

News snaps

Seven wanted criminals held

PATUAKHALI, Dec 30: Police in two separate drives on Monday and Tuesday arrested seven people wanted in connection with various criminal cases in the town here, reports UNB.

The arrested were identified as Uzzal, 18, Kabir Hossain, 22, Mosharrif Hossain, 28, Naimul, 28, Amjad Biswas, 25, Abdur Rahim, 35 and Uzzal Khondaker, 20. They were wanted in connection with terrorism and toll collection cases.

Road construction work progressing

HABIGANJ, Dec 30: Construction and development works of eight roads in the district costing Tk 10.20 crore are progressing fast, reports UNB.

The roads are Habiganj-Nabiganj-Sherpur, Habiganj-Baniachang-Ajmiriganj, Habiganj-Lakhal, Mirpur-Bahubal, Jagdishpur-Shahjibazar-Shayestaganj, Habiganj-Shayestaganj, Chunarughat-Shatijuri-Natur Bazar and Shayestaganj-Puran Bazar-Kalimnagar. According to official sources, the works included construction of two RCC and four bailey bridges, nine box culverts, 1.80 km pucca road, repairing and seal coat of 4.60 km road, widening of 5.9 km road, protection work of 4.36 km, HBB work of 6.20 km, 200 meter drainage construction and earth filling work of 10.20 km roads. Of the projects, being implemented by the Roads and Highways Department, 50 per cent works have already been completed. The rest works are expected to be completed by June next.

Plying of worn-out vehicles up

JAMALPUR, Dec 30: Plying of worn-out vehicles has increased in the district alarmingly occurring frequent accidents, reports UNB.

Moreover, unskilled drivers are plying their defective vehicles to and from the district without driving licence making life of the passengers miserable. People alleged that the authorities concerned do not pay any heed in this regard. Most of the vehicles have no route permit, licence, fitness certificate and even registration. In the rainy season sufferings of the bus passengers know no bounds. They even have to use umbrella in the bus as water gets into bus due to breaking of windpanes. Plying of tempo on different important routes is a rising menace for the people. An investigation showed that over 400 tempos are now moving in the district creating traffic congestion. People here urged the authorities concerned to take immediate steps to stop illegal plying of worn-out vehicles to avert occurrence of frequent accidents.

Man arrested with fake passport

SYLHET, Dec 30: Police arrested a man with fake passport from Osmani Airport here on Wednesday, reports UNB.

Immigration office sources said, Lokman Ahmed, son of Abdul Matin of village Singabari in Kanaighat thana was caught while he was trying to pass immigration counter. A case was lodged with the Kotwali police in this connection.

Reconstruction of pry schools soon

BARISAL, Dec 30: The reconstruction of 560 flood damaged primary schools under the post flood rehabilitation programme is going to start after the holy Ramadan here, reports UNB.

Official sources said a total of 365 government, 192 non-government and three community primary schools have been identified as flood damaged in seven thanas under the programme in the district. The thanas include Sadar, Gournadi, Mehendiganj, Babuganj, Uzipur, Banaripara and Muladi. In another scheme, a total of Tk 1,01,500 has been allocated for the fish farmers in 10 thanas under the post-flood rehabilitation programme. Official sources said some 145,000 fries costing Tk 43,500 will be distributed among the fish farmers in the district. The fries will be collected from the government hatcheries.

Uplift schemes progressing

CHUADANGA, Dec 30: The implementation of five schemes in two thanas of Chuadanga district, Chuadanga sadar and Alamdanga, by the LGED is nearing completion now, reports BSS.

The schemes are being implemented under the Rural Development Project-18, a Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme of LGED at total cost of Taka 67,00,000. According to an official source, 90 per cent of the total work of the schemes have so far been completed and the rest work is expected to be completed by the next month. The ongoing schemes include development of five kilometre roads by carpeting under five separate plans. Of the total schemes, four schemes are being implemented in Alamdanga thana and one scheme in Chuadanga sadar thana.

29,100 VGF cards distributed

JHENIDAH, Dec 30: The district Relief and Rehabilitation Department distributed 29,100 vulnerable group feeding cards (VGF) among the destitute families in 67 unions and five pourasavas under six thanas of the district, reports BSS.

Official sources said, of the total cards, 6,100 were distributed in Jhenidah sadar thana, 5,400 in Shalakupura, 4,100 in Kalganj, 4,600 in Maheshpur, 3,400 in Harinakunda, 11,900 in Kotchandpur thana, and 900 in Kalganj Pourasava, 900 in Jhenidah Pourasava and the rest 1800 cards were distributed in Maheshpur, Shalakupura and Kotchandpur pourasavas. Each VGF card holder got eight kilos of rice and eight kilos of wheat every month.

'Govt made history holding free poll'

NATORE, Dec 30: LGRD Minister Zillur Rahman said BNP leapt into an anti-people fascist role slapping down hartal on people's verdict in the Pabna by-election, reports UNB.

He was addressing at a public meeting at Hatidand Bazar ground here recently. Zillur, said BNP would not have gone for false propaganda and hartal if they had got minimum respect for people's verdict and democracy. He observed the present government made history holding free, fair and impartial elections by establishing people's right to vote. The minister called to build a united resistance to the "anti-people activities and conspiracy for destroying the democracy by calling unpopular hartal by an unholy band of BNP and anti-liberation forces".

Tk 14cr sanitation project

KHULNA, Dec 30: As life speeds up in the city polluting the environment, Khulna City Corporation has taken up a sanitation project, involving Tk 14 crore, reports UNB.

Officials said sanitary land fields, drains and sanitary latrines would be constructed under the project, being financed by World Bank, UNDP and others. They said necessary number of trucks to dispose off garbage would be purchased and a coordinated plan be formulated for the port city. Research for evolving eco-friendly technologies will also be conducted for the development of environment. The project works will begin in February next and is expected to be completed by the end of 2000. The city corporation has been carrying out experiment by taking up environment-friendly sanitation projects in some certain areas of five wards in the city since 1997.

Loan disbursement work progressing

KISHOREGANJ, Dec 30: Kishoreganj regional office of Bangladesh Krishi Bank was fixed a target to disburse Taka 29,76,10,000 in 13 thanas of the district through bank's 20 branches in the current 'robi' season, reports BSS.

Of the target a total of Taka 23,78,19,000 has been disbursed till December 17 this year. The percentage of disbursement is about eighty. The disbursement work is in full swing, according to official sources.

Sanitation fair ends

SATKHIRA, Dec 30: A two-day long sanitation fair-98, organised by the Public Health Engineering Department of Debhata thana concluded here recently, reports BSS.

The sanitation fair was inaugurated by Akru Mian, Executive Engineer of Public Health Engineering Department. He was present in the function as the chief guest. The function was presided over by Abdul Kader, a UP member.

3,602 farmers receive seeds

SHERPUR, Dec 30: At least 3,602 small and marginal farmers of 15 unions in Sadar thana have received seed and fertiliser under Agriculture Rehabilitation programme during the last month, reports UNB.

Official sources said agriculture office distributed seeds of vegetables, mustard, maize, wheat, 'Boro' paddy and DAP and urea fertilisers among the farmers from November 16 to 18 in the district. These include 3,335 kg of paddy seeds of BR-29 variety, 13,500 kg of wheat, 800 kg of maize, 230 kg of mustard, 284 kg of vegetable seeds, 30 metric tonnes of DAP fertiliser and seven metric tons of Urea.

Training course on seed production

MAGURA, Dec 30: A two-day training course on seed production and its preservation concluded at Shalika Thana Council auditorium recently, reports UNB.

A total of 30 bloc supervisors took part in the course organised by local Agriculture Department. The supervisors were given training on how to produce high yielding variety of seeds and preserve it properly. They will impart, inter alia, practical training to the farmers in modern methods of cultivation and proportional use of fertiliser in the crop fields. Local Parliament Member Adv Biren Shikder inaugurated the course.



PABNA: Farmers in the district have produced vegetables of various kinds abundantly in this winter following the worst-ever deluge of the century. — Star photo

Despite harvesting of 'Aman' crops No sign of fall in price of rice in Natore

NATORE, Dec 30: There is no sign of fall in price of rice in the market with the harvesting of new 'Aman' crops in the district, reports UNB.

At present course rice is being sold at Tk 16 per kg breaking all previous records. Last year the price was between Tk 12 and Tk 13.

"Every year we usually buy rice between Tk 10 and 13 per kg with the arrival of new 'Aman' crops in the market, but this time, even in the month of Ramadan the price of rice remained almost static at the pre-harvesting level. Now the lowest price of a kg of rice is Tk 16", Abdur Rahim, Kamrul, Rahim Uddin and Ansar Ali four farm labourers at Nazirpur area told the visiting correspondent on Sunday.

Natore is traditionally one of the surplus areas of the country in respect of foodgrains production. But this year devastating flood has dealt a severe blow to Natore like other districts.

According to the estimate of the district Agriculture Extension Department, the damage caused to the standing 'Aus' paddy and transplanted 'Aman' by the deluge was responsible for the present short fall of about 28,000 MTs of rice in the actual production target.

"We have been passing severe hardship since the rice price went up at the beginning of the flood in July last" said these labourers.

According to them, the agricultural labourers of the district are switching over to non-farm

activities as their wages have gone down in real terms over the years. Now the daily wage of an agricultural labourer is Tk 40 to 50 in cash and one course of meal in kind.

"The shortage of farm labourers is acute here as most of them have switched over to non-farm activities. We do not find a labourer even after offering Tk 60 per day" said owner of a farm and a model farmer Ershad Ali Sarkar of Rashidpur village under the same thana.

Asked why the wages of the agricultural labourers did not increase despite the persisting shortage Ershad Ali said that the economic condition of the comparatively solvent farmers had also deteriorated due to recurring crop failure.

50,803 hectares brought under 'Boro' farming

JHENIDAH, Dec 30: A total of 50,803 hectares of land have been brought under 'Boro' farming programme in the district during the current season, reports UNB.

According to Agriculture Extension Department of the total land, 50,737 hectares will be brought under high yielding variety and 66 hectares under local variety.

The production target has been fixed at 1,26,941 metric tons.

Thana-wise break up of land under HYV cultivation is as follows: 13,707 hectares in Sadar, 10,380 hectares in Kalganj, 3,200 hectares in Kotchandpur, 14,960 hectares in Moheshpur, 3,370 hectares in Shalakupura and 5,120 hectares in Harinakunda thana.

Sources said bank loans, fertilisers, pesticides and other agricultural inputs would be provided to the farmers to make the programme a success.

Tk 20 cr allocated for reconstruction of flood damaged institutions

CHAPAINAWABGANJ, Dec 30: A total of Tk 20 crore has been allocated for reconstruction and maintenance of 145 secondary and higher secondary flood damaged educational institutions here, reports UNB.

Officials sources said, of the total amount, Tk 29.50 lakh has been sanctioned against 56 flood damaged different educational institutions in Sadar and Tk 27.5 lakh for 58 institutions in Sibganj thana.

Besides, Tk 6.30 lakh against 11 institutions in Gomastapur, Tk 11 lakh for 19 institutions in Bholahat and Tk 60,000 for one flood damaged educational institution in Nalcholia thana have been allocated.

The work will be completed in two phases, sources said.

'Introduce digital telephone system in Chandpur'

From Shirin Akhter

CHANDPUR, Dec 30: The telephone subscribers of Chandpur exchange have been suffering due to poor telephone service here for a long time.

There are two telephone exchanges in Chandpur. One is at Puranbazar and another is at Natunbazar. Puranbazar exchange is numbered by hour figures, while Natunbazar exchange is numbered by three figures. The Puranbazar exchange was established in 1964 which is an old system one. Most of the machines are damaged.

The building is in dilapidated condition. One cannot connect from four group to three group easily.

Natunbazar exchange has decided to give 300 new telephone lines, but the scheme could not be materialised due to shortage of cables. At least 500 applications are lying pending in telephone office for new connections.

Overbilling and mismanagement are plaguing local telephone exchanges. There is no billing office here. The bills are submitted and processed from Comilla office. So subscribers have to go to Comilla, with complaints.

The telephone subscribers have been facing a lot of inconveniences as the sets do not work properly. Frequent cross connections and other disturbances like wrong connections

and noisy sounds are regular phenomenon which cause immense sufferings to the subscribers.

Local businessmen at Puranbazar informed that trade and commerce of the district with the capital and other commercial places have been facing setback due to lack of proper telelink facilities.

Besides, Chandpur based correspondents of different dailies of the country are facing a lot of problems as they can not send news to Dhaka and other places because of frequent disturbances in lines. People of the district urge the government to introduce digital telephone system in the district as early as possible.



CHANDPUR: The dilapidated condition of flood damaged Zamzamia Bridge which is situated in the middle of Algee Bazaar and Chota Sundar High School. Pedestrians cross the bridge in great risk. — Star photo

Works on 69 uplift schemes progressing

JHENIDAH, Dec 30: Works on 69 development schemes under the Test Relief Programme in Moheshpur thana are going on in full swing, reports UNB.

Official sources said, 106 metric tons of wheat worth about Tk 11 lakh have been sanctioned for the implementation of the schemes.

The schemes included development of educational and religious institutions, earth filling of rural markets and cleaning of water hyacinth and bushes. Twenty-five per cent of the works have already been completed, sources said.

Massive irregularities in Rural Stipend Project

NOAKHALI, Dec 30: Massive irregularities in implementation of Rural Stipend Project have been reported from three districts hampering the scope of women education, reports UNB.

Funds have been collected at most of the schools and madrasahs showing inflated figure of students in Noakhali, Feni and Laxmipur districts.

Each school used three sets of attendance registers for male and female students, one which is used to call names in the class room, another for collection of stipend money which is embezzled later and the third set for deceiving the Education Ministry's scrutiny in respect of

government grants and aids.

The malpractice is going on in complicity with bank employees and thana level officials and made possible in absence of any inspecting and monitoring system, sources alleged.

It may be mentioned here that the stipend scheme including free education from class six to ten was introduced for the girl students in the rural areas in order to encourage women education in the country. According to the rule, a regular girl students who must be unmarried to get the facility for education free of cost.

New Kanaipur UP chairman

From Our Correspondent

FARIDPUR, Dec 30: Amirul Islam was elected chairman of Kanaipur Union Parishad (UP) in the sadar thana.

The post of the Kanaipur UP chairman fell vacant following the brutal killing of its ex-chairman Abdul Berek Molla on October 31. He was seriously chopped in the court compound here on October 25 in day light by some terrorists.

Local sources said that the UP election was held in a free, fair and peaceful atmosphere on December 19. It is mentionable that the newly elected chairman Amirul Islam is the eldest son of ex-chairman Abdul Berek Molla.

In Netrakona

Winter crops farming facing setback

NETRAKONA, Dec 30: Cultivation of winter crops and vegetables is facing a setback due to shortage of seeds and funds and widespread pest-attack on crops, reports UNB.

Growers of all 10 thanas are being deprived of getting adequate seeds, fertilisers and funds in the current season after the prolonged flood.

A total of 1,722 square km crop lands of 86 unions of the district have been badly affected by the deluge and after the calamity a vast tracts of 'Aman' crop land have been ravaged by massive pest-attack.

The government has laid special emphasis on the cultivation of winter crops and vegetables to overcome the losses

caused by flood under the post-flood rehabilitation programme in the district. But the programme may hamper due to lack of bank loans.

Although the commercial banks have undertaken loan disbursement programme among the poor and marginal farmers, they are being deprived of getting loan due to undue interference of a section of local people, it is alleged.

This year, a total of 8,747 hectares of lands have been brought under winter crops and vegetable cultivation in the current season in the district. But the growers apprehended that the target might not be achieved.

Non-formal education fails to make headway

NOAKHALI, Dec 28: The non-formal education at Hatiya thana of Noakhali and Ramgati thana of Laxmipur district has failed to make any headway, a survey conducted by a non-government organisation revealed here, reports UNB.

Malpractice, corruption and irregularities in administering the project have negated its objectives. Officials and employees of the executing agency are allegedly involved in misappropriation in collaboration with some dishonest teachers showing the progress of work on papers only.

The survey said some 705 mass education centres were set up in Hatiya under non-formal education scheme-2, of which only 20-25 can be located by signboards. There is no indication of existence of any of the remaining centres.

The non-formal Education Directorate gave permission to non-government organisations like VIDO, Dip Unnayan Sangstha, RIK Swarnivir Bangladesh, BRAD, DORP, Shohelpur Mahila Sangstha, Comilla Atmanibedito, PDP and VDC to execute some of the schemes, but they so far failed to do the job.

On the other hand, the situation is more frustrating in Ramgati thana. A total of 300 learning centres were set up here, out of which 90 were entrusted to Swarnivir for implementation, 75 to Sopiret, 45 to RDC and 90 to DORP.

Some officials of the NGOs accused an official of non-formal education directorate of creating impediments in the way of its implementation for collecting gratification money.

An evaluation team which visited some centres of Ramgati thana in November found massive irregularities, but they did not take any action to rectify the situation, according to some local respondents of the survey.

An official of PDP said, they applied for setting up school in Ramgati thana, but they were not given permission because the bribe was refused.

A number of organisations in Laxmipur district expressed concern at the situation and demanded intervention of higher authority to solve the existing problems besetting the non-formal education in the area.

Local leaders of Ramgati thana also expressed their dismay and urged the higher authorities to remove the bottlenecks centering the non-formal education schemes.

Another report from Pabna says: Academic life of the students of 592 flood-affected educational institutions in the district has seriously been affected due to the non-availability of fund for repair.

Official sources said the extent of damage caused by the devastating flood was estimated at about Tk 787.40 lakh. The institutions include 357 primary, 142 secondary schools, 70 madrasahs and 23 colleges.

The officials said they have written to the higher authorities for the required allocation for repair work. But there was no allocation for the purpose so far and the repair work was yet to begin.

Local people said classes of some of the primary schools are being held under the sky and beneath the nearby trees.



MYMENSINGH: Dr Ataur Rahman, Director (Administration) of Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture (BINA) speaking as the chief guest at a farmers' rally organised recently by BINA and Agriculture Extension Department at village Kumargata in Muktagacha thana. — Star photo

Ginger cultivation exceeds target in 5 districts

From Our Correspondent

MYMENSINGH, Dec 30: The target of ginger cultivation exceeds in five districts of Greater Mymensingh region has been achieved.

The districts are Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Sherpur, Kishoreganj and Netrakona.

According to District Agricultural Extension Department (AED) official sources, the target of ginger cultivation was fixed at 730 hectares in Greater Mymensingh region. But 775 hectares of land have been brought under ginger cultivation in this region during the current season.

Of the total land, 264 hectares out of its target 249 hectares of land have been brought in Mymensingh, 226 hectares, out of its target of 216 hectares in Jamalpur, 86 hectares, out of its target of 81 hectares in Netrakona, 119 hectares out of its target 109

hectares in Kishoreganj and 86 hectares, out of its target of 81 hectares in Sherpur district, sources said.

Meanwhile, 2,850 hectares of land have been brought under turmeric cultivation in five districts of Greater Mymensingh region in the current 'Rabi' season, according to Agriculture Extension Department (AED) official sources.

The production target of turmeric has been estimated at 7,125 metric tons.

AED officials said, 850 hectares of land will be brought under turmeric cultivation to produce 2,125 metric tons of turmeric in Mymensingh district, 550 hectares to produce 1,375 metric tons in Jamalpur, 550 hectares to produce 1,375 metric tons in Sherpur, 450 hectares to produce 1,125 metric tons in Kishoreganj and 450

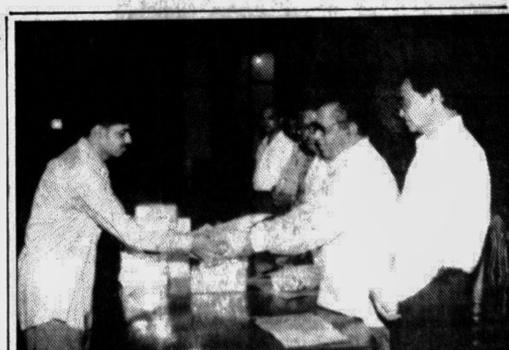
hectares to produce 1,125 metric tons in Netrakona district.

AED officials also added, the production of 'Rabi' crops in Mymensingh district is very satisfactory.

Growers of 'Rabi' crops are much optimistic about good yield as they are enjoying a favourable climate in this season.

During the 'Rabi' season the farmers have cultivated 'Boro' pulses, mustard, wheat, sugarcane, groundnut, potatoes, onions, garlic and vegetables.

Farmers' sources said, the recent deluge has offered a mixed soil with silt that is suitable for various 'Rabi' crops. Farmers also said as they missed the chance of 'Aman' cultivation for the long standing flood, now they have been engaged in massive 'Rabi' cultivation to recoup the loss.



AGRI-VARSITY (Mymensingh): Vice-Chancellor Prof Muhammad Hussain recently distributed prizes among the winners of a farming programme at Shilpacharya Zainal Abedin auditorium. — Star photo