

## Lightning strikes claim five lives

STAR REPORT

Five people were killed and seven others injured in lightning strikes in three districts yesterday, according to reports from our correspondent and a news agency.

In Bagerhat, two people were killed and six injured by lightning strike in the Sarankhola area, reports our local correspondent.

The deceased are day laborers Sheikh Milon, 40, and Mustafa, 55.

AHM Kamruzzaman Khan, officer-in-charge of Sarankhola Police Station, said the incident occurred at Bandakata canal around 10:30am.

The two were on a trawler on the canal, and the injured were in an adjacent shop when the incident happened, he said.

According to UNB, at least three people died from lightning strikes in Chuadanga and Cumilla.

In Chuadanga, two farmers died, and another was injured after lightning struck them in separate places of Damurhuda and Darshana upazilas.

The deceased are Ahmed Mallik, 65, from Patachhora village in Damurhuda; and Rubel, 28, from Jhajri village in Darshana.

Mallik was working in the field around 9:00am. When a thunderstorm started, he got injured by lightning on his way home from the field.

In Cumilla, a 13-year-old boy died after a lightning struck him while he was playing football in a field near his house in Muradnagar upazila around 9:30am.

TK 1.24CR KODALIA-TEZROL ROAD WORK

## The asphalt didn't even last 10 days!



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

It was only around 10 days that the Kodalía-Tezrol road in Jashore Sadar upazila was reopened after development work.

And yet, the bitumen cover is coming off!

Aggrieved local residents have submitted a complaint to the concerned department, bringing allegations of poor quality of road work and use of sub-standard materials.

However, the contractor claimed there was no irregularity in the road construction work.

The 1.24-kilometre stretch of

the road was recently renovated between Kodalía Bazar and Tezrol areas of Lebutala union under the Important Rural Infrastructure Development Project-3 (IRIDP-3) at a cost of Tk 1.24 crore.

Noor Islam, a contractor from Barandipara of Jashore town, got the contract for the project. Later, Mehedi Hasan Ramun, another contractor from Khajura area of Sadar upazila, took over the work and completed it recently.

Barely 10 days after the road was opened to vehicles, the pitch at different places on the road has been coming off.

The locals even showed

journalists that the asphalt could be pulled off even by hand.

"If this is what happens just after 10 days of completing road work, imagine what will be the road's condition after the monsoon?" said Al Amin, an easy-bike driver.

"Even as we walk, the pitch is coming off and sticking to our shoe soles," said Solaiman Hossain, a resident of Kodalía village.

Local residents have sent a written complaint to the deputy commissioner of Jashore and the Local Government Engineering Department office of the district in this regard, said Zakir Hossain,

a local union parishad member.

Since the beginning of the road work, the contractor had been using low-quality bricks, clay, pebbles and bitumen, he alleged.

Contacted, Mehedi Hasan Ramun denied the allegations.

"No sub-standard materials were used. LGED assistant engineer Azizul Haque and sub-assistant engineer MA Raihan supervised the work," he claimed.

Azizul Haque said they will investigate the matter and action will be taken if the allegations are found to be true.

MA Raihan declined to comment over phone.

## No visa for 24,000 pilgrims yet

### Application deadline ends, govt requests for another extension

RASHIDUL HASAN

Despite the deadline for visa application ending yesterday, around 24,000 intended pilgrims registered under private hajj management are yet to get visas.

Top officials of religious affairs ministry said despite repeated warnings, private hajj agencies are dilly-dallying in ensuring visas for pilgrims.

As of yesterday, the visa process of around 60,000 hajj pilgrims has been completed.

This year, 85,257 Bangladeshis are scheduled to go to Saudi Arabia to perform Hajj, of which, 42,629 will be carried by Biman, while two Saudi airlines will carry the rest.

Of the total hajj pilgrims, 80,838 are scheduled to perform hajj under private management and the rest under government management.

"If any intended hajj pilgrims fail to get visa due to negligence of private agencies, they will have to be held accountable for this," Additional Secretary

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## AGE LIMIT FOR GOVT JOB Cops foil students' demo at Shahbagh

DU CORRESPONDENT

Police foiled a demonstration by students and job seekers at Shahbagh intersection in Dhaka yesterday afternoon.

The protesters staged the demonstration demanding that the government increase the age limit to apply for government jobs to 35 years from the existing 30.

Around 10:30am, 50 to 60 job seekers started the programme in front of the Raju sculpture on the Dhaka University campus.

Later, they marched towards the Shahbagh intersection around 3:30pm.

Witnesses said when the agitating students blocked the road at Shahbagh intersection around 3:45pm and stopped the moving vehicles to press home their demand, police started dispersing them.

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Palm trees have started to bear fruit in Barishal and life has become busier for Md Shamim, 45. Every day, he goes from house to house and climbs up the trees to collect the fruit. He pays Tk 1,000-1,200 to owners for the fruits in each tree. Shamim then sells those in the city for Tk 15-20 per piece. The photo was taken in Korapur area recently.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## Former UP chairman shot dead in Narail

STAR REPORT

A former Union Parishad chairman was shot dead in Narail's Lohagara upazila on Friday night.

The deceased is Sikder Mostafa Kamal, a two-time chairman of Mallikpur Union Parishad.

Mostafa Kamal, also a leader of the upazila unit of Awami League, came under attack around 7:30pm while returning home from Lohagara Bazar on a motorcycle.

According to police and locals, several miscreants stopped his motorcycle near the Kundashi area and shot him before fleeing.

With bullet wounds in his chest, he was taken to Lohagara Upazila Health Complex. He died on the way to Dhaka around

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## Lichi cultivation a success in Pirojpur

KM HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

In the recent years, many farmers in Pirojpur district switched from paddy cultivation to growing different varieties of seasonal fruits.

The farmers said they found it hard to retain their production costs in paddy cultivation whereas fruit cultivation has been a successful initiative to many of them.

"We can cultivate paddy only a year as our lands are very low lying and remain inundated for most of the time of the year. As such, paddy cultivation was not beneficial for us. So, many farmers are now cultivating different seasonal fruits including jujube, mango, guava



and lichi," said Manmatho Edbor, a grower from Nazirpur upazila of Pirojpur.

In particular, lichi cultivation has become quite popular among growers in Pirojpur. Many are cultivating

Mujaffarpuri and China-3 varieties of lichi successfully. "Lichi is a highly valued and popular fruit, so we don't face any trouble to sell our harvest to buyers from different areas profitably," Manmatho added.

Hansapati Mistry from Tarabuniya village under the

upazila, said, "I began lichi cultivation first in our area. Later on, many others followed me to grow the delicious fruit. At present, I am waiting to harvest lichi from around 500 trees in my orchard."

Mentioning that the recent hot spell was a concern to the growers in the area, Hansapati said rainfall ahead of the harvest will help the fruit mature well and enhance yield.

Md Khalid Hossain Sajal, chairman of Shakhrikathi union in the upazila, said cultivation of fruits including lichi has been playing an important role in the local economy.

After meeting local demand, farmers can transport lichi to other areas of the country, he added.

Pankaj Kumer Boral, sub-assistant agriculture officer in Nazirpur, said this year, lichi has been cultivated in 55 hectares of land in Pirojpur, and a good yield is expected.

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