

2 teens killed in Panchagarh road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Thakurgaon

Two teenagers were killed after a truck hit their bicycle in Debiganj of Panchagarh Thursday night.

Sanjoy Chandra Roy, 14, son of Raj Kumar Roy, and Anik Chandra Roy, 14, son of Atul Chandra Roy, were from Pamuli Bhullipara.

Sanjoy was a class eight student while Anik worked at a local workshop.

Debiganj Police Station OC Soyle Rana said the accident occurred when a stone-laden truck heading towards Debiganj ran over the boys from behind while they were returning home from Laxmi Bazar.

The truck was intercepted by locals, who caught the driver, Abdul Halim, 60, and his helper, Jahid Hasan, and handed them over to the police.

Anik's family filed a case with the police station.

The two arrestees yesterday were produced before a Panchagarh court that sent them to jail, said the OC.

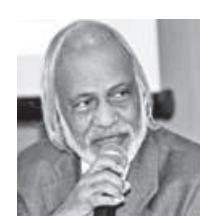


Workers prepare bitumen for roadwork in Khulna. After an entire day of intense labour amid soaring temperatures, they earn around Tk 700.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

AL ban not a matter for BNP to decide Says Moyeen Khan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



BNP Standing Committee Member Abdul Moyeen Khan yesterday said the decision to ban Awami League can be taken by the Election Commission or the government, not by BNP.

He made the comment while speaking to journalists after a meeting with a delegation from the Carter Center at the BNP Chairperson's office in Gulshan.

"Our secretary general has already said this is a matter for the people to decide. The people will determine who will participate in the election and who won't..." Moyeen Khan added.

He also said, "You [the journalists] have asked me whether Awami League will participate in the election or not, whether they will be accepted or not, whether they will be banned or not. Why don't you ask this question to Awami League? Do they really want to participate in the election? Do they really want democracy? That is for them to say."

"Nine months have passed. Has a single leader of Awami League sought forgiveness from the people for their oppression, looting, and misdeeds? Has anyone admitted their mistakes?" he asked.

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GD-1126

New political platform 'UP Bangladesh' launched

DU CORRESPONDENT

A new political platform, United Peoples Bangladesh (UP Bangladesh), was launched yesterday.

The 82 member platform, which includes former leaders of Islami Chhatra Shibir and the Jatiya Nagarik Committee, was announced at the Central Shaheed Minar around 4:30pm.

Former Dhaka University Shibir president Ali Ahsan Zonaed was named convenor, with Arefin Muhammad Hizbulah as member secretary. Rafe Salman Rifat, also a former DU Shibir president, was appointed chief coordinator, Nayeem Ahmad as chief organiser, and Shahrin Sultana Era as spokesperson.

At the programme, Zonaed said the platform would work to resist fascism, communalism, and corruption. "Our political journey is rooted in the July uprising. Our only politics will be to realise the dreams of the martyred families," he said.

UP Bangladesh aims to pressure the government to prosecute those responsible for the July killings and to ensure rehabilitation for the injured and support for the families of the deceased.

SUZID DAS, Faridpur

Seventy-year-old Shomiruddin Nagarchi's back is bent with age, but his hands remain steady as he sits cross-legged on the mud veranda of his tin-roofed house in Joynagar village under Balmarai upazila of Faridpur.

Around him are piles of freshly crafted palm-leaf fans (locally known as "tal-pakha"), a symbol of tradition that has endured for generations.

For Shomiruddin, making palm fans is not just a livelihood but a legacy. "I have no farmland. My father and grandfather made these fans, and I learned from them," he says with a quiet smile. "It's love, it's heritage. That's why I can't leave it."

Shomiruddin's wife, Bhanu Nagarchi, also works alongside him. The couple, whose only daughter was married off years ago in Jhenaidah, now live alone.

Bhanu said together they make around 50 to 60 fans a day, often working from dawn until late at night.

But times have changed. With the spread of electricity and the rise of electric fans, demand for the palm fan has declined sharply, she added.

"There used to be so much

JOYNAGAR IN FARIDPUR

'Tal-pakha' artisans struggle to stay afloat

work... two artisans could make over 100 fans in a day,"

Shomiruddin recalled. "Now, we barely make 25 to 30 a day."

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw the entire village at work. Men sliced palm leaves and split bamboo, while women stitched and coloured

of near unemployment. Some turn to other work, including joining village musical troupes to make ends meet.

Papi Begum, 35, a homemaker, said she and her family make 50 to 60 fans a day. A single fan retails for Tk 40 to 50, but wholesalers buy in bulk



the fans.

Talking to the craftsmen revealed that Joynagar is home to around 100 families engaged in the craft. During the peak season from Chaitra to Ashwin, the village comes alive with activity. However, from Kartik to Falgun, the artisans face months

-- about Tk 2,500 to 3,500 per month, depending on market rates.

"Costs have climbed: a single fan now costs Tk 10 to 15 to make, including palm leaves, bamboo, thread and dyes, leaving little profit," she said.

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Maize cultivation transforms lives on Teesta sandy chars

S DILROY, Lalmonirhat

Char farmer Maqbul Hossain, 65, has been cultivating maize on seven bighas of sandy char land on the Teesta riverbed for the past 10 years. Before switching to maize, he could hardly grow any crops on the char lands and had to struggle with poverty to survive. But after starting maize cultivation, his family began to prosper.

Maqbul Hossain lives in Char Shoulmari area of Lalmonirhat.

This year, Maqbul harvested 290 maunds of maize from seven bighas of land. He spent Tk 81,000 on maize cultivation and is selling the crop at Tk 1,100 to Tk 1,160 per maund.

"If I had not started cultivating maize on sandy char, I would still be struggling with poverty. Maize cultivation has brought prosperity to my family," he said.

Delwar Hossain, 60, a farmer from Char Doani area, said he lost 10 bighas of land to river erosion and had to move to the city with his family, earning a living by driving a rickshaw. As chars re-emerged on the Teesta riverbed, he returned to his village 12 years ago and started cultivating maize. This year, he cultivated maize on eight bighas and harvested 322 maunds.

He said, "With the income I earn every year from maize cultivation, I can meet my family's needs and still save some money."

Many other farmers echoed him.

Shafiqul Islam, additional director of the Department of Agricultural Extension in Rangpur, said maize has been cultivated on 126,501 hectares of land in five districts of the Rangpur region -- Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Rangpur and Nilphamari -- with a production target of 13.92 lakh tonnes. About 50 percent of the maize is produced in char areas.

This year, it has been cultivated on 33,055 hectares of land in the district, with most of it grown on the sandy char land along the Teesta riverbed, he said.

The country's annual maize demand is around 70 lakh tonnes, while production currently stands at about 68 lakh tonnes. "No maize will have to be imported after the next two to three years," he added.

Former public prosecutor held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Zahirul Islam Selim, the recently removed public prosecutor and vice president of the Cumilla city Awami League, was arrested at his residence in the city early yesterday.

He was detained on allegations of conspiring to incite unrest through an online meeting involving ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, said Kotwali Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mohinul Islam.

He said the former PP is an accused in a case related to an attack on the anti-discrimination student movement.

Police said he will be presented before the court today.