



P3 Historic water tank now decaying away



P7 Russia, China not creating military alliance



P11 Eleta dreams of scoring plenty



B1 Bike sales drop 30pc in two months

SUED UNDER DSA

Woman dies in Rab custody

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An employee of a Naogaon union parishad land office who stood accused in a case under the Digital Security Act died in the custody of Rab-5 after suffering haemorrhages of the brain.

Rab officers told doctors Sultana Jasmine, 38, suffered a fall.

Her son Shahed Hossain Saikat, a student of Chattogram University, said, "She died due to torture in Rab custody. She has a mark of injury on her head."

Family members said she was in perfect health.

Rab picked up Sultana around 10:00am on Wednesday (March 22) when she was on her way to Chandipur Union Land Office where she was an office assistant, law enforcers said.

She died at 10:00am on Friday (March 24) at the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH).

A day after her detained, she was sued under DSA in Rajshahi "for syphoning off money from job seekers using a Facebook account".

Faisal bin Ahsan, officer-in-charge of

Naogaon Sadar Police Station, told The Daily Star that Rab did not inform police about the arrest and they learnt about the matter from the media.

Sultana's uncle Nazmul Haque Montu, a former councillor of Naogaon municipality, said, "My niece was intercepted at Muktir Mor by a white microbus carrying Rab officers. We had been looking for her in various [Rab] camps since but failed to locate her. Around noon, we heard that she is under treatment at Naogaon Sadar Hospital."

Her family rushed there to find her unresponsive. She had a bruise on her head.

"Rab said that she suffered a stroke but she was young and in perfect health. Why would she have a stroke in Rab custody?" Montu added.

Sultana was moved to the RMCH the next day.

RMCH Director Brig Gen FM Shamim Ahmed said that Sultana was brought in by a Rab team in a critical condition around 9:20pm on Thursday.

"She was unconscious and was immediately rushed to the neurology ward.



Jasmine



President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina cut a cake at a reception marking the country's 53rd Independence and National Day at the Bangabhaban yesterday. The first lady, Rashida Khanam, as well as President-elect Md Sahabuddin and his wife, Prof Rebecca Sultana, were present on the occasion.

PHOTO: UNB

BUSINESS

FOOD IMPORT BILL SURGES

Although Bangladesh has almost achieved self-sufficiency in rice production, its dependence on the international market remains high for food items with import cost rising two and a half times to Tk 80,800 crore from a decade ago.

The country had to spend the money to buy rice, wheat, spices, edible oil, oil seeds, pulses, sugar and dairy and milk products. In the first seven months of this fiscal year, Tk 50,000 crore was spent to import food items, a rise by 10.5 per cent from a year ago.

STORY ON B1

41 RISKY BUILDINGS

Rajuk evacuation move going nowhere

HELEMUL ALAM and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

It appears the evacuation notice handed out to 41 risky buildings by the Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) on March 13 was not well-thought-out.

The notice called for vacating the structures within seven days and their demolition in three months – raising questions about its feasibility.

In the two weeks since it was issued, none vacated the structures, which belong to eight government and autonomous bodies in Dhaka, Gazipur and Narayanganj.

And the absence of a relocation option by Rajuk has been blamed for the inaction, The Daily Star has learnt from the occupants.

Take the case of Dhaka Collegiate School in old Dhaka. Three of the buildings on its campus used for labs, classrooms and hall rooms have been identified as risky by Rajuk between 2021-2022 under an urban resilience project.

But the school authority has no option to relocate the functions of the three buildings.

"It will be really tough for us to vacate those buildings without any alternatives," said its headmaster Arifur Rahman, adding that the institute is yet to receive the notice.

Ahmeduzzaman, head clerk of Kabi Nazrul



Government College, echoed the same.

"We do not have another place to run our academic activities. Besides, it is a college established way back in 1874 and needs to be protected as heritage," he said.

Three buildings of Jahangirnagar University have been identified as risky and the university authorities need at least six months to vacate those, according to Abdus Salam Md Sharif, its chief engineer.

"But before demolition, we need to know about the fund for a new building, which will be required for smooth academic activities," he said, adding that the Rajuk notice also called for retrofitting of 10 other buildings of the university.

Helal Uddin Patowari, the chief engineer of Jagannath University, acknowledged receiving a letter from Rajuk on March 15; but the letter did not mention the name of the buildings.

Two buildings of the university have been identified as risky. "We have nowhere to relocate the labs and classrooms," Patowari said.

Three buildings of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) campus have been identified as risky by Rajuk. Of them, the 17-storey D Block building was built in 2011.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

SHISHU HOSPITAL

Man beaten to death over theft allegation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man was beaten to death allegedly by some Ansar men on suspicion of being a thief at the Shishu Hospital in the capital yesterday afternoon.

Md Mamun, 32, of Pallabi area, was a tea stall owner, said his brother Masud Rana.

He said Mamun along with his wife, daughter, and mother went to the Shyamoli area around 11:30am.

"In the afternoon, Mamun sent his family home on a bus and went to the [Shishu] hospital area. Outside the hospital, he saw his neighbour whose daughter was being treated there. As the neighbour and he tried to enter the hospital, an altercation broke out with the Ansar members present there," he claimed.

"At one stage, my brother assaulted an Ansar man. Later, the Ansar member shouted

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

1971: THE BATTLE OF KUSHTIA

One little town showed how to fight back

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and DIPAN NANDY, back from Kushtia

An eerie silence settled over the streets of Kushtia in the early hours of March 30, 1971, as a curfew, imposed by the occupying Pakistan army, was in place.

Thousands of Bangalees, divided in three groups, were quietly creeping towards the police lines, Wireless Centre and Zilla School, where marauding Pakistani forces had set up their camps five days ago.

As the clock struck 4:00am, the three groups broke the silence by opening fire, as several thousand others, in unison, shouted "Joy Bangla" at the top of their lungs.

"Opening fire and simultaneously chanting the slogan at our loudest confused the Pakistan army about how many of us were actually attacking them," remembered Mesbah Ul Haq, who took part in the battle.

Bangalee forces were shouting slogans from different corners. When one group stopped, the other started. It completely perplexed the Pakistanis, he said.

After his capture, Pakistani army Naik Subedar (senior sergeant) Mohammad Ayub had said, "We were very surprised."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

... They [the Pakistanis] got the message – Bangladesh is unbeatable. I am proud I was a part of that battle.

MESBAH UL HAQ
freedom fighter

Six injured as two BCL factions clash at college

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

At least six Chhatra League activists were injured as two factions of Sir Ashutosh Government College unit BCL in Chattogram's Boalkhali clashed over placing wreaths at the campus Shaheed Minar on Independence Day yesterday.

Among the injured, Arafat Hossain Tarek is the convener of the college unit BCL, while Md Irfan is its joint convener, said sources.

Other injured are Altaf Hossain Hridoy, Shuvo Das, Mahim Uddin and Md Noman.

According to sources, the BCL unit has two factions – one is led by Tarek and the other by Irfan.

The two groups fought amongst themselves at different times over

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



The once 150-meter-wide Shoilmari river in Khulna has been reduced to a narrow channel only 3-4 meters wide due to unabated encroachment, sand filling and unplanned development. When the tide is low, the navigability for boats is further reduced. As the authorities concerned remain indifferent, the important river now serves as a drainage system for many areas. Locals fear that if the river dries up completely, the region may become severely flood-prone. The photo was taken from the Batiaghata Bridge yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

DEMERIT POINT FOR DRIVERS Govt agencies dragging foot on enforcement BRTA says required software to be ready in 7-10 days

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

When the Road Transport Act-2018 was enacted over four years ago incorporating a system of demerit points on driving licenses for traffic violation, the authorities said the system would go a long way in ensuring road safety.

The law came into force in November 2019, but the authorities could not implement the system because the rules were not there until December 27 last year.

Even though the rules are here, the system still exists on papers only.

The demerit points system, as mentioned in the act, means there will be 12 points for each driver, and a traffic rules violation will result in deduction of one or two points. A licence will be revoked if a driver loses all the points.

Contacted, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) Chairman Nur Mohammad Mazumder said the software needed for the implementation will be ready within seven to 10 days and the system will be operational then.

Besides, a mobile app will be developed for the task, he said. "Once the app is available, implementation will be easier. But it will take some more time."

But some BRTA and police officers express doubts as to whether such a system can be implemented with success in a country where over five lakh vehicles operate without fitness certificates, thousands of drivers do not have licences, and cities do not have parking areas.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4