

Special train for pilgrims of Urs in W Bengal

RAJBARI, Feb 12: A special train has been arranged to facilitate the pilgrims of annual Urs of Hazrat Shah Morshed Ali Al Kadri Al Hasani Wal Hossaini (R) to be held at Medinipur of West Bengal in India, railway sources said, reports UNB.

The train will leave Rajbari station on February 15 at 10 pm and is expected to return on February 19 after the completion of the Urs. This special arrangement has been made jointly by Bangladesh and Indian governments.

About 1200 pilgrims from Bangladesh are expected to attend the Urs, to be conducted by Gadinashib Pir Hazrat Shah Rashid Ali Al Kadri. Anjumana Kaderia of Rajbari is making the necessary arrangement for the pilgrims.

Two smugglers held near Trimohini border

KUSHIA, Feb 12: Police Saturday arrested two motor cyclists who tried to cross Trimohini border point under Daulatpur thana and seized Tk three lakh four thousand and nine hundred from them, says an UNB report.

Habibur Rashid and Ayub Ali of Allar Dargha village of Daulatpur thana confessed to police that they carried gold and cash to India and brought heroin in exchange.

In another incident, an Awami League activist of Anjangachi village in Mirpur thana, Tofazzel Hossain Tofa (45), was shot dead Friday night by unknown assailants, police said.

Shampur without power for 15 hrs

NARAYANGANJ, Feb 12: Supply of electricity was suspended for about 15 hours during 8 pm Friday upto till 11 am Saturday due to a mechanical disruption in a power-station at Shampur in Narayanganj.

Normal operation of more than 1,000 industries including 100 large units and city life, were being affected due to the power failure.

Father, son hurt in a clash with rival group

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Feb 12: Father and son were injured in a clash between rival groups of villagers at Radhanagar under Chhatak thana of Sunamganj district Saturday afternoon. Both had been admitted into the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital with critical injuries.

Police said, the incident occurred as a sequel to a long standing dispute over land. A case has been registered. The victims are: Cherag Ali, 40, and his son Shahjahan, 20.

Brave indeed

BHOLA, Feb 12: Police rewarded a house-owner for bravery in rounding up a dacoit while committing dacoity in his house on February 4, says UNB.

According to police, a gang of dacoits entered the house of Yusuf at dead of night and looted valuables. But while decamping Yusuf caught hold Basar, 25, a dacoit, from behind and cried for help. At this the dacoit stabbed him seriously but could not escape as the neighbours surrounded him. He was later handed over to the police.

Yusuf was admitted to Bhola sadar hospital. Deputy Commissioner and SP of the district appreciating the bravery handed over the cheque of Tk 1000 to Yusuf as reward.

Road accidents claim 105 in 1994

JAMALPUR, Feb 12: Some 105 people were killed in 372 road accidents on Jamalpur-Tangail-Dhaka and Jamalpur-Mymensingh highways in last year, reports UNB.

According to official sources, at least 1,015 people were injured in the accidents and 215 vehicles worth Tk 25 crore were damaged during the same period.

Police said, of the dead, 68 people were killed in 172 truck accidents and the rest were killed in coaster, bus and motor car accidents. Dr Sirajul Haq MP of BNP was among the dead and Deputy Health Minister Sirajul Haq among the injured.

In Sundarbans Thousands of sundari trees attacked by 'top-dieing' disease

From Abu Ahmed

SATKHIRA, Feb 12: Thousands of sundari trees in the Sundarbans, the biggest mangrove of the world are being destroyed on account of fated diseases due to adverse affect of the Farakka every year. The number of sundari trees have drastically fallen by about 60 per cent to 50 per cent due to top-dying disease which is increasing in gradual course.

Unless immediate measures are not taken to prevent the disease, it is apprehended that at one stage most of the sundari trees, the most valuable trees of forest resources from the Sundarbans will vanish.

According to a forest official source, due to adverse effect of the Farakka, salinity of

waters in the Sundarbans has been increased abnormally. As a result the sundari trees of the Sundarbans have been attacked with the top-dying disease. Abnormal rise in salinity is the main cause of top-dying of the roots of these trees, said the forest experts.

According to a latest report, for the normal growth of sundari trees the water must contain 12ppt (a measurement of salt in water and soil) and soil must contain between 8 and 10ppt but the experimental study shows that at present water in the Sundarbans contain 28ppt while the soil contains between 16 and 20ppt, an amount of salt too high for the trees to survive. In addition to this fresh growth of sundari trees have been greatly

threatened due to this high salinity, the experts say.

According to the concerned sources, despite government ban on cutting of sundari trees from the compartment with effect from 1989 with a view to keeping ecological balance, cutting of these variety of trees from different compartments could not be stopped. As reported by the concerned official sources, generally the sundari trees attacked by the top-dying disease are being cut down.

For prevention of this injurious top-dying disease, a team led by expert Dr Gibson conducted a research in 1985 under Forest Research Centre, Chittagong but he could not identify specific cause for this disease. For prevention of top-dying disease in the forest, he advised to cut off the trees already attacked with top-dying disease. According to Dr Gibson, repeated natural calamities, excessive salinity and massive siltation in and around the forest might be the cause of top-dying disease.

As per recommendation put forward by Dr Gibson since 1991-92 financial year about 20 lakh cubic feet of diseased sundari trees from compartments of 32, 36, 37, and 38 under 55 coups of the Sundarbans have so far been cut off.

According to a survey, conducted in 1956 by the Forest Department, it revealed that the sundari trees covered 60 per cent of the total area of the Sundarbans. In 1983, the percentage of sundari trees decreased to 53 and it further decrease of 50 per cent in 1994.

As informed by the same concerned sources, still there are thousands of top-dying diseased sundari trees in Khulna Range, Shyamnagar Range, Chandpur Range and Nalian Range of the Sundarbans.

Smuggled goods continue to penetrate Jessore, Jhenidah

From Our Correspondent

JESSORE, Feb 12: Smuggling has resurfaced with new intensity along border areas of Jessore and Jhenidah districts recently.

According to source, smuggling of sugar and salt mixed with Ammonia sulphur, is rampant in these areas. These are being smuggled into local markets and selling at cheaper price than that of local products.

Complaints received from different sources indicate that people of Sharsha, Jhinkergachha, Chowgachha in Jessore, Moheshpur, Kotchandpur thanas in Jhenidah districts are suffering from various intestinal diseases following use of these adulterated salt and sugar. It is also learnt that from borders of Gogu, Rudrapur, Patkhail, Daulatpur, Sadipur, Roghunathpur, Dhanokhola, Sikarpur, Kashipur of

Sharsha, Belta, Kayemkola, Gonganadpur of Jhinkergachha, Dhailiani, Kabilpur, Sahajadpur, Chowgachha, Muskhila, Purapara of Chowgachha, Jadabpur, Jalali, Bhoiraba, Jinanagore, Samanta, Bagadanga, Khalishpur, Moheshpur of Moheshpur thana and several markets of Kotchandpur thana in Jhenidah district become main routes for smuggling these days.

Sources said that salt, sugar, sarees, cattle, bus, truck parts and chasis, tubelight, garments, wrapper, crockeries, drugs, heroin, fertilizer pesticide are being smuggled into the country routed through these border routes.

Similarly, gold, copper, bronze VCP, VCR, Bearing, Jamdani saree are being reportedly smuggled out through same routes in connivance with law enforcing agencies.



CHANDPUR. Professor Abdul Khaleque, Principal of Chandpur Government College distributing scholarship among students sponsored by Chandpur Zila Samity of Dhaka. — Star photo

Soil fertility rate declining as farmers use Indian pesticides

From Our Correspondent

JESSORE, Feb 11: Fertility of land is decreasing in south-western zone of the country following extensive use of smuggled Indian banned pesticide.

According to source, pesticide is main among goods that are being smuggled into border districts of Jessore, Jhenidah, Satkhira, Chuadanga, Meherpur and Kushia from India.

Varieties of this group including Thinoal, Thiodine, Thiomex and Hexadal have flooded markets. These are available at doorsteps and selling at cheaper prices than those of local products. Detailed information says that one packet of Hildone weighing one kg is selling at Tk 245 while 50 grams of Nogos is selling at Tk 210. It is also

learnt that price of local product is 200 per cent more than India products.

Availability of Indian pesticide at cheaper price has tempted farmers to use it in massive dose to boost production without knowing merits and demerits. This rampant use has begun to destroy smaller bacillus (bacteria) in soil, adversely affecting capacity of productivity. Its use in India, has already been banned long ago.

Long-term poisonous reaction of this is causing hazards to human health and environment.

This pesticide is very strong and harmful in action. Ignorance about side-effects of this product and cheaper rate has been cause to attract the farmers in the area. Its use on

land discolours leaves of paddy plants and kills insects including frog, fish, needed as auxiliary elements for crop production. It also stops their regenerations.

Besides, organic matter of soil is also reducing.

Bangladesh government has banned this item in the country. But how and why it is still being sold in open market is a question. Pesticide came to market in mid fifties. Now time has come for a thorough examination of its merit and demerits.

According to field workers of Agriculture Extension Department (AED), poisons of this pesticide enter human health, while consuming vegetable, rice, fish, dal grown by using these. Even cows and goats are not spread.

Improving rural health and sanitation

By Naimul Haq

A Successful Partnership

MAGURA, Feb 10: The Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) through its partners has been providing financial as well as technical assistance for Bangladesh's drinking water and sanitation programmes being implemented since 1975.

The goal of the programme is improved health and reduction of diarrhoeal diseases and parasitic infections through supply of clean water integrated with sanitation and promotion of personal hygiene.

One of the partners of SDC is NGO Forum, a non-profit service delivery agency of local, national and international NGOs engaged in safe water and sanitation activities. The Forum has a network of 425 partners. It focuses on integrated water and sanitation programmes at the community level providing safe water in the unserved and underserved areas of the country. The Forum works at the village level through its partner NGOs. The village sanitation centres (VSC) are a major component of the Forum's activities.

Each partner applies for implementing its programmes to NGO Forum. Once feasibility study is completed, each partner receives support from the Forum. The partner NGOs can apply for implementation of two types of programmes: (a) tubewell distribution and (b) village sanitation centre (VSC).

For tubewell distribution each partner receives hardware support like pump-head, GI pipe PVC pipe and filter, sand trap, cement etc. For a village sanitation centre each partner receives Tk 50,000 in cash as revolving money in addition to steel mould for making pans and rings for production. Each centre must have the capacity to produce at least 100 latrines each consisting of one slab and five rings. These are the preliminary stages of the water and sanitation project, more commonly known as WATSAN.

Of course, software support is also included in the programme. This support comprises all necessary activities needed to build up awareness among the village community of policy makers, planners, implementers and beneficiaries. A number of selected members of each partner NGO are given training on particular subjects. In addition to regular training, workshops, seminars, exchange visits and discussions are conducted from time to time. The whole idea of software support is to mobilise the community to share experience, identify problems and to understand the needs of the

local people.

"Identify the parts on the black board one after another you have learned so far", Nazima Jasmine asks her class. "You in the second bench", Jasmine points her finger, "explain what steps would you take when your tubewell goes out of order?" The answers were quick and to the point. All raised their hands to volunteer to answer whenever Jasmine asked something. "They are very good, especially in theory classes. It's the practical work which confuse them most of the time but we overcome this somehow through repeated lessons," said Jasmine, now in her mid thirties and married for more than twelve years. Sixteen tubewell caretakers had been invited to this workshop at the Jhaudia Government Primary School in Badiatola village of Jessore district. This was arranged by Shishu Niloy, a partner of the Forum. This type of workshop is held once in a year. The participants come from

villages far away. All of them were provided accommodation, food and, of course, transport.

The aim of the workshop was to provide necessary knowledge, skills and create awareness regarding proper use and maintenance of tubewells.

At a VSC in Boaliaghat of Manirampur thana of the district, another partner, Aaddin, has been operating since February 1994. It has four units, each covering 15 villages.

"We have produced 87 slabs and 102 rings for the sanitary latrines through our four units," says Jasmine Akhter, Manager of Boaliaghat unit. "We also have mobile units to facilitate easy supply of sanitary latrines to those areas where transporting slabs and rings are not possible, she added.

Each slab and ring made at the Boaliaghat unit cost Tk 55 and Tk 80 respectively. These are sold at the rate of Tk 65 and Tk 100 respectively.

Aaddin in Boaliaghat has eight women working at the field level. All have been given a target of selling at least 13 sets of latrines each of which consists of one ring and one slab, but surprisingly, villagers in Manirampur show little interest in buying the sets. The reason is very simple. The area is comparatively low. During rainy seasons most of the places remain under water for days. So, having a sanitary latrine would not mean much to us, explained Wahiduzzaman who is in his mid-fifties. "This is not a problem. Our products are mostly readied once we receive an order. But at the same time we think of some alternative ways to promote use of sanitary latrines in the area", said Akhter.

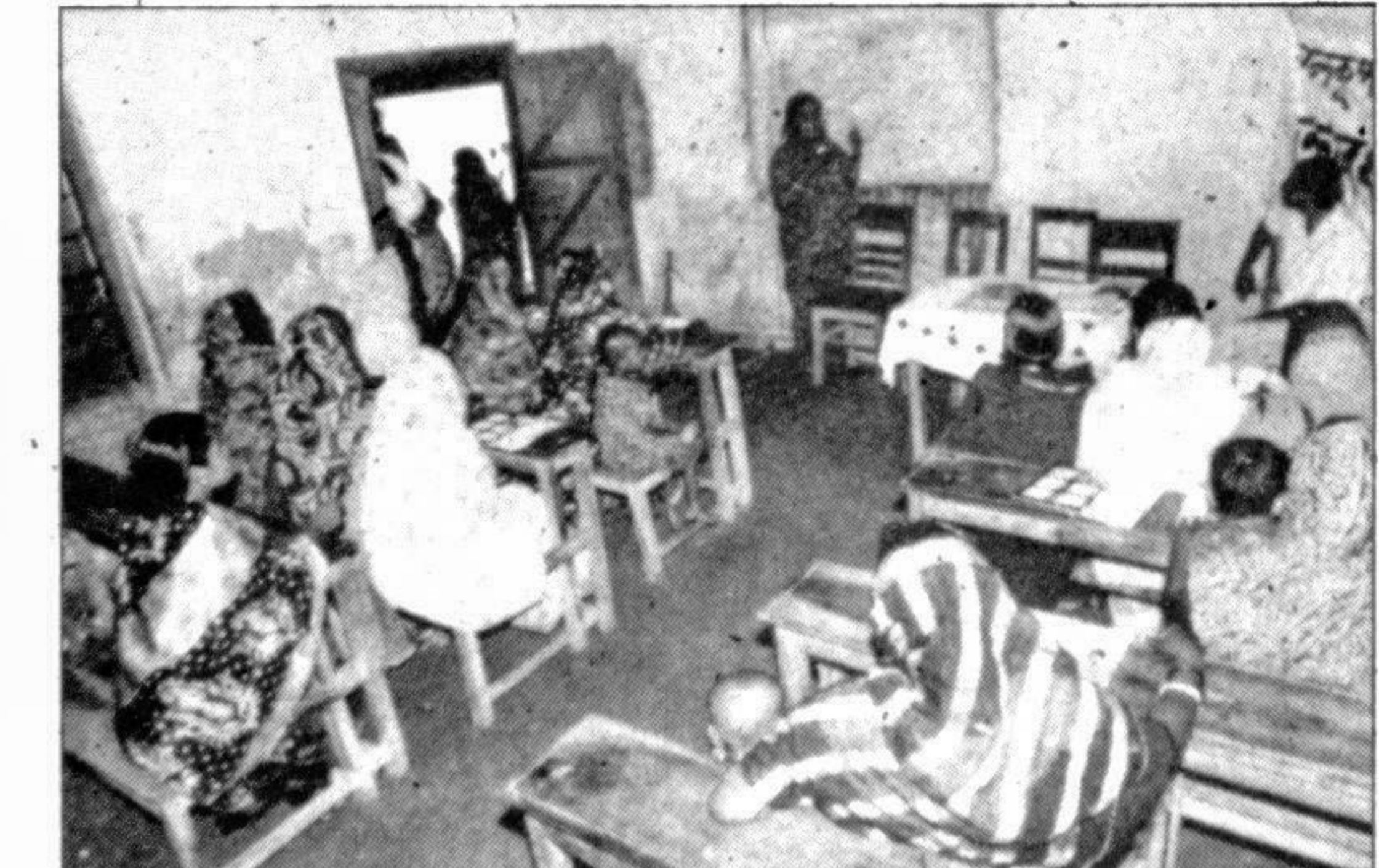
Another partner of the Forum, Rural Organisation for Voluntary Activities (ROVA), has been equally serving the villagers in Harishpur in Shalika union of Magura district. Started in March 1993, the organization, unlike Aaddin, operates both tubewell as well as VSC. Most of ROVA's staff are serving as volunteers. However, there are paid staff, 23 in all. "All of them are very active workers," claims Kazi Kamruzzaman, director of the organisation.



Jasmine Akhter at the Aaddin VSC.



Women volunteer tubewell caretakers attend a regular monthly class at the Harishpur VSC organised by the NGO Forum in Magura district. — Photo courtesy: SDC



Nazma Jasmine teaching how to repair a tubewell to caretakers at the Jhaudia Government Primary School classroom in Jessore. — Photo courtesy: SDC

Notes from Sirajganj

From Our Correspondent

Journalist honoured

Aminul Islam Chowdhury, mobile Correspondent of Ittefaq and Sirajganj Correspondent of Bangladesh Television (BTV) has been selected for "five hundred leaders of influence" to be published by American Biographical Institute.

The Board of Directors of the Institute have nominated Mr Chowdhury as the one of the 500 renowned personalities of the world. He has been invited to visit America during the publication ceremony of the book.

Eye camp held

An eye camp was held at Bagulia Primary School in Chowhall thana recently. Eye specialists of BNSB Eye Hospital in Sirajganj extended outdoor treatment to 120 patients and operated upon 70 patients. Local elites sponsored the eye camp.

Abandoned arrested

Police arrested Mobjel Hossain, 37, wanted for six cases, including murder and kidnapping from Sirajganj Bazar station recently.

Mobjel of village Bamangati in Sadar thana was wanted by police in connection with murdering of labour leader Chand Mia and a kidnapping case in Dhunat thana in Bogra district.

CBA polls held

Elections to Quami Jute Mills CBA was held recently peacefully.

Abdul Khaleque of Jatiyo Sramik Federation and Sujabat Ali of Jatiyo Sramik Jote were elected president and general secretary respectively.

In other posts, three from Jatiyo Sramik Federation, one from Jatiyo Sramik League, one from Trade Union Centre (TUC) and one independent candidates were elected.

Hashish seized

CID police of Sirajganj, on secret information, recovered 20 kgs of ganza worth about Tk 60,000 from village Chandakona in Raiganj thana and arrested one Abdul Matin recently.

He confessed that his brother-in-law, Abdul Mejid was involved in this business.

A case has been lodged with police.

English school opened

An English medium school, Carrear KG and Pre-cadet School has been opened at Victoria High School road in this town.

The opening ceremony, with its founder-chairman Sheikh Intaz Ali Kunkum in the chair, was addressed, among others, by Deputy Commissioner Syed Abdul Malek, Advocate S M Kamruzzaman, Principal Waliul Islam and Motahar Hossain Talukder.

Tk 3.4 cr plan to supply water in Khagrachhari pourashava

KHAGRACHHARI, Feb 11: The government has taken up an ambitious programme to supply water in the Khagrachhari municipality area at a cost of Tk 3.4 crore, reports UNB.

Preliminary work on the project will be completed within the current financial year while the rest of the work will be completed during the fiscal 1995-96.

According to official sources, Tk 1.5 crore will be spent in the current fiscal year for the construction work of pump-house, overhead tank, water reservoir, supply line and water purifying unit to provide pure and iron-free water for the dwellers.

A six-member committee has been formed to supervise the on-going project.

After the completion of the project, a long felt demand of about 40,000 town dwellers will be fulfilled.

Transport strike called off

JENIDAH, Feb 12: The indefinite period transport strike on the Kushtia-Jenidah road was called off after a tripartite meeting held at the DC office Saturday, reports UNB.

The meeting comprising students and teachers of Islamic university, leaders of bus-truck workers, and owners and officials of the district administration, formed a committee to set up a bus stoppage for the students.

The transport strike began on February 3 (Friday) to demand compensation for the damage made to a number of private buses, reportedly caused by some students of Islamic University on February 2. On the day, one student of the varsity was killed in a road-mishap.

Meanwhile, a day-long transports strike was also observed on Friday in four southern districts including Jhenidah on the same issue.