

Upazila roundup

KURIGRAM
Science Week

From A Correspondent

January 28 : The 14th National Science and Technology Week-91 was formally inaugurated by Mr. Fazlul Haque, ADM, Kurigram, in presence of a large number of school and college teachers, students and members of science clubs of Kurigram district at Kurigram Government College premises on January 25.

The inaugural ceremony was addressed by Prof Nizamuddin, Prof Mostafa Bin Hossain Khondakar, Secretary, Science Week Uddjan Committee, Prof Sk Abu Bakar Siddiqui, Principal-in-charge of Kurigram Government College and Mr. Fazlul Haque, ADM, Kurigram.

A large number of educational institutions and science clubs of the district participated in the science week with project for exhibitions.

Installation ceremony

The installation ceremony of newly elected 21-member office bearers of Samprotik Shilpi Gosthi, Kurigram, was held recently in a function held at the local Poursava Hall with Mr. Asit Kumar Nandee, President of the Gosthi in the chair. Mr. Shyamol Kumar Bhowmik, Secretary of the Gosthi spoke.

In this connection, a geeti alkhyia styled "Bijoyer Anonda Dhara" was staged under the direction of Habibur Rahman Dulal "Hollaboli", a drama, was also staged on this occasion which was directed by Delwar Hossain Monju.

NETRAKONA

No waiting room in rly station

From Our Correspondent

January 28 : Passengers in Thakurgaon railway station on Mymensingh-Mohanganj lines are suffering a lot of inconveniences due to absence of waiting room.

Hundreds of passengers coming from far flung areas have to keep standing in the platform for hours together under the open sky. They suffer much during the rainy and summer seasons. Women and the children are the worst sufferers.

Moreover, the passengers, particularly women, face a lot of inconvenience for want of a bathroom in the station.

According to the Station Master, the latrine which was built during the British period is quite unfit for use. Despite repeated representations to the Railway authorities by local people no action has yet been taken to provide minimum basic amenities for passengers.

NOAKHALI

741 examinees expelled

January 28 : A total of 741 degree examinees have so far been expelled from different centres of the districts for adopting unfair means in examinations, reports UNB.

The degree examination under Chittagong university began on January 12.

A total of 6741 candidates are appearing at degree examinations from five centres of the district.

Earlier, five examinees, said to be appearing from other district, were caught red-handed while copying at Noakhali Government College centre. They were sent to jail custody.

Meanwhile, strict measures were taken by the district administration to check unfair means in the examination centres.

Another report says that a boy was killed on the spot when a speeding truck knocked him down near Sonapur railway station recently.

The unidentified body was sent to Sadar hospitals for autopsy. The driver fled away with the vehicle. A case was instituted in this connection.

SHERPUR

Wanton felling of trees on

January 28 : Wanton felling of trees has been affecting ecological balance and causing scarcity of firewood in the district.

According to sources, brickfield owners in collusion with dishonest farmers are chopping down the trees despite government ban.

About 2,000 maunds of firewood are needed to burn one lakh bricks, the sources say adding that there are about 30 brickfields in the district. Besides, price hikes of firewood are having a telling effect on the poor people.

Meanwhile, another report from Bhola says brickfield owners have been using firewood to make bricks substituting meagre coal supply.

Government has so far supplied 3500 tons of coal for 50 brickfields of the district where demand was 17,500 tons, they added.

But the recent government decision to resume gas supply to brickfields will substantially reduce the felling of trees, environmentalists opined.

KUSHTIA

Huge arms recovered

January 28 : Kushtia district police recovered a huge quantity of illegal fire arms and ammunition from the possession of anti-social elements in different areas of the district, reports UNB.

The arms and ammunition recovered recently included 48 pieces of fire arms of different kinds and 440 rounds of cartridges.

Nine miscreants have been arrested and six regular cases lodged with concerned police stations in this connection.

Vigorous drive for the recovery of more illegal fire arms is on to ensure a smooth and congenial atmosphere for the ensuing parliamentary election in the district.

MANIKGANJ

Facilities absent in hospital

January 28 : The 50-bed Sadar hospital here has been plagued with multifarious problems causing immense sufferings to patients, reports UNB.

Patients, coming from far-flung areas, are going back without treatment due to lack of medicines, necessary equipment and shortage of doctors.

In absence of anaesthetics and blood bank, condition of surgical patients become more precarious. The lone sterilization machine and aircooler in the operation theatre had also been lying out of order for a long time.

Besides, doctors are too inadequate to cope with the rising need of the patients. Many of them reportedly often absent themselves.

Sufferers say they are to buy medicines from outside at exorbitant prices.

Local people have urged the authorities to increase the number of beds and furnish the hospital with modern equipment for better medicare to the patients.

BHOLA

Persons selling BKB tractors to be sued

January 28 : Bangladesh Krishi Bank has decided to file cases against persons who are allegedly selling tractors to other people after purchasing them with bank loans, reports UNB.

According to bank sources, the decision will help ensure fair utilisation of disbursed loans and proper use of tractors in cultivating the land.

Necessary instructions to prepare lists of such loanees have already been issued to the branch managers at field level, it is learnt.

A good number of loanees purchase tractors and sell them out with higher prices to other people. The bank is finding difficulties to realise outstanding dues as some borrowers continued to pursue such practice.

JESSORE

Smuggled goods recovered

From Our Correspondent

January 28 : Navaran Task Force recovered smuggled goods worth over Taka 1,25,70,161 during the last four months from September to December 1990. Twenty-four smugglers were arrested in this connection.

Sources said that the smuggled goods were recovered after searching all the passenger buses, trucks and private cars passing through Benapole and Jessore border. They recovered these goods from incoming and outgoing smugglers.

The goods included Bangladeshi polyester cloth, VCP, VCR, old clothes, Indian sarees, earrings, sugar and machinery.

The arrested persons were handed over to Shereah Thana and recovered goods were deposited with the Benapole and Jessore customs godown.

Haphazard shrimp culture disturbs ecology

The rapid and unplanned growth of shrimp farming in Bangladesh is causing havoc with the country's fragile environment. It is also pushing peasants off the land. Beel Dakhatia-swamp of the bandits in Bengali is one of Bangladesh's largest swamps covering over 39,000 hectares. Located in the district of Khulna in southwest Bangladesh, it has supported generations of Namasudras, a low-caste Hindu minority who farmed the rich alluvial soils left behind when the waters drained in the dry season. But the 100,000-strong Namasudra scattered in 80

der embankments in the coastal area of Bangladesh, Beel Dakhatia has turned into an in-land lake due to bad hydrological planning. Thirty years ago, the decision was taken to build coastal embankments to protect cropland from salt water washed ashore by cyclone-induced tidal surges. But drainage canals and rivers have silted up due to lack of maintenance by the government. Heavy flooding throughout the 1980s and the encroachment of shrimp farms for exports have also contributed to the disruption of the swamps seasonal cycle.

shrimps. The dykes erected to form the ponds block off the natural drainage. In the floods of 1988, the Namasudra and their neighbours were forced to break them up to save lives and property. The people claim that in reprisal they were brutalised by private guards from the shrimp farms. They, as well as other affected groups, are fighting back and have staged large demonstrations to rally support for their cause. In September last year, the people of Beel Dakhatia took the matter into their hands and cut the embankment. Claims were made at a

farmers are renting the land to shrimp farmers provided they get it back for planting in the dry season. But as the land has got saltier, their rice yields have fallen from 1.7 tonnes per hectare to 0.5 tonnes, forcing some to give up farming. The rapid and unplanned expansion of shrimp farming is also threatening the country's coastal ecosystem. Mangrove forests which are vital to coastal and estuarine aquatic life are being destroyed. On the southeast coast the entire Chakaria Sundarbans, covering about 7,729 hectares, have been denuded for shrimp culture



Carrying lobsters this fisherman returning home happily.-Star Photo.

villages perched on the edge of the swamp cannot farm any more. Due to a combination of man-made and natural disasters, the swamp no longer drains. It now resembles an in land lake. For most parts of the year travel the villages now requires a "dunga", the flat bottomed canoe. Villagers are lucky if they can get the odd fish. Some net shrimp fry to sell to the shrimp farms to the south of the swamp. But at US five cents a half kilo of fry, they hardly justify wading chest-deep in water for many hours a day. Like dozens of the 92 pol-

Shrimps are one of Bangladesh export successes. Shrimp exports have grown from a more 1000-tonnes in 1980-81 to about 23,000 tonnes in 1989-90. Last year they brought in US \$1.4 billion accounting for 12% of total exports. The land devoted to shrimp farming has grown accordingly from 100 hectares in 1980 to about 100,000 hectares today. The rich shrimp farmers who have set up in Beel Dakhatia do not want the swamp to drain since the waters would go through the ponds washing away the

meeting in the village of Kalbari that a wealthy local politician wanted to turn the entire swamp to shrimp production. If this happened, entire communities would be displaced. Already, male heads of families are being forced to migrate in search for work. The Namasudras are not the only casualties of Bangladesh's shrimp export boom. In Khulna, coastal embankments are broken to get the salt water needed for shrimp farming, thus making the land unsuitable for other agricultural uses. Many

while the Sundarbans, the largest mangrove forest in the world, is also at risk. Bangladesh's fish resources are also being hit. Because there are no shrimp hatcheries, shrimp farmers obtain the fry from fishermen. But the sought-after "begda" fries are rare. Researchers calculate that to capture a single bagda fry, thousands of aquatic creatures, including shrimp are wasted. Bangladesh needs to diversify exports, but it must not be at the expense of the poor and of the environment. —An Oxfam feature

Local variety paddy farming decreases

From Our Correspondent

KURIGRAM, Jan 28: The cultivation of local varieties of paddy is decreasing in different upazilas of Kurigram district.

The farmers of the district previously grew different local varieties of paddy. These are Panisail, Binipakri, Khirshahog, Kalijira, Dudkomor, Dhyapa, Uknimodhn, Satia, Porangi, Sada aus and Kalamantik on their land. These varieties grew abundantly. After the harvest of the varieties of paddy the farmers procure sufficient straws which were used as fodder. There was no scarcity of fodder. The health of the domestic animals was then better.

The farmers adequately cultivated Khesari, masur and other pulses and they never face the shortage of fresh grasses. The cows eat them and give milk sufficiently. There was no problem of pure milk in the district. But with the introduction of IRRI-Boro in the recent years, the traditional varieties of paddy have disappeared.

Fodder scarcity

Enough straws cannot be collected from IRRI-Boro. For this reason acute scarcity of fodder is prevailing throughout the district.

Other crops cannot be cultivated after harvesting IRRI-Boro. As a result, the cultivation of these varieties of paddy has become less profitable.

Before the introduction of IRRI-Boro the farmers could produce three crops in a year. They did not think of fertilizer and irrigation and their economic condition was better.

IRRI-Boro is now cultivated on a major portion of the agricultural land in Kurigram district but the authorities have taken no steps to supply power pumps in order to minimise the production cost of the

According to a survey, the cultivation of local varieties of paddy have fallen to 50,000 acres from 1,75,000 acres. Due to a sharp fall in the cultivation of local varieties of paddy many problems have been created. The shortage of fodder is now endemic. The production cost of IRRI-Boro is increasing day by day because the authority has been increasing the prices of agricultural inputs since the liberation of the country without considering the financial condition of the agriculturists. The prices of the agricultural inputs have now gone beyond the purchasing capacity of the farmer.

Irrigation not needed

Some farmers of Kurigram Sadar Upazila told me that lo-

Excess fees being realised from SSC candidates

From A Correspondent

PANCHAGARH, Jan 27 : Excessive fees have been realised from the examinees of Secondary School Certificate under the Rajshahi Board, it is alleged.

Violating the Board orders different school authorities like Balarampur High School, Balaramhat high school, Panchagrah B.P. government High School, Kamalapur High School, Dr. Abeda Hafiz High School and Nutunhat High School under Rajshahi Board are collecting excessive fees from the students.

It is apprehended that as a result hundreds of examinees are facing financial problems for appearing in the ensuing examination.

The fee fixed by the Board for per theory paper is Taka 14, practical paper Taka 40 and mark sheet fee Taka 15. In total each examinee is required to pay Taka 295 for the examination. But, the school authorities are demanding to pay Taka 1000 to Taka 3000 from each student.

Six jailed for dacoity in Chandpur

From Our Correspondent

CHANDPUR, Jan 28: Six persons were found guilty of committing dacoity in a passenger bus on Chandpur-Cornilla road recently. They were sentenced to suffer R.I. for three years each with a fine of Taka one thousand and in default to suffer R.I. for three months more. The judgement was delivered by Mr. Sunil Chandra Pal, Assistant Judge, Chandpur. The prosecution case in brief is that on 28-8-89 acting on secret information, Chandpur police arrested seven dacoits from a passenger bus Cornilla BAA 4701 near Sholaghar. The police after investigation, submitted chargesheet against the accused persons. The judge after examining the witnesses and the evidences found six accused, Al-Kusum, Fazil Khan, Lokman, Straj, Alamgir and Hafiz guilty of committing dacoity.

500 voters not enlisted in Borguna

UNB form Borguna adds: A total of 500 eligible voters of a village in the sadar upazila were not enlisted in the voters list for the parliamentary election. The voters of village south Kallitobok under Dholua union of the district found their names missing from the voters list when they approached the local election commission office to obtain their serial number.

It was alleged that the Election Commission office here allegedly demanded illegal gratification from them to enlist their names. But the local office of the election commission denied the allegation.

Sharp rise in prices of essentials

From Our Correspondent

BAGERHAT, Jan 27 : Prices of essential commodities have shot up here following the Gulf war. Price of rice has shot up Tk. 2.00 per kg. The commodity is currently selling here between Tk. 11 and Tk. 13 per kg. according to quality as against between Tk. 9 and Tk. 11 previously. Kerosine is now being sold here at Tk. 30 per kg. as against Taka 18 previously. It is reported that the commodity is being sold at Tk 40 or more per kg. in the rural areas where there is no better communication.

Prices of all kinds of vegetables have also shot up. Beans now sell at Tk 8 per kg. instead of Tk 6, Cauliflower at Tk. 7 as against Tk. 6 per kg. Potato at Tk. 6 per kg instead of Tk. 5.

This sudden rise in prices of essential commodities affected all classes of people in general and the poor and the limited income group in particular.

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atta, oil, vegetables and other commodities have abnormally gone up throughout Chuadanga district for the last few days. Rice is being sold now in the local markets between Taka 11 and 14 atta, between Taka 9.50 and 10.50.

Price of all sorts of fish like ruhi, katta, mrigel, kot, magur and silver carp have also gone up. Price of both beef and mutton have also marked a sharp rise. Beef is now being sold between Taka 35 and 40 while mutton is being sold between Taka 75 and 80.

The Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) has fixed up a target to install 70 deep tubewells in four upazilas of Chuadanga district during the current financial year.

According to an official source, of the total deep tubewells 10 tubewells to be installed in Chuadanga Sadar Upazila, 10 in Alamdanga Upazila, 35 in Damurhuda Upazila and 10 in Jibannagar Upazila.

Star Report

Political leaders now conducting vigorous election campaigns in their respective constituencies are demanding an immediate halt to Gulf war. Fully aware about public sentiments since the attack on Baghdad by the US-led multinational forces the politicians have clearly taken side with Saddam.

The political activities are making in frequent pledges to the people as these have little attractions. Instead, war is getting top priority in their speeches and other election activities. In reality, it is certainly meaningless to demand for an urgent halt to war from remote village areas as this will go completely unheeded by the countries involved in the conflict.

Salahuddin Kader Chowdhury

Our Staff Correspondent writes : National Democratic Party Secretary General Salahuddin Kader Chowdhury on Saturday said that his party was contesting the polls to hasten transition to democracy.

He was addressing a public meeting at Kamalpur Madrasah ground of Raupur upazila in Chittagong. Presided over by a local leader Shafiq Ahmed the meeting was addressed by Mustafizur Rahman, Abul Mabud and Shamsul Alam.

Salahuddin Kader Chowdhury said that they fought autocracy to build up an democratic order. He hoped that a representative government elected through free polls was the need of the hour. The NDP leader observed that all political parties had responsibility for upholding the norms of democracy during the election period.

He urged the people to vote for the honest men to emancipate the masses from all sorts of sufferings and repressions.

Narayanganj

A correspondent from Narayanganj adds : The district is currently under the grips of election fever. Narayanganj town itself turned into a veritable garden of banners, placards, posters, festoons and election camps. Ever since the submission of nomination papers by the contenders electioneering got underway in remarkable manners. Tea stalls started to drive a roaring trade and people who earn a living by painting placards and banners work round the clock.

Owners of printing presses have long since shunned their timely- eating habit and early to bed principles so is the case with people who rent out loud-speakers.

Most of the voters, however, do not seem much impressed and they are extremely tight-lipped about whom they would vote for. Possibilities are that in most of the places, voters would go for 'new blood'.

Jhenaidah

Our Jhenaidah Correspondent adds : A number of procession meeting, milad mahfil, special prayers, feeding of poor, organised by different socio-political and religious organisations is being arranged daily throughout Jhenaidah district in favour of Iraq and Iraqi President Saddam.

Political scene

'Halt war' cry now part of polls campaign

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