

NEWS SNAPS

Books for pry school students

BSS, Munshiganj

Five-lakh books have been distributed free among the primary school students in six upazilas of Munshiganj district as part of the national programme of free distribution of books at primary level.

According to district primary education office sources, the books have been given to boys and girls at Class one to five level of 503 government primary schools, 49 approved community primary schools and one experimental primary school of the Primary Training Institute, Munshiganj.

Touchstone statue recovered

BSS, Panchagarh

Members of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) recovered a touchstone statue of "Krishna" from Malipara frontier in Sadar upazila of Panchagarh district on Monday.

Officials said acting on a tip-off, the BDR battalion rushed to the village and recovered the statue from a field at Malipara. The statue was 6.5-kilogram with one foot height. Its price was estimated at Tk one lakh.

Poultry farm gutted

BSS, Munshiganj

A poultry farm at Pashchim Deobhog in Sadar upazila was gutted by fire in the early hours of Sunday.

According to eyewitnesses, about 1,000 poultry birds were killed in the fire. The blaze broke out at round 4 am, when the employees of the farm were asleep. Villagers and fire brigade personnel doused the fire after a hard struggle for half-an-hour.

On e community clinic for 6,000 people

BSS, Tangail

The government has taken up a scheme to set up 104 community clinics to reach healthcare services to the doorsteps of people in Tangail district.

According to official sources, work on the community clinics has already started. The clinics are expected to be completed in the current financial year. One health assistant and one family welfare assistant would run each community clinic for 6,000 people. Of the total, 48 clinics have already been completed. These were 17, out of 25 clinics in Madhupur upazila, 17, out of 39 in Shakhipur and Bashail upazilas, 10, out of 25 in Nagarpur upazila and four, out of 11 in Gopalpur upazila.

Prices of essentials soar in Faridpur

ABDUL MATIN FAKIR, Faridpur

Prices of essential commodities have been on the increase in all the markets of Faridpur district since December 15 last year causing tremendous hardship to people of low income group.

People cannot find out the reason of price-hike of rice, pulses and vegetables in this harvesting season. Prices of rice of all varieties have registered a rise of Tk 2 per kilogram (kg) during the aforementioned period. Coarse rice usually consumed by the people of low income group. Now it is being sold at Taka 13-14 kg as against Tk 11-13 a few days ago. Medium quality of rice including Jhingashail and Swarna is on sale at Tk 15 against Tk 13 weeks ago. Fine quality of rice is being sold at Tk 18-20 per kg as against Tk 16-18 per kg. Superfine rice Kataribhog sells at Tk 23-25 a

kg as against Tk 22-24. People of all walks of life are surprised at this price spiral during the harvesting season.

The prices of winter vegetables are also increasing every day. Brinjal is now selling at Tk 16 a kg in place of Tk 10 a few days ago. Cauliflower and cabbage are selling at Tk 12 and Tk 8 a kg respectively in place of Tk 8 and 6. Bean sells at Tk 12 in place of Tk 8 a kg a week ago. The price of potato has jumped from Tk 8 to 12 a kg within a week. Tomato is selling at Tk 18 a kg in place of Tk 5-6. A slice of gourd weighing 400 gram sells at Tk 10 in place of Tk 5.

The prices of all kinds of leafy vegetables have doubled. On average these are now on sale at Tk 10 to 14 a kg.

Pulses including Moog, Musur, Motor and Chhola are selling between Tk 40 and 45 a kg as

against Tk 38-40.

All kinds of fishes are selling at too high prices for common people to afford to buy. Medium size Koi fish numbering 15 sells at Tk 450, a Shoil fish weighing 700 gram sells at Tk 100, Rui and Katta each weighing three kg are selling at Tk 400-450. Small fishes are hardly available in the markets.

Edible oil is selling at exorbitant prices. Soyabean is selling at Tk 50 to 60 a kg in local markets as against Tk 40 a kg fixed by the government. Mustard oil is selling at Tk 60 to Tk 65 a kg.

Mutton sells at Tk 140, beef at Tk 90 as against Tk 75 and chicken at Tk 100 a kg.

Government should take immediate measures to check the upward trend of prices of essential commodities to dispel the frustration prevailing in the minds of common people.

50 in Gopalganj unfit to contest UP elections

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gopalganj

Gopalganj District Election Office has rejected nominations of 50 persons.

The Election Office (EO) has rejected the candidature of two chairman candidates in Gopalganj Sadar upazila, two chairman candidates in Mukshudpur upazila and one chairman candidate in Kotalipara upazila because they were loan defaulters.

Nominations of five female ward chairman candidates in Gopalganj Sadar upazila, six in Mukshudpur upazila, one in Kasiani upazila, two of Kotalipara upazila and one of Tungipara upazila have been rejected.

Nominations of four ward member candidates in Gopalganj Sadar upazila, six in Mukshudpur upazila, two in Kasiani upazila, 14 in Kotalipara upazila and five candidates in Tungipara upazila have been rejected because they were loan defaulters.

Braving shivering cold...



PHOTO FEATURE: AKHTERUZZAMAN

The entire Sirajganj district is in grip of prolonged cold spell of cold wave. The sky continues to remain overcast by dense fog keeping the sun invisible throughout the district. Despite this situation life goes on as usual. (Top left) Braving shivering cold a group of poor children at Shaprir Char (a shoal area in the Jamuna River) in Sadar upazila, Sirajganj set for school while (right) other rural children, unaware of the unbearable weather, play under the open sky. (Bottom left) Four farm labourers at Khas Belter Char carry their produce towards home following harvest of pulse while (right) some guest birds have taken refuge on a tree at Khas Belter Char in the Jamuna River.

Electioneering goes on in full swing in Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

"Cold spell is no problem in this election season," said an union parishad (UP) polls candidate of Kholahati union in Gaibandha Sadar upazila.

Despite biting cold electioneering is going on in full swing in this northern district.

Elections will be held in 80, out of 82 UPs in Gaibandha.

Despite an unbearable cold spell, candidates and their supporters are moving from door to door to woo voters even in remote areas.

Almost all the tea stalls in villages have become the ideal places of election debate. Supporters of candidates have erected election camps at important places of villages. Many makeshift tea stalls have also grown up everywhere.

One person named Jainul, a petty tea stall owner at village

Panchpir bazaar in Sunderganj upazila informed that the election season has changed his fate. Previously his tea stall was about to be closed, but now he has built his stall anew which he also developed to some extent. Not only that, he further told, he has engaged three boys to help serve tea to a large number of customers. Now he is doing a brisk business of tea.

The district election authorities have recruited 41 Returning Officers in seven upazilas in Gaibandha.

The Election Commission (EC) has taken up all possible measures to conduct free and fair UP elections. A total of 13,32,765 voters including 6,49,672 female voters will exercise their franchise in the coming polls.



PHOTO: STAR

Four female workers threshing paddy at village Duoj of Atpara upazila in Netrakona. The number of female labourers increased considerably in recent time due to various reasons.



Some distinguished personalities of Sylhet pose for photograph after receiving awards distributed by Bangladesh Jubo Unnyan Parishad, a youth development organisation, at Sarda Hall in the divisional city recently for their outstanding achievements in different fields.

RU medical centre in bad shape

RU CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The Rajshahi University Medical Centre (RUMC) is beset with manifold problems.

The centre was established in 1959 with a doctor named Md Abdul Qaium. At the beginning it had no building of its own.

At present, on average 600 patients of the university including teachers, students, officers, employees and their relatives come to the medical centre for treatment everyday. Many of them go back home for lack of proper medical facilities.

The RU medical centre lacks sufficient doctors. So, the centre fails to render proper healthcare services to 33,000 people of the university. There is no eye, ear, brain and dental specialist. As a result the patients are compelled to go to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) or different private clinics of the city for treatment. At present, the medical centre has only two ambulances. One ambulance is out of order and the remaining one mainly serves the teachers and the officers of the university. As a consequence, the students are compelled to hire vehicles during emergency

period at a high rate to go to RUMC or various clinics of the city for treatment.

There are only 10 beds in the centre for seriously injured or infectious diseases affected patients. Now it has no X-ray machine. As a result, the seriously wounded patients have to rush at other diagnostic centres for X-ray. It is widely alleged that the doctors of RU medical centre do not take care of the ailing students or listen to the problems of the patients properly.

The posts of four, out of 20 posts of doctors are lying vacant. The medical centre is very dirty.

There are only two female doctors in the centre. The female patients have to suffer a lot.

One of the doctors of the medical centre told, requesting not to be named, that this centre needs at least three ambulances, modern medical equipment, 32 doctors including seven more female doctors. Then and only then the existing problems will be solved, he further said.

The budget allocation for the centre should also be increased. The present budget allocation for the centre is Tk 10-lakh per year.

JB earns profit in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The Janata Bank in Rajshahi division reduced the amount of its classified loans by Tk 20 crore in last three years.

With the end of the year 2002, the bank's classified loan amount stand at Tk 190 crore which is 27 per cent of the total loan. In 1999, the amount was Tk 210 crore which was 40 per cent of the total loan.

The bank however earned Tk 1.75 crore profit through its 225 branches in the division last year.

The bank had been incurring losses since 1999 when the loss amount was above Tk 15 crore.

The bank realised bad loans of Tk 44 crore last year and increased its deposit amount to Tk 1382 crore from Tk 952 crore in 1999.

3 tribals caught

UNB, Khagrachhari

Local people caught three alleged tribal criminals along with firearms at Lalchhari in Ramgarh upazila Saturday.

Police said the three tribal men -- Bikash Chakma, 20, of Matiranga upazila and Aongajai Marma, 32, of Lalchhari in Ramgarh -- were caught as they terrorised a villager brandishing firearms. They were handed over to police.