

NEWS SNAPS

Unnatural death of teenage girl

UNB, Patuakhali

A teenage girl allegedly committed suicide by taking pesticide at village Shiali in Sadar upazila Monday.

The victim was identified as Nurmehar Begum, 15, daughter of Kalu Mia. The body was sent to hospital morgue for autopsy. An unnatural death (UD) case was filed.

Armed robbery at Narayanganj

UNB, Narayanganj

Armed robbers looted cash and valuables worth Tk 5 lakh from a house in Chanmari area of the town Monday night.

Family sources said nine robbers swooped on the house of Omar Ali and looted the valuables, including 52 tolas of gold, locking the house inmates in a room. In another incident on the day, road pirates looted valuables from the passengers of a Bhultahat-bound minibus.

Miscreants swoop on bus

UNB, Manikganj

Local miscreants damaged a bus and snatched Tk 20,000 from the passengers at Ketra in Sadar upazila Monday.

Witnesses said the criminals swooped on the bus when it smashed a rickshaw.

Robbery in Keraniganj

UNB, Keraniganj

Valuables, including cash and electronic goods, worth over Tk 50,000 were stolen from the house of a newsman at village Chunkuria here Tuesday.

Police said thieves entered into the house of Jahangir Hossain Jhunu, local correspondent of Bangla Bazaar, in the afternoon and looted the valuables.

Jail term for killer husband

UNB, Brahmanbaria

A man was sentenced to life term in jail by a court here Monday for killing his wife.

The court also fined convict Arun Baidya Shahaji of village Kunda in Nasimagar upazila Tk 10,000. The case history, in brief, is that Arun beat his wife Rina Rani to death following a family feud on November 9, 1996.

Tk 19 cr BRDB farm credit distributed

UNB, Madaripur

Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) distributed Tk 19 crore as farm credit in four upazila of Madaripur district in the first six months of the current financial year.

BRDB distributed the loan for poultry and dairy farming, pisciculture, betel leaf cultivation, weaving and small trading under a government-sponsored production and employment project.

100 brick kilns in Magura polluting environment

HOSSAIN SERAJ, Magura

As winter sets in, the people in Magura district face another spate of environmental pollution.

This is because about 100 brick kilns here are burning tons of fuel wood and coal in a very crude manner.

Local people said, most of those brick kilns have been set up without the approval of local administration.

Khan Marharul Huq Lipu, a sociology college teacher in Magura said, unauthorised kilns are threatening the on-going campaign to protect the environment.

A competent source said, some people who have applied for permission with the local authorities have already started their business while some others are engaged in their illegal business without any approval. As per Brick Burning Control Act of 1992, one may be sentenced to 10 years imprisonment or fined Tk 50,000 for violating the law.

Local people said, although some brick kilns owners are using coal, most of them are involved in burning wood in their kilns.

A reliable source claimed, at least 20 lakh maunds of fire wood will be burnt in the kilns violating the rules.

Local people said, brick field owners buy trees from poor villagers and use those in connivance with a section of dishonest government officials, although there has been a task force for keeping vigilance on the illegal practice.

Experts said, the Act allows maximum 1.5 acres of land for a brick field, but many kiln owners use 4 to 5 acres of land for setting up of a kiln.

According to the law concerned, kiln owners are to install minimum 50 feet high chimney with filter in every kiln for emission of smokes. But most of kiln owners can only allow 'unfertilized' and 'fallow' land for setting up of brick fields. But in Magura district many kilns have been set up on arable lands, much to the sufferings of the dwellers.

Meanwhile, some brick kiln-owners have been using highly sulphured coals in burning bricks.

Experts opined, thick black cloud looms over the relevant areas throughout the operational period of these kilns. At places like Ichchakhada, Ramnagar and Paria in Sadar upazila, children and adults are equally vulnerable during the period and complain headache, asthma and other respiratory problems.

Local farmers also complain adverse effects on crops grown around the kilns. The smoke pollutes air, water and land with particulate dust and a high concentration of toxic sulphur.

Meanwhile, coal imported from Meghalaya in India, has a very high sulphur content, hundred times more than the permissible limit.

Local people have urged the authorities concerned to take fruitful steps to stop the illegal practice.

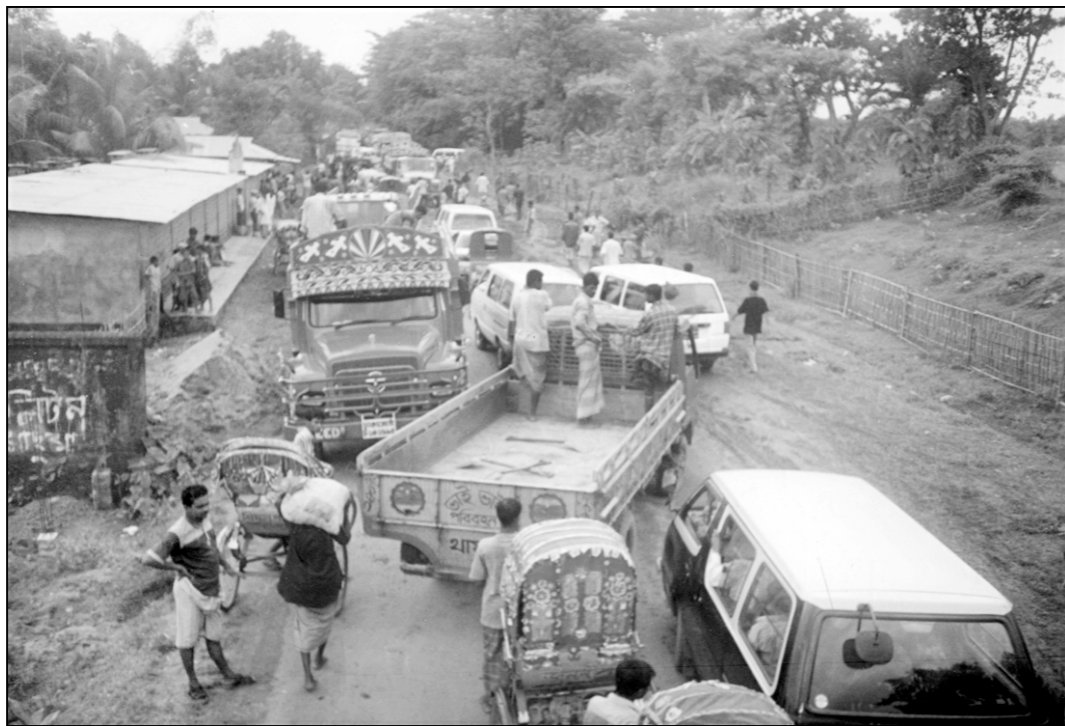


PHOTO: STAR

Unbearable traffic jam at Shahbandar on Sylhet-Dhaka highway. Passengers and others suffer a lot due to traffic jam which is a regular feature here.

62 killed in Bagerhat last year

UNB, Bagerhat

A total of 62 people, including political leaders and activists, were killed in Bagerhat district last year.

Some 116 firearms were recovered and 1,868 cases filed with various police stations of the district during the period, according to police records.

The police records also showed that 19 robberies, 18 piracies, 273 incidents of woman repression and three acid attacks and 1,300 other cases took place during the year.

Besides, 54 cases were filed under the Narcotic Control Act.

Pirojpur farmers receive Tk 9.78 cr farm loan in six months

UNB, Pirojpur

Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) distributed farm loan amounting to Tk 9.78 crore among 7,073 people of Pirojpur district in the first six months of the current fiscal year.

Of the total, Tk 46.85 lakh was distributed for aman cultivation, Tk 56.69 lakh for sugarcane, Tk 94.37 lakh for boro paddy and Tk 2.88 crore for potato cultivation, officials

said.

Besides, BKB gave the farmers Tk 54.35 lakh for buying bullocks, Tk 5.62 lakh for pisciculture, Tk 1.71 lakh for undertaking self-employment projects, Tk 1.61 crore for poverty alleviation and Tk 2.69 crore for other purposes.

During the period, the bank realised its outstanding loan amounting to Tk 10.18 crore from its 6,167 borrowers.

Life term RI for murderer

UNB, Sylhet

A court here Monday sentenced a man to life term rigorous imprisonment (RI) in a murder case.

The court also fined convict Abul Miah of village Kolagaon in Durga upazila of Netrakona Tk 10,000, in default, to suffer two years RI more.

According to the prosecution,

Abul Miah stabbed Muhit Miah, owner of a tailoring shop, as he caught Abdul red-handed while stealing money from his cash box on July 5, 2000. Muhit later died at local hospital.

After examining records and witnesses, the Additional District and Sessions Judge pronounced the judgement.



PHOTO: STAR

Students of the Faculty of Fisheries of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) brought out a procession (left) and formed a human chain (right) in Mymensingh on January 18 demanding cancellation of the new draft proposal of recruitment and reintroduction of the recruitment rule of BCS (Fisheries) cadre service of 1981.

Growing trend of acid attack raises great concern

UNB, Satkhira

Speakers at a rally here Tuesday voiced grave concern at the growing trend of acid attack in the country and called for waging a social movement against the perpetrators.

Leading artistes and professionals of the country attended the rally at Shaheed Abdur Razzak Park and appealed to the affluent section of the society to come up in aid of the acid survivors.

Acid Sahayak Fund, launched by Prothom Alo, organised the rally to create mass awareness against acid terrorism and raise funds for the survivors of acid attacks.

Citing statistics, the speakers told the rally that 221 women and children across the country fell prey to acid attack in 2000 while 430 in 2001 and 485

in 2002.

They called for effective enforcement of law and boycotting the perpetrators of acid attack to eliminate the menace from the society.

Film actor Ilias Kanchan, actress Shomi Kaiser, singer Kumar Biswajit, Prothom Alo editor Motiur Rahman, Dr Samantlal Sen, and local politicians addressed the rally.

Later, the organisers announced to provide one sewing machine, one cow and a tin-shed house each to three acid victims of the district.

They are Purnima Rani of village Pakshia and Anjumanwara Begum of village Mehendi in Tala upazila and five-year-old Bilkis of village Bohera Guru in Debhata upazila.

Date-expired goods on sale in Khulna

UNB, Khulna

The trend of selling date-expired goods and cheating in weight is on the rise here despite Bangladesh Standard Testing Institute's (BSTI's) intensified activities.

There are a good number of companies in the city which are marketing flour, biscuits and some other food items made of wheat without having BSTI's approval.

According to shoppers, a section of dishonest shop owners sell date-expired food items and medicines posing a threat to public health. Cheating in weight is also a common practice, they said.

A BSTI official said the companies hardly bother about BSTI approval while marketing an item because of loopholes in the consumers rights protection act.

"What the government needs to

check swindling in business is to amend the law incorporating tougher provisions," the official said preferring anonymity.

3,000 MTs of chilli output target fixed in Madaripur

UNB, Madaripur

Some 1,500 hectares of land in four upazilas of Madaripur district have been brought under chilli cultivation with an output target of 3,000 metric tons (MTs).

Of the total, 200 hectares are in Sadar, 500 in Kalkini, 500 Rajoir and 300 hectares in Shibchar upazilas.

Meanwhile, the Department Agriculture Extension has distributed seeds, fertilisers and other agri-inputs among the farmers.

Tk 21.13 lakh land dev tax realised in Pirojpur in 6 months

UNB, Pirojpur

An amount of Tk 21.13 lakh was realised in land development tax from Pirojpur district in the first six months of the current fiscal year.

Of the total, Tk 2.12 lakh was collected from Nazirpur, Tk 3.53 lakh from Nesarabad, Tk 15,058 from Kaukhali, Tk 5.02 lakh from Sadar, Tk 1.45 lakh from Zianagar, Tk 1.46 lakh from Bhandaria and Tk 6.57 lakh from Mothbaria upazila.

Cold spell makes life miserable



PHOTOS: STAR

After a brief respite, mercury begins to fall again in some parts of the country. As a result life of people becomes miserable due to cold spell. Here are some shots from Magura and Sirajganj districts which testify to the truth. (Top left) In one winter morning a baby tries to find warmth in his uncle's lap in Magura town, while (right) in a remote shoal area named Beltar Char in Jamuna River of Sirajganj district all the members of a marginal farmer's family try to fight cold by burning straws. (Bottom left) A scene of a wholesale vegetables market in a chilly winter morning in Magura, while rickshaw pullers and passers-by make life mobile which became paralysed in the southern district town due to shivering cold.