

More farmers, weavers becoming debtors in Kishoreganj

From Our Correspondent

KISHOREGANJ, Aug 2: The number of debt-ridden persons are increasing everyday in 13 thanas of Kishoreganj district.

There are nearly 12,00,000 debt-ridden persons and the number is still increasing.

About 90 per cent of the debtors are farmers and the rest 10 per cent are weavers and small traders. All of them are now struggling for survival.

Debt took a serious turn in 1984 due to natural calamities especially the devastating floods which hit during the last few years.

The farmers have also become debtors due to the sky high prices of agricultural inputs, other daily essentials, natural calamities and dowry system in the rural villages.

The farmers have mortgaged their agricultural land to local wealthy persons and to the commercial banks to receive loan to meet their various expenses including daughters' marriages.

Many of them have sold their crop land and dwelling

houses to repay the loan. It was learnt, a large number of cultivators have become destitute after repaying their loans.

Some farmers received loans from local money lenders finding no other alternatives.

In many cases needy cultivators produce fake documents to take loans. Because they know that they would not be able to repay the loans.

The weavers borrowed money from *mahajans* (money lenders) to purchase looms and raw materials. They are now unable to repay loan because of the recession in their business.

Those who received loans from the banks are now under pressure to repay the loans. To avoid certificate cases they sold most of their land at low prices to repay bank loans.

Besides, those who take money from village money lenders are now under pressure to repay loans. Finding no other alternative cultivators give their cultivable land in lieu of debt.

Processing of raw skins polluting environment

SHERPUR, Aug 3: The processing of raw skins of animals in open places of the residential areas in Sherpur pourashava has been polluting the environment causing health hazards and suffering of the town dwellers, reports UNB.

The dwellers alleged that raw skins are being salted in open place spreading bad odour in the air making it impossible to reside in the area.

The situation turns worse every year after the Eid-ul-Azha when the unscrupulous skin dealers become active in collecting raw skins from different areas and preserve the same here and there in the town.

Local people alleged that the dealers process the skins for the months together with least consideration to public annoyance and suffering.

Meanwhile, many dwellers of the town are suffering from different diseases like asthma and diarrhoea due to pollution of the environment, medical sources said.

Local leaders demanded of the authority to take immediate steps against the dishonest skin dealers for the sake of public health and sanitation.

Bamboo output declining in Kishoreganj

KISHOREGANJ, Aug 3: Bamboo production in the district is declining day by day due to lack of proper maintenance, nursing of bamboo clusters and absence of planned plantation programme, reports UNB.

According to sources, the district was once very famous for its bamboo production. There were thousands of clusters on vast tract of land which are rampantly being uprooted.

As such acute scarcity of bamboo has been prevailing in the district though the demand is increasing day by day as the traditional cottage industry, repair and construction works of the thatched houses entirely depend on bamboo.

Meanwhile, prices of bamboo have shot up beyond the purchasing capacity of poor people. A medium size bamboo is now being sold between Tk 70 and 80, the sources added.

On the other hand, no efforts have yet been taken to save the bamboo clusters from decaying in these areas. The clusters are being sold in the market by the ignorant growers as they think it will grow automatically.

Workers of the bamboo based cottage industries have been suffering badly due to shortage of bamboo. Many of them have already left the occupation.

Contraband worth Tk 14 lakh seized

RAJSHAHI, Aug 3: BDR personnel of 20 Rifle Battalion seized Indian contraband worth over Tk 14 lakh by conducting several anti-smuggling drives at different places in the battalion area of the district recently, reports BSS.

The seized contraband include Indian sarees, bicycle tyres and tubes, sugar, salt and cosmetics.

Later, the seized contraband were deposited to the Rajshahi Customs office.

Notes From Kushtia

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA, Aug 3: All haats and bazars of Kushtia district are now in a deplorable condition causing inconvenience to the sellers and buyers.

The shop-keepers and traders pay enhanced tax to the government and local *ijarads* without any return.

The haats and bazars have not been expanded although the population has increased manifold. The shop-keepers and vendors occupy most of the space hampering movement of buyers and sellers.

In the absence of drainage system, the haats and bazars of the district go under knee deep water following downpour.

The revenue is collected from the haats and bazars but no measures have been taken to improve the conditions of the markets.

Most of the haats and bazars have no sheds for the buyers and sellers to protect from scorching heat of the sun and shower during monsoon.

Absence of tubewells in some haats and bazars increased sufferings of the people.

Filth and garbage are piled up hither and thither creating bad odour which threatens public health.

Mosquito menace

Public life in Kushtia city and the adjoining areas has been made miserable due to mosquito menace which has assumed an alarming proportion for the last few weeks.

The mosquito menace has paralysed the life in the city. The school and college students are the worst sufferers. The students cannot prepare their lessons regularly. The poor people who have no means to purchase mosquito-net are also the worst sufferers.

The mosquito attack begins not only after sunset but also in day time causing hindrance to the normal work in offices, business establishment, schools and colleges.

Stagnant filthy waters in both kutcha and pucca drains, marshy places, kutcha and service latrines, water-logging around the tubewells heaps of garbage and jungles beside the roads and water hyacinths in the city are the ideal place for mosquito breeding.

Silted drains with stagnant water in the city are not renovated causing untold sufferings to the city dwellers.

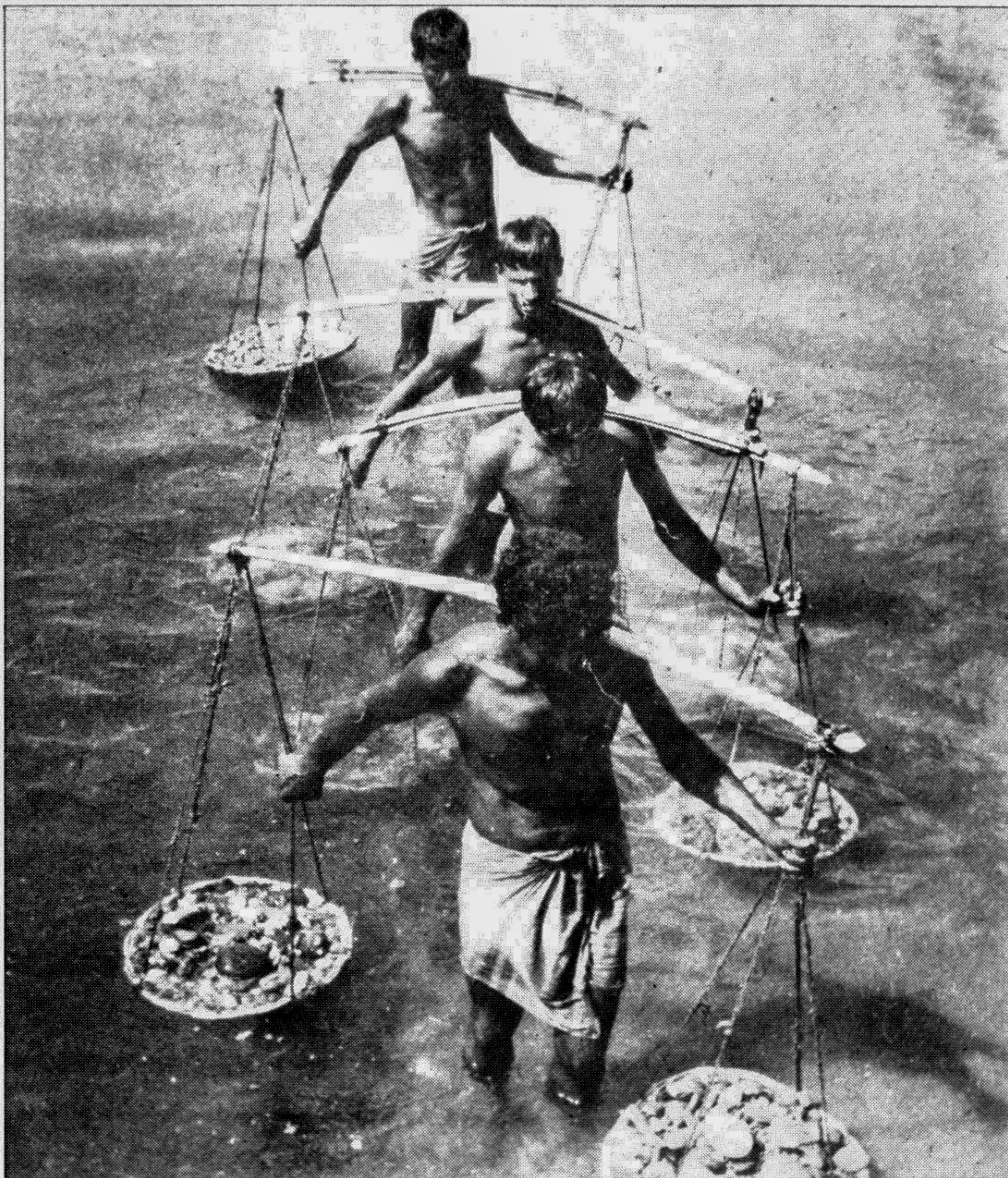
Rival groups clash, goods worth Tk 2 lakh looted

MAGURA, Aug 3: At least seven houses were ransacked and goods worth about Tk 2 lakh looted by arrival group on July 29 at village Kazali in Sreepura thana of the district, reports UNB.

According to police, following past enmity the supporters of Golam Sarwar of the village suddenly attacked the houses of rival group leader Abdul Mannan and his men Hashem Mollah, Siddique Mollah, Abdul Hakeem, Salam Biswas, Belayet Ali, and Sabed Ali with lethal weapons.

The enmity was prevailing for a long time over village politics. The attackers damaged the household articles and looted cash and valuables worth about Tk 2 lakh, police said.

A case has been lodged with the police and tension is prevailing in the village.



PANCHAGARH: These men are collecting stones from a river for the road development works. Hundreds of tons of stones are carried into the Bangladesh border by the river flow from across the border. — Star photo

Jute cultivation target fails in south western districts

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA, Aug 3: Jute cultivation target in the South Western district has failed this year due to various problems faced by the farmers, it was learnt. The districts which were worst affected in jute cultivation are Khulna, Jessore, Magura, Jhenidah, Kushtia, Chuadanga, Narail, Satkhira, Bagerhat and Meherpur.

According to Agriculture Extension Department sources jute cultivation target in Khulna district was fixed at two thousand three hundred hectares of land while it was cultivated on only 470 hectares of land. In Jessore cultivation was possible on 15386 hectares of land in place of 24300 hectares. In

Magura 12019 hectares of land was used for jute cultivation in place of 16300 hectares. In Jhenidah only 9710 hectares of land was brought under cultivation in place of 15300 hectares. In Kushtia district 8176 hectares of land was brought under jute cultivation in place of 10,000 hectares. In Chuadanga cultivation was possible only in 9250 hectares of land in place of targeted 11320 hectares. In Narail cultivation target failed and only 4674 hectares of land was brought under jute cultivation in place of 13,330 hectares of land. In Satkhira 6665 hectares of land was cultivated in place of 9650 hectares. In Bagerhat only 250

hectares of land could be covered in place of 900 hectares. In Meherpur 8639 hectares was brought under jute cultivation in place of 10516 hectares.

The farmers informed that the causes behind such failure in cultivating jute were want of seeds and fear of the farmers who sustained heavy losses during past several years.

Jute growers in greater Kushtia district have been facing immense difficulties for want of adequate water for retting process. Water from most of the roadside ditches and ponds is being used in cultivating other crops. In addition to these, rainfall in the region this year was recorded

quite in sufficient.

It is reported that most of the government agencies have not yet taken any step to purchase jute from any place of Kushtia district. This has disappointed most of the growers who now have to sell their products at lower costs. If this state of affairs continue further this will definitely cast a gloomy picture in the rural area where people have lost all hopes and aspirations in getting rid of their loss sustained

during the previous years in jute production. In this way rural economy is going to be ruined giving a blow to the overall economic condition of the country at large.

BADC returns radio active fertiliser

From Our Correspondent

GAIBANDHA, Aug 3: Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC), Gaibandha returned back 31.819 metric tons of high radio active zinc oxy-sulphate fertiliser imported from USA.

The BADC imported a total of 6.130 metric tons of zinc oxy-sulphate fertilizer manufactured by Stoller Inc of USA which was supplied by Trans-Continental Inc in 1990.

Road mishaps claim 113 lives in 6 months in greater Sylhet

From Our Correspondent

SYLHET, Aug 3: A total of 113 persons were killed and 663 were injured in 141 road accidents in different areas of greater Sylhet region during the period of six months from January to June this year.

Of the total 87 accident took place in Sylhet district. Fifty seven persons were killed and 286 more were injured in these mishaps. In Moulvibazar district, 19 persons were killed and 88 others were in-

jured in 19 different accidents during the period while in Habiganj district, 21 persons were killed and 204 more were injured in 24 different accidents. The death toll stood at 16 and 85 people were injured in separate accidents in Sunamganj district during the same period.

The highest number of accidents took place in February. Twenty-nine persons were killed in 29 separate incidents.

The minimum number of accidents took the lives of 14 people in March. However, 13 persons were killed in the month of June in 22 accidents.

It is observed that, minibus and microbuses caused the highest number of road accidents. Forty-four road accidents were caused by these vehicles claiming lives of 36 persons and injuring 167 others.

District roundup

C'NAWABGANJ

Serious flooding, over 5000 people affected

Aug 3: At least 15 unions of the district have been inundated due to onrush of water released through the Farakka Barrage by Indian authority, says UNB.

The barrage is situated two miles away from the border here. Local people are apprehending serious flooding as the Padma and Mahananda flowing through the district is likely to overflow the banks soon. Meanwhile, the district experienced a heavy rainfall during the last few days.

About 5,000 people were affected by the flood and crops on 6,000 acres of land were damaged due to the sudden flooding.

According to the information available here, Indian authority has been releasing 30,000 cusec of water daily through the barrage.

The controversial barrage which has been creating much trouble to the lower riparian Bangladesh by obstructing and releasing water in the odd seasons, itself was threatened by the sudden increase in rain water, the information said.

India creates numerous problems for irrigation and cropping in Bangladesh. Ecological balance in Bangladesh has also been affecting adversely due to the unilateral withdrawal of water at Farakka.

KHULNA

Shrimp exporters face problems due to shortage of ships

Aug 3: Frozen food worth about Tk 417.90 crore have been exported through the Mongla Port during the last financial year, reports UNB.

The amount is Tk 100 crore higher than that of the previous year. During the 1992-93 fiscal frozen food worth about Tk 318.87 crore were exported through the port.

The exported items included 2.74 crore pounds of shrimp, worth about Tk 414 crore, 12.52 lakh pound of white fish worth about Tk four crore and 22,000 pounds of tortoise.

Twenty-five agencies in the region exported the items to the USA, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Holland, Belgium, Germany and UK.

Export Promotion Bureau and Export Agency sources said record amount of shrimp is expected to be produced in the region this year.

But due to non-availability of required number of ships at the Mongla Port the exporters cannot send the frozen shrimp as per their desire, it is learnt.

BARISAL

Programme to check erosion of Charkaua

Aug 3: Government has undertaken a programme to check erosion of Charkaua areas by the river Kirtankhola, reports BSS.

Mujibar Rahman Sarwar inaugurated the programme by throwing a special bamboo box filled with concrete materials, in the erosion spot on Thursday.

Chief Engineer of Water Development Board, Barisal Division was present in the function which was attended by a large number of people.

About 50 to 60 shops of the area went into the river on Thursday last causing a largescale loss of property. Besides, a madrasah, a mosque and a number of dwelling houses have now been threatened by the erosion. About one hundred shops and houses have already been shifted to safe distance.

Water Development Board (WDB) of Barisal has undertaken a scheme worth Tk 20 lakh for the protection of the areas on an emergency basis, an official said.

Another report says: A day-long orientation course for the deputy commissioners and scout officials of six districts under Barisal Division was held in the conference room of the Divisional Commissioner on Thursday.

It was presided over by M A Rasid, Divisional Commissioner, Barisal. The function was attended, among others, by Badiur Rahman, National Commissioner, Bangladesh Scouts, Dhaka and Professor Hasan Waiz, Chairman of the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Jessore and Regional Scout Commissioner of Khulna. Barisal Range.

JHALAKATHI

Canal needs re-excavation works

Aug 3: The five-kilometre long Powta-Manpasha canal of Nalchiti thana needs immediate re-excavation for irrigation facilities and boat communication in the locality, reports UNB.

Local people said the canal was excavated long ago and now it has already been silted up hampering irrigation on 10,000 acres of IRRI-Boro land.

The villagers of Powta, Akhorpara, Dikpasha, Naikati, Bindupasha, Dahor, Siddhahati, Avoynil and Manpasha are affected due to siltation of the canal.

According to local people, Powta and Manpasha are the two important hats in the area and due to siltation of the canal boat communication with these hats has remained suspended.

The farmers have been facing difficulties to carry their agri products to these hats as the road communication is costly and time consuming due to bad condition of kutcha roads.

PATUAKHALI

Cottage industry needs bank loans

Aug 3: The hogla-leaf (a kind of shrub) based cottage industry in the rural areas of the district has been suffering a setback due to lack of patronisation and bank loans, says UNB.

Local people said, hogla plants abundantly grow in the char areas and coastal belt of the district particularly in Bauphal, Dasmina, Galachipa, Dumki, Mirzaganj and Kalapara thanas. It is also seen growing abundantly in the river banks.

Thousands of rural people, particularly the poor women, are engaged in making locally called "hogla," which is being used for packing purposes in industries, making baskets, mats and fences and other house-hold works.

Some workers said at present this cottage industry is suffering a serious setback due to lack of fund as most of them are poor and suffering from financial stringency.

They said the product has country-wide demand but due to lack of marketing facilities and patronisation they cannot reach the commodity to the markets of other districts.

Local elite have urged the authority to save the industry by providing bank loans and other facilities to the rural poor.

MAGURA

One caught red-handed while kidnapping a minor girl

Aug 3: An old woman was caught red-handed by the villagers while she was kidnapping a minor girl from village Barunatai on July 28, reports UNB.

According to police, Hasina Banu, 60, of village Panighata in Mohammadpur thana allured Reshma Khatoun, 8, daughter of Abdus Salam of Barunatai in Sadar thana and started fleeing with the girl. Some villagers noticed the matter and after a hot chase caught the woman with the minor girl.

She was later handed over to the police and a case has been started in this connection.

JHENIDAH

Jute worth Tk 20 crore expected this season

Aug 3: At least one lakh bales of jute worth about Tk 20 crore are expected to be produced in the district during the current season, says UNB.

According to Agriculture Extension Department, jute was cultivated on 10,062 hectares of land in six thanas of the district. About 10,040 hectares were brought under High Yielding Variety (HYV) of Tossa and the rest under local variety.

Of the total, 2400 hectares were cultivated in Sadar, 1700 hectares in Saikupa, 1862 in Harinakunda, 1100 hectares in Kaliganj, 400 hectares in Kotchandpur and 2600 hectares in Moheshpur thanas.

Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation supplied high quality jute seeds and other necessary inputs among the farmers and Krishi Bank provided loan to make the programme a success.



SYLHET: Md Ali Akbar, Additional District Magistrate, Sylhet speaking at a discussion meeting arranged in observance of the World Breast Feeding Day Monday. — Star photo