

News snaps

Honours course in Habiganj College

HABIGANJ, Dec 12: Habiganj Brindaban Government College has introduced honours courses in six subjects from the current academic (1998-99) session, reports UNB.

The subjects are Bangla, Philosophy, Management, Accounting, Botany and Zoology. College sources said the authorities had also sought permission from the National University to introduce honours in Political Science, Islamic History, Physics, Mathematics and Economics. But the NU authorities have initially given permission to open honours courses in the five subjects. In 1993, the college had introduced honours courses in Political Science, Philosophy and English, but after the 1947 partition the authorities put off the honours courses, depriving thousands of students of higher education.

School drop-outs shoot up

PANCHAGARH, Dec 12: The drop-out rate of school children in five thanas of Panchagarh district has shot up alarmingly due to stoppage of the Food for Education programme about five months ago, reports APB.

About 16,445 children of extremely poor families who were the beneficiaries of this programme have been so badly affected that about 15,000 of them are trying to do odd jobs or scrounging for food instead of attending classes. These children were chosen from among 1,43,270 in 625 government and non-government primary schools in five thanas because of dire poverty of their families. Each child used to get 16 kg of rice or wheat every month for attending classes under the programme which was initiated in 1993. From July this year, food allocation was stopped and the drop-out rate began to rise. Deputy Commissioner A F M Saiful Islam and District Primary Education Officer Md Afaruddin confirmed the suspension of food allocation by the government due to scarcity. They could not tell when the allocation would be resumed.

Separate incidents claim 2 lives

NARAYANGANJ, Dec 12: Two people were killed in separate incidents in Fatullah thana on Wednesday, reports UNB.

Police said Ahmadullah, 25, a rickshawpuller, was killed in a road accident on Dhaka-Narayanganj link road. In another incident, an unidentified youth was strangled to death by unknown assailants. His body was recovered from a printing press at Nagbari-Dewbhog the following day. Meanwhile, police arrested manager of the printing press, Riton, 23, in connection with killing.

Training programme of UP chairman

LALMONIRHAT, Dec 12: One day training programme of UP chairmen and members was held at Zilla Parishad auditorium on Wednesday, reports BSS.

Khan Foundation organised the training programme. Taslimuddin, ADM of Lalmonirhat, inaugurated the training programme as the chief guest on behalf of the deputy commissioner, Lalmonirhat. Aftab Hassan and Ataur Rahman, ADC (Gen) and ADC (Rev) respectively of Lalmonirhat, Amzad Hossain, TNO Lalmonirhat sadar, Shahidul Hossain of LGED, Lalmonirhat and Ruffath Solaiman, programme specialist of USAID were special guests. Prof Anwar Hossain of Dhaka University presented the keynote paper on the programme. Nine UP chairmen, 108 members of nine union parishads of Lalmonirhat sadar thana took part in the programme.

Bridge construction project undertaken

TANGAIL, Dec 12: Local Government Engineering Department, Tangail has taken a programme to construct a 51-meter long bridge on Bashail-Kawljani Road over Mohesha khal in Bashail thana, reports BSS.

The work will be done under Rural Development Project 14 Infrastructure, Tangail. Thana Engineering Department will supervise the work. Official sources said, the work will be completed within six months.

Foodgrains for distribution under VGF

BANDARBAN, Dec 12: A total of 224 tonnes of foodgrains, rice and wheat, were allocated by the government for distribution under vulnerable group feeding (VGF) programme for Bandarban district for the month of November, reports BSS.

An official source said, 14,000 families have been brought under VGF programme in this district. Bir Bahadur MP, chairman, Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB) visited Bandarban last week and distributed rice and wheat among 1,000 VGF card holders of two unions in Bandarban sadar and Ruangchhari thanas.

LGED undertakes 51 projects

FENI, Dec 12: A total of 51 projects have been taken up in the current fiscal year for construction and repair of bridges and culverts in the rural areas of Feni district, reports BSS.

According to Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) the government has sanctioned more than Taka 4.18 crore for implementation of the projects. Of the projects the largest one is the construction of a bridge over the river Silonia in Farshuram thana. The work of the projects will be completed by the middle of 1999.

Foundation stone laid

KAMALGANJ (Moulvibazar), Dec 12: Communications Minister Anwar Hossain said social and political stability has to be ensured for the national economic development, reports BSS.

The minister was addressing a public meeting here marking the foundation-stone laying ceremony of Taka 3.20 crore Dhalai Bridge. Whip Abdus Shahid and Hosne Ara Wahid MP, also addressed the meeting. The minister emphasised the need for developing the mentality to allow an elected government for functioning during its tenure uninterrupted. He also called upon the political parties for engaging themselves in the production-oriented politics in the best interest of the people. Hossain said Bangladesh could be developed as an affluent country by proper utilisation of its huge natural resources.

454 projects being implemented

SUNAMGANJ, Dec 12: Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad has directed the concerned officials to complete the maintenance work of the rural infrastructure, build the flood-affected houses and distributed relief materials among the vulnerable group feeding (VGF) card-holders within the scheduled time, reports BSS.

The minister was addressing the district infrastructural maintenance coordination committee meeting in the conference room of the Deputy Commissioner of Sunamganj district here. During the current fiscal, a total of 454 projects are being implemented in the district with an allocation of 869 tonnes of rice and wheat, the meeting was told. A total of Taka 18 lakh was distributed among the flood-affected families for building houses and 926 tonnes of rice and wheat were sanctioned for distribution among 57,900 VGF card-holders in the district.

Call to drive out illiteracy

TANGAIL, Dec 12: Abdul Kader Siddiqui, Bir Uttam, MP has called on the people to go ahead in education and efficiency, reports BSS.

The people of Bangladesh fought for independence in 1971 and now we have to work for driving out illiteracy, he added. Siddiqui was speaking at a function on Thursday at Nagbari Hasina Chowdhury High School. Abdul Latif Siddiqui MP also spoke on the occasion. Dr Ashraf Siddiqui presided over the function.

Wheat sanctioned under FWP

MANIKGANJ, Dec 12: The government has sanctioned 632 tonnes of wheat under food for works programme (FWP) for maintenance and repair of rural infrastructure in the seven thanas and one pourasava of the district in the current season, reports BSS.

A total of 358 projects are being implemented under the programme. The District Relief and Disaster Management Office sources said, a number of roads, culverts, educational and religious institutions damaged by this year's flood are being repaired under the programme. The programme has also provided employment opportunities for the rural poor including women.

Kilns posing threat to environment

NARAIL, Dec 12: Indiscriminate setting up of kilns in the district has been posing threat to the environment and decreasing the fertility of soil as well, reports UNB.

According to the local customs office, about 800 acres of land are being used for manufacturing bricks in Lohagara, Kalia and Sadar thanas. At least two crops were produced on those fields in every season in the past, but now it has become impossible to grow the same due to the adverse effect of kilns. As a result, a good number of farmers are incurring heavy loss as their crop fields turned into fallow lands. Finding no other alternatives, they have been compelled to lease out their lands to the kiln owners. It is learnt that coal is hardly used in brick-fields instead trees are being burnt indiscriminately threatening the ecological balance.

Pak army were massacred in Kushtia in 1971

From Fakhrun Nessa

KUSHTIA, Dec 12: Kushtia town was liberated on December 11, 1971 after nine months of Liberation War.

The brave people of Kushtia had to sacrifice very dearly for the liberation of our country. The reason of the Occupation Pakistan Army's wrath was attributed to the fact that Kushtia remained free for 16 days after March 29. Again it was finally liberated on December 11, 1971.

When on March 25 the Occupation Pakistani Forces took control of Kushtia, people of all walks of life decided to fight against them. People of greater Kushtia district under the leadership of Major Osman, head of the then EPR of Chuadanga started assault on the Occupation

Pakistan Army on the night of March 29 and defeated and annihilated all the soldiers of the enemy Army with the help of students and people of all walks of life. In this fight Abdul Momin, Zafarullah Khan Choudhury and 18 others were injured. They were sent to Krishnanagar Hospital in Nadia district of West Bengal for better treatment.

Those who fought in this battle are Abdul Momin, Abdul Hadi, Marfat Ali, Abdul Jalil, Daliluddin, Ziaul Bari Noman, Shahidul Islam Kiblu, Akkas Ali Manju, Bahauddin, Badsha, Ansar Commander Akhter, Sultan and Faruque.

The people of Kushtia kept the district liberated for 16 days. The day, the Pak Army re-

captured the town on April 17, 1971, they let loose a reign of terror. The whole town was totally burnt. The sky was overcast with smokes for days together. The Occupation Pakistan

Army wrought havoc both on land and on the people. The streets, lanes and by-lanes were littered with blood. In Kushtia town every house was affected. Some of the multi-storied buildings completely razed to the ground. Almost all shops were looted, burnt and damaged. In fact not a building in the town area was spared by the barbarous Pakistan Army who killed at least 40 thousand people. Ten thousand people were killed in Kushtia town only. Five lakh houses were burnt

and damaged and 15 lakh of people rendered homeless. The brute forces patrolled the town and gunned down each and every human being on sight. If anyone peeped through the window he became at once the target of rifle shot.

Ansar Ali, Entaz Ali, two prominent merchants of the town were shot dead within the compound of their residences. Rafique Ahmed, Abul Kashem, Hasan Fayez, Bulu and his brother Shamsul and all 17 members of the family of the owner of Kohinor Biscuit Factory were killed. The Occupation Pakistan Army damaged and set ablaze 80 per cent shops, 56 per cent residential houses, looted valuables worth Taka 10 crore and burnt property worth Taka 50 crore in Kushtia town only.

Pakistani forces then recaptured Chuadanga in the month of April and proceeded towards Meherpur.

Meanwhile, Bangladeshi jawans assembled at Baidanath Tala of Meherpur and the leaders of Awami League took oath of office of the interim government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh there. The functions were held in presence of hundreds of local and foreign journalists. The place was named as Mujibnagar and this was declared as the first capital of independent Bangladesh.

The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh constructed a national mausoleum at Mujibnagar in memory of the valiant freedom fighters who laid down their lives for the cause of the country.

Over 100 JP, BNP workers join AL

SATKHIRA, Dec 12: More than 100 leaders and workers of Jatiya Party and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) joined Bangladesh Awami League at a function held at Assasuni thana premises on Sunday, reports BSS.

State Minister for Relief and Disaster Management Talukdar Akhul Khaleque was present at the function as the chief guest.

Presided over by Dr Mukhlisur Rahman MP, President of Assasuni thana Awami League the function was addressed, among others, by Nurul Alam, Kanak Chandra, Nur Mohammad, Shahjan Ali and Rashed Sarwar Sheli.

Cultural workshop

KHULNA, Dec 12: Coordinator of Mass Culture Department of Proshika Abdur Rob has called upon the cultural organisations to play their due role to bring about development and create awareness at the grass root level of the society, reports UNB.

He was addressing as chief guest at a two-day cultural workshop at the Karitas auditorium here on Friday. Swapna Guha, Chief Executive of welfare organisation Rupantar presided over the meeting.

Rafiqul Islam Chowdhury, Deputy Director of divisional information office, Prof Susanta Sarker and Prof Shahadat Hossain also addressed the concluding session.

Youth kidnapped, murdered

JESSORE, Dec 12: A young man was kidnapped and stabbed to death by a group of armed miscreants following a past enmity near Basundia in Abhoynagar thana here on Thursday, reports UNB.

The victims was identified as Sayedur Rahman, 30, son of Motiur Rahman of Baliadanga village.

Police said the miscreants stormed the house of Sayedur at dead of night, dragged him to a nearby railway track at gunpoint and stabbed him to death. GR police recovered the body and sent it to Jessore General Hospital for autopsy.

Local people rushed to Jessore Sadar Hospital with critical injuries. Later, he was shifted to a Khulna hospital where he succumbed to his injuries.

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No initiative to preserve memory of Shaheed Sirajuddin Hossain

From Monojit Kumar Das

MAGURA, Dec 12: Shaheed Sirajuddin Hossain, former Executive Editor of The Daily Ittefaq who sacrificed his life for the liberation of our motherland was an illustrious son of Magura district.

He was brutally killed by the notorious Al-Badr forces at Rayer Bazar slaughtering ground in Dhaka on December 10 in 1971. The people of Magura feel proud for him.

Shaheed Sirajuddin Hossain Degree College at Khajura bazar of Bagharpara in Jessore district near his village home Sharsuna and Shaheed Sirajuddin Hossain Pathagar at Arpara of Shalikhana thana are the two institutions which were established in his memory.

While talking to some elite

in Magura they told this correspondent that more initiatives should be taken for preserving his memory as a martyred intellectual.

He was born at Sharsuna village in shalikhana thana of Magura district in the month of March, 1929. He lost his father at the age of three. He received primary and secondary education from Nawab Bahadur School of Murshidabad, Jessore Zilla School and a school at Jhikaragachha in great hardship. He was graduated from Islamia College of Calcutta in 1947.

He started his career as a journalist by joining The Daily Azad, the then renowned Bangla daily. Afterwards he joined The Daily Ittefaq. In

1970 Sirajuddin Hossain was appointed the Executive Editor of The Daily Ittefaq. His writings encouraged the struggling students and general public during the mass movement of 69 and Liberation War in '71. He wrote many books like 'Tithas Katha Kao', 'Paromanobik Shaktir Babohar' and others.

When the final victory over Liberation War was knocking at the door then he was brutally killed by the Al-Badr forces.

The members of the martyred journalist's family told this correspondent that the government should take proper initiatives to protect the memory of Shaheed Sirajuddin Hossain and others who dedicated their valuable lives for our motherland.

Sanctuaries needed for migratory winter birds

KISHOREGANJ, Dec 12: With the advent of winter migratory birds have been coming in various water bodies in the district, reports UNB.

But the amateur hunters and bird hunters started killing the local and migratory birds alike defying the government ban.

The guest birds driven out by chill weather and biting cold in Siberia and other parts of the world through the beel, haor and other water bodies in the region every year.

But due to indiscriminate hunting, the number of birds has been decreasing rapidly, experts said.

The law enforcing agencies are seen indifferent in taking punitive measures against the hunters despite people's appeal in this regard, alleged the local people.

Experts said, there would be

no migratory birds in the country in near future, if sanctuaries are not created as a safer place for them.

Another APB report from Barguna says: With the advent of winter, migratory birds have started to flock to water bodies like rivers, beel and canals in five thanas of the district.

The birds locally known as Dighari, Kalighazi, Sarail, Balisash, Paankauri and the like have been flying into these warmer areas of Bangladesh from such cold places as Siberia, local experts said.

Some 300 species of migratory birds usually throng this district during every winter, especially in such thanas of the district as Amtali, Patharghata and Barguna Sadar.

In the past, some 580 species of winter birds used to fly to the areas, Zoologists told.

Even a few years ago, local

and migratory birds used to be available in the local beel, haor and canals in fairly large number during winter.

They survive on fish as their main food. With scarcity of fish in the local water bodies, these birds fly away soon after arriving here. Their number has also decreased.

Experts said most of these winter birds come here between November and February from the cold places around the globe. They return to their places of origin as the spring sets in.

The arrival of these birds turn the water bodies lively and pulsating with their chirping and fluttering of the wings.

Locals say that apart from scarcity of food, the foreign species feel discouraged to flock and stay here owing to increased bird hunting.



JHENIDAH: Farmers of a village near the bank of the river Kumar beside Saikupa thana town striving hard to recoup the losses caused by the unprecedented deluge. Photo shows a cultivator ploughing land for winter cultivation. — Star photo

S-W districts have become haven for extortionists, terrorists

CHUADANGA, Dec 12: South-western districts, including Chuadanga, have turned into a safe haven of extortionists, terrorists and extremist of political groups, reports APB.

Apart from killing, kidnapping, extortion and smuggling, these groups of political extremists also indulge in internecine feuds and clashes.

At least 5,000 people were killed over the last 26 years and 10 months time in this region by the extremists, locals said.

Although no precise figure is available, these statistics have been obtained from newspaper reports and according to police department sources.

Repeated announcements of amnesty and calls for surrender of arms by the government has apparently fallen on deaf ears. Police operations against these elements have also not proved effective.

The extremists have literally unleashed a reign of terror in the rural areas of these districts. They have set up their own administrative-judicial systems and the helpless villagers do not dare to raise their voices in protest against them, locals alleged.

Sources claimed the poor, illiterate villagers are being held as veritable hostages by these terrorists. There are also allegations that police maintain tacit understanding with them.

Underground political parties like Biplabi Communist Party, Purbo Banglar Communist Party, different factions of Sarbarcha groups, Siraj Bahini, Tota Bahini and Lalan Bahini are reportedly operating with impunity in Kushtia, Meherpur, Jhenidah, Magura, Jessore, Satkhira, Barisal and Khulna districts.

Other groups active in the areas are Lant Bahini, Ruhul Bahini, Sabuj Group, Tapan Bahini, Babul Bahini, Faruque Bahini, Mom Bahini, Krishna Bahini, Babla-Mostakin Bahini, Kishu Nikhuje Bahini, Rustam, Sariful, Hassan, Tutul and Assad Bahini.

In all there are more than 100 such groups in the region, who indulge in internecine strife for dominance.

Apart from these, various political parties maintain and nurture cadres. Political leaders also get killed at the hands of the cadres of their own parties.

On October 26 last, for instance, an Awami League leader was killed at the hands of his own party cadres.

The so-called politics of 'eliminating class-enemies' began in these areas in the beginning of sixties.

Things worsened soon after the independence of the country when a section of political parties launched more than one Ganabahinis. These, however, were dissolved after a few years.

Informed sources said the terrorists survive on the support and patronisation of the local vested quarters.

Police also know about their patrons but cannot take any action against them for obvious reasons.

Police in recent raids hauled up quite a number of activists of the underground groups and recovered huge quantity of arms and ammunition.

The groups, however, continue their activities in the areas. It is estimated that at least 2,000 people were killed by the terrorists in Chuadanga region alone.

Apart from this, at least 500 cadres belonging to these groups were reported to have

Unbearable traffic jam at Jessore

JESSORE, Dec 12: Traffic jam in Jessore town has become unbearable in absence of a proper control system, reports APB.

The problem has become so acute that it is impossible to travel even one kilometre on the main roads in one hour during rush hours in the morning. Huge unauthorised rickshaws, rickshaw vans, tempos and disordered parking of vehicles along both sides of roads worsen the situation by narrowing down the usable portions.

There are about 400 rickshaws and 16000 rickshaw vans in the town, of which only about 25 per cent are licensed, sources said.

Although the problem was discussed at meetings of the District Co-ordination Committee and the District Law and Order Committee, no concrete step has yet been taken to ease

the situation. Local people complain that the problem could have been solved long before had the trade unions of transport workers and owners and a section of political leaders not interfered in the authorities' steps.

The problem becomes acute in the main roads including the Haji Mohammad Mohsin Road, Kapuripatty Road, RN Road, Mujib Sarak and Dartana square.

Unauthorised rent-a-car stands also contribute to worsening the situation along the RN Road, MM Ali Road and Gariakhana Road. Stockpiling of construction materials at places along the roads add to the problem.

It is alleged that policemen in charge of traffic control do not take any action worth the name against the violators of traffic laws.



PABNA: A neglected children's park in the district town. — Star photo

Effectiveness of agri-tech being assessed

KHAGRACHHARI, Dec 12: A team of agriculture experts has been visiting the hill districts to assess the effectiveness of the agriculture technology used in the country, reports UNB.

The team, headed by former Secretary M Shahidul Islam, is engaged in assessing the response of the farmers towards different technology used in various agricultural purposes including crop, fruits, livestock, fisheries and forest resources.

They are visiting different parts of the country and talking to the farmers to explore the modernisation possibilities.

As part of their programme, they are to visit Dhaka, Mymensingh, Comilla, Sylhet, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Khulna and Barisal.

They are collecting information from the farmers' level about the adaptability of the technologies offered by different research centres.

They are also assessing the success or failure of each of the new techniques offered to the farmers for increasing agricultural production in the country.

The members of the team have been collecting data from the landless, small, medium and large farmers.

The members of the committee include Prof Rezaul Karim Talukder and Abidur Reza of Bangladesh Agriculture University, S M Shahid, former Director of Soil Resource Development Centre and Dr Nuruzzaman, former Director of Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council.

The team is now visiting the district and talking to the farmers of the hilly region. They also talked to experts working in Hill Agriculture Research Centre and inquired about the technologies innovated by the centre for the tribal and non-tribal farmers in the region.

They visited Perachhara and Kukiachara and talked to farmers and the owners of fish farms.

Smuggling on alarming rise in N-dists

SIRAJGANJ, Dec 12: The smuggling of contraband items in different northern districts of the country is on alarming rise in the recent months, reports UNB.

Local people and sources in different law enforcement agencies said the extent of smuggling has increased following the opening of Bangabandhu Bridge on the river Jamuna.

The transportation of smuggled goods has now become easier and less risky with the establishment of direct road link with the eastern and western regions of the country, observed the sources.

They said the organised groups of smugglers are using different remote hats-bazars and places for storing the Indian smuggled goods.

Chattagram Zila Sangbadpatra Hawkers Union executives

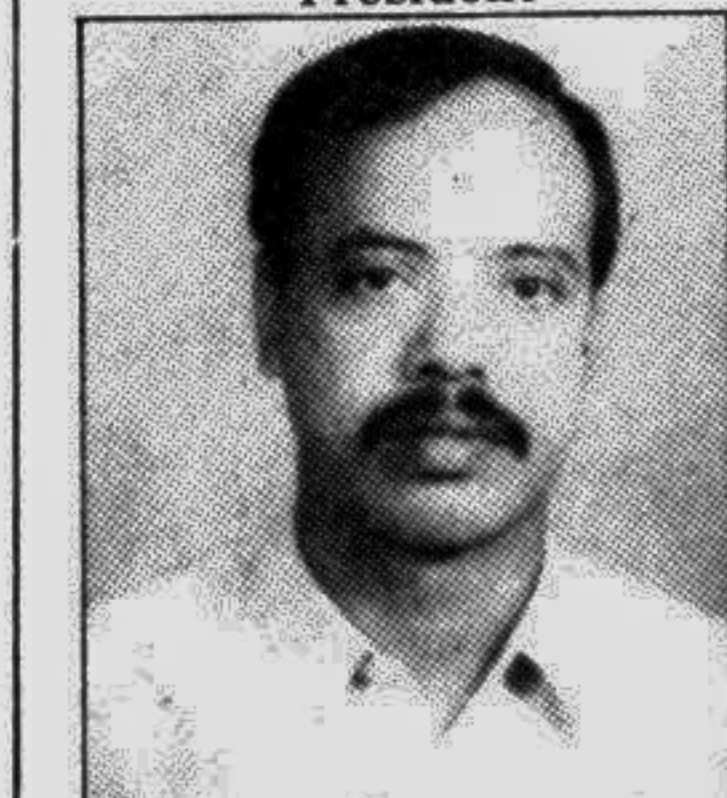
From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Dec 12: Abu Taher and Daudul Islam were elected new President and General Secretary of Chattagram Zilla Sangbadpatra Hawkers' Union.

They were elected in an election held during the biennial



President



Gen Secy

conference of the union held on December 9 at the Cheragi Pahar office of the organisation in the port city.

The other office-bearers of the union are: Vice President—Joinal Abedin, Assistant General Secretary—Mokbul Hossain, Organising Secretary—Ali Akbar Mojumder, Publicity Secretary—Manik Chandra Nath, Office Secretary—Hossain Ahmed, Treasurer—Lal Mia members—Zahid Hos-

sain, Subal Chandra Nath, Nur Rahman Khokon, and Abul Bashar.

Journalist Helal Uddin was the President of the Election Committee.

A rally was also held which was presided over by journalist Helal Uddin, President of the