged her counterpart to aid Bangladesh's gas exploration and development activities.

In 2012, a turnkey agreement was



PHOTO: STAR

They also claimed that Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company (Bapex) is capable of carrying out the activity by itself.

Imran Habib Rumon, convener of the district unit of BSD, presided over the event, addressed by Dr Manisha Chakraborty, co-coordinator of the unit, among others.

GAZPROM, BAPEX TO SEARCH FOR OIL, GAS

Russian energy giant Gazprom and Bapex signed two deals at Petrobranga's Karwan

signed with Gazprom as contractor to drill 10 wells to extract gas under areas of Bapex, Bangladesh Gas Fields Company and Sylhet Gas Fields.

Wells were drilled at Srikail of Cumilla and Shahbazpur of Bhola. Gas was discovered in the latter and extraction has been ongoing for the past 10 years. Three more wells were planned to be drilled there.

In 2017, Bapex discovered another gas field in Bhola. The government decided to take help from Russia's Gazprom to assess reserves there.

National food safety day today

UNB, Dhaka

National Food Safety Day will be observed today across the country, with a call to prevent food adulteration and ensure safe food for all.

This year's theme of the day was "Sobai mile hat melai, nirapod khaddo nischt chai" (Let us all join hands; we want assurance of safe food).

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued separate messages on the occasion.

In his message, the president said there is no alternative to safe food to build the present, and make sure that the future generation becomes healthy and skilled.

He urged all agencies concerned and people to join the movement for safe food in the country.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said, "There is no alternative to safe food to continue the trend of development and grow our present and future generation healthy and active."

Highest safe standard of food production, import and marketing must be ensured for protection of lives and health, she said in a message, adding, "I hope that the Food Safety Authority will take the country forward by achieving professional skills."

Different government organisations, food processing companies, traders, importers and other stakeholders will organise various programmes marking the day.

Food adulteration has been the biggest hurdle towards ensuring secured and safe food for the people of the country.

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