

### Nor'wester hits Chandpur, 50 hurt, phone lines snapped

CHANDPUR, Apr 24 : At least 50 people were injured and about 1,000 thatched and tin-roofed houses damaged when a nor'wester swept over the district headquarters and its adjoining thanas on Saturday, says an UNB report.

The nor'wester with a heavy velocity per hour also uprooted a good number of trees and blew away 20 shops at Bafurhat, local people said.

About 100 telephone lines were disrupted and three BJC jute godowns damaged by the storm. The jute kept in the godown is rotting.

Meanwhile, the road communication between Chandpur-Habiganj and Chandpur-Comilla remained disrupted for more than five hours due to blockade of roads by fallen trees.

### Govt's decision to privatise sugar mill protested

RANGPUR, Apr 24 : Shyampur Sugar Mills Employees Union strongly protested the government decision to privatise the mill and demanded immediate withdrawal of the decision, reports UNB.

The employees expressed their resentment at a press conference here on Wednesday.

They also expressed their fear that about 1200 employees would lose their job if the decision is implemented and about 40,000 farmers would be thrown into uncertainty regarding the availability of fair price of their sugarcane which would affect the overall sugarcane production of the mill area.

They said, Shyampur Sugar Mill, one of the profitable industries among the nationalised industries of the country, produced about 11,000 metric tons of sugar during the current crushing season which has exceeded the production target of 9,000 metric tons and paid Taka four crore as VAT.

Besides, sugar worth about Taka 18 crore have already been stockpiled at mills godown, they added.

The union also blasted the government for planning to sell out the mill at a very nominal price of Tk 5.27 crore only to the private sector, although it's present value which they said is about Taka 150 crore.

### Suggest solutions to national problems : Islam to newsmen

JESSORE, Apr 24 : Post and Telecommunications Minister Tariqul Islam recently called upon the journalists to project the activities of social reconstruction and suggest solution of the national problems through their writings, reports BSS.

He gave the call while addressing as the chief guest at the installation ceremony of the newly elected managing committee of the Jessore Press Club at the club auditorium.

Presided over by former president of the club Nurul Alam, the function was addressed among others by newly elected president and general secretary Saiful Alam and Fakir Showkat respectively. Police Super Sajjad Hossain and President of district Bar Association Advocate Kazi Towhidur Rahman.

Termining the journalists as a conscious section of society Tariqul Islam said that the journalists could play a significant role in strengthening the democratic system by discouraging the evil designs of the vested quarters.

He called for practising democracy in every spheres of life to give it an institutional shape as without democracy and social justice real progress and prosperity of the nation could not be achieved. He urged them to be united for the national cause and create social awareness about the fruits of democracy as well as to safeguard it.

### Houses, trees blown away by tornado

JAMALPUR, Apr 24 : A tornado lashed five unions of Jamalpur sadar thana here Wednesday midnight blowing away roofs of 200 houses, including the concrete rooftop of some schools and madrasahs.

Standing crops on about 1000 acres of land were damaged. The storm uprooted huge trees and electric poles. As a result electric supply was disrupted for several hours.

Deputy Minister for Health and Family Welfare Md Serajul Huq visited the tornado hit areas and distributed some relief goods and cash taka.

## Tiny Sahara peeping in N-Bangladesh

From Our Correspondent

RANGPUR, Apr 24: The size of major rivers and their tributaries have further shrunk in the northern region giving rise to the process of desertification.

According to reports received here, the Indian authorities have constructed a gigantic dam in the upper stream of river Teesta in Jalpaiguri in West Bengal and two artificial bundles in the upper stream of Dharla and Brahmaputra rivers in Coochbihar and Debrugarh in Assam state, to divert water flows of all these major rivers along with their tributaries, creating a grave situation already noticed in the region.

The Indian authorities have already started withdrawing water from Brahmaputra, Teesta, Dharla, Karotoa, Mahananda and Atrai and diverted to other internal routes through man-made canals.

This has resulted in an un-

precedented shortage of water all over the northern region since most of the major rivers recorded a sharp fall of water level and gradually drying up jeopardising total irrigation process and navigation system.

According to witnesses, thousands of acres of land in Dinajpur, Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Nilphamari, Panchagarh have become unfit for cultivation of traditional crops. Some farmers say the fertile soil no longer gives production as before. Growth of crops has now been reduced due to shortage of water in the soil.

Signs of desert in some areas have already started to emerge. Soil in most of the northern region have dried up which may not withstand cultivation process any longer in near future says an expert. Many trees have died due to

shortage of water.

Reports received from remote villages of the region, say hundreds of irrigation tube-wells have gone out of operation due to drop in underground water level. Hundreds more faces similar condition.

The width of mighty Brahmaputra river has shrunk to only 50 yards from 300 to 350 yard. Other major rivers like Teesta and Dharla have been facing same fate along with tributaries.

Innumerable chars and shoals have developed, most of which emerged long time back. These chars hinder in navigation routes.

The vast areas of these rivers are now used by the farmers for cultivation of different crops.

**Jamuna erosion**

The Fulchhari thana headquarters is threatened by the

continued erosion of the river Jamuna.

There are many government and non-government buildings worth several crores of taka. Besides, large number of dwelling houses, hat and bazars are now facing extinction due to devastating erosion of the mighty river Jamuna which in the past few years had engulfed vast areas of the thana rendering thousands of people homeless. Many government buildings were also swallowed by the river during the previous years.

The Water Development Board every year since 1978 had spent huge amount of money in its protective measures, but all goes in vain.

An effective step is needed to protect the Fulchhari Bandar Railway Station and the thana headquarters before the coming monsoon, according to the experienced circles.



Women workers making concrete rings for sanitary latrines in village Naokhanda near Manikganj as part of an income generating programme of an NGO. — Star photo

## Smuggling intensifies along Kushtia border

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA, Apr 24: Unauthorised trade or smuggling of Indian goods across the border areas of the district has sharply increased recently, according to official and unofficial sources.

A large number of Indian bullocks, printed sarees, crockeries, batteries, electrical goods; sugar, salt, bicycle, ornaments and other commodities are being smuggled into the country almost everyday.

Unemployed young men, boys and girls who live near the border areas are said to carry out this smuggling business who act as carriers of the smuggled goods.

Lately smuggling was almost suppressed by the activities of BDR personnel working in the area. The activities of smugglers have been intensified following relaxation of checking border-trade, it is observed. Some influential industrialists of the area are engaged in this trade, including gold smuggling, reliable sources disclosed.

A source said that inter city trains are now safe for carrying smuggled goods. Local shop owners said about 3000 maunds of sugar and salt are coming everyday from India. At present Indian sugar and salt are being sold in different markets of border areas at Taka 21 and Taka 4.50 per kg respectively.

At present sugar produced in Kushtia Sugar Mills are lying unsold as because of availability of cheaper smuggled sugar in the country.

**Pottery industries need loan**

KUSHTIA, Apr 11: Traditional pottery industries in six thanas of the district are on the verge of extinction due to shortage of fund and scarcity of raw materials.

Local potters who are engaged in this business for a long time alleged that they are not getting bank loan to purchase inputs like clay or mud, dice and other necessary ingredients. So they are compelled to take loan at a very exorbitant rate of interest from the local money lenders.

About two thousands families are engaged in this age-old profession without any financial aids and training in the district.

On the other hand prices of raw materials have increased during last few years, while the demand of the earthen wares is gradually going down in the local market.

Potters said due to lack of transport facilities they are to sell their products at throw away prices.

They urged the authorities to provide them with necessary bank loans and better marketing facilities to continue their age old occupation.

**Spread of cattle diseases**

A cattle diseases that broke out in an epidemic form have so far claimed 50 animals in six thanas of the district, farmers said.

The worst affected unions of the thanas are: Jagati, Talbaria, Mirpur where at least 1000 cattle are suffering from the disease.

The disease, known as khura, causes infection in jaws and hooves while another disease popularly known as 'gola fula' crippled the animals arresting movement.

Farmers alleged that due to wrong treatment by unqualified veterinary doctors, compounders and field assistants of Kushtia Livestock Department many cattle died in these unions.

The farmers also alleged that local livestock department

did not take measures to inoculate the cattle since the outbreak of the diseases.

**Lack of housing facilities**

Office employees and low income group of people have been adversely affected by the shortage of housing facilities in the town.

Local people said, new houses could not be built to cope with the rising population in the town due to price hike of construction materials.

Many government, autonomous and semi autonomous bodies and different banks opened their offices in rented houses further aggravating the housing problems.

Taking advantage of the situation, the houseowners are charging exorbitant rent for their houses it is learnt.

Skin disease and stomach ailments have broken out in the district in an alarming proportion.

Doctors said patients with intestinal disorder and itching are pouring to the hospitals for treatment.

The causes behind the outbreak of the diseases are attributed to consumption of adulterated edibles as ghee, butter, mustard oil and milk.

People of the area said, the items are being sold in the local markets freely before the very nose of the law enforcing agencies.

Besides, sale of unwholesome eatables in hotels and restaurants have worsened the situation.

It is alleged that the unscrupulous traders with the connivance of some officials are engaged in the malpractice for long.

But no action has yet been taken by the district administration against the dishonest traders inspite of repeated appeals by the sufferers.

Work on the project has already been started and is expected to be completed by June next, a LGED source said.

The LGED, Moulvibazar has taken up another project to construct 16 bridges and culverts on "growth centre connecting roads". Work of this project has already started. The government has sanctioned Taka 48 lakh 55 thousand to implement the project.

On completion of the projects, road communication with rural areas will be more easier and thousands of acres agricultural land will be free from, source said.

Another report says: The Roads and Highways Department has taken up a scheme to construct a bridge over the river, Sunai on Banibazar-Juri-Baralekha Road. The bridge will be 300 feet long.

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## Tk 4.11 crore sanctioned for 13 bridges, 37 culverts

From Our Correspondent

MOULVI BAZAR, April 24: A total of Taka 4 crore 11 lakh 30 thousand has been sanctioned for construction of 13 bridges and 37 culverts here under "North-South Irrigation Project"(NSIP).

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is funding the NSIP covering six thanas of Moulvibazar district. The Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) has been supervising the NSIP in the district.

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The Roads and Highways Department has also taken up

a scheme to construct 2 other bridges on "Moulvibazar-Shamsnagar Road" over 2 big canals.

The government has sanctioned Taka four crore for construction of above mentioned three bridges. Construction work of all the bridges is expected to be completed by June next, according to Roads and Highways Department sources.

The two-day long district level competition of "National Children Award" organised by Bangladesh Shishu Academy Moulvibazar district branch concluded here recently. Subjects of the competition including songs, debate, recitation and sports. A good number of participants from six thanas, who had been selected from thana level competition took part in the competition.

A concluding and prize distribution ceremony was also held on the concluding day at local PTI auditorium with Jahrat Abid Chowdhury in the chair. It was addressed by organiser of district branch Shishu Academy Jasmuddin Masud.

The district leaders of National Awami Party (NAP) Prof Mujaffar group urged the pro-liberation and pro-socialism minded politicians to unite.

They criticized the activities of some parties who are now engaged in hypocritical activities.

## Women in search of jobs in town areas

From Our Correspondent

HABIGANJ, Apr 24: A large number of distressed women are pouring in the district town and its surroundings in search of employment, food and relief materials.

Most of them are passing their days in great hardships due to lack of job opportunities while some have turned to beggars.

The Food for Works Programme was not enough to check the increasing number of destitute women and landless people in the district.

The number of women beggars are also rising in the district town causing in convenience to the town dwellers. These floating people affected by natural calamities like flood are pouring into the town areas.

It is informed that many of them have been engaged in immoral activities for their survival giving rise to anti-social activities in different areas.

A train dacoity was committed here near Shaistaganj railway station recently.

Witnesses said, a gang of armed dacoits, numbering 15 to 16 entered into 1st class 'Kha' compartment of the Sylhet-bound Joyontika Express train at sunset after a few minutes of its departure from Shaistaganj railway station.

The dacoits assaulted and injured about 20 passengers and looted away valuables worth about Taka five lakh lacks from the passengers.

## Chakma repatriation All well that ends well!

KHAGRACHHARI, Apr 24 : The Chakma refugees who came back to Bangladesh from Indian state of Tripura in February last are indeed happy as they got themselves resettled in their homesteads in different parts of Khagrachhari hill district.

A BSS correspondent who visited a number of repatriated families at Matiranga, Dighinala and Khagrachhari on Tuesday found every returnee is leading a new life in his ancestral homestead with new hopes and enthusiasm for better future.

The returnees said, they had built new houses with house building materials and cash given by the government.

A total of 1841 Chakmas of 369 families returned to Bangladesh in three batches in February last.

One, Rama Devi, 28 wife of Chiro Jyoti Chakma emerging from newly constructed tin shed at Terrechara, about five km off Khagrachhari, said, "I am happy here! It was in 1986 when she was an SSC examinee who along with her family members had crossed into Tripura where her family had to often starve and live in poor condition. She said other members of her family will soon come back to Bangladesh

as she is conveying message to them that she is better here.

Rama Devi Chakma said, she had applied for a job in nearby BSCIC and expressed her firm determination that she would never go back to India.

Khaila Prue Mogh, 70, headman of Katalchhari of Matiranga thana said, he got back all his family land on return.

He said, he would bring back other family members who are in Tripura refugee camp. Mogh returned here to know the situation. He further said the government of Bangladesh initially made all arrangements for the returnees but he regretted that he had not yet received the money for buying bullock.

Some returnees said they were very happy to have houses of their own and with cash money planned to do something else.

The repatriated tribals also told Ramesh Bhandari, the visiting Governor of Indian State of Tripura that they were satisfied with the arrangements made by Bangladesh government.

Bhandari urged them to convey similar message to their tribal leaders to pave the way for speedy repatriation of the remaining refugees to Bangladesh.

## District roundup

NAOGAON

### Demand for construction of bridge

Apr 24: A bridge over the Chhoto Jamuna river near Naogaon Government College in the town is urgently needed as a diversion road for the inter-district transports to ease traffic jam and accidents, says UNB.

The inter-district coaches running through the town have to use the only main road which is already overloaded with movements of other vehicles, town dwellers said.

Thousands of travellers and students cross the river every day using small boats risking their lives. The lone bridge — Lord Lytton bridge in the old town is not enough to carry the load, people of the area said.

Moreover, the court buildings opened recently by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, is situated near the bus terminal outside the old town.

They demanded construction of the proposed bridge in view of the inconveniences faced by town dwellers and travellers.

Naogaon municipal area is about four square miles with a population of more than one lakh.

The people of the area urged the government to consider the proposal and include it in the ensuring planning programmes of the budget after proper survey.

RAJBARI

### Comprehensive plan to extend library services

Apr 24 : State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof Jahanara Begum has said, a comprehensive plan to expand the country's public libraries is being implemented by the present government, reports UNB.

The present government is committed to ensure uniform development all over the country, the State Minister said while inaugurating the Ahmed Ali Mridha Public Library at Goolanda thana in Rajbari on Tuesday.

The library has been built at a cost Taka 17.5 lakh, says an official handout.

The state minister called upon the affluent section of the society to come forward to establish public libraries for the benefit of the people.

NETRAKONA

### Whip visits flood affected areas

Apr 24 : The Whip of Jatiya Sangsad Advocate M A Karim recently visited the flood affected areas in Kalmankanda thana, reports BSS.

He saw for himself the extent of damage and express his concern over the damage of crops and properties in large area caused by the flash flood. He also enquired about the condition of the affected people. Talking to the people, the whip assured them of all possible help on behalf of the government.

He said, the government under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia was always ready to stand by the side of the people during their woes. The torrential rains and on-rush of waters from the Megalayan hilly range in India had triggered the flash flood.

SIRAJGANJ

### Construction of roads in progress

Apr 24 : Construction of Sreekola-Kawak section of the Bogra-Nagarbari road will be completed by the end of this month, official sources here said, reports UNB.

Meanwhile, the work on the 2.5 kilometres long road has started last month after acquisition of 74 decimal land in Ullapara thana.

The government has already disbursed compensation of Taka 30 lakh to the owners of the land.

After the completion of the road, communication of the district with the northern districts would be eased.

KHULNA

### Women folk asked to take part in more uplift works

Apr 24 : Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad Shaikh Razzak Ali said that women-folk should play on a pioneering role in developing our socio-economic condition, reports BSS.

The Speaker was addressing the inaugural session of day-long workshop on equality, development and peace for the advancement of women held at a local hotel in Khulna on Wednesday.

Presided over by Muhammad Enamul Huq, Secretary, Ministry of Women Affairs, the function was addressed among others by UNDP representative Md Iqbal Kabir. Highlighting the prevailing conditions of the women in our society Shaikh Razzak Ali called for removing the disparity between men and women as the women folk constituted half of our entire population. He said, if democracy rule of law and social justice were maintained human rights including women's rights in particular could automatically be preserved. He under scored the need for creating social awareness to protect the rights of the women.

C'NAWABGANJ

### Shortage of drinking water, thousands suffer

Apr 24: Intestinal diseases have broken out in the district due to acute shortage of pure drinking water, doctors said, reports UNB.

Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) installed about 4,000 hand-operated tubewells in Naehol, Bholahat, Gomostapur, Shibganj and Sadar thanas.

However, the present strength of tube-well is not sufficient for 10 lakh consumers of those thanas. For this reason, villagers of these areas are taking dirty and contaminated water of pond and tank, and becoming sick.

Besides, about 800 tubewells become inoperative due to different reasons — faulty filter system and deposition of sand, abrupt fall in the ground water level.

Last year, the PHED had installed a good number of tubewells and tara-pumps. Low-income group of people could not afford to get the service of such pumps due to increasing charge of sinking and re-sinking of tubewells.

Meanwhile, PHED has fixed Tk 250 as service charge of each hand-operated tubewell and Tara pumps. However, the rate has been re-fixed due to unknown reason and at present villagers are to pay Tk 1000 for each Tara pumps and Taka 700 for hand operated tubewells, it is alleged.

Moreover, PHED has withdrawn subsidy on repairing and maintenance of the tubewells.



Samarsingh along with his four other family members returned home after six years. Thousands of Chakma refugees like Samarsingh fled to neighbouring Tripura state of India following unrest in Chittagong Hill Tracts. Samarsingh's family now leads a peaceful life in Tarabunia village who was given back his land. — Photo by A K M Mohsin