

News snaps

Winter crops under pest-attack

MADARIPUR, Jan 3: Farmers are worried and bad luck looms large as crops and vegetables in different areas of the district, particularly *char* lands, have come under massive pest-attack, reports APB.

Prospect of wheat, potato, tomato, mustard, and pulses like *musur*, *kalai*, and *khesari* has become bleak due to attack by various types of pests, farmers and Agricultural Extension Department officials said. Bands of *leda poka* (a kind of pest) attack the crops after dusk. Pests also emerged from the soil after sunset and eat up the roots of the plants. Use of locally available pesticides did not prove effective, farmers say.

Skin-grafting on acid victim

JHENIDAH, Jan 3: A successful skin-grafting operation was performed on an acid-burnt patient, Tohura Begum, 23, at Jhenidah Hospital recently, reports APB.

She can now look forward again to a normal life after the operation was performed on her face and other parts of her body by Dr Abdul Latif recently. Tohura Begum is the daughter of Yasin Tarafdar of Phultala village in Moheshpur thana. Her husband had thrown acid on her on the night of October 29 after she divorced him as he tortured her for dowry, she told. She was admitted to the Jhenidah Hospital immediately.

Drug addiction rising

KUSHTIA, Jan 3: Drug addiction among young men has been rising alarmingly in the district, much to the concern and anxiety of parents and guardians, reports APB.

Phensidyl, hemp, opium, heroin and liquor are sold almost openly in Kushtia and Bheramara towns, local people say. The addicts include school and college students, rickshawpullers, transport workers and unemployed youth. Allegations are also there that drug dealers store and sell these items right under the nose of the law enforcing agencies. With the increase in the number of drug addicts, the incidence of crime has also gone up in the district and neighbouring areas. Police said they can not control this menace because of "intervention by influential people".

School dropouts on rise

SHERPUR, Jan 3: Food for Education Programme (FEP) in the district has not been successful as rate of attendance at primary schools is declining due to suspension of its operation for the last six months, reports APB.

An official source here said the distribution of foodgrains among the students of primary schools remained suspended for the period owing to lack of allocations for the district. The programme was introduced to check the rate of dropouts and raise percentage of educated children barring them from child-labour. Under the programme, each student from poor families who attended school on average 85 per cent of days in a year would get 15 kg of foodgrains per month.

Vegetable farming on 7,000 hectares

KUSHTIA, Jan 3: District Agricultural Extension Department (AED) has fixed a target to bring 7,000 hectares land under winter vegetable cultivation in six thanas of the district this year, reports APB.

About 10,000 metric tons of winter vegetables worth about Tk 8 crore are expected to be produced in the season, said an AED source.

Kushtia flood victims get 4,900 VGF cards

KUSHTIA, Jan 3: The government has distributed 4,900 Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) cards among the flood affected people in six thanas and four pourasavas of this district, reports APB.

Each VGF card-holder will get eight kilograms of rice per month under the programme. About 650 tonnes of rice have been allocated for the purpose. Besides, about Tk 400,000 have already been distributed among the affected people under the post-flood rehabilitation programme.

Five terrorists arrested

SATKHIRA, Jan 3: Police arrested five terrorists along with firearms from Tala thana of the district in a drive recently, reports UNB.

The arrested are — Khorshed, 24, Wadud, 35, Liaqat, 35, Amirul, 28, and Shamal Sardar, 20. A revolver, a pipe gun, 11 bombs and four rounds of bullets were recovered from their possession. Another report from Comilla says, Customs and BDR *Jawans*, in a joint raid, seized a truck loaded with smuggled Indian sugar from the Mia Bazaar in Choudhagram thana. The smuggled goods of 220 bags of sugar worth Tk 6 lakh were deposited with the district Customs office.

Three killed in road accident

SATKHIRA, Jan 3: Three persons including a housewife was killed in separate road accidents in three thanas of the district recently, reports BSS.

Police and hospital sources said, a Kaliganj-bound minibus hit Sharifa Khatun, 42, wife of Sayed Ali of village Moutela near Moutola bazaar on Kaliganj-Shyamnagar road in Kaliganj thana while she was milking her cow on the road side. She succumbed to her injuries at Satkhira Sadar hospital. A Shymnagar-bound minibus from Munshiganj ran over a bi-cycle rider Delowar Hossain, 21, of village Munshiganj at Munsur Sardar bus-stand on Shyamnagar-Munshiganj road in Shyamnagar thana as the victim was crossing the road.

Corrugated iron sheets donated

CHANDPUR, Jan 3: The Lion's Club of Chandpur has donated eight bundles of corrugated iron sheets among some flood affected families in Nanupur village in Sadar thana, reports APB.

The CI sheets were handed over to the families at a simple function recently. Club sources said.

143 cases pending

Kushtia, Jan 3: A total 143 cases under the Women and Children Oppression Act are pending with courts in greater Kushtia district, reports APB.

Of those, 91 are in Kushtia and 42 in Meherpur. As per law, a case under the Act is supposed to be disposed within three months. A police source told the agency that many of the cases have been delayed because of alleged false statements of victims which damage their merit and lead to legal tangles.

Bid to realise PDB dues failed

JHENIDAH, Jan 3: The local Power Development Board (PDB) has Tk 5 crore dues with consumers, according to official sources, reports APB.

Of the amount, Tk 2 crore is due with consumers in Jhenidah Sadar thana, Tk 2 crore in Magura Sadar thana and Tk 1 crore in Kaliganj, Shailakupa, Moheshpur, Harinakunda and Katchandpur thanas. There are about 30,000 consumers in Jhenidah Sub-division of PDB. In Jhenidah Sadar thana, 70 per cent of the dues are with the PWD, Collectorate and other government departments. Ashraf Ali, Executive Engineer of local PDB, told that repeated attempts to realise the dues failed.

No progress in rice procurement drive

PIROJPUR, Jan 3: The government has failed to purchase any rice or paddy in six southern districts under its food procurement programme, launched on November 1, reports APB.

There was a plan to procure paddy and rice worth one crore taka from the districts during the current 'Aman' season. Food Department sources said that 500 tonnes of paddy would be bought from the farmers directly and another 500 tonnes of rice from rice mills. They said the procurement drive is scheduled to continue till February 28. The price of paddy has been set at Tk 7.6 per kilogram and that of rice at Tk 12 a kg this season, they said.

Unscrupulous people producing molasses

CHAPAINAWABGANJ, Jan 3: A section of unscrupulous people are producing molasses in the district mixed with harmful ingredients to make the commodity brighter one to draw the attraction of customers, reports UNB.

These people are manufacturing molasses mixing with poisonous ingredients including a kind of powder, urea fertiliser and pesticide for brightening it to earn a windfall profit at the cost of public health. The whitened molasses sells at higher price than that of the blackened one. The physicians said with the intake of such molasses a man may be attacked with complicated diseases including serious stomach ailment. Apprehending the danger many people in the district totally gave up the habit of using molasses for making their nutritious foods on the occasion of various festivals.

Shrimp farm owner killed

SATKHIRA, Jan 3: A shrimp farm owner of village Aulapur in sadar thana of the district was killed by unknown assailant recently, reports BSS.

Police said the victim Ashraf Hossain, 38, was stabbed to death while he was sleeping at the 'tonga' of his shrimp farm. The motive of the murder could not be ascertained. A case was filed with sadar thana. None was arrested in this connection.

Rivers need immediate dredging

From Aroop Talukdar

BARISAL, Jan 3: Plying of riverine vessels is becoming risky gradually due to emergence of numerous shoals along the river routes to and from Barisal, Dhaka, Bhola, Patuakhali and Pirojpur during this inter season.

Now, more than 50 passenger launches, both small and double deckers and cargo vessels are plying between Dhaka, Barisal, Jhalakati, Patuakhali, Bhola, Pirojpur, Madaripur including some other destinations in the southern region.

Mentionable, riverine routes are the main routes for thousands of people moving to and from different destinations in the riverine districts.

Launch and cargo vessel owners and their 'Sarengs' said, many of the river routes have no necessary depth of water for smooth plying of riverine vessels.

At different points in the Meghna, Padma near Chandpur, Deara point of Arel Khan river, Kirtonkhola of Barisal, Ilisha, Tetulia rivers of Bhola many underwater shoal lands have been emerged hampering smooth and regular plying of marine vessels, particularly at night time.

Every year the routes are becoming narrower as the rivers are not dredged out when it is necessary.

In such cases passenger launches are being delayed in their journey to reach the destinations causing immense sufferings to the passengers, particularly women and children on board due to shortage of food and drinking water.

According to a source of Bangladesh Inland Water

Transport Authority (BIWTA) here, for smooth plying of big marine vessels it needs at least eight feet deep water along the

WDB. Its office is at Dhaka. As a result, it is getting difficult to work or their negligence sometimes worsens the condition. He

this way several lakhs of takas are spent in dredging. Barisal Port Authority supervises more than 50 stations



BARISAL: Shoal has emerged in the river Meghna near Hizla in the district. —Star photo

river routes which is becoming only five feet deep at Hizla, Tek, Badartuni, Shoula, Patti, Haturia, near Laharhat and near Sreepur points along the river routes.

A Barisal port official informed, to mark and find out the underwater shoals and depth of water in the river routes, responsibility lies on the Hydrography Department of

also informed that dredging was conducted a few months ago in the Kirtonkhola river near Barisal Port area. But this dredging helped little to increase the depth of water or to remove silt from the water routes as the silts are left at other places along the river not too far from the dredging sites.

Some launch owners and workers' union leaders told, in

in this area, but strange enough dredging, hydrography, marine security and some other sectors go to different authorities.

Almost always the port authority faces various problems in different sectors.

Now, it is feared that some of the riverine routes may be abandoned or stopped forever if dredging is not conducted immediately.

Russo fighting against odds to become an artiste

From Ranesh Maitra

PABNA, Jan 3: Raoshan Akhter Russo is a favourite name in the cultural arena in the town.

At the age of 22, she has already won the hearts of hundreds of people with her talents in various cultural activities, such as dance, drama, music and recitation.

Born on February 1, 1976,

She has already taken up a challenge against all sorts of social and religious taboos from a small district town of North Bengal. Already she has been succeeded in making a place in the cultural arena of Pabna. But she will have to go a long way. She has been striving very hard to make her place as an actress, reciter, dancer and a

Family Planning. They are relentlessly encouraging their unmarried young daughter to achieve her goal. They hope that the indomitable courage and determination of their daughter will ultimately win against all odds.

Russo has become a graduate, she obtained her graduation degree as a regular student



PABNA: Russo acting the role of Totapakhki, a famous drama of Rabindranath Tagore which was staged in Pabna town recently. —Star photo



PABNA: Raoshan Akhter Russo alias Pushpita, who is striving hard to build up her career as an artiste. —Star photo

she has been struggling hard for developing herself as a good cultural activist in Pabna. She has come of an ordinary middle-class family. Usually at her age girls in our society search for a life-partner with an outlook of dependence, but she is a difference. Because she has been striving hard to establish herself towards her goal.

singer. Generally our lower middle-class Muslim families are conservatives. They are reluctant to groom up their children as drama artiste, musician, dancer and recitationist. Thanks to her father who is a small trader and also her mother who is a petty government employee working under the Directorate of Health and

of Shaheed Bulbul College in 1998. She did not fail in any examination starting from school level to college level.

When asked 'why you could not make good results in the school or college-level examinations', Russo replied, 'My whole attention was, and still is, towards developing myself as a cultural activist. This is responsible for her mediocre result. When this correspondent asked her again why she did not continue her studies further, Pushpita, with tearful eyes, pointed out towards the financial constraints of their family.

Their family is, however, quite a big one. Besides her parents, they are five sisters and one brother. Her mother is a class four employee. But still since her childhood, she also developed herself as an actress and dancer. So, she encouraged her children in prosecuting academic studies and also in cultural activities. Russo's father also did not discourage his daughters in developing themselves as cultural activists.

Russo is the third child. Her elder sisters are also singers. The fourth sister is also a cultural activist. She is an HSC examinee. The fifth sister is a school-going one. The only brother is a first year Honours student who has been reading in Government Edward College.

Her choice is Nazrul 'geeti' and Folk songs. As regards dance, she likes classical ones, but its teachers are rarely available here and hence she is facing difficulties towards achieving her goal. As regards drama she likes very much social dramas.

Russo has also undergone a training in drama. She also completed a two-year training course in recitation of Bengali poems. She is a Development officer in the General Insurance Company.

Misappropriation of VGF wheat in Magura

MAGURA, Jan 3: The local people submitted a written allegation against Sabdalpur union Chairman for his alleged misappropriation of VGF wheat in Sripur thana here, reports UNB.

Local people including two Union Parishad members alleged that the chairman sold out the government allocated wheat lifted on June 30 under VGF programme in the black market.

When contacted Sripur thana TNO admitted about the allegation and said an investigation was on in this regard.

Local people expressed concern over the inordinate delay in submitting the report by the committee formed to probe into the allegation.

Money-lenders doing roaring business in 9 N-dists

ISWARDI, Jan 3: Professional money-lenders have been doing a roaring business in nine northern districts including Pabna, reports APB.

People in the rural areas have been facing unemployment problem. The money lenders have taken full advantage of this situation and are extending loans to the needy against their immovable properties like houses and cultivable land at exorbitant rates of interest, local people say.

A large number of people have moved to urban areas in search of job. Those who cannot leave their homes, fall back upon the professional money-lenders.

The situation has worsened with the advent of the Holy month of Ramadan, because prices of essentials have shot up.

Scarcity of 'Boro' 'Rabi' seeds in Kushtia

KUSHTIA, Jan 3: Acute scarcity of seeds has been hindering cultivation of 'Boro' and 'Rabi' crops including wheat in six thanas of the district during the current season, reports APB.

According to the Agricultural Extension Department (AED), at least 100,000 KGs of 'Boro' and about 800,000 KGs of wheat seeds are required for the current season. But the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) has so far supplied 11,000 KGs of wheat and 3,500 KGs of 'Boro' seeds which is only 1.5 per cent of the total requirement.

BADC has so far supplied only 350 KGs of maize, 100 KGs of mustard, 90 KGs of *mug*, 100 KGs of sunflower and 5,000 KGs of potato seeds.

Farmers said they had started cultivation with great enthusiasm to recover the losses during the last floods, but all their hopes have been dashed by scarcity of seeds.

The main reason for the scarcity of seeds is poor harvest last year, they said. Moreover, most of the farmers ate up the seeds during the floods due to shortage of food, they said.

Burglar beaten to death

MYMENSINGH, Jan 3: An alleged burglar was beaten to death by a mob near Beltali Barabala in Sadar thana here on Friday, reports UNB.

Police said some four burglars came to the area for stealing the electric wire of the Pali Bidyut Samity early in the morning. Local people suspecting them gave a good chase and managed to red-hat Shamsul Haque, 35.

Law and order worsens in Sirajganj

SIRAJGANJ, Jan 3: The law and order situation has deteriorated sharply in the district causing concern among the peace-loving people, reports UNB.

Various crimes like theft, dacoity, acid throwing, extortion, rape, killing and terrorism are now regular phenomena in the district.

The helpless majority people victimised by offenders in many cases, do not even dare to file cases with the police for fear of their own security.

Police and witnesses said a BDR *Jawan* identified as Golam Mostafa, 35, was stabbed to death by a group of miscreants in day light at the Judge Court verandah here on September 2.

Ullapara thana police recovered the body of an unidentified man from Sirajganj road on August 25 and Sirajganj thana police recovered the body of a minor child from poura area in the town on November 29.

Abdul Baten, 55, was killed in a clash between two groups of rival villagers at Fakirpara village in Shahjadpur thana on August 26.

Some miscreants strangled Mithu, a student of class three, son of Hamid Master of Chhabbisha village in sadar thana and Noor Hossain, 30, of Selunda village in same thana, was hacked to death by a group of miscreants on June 13.

Besides, a sexagenarian identified as Sujabad Ali, of Konagati village in sadar thana, was killed in a clash on August 30.

On August 3, some assailants seriously wounded two people at Milan Traders in the town and another was stabbed by a group of ruffians in the poura area on the same day.

Shahjadpur police recovered the body of Sohrab Ali from behind the Bijoy cinema hall on September 3. Miscreants chopped an old woman, 70, to death at Purnaghoshgati village in Tarash thana on September 15.

An old man was killed in a clash at Bachamara village in Shahjadpur thana on September 11 and a husband killed his wife identified as Anguri Khatun of Konabari village in Kamarkhand thana on September 14.

On the same day, a young housewife identified as Rahimmon, 30, of Joypur village in Shahjadpur thana, was killed in a clash and a newly married

housewife was killed allegedly by her husband at Royhati village in Royganj thana on October 25.

Apart from this, Ainul Haque allegedly beat to death his pregnant wife Laila, 25, of Morhda village in the same thana on November 29.

A young housewife was beaten to death by her husband at Chaksarappur village in Tarash thana following a brawl over dowry money on August 15.

On September 10, a group of scoundrel chopped Iman Ali, 35, to death in daylight at Bahuli hat in sadar thana and a group of miscreants slaughtered to death a local Awami League leader Shahida Aziz at Shibpur village in Royganj thana on December 4.

At least 15 people were injured in a clash between workers of bus and tempo at Dhaka-Bogra highway in the town on November 19 and at least 27 people were injured in a clash between the activists of Awami League and BNP on November 7.

Apart from this, some 75 people were also injured in two fierce clashes between the activists of Awami League and BNP in the town on October 22 and December 12.

At least 35 people were injured in sporadic clashes between two villagers in Shahjadpur thana and 13 activists of the ruling and opposition parties were also injured in a clash on December 10.

Rabeya Begum, 60, of Chandidas Gati village in sadar thana, was slaughtered by some ruffians on November 4 and a UP chairman was chopped to death by miscreants in Kamarkhand thana on October 19.

On the same day, a group of scoundrel hacked an old man to death at Ullapara village in Belkuchi thana.

A teenager was violated allegedly by some miscreants behind Gano Sahajiya Sangsha in Chandidasgati village in sadar thana and another young girl was raped at Reghbbaria village in Ullapara thana on October 14.

A train dacoity was committed at Jhaoli area between Sirajganj and Ishwardi stations on November 29 and two robberies were committed at Rajakhar Char village in sadar thana on December 11 and at Sarishakol bazar in Shahjadpur thana on December 21.



MYMENSINGH: Prof Mustafizur Rahman, President, Bangladesh Agricultural University Teachers' Association (BAUTA) recently distributed relief materials and money among the flood victims in sadar thana. BAUTA executive committee members were also present. —Star photo



NARAYANGANJ: A colourful Victory Day rally was arranged by the district administration in the port town on December 16. —Star photo

Extraction of date juice begins in full swing

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA, Jan 3: Extraction of date juice has begun across the district.

People of Bangladesh from time immemorial have been extracting juice from date-palm trees in every winter.

Farmers who harvest 'aus' and 'aman' paddy from their land feel delighted with the smell of new crops. Their wives husk paddy and prepare rice with much enthusiasm.

On the first day of Bengali month Agrabayan Nabanna festival is observed in rural Bangladesh with great joy with the harvest of the new paddy. The housewives of farmers make various kinds of cakes with new rice. Molasses made of juice is the main ingredient for preparing cake.

Solid molasses locally known as 'patali' is very tasty to eat. The juice occupies a distinctive place in Bengali culture especially here and in its adjoining areas which is famous for date juice and molasses.

15 dacoities committed in 4 Mymensingh thanas in '98

MYMENSINGH, Jan 3: Fifteen dacoities were committed in Bhaluka thana here in a week marking the alarming deterioration of law and order situation, reports UNB.

The gangs looted valuables worth Tk 8 lakh by raiding 15 houses including three shops from December 19 to 25, official sources said.

Witnesses said about 25 dacoits looted goods including gold and cash worth Tk 3 lakh storming the houses owned by Akhter Hossain and Abul Kalam at Mamarish village on December 25.

Earlier on December 23, the gang attacked the houses of Omar Ali, Keramat Miah, Hekmat Miah, Hafez Miah, Suruz Miah and Taleb Miah one after another and looted goods worth Tk 2 lakh.

On December 19, dacoities were committed in four houses at Sonakhali, Katlamari and Angarpara villages and three shops in Interhat Bazaar and decamped with valuables worth Tk 3 lakh.