



Despite immense hardship, this farmer is all smiles while showing off his successful harvest of cucumber, reaped right off the field. Farmers in Tangail are slowly shifting towards vegetable cultivation due to its profitability, as opposed to other crops. This photo was taken recently from Tangail Sadar's Taratia area. PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

Body of missing boy found in banana orchard

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Police have recovered the body of a teenage boy with a noose tied around his neck from a banana orchard at Sarabari area in Tangail's Ghatail upazila yesterday. The deceased is Maruf Hossain (14), son of Faruque Hossain of Gorbari village, adjacent to Sakhipur upazila.

Police and family members said Maruf, student of a local madrasa, was going to his uncle's house at Deopara on Thursday noon, with his elder brother Babar Ali on his battery-run three-wheeler.

Keeping Maruf inside the vehicle, Babar went into the uncle's house. After returning, he saw that Maruf and the three-wheeler were nowhere to be found.

Yesterday morning, locals sighted Maruf's body in the orchard and informed police, who later recovered the body and sent it to Tangail General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Contacted, Ghatail Police Station OC Azharul Islam said they suspect Maruf might have been strangled by one or multiple people who were looking to steal the vehicle.

SAIDPUR GOVT COLLEGE

No dorm for 5,000 students

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Established in 1953, Saidpur Government College, situated in the flourishing railway town of Nilphamari district, has been running without a hostel for the last 70 years, creating immense suffering for learners who come from distant areas for higher education.

In the absence of a permanent dormitory, students are now compelled to reside in messes scattered across different parts of the town, bearing additional cost for rent and transportation.

Relevant sources informed that after the college was nationalised in 2018, it started attracting a large number of students from far and wide for its quality education. Currently, it has around 5,000 students enrolled.

Meanwhile, Hafizur Rahman Hafiz, former principal of the college, said the then sub-divisional officer of Nilphamari had allocated an age-old two-storey building for makeshift accommodation of students until a hostel was built. The building was chosen from the government's enlisted abandoned properties, located near the college.

But a few years ago, the Public Works Department (PWD) declared the building risky and unfit for living. It has been lying deserted since then, Hafizur said, adding that as a result, students are once again left without proper accommodation.

Abdur Rashid, a second year honours student of the college's department of political science, said, "I've come from Birganj upazila in Dinajpur. I'm studying here by residing in a mess two km away from the college. To bear



The college was allocated an age-old two-storey building to use for makeshift accommodation of the students. But it was later declared risky and unfit for living by the Public Works Department, once again leaving the students without a place to go. PHOTO: STAR

the additional cost, I work as a house tutor."

Meanwhile, degree student Abul Kashem said, "Along with the additional cost, there is also a lack of safety in the messes."

Asadul Islam, a first-year student of botany, said, "The authorities should build a hostel immediately, otherwise students from distant areas won't choose the college for admission in future."

Contacted, Abdul Mannan, principal of the college, said, "We're aware of the students' suffering. We've recently sent a proposal to the education engineering department of the ministry to build two hostels, as we've got sufficient land."

10 held over attempt to steal Tk 18cr from bank accounts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have arrested 10 people for allegedly attempting to steal Tk 18 crore from two bank accounts of Walton Group and United Group of a private bank, by using forged signature and information.

The arrestees are Zakir Hossain, Yeasin Ali, Mahbub Ishtiaq Bhuiyan, Anisur Rahman, Dulal Hossain, Aslam, Abdur Razzak, Zakir Hossen, Anwar Hossain Bhuiyan, and Nazrul Islam.

Among them, Zakir is an SME sales team manager at Dutch-Bangla Bank's Karwan Bazar branch.

He used to collect information of affluent customers from the bank's servers and provide it to his accomplices, police said.

On Thursday, Gulshan police conducted drives in different areas of the capital to arrest them, Md Asaduzzaman, deputy commissioner (DC) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Gulshan Division, told a press briefing yesterday.

DC Asaduzzaman said, "On Tuesday, the gang was attempting to transfer money from a Dutch-Bangla Bank account of Walton Group by forging signatures and information through real-time gross settlement system... When it raised suspicion, the bank manager contacted Walton Group, and the fraud came to light."

Among the arrestees, five were held from a restaurant in Bhatara area while they were planning to embezzle Tk 12 crore from a savings account of United Hospital Limited with Dutch-Bangla Bank's Basundhara branch.

The DC said the racket works in two layers. One group forges signatures of certain individuals or groups, while the other tries to convince the branch manager in their favour.

Safayet Tarique, first assistant director of Walton Group, filed a case with Bhatara Police Station on Thursday over the incident.

Labour leader killed over land dispute

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A railway labour leader was killed in Rajshahi yesterday, following a dispute over land yesterday.

Victim Zahurul Islam (50) was a porter at Amnura Railway Station of Chapainawabganj, police and local AL leaders said.

He was vice-president of Railway Sramik League's Open Line Unit and former general secretary of a ward unit of Awami League.

The murder occurred in the city's Shiroil Colony area under Chandrima Police Station at 1:00pm, Golam Ruhul Kuddus, additional deputy commissioner and spokesperson of RMP said.

Police arrested a railway employee named Matiar Rahman in connection with the murder. He and Zahurul were partners in cultivating crops on a piece of railway land.

A Rare Duck

FROM PAGE 3

sand, repeating with its other foot, like an unsure dancer. Then it floated into the water. Finally it flew. Its takeoff was abrupt like other ducks, but unlike smaller ducks, its flight was slow. All this while, I had thought our Comb Duck was unattractive. But when it opened its wings in flight, an unexpected beauty emerged. Within the black of its feathers were shimmering islands of orange, blue and green. As always, nature revealed her secrets slowly.

For the author's daily bird photos, please follow "Ihtishamkabr" on Instagram.

You got to

FROM PAGE 5

in our family, the residents of the neighbourhood and even the rest of the city will be hard pressed to find a better puri."

At this point, Yousuf asked this correspondent and his entourage, "Don't you want some?"

As they signalled in the positive, a plate full of steaming hot puri was served right away.

You might be wondering what the puri actually tastes like, but we'll leave that out for now. If you're that interested, go visit Buddha's Puri, open for business from 7:00am in the morning to noon, and again from 4:00pm to 9:00pm.

Vaccine patents accord possible in 'weeks': WTO

AFP, Paris

An accord between rich nations and developing countries on intellectual property waivers for Covid-19 vaccines could be just weeks away, the head of the World Trade Organization said yesterday.

Developing countries that are lagging behind in vaccinating their populations have been pushing for waivers on the patents, or intellectual property rights, on Covid-19 vaccines as they say this would help spur local production.

That has pitted them against a group of mostly developed countries, including prominently EU nations, which believe that would discourage innovation and that other steps can be taken to boost access to vaccines.

"We hope that within the next few weeks we can have a breakthrough" on what has been a bone of contention for months, WTO leader Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala told a press conference.

"We believe there could be a sensible landing zone, a sensible compromise solution that would allow developing countries more access to technology transfer and IP whilst protecting innovation and research, not discouraging it," she added.

While a deal could be reached soon, it may not happen before the EU-African Union summit on February 17-18 in Brussels, said Okonjo-Iweala.

Addressing the same conference in Paris, French minister for foreign trade Franck Riester, said "what is important is access to vaccines."

This can be improved by lifting as far as possible restrictions to their distribution, he said.

With France having this month taken over the rotating EU presidency Riester said if greater facilitation of distribution was required then the EU was "ready to do that in the most constructive possible manner."

Know your

FROM PAGE 12

Immunity: As gooseberries contain a lot of vitamin C, it can enhance immunity.

Memory and brain health: High concentration of vitamin C and antioxidants can benefit memory.

Heart health: Gooseberry can prevent heart disease to some extent by reducing inflammation.

Liver health: Some promising animal studies suggest that gooseberry juice could help improve liver function.

Hair growth: Application of gooseberry is thought to stimulate hair growth and protect against hair loss.

However, eating too much gooseberry can cause stomach problems due to its sour nature. This fruit can also not replace medical treatment for any of the issues listed above.

Ten Pak troops slain in ambush

AFP, Islamabad

Ten Pakistani troops were killed in a checkpoint firefight earlier this week, an army statement said

Thursday, in an attack claimed by separatists in the country's restive southern province of Balochistan.

The Pakistani army said ten soldiers were slain "during intense exchange of fire" while defending against a raid on a post in the Kech district of Balochistan overnight from Tuesday into Wednesday.

One assailant was killed and several others were injured by army troops, the statement said, adding a "clearance operation" underway to "hunt down perpetrators" had captured three gunmen.

In a statement to AFP, separatist group the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility for the assault and said the military death toll stood at 17.

"The enemy's weapons and other military

equipment were seized and the post was set on fire," the statement said, confirming one of their own militants was killed in the clash.

A spokesman for Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan said he felt "deep sorrow" over the incident.

"Every drop of blood of the soldiers guarantees the security of the country," his office said in a statement.

Last week another separatist group from the region, the Baloch Nationalist Army (BNA), carried out a bombing in the eastern city of Lahore, killing three people.

Separatists have been waging an insurgency for years in Balochistan, the largest but least populous province of Pakistan, which borders Iran.

It is the poorest region of the country but is rich in minerals, and resentment among residents has been stoked by billions of dollars of Chinese money flowing in through Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative.

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Faulty design

FROM PAGE 3

DS: Who was responsible for the incident?

Dey: Of course, the launch owners and staffers like drivers and masters were responsible. However, we found that four government officials also didn't do their job properly, which led to the fire hazard.

During the annual fitness test, commonly known as a survey, all the issues should have surfaced. But the officials involved in the survey didn't fulfil their duties.

The launch could carry a maximum of 420 persons. But passengers said 800-1,000 were present on the launch at the time of the

accident.

When a launch leaves a terminal, it has to take permission from BIWTA's marine safety and traffic management department. A master of the launch told officials that the vessel was carrying only 310 passengers, and the officials signed it off without checking, which violated the laws.

Three officials, including a traffic inspector and an official from the shipping ministry, were appointed to inspect launches there. The ministry official, however, said he was not present at Sadarghat terminal that day.

DS: What has been the situation of launch accidents in the last five years?

Dey: There are no government statistics. But we collected data from several media reports, which showed that in the five years since 2017, 304 accidents took place, while at least 560 people died.

Some factors are behind these incidents: the absence of efficient drivers and masters, not following the designs, carrying extra passengers and bad weather.

There are 14,000 registered vessels, but over two lakh are running now. This is another reason behind the accidents.