

# Extensive pest attack hits betel leaf output

**RAJSHAHI, Sept 20:** Betel leaf production is facing serious self-back due to extensive pest attacks in Rajshahi.

Betel-leaves worth crores of taka have already been destroyed by pests in four thanas of Rajshahi district, according to unofficial and official sources.

Rajshahi is a district which grows huge amount of betel leaf of best quality every year which are sent to other districts of the country. Betel leaf is one of the main cash crops of the district.

According to official sources, there are about 45,000 'Baras' (betel-leaf garden) in the district — 12,000 in Mohanpur, 10,000 in Durgapur, 12,000 in Bagmara and 6,000 in Foba thanas this year including new and old ones.

There are also a few 'Baras' in other thanas of the district.

Official sources informed that about 25,000 betel-leaf gardens, out of the total, had been seriously affected by a disease called, 'Doga Potcha' (rotting of the tip of the stem). The disease cannot be treated or

From Our Correspondent

controlled by pesticides, sources said.

It is learnt that a black spot at first appears on the stem which extends slowly to the adjacent areas and ultimately the stem decomposes.

Gardens after gardens are being attacked by the disease and

## Housewife ends her life

**From Our Correspondent**

**KUSHTIA, Sept 20:** Sabana Khatun, 20, wife of Abidul village Dusand under Khoksa thana committed suicide by taking poison on Sunday last.

She was rushed to Khoksa Thana Health Complex but she expired before getting any medical aid. Cause of her suicide could not be known but villagers said that she committed suicide due to family feud. She was married to Abidul, 18 months ago.

An unnatural death case has been registered with Khoksa police station in this connection.

the betel-leaf trees are being destroyed.

It is learnt that a Bara mostly comprises of one to three bighas of land and a 'Bara' of one bigha costs at least Taka 5,000. In that consideration, the damage caused by the pest attacks has already amounted to about Taka 12.5 crore.

A farmer earns at least Tk 30,000 from a 'Bara' of one bigha land and in that context the farmers will lose an additional amount of about Taka 75 crore this year.

Official sources say that the 'Doga Potcha' disease is a self-limiting disease which is spontaneously recovered after reaching the peak point of infectivity and pathogenicity.

The sources see that the disease has reached its peak point and will now slowly disappear. In that case, they hope, some betel leaf trees will revive and develop new buds from their remaining alive lower part of the stem. Thus, the loss of production will be compensated to some extent, they added.

# If proposed substitute highway built Distance between Dhaka and Sylhet will be reduced by 75 km

**From Our Correspondent**

**MOULVIBAZAR, Sept 20:** Distance between capital city Dhaka and divisional headquarter Sylhet will be reduced by 75 kilometre if the proposed substitute highway implemented.

The Sylhet-Dhaka highway now running via Bhairab, Sarail Biswaroad, Madhabpur, now running via Bhairab, Sarail Biswaroad, Madhabpur, Sayestaganj, Srimongal, Moulvibazar and Sherpur. According to the blue print of the substitute highway, it will run through Bhairab, Sarail Biswaroad, Nasirnagar, Kalauk, Habigonj, Nabigonj and Sherpur.

The proposed substitute Dhaka-Sylhet highway has two parts. One part will be started from Sarail Biswaroad to Habigonj via Nasirnagar and Kalauk. Another part will start from Habigonj to Sherpur via Nabigonj. The said first part need major development while the last one is already under normal development programme.

The length of Sarail Biswaroad-Habigonj part of the proposed highway is about 40 kilometres. 20 kilometre road under this part needs to be asphalted work while rest 20 kilometre is already pucca. This 20 kilometre which needed pucca work are situated at 17 kilometre on Fandauk to Kalauk and 3 kilometre on Kalauk to Habigonj. Besides this, three medium and small size bridges — Kaliadara bridge on Habigonj-Kalauk portion, Fandauk bridge on Kalauk-Nasirnagar portion and Kunda bridge on Nasirnagar-Sarail portion of the proposed highway needs to be constructed. If Sarail Biswaroad-Habigonj portion of the proposed highway is implemented, distance between Dhaka and Habigonj district headquarter will be re-

duced by 40 kilometres.

On the other hand, Habigonj to Sherpur portion, the last part of the proposed Dhaka-Sylhet highway needs minor development. This portion needs only wideness work. If this second part is implemented, the proposed Dhaka-Sylhet substitute highway will be ready for service. With the completion of Sarail Biswaroad to Habigonj and Habigonj to Sherpur portions of the highway, the Dhaka-Sylhet distance will be reduced by 75 kilometre.

It is gathered that, the proposed Dhaka-Sylhet substitute highway was in the blue print during the construction of Syl-

het-Dhaka present highway. But it was Nurul Ameen, the then chief minister of the East Pakistan, who amended the main blue print of the highway and reportedly diverted it to the present way as his village home was Shabajpur on present Dhaka-Sylhet highway.

With the implementation of the proposed Dhaka-Sylhet substitute highway, the Dhaka-Sylhet distance not only will be reduced but also time of journey, fuel consumption of vehicles will be reduced and traffic jam at Srimongal and Moulvibazar towns will be removed and the neglected road communication of Habigonj district will be improved.

## 3 women rescued after exchange of fire for over an hour in CHT

**From CHT Correspondent**

**DIGHINALA (Khagrachhari), Sept 20:** Security forces have here rescued three tribal women from the den of the tribal insurgents and recovered uniforms, tents, blankets and other used up things on September 11 last after exchange of fire for about one hour and a half hour between both the sides at Baluchhora in Dighinala thana of the district, according to a late official report.

The rescued were identified as Sabita Chakma, 27, Niharini Chakma, 23 and Durgalini Chakma, 25. They were later handed over to local tribal leaders for sending them to their near and dear ones, officials said.

The tribal insurgents would allegedly use the captives as comfort women, human shields in the bush warfare confronting the

security forces and some other purposes against the will of the captives, security forces quoted the rescued as saying.

The victims were allegedly collected from different places in Khagrachhari hill district at gunpoint.

The security forces while on a routine patrol at Baluchhora hill of Zarulchhari in Dighinala thana of the district came under attack of the tribal insurgents with gun fire on September 11 in the evening when the former responded with fire.

After an exchange of fire for about one and a half hour the tribal insurgents were compelled to retreat leaving the captives and belongings in the den which was almost damaged in the firing, sources from the security forces added.

## Power system loss increases to 25 pc in Comilla

**COMILLA, Sept 20:** Electricity system loss has increased to 25 per cent from 20 per cent in Comilla Bidyut Samity-2 due to illegal use of power, reports UNB.

Comilla Pali Bidyut Samity has been formed covering Sadar, Burichang, Brahmanpara, Chowdhagram, Laksham and Nangolkot. There are some 14,000 subscribers in these six thanas.

Electricity is mostly being illegally used by Fatepur, Medda, Nurpur, Dhalua and Mokra unions of Nangolkot thana, it was alleged.

It was learnt that officials and other employees were assaulted by the unruly villagers when they tried to snap illegal lines.

Meanwhile, three employees were injured by the villagers of Gamodda village of Mokra union when they detected some illegal lines.

Another message adds: Police arrested 79 people in the district on various charges on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Of them, 47 were arrested in QR case, 20 in CR case and 12 in regular case.

## Electrification programme undertaken

From Our Correspondent

**CHUADANGA, Sept 20:** The Chuadanga Pali Bidyut Samity (PBS) has taken up a massive programme to erect 180 kilometre electric lines in four thanas of Chuadanga district during the current financial year at a total cost of over 20 crore taka.

The thanas of the district are Chuadanga sadar, Alamdanga, Damurhuda and Jibannagar.

According to an official source, of the total area 50 kilometres will be erected in Chuadanga sadar thana, 20 kilometres in Alamdanga thana, 70 kilometres in Damurhuda thana and 40 kilometres in Jibannagar thana.

According to local PBS sources, a total of 160 kilometre electric lines were erected in four thanas of Chuadanga district during the last financial year under its electrical network, of which 73 kilometres electric lines were erected in Chuadanga sadar thana, 18 kilometres in Alamdanga thana, 23 kilometres in Damurhuda thana and 54 kilometres in Jibannagar thana.

It may be noted here that Chuadanga Pali Bidyut Samity has so far provided electricity to 184 villages out of 450 villages of the four thanas of the district under its electrical network.

It may be noted here that the Pali Bidyut Samity Chuadanga has so far provided electricity connections to 15,620 houses, irrigations schemes, small industries and shops of the four thanas of the district.

The PBS has so far erected 867 kilometre lines in the district of which 780 kilometre lines have been electrified. The electricity supply work by the PBS in the rural areas of the district are now going on in full swing through its two electricity supply sub-stations, like Alamdanga and Jibannagar.

# Loadshedding of electricity reaches its peak in Sylhet Division

From Staff Correspondent

**SYLHET, Sept 20:** Frequent loadshedding of electricity has made the life of common people of Sylhet Division miserable during the last few months.

The situation has turned worse due to the severe heat-wave prevailing in the region. It may be pointed out that, Sylhet has been experiencing the country's highest temperature for the last few days. Sylhet, as well as Dhaka city recorded the highest temperature of 37.5 degree celsius on the 16th September. It was highest during the last 36 years, official source said.

The frequent electricity failure has badly hit the students, employees in the offices and businessmen community. Besides, the small and big industries are also suffering much

due to the prevailing power supply situation throughout the division. Irrigation to the agricultural lands is also being suffered greatly in many areas of the Habiganj, Sunamganj, Moulvibazar and Sylhet districts in this peak season of farming. The poor and marginal farmers in general have been facing a serious economic hardship following a

failure of a good part of the crop in the last season and the high prices of agricultural inputs.

The people in general throughout the division seemed to be very much annoyed due to the prevailing irregularity in power supply as the total generation of power in the region is much more than the genuine demand. It may be stated here that, 1 total of 140 Megawatt power is being produced in the three power generation stations of Power Development Board (PDB) in Sylhet division.

It includes, 25 Megawatt from the Shajibazar Power Station against its production capacity of 50 megawatts, 92 Megawatt from the 90-Megawatt combined cycle power plant at Fenchuganj, 23 Megawatt from the 20 Megawatt power station. Whereas the greater Sylhet has got a total demand of 80 to 85 Megawatt power during the peak hour, sources said. The demand of Sylhet District stands at only 39 Megawatt.

An official source when contacted said, about 20 to 25 Megawatt power is being shedded a day now in the Sylhet Division against its demand of 85 megawatt. He however said, the whole country is now experiencing acute load-shedding of electricity. Though the generation of power is almost satisfactory in the Kumargaon and Fenchuganj power stations, it is poor in the Shajibazar power station, he said. It is now producing only 25 megawatt against the capacity of producing 50 megawatt a day. Due to the worn out condition of the plant, it can not run well, he said. Kumargaon and Fenchuganj stations are producing even more than their capacities, the source added.

The source further informed that, the said quantity of power is being shedded every day in Sylhet. As per direction of higher authorities to meet the demand of the National Grid.

Meanwhile, different local organisations and district units of political parties have organised meetings and processions to protest the frequent load-shedding of electricity in greater Sylhet region for the last few months. They called upon the authorities concerned to take effective measures for meeting the sufferings of the people in general, especially the students and businessmen immediately. Otherwise, larger movement would be launched, they asserted.

The Sylhet district unit of Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal day before yesterday gathered the office of Superintending Engineer of PDB in Sylhet and handed over a memorandum to him to press the demand. The Juba Dal activists also staged a 3-hour sit-in in front of the office, after they brought out a procession and held a rally. The speakers in the rally called upon the PDB officials to stop frequent load-shedding, otherwise, they would call for a day long hartal on September 22, the speakers asserted.

The Sylhet district unit of Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis and Jago Sylhet, a local organisation also brought out separate processions and held protest meetings against the frequent load-shedding of electricity in the Sylhet division. The electricity is produced much more than the demand, the speakers said.



SYLHET: Different organisations (top) Sylhet unit of Khelafat Majlis, (middle) Jago Sylhet, (bottom) Jatiyatabadi Jubadali, brought out separate procession demanding immediate stoppage of frequent load-shedding of electricity in the district. — Star photo

# Fearing eruption of clash between Bangalees & Paharis Many offices, important business establishments remain closed

From AKM Zahoorul Huq

**RANGAMATI, Sept 20:** The over all life in Baghaichhari and Langadu thana in the district has become jeopardised due to mistrust and misunderstanding prevailing between tribals and non-tribals as well as the enforcement of the boycott programme announced by the Parbatya Nagorik Parishad on September 14 following the massacre of 33 woodcutters in Charakhali of Baghaichhari thana on September 9 stepped up by the tribal insurgents.

The apparently confined tribals have been taking supply of the life saving drugs and other extremely essential commodities from the nearby security force camps and bases. The Thana Nirbahi Officer (TNO) of Baghaichhari thana, Tazul Islam told The Daily Star this morning over telephone. The law and order situation is under control of the administration, Tazul added.

"I am optimistic that the mistrust and misunderstanding working adverse to amity between tribals and non-tribals will be removed very soon as

the negotiation already taken in progressing fast," TNO said.

One offices of BKB Baghaichhari branch has been keeping its branch open, but no transaction is taking place as no service seekers arrived there. The other staff are also keeping themselves absent from attending the duty, witnesses said.

The distressed mother of the thana are not getting the supply of their VGD grains, allotted for the months of July and August, 1996, which has been issued by the TNO as the LSD is kept closed as the officer in-charge

and other staff abandon it immediately after the Churakhali massacre on September 9 causing immense sufferings to the hapless mothers, sufferers alleged.

Project implementation office and project office of Rubber Plantation are also left off by the concerned officials, it was learnt.

Plying of river-crafts was also suspended in Marishya-Baghaihat route following the controversial abduction of Kalpana Chakma on June 11 night which is not yet restored making the life of that locality

miserable.

Tribal students of different institutions in Baghaichhari and Langadu thana are keeping themselves absent in attending the schools and colleges as well as the tribal employees are also absenting themselves in the offices following the Churakhali incident, officials said.

Tribals are yet to start coming in the bazaars and public places in Langadu and Baghaichhari thana, as they are still afraid of security, said Mohammad Shah Alam, Chairman of Mainyamukh Union Parishad.

## Sarbahara Party leader held

**From Staff Correspondent**

**BARISAL, Sept 20:** Jhalakathi police arrested Siraj Khondoker, a leader of Sarbahara Party (Zia group) recently.

Police said, Siraj was arrested from the house of Motilal Sil of Uttar Manpasha village of Jhalakathi district in the dead of night while he was playing cards with his two other associates, Sankar Sil and Rustam Ali. They were also detained.

Siraj was wanted for a long time for several cases.



MAGURA Traps to catch fish is being transported by rickshaw van. Rickshaw van is the only mode of transporting goods in the interior of the district. — Star photo

## Hashish seized

From Our Correspondent

**GAIBANDHA, Sept 20:** Gaibandha circle of Narcotics and Liquor Department recovered two and half kilograms of hashish after launching a raid at village Badiakhali under sadar thana recently.

On getting a secret information, a contingent of said department together with police personnel raided Nurulganj market under Gaibandha sadar thana and caught red handed two persons namely Abdul Aziz and Nur Mohammad of village Gajabari under Fulchhari thana. They also recovered two and half kg hashish from the possession of arrested persons. The price of hashish was estimated at Tk 10,000. The accused persons were removed to custody. A case was filed with Gaibandha sadar thana.

Another news adds, BDR personnel of Gobindaganj camp in a recent drive recovered smuggled Indian sugar and other items worth about Tk 1.50,000 at Mokamotla checkpoint on September 7. Seized items were later handed over to Customs and Excise Department.

## Attack on journalists condemned

From CHT Correspondent

**RANGAMATI, Sept 20:** Rangamati Press Club in a meeting condemned the heinous attempt stepped up on two local journalists allegedly by a group of terrorists led by a timber trader of Wednesday night at Bonarapa in the town while they were on way to press club after a professional assignment.

The meeting chaired by AKM Maqsood Ahmed, president of the press club demanded immediate arrest of the criminals and their punishment for assaulting the professional journalists. A case was lodged with Rangamati Kotwali thana in the connection this morning.

# Severe power disruption cripples life in Sirajganj

From Our Correspondent

**SIRAJGANJ, Sept 20:** Power disruption in Sirajganj district specially in the thana level distribution system have reached to the highest rate causing immense sufferings to the consumers and affecting production in the industrial units as well.

It was learnt that power disruption in the district have turned serious. Everyday power supply remains suspended for about six hours in Sirajganj town and about 12 hours in the thana level distribution system. Shutdown is made everyday at 6 pm and supply resumes at 11 pm which comes to no use of the domestic consumers of thana areas.

Due to frequent disruption of power production in the industrial units including handloom oriented cottage industries have fallen considerably. Besides, production in saw mills yarn processing mills and yarn finishing mills also face deadlock as power supply remains stopped for hours together. While visited some handloom oriented areas in Belkuchi, Chowhali and Shahzadpur thanas recently, the commercial and domestic consumers alleged that the local revenue office of Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) do not pay heed to the complaints of the consumers. On the other hand, the Resident Engineer of Belkuchi PDB office told The Daily Star that they have nothing to do except collecting revenue and to monitor maintenance works. The transformer of Mukundaganj bazar, the largest business centre of Belkuchi thana sadar, remains inoperative for about three months which is not replaced.

The bazar banik samity have submitted ultimatum to the PDB authority for replacing the transformer by a new one within seven days.

When contacted, the Executive Engineer of Sirajganj PDB told that extreme short supply of electricity from national grid

line have created such inconveniences. He said that out of required 14 megawatt, only seven to eight megawatt of power is supplied from the grid from which about three megawatt is kept reserved for Sirajganj Pali Bidyut Samity. The rest quantity is quite insufficient to meet the minimum requirement of the district.

Meanwhile the authorities of Sirajganj Pali Bidyut Samity (PBS) have started surveying the supply network of Belkuchi thana from September 15. The sources said that Belkuchi area will be taken up under PBS supply network.

The suffering consumers of electricity have urged upon the authorities concerned to take necessary steps to immediately stop power disruption in the district.

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## Smuggled goods worth Tk 2 lakh seized, 5 held including Indian citizens

From Our Correspondent

**CHAPAINAWABGANJ, Sept 20:** Parding two different place one in the river Padma and another at Hayatpur and Telkupi areas the BDR personnel of 26 Rifle Battalion recovered smuggled goods worth Tk two lakh and arrested 3 Indian citizens and two alleged Bangladeshi smugglers on 12 September.

The recovered goods are — 24000 kg of Indian sugar worth Tk 1 lakh 12 thousand 7 hundred 20, 141 bottles of wine and 50 bottles of phenylidyl syrup worth Tk 80 thousand 75. The Indian nationals who were arrested by the BDR are Md Babur Rahman, Nemohammad and Abdur Razzak all from Raghunathpur thana under Murshidabad district and the arrested Bangladeshis are Md Nasir Ali and Md Hossainur

## 10 injured in clashes

From Our Correspondent

**CHAPAINAWABGANJ, Sept 20:** At least 10 people were injured two critically at two clashes between the rival groups at Dhorbona and Dadanchauk under Shibganj thana on 8 and 13 September respectively.

It is known, the clash at Dhorbona ensued from a very trifling matter and resulted in a violent clash reportedly between Panchu member and Ashraf groups. At least 7 people were injured one critically. Critically injured Mithu is under treatment at Nawabganj Sadar Hospital.

According to the eye witnesses, at least 7 houses were ransacked and goods of about 3 lakh taka were looted and about 2 hundred bombs were blasted. Both groups have filed cases against each other with Shibganj Thana Police arrested Shahjahan and Montu from the spot.

## Angry youths attack local power supply centre

From Our Correspondent

**JHALAKATHI, Sept 20:** A group of angry youths attacked local power supply centre damaging files and necessary papers recently to protest the load shedding in the area for a long time, reports UNB.

Sources said at least 150 agitated people went to the centre in a procession in the morning and ransacked the centre by throwing stones.

A number of officials were also assaulted and two motor bikes standing on the road were damaged.

An engineer said that the officials with dire consequences in the protest of their failure to regularise power supply within 24 hours. They said they will attack the office and disrupt the supply.