

### Two killed by thunderbolt in Faridpur

FARIDPUR, June 17: Two brothers died and their mother was seriously injured when they were struck by a thunderbolt at village Parchar in sadar thana Saturday morning, reports UNB.

The two brothers, Akkas Ali, 28, and Abbas Ali, 21, along with their mother Kamela Begum were hit by thunderbolt as they were sitting at the veranda of their hut.

They were rushed to the Faridpur General Hospital where the attending doctors declared Akkas and Abbas dead. Their mother was admitted there with serious burn injuries on her back.

Meanwhile, the low-lying areas of Faridpur town went under water following a heavy downpour that started from early Saturday.

### Rain damages crops on 3000 hectares of land in Madaripur

From Our Correspondent FARIDPUR, June 17: The standing crops on three thousand hectares of land in four thanas of Shibchar, Kalkini, Rajair and Sadar of Madaripur district have been damaged owing to heavy rainfall and gusty wind recently.

It is learnt from Agricultural Extension Department that, boro paddy on 445 hectares, aman on 472 hectares, aus paddy on four hundred hectares, jute on 515 hectares, sesame on 360 hectares, groundnuts on 45 hectares, pepper on three hundred hectares, vegetables on 65 hectares and other crops on 840 hectares of land have been destroyed.

### One killed, decomposed body found in Sirajganj

From Our Correspondent SIRAJGANJ, June 17: Two unnatural deaths were reported at Sirajganj Friday. An unidentified day labourer, 35, succumbed to injuries at Belkuchi thana health complex Friday. The day-labourer sustained head injury while loading cloth bales on the truck at Shohagpur hat.

In another case a decomposed body of a 12 year old boy identified as Nazrul Islam was recovered the same day from the launch ghat of Sirajganj. The victim had been missing since June 11 after falling in the erosion point of the Jamuna.

UD cases were lodged with the concerned police stations and bodies were sent to Sirajganj hospital for autopsy.

### Fire mishap: 20 receive burn injuries

From Our Correspondent CHANDPUR, June 17: At least 20 people received burn injuries, five of them seriously, and 10 houses were completely gutted in a devastating fire that broke out in village Kasiapara under Faridganj thana here Thursday night.

Among the critically injured five persons, one woman was shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital while the others were admitted to Faridganj Thana Health Complex.

A fire brigade team from Chandpur Puran Bazar rushed to the scene at 10 pm and put off the fire, which originated from an electric short circuit, after a two-hour exercise.

Deputy Commissioner of Chandpur visited the spot Friday. The loss of property is estimated to be around Taka 50 lakh.

### Housewife burns herself to death

From Our Correspondent FARIDPUR, June 17: Parvin, 28, wife of Hafizur Rahman, a senior teacher of Faridpur Zila School burnt herself to death recently.

Parvin who was the auditor of local AG office was married to Hafizur Rahman two years ago.

It is learnt that Hafizur Rahman had developed an illicit relation with a girl Zuna, 20, whom he taught as a house tutor.

# Fruits worth Taka two lakh rotting everyday in CHT

From AKM Zahoorul Huq

RANGAMATI, June 17: Different species of fruits worth over Taka two lakh are being damaged daily in all the 25 thanas of the Chittagong Hill Tracts region due to lack of transportation, storage, marketing and processing facilities causing a serious financial loss on the 60 per cent of the people of this region, who earn their livelihood by producing, carrying, marketing and dealing the fruits in the harvesting season.

At least fruits worth over Taka one crore will be damaged during the on-going harvesting season in the inaccessible thanas of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) region where these are abundantly produced in absence of buyers.

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Kina Mohan Chakma, a Councillor of the Local Government Council of Rangamati Hill District, from Zurachhari thana told The Daily Star that jack-fruits are getting petrified in the trees in many of the tribal hamlets as the owners of the orchards are reluctant in collecting these from the trees and carry to the local markets as these do not fetch the labour cost.

A large quantity of pineapple and jackfruits, piling in the different hats and bazars of Baghaichhari, Langada, Zurachhari, Kaukhali, Borkal, Belaichhari, Namiar, Char and Rajstahahi in Rangamati hill district, Mohalchhari, Dighinala, Panchhari, Matiranga, Guimarn and Ramgarh Thana of Khagrachhari hill district as well as Thansi, Alikadam, Lama, Ruma, Naingkhiongchhari and Roangchhari in Bandarun hill district. The produc-

causing a virtual halt in transportation of commodities from the tribal hamlets situated in the inaccessible areas, to thana and district headquarters. As the plying of engine-fitted boats, the only means of transportation, is at present almost suspended, the perishable fruits like pineapple, jackfruit and banana are getting petrified at the very origins in absence of cold-storage or any sorts of provisions for storage and conservation.

Meanwhile, the pineapple cultivation in Bandarun hill district has suffered a serious setback due to three months long severe drought and tidal surge as well as landslide on May 17 last. Seventy per cent of pineapple in the orchards has been damaged causing an adverse effect on the socio-economic condition of the tribal people as the crop was the major source of their annual earnings, sources from the Agriculture Extension Department said.

Discouraging the age-old shifting cultivation method, an area of more than 35 thousand acres of land was brought under pineapple cultivation with government and private patronization in the three hill districts of Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarun within the last one decade. As the changed attempt was proved economi-

cally very viable, the extension of pineapple cultivation was regarded as a blessing for the jhoom-based tribal people.

But due to absence of government patronization in transportation, marketing, storage and processing of pineapple, the people will lose their increasing interest in extension and cultivation of it, said Bir Bahadur, Member of Parliament from Bandarun hills district.

Not only pineapple and jackfruits, other fruits like lemon and vegetable of different species worth over Taka five crore are getting damaged annually in CHT for the absence of proper transportation, marketing, storage and processing facilities, said Gautam Dewan, the ex-chairman of the Local Government Council of Rangamati hill district.

If there was any fruit processing or conservation plants in Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarun, crops produced in CHT would be saved from damages in one side and on the other side, hundreds of unemployed youths would get the jobs for their survival, Gautam further said adding that there exists a very bright prospect for exporting the conventional and non-conventional commodities including fruits and vegetables from CHT.

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very difficult for the mills authorities to reserve the huge amount of unsold sugar. Under the circumstances, the sources suggested that smuggling of sugar should be controlled strictly to promote the sale of the sugar produced in the country, otherwise the mills would have to face loss of crores of taka every year. On the other hand, if the sugar can be sold, the mills authorities will be able to pay the farmers' due. It is to be mentioned here that, sugarcane is the main cash crop of Rajshahi and Natore districts, cultivation and harvest of sugarcane it takes 12 to 15 months and a good amount of investment. Under the Rajshahi, Natore and North Bengal (Natore) Sugar Mills area, more than 1.5 lakh farmers cultivate sugarcane. They depend mostly on the money earned from the sale of sugarcane for their livelihood.

# Sugar worth Tk 131cr remain unsold in three sugar mills

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAH, June 17: An amount of about 49,000 metric tons of sugar worth Tk 131 crore are lying unsold in the godowns of Rajshahi, Natore and North Bengal (Natore) Sugar mills till last week.

All these three mills exceeded their respective targets of production but could not sell even half of the total sugar produced in the season due to its higher price rate comparing to that of the Indian sugar coming across the border, it has alleged. In the markets of Rajshahi, Indian sugar now sells at Tk 25 per kilogram against Tk 29 per kilogram of the Bangladeshi sugar.

As the of this sugar cannot be sold, the mills authority cannot pay the price of the purchased sugarcane from the farmers. Upto last week Tk 10.5 crore were yet to be paid to the farmers under

the zones of the above three mills.

Rajshahi Sugar Mills produced 23,000 metric tons of sugar this season against the target of 20,160 metric tons by crushing 2.93 lakh metric tons of sugarcane. Twelve thousand 492 metric tons of sugar worth of Tk 33.73 crore remained unsold till June 10 and the farmers due bill was Tk 3.21 crore. The general manager of the mills when contacted hoped to pay all the dues of the farmers in next one month. Natore Sugar Mills crushed 3.21 lakh metric tons of sugarcane and produced 25,725 metric tons of sugar against the target of 19,140 metric tons. This mill could not sell 17,900 tons of sugar worth Tk 48.33 crore. The mills authorities could not also pay the farmers due amounting to Tk 9 crore.

Meanwhile, the North

Bengal Sugar Mills of Natore produced highest amount of sugar. This year in the country that amounted to 27,598 metric tons against the fixed target of 21,315 metric tons. To produce the said amount of sugar the mills crushed about 3.40 lakh metric tons of sugarcane. Out of the total production of 18,341 metric tons, that is, two third of the sugar were lying unsold worth Tk 49.52 crore. The farmers due about Tk 3 crore, it was said on June 11. The sources said that sugar produced in these three mills were of good quality in comparison with the Indian sugar coming across the border. But consumers are preferring Indian sugar for its lower price tag. The price always differs by Tk 4 to 5.

Meanwhile, the rainy season is on in the region. Sugar usually dissolves in the rainy season and it will be

### Erosion in Jamalpur

# Latest havoc in the drought-hit region of Jamuna-Brahmaputra basin

From Our Correspondent

JAMALPUR, June 17: The erosion of Jamuna and Brahmaputra river continue unabated and already devoured vast tract of land in the district. The erosion continues to grab fresh land threatening residential areas, educational institutions, markets, and railway ferry ghat.

Like every other year, the devastating erosion has once again taken serious turn with the rise in the water level in the rivers. This year too, erosion has forced thousands of people homeless several acres of crops land gone under the rivers.

About 3 lakh people, mostly poor, have taken shelter on roads and other high places. The Bahadurabad railway ferry ghat, which was earlier shifted to a new site on several occasion needs shifting again as the river continues to engulf the surrounding areas.

Measures taken so far by the concerned authority to check the erosion in the district were alleged to be inadequate. Thousands of acres of land in the district, engulfed by the river erosion during the past years has seriously affected the crop output from the district. This year too standing crops were affected by both, drought and erosion.

According to unofficial sources, more than 36 square

km area including 90 per cent areas in five unions at Islampur thana, two unions of Dewanganj thana and two unions of Madarganj thana have been washed away by the river erosion in the last 12 years.

The worst affected unions are: Belgassa, Kulkancili, Nowrapara, Shapdari in Islampur thana, Bahadurabad and Char Ramrampur in Dewanganj thana Char Pakerdow and Baliyuri in Madarganj thana.

Erosion in the district continues to affect rural poor who have lost at least 25,000 acres of crop land in the past few years.

It was alleged that the erosion hit-people were not provided with any relief goods. Many of the victims have fallen sick and need urgent medicine.

The severe erosion has also threatened many buildings and similar structures. The 100 year old Guthail Bazar, Guthail High School, and Madrasa would probably not escape the threat of erosion.

The Jamalpur Dewanganj road at Kangalkusha point only 20 feet away from the river bank, may collapse any day. The Madarganj thana court building and Dewanganj Bazar faces similar fates.

portion out of 100 km long Harindara Flood Control and Irrigation Embankment from Bahadurabad ghat to Jagannathganj ghat has been washed away by the erosion of river Jamuna during the last 12 years. As a result 60,000 acres of crop lands were affected by the flood water. When contacted, a source of Operation and Maintenance (O&M) Division of Water Development Board (WDB) informed this correspondent that smooth maintenance and repairing works of the embankment is disturbed as both sides of the embankment are occupied by the homeless people.

Different Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), including Save the Children Fund, Action Aid, Proshika, distributed house building materials among some families but a section of affected families are yet to receive any help. Grameen Bank has distributed house building loan among the erosion victims of the district recently.

Erosion affected landless people who are mostly agricultural labourers are facing starvation. Scarcity of drinking water, cloths and medicine were also prevailing. Nurul Islam, Union Parishad chairman of Shapdari union under Islampur thana

told this correspondent that he took shelter at Islampur thana officer staffquarter after he lost his homestead in the Jamuna erosion last year.

Another victim said he lost 110 acres of crop land including homestead. Md Abdur Razzak, Pahluan, a victim of Chinaduli union said "I have been living in this union for 50 years but I never witnessed such a devastating erosion."

Total damaged is estimated at Taka 25,000 crore during the period after liberation in all the affected areas of the district.

Meanwhile, severe erosion by the river Brahmaputra devoured at least 40 houses in Sadar thana of Sherpur district today rendering nearly 200 people homeless.

Char Mokhi Union parishad chairman said the river has almost engulfed the village, Vaghlanadi, as the erosion intensified with the abnormal rise of water.

The char areas of the district have already been inundated by the flood waters, he said.

Brahmaputra rose by about one and a half feet during the last 24 hours till Friday evening, local people said.

# Budget '95-'96: Reactions from Rajshahi

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAH, June 17: Different political parties, and organisations have expressed mixed reactions over the proposed budget for the 1995-96 fiscal year. Mayor of Rajshahi City Corporation praised the budget terming it mass-oriented and hopes that it would fulfill the aspirations of the people. He thanked Prime Minister and the Finance Minister for presenting such a welfare-oriented budget that allocated the largest amounts in education, agriculture and industrial sectors.

Rajshahi Chamber of Commerce and Industries

presided Mohammad Ali Sarkar said that cutting of duties from various raw materials and consumer goods was praise worthy but widening of the coverage of VAT has raised questions whether the reduction of duties would be beneficial.

Professor Shah Habibur Rahman of Economics Department of Rajshahi University slated the budget and termed it illegal and anti-people on the point that the budget was submitted in an illegal parliament. Professor Solaiman Mandal of the same

department said that the proposed budget could not be pragmatic and mass-oriented as it bore no scope for economic analysis. Prof M A Hamid, however, praised the budget and said that it would promote industrialisation.

Awami League leader Rafiquddin, Jatiya Party City president Abdul Hadi and Jamaat-e-Islami city Ameer Ataur Rahman said that the budget was illegal and it would not be accepted by the people. BNP and JCD leaders of different levels issued press releases praising the budget.

# 15,000 drug addicts in Rajshahi

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAH, June 17: An average number of 15 thousands of people were found to have been addicted in varieties of drugs and narcotics in Rajshahi district spending about Tk 3 lakh daily to buy drugs and narcotics.

To manage the costs most of the addicts are being indulged in antisocial activities like theft, robbery etc. The number of the addicted people is increasing day by day and it has become a great social problem here.

Local Drug Control Department and a few Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) engaged in anti-drug addiction activities here informed that the young people comprised about seventy per cent of the total number of addicts. Among the youths, university students, unem-

ployed educated youngs and day labourers like rickshaw pullers are among the main addicts.

Names of girls have recently been reported in the list of the drug addicted people. The girls are mostly university students, it is learnt.

The drugs used by the addicted people are mainly heroin, phensedyl syrups ganja.

The sources informed that an addicted person usually takes four doses of drugs. Each dose costs Tk 10 to 30. So an addict has to spend Tk 40-120 daily that is impossible for most of the people. That is why they take adulterated drugs much cheaper and usually twice a day. About 70 per cent of the addicted people cannot afford the money from their own pockets. So they have to in-

dulge in theft and robberies which they start usually from their own home and neighbours.

Dr Afzal Hussain, Director of Drug Abuse Prevention Centre situated at Ahmedpur in the city said that drug addiction is mainly an urban problem. In the countryside, some people drink home-made wine. He suggested that preventive and treatment measures might be taken but without rehabilitation programmes drug addiction problem could not be removed. He observed that most of the addicted people took up addiction after full cure only due to absence of any rehabilitation programme for them.

He observed that drug smuggling was the main obstacle to prevent the addiction.

### Groundnuts worth Tk 60 lakh destroyed

From Our Correspondent

FARIDPUR, June 17: About 10 thousand maunds of groundnuts with an estimated worth of Taka 60 lakh have been destroyed in Char Ghawkanda and Char Bhadrans Unions under Char Bhadrans thana as the land went under water due to sudden abnormal rise of water level in the river Padma recently.

It may be mentioned that the land of Char Bhadrans thana specially that of Char Ghawkanda Union is highly suitable for groundnut cultivation.

It is also reported that 500 acres of land with groundnut in the union have been submerged causing tremendous loss to the growers.

### VDP member caught while extracting timber in CHT

From CHT Correspondent

KAPTAL (Rangamati), June 17: Forest officials have here arrested a member of Village Defense Party (VDP) while illegally telling trees in the reserved forest and seized few alamats along with a sampan boat on June 11 last, officials said.

Nurul Haque, 25, son of Nurul Sata of Gobaghona cluster village under Rangamati sadar thana of the district while illegally extracting teak from the reserved forest of Kalmichhora beat under Karnafuli range of Chittagong Hill Tracts South Forest Division was caught red-handed on the night of June 11, said Nuruzzaman, the beat officer of Kalmichhora beat. A sampan boat along with few alamats of extraction of timber were also seized.

The accused said to be a member of VDP was sent to Rangamati Forest Magistrate Court.

### BKB goes to court

MAJIDEE COURT (Noakhali), June 17: Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) has filed 3,046 certificate cases against its loanees in the district for non-payment of Tk 67.51 lakh, reports UNB.

Officials said the bank through its 17 branches of the district had disbursed loan amounting to Tk 93 lakh during the 1994-95 fiscal.

# Overhead tank not working Serious water supply crisis in Sirajganj town

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, June 17: One out of two overhead water supply tanks in Sirajganj town remain out of operation for more than five years seriously creating water supply crisis within the municipal area.

It is learnt that the two overhead tanks were constructed for water supply in Sirajganj municipal area. The overhead tank of Mujib Road remains inoperative for more than five years. The only functioning tank at Dhanbandi with 1.5 lakh gallon capacity is used to supply water for 915 consumers. Out of four wells, three at Dhanbandi are in operation. The only well at Mujib Road is declared abandoned. An Iron Removal Plant (IRP) or iron filtering plant has been constructed at Dhanbandi with technical assistance from the Dutch government at the cost of Tk 1.5 crore. At present 915 connections have been extended

by 18.81 kilometer long pipe line. Four roadside supply points were damaged in absence of proper maintenance for about one year.

When contacted, the Water Supervisor of Sirajganj Municipality told The Daily Star that out of targeted revenue amounting to Taka 50,000 only 40,000 per month can be realised. Monthly expenses for supply of water stand at Tk 57,000 which include power bills, staff salary and system maintenance. Power bills amounting to Tk five lakh remain unpaid. The Sirajganj Supply Office, of Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPD) have been issuing reminders to pay arrear power bills of water supply which could not be paid due to fund shortages.

The water supply network of Sirajganj Municipality is under the scheme of 12 town water development project.



SYLHET Principal of Madan Mohan Collage recently handed over 200 mosquito nets to the DC for distribution in the malaria hit areas. — Star photo

# The traditional way

From Ashit Chowdhury

SIRAJGANJ, June 17: A peculiar weighing system is followed at Sthal bazar in Chowhali thana, locally known as the 'Pakrashi Weight'.

It is learnt that Pakrashi family was the zamindars of Sthal area during British rule in Chowhali thana, situated in the southern part of Sirajganj and to the western part of Manikganj districts.

With passage of time, the Pakrashi left the erstwhile East Pakistan. Devastating erosion of Jamuna washed away all the buildings and establishments of the Pakrashi zamindars. When in power, the zamindars introduced a

peculiar system of weight. Normally, one seer was counted in 80 tolas. But 'Pakrashi' weight means one seer is equal to 320 tolas which is four times higher than usual seer.

The government has introduced metric system of weight but 'Pakrashi' weight is still followed in the Sthal bazar under Chowhali thana.

The sellers, however, claim price accordingly. The system is followed by all without any questions. When contacted, some aged villagers told this correspondent that they are upholding their tradition only.