

District roundup

JAMALPUR

Bar assoc annual meet held

Feb 10: The annual general meeting of the district Bar Association was held at its hall auditorium with much enthusiasm on Thursday, reports UNB.

Advocate Zahid Anwar and Advocate Anwarul Karim Shahjahan have been elected president and general secretary respectively. One hundred eighty-eight members participated in the election.

Another message adds: The annual general meeting of the Apex Club was held in the town on Thursday.

Local journalist Lovlu Ansar and former Jamalpur paurasava vice chairman Ibrahim Khalil were elected president and secretary of the club.

Principal Harun-or-Rashid and Syed Mannan were elected as vice presidents and Hafiz Rahman as treasurer.

MEHERPUR

Use of firewood for burning bricks unabated

Feb 10: The brick manufacturers of the district are using firewood for burning bricks violating the government ban, reports UNB.

According to informed sources, there are about 20 brickfields in the district. Trees are being cut indiscriminately by the brickfield owners at a cheap rate adversely affecting the ecological balance.

The poor ignorant farmers are selling the trees including fruit-bearing ones to meet their day to day expenditures.

When contacted the brickfield owners said due to shortage of coal they are compelled to use firewood for manufacturing bricks. But officials said coal stock is satisfactory but the unscrupulous brickfield owners purchase firewood at a comparatively rate from the ignorant farmers.

While contacted the Divisional Forest Officer said he would contact the Thana Nirbahi Officer regarding the allegation of using firewood in the brickfields and necessary action would be taken against the violators of government ban.

SIRAJGANJ

28 Chhatra League activists chargesheeted

Feb 10: Police chargesheeted 28 activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (M-I) including local leader Chayan Islam under anti-terrorism act in Kazipur thana on Thursday, reports UNB.

A group of armed activists of Chhatra League attacked supporters of Jatyatabadi Dal at Kazipur Mansur Ali College premises on November 21 and chopped left leg of JCD Kazipur thana unit Secretary Rabul Hassan, according to the complaints.

Local BNP leaders filed the case with the police against the activists of Chhatra League and Jubo League in this connection.

HABIGANJ

Youngman killed as bus, truck collide

Feb 10: A young man was killed when a passenger bus and truck collided at Shajshajganj Furan Bazar on Dhaka-Sylhet highway Thursday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said Abdul Gani (32) of Laskarpur village in Sadar Thana died on the spot after Dhaka-bound bus (Dhaka Cha-9159) and Sylhet-bound truck (Rangamati Ta-2431) collided head-on. The victim met the tragic end while he was crossing the road.

Police seized both the vehicles while the drivers managed to flee.

JHENIDAH

Gun with four rounds of bullets stolen

Feb 10: A single barrel gun with four rounds of bullets was stolen from the house of Sanauddin at Kanchanpur in the paurasava on January 19, reports UNB.

Police sources said the thief entered through the open door of the house and took away the gun at about 8 pm.

A case was recorded with the Jhenidah Police Station.

FENI

Indian sarees worth Tk 8 lakh recovered

Feb 10: Bangladesh Rifles seized smuggled goods worth about Taka 8 lakh in two separate drives and arrested a train driver during last one week, reports UNB.

Acting on secret information, BDR jawans raided the intercity train at Feni Railway Station and seized smuggled Indian sarees worth Taka 7 lakh from the guard room on January 27.

The arrested driver of the train was identified as Khetra Mohon Das.

BDR jawans also seized Indian sarees worth Taka 87,000 from two night coaches on Feni by-pass road on January 25.

The seized goods were handed over to the local customs department and the arrested were sent to jail hajat.

Two cases were lodged with the police.

COMILLA

Mahila Sangstha donates Tk 20,000 for self-employment schemes

Feb 10: Jatiya Mahila Sangstha donated Taka 20,000 to Satrang Mohila Sangstha for implementing its self-employment schemes at a simple function on Monday, reports UNB.

The members of local unit of Jatiya Mahila Sangstha Laila Noor, Rezia Begum, Begum Sahadat Jahan and Fatema Siddique spoke on the occasion.

The speakers stressed the need of self employment schemes for the rural women. They said poultry farm, pisciculture, indoor vegetable cultivation and other cottage industries are the easy occupations for generating self-employment.

The cheque was handed over by the district unit president Fatema Siddique. The money would mainly be used on setting up a poultry farm.

BRAHMANBARIA

Smuggled goods worth Tk 8.31 lakh seized

Feb 10: Bangladesh Rifles seized smuggle goods worth over Taka 8.31 lakh from different areas of the district, reports UNB.

Acting on secret information, BDR raided Titas river ghat on January 28 and recovered Indian spare parts worth about Taka 8 lakh.

In another raid they also recovered Indian sarees, sugar, match boxes, books and cloths worth Taka 31000 from Dhaka bound Jhatika Express train.

All the goods were handed over to the customs authorities and cases have been filed with the police.

MYMENSINGH

Top priority to education

Feb 10: State Minister for Relief Lutfur Rahman Khan on Sunday said that the present democratic government attached top priority to education which could only change the fate of the people and ensure their progress and prosperity, reports BSS.

He was addressing a students gathering at Iswarganj Degree College ground here on Sunday last.

Whip Advocate M A Karim and the Principal of the College Abdur Rashid also addressed the gathering.

PATUAKHALI

Imam Samity unit executives

Feb 10 A new committee of the district unit of Patuakhali Imam Samity for the year 1993 has been formed in a meeting held on Sunday, reports UNB.

The meeting was held at the local Bara Masjid with Pesh Imam Moulana Ali Ashraf in the chair. Imams from different thanas took part in the meeting and discussed elaborately about their longstanding problems.

The office bearers of the new committee are: Alhaj Moulana Ali Ashraf — President, Moulana Hatem Ali — Vice President, Abdus Sobhan — Secretary, Hafez Mohammad Abu Zafar — Treasurer, Moulana Mohammad Masumuddin — Asst Treasurer, Hafez Abdul Wahab — Publicity Secretary and Mohammad Abdul Khaleq — Asst Publicity Secretary.

The members are: Mohammad Siddiqur Rahman, Hafez Moulana Abdul Khaleq and Moulana Abdus Salim.



Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman inaugurating Raikhal bridge in Sylhet on January 29. —PID photo

Water level fall in Padma, Meghna

From Our Correspondent

CHANDPUR, Feb 10: The Meghna and the Padma recorded a sharp fall in the water level with the beginning of the dry season.

According to Chandpur Water Development Board office sources, as many as two hundred shoals have been surfaced on the two mighty rivers threatening the operation of launch, steamer and other water services. It is apprehended that steamer and launch services between Barisal-Dhaka, Khulna-Dhaka, Chandpur-Dhaka, Chandpur-Barisal and in other places may be suspended at any time due to want of navigability. Already the steamers and launches are plying through the alternate routes of the rivers which take more time to reach the destination. Sometimes steamers and launches are stranded on the routes due to rise of shoals in different areas of the rivers.

Betel-leaf farming on wane

Our Correspondent adds: Betel leaf cultivation in the district has been decreasing alarmingly due to many problems including price hike of raw materials and absence of proper marketing facilities.

According to Agriculture Department sources, about 40 thousand acres of land are brought under betel leaf cultivation in the district every year. About one lakh people of the district are depending on betel leaf cultivation. At present, the price of bamboo, jute-sticks, oilcake, ropes, fertilizer and other inputs for betel leaf cultivation have gone beyond the reach of the poor cultivators. About Taka 8 thousand is required to cultivate betel leaf on one bigha of land. Besides, other costs are needed to protect the field from the various diseases and pest attack. Due to lack of marketing facilities the betel leaf cultivators are compelled to sell their products at a low price.

It is apprehended if various problems in betel leaf production are not removed a large number of cultivators will be compelled to give up the age-old profession. Every year betel leaf production is decreasing in the district.

Target of boro production may not be achieved

From Our Correspondent

SYLHET, Feb 10: The target of boro production throughout the four districts of greater Sylhet region may not be achieved during the current season due to a number of problems.

Abnormal rise in the prices of chemical fertilizers, high price and non-availability of high yielding varieties of seeds, corruption in distribution of the agricultural loans among the poor and marginal farmers are some of the main reasons. New procedures the irrigation schemes have also

attributed much to the situation.

According to some official source, a massive programme was taken up to bring a total area of 3,45,100 hectares of land under boro paddy farming during the season. It includes, 62,400 hectares 11 thanas of Sylhet, 37,600 hectares in 6 thanas of Moulvibazar and 1,65,100 hectares in 11 thanas of Sunamganj and 78,200 hectares in 8 thanas under the Habiganj district. The target of paddy production was fixed at 7,39,015 metric tonnes, the source added.

Abnormal rise in the prices of different types of chemical fertilizers has affected the poor and marginal farmers.

The supply of high yielding varieties of seeds is also quite inadequate. These are not at all available in the thana-level offices of BADC at fixed prices. But these are found selling in the open markets at exorbitant prices.

On the otherhand, the government has changed the old system of commissioning the irrigation machines. It has already withdrawn the renting system of the different irrigation equipments. Now these are sold from BADC. Only the big farmers are able to purchase these. The poor and marginal farmers are to buy water from these people at high rates during the peak

hour of irrigation. Rise in the prices of fuel has also affected the farmers in general, it is learnt.

Disbursement of agricultural loans is also not at all satisfactory. There is fund sanctioned as farm loans by the different commercial banks including the Bangladesh Krishi Bank. But the officials in the bank branches in the remote areas are found less interested in disbursing the agricultural loans to the farmers, it is informed. A section of influential people and village touts are getting the loans.

Workshop on seed producing, sale, distribution concludes

FENI, Feb 10: A day long workshop on seed producing, sale and distribution was held here at district Agricultural Extension Project on Wednesday, reports UNB.

A total of 30 seed producers and distributors took part in the workshop.

Deputy Director Agricultural Extension Department, Giasuddin Ahmed, distributed the prizes and certificates among the participants as chief guest.

Across the country

The child hawkers of Bogra

by Somudra Hoque

BOGRA, Feb 10: Hot news! Mother of 4 elopes with young star, Oldie marries a sweet sixteen, Mofiz caught red-handed...

Each new morning in Bogra town brings a racket of loud cries from street-hawking 'lokais', selling newspapers.

These are 'inteskhabor' (interesting news) Sir, said 8-year old boy Gada holding in his hand local dailies 'Karota', 'Chandni Bazar', 'Mukta Barta', 'Uttar Barta'. 'If we sing out the day's headlines, people get interested and start buying our ware,' he said.

Gada is also locally known as 'Bakuler Baap', but he doesn't know why they call him that — after all at eight he cannot beget a daughter, whatever her name. This probably points to the kind of rapport he has with the local people.

Like Gada, 8, Moti, 10, Alam, 8, Rafique, 12, and others tallying up more than 40 children work as street newspaper hawkers in Bogra town. There are five existing dailies in the town, all having their own offset printing machines, computers, fax facility and telephone. They entered into modern technology two years back.

The little boys running towards their clients, their eyes shining with expectation keep babbling a please take one paper, you'll get more news, leaders' speech, foreign current affair, violence, cinema, 'inteskhabor', you'll also get Mofiz's news!

Who is Mofiz? This query amazes Gada with its silliness and he says "You don't know Mofiz? Clarification comes from a regular local newspaper reader. Mofiz is the symbolic name of a dishonest and corrupt union Parishad chairman or member. May be once upon a time, one Mofiz was arrested

on charge of some corruption. From that time all corrupted UP chairmen and members are locally known as Mofiz.

Alam and Moti said that bus and train passengers and shopkeepers, were their main customers. About 30 per cent of their clientele were house deliveries.

"We are more interested in selling local newspapers as we get 40 per cent commission on these" said Rafiq. How they collect the local newspapers? Alam explained: "We've to pay up to 60 per cent of price of our requirement to the circulation managers every evening by taking a slip. According to these slips we collect papers from different daily offices at dawn. We have no education, so at the time of collecting newspapers we understand from circulation staff what kind of news have been published today, circulation staff tell us the main points and sometime we relay it to our colleagues."

These street children came from acutely poverty stricken families of different villages. They live in the town, their selling finishes within noon. After work, they move here and there, wherever they wish to go. They take food from low cost floating hotels and at times even at the big ones if the day's earning is fat. They watch movies without ticket because they allow the hall gatekeepers to read their newspapers free of cost.

They all sing Hindi songs. 'Dekha hai pahela baar Sejan ke...' or 'Hawa hawa El hawa Khushbu huta dey...' from where have they heard these songs? Gada says with a smiling face, 'sometimes we watch video film where video shows are on'. They also know the name of Amitabh, Sreedevi, Mithun, Rehka, all stars of the

Hindi filmdom.

How much they earn every day? Gada says, sometimes I get 40 to 50 taka, at others 30 to 40 taka. And what do you do with all this money Gada? "Usually I give the money to my mother because she needs to feed a family of four. I've one brother and two sisters. I do not like my father. He left us and married another woman. My mother went to him the other day to get some money for food but he beat her and drove her out."

Moti said, "I was interested to go to school but my father did not allow me to. So I became the money maker of my family."

Gada says with a sad face "I do want to educate myself but how could I afford that?" Alam said, "I've seen a Pathokoli school in the town one year back, on the other day I went there but found no students like us. This school remains closed."

Gada is seen at night sitting at the Satmatha main junction of the town spreading some old magazines. Some of these magazines are pin-up adult ones. He has taken these from a 'Potrika agent', by no sell no price basis. Why are you selling these magazines? — Trying to earn a little more, says he.

Like Gada a few others also sell magazines. These street children do not like to return home regularly. They go at intervals of 10 to 15 days. They sleep at night at railway platform or under the shed of business establishment, or in verandahs of offices. They rise at early dawn to run for the papers.

Gada said ruefully "We are selling hot news for all but there will be no good news for us for a long time."



BOGRA: The child hawkers are selling newspapers in a cheerful mood. —Star photo

Youngman burnt alive in Feni

FENI, Feb 10: A man was burnt alive and two others received burn injuries and valuables worth about Taka 5 lakh were gutted in a devastating fire at Sotynagar in Daganbhuytan thana, reports UNB.

According to a delayed information, the fire originating from a lamp of the house of Abdur Rashid soon engulfed the entire house on Feb 2.

Rashid (20) died on the spot and seriously injured Abul Hossain (40) and his son Noor Mohammad (5) were rushed to the local hospital.

Newly constructed bridges open to traffic

MYMENSINGH, Feb 10: The newly constructed two bridges have been opened to traffic at Fulbaria thana in the district, reports BSS.

State Minister for Relief Lutfur Rahman Khan inaugurated these bridges recently. The bridges are 140 feet long Beribari Bridge over the river Kalamdaha on Shiganj to Fulbaria road and 120 feet long Loheswar Bridge over the river Bazua on Fulbaria to Sagartlight road.

The Directorate of Relief and Rehabilitation constructed these bridges with the financial assistance of USAID.

Amirul Islam Hira MP and the Director General of the Directorate of Relief and Rehabilitation Saiful Islam were present.

Later, the State Minister addressed four public meetings at Loheswar, Asim, Kirshoreganj and Shiganj.

50,000 fishermen facing innumerable problems

PABNA, Feb 10: About 50,000 fishermen of the district were facing innumerable problems due to scarcity of fish, siltation of rivers and drying up of beels, canals and haors, reports UNB.

According to some farmers, some varieties of fish have already perished due to unplanned irrigation and arbitrary use of pesticides on the crops.

Besides, many low lying areas have been brought under crop cultivation turning fish breeding and nourishing centres into dry lands. The flow of water into the tributaries of the rivers Padma and Jamuna is obstructed by flood control embankments during the flood period for which river beds remain dry except in rainy

season. Moreover, due to fund shortage the fishermen cannot buy fishing materials the price of which has gone high in recent times. They alleged that they are not getting bank loan due to complicated procedure to continue their age-old occupation. As a result they are forced to borrow money from the greedy money lenders at a high rate of interest.

The fishermen are also deprived of getting 'Jalmahals' (waterbodies) lease through cooperative societies as the societies are dominated by influential quarters. They also alleged that most of the societies are fake and run by non-fishermen group with the connivance of government officials.



SIRAJGANJ: Al-haj M Aminul Islam, Divisional Commissioner of Rajshahi addressing the district scout rally at Belkuchi recently. —Star photo

Call to uphold ideals of scouting

From Our Correspondent SIRAJGANJ, Feb 10: Divisional Commissioner of Rajshahi, Alhaj M Aminul Islam has called upon all to uphold the ideals of scouting.

He was addressing the inaugural session of 3-day third Sirajganj district scout rally held on February 2 at Belkuchi Alhaj Siddique High School ground with Deputy Commissioner AZM Shaiful Islam in the chair. Among others district scout secretary M A Aziz and President of Belkuchi thana scout and TNO Samar Chandra Sinha spoke on the occasion.

The 3-day district scout rally was participated by 27 teams from all the thanas of the district including 10 from Sadar and four from host Belkuchi thana. On the concluding day, thousands of people exhibited charming performances of the scouts which included grand camp fire.