

News snaps

Crimes up in Feni

FENI, Dec 14: Crimes are on rise in the district causing concern among the peace loving people, reports UNB.

According to police and local newspapers, some 84 crimes including killing, rape and robberies were committed in six thanas of the district in the last month. Of the total, 29 crimes were committed in Sadar, 20 in Chhagalnaiya, nine in Daganbhuiyan, 13 in Sonagazi, seven in Farshuram and six in Fulgazi thanas. During the period, a total of 65 cases were filed with the police. Of the total, 26 cases were lodged in Sadar, 15 in Chhagalnaiya, seven in Daganbhuiyan, nine in Sonagazi, five in Fulgazi and three in Farshuram thanas. According to official sources some 82 crimes were committed in the month of October and 79 cases were registered with the police.

Rupganj Bazaar in bad shape

NARAIL, Dec 14: Rupganj bazaar, an important business centre in the pourashava here, is facing accommodation problem causing inconvenience to the buyers and sellers, reports UNB.

Sources said the bazaar was not expanded with the increasing needs to the local people since long. The lanes and by-lanes of the bazaar have been occupied by the vendors and many people constructed a number of pucca and semi-pucca structures narrowing the space. Makeshift structures along the highway were also constructed by a section of traders much to the inconvenience of the people. The pourashava authority is yet to take any steps to solve the problems of the bazaar, said the local people.

Young drug addicts on rise

PATUAKHALI, Dec 14: The number of drug addicts among youths is increasing in the district at an alarming rate, much to the concern of parents and guardians, reports APB.

The addicts include female students of colleges and activists of political parties. The district administration and law enforcing agencies are not taking any action although opium, hemp, phensidyl, rectified spirit and country-made liquor are commonly available in the district town and other areas. Knowledgeable sources said that most of the narcotic stuff enter the country from across the border. Organised gangs of smugglers are doing a roaring business in cooperation with a section of employees of the departments concerned, they alleged. The drug smugglers here also supply smuggled drugs to different parts of the country. Women and children are also engaged in the work.

Migratory birds arriving

SHARIATPUR, Dec 14: Migratory birds from Siberia and other colder regions have started arriving in Shariatpur and Barisal districts, reports APB.

Ducks, Pankauri, Buri, Storks, Herons, Pintail and other migratory birds have taken temporary shelters in the rivers, beel, ponds and canals of the districts. Nearly 580 species of birds, of which at least 200 are of Siberian origin, fly in to Bangladesh with the advent of the winter season and go back to their original habitats with the approach of the spring.

FAO sponsored workshop at Rangamati

RANGAMATI, Dec 14: A two-day workshop on 'participatory watershed management' concluded here on Saturday at Bangladesh Family Welfare Visitors' Training Institute, reports BSS.

The workshop sponsored by FAO, was organised by local Forest Department. Chairman of the task force on repatriated tribals and internal refugees rehabilitation affairs, Dipankar Talukdar, MP inaugurated the workshop as the chief guest. Conservator of Forest, Rangamati Forest Circle, Sunil Kanti Bose chaired the inaugural function. The workshop was participated by 57 peasants' leaders from different districts of Chittagong division, working in the grass-root levels.

FEP remains suspended

PATUAKHALI, Dec 14: The Food for Education Programme (FEP) remained suspended in the district over the last five months hampering the education of poor children, reports UNB.

The children of poor families have been facing problems in prosecuting their studies as they are to search for jobs to eke out their living resulting in the drop out in increasing numbers in the primary schools. District Primary Education office sources said, families of 21,641 poor school children of 259 government and registered primary schools of 15 unions in six thanas were brought under the programme. Each family with one student was given 15 kgs of wheat or 12 kgs of rice and the family with more than one learners 20 kgs of wheat or 16 kgs of rice per month. But the distribution of food grains remained stopped since last July.

Human Rights Day observed

LALMONIRHAT, Dec 14: Fifty years of World Human Rights Day was observed here on Thursday in a befitting manner, reports BSS.

A colourful rally was brought out from collectarate field in the morning. Organised by Human Rights Commission (HRC) of Lalmonirhat, Human Rights Monitoring Cell (HRMC) of Lalmonirhat, local NGOs Manosika, Ova and Mentally Retarded School Lalmonirhat. A memorandum was handed over to DC, Lalmonirhat for sending it to the prime minister. A discussion meeting was held at Sahitya Parishad auditorium in the evening in this connection. Sahabuddin, President, Human Rights Commission (HRC) of Lalmonirhat was in the chair. The discussion was addressed, among others, by Shaiful Islam Kanu, secretary of Human Rights Commission and Editor of Lalmonirhat Barta, AKM Shamsul Haq, advocate, Secretary, Human Rights Monitoring Cell of Lalmonirhat and Dilip Sarker of Ova.

Uplift programme progressing

SHERPUR, Dec 14: The Post-Flood Infrastructure Development programmes are progressing fast in the district, reports UNB.

Official sources said a total of 359 metric tons of wheat have been sanctioned to implement 221 uplift schemes under the Test Relief programme. Meanwhile, no schemes have yet been taken up for implementation in Nalitabari thana despite allocation of 116 metric tons of wheat. Moreover, under the post-flood agriculture rehabilitation programme, Tk 5.4 crore have been disbursed among the affected farmers. Besides, Tk 35 was sanctioned for purchasing necessary seeds. The government also distributed a grant of Tk 22 lakh for reconstruction and repair of the flood damaged houses in the district and a total of 4,400 families have been given Tk 500 each. Meanwhile, Tk one lakh each has been sanctioned for cultivation of pulses and grass in the district, official sources.

Allowances distributed

RAMPAL (Bagerhat), Dec 14: The government is providing allowances to nine lakh widows and aged people across the country per month. State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Talukdar Abdul Khaleque said, reports BSS.

The minister was distributing relief, allowances and cash among 1,600 distress people in Rampal thana in Bagerhat district. He said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has instructed to disburse allowances considering the sufferings of the distress people. Leaders of local Awami League and its front organisations and officials were present at the function.

Youth training centres in each dist

THAKURGAON, Dec 14: Post Telecommunications, Housing and Public Works Minister Mohammad Nasim said here that the present democratically elected government was committed to discharging its duties with utmost sincerity, reports BSS.

He said in its development efforts the government has laid emphasis on 'self-employment' programmes by establishing youth training centres at every district headquarters and providing credits to the youth. Inaugurating the Thakurgaon Youth Training Centre, the minister said the youths have to be self-reliant and free from frustrations. He said the government is trying its level best to free the country from dependence using its resources including the youth. Nasim said that during the last 21 years the country was run in an unplanned way. 'But the present government wants to move forward with proper plans so that democracy can take an institutional shape,' he added.

Work on fire station progressing

MANIKGANJ, Dec 14: The construction work of 2nd fire service station in the district at a cost of Taka 1.53 crore at Ghior is in full swing, reports BSS.

The work includes land development, construction of main building, dormitory and boundary wall and arrangement for water supply, sanitation system and electrification. More than 25 per cent work has already been done. Rest of the work of the fire service station will be completed by March, 1999.

HR monitoring cell formed

LALMONIRHAT, Dec 14: Human Rights (HR) Monitoring Cell of Lalmonirhat was formed in a meeting held here at Bar Association office on Thursday, reports BSS.

The office bearers of the organisation are: president — Advocate Fazlul Haque, vice-president — Advocate Matru Rahman, secretary — Advocate AKM Shamsul Haque.



SYLHET: After the liberation of Bangladesh the freedom fighters surrendered arms and ammunition to Dewan Farid Gazi, the then MNA and civilian Advisor of the North-Eastern Zone (1) of the Liberation War at a function held at the Registry ground in Sylhet town. — Star photo

Pak army retreated from Sylhet on this day

From Iqbal Siddiquee

SYLHET, Dec 14: Sylhet, the north-eastern district of the country was liberated on the 15th day of December in 1971.

Memory of the bright moments are still alive in the hearts of many people. The holy town of the great Muslim saint Hajrat Shahjalal (RA) was overwhelmed with repeated sky touching slogans by thousands of joyous people and freedom fighters who had just entered into the township following defeat of the occupation Pakistan army and its collaborator forces.

People of this region tasted victory one day ahead of the national Victory Day on December 16 after the fall of 'Niaz Bahini' in the then Race Course maidan in Dhaka.

The freedom fighters and Allied forces strengthened their attack on the occupation Pakistan army both on the land and in the air after India's official recognition to the independent state of Bangladesh on December 6.

Since the beginning of November, the freedom fighters launched their guerrilla attacks throughout the country. The Allied forces also extended their help in almost all the areas resulting in a number of major wins of the freedom fighters. This time the freedom fighters and the Allied forces began to achieve great success in different important areas causing serious injuries for the occupation forces.

The occupation Pakistani army became worried enough with the fall of some important bases at different sectors. In such a situation, the Pak Army resorted to serious air strikes. Ignoring these air attacks, a big contingent of freedom fighters and the Allied forces reached in the Khadimnagar area, about five miles off the district town on December 13.

By this time, two other con-

tingents of freedom fighters captured Jalalpur and Lamakazi in the south-western side of the town. Then the freedom fighters trapped the Pak Army totally as there was no place for their movement. Only the northern side was open then. But it was also quite unfortunate for them because this open area is also full of hillock type places and next to which is Indian border. For this reason the occupation Pak forces had no way to retreat. The whole situation made the well equipped Pak Army totally crippled.

In the afternoon of December 13 two freedom fighters named Anwar Hossain Gora and Kuli Miah started moving towards Sylhet town in an open jeep. They fixed a loudspeaker ahead of the vehicle and started asking the Pak army men to surrender. They were repeatedly calling them to surrender without any bloodshed. This vehicle was being followed by another jeep with Dewan Farid Gazi, the then Member of National Assembly (MNA) and the civilian Advisor of the north-eastern region in the Liberation War and Colonel Bagchi on board. But all in vain. On that day the freedom fighters had to go back disappointed as the Pak Army declined to surrender and tried to resist them near the Sylhet Government College area.

On the previous day, the war leaders of Bangladesh and India sat in a meeting in Darbaza area on Sylhet-Tamabil road to settle the ways and means of freeing the Sylhet town. Colonel Bagchi of the Indian Army, Colonel CR Dutta of 'Mukti Bahini' and Dewan Farid Gazi reached at a decision that the town must be freed on pressure and without bloodshed.

None of the leading people wanted to cause any kind of damage to the Haripur oil project, the Transmission Building of radio at Tilagarh and Gov-

ernment College which are located at the entry point of the town on Sylhet-Tamabil Road on the eve of victory.

According to the prepared plan, the freedom fighters and the Allied forces began to proceed towards the town under the leadership of Dewan Farid Gazi, Colonel CR Dutta and Colonel Bagchi. By this time, there were informations that the occupation Pak forces had retreated from their previous position in the Government College areas. It was later found correct. They took shelter at their main base at Salutar along with bag and baggage.

The freedom fighters and the Allied forces easily entered into the town without facing any resistance. In the meantime, another big contingent of freedom fighters of 'Z' force under the leadership of Ziaur Rahman reached the Cattle Farm area at Alural, in the suburb of the town. The Pak Army became crippled fully this time. But they damaged a part of the Keane Bridge with dynamite out of grudge, while fleeing from the main town on December 13. The bridge over the river Surma was then connecting two parts of Sylhet town. It was then also the main entry way to the town. The blasts with big bangs shook the whole township.

The freedom fighters began to enter into the town since the night of December 14 in groups from different directions. Jubilant people in thousands took to streets even in the midnight. The whole town was humming with slogans and shoutings of different joyous slogans. The town was full of victory processions. The town was declared free of occupation forces totally on the next morning of December 15. However, the Pak army officially surrendered after one day of this ever-fresh event.

Telecommunication system in 2 dists may collapse

COMILLA, Dec 14: Telephone users in the district have been suffering for long due to technical shortcomings and faults in the old analogue system, reports APB.

The telecommunications minister had given assurance about a year ago to install modern digital system but nothing has been done so far.

One of the two-F-1 machines on which telecommunications of the town and 12 thanas depend, was installed in 1968. Ten years later, another machine was installed and after that there has been no effort to improve the system.

The two machines are too inadequate for 3,600 telephone lines in the district, experts say.

Of the 22 telephone exchanges in the district, 19 have out-of-date magneto system machines of the British era. The other three have CD machines. Due to the decrepit condition of these machines, telecommunication system in the district may collapse any time, experts say. When in works, which is seldom, it is marred by cross-connections, failure in getting the right numbers and humming noises.

Local people said they are being deprived of minimum facilities though the pourashava was set up in 1869 and has gained the first class status over the years.

The length of metalled road in the pourashava is 48.66 km while there is another 51.37 km semi-metalled and about 60 km kucha roads within the municipality area.

Most of the roads are in very bad shape with big potholes and

cracks at different points. The roads include Malgudam-Bazrapur, Pultala-Boardighar, Nayapara-Panchrasta, Crossing, College Road and New College Road.

Local people complained that the authorities are not taking initiative for the repair of these roads for long causing un-

pleasant bills and frequent telephone users allege.

On the other hand the demand for telephones is increasing. At least five applications are being filed daily while about 3,000 are now pending with the authorities for years, sources in the T&T office said. They, however, said that 1600 new connections will be given in the next two or three years.

In the thanas, it is not possible to use phones at night since most of the exchanges remain closed. The 46 card-phone booths in the 12 thanas remain unusable day after day. In spite of a great demand, those are not maintained properly and repaired timely, users allege.

There are only 2 ISD card-phone booths but those remain out of order most of the time, creating great inconvenience to families who have members abroad.

Business activities are being seriously hampered as fax internet of E-mail facilities are unavailable since the telephone system is not digital. In emergencies, businessmen have to pay extremely high rates for utilising the services of certain phone-fax operators.

Another report from Chapra, a village in the town, says: Subscribers in the town are suffering untold miseries owing to faulty telephone service for quite sometime.

The local telephone office is daily receiving innumerable complaints.

Most of the local telephones appear to have become inoperative. It may be mentioned that almost all the underground telephone cables were damaged during the last floods.

As a result, 298 out of the 400 telephones of the town went out of order.

Local T&T Board officials told that they would not be able to do anything for improving the quality of service until the underground cables were replaced.

The other alternative was the introduction of digital system, they pointed out.

The T&T Board, people, however, could not say as to when the digital system would be introduced here.

It is gathered that although lying of underground cables is complete, there is no noticeable progress in the refurbishing of local telephone exchange.

Shaheed Capt Bashar's name is absent on "Smriti Amlan"

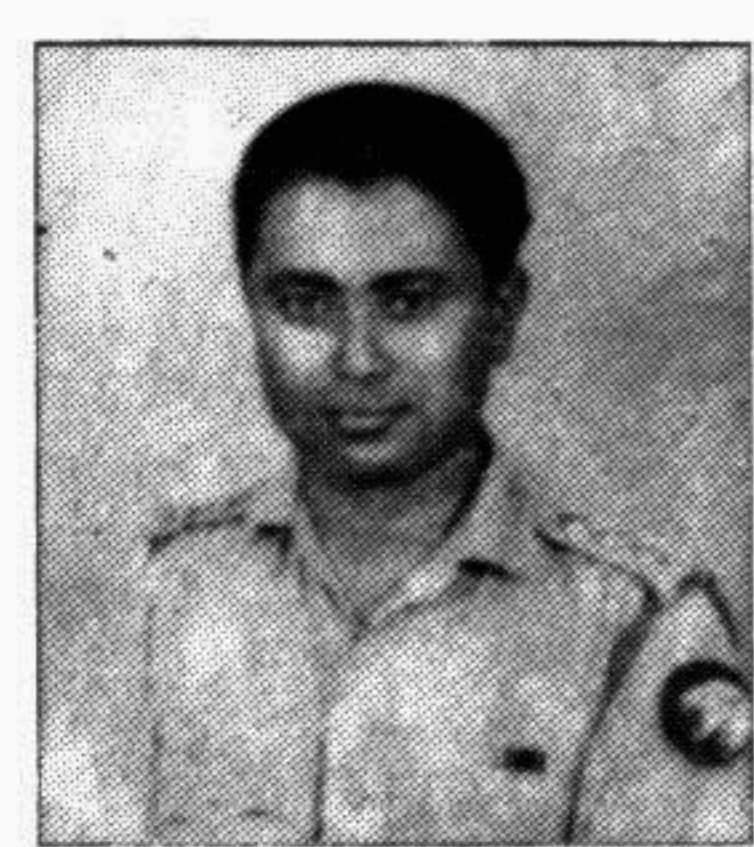
From A Correspondent

NILPHAMARI, Dec 14: The name of Shaheed Captain R A M Khairul Bashar, a distinguished martyr of the Liberation War was not included in the list of shaheed freedom fighters which was engraved on a memorial monument in Nilphamari town for reasons unknown to all.

The monument named 'Smriti Amlan' was built under the auspices of Nilphamari Pourasava, Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman inaugurated the monument on May 22 last.

Just after the opening of this monument when the family members of Shaheed Captain Bashar contacted with the chairman of Nilphamari Pourasava, he replied that the names of Shaheed freedom fighters had been engraved on the memorial monument according to a list supplied by the Nilphamari unit command of Muktiyoddha Sangsad. Again when the family members of the Shaheed Army officer drew the attention of the Commander of Nilphamari Zilla Command of Muktiyoddha Sangsad regarding the matter citing the list of Shaheed freedom fighters kept with the local Deputy Commissioner's (DC) office where the name of Shaheed Captain Bashar is included, he could not give any satisfactory answer.

The glorious role of Captain Bashar in the Liberation War is well-known to all of his colleagues in Chittagong Cantonment. He hoisted the national



Captain Bashar

flag of Bangladesh first atop the paramulator of his baby daughter following the historic March 7 speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Chittagong Cantonment. Then he pushed this paramulator around the cantonment. This act is a unique testimony to his patriotism. Such act angered the then Pakistani war mongers. Then Captain Bhuyian, Major (Dr) Rezaur Rahman and Major Mohsin were the witnesses. He organised the liberation war

and his name was announced through Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra of Kalurghat. In the announcement the students young people were asked to report to Captain Bashar. It was revealed in an article written on the Victory Day supplement of The Daily New Nation a few years back by Rabintra Nath Tribedi, a former senior officer of the Press Information Department. In the month of April he shot down a Pakistani army's helicopter in the sky of Chittagong. After being captured he was flown to Dhaka. He was shifted to Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Field Interrogation Centre where he was asked by the Pakistani war mongers to become a state witness against Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who was then imprisoned in Pakistan. A treason charge was framed against Bangabandhu by the then Pakistani rulers. But Captain Bashar denied straightaway. At this act the then Pakistani General Tikka Khan became furious. He ordered his men to torture Captain Bashar brutally which led to his martyrdom.

After the liberation of Bangladesh a road was named as Shaheed Bashar Road (previously Staff Road) at Dhaka Cantonment. But it is a matter of great regret that his name had not been engraved on 'Smriti Amlan'.

Sherpur Killing Day observed

From Our Correspondent

SHERPUR, Dec 14: It was 24th November 1971, freedom fighter Ayeazuddin of village Bania Para in Sherpur district along with 52 other freedom fighters laid down their lives in a combat against Pakistani soldiers and their collaborators.

The 'Razakars' found the secret hideout of the freedom fighters and based on their information on 24th November, 1971 the Pakistani soldiers and the 'Razakars' surrounded the Bania Para village. One section of the troops started burning the houses while the other captured 101 villagers and lined up them to the local school ground where later shoot them. As soon as they were lined up for killing Azfar Ali, a freedom fighter of that village started firing from their hideout.

On hearing the gunshots the Pakistani soldiers took their position against the hideout saving 101 people behind. They were all saved.

At one point they captured Azfar Ali. At Bania Para and Shurazdi village, there were about 60 freedom fighters who were led by Ayeazuddin Mollah. Their job was to help the freedom fighters in supplying food, medicine and training.

The Pakistani army based on their information captured 52 freedom fighters out of 60 and shot them to death. As Ayeazuddin Mollah was their leader the Pakistani soldiers took him to an open space and killed him by torturing.

Every year on 24th November 'Sherpur Killing Day' is being observed in a befitting manner. Shaheed Ayeazuddin Smriti Shansad, Muktiyoddha Sangsad, and Projanto 71 chalk out elaborate programme on this day.



Ehsan Uddin Lutur Arsenic awareness tour

From Our Correspondent

COMILLA, Dec 14: Two young cyclists begin tour of south-eastern region of the country with the slogan 'Drink arsenic-free water, keep well' to create awareness about arsenic hazard among the common people and motivate them to take precautionary measures.

Lutur Rahman George and Ehsanuddin Soby with patronisation of Bhadratita Samaj Kalyan Sangstha, a social welfare organisation of Narinda, Dhaka will begin their liking tour from the National Press Club premises on December 16 morning to Comilla, Chandpur, Lakshmipur, Noakhali, Hatiya Nahumdwip, Feni, Khagrachhari, Rangamati, Chittagong, Bandarban, Cox's Bazar Teknaf and St. Martin.

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told suffering to the movement of pedestrians and as well vehicles.

The problem increased further after the authorities cut different roads to set up gas pipeline in the town.

The authorities are not taking up steps to repair the roads although the gas supply authorities paid a large amount for the purpose, they added.

The drainage systems of the town has also been facing serious set back due to various faults. Unauthorised construction of buildings and other establishments has been obstructing the drainage system.

Along Malgudam road, a number of shop owners and bamboo traders virtually stopped the drains of both sides blocking the water outlet.

Hasan said foundation stone of the Doarkhi Shikarpur bridge would be laid on Saturday next for meeting the long-cherished demand of the people.

He said the present government had taken in hand massive development programme for the balanced development of the southern districts, which so long remained neglected.

Local people said they have informed the concerned authorities for taking necessary steps to stop the erosion, but nothing tangible was taken in this regard so far.

Rampant stealing of transformers

BANDARBAN, Dec 14: The supply of power in the district has become seriously erratic due to various reasons including stealing of transformer, reports UNB.

Local PDB office sources said a total of six transformers were stolen during the last one year from different points of the district.

The points include Ruma, Keyamalong, Jouthakhamar, Reigcha, Satkamalpara, and Tanchangyapara.

Most of the areas in the district remain in darkness after sundown due to this reason, said the source. A number of power subscribers complained that their sufferings have increased much during the recent months.

Meanwhile, burglary and dacoity have increased alarmingly in different areas particularly during the night time taking advantage of erratic power supply and load-shedding.

The local people complained that the authorities here are yet to take any measure to replace the transformers.

The PDB sources said there is another problem of burning out of electric fuse of the supply line and the problem is mainly due to spark created by the branches of tree adjacent to the supply lines.

The authorities allocate money for cutting the tree branches every year, said the local people. They, however, alleged that the concerned officials draw the money submitting false vouchers without cutting any branch thus aggravating the situation.

They said three breakers were burnt during the last one year due to the problem.

Besides, there is a shortage

of supply of spare parts and necessary equipment. PDB here hampering the repair and other works necessary for uninterrupted supply of power.

To meet the demand of power supply, generators using diesel are operating in the district headquarters. Many government offices are also using generator for this purpose.

Prospect of Aman procurement drive bleak in Gaibandha

From Our Correspondent

GAIBANDHA, Dec 14: The prospect of 'Aman' procurement drive is bleak in the district.

Forty days have already passed since launching of the procurement drive, but the concerned department failed to collect a single kg of foodgrains during the period.

'Aman' procurement drive began in the district on November 1, 1998 which will continue till February 28, 1999. A target of 'Aman' procurement was fixed in the district at 3,000 metric tons of paddy and 10,000 metric tons of rice.

While contacted with the related department, businessmen and farmers they told this correspondent that the government fixed up the procurement price of 'Aman' paddy at Taka 304 per 40 kg and rice at Taka 480 per 40 kg. But since the harvesting of 'Aman' crops, paddy is being sold at Taka 370 to Taka 400 per 40 kg, and rice at Taka 580 to Taka 700 per 40 kg. So nobody were interested to sell crops to government procurement cell at the fixed rates.

Alleged corruption by marriage registrars

MADARIPUR, Dec 14: About 60 per cent of the marriages among poor families in rural areas in the district are being solemnised without registration due to high rate of fees, causing an alarming rise in divorce, reports APB.

Marriage registrars charge exorbitant fees illegally because the girls are much below the marriage age, some even 12 years old. As per law, the minimum age of girls for marriage is 18.

The unscrupulous registrars agree to overlook the age bar, but take hefty bribes, which

many young men of low-income groups go for playmate, mostly because of dowry from better-off families. If they do not divorce their first wives, they abandon them along with the children, if any.

Social thinkers say, a realistic step by the government to check this, would be lowering the marriage age to 14 from 18 and the registration fees so that everyone could afford.

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