

SNAPS

Workshops on pest management thru' IPM system held

STAR NATIONAL DESK
Two workshops on pest management through Integrated Pest Management (IPM) system were held at Moulvibazar and Habiganj recently. The project is being funded by the Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA) and implemented by the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE). Four hundred farmers, 100 DAE staff, people's representatives, government officials and NGO men participated in the workshop. Transplanted aman in Sylhet is prone to attack by Hispa pests.

Danish Embassy officials visit 'farmers schools'

STAR NATIONAL DESK
Two high officials of the Royal Danish Embassy in Bangladesh visited Farmers' Field Schools (FFS) in Jessore to see their activities.

The Counsellor and the Programme Officer of the Embassy on October 15 and 16 saw the activities under the Strengthening Plant Protection Services (SPPS) Project (Phase-2) in five areas in the region, says a press release.

The project is being funded by the Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA) and executed by the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE).

They visited a FFS at Baghdanga, Jessore Sadar, at Swaruppur, and Chowgachha and exchanged views with farmers.

A total of 851 FFS have been established in 200 upazilas under the project to disseminate the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) concept.

Freshers' reception at Ctg University

CU CORRESPONDENT

A freshers' reception was arranged on Saturday for the newly-admitted first year students of Chittagong University Computer Science Department.

A discussion was held at the BBA faculty lecture gallery on the campus. Vice chancellor Professor AJM Nuruddin Chowdhury was present as chief guest while Pro-Vice Chancellor Professor M Shamsuddin was special guest. Departmental chairman Professor Dr Md Nurul Mostafa presided over.

Among others, Dean of Science faculty Professor Dr Md Abu Saleh, Dean of Arts faculty professor Md Sirajul Islam and Dean of BBA faculty Professor Shanti Rangan Das addressed the meeting.

Life begins with tobacco ends in disease

20,000 children work in hazardous bidi factories in Haragach Bandar



PHOTO: STAR

Deprived of schooling and other facilities, they begin life with tobacco. The photo was taken on Thursday from a bidi factory at Haragach Bandar in Rangpur.

MOZAMMEL HAQ, Rangpur

The tiny-tots start life with harmful tobacco, not with pen or pencil.

Seven year-old Abdul is learning how to make bidi. He said his parents sent him to the bidi factory.

There are thousands like Abdul, making bidi in shanties, inhaling polluted air which cause fatal diseases.

Parents here like to have more children because they supplement family income by working in bidi factories.

At least 20,000 children below 12 are working in 49 bidi factories in Haragach Bandar, according to an ILO-sponsored survey.

Haragach Bandar, 8 miles from Rangpur town, is famous for tobacco business and bidi factories.

Over one lakh people including children are engaged in bidi factories and tobacco business in the

Bandar area.

Every day, over five crore bidi sticks are manufactured and dispatched to different districts by trucks and other transports. Government earns over Tk 50 crore every year by selling bandarole of bidi and cigarettes, sources in the industry said.

A customs official said 40 of the bidi factories here are tax payers.

A child worker earns around Tk 20 and an adult Tk 40 to 60 a day.

The more the number of children a family has, the more is the income.

This encourages males to have more than one wife, a social worker said.

Haragach Bandar comprises parts of Haragach, Sarai and Mornia unions under Kaunia and Gangachara upazilas. The area is on the southern bank of Teesta river and its tributary Manosh.

In past few decades, erosion by the rivers devoured thousands of homesteads and vast areas of cultivable lands, making the landless and homeless dependent on the tobacco industry.

Most of them live in and around Haragach Bandar. At least three lakh people huddle in clusters of shanties.

The thick population has created great health hazards, said Anwarul Islam, chairman of Haragach Pourasava.

Thousands of children growing in the area turn to child labourers and none of them dreams of going to school, said Majibar, a labour leader.

A large number of people of all ages became easy prey to various chronic diseases like asthma, TB, jaundice, bronchitis, kidney infection and skin and eye disease due to tobacco dust floating on air.

They can hardly afford good treatment and die, said Abu Omar, a physician.

As per law, the factory owner must employ a doctor for regular checkup of the workers. But it is never done.

Asked about this, worker Junab Ali simply laughed away. "Who will enforce this law?" he asked.

There is a ray of hope in the darkness.

In recent days, some non-government organisations have launched a motivation drive on terrible affects of tobacco on health. They are holding group meetings and making house to house contact.

They have offered vocational training to teenagers and soft loan to families to discourage child labour in bidi factories. They are also provided health care services to many families.

Pirates rule coasts

16 fishing trawlers looted, 38 abducted in 5 days

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Armed pirates looted 16 fishing trawlers and abducted 38 fishermen in the Bay and in the Meghna estuary in five days till Saturday.

Our Correspondent reported from Barisal that armed pirates looted and hijacked a fishing trawler along with its 18 crew and fishermen in the sea on October 21.

Four fishermen were thrown into the sea, two of the survivors told this correspondent at Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital (BSBMCH) on Saturday.

The two Selim, 45 and Ali Hossain, 35 were rescued by another trawler -FB Suktara-on October 22. They were brought to Alipur in Patuakhali on Saturday with marks of injury on their bodies and sent to BSBMCH.

They said the hijacked trawler is owned by one Mahmudul Huq of Cox's Bazar.

When contacted from Alipur, Huq said the pirates demanded ransom for release of the trawler along with the abducted fishermen and crew. The pirates asked him to send the ransom money to an address in Barisal. But he declined to disclose

the address fearing reprisal. When contacted, police expressed their ignorance about the matter.

A correspondent reported from Bhola that pirates looted 15 fishing trawlers on the Meghna estuary and hijacked five others along with 20 fishermen in three days till Friday.

Another at least 20 fishermen were injured in the attacks and fishing equipment worth over Tk five lakh were looted, according to fishermen of the looted trawlers. No case was filed till yesterday.

16 hurt in AL clashes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

At least 16 people were injured as clashed between rival factions foiled Awami League triennial conventions in Assasumi and Kalaroa upazilas on Friday and Thursday respectively.

Party sources said at least 10 activists were injured when the conference of Budhata union AL at Assasumi ended in a pandemonium following an attack by a rival faction.

Satkhira district AL leader

Monsur Ahmed, Assasumi thana AL president and former lawmaker Moklesur Rahman came to attend the conference, called at Budha High School premises.

The sources said a group of 'miscreants' led by ABM Mustakim who joined AL recently attack the venue in presence of AL leaders. They dismantled the stage and tore down mikes.

In Kalaroa, six AL activist were injured when two rival factions clashed at the Keral Kata union AL

conference, called at Singia Bazar. The rival factions in Keral Kata union AL are led by local Union Parishad chairman Abdul Hamid and Firoz Ahmed Swapan.

The Swapan group convened the conference, opposed by the Hamid faction, calling it "constitutional".

As the conference was about to start at 3 pm, activists loyal to Hamid hurled chairs at the podium. The two rival groups then fell upon each other.



PHOTO: STAR

Two of the victims of acid attack at Harigati Majihati village in Kendua upazila in Netrakona.

Haven for criminals, hell for victims

JAHANGIR ALAM, Netrakona

Four victims of acid attack for protesting abduction of a woman are on the run following threats but the accused are moving freely in the area.

Names of five of the 15 accused have been dropped from the FIR-list as they are activists of ruling BNP, the victims and local people claimed.

The 10 others are on bail. The abducted woman is still traced.

Ambia of Harigati Majihati village in Kendua upazila was married to one Anwar of the same village but was divorced some months later.

As she lodged a case, she was abducted allegedly by her former husband Anwar, Shahin and Jahur on April 20. Her cousin Bulbul filed an abduction case with Kendua police.

Some ruling party men allegedly led by Sadaruddin, president of Sandikona union BNP, threatened Bulbul to withdrawal the abduction case or to face death.

Bulbul refused. On the night of July 7, Bulbul and his friends Ataula, Saidul Islam and Masud became victims of acid attack when they were asleep in a newly raised house in the village.

They filed a case with Kendua police accusing 15 people including Jabbar, Toynal, Anamul, Juel, Shahin, and Badal.

But the Officer-in-Charge of Kendua thana dropped names of five of the accused from the list of accused. They are BNP leader Sadaruddin and party activists Tara Mia, Saidur Rahman, Abdul Hasem and Islamuddin.

The ten other accused got bail a few days after filing of the case.

When contacted with the OC claimed that names of the five have been dropped from the list of accused after investigation.

But the victims and local people claimed that political pressure was behind this.

Dacoity bid in Judge Court foiled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Local people on Saturday night foiled a dacoity bid in Sirajganj Judge Court.

Police said a gang of armed robbers broke open the collapsible gate of the judge court at about 3 am, broke open the steel almirah.

Hearing the sound, local people rushed there and the robbers fled away.

Nazir Ishaque Ali lodged a case with Sadar police but could not say whether any document was looted or not.

Police arrested security guards Obaidur Rahman, Mahubur Rahman, and Nurul Haque.