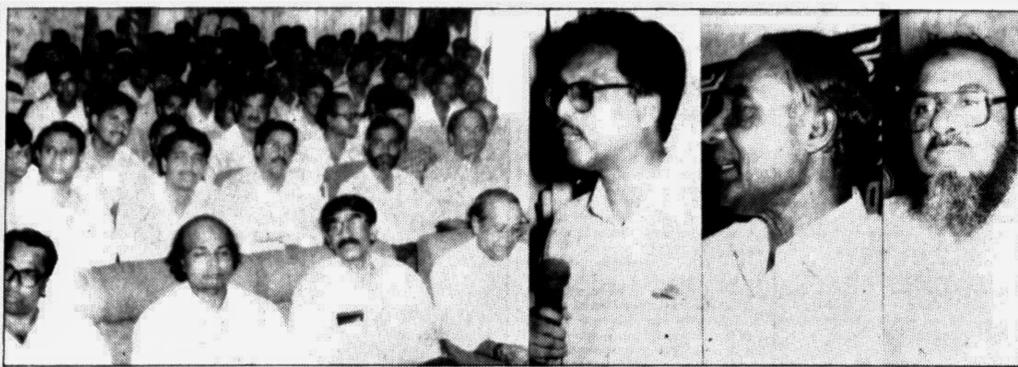


**BCL-Chhatra Samaj activists clash: 9 injured**

**From Our Correspondent**  
**GAIBANDHA, Sept 29:** Nine persons sustained injuries in a clash between BCL and Chhatra Samaj activists after chasing and counter chasing each other over the issue of corrupt practice in distributing VGD card for the destitute women on September 22 at Palashbari thana.

Protesting alleged corruption in distributing VGD cards at Palashbari Thana Awami League Palashbari unit first launched a meeting at local shaheed miner on September 20 and later brought out a protest procession carrying brooms demanding punishment of corrupt persons.

On the next day, as a counter programme, JF supported student wing Chhatra Samaj brought out a procession carrying shoes on September 21. On that issue next day BCL and Chhatra Samaj restored to chasing and counter chasing using lethal weapons. At one stage a clash ensued between the groups in which nine persons sustained injuries.



**RAJSHAHI:** Engineers' Institution, Bangladesh (IEB) Rajshahi unit recently organised a seminar on "Preparation of Integrated Water Management Plan for Bangladesh" at its premises. Dr Ainun Nishat, Professor in Water Resources Engineering Department of BUET presented the key-note, while president of IEB Dr. M Anwarul Azim was the chief guest. The seminar was presided over by Tarek Uddin Mia, president of IEB, Rajshahi unit.

**Arsenic may have been carried through rivers, experts suspect**

**From Our Correspondent**  
**PABNA, Sept 29:** The Health Department here is taking a long time in arriving at a final conclusion as to the real situation with regard to the arsenic in water. Many people have already died while many others have long developed symptoms related to excessive arsenic consumption. Treatment could not be started as yet as the official detection was still in the process.

Dr AKM Fazlul Haque, Civil Surgeon, Pabna, told The Daily Star that through official channel, samples of water from suspected tube-wells both from Bera and Ishurdi thanas were sent to Dhaka for examination but the results were yet to be received. But, he said, the Department of Public Health Engineering of Pabna also sent samples of water from 16 tube-wells within Bera Pourashava to their Rajshahi office and it was found out that in the water collected from eleven out of suspected 16 tube-wells, arsenic content was much higher than the quantum consumable by the human beings. All those tube-wells were already sealed off although Health Department from Dhaka were yet to find out the actual position. He admitted that all the symptoms that were being found among the patients who fell sick after consuming water from those tube-wells were quite similar to the patients, drinking water containing arsenic.

When asked as to how the arsenic was being carried into tubewell water, the Civil Surgeon expressed his suspicion that about two years back, arsenic was detected from a number of tubewells in several districts of West Bengal situated on the bank of the river Padma and hence it was being apprehended that in Bangladesh too, through the river Padma, arsenic might have been carried into the underground water of tubewells.

In this case, he suspected, that this might have happened in Ishurdi thana, situated on the bank of the river Padma — not far off from Murshidabad district of West Bengal.

The Department of Public Health Engineering of Pabna has taken samples of water from as many as 60 tubewells within Paksey Zone and also from the waste water of North Bengal Paper Mills and from the river Padma but they were yet to receive the test results. The Executive Engineer of the Public Health Engineering, Pabna, disclosed the above and said that the findings of the test were expected soon.

But the question is with regard to the Bera Pourashava where there is no link with the Padma. Bera is situated on the bank of the river Hurasagar, a tributary of the river Jamuna having no link whatsoever with West Bengal geographically. When arsenic is found in Bera, it can be suspected that the Jamuna also carries excessive arsenic and in that case, several thanas of the Strajganj district.

Meanwhile, while talking to this correspondent a number of patients from several villages, namely, Sahapur, Pakuria, Nalgari, Naodapara, Char Rappur etc, told that being attacked with this "unknown disease" at least eleven patients died during last seven to eight years while hundreds were affected. Several patients were just on the verge of death, they said, on the basis of their non-medical but practical experiences gathered throughout years.

When asked about when exactly his department came to know the situation in Ishurdi thana, the Civil Surgeon told that only in July last, when Dr Saiful Kabir of the Dhaka Community Hospital came to Paksey in connection with a Health Camp, he suspected and informed him and since then, i.e. only two months back, the matter came to his knowledge. The Civil Surgeon added that he spent no time thereafter and took samples of water, asked people not to use water from the suspected tubewells. The patients for last several years went to the local doctors, but they failed to detect as the disease was not of common nature to them.

Taslima Khatoon died of this disease. Her son Mukhtar, 8, was also awaiting death, according to Manik of village Naodapara. The condition of his father, step-mother was also not very well. A family is going to perish. Besides the doctors, they also tried kabiraj, homeopathy and peers but no result, Manik lamented.

Two brothers, Helal, 20, and Belal, 16, and their father Maqbul Biswas, 57, fell seriously ill and were now in a critical stage. Mosharrar 28, another son of Maqbul Biswas, also feels the symptoms of early stage of attack. No medicine is working in their case too, told Mosharrar.

Akhteruzzaman, 30, of village Nalgari said that his mother Abeda Khatoon, 60, and elder brother Fazlul Huque already died of liver cancer caused suspectedly by drinking water disproportionately containing in tubewell water. Besides, with symptoms of disease caused by arsenic consumption, his bhabi's Baby, 25, father Mojibar Rahman 68, nephew Kanak 13, and sister Jahanara, 19, also died during the last two and a half years. One Moslem Uddin, 36, a labourer of Paksey North Bengal Paper Mills has been attacked by arsenic poisoning as has been told by a doctor of Calcutta, he said.

The Public Health officials told that they observed a peculiarity in Bera pourashava area. It is believed that when water is found to contain arsenic in any tubewell, the layer is to be considered as contaminated. But in Bera it was found that people drinking tubewell water in a year developed no symptom although the family of the next-door neighbouring house, drinking tubewell water from the same area were badly affected suspectedly drinking water containing arsenic.

**One awarded life-term for murder**

**From Our Correspondent**  
**KISHOREGANJ, Sept 29:** Renu alias Mumtazuddin was awarded life-term imprisonment with a fine of Taka 3000 or in default to suffer rigorous imprisonment for six months more, court sources said.

Six persons were also acquitted of the charge. They are Nur Ali, Abdul alias Abdul Hye, Abus Sattar, Anis, Genu and Menu.

According to the prosecution, on the night of June 18, 1983, Akkas Ali of village Kamaliarchar in Kishoreganj sadar thana was killed. His body was recovered from a pond near his house the following day. Police later took Renu into custody who confessed his guilt to the Magistrate. Police after investigation submitted charge-sheet against seven persons.

After examining the witnesses and records, Additional District and Session Judge, Second Court of Kishoreganj, Md. Mazrul Ahasan awarded Renu the aforesaid punishment and acquitted six others on September 19.

**Daughter killed in road mishap, mother escapes, hospitalised**

**From Our Correspondent**  
**JHENIDAH, Sept 29:** A middle-aged woman was crushed to death and her mothers, received severe injuries near Jhenidah Cadet College Thursday afternoon, according to eye-witnesses.

Jhenidah police said, when both the women were trying to get into a bus bound for Kushtia, a truck from the opposite direction crushed the daughter to death on the spot. Her mother was rushed to Jhenidah Sadar hospital in critical condition.

The identity of the victims could not be known. No case was registered with police so far.

**Fake police constable held**

**From CHT Correspondent**  
**KHAGRACHHARI, Sept 29:** Authorities have rounded up two persons alongwith a fake police constable and recovered 600 grams of hemp Thursday from two different places in the district in separate raids.

The jawans of Khagrachhari Army region held up an alleged fake police constable while moving headquarters area Thursday morning. The arrested was identified as Abdul Wahid, 24, son of Hazi Monu Miah of village Nabinagar Paschimpara in Nabinagar thana of Brahmanbaria district.

Wahid was handed over the Khagrachhari Kotwali thana police for taking further necessary action.

Meanwhile, the Panchhari thana police has arrested Karun Mohan Das, 35 from Sartapar in the thana and recovered 600 grams of hemp from his possession in the early hours of yesterday in a raid conducted in a tip off, a police source said.

The arrested of both the cases were sent to Khagrachhari court yesterday for trial. Separate cases were lodged in these connection with Khagrachhari Kotwali and Panchhari thana police.

**Mother of two gang raped**

**From Our Correspondent**  
**KISHOREGANJ, Sept 29:** A 29-year-old woman, abandoned by her husband and mother of two children was allegedly gang-raped in broad daylight at village Sathari in Bajitpur thana on September 21.

Police sources and witnesses said, Rina Rishi Das used to earn her livelihood by selling betel-leaves and betel-nuts from door to door. On the day of incident a gang of numbering six confined her forcibly in the house of Angur Mia of the village when she reached there and raped her on after another. She was later recovered in an unconscious state by the villagers.



**FARIDPUR:** Local pourasava Chairman Fazlul Kabir Chan exchanging views regarding poisoning of tubewell water by arsenic in the town at the poura auditorium early this week. A total number of 15 suspected affected victims are also seen during the session.

**Scarcity of seed may affect jute production**

**From Our Correspondent**  
**GOPALGANJ, Sept 29:** Jute production in all the five thanas of the Gopalganj district may fall significantly this year due to price hike and non-availability of necessary high yielding variety seeds.

The thanas are Gopalganj sadar thana Kasiani thana, Muksedpur thana, Kotalipara thana and Tungipara thana.

According to District Agriculture Extension Department sources, only 52 per cent of the land was brought under Tosa variety of jute while only 20 per cent was brought under local variety.

Some farmers said they procured jute seeds from local markets at an exorbitant price but the seeds were of poor quality.

They also alleged that they did not get jute seeds of either Tosa or local variety from local BADC office.

When contacted local BADC office, some officials said that they got only one ton of Tosa seeds as against the allotment of eight tons. The source said that they received one ton of seeds on April 24 when the sowing season was almost over. As a result, only 500 kg was sold and the rest 400 kg is lying unsold in the stores.

Local farmers also alleged that a sizable quantity of seeds are being returned to the authority as those were not supplied in time.

Official source said about 5013 hectares of land out of 11,723 hectares have been brought under the Tosa variety and only 550 hectares of land out of 1200 were cultivated under local variety in Gopalganj district.

In Gopalganj sadar thana, Tosa and local variety was cultivated on about 764 hectares of land out of 3630 hectares in Muksedpur thana Tosa and local variety was cultivated in 3456 hectares of land out of 5180 hectares in Kasiani thana Tosa and local variety was cultivated in about 1250 hectares of land out of 4200 hectares, in Kotalipara thana Tosa and local variety was cultivated in 33 hectares of land out of 900 hectares and in Tungipara thana Tosa and local variety was cultivated in about 50 hectares of land out of 1813 hectares.

The cultivation target for Tosa, in Gopalganj district was on 5013 hectares of land while local variety on 550 hectares of land. But cultivation was only on 3673 and 295 hectares of land respectively.

On the other hand about 50 to 80 per cent of local farmers used Indian variety of jute seeds buying them from black markets between Tk 70 and Tk 150 per kg.

**Light of education yet to reach remote Pabna villages**

**From Our Correspondent**  
**PABNA, Sept 29:** The light of non-formal of formal primary education is yet to reach thousands of children in two char — villages, Char Bhawanipur and Kashchar Dhobrakole, surrounded by the river Padma from all sides, within Pabna sadar thana. The two villages were hardly ever visited by anyone in the administration, either of the thana or of the district-level.

Char Bhawanipur and Kashchar Dhobrakole have got a total area of 12 square kilometres with a total population of 12,000. These two thickly populated villages were created when shoal appeared about 25 years back and gradually, people started building their homes, planting trees.

They are permanently locked by the river Padma. The inhabitants of the two villages settled here when their original homes elsewhere were eroded by the turbulent and what the inhabitants call 'treacherous' river Padma. The curse of erosion is virtually still their permanent companion.

These river-locked-people also find their houses, mosques, and crop lands inundated almost every year when flood comes in once, twice or thrice almost every year.

The inhabitants adjacent to the areas of the neighbouring district of Kushtia have to depend solely upon boats for their movement, outside mainly needed for marketing their agricultural products being the only means of their livelihood. Catching fish from the river is their common pursuit.

For 12,000 population, there is only one non-government primary school. Wheat is distributed against enrollment of their names on registrar of the said school under recently introduced "Food for Education Scheme." Hence, after their enrollment none asks them to attend the classes. The teachers are also not found to attend the school except on the days otherwise needed for.

"Education does not attract us. We find no utility of it either. It does not pay us nor does it in anyway help us build the lives of our children." Gafur Shaikh, aged about 45, of village Char Bhawanipur told while talking to The Daily Star recently when this correspondent visited the flood-affected villages.

Gafur Shaikh surprisingly defended the teachers of the school by saying "They are unable to earn their livelihood in this service as this is a non-government institution. They are too poor as the system of payment is irregular. Hence, they become compelled to engage themselves in other jobs".

The teachers are also village 'matbars' who have also to settle the disputes among the villagers. They hardly go to police since it is very difficult for them to reach the thana. The mode of communication primarily stands on the way. Police also finds it extremely difficult to reach the two villages mainly for the same reason.

The situation of the two villages is also peculiar. Pabna is situated 20 kilometres to the north, Kushtia is situated 24 kilometres to the south and Rajbari is situated about 30 kilometres to the east. All these three towns are now headquarters of three separate districts.

People of Char Bhawanipur gave a new information. They are voters both of Pabna and Kushtia districts although geographically the village was under the territorial jurisdiction of Pabna district. Their names are enrolled in the voters lists of both the districts.

Replying to a question, they said that they cast their votes but sometimes in Pabna district and sometimes in Kushtia but not in both the districts simultaneously. The choice depends on the communication facility available during the time of election, they informed.

They further revealed that no field worker of the Family Planning Department reached villages ever during the last three consecutive years. They have no modern latrine nor even any traditional latrine. Both men and women attend to their call of nature beside the bushes. Women generally go to these natural latrines in the night.

In the rainy seasons, they make some extra earning by catching 'hilsa' fishes from the river Padma quite in abundance and the 'Farihs' come to buy their catches. The Farihs then go to Pabna or Kushtia or Rajbari or Faridpur for marketing those fish with a big margin of profit. They earn in cash, highest in the year, during 'hilsa' catching season.

Electrification is quit unknown to them.

They are still far away from the advantages of modern life.



**SYLHET:** Badar Uddin Kamran, Chairman Sylhet Pourashava speaking as chief guest at the inaugural function of the first Sylhet divisional conference of city poura Karmachari Federation held on Tuesday. The function was also addressed by Shamsuddin Asalat, secretary of the federation, Abdul Latif Chowdhury and Khondaker Nazrul Islam, vice-presidents, Jamir Ali Khan, joint secretary general, Azharuddin Jahangir, Commissioner Sylhet Pourashava, Md Fazlur Rahman.

**Timbers worth Tk three lakh seized**

**From CHT Correspondent**  
**BANGALHALIA**  
**(Rangamati), Sept 29:** Jawans of 33 battalion of Bangladesh Rifles stationed at Bangalhalia in Rajasthali thana of the district have there recovered valuable teak timber worth over Taka three lakh and seized three trucks in this connection is a raid conducted Thursday night.

The recovered timbers along with the seized trucks were handed over to Kaptai Pulpwood Plantation Division for taking further necessary action.

Earlier, on September 17 last the Divisional Forest Officer of Kaptai Pulpwood Plantation Division, Nurun Nabi Mridha in a raid conducted on different places in Rajasthali thana of the district recovered about 500 cubic feet of valuable teak allegedly extracted allegedly from the government reserved forests of Chittagong Hill Tracks South Forest Division's Karnaphuli Forest Range territory, officials said.

**New HY variety of rice developed at BAU**

**AGRI-VARSITY (Mymensingh), Sept 29:** The Co-ordinated Genetic Research for Crop Improvement Project of the Department of Genetics and Plant Breeding under Bangladesh Agricultural University Research System (BAURES) of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) has succeeded in developing a new high yielding variety of rice, BAU 16. Prof Dr A K Pathway of the Department of Genetics & Plant Breeding has developed this variety from the cross between local Nizarsail and IR 578-175-2-2, according to a press release.

A ten-member Field Evaluation Team headed by the Additional Director (Field Operation Wing) of the Directorate of Agricultural Extension observed the field performance of BAU 16 in respect of different variety characteristics and yield during the growing season of 1992 and 1993 in 5/6 Agricultural Zones of the country and had recommended it to the Technical Committee of the National Seed Board (NSB) for approval in favour of this new HYV rice for transplanted aman season.

As a result the Technical Committee in its 29th meeting held on 30.6.96 recommended it to the National Seed Board. Consequently the NSB in its 36th meeting held on 22.8.96 released BAU 16 as BAUR 2 to be cultivated throughout the country as a transplanted aman variety.

The main characteristics of this variety is that the plant is deep green with erect flag leaf which remain green even after maturity for which sterility percentage is very low. Its grain is red in colour and attractive. The height of this variety is about 100 cm. It is reasonably immune or resistant to most of the normally occurring diseases and insect pests. It can be cultivated with minimum fertilizer as well as with minimum or no irrigation i.e. in rainfed condition. On an average it gives 4.5-5.5 ton yield per hectare. Moreover, it can be cultivated in late season (up to 15th September) i.e. it will be a suitable variety for the flood prone areas of the country.

**Students' rally demands degree exam centre**

**From Our Correspondent**  
**KUSHTIA, Sept 29:** Student of Khas Mathurapur Peoples College brought out a procession yesterday in support of their demand for introducing degree examination centre there.

BCL activists organised the demonstration and procession which paraded the main streets of Mathurapur bazar and later held a rally which was addressed among others by Rashedul Islam Biplove, Chairman, steering committee of central Bangabandhu Kishore Sangsad, Beni Sarkar and Lablu. The rally was presided over by college BCL president Shibli Sadik.

**Two RU officers made OSD**

**From Our Correspondent**  
**RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY, Sept 29:** Two officers of Rajshahi University (RU) were made Officers on Special Duty (OSD) on charge of alleged misappropriation of fund allotted for buying books of the University Central Library.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the RU Syndicate on Monday with Vice-Chancellor Prof Yusuf Ali in the chair.

The two officers were believed to have been involved in misappropriation of Tk 44 lakh of library fund sanctioned for buying new books, official sources said.

The misappropriation was detected in 1990 when three other officers were suspended. The district Anti-corruption Bureau had been investigating the case involving a total of 29 employees of the university.

The two officers, Assistant Registrar M Shamsuddin Haider and Section Officer M Mojibur Rahman, belonged to University Planning and Development office. Their duties were handed over to the Registrar office, official said.

Official source said, earlier one officer was made OSD and two other officials including the acting librarian were suspended.

Meanwhile, Officer and Employees Oikya Parishad brought out a rally in the campus protesting the Syndicate's decision.

**Passengers suffer as bus stand in bad shape**

**From Our Correspondent**  
**GOPALGANJ, Sept 29:** Bus passengers are facing untold sufferings due to bad shape of Kuadanga bus stand situated within Gopalganj Pourasava.

The everbusy bus stand needs immediate development as most of the buses and coaches from almost all the districts of southern Bangladesh make stoppages here. Over 200 buses ply through this bus stand to other district towns of the country including the capital city.

There is no electricity connection, no water supply system, no good sanitation system for the travelling bus passengers.

It is shocking that bus passengers have to collect tickets standing on the road as there is ticket collecting booths. The bus stand needs immediate earth filling works.

Gopalganj Pourasava earns an amount of Taka 4 lakh by collecting Taka 10 from each and every passing bus. But the poura authorities did not pay due attention to develop the bus stand though it is directly supe-

**Girl commits suicide**

**From Our Correspondent**  
**KISHOREGANJ, Sept 29:** A 15-year old girl committed suicide at village Rahampur in Nandail thana on September 20.

Police and family sources said, Melena, daughter of Asmat Ali, hanged herself from the branch of a tree with a rope in the evening. Earlier, mother of Melena rebuked her following which she went out of the house. She was later found hanging from a tree behind the house.