### News snaps

### Four alleged robbers caught

JAMALPUR, Jan 10: Local people caught four alleged mem-bers of a gang armed with lethal weapons on Monday night when they were preparing for a robbery in the town, reports

All the four identified as Shakil, 20, Azim, 22, Palash, 17, and Jewel, 21, hailed from different parts of the town. They were handed over to the police. Police said local people caught the miscreants along with firearms as they were taking preparations for committing a dacoity at Bogabayeed-Rashidpur Road. On receipt of information, Sadar police arrested the four and recovered ram dao, Chinese axe, daggers, knives and torches from their possession.

### Tk 23 cr rehabilitation programme

RAJBARI, Jan 10: A 23 crore taka programme for rehabilita-tion of families of 1,400 handicapped people is being implemented here, reports APB.

Each handicapped person or his family has been given grant to do income-generating activity under the government's post-flood rehabilitation programme. This assistance is being given with the help of 'Impact' of UK through the 'Impact Foundation of Bangladesh' among the flood-affected people at Rajbari Sadar, Goalundo and Pangsha. Executive Director of the Foundation told that paddy wheat and wagetable needs are also being dation told that paddy, wheat and vegetable seeds are also being distributed among the flood-affected farmers.

### Hundreds of small Sishu trees axed

BHERAMARA, Jan 10: Hundreds of small 'Sishu' trees are being axed in 12 thanas of greater Kushtia district following the outbreak of an unidentified disease, reports APB.

Besides causing loss to the growers, this has dampened the government's tree plantation campaign in the area. The growers say, soil of this region is suitable for growing sishu trees and this variety of tree grows faster than others in the area. Sources in the Forest Extension Department said that they were yet to identify the disease. The department has, however, sent a report about the symptoms of the disease to the Forest Research Institute (FRI) in the United Kingdom.

### Wheat farming on 15,933 hectares

MANIKGANJ, Jan 10: A total of 15,933 hectares of land have been brought under wheat cultivation in seven thanas of the district in the current season, reports BSS.

Official sources said, about 35,610 tonnes of wheat is expected to be produced here. Of the total land 3,000 hectares have been cultivated in Manikganj sadar, 3,000 hectares in Saturia. 1,500 hectares in Ghior, 2,200 hectares in Daulatpur, 3,000 hectares in Singair, 1,933 hectares in Shibalaya and 1,300 hectares in Harirampur. Agriculture Extension Department sources said necessary seeds, fertiliser and other agricultural inputs have been distributed among the marginal farmers for successful implementation of the scheme.

### Tk 1.14 cr loan distributed

KISHOREGANJ, Jan 10: Bangladesh Rural Development Board distributed a total of Taka 1,14,85,000 as loan through four co-operatives among the farmers, landless men and women in the district in 1998-99 fiscal year, reports BSS.

According to official sources, a total of 93,478 farmers, landless men and women have been benefited by the loan. The board has recovered Taka 1,26,06,000 arrear loan which is about 78 per cent of the total amount of loans disbursed.

### Most projects remain unimplemented

FENI, Jan 10: Even though the project period completed on December 31, most of the projects taken up under Test Relief (TR) programme in the district remained unimplemented, reports UNB.

Only 35 per cent works of 298 projects were completed by the period while works on many others could not be started yet, according to competent sources. They said a total of 519 metric tonnes of wheat were allotted for implementing 298 projects under the TR programme in 1998. Of them, 65 projects were undertaken in Chhagolnaiya thana, 60 in Dagonbhuiyan, 50 in Sadar, 34 in Parshuram, 82 in Sonagazi and seven in Feni Pourasava. The half-baked projects have created a problem in kicking off the works of the Food For Works programme.

### Lentil plants under pest attack

SHARIATPUR, Jan 10: When farmers embarked on a massive farming to recoup their output losses caused by the devastating flood, pest attack played a havoc with their lentil plants, reports UNB.

Officials said lentil on 1,050 hectares of land in Sadar, Naria and Jajira thanas have been damaged by the pest attack. "We have become hostage to fortune ... probably we are hurtling towards another setback after the flood," said a frustrated farmer. He said that it would be difficult for them to recover their production cost this season. According to the officials, crops on 12,525 hectares of land were completely damaged while on 10,728 hectares partially by the prolonged flood last year. About 1,000 cattlehead, 3,000 goats and several thousands poultry birds also died in the deluge.

### Bomb recovered

GAIBANDHA, Jan 10: A big size homemade bomb was recovered from a roadside ditch at Jhineswar on Gaibandha-Palashbari road on Thursday, reports UNB.

Villagers said some miscreants, came in a white-colour microbus, dumped a polythene bag in the ditch and drove away soon when they rushed to the spot. Being informed by the police Captain Zulfikar, an ammunition technical officer of BMA In-

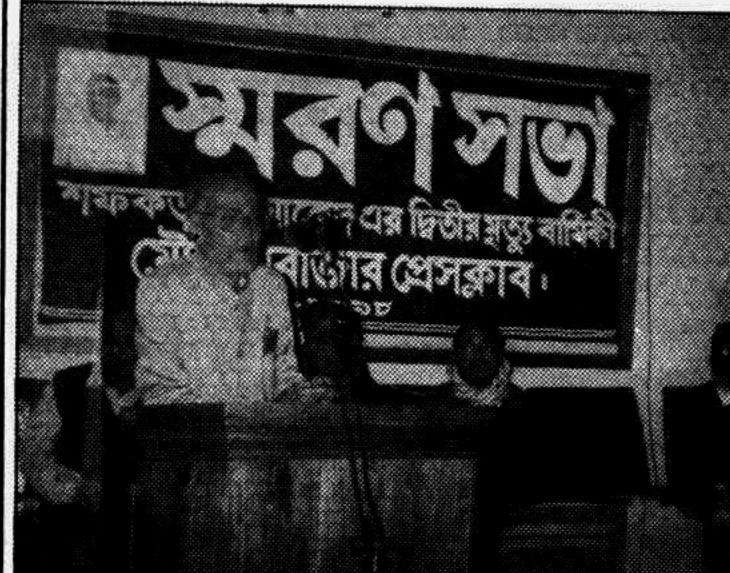
#### fantry Division of Rangpur Cantonment, recovered the bomb. Hundreds of cases remain pending NATORE, Jan 10: Hundreds of cases have been pending with the three Magistrate courts in the district, causing great diffi-

culties to both the plaintiffs and defendants, reports APB. Official sources said the three magistrates for the three Foujdari courts have to remain busy with administrative work. Three courts were set up to cover six important thanas of the district. Court-1 is for Natore Sadar and Bagatipara, Court-2 for Gurudaspur and Shingra and Court-3 for Lalpur and Baraigram thanas. Magistrate Ataur Rahman who is in charge of Court-1 has to remain busy with work at the treasury, NDC and other responsibilities. Magistrate Ferdose Alam of Court-2 has to devote most of his time to administrative work and issuing licences for guns and firearms.

### Number of hemp addicts on rise

SHARIATPUR, Jan 10: The number of hemp addicts is on rise due to increasing cultivation of the contraband in district by growers, reports UNB.

Poor and middle-class farmers of Gosairhat, Zazira and Bhederganj thanas have been cultivating hemp in rural areas like other seasonal crops for the last few years as its cultivation has been fetching more profits than other crops. A local hempgrower said farmers can plant nearly 400 seedlings on one acre land and earn lakhs of taka. About 6 kg hemp is produced from only a tree which are being sold at Tk 36,000, he also added. Local people urged the authorities concerned to check the cultivation of hemp to save the youths from its increasing addiction.



MOULVIBAZAR: A discussion meeting was arranged at the local press club recently on the occasion of the second death anniversary of Shafquatul Wahed, an organiser of the Liberation War. Star photo

### Three alleged rapists sued

PATUAKHALI, Jan 10: After being directed by the Magistrate Court, Mirzapur thana filed a case on Thursday against three youths for violating the chastity of a woman, reports UNB. The court order followed an investigation after the victim filed a case with the court on December 26. Joybanu, 30. a mother of three of Vikakhali village in Mirzaganj thana, was raped by the youths on December 25, court sources said.

## Rampant pilferage of forest resources in Mymensingh

From Aminul Islam

MYMENSINGH, Jan 10: Forest resources in five thanas are being rampantly pilfered by an organised gang of lifters for a long time. As a result a vast tract area of forest lands are being turned into grazing fields gradually.

According to local people,

acres in Trishal and 3,489 acres in Haluaghat thana.

Virtually now a vast tract of forest lands have been turned into grazing fields. Ther are forest resources on only 25 per cent of the aforementioned ar-

Local people alleged, ram-

forest areas and when the saplings are dried up, they cut and sell those for fuel.

Valuable timbers and dried up saplings are being smuggled out to various parts of the country through different

routes. . Besides, a group of influen-



MYMENSINGH: A view of denuded forest land at village Habirbari in Bhaluka thana. - Star photo

these gangs are very much active for long, but the authorities concerned are not taking proper action against them. Divisional Forest Office sources said there are 38,000 acres of forest lands in different areas of the district. Of the total, 23,021 acres are in Bhaluka, 7,617 acres in Muktagachha, 255 acres in Dhubaura, 6,522 acres in Phulbaria, 102

NETRAKONA, Jan 10: Ex-

traction of date juice is going on

in full swing in different parts

of the district with the advent of

known as 'gachhi' have become

very busy in trimming date and

palm trees to collect sweet juice

tract a huge quantity of juice

which later used for preparing

molasses, locally known as

khejur gur. It is very tasty to eat

and has great demand among

Winter brings a festive mood

Every winter the gachhis ex-

The juice extractors locally

winter, reports UNB.

for making molasses.

the people.

pant lifting of timbers are being done by different organised groups in connivance with a section of dishonest forest officials. Besides some people with the help of dishonest forest officials are destroying valuable saplings and other forest resources from the government forest areas. Such people set on fire to the standing saplings of

to the villagers particularly to

the farmers living in rural ar-

eas. Different kinds of cakes are

made of newly harvested rice

which are enjoyed by all the

prepared from harvested rice in

Nabanna festival along with

A gachhi of Dapunia village

the molasses. Best quality mo-

in sadar thana said, it costs Tk

18 to 20 for preparing one kg of

patali gur and it is sold at Tk 24

to 28 in the market. The price of

molasses in the rural bazaar is

between Tk 24 to 28 depending

lasses are called as 'patali gur'.

Payes, a very popular food, is

family members.

tial people with the help of dishonest forest officials are allegedly grabbing a vast tract of forest lands from Bhaluka thana forest area. They are grabbing this land by preparing false documents. Many signboards after the name of various proposed industries are also found hanging on both sides of Dhaka-Mymensingh highway

A survey conducted by the

A good number of people are

local Forest Department re-

vealed that there are some

20,000 date-palm trees in 10

engaged in collecting and sell-

ing the juice thereby maintain-

ing their families. Every morn-

ing in winter season the juice

collectors along with juice pots

are seen moving from door to

A gachhi told that he is earn-

ing Tk 100 by selling juice of his

door for selling it.

10 date trees per day.

on quality.

thanas.

in Habirbari union of Bhaluka

thana. Forest officials also said due to lack of sufficient forest guards in different parts of forest region lifting activities are increasing. Officials said there are 115 forest guards for Mymensingh region, consisting of 22 beats and covering an area of 8.356.81 acres of forest land. "But the number of guards are too adequate to check the lifting activities, added the official.

Meanwhile, the forest authorities of the district filed 726 cases in the forest court during the last eight years. Out of the cases 581 are under investigation and 145 under trial.

On the other hand, hundreds of landless people are being deprived of their legal share of afforestation which are properly supervised by them.

Under the afforestation programme, the government is bringing a vast tract of fallow lands under tree plantation every year. As per contract the landless people of the concerned areas who look after the trees will get 40 per cent value of the trees after seven years of plantation. It is also alleged that although more than 2,000 trees under the aforesaid programme were matured about a year ago, the concerned officials are not taking any initiatives to give the share to the concerned landless.

When contacted with a high official of the Divisional Forest office, he told the Daily Star requesting anonymity that although maturing period of the contract was over, due to lack of departmental order they could not finalise the matter.

UNB reports from Rangamati: Forest officials seized eight boats loaded with a huge quantity of valuable teaks from the river Karnaphuli on early Wednesday.

. Acting on a tip-off, they raided some areas adjacent to the river in Kaptai thana and seized 800cft timbers worth over Tk 2 lakh.

### Extraction of date juice Osmany Medical College admission test going on in full swing begins Feb 26.

SYLHET, Jan 10: The first year admission test of MAG Osmany Medical College of 1998-99 session will begin at 9 am on February 26, reports

The distribution of admission forms began from December 31.

The admission test like the previous year will be held in multiple choice questionnaire system. The admission seekers are to appear at the examination for a total 100 marks including 30 each for Chemistry, Biology and Physics and 10 for English, said college sources.

### Child marriages up in 5 N-dists

KURIGRAM, Jan 10: Rate of child marriage and divorce have increased to alarming proportions in five districts of greater Rangpur, Reports APB.

According to a survey by some local social organisations, 5 to 10 per cent school girls in urban areas and 15 to 20 per cent in rural areas are given in marriage before they reach 15. The five districts in greater Rangpur are Rangpur, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat and Nilphamari.

These girls become mothers within the first year of their marriage and suffer from various pre and post-natal diseases. These immature housewives often become victims of repression as they can not cope up with family responsibilities. These marriages result in divorce. Many die. The husbands, who are also

teenagers, often leave school and become unemployed. Most of these marriages end up in divorce or through cases in courts.

The survey said that parents and social custom are responsible for such child marriages. Dowry also plays and impor-tant role behind these child marriages.

### Heart camp in Faridpur FARIDPUR, Jan 10:A two-day

heart camp, organised by Faridpur branch of Bangladesh Heart Foundation concluded

here recently, reports BSS.

One hundred fifteen patients with various heart ailments and rheumatic problems were given treatment by eminent cardiac physicians of the country, including Prof Brig (red) Abdul Malik, Prof and Chairman of Cardiology of Banga-bandhu Medical University Dr Sirajul Haque, Prof Rezaul Karim Khondoker, Dr Abul Hossain Khan Chowdhury and local cardiologists Dr Mustafizur Rahman and Dr Jalaluddin Ahmed.

A seminar of heart disease was also organised on at the local Faridpur Medical College auditorium.

The seminar was addressed by the visiting eminent heart specialists. The speakers dealt with various aspects of heart disease and suggested health tips to reduce heart ailments. The seminar was presided

has been providing regular weekly heart treatment since its inception in August last

## Scarcity of fertiliser

RAJSHAHI, Jan 10: Acute scarcity of fertiliser is prevailing across the district creating deep frustration among the farmers during the current pick

season, reports UNB. The price of fertiliser is showing upward trend day by day due to its scarcity and cultivation target on about 1,35,000 hectares of land in the Barendra region may face a set back. apprehended the farmers.

Various crop fields including what are needed huge quantity of urea and other fertilisers to boost production, but the price hike and its scarcity put the growers in great difficulty.

The TSP fertiliser is now being sold between Tk 650 and Tk 680 per sack as against Tk 500 and Tk 525 while SSP fertiliser is being sold between Tk 330 and Tk 340 as against Tk 255 and Tk 275.

Meanwhile, urea is being sold between Tk 310 and Tk 315 as against Tk 280 per sack. On the other hand, potash fertiliser is available in the market at Tk 450 as against Tk

A section of dishonest traders, taking advantage of the situation, are selling Indian substandard fertilisers with impunity damaging the prospect of crops.

Some cultivators alleged that a section of traders have created artificial scarcity of Urea and TSP to earn windfall profits.

Meanwhile, local markets have been flooded with Indian substandard and adulterated fertilisers and the ignorant farmers are buying the same due to its availability at a cheap



RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY: Uttam Kumar Das, Research Fellow, Institute of Bangladesh Institute of Bangladesh Studies addressing at a seminar titled:"Trafficking of women: Laws and its practise in selected South Asian countries"at the institute's seminar hall recently. The seminar was presided over by Prof M Badruddin, Department of Law. - Star photo



AGRI-VARSITY(Mymensingh): Vice-Chancellor Prof Muhammad Hussain giving away certificates among the senior officers on the concluding session of a higher training course on " Time Management and Decision Making" organised recently by the Graduate Training Institute of the university. Star photo

### Smuggling of jute up Growers say they have huge

KURIGRAM, Jan 10: Smuggling of jute has increased as its price is much higher just across the border because BJMC mills are not purchasing jute for the last three months, reports APB.
Prices of White Variety of

jute has fallen to Tk 180 and that of Tosha to Tk 250 per maund in the local markets. Buyers across the border are buying Bangladeshi jute at a price of Tk 370 per maund, traders and growers said. Jute is being smuggled

through Baghbhandar, Sonatali, Bhothaat, Joymonirhaat and Shngjhhar borders, they said. Nine jute mills had opened

purchasing centres, three in Sadar thana, two in Ulipur thana, two in Chilmari thana and one each in Nageswari and Bhurangamari thanas. The market was buoyant when the centres bought jute at the beginning of the season, they said. But the jute markets have now become virtually 'buyerless'. A section of middlemen,

including representatives of

some shipper agencies, have

been buying jute at throw-away

prices.

16,160 hectares of land this 10,000 female students deprived

stocks. The traders estimate

that some 40,000 bales of jute

are still lying unsold at growers'

sion Department sources said

that jute was cultivated in

District Agriculture Exten-

of stipend MADARIPUR, Jan 10: Nearly 10,000 female students of 44 school of Kalkini thana here have been deprived of their stipend money for the last two years resulting in increase in the dropout, reports UNB.

Government introduced the system to encourage female education in rural areas. But local people said the stipend money remained stopped since January 1997.

Already a large number of girl students have been forced to give up their studies owing to stoppage of the stipend negating female education in the thana.

### Pottery of Sherpur on verge of extinction

tery of Sherpur, which was once famed throughout undivided Bengal, is now becoming extinct, a study shows, reports

The community called Pal, who have been traditional potters, are trying desperately to keep it alive.

But various factors, along with the present preference of the people for unbreakable aluminium and plastic goods. are largely negating their ef-

Their products, especially plates, bowls and other kitchen-ware, and toys such as dolls, were in heavy demand in Assam, Bengal and Orissa, his-

is produced and the Pal and other potters had to switch over to other vocations for their sur-

The clay, which could be obtained freely before, has now become expensive to make pottery an economic proposition. The old colouring materials are

become dear. The pottery items hence can no longer be sold as cheap as before. Moreover, the impoverished potters do not have enough capital to resume their age-old profession, said observers.

Unless the government provides adequate capital and opens up new markets, this ageold cottage industry, so long a distinctive feature of indigenous culture, will vanish into irretrievable past, observe the

### Urs mubarak

MADARIPUR, Jan 10: A twoday long Urs mubarak of Hazrat Khawaza Mainuddin Chisti Ajmir (RA) concluded here at Kulfardi Darbar Sharif in Madaripur sadar thana on December 28, reports BSS.

Thousands of devotees of the Pir Sahib from different places attended the Urs.

included feeding of the distressed, special prayers and session of spiritual songs.

#### ery, reports APB, The air has been polluted by of the Health Department told the black smoke emitted from that the intense, blue light rabrickfields, unroadworthy vehicles and welding workshops. Lethal weapons The fertility of farmlands has decreased sharply because of chemical fertiliser and pestirecovered: 2 cides. A source in the Agricultural Extension Department arrested told that the percentage of sulphur and zinc in farmlands was MYMENSINGH, Jan 10: Podropping alarmingly. lice arrested two people and re-covered some lethal weapons

The only way to recover fer-tility of land and restore the along with a pipe-gun from a residence at Akua Voteghar environment is to resume use of organic fertiliser and pesticides, he said.

vehicles frequently on busy roads here.

KURIGRAM, Jan 10: Envi-

ronmental pollution has reached a serious stage in the

district due to excessive use of

chemical fertiliser and pesti-

cides, indiscriminate felling of

trees and destruction of green-

Almost all the trees along the Rangpur-Kurigram highway have been felled by organised gangs and sold to more than 200 brickfields in the district. The brick manufacturers burn thousands of tons of wood, and the black smoke emitted

through the chimneys are pol-luting the environment and turning areas around waste-

JHENIDAH: Plying of vehicles are being hindered greatly as truck drivers park their

Black smoke emitted from

brickfields polluting air

The welding workshops which have mushroomed in the district also pose a great threat to the environment. An official

area in the town on Thursday,

raided the residence of Ahmad

Ali Muhuri in the area and ar-

rested two alleged dacoits - In-

pipe-gun, a ramdao, two swords

and other lethal weapons from

Acting on a tip-off, police

Police also recovered one

reports UNB.

san and Jahangir.

the residence.

diated by the blazing electrodes is harmful for human health and very dangerous for unprotected eyes.

- Star photo

The smoke discharged by vehicles, many of which are unfit to ply the roads, is another serious pollutant but there is no step by the authorities to check

### 1,127 identified as bonafide freedom fighters RAJSHAHI, Jan 10: Some

1,127 people were identified as bonafide freedom fighters in nine thanas of the district, reports UNB. This was revealed at a press conference of Muktijoddha

Sangsad district and city units, held at Rajshahi Press Club on Wednesday. member of the Muktijoddha Sangsad Central Command

M A Rashid, as the founding Council said the scrutiny was done from among 2,400 appli-

over by Faridpur branch president of Heart Foundation

Chowdhury Momtaj Hossain. Faridpur Heart Foundation

# SHERPUR, Jan 10: The pot-

tory reveals. But today very little pottery

vival.

no longer available, and the new stuff is also expensive. Firewood, which was once

The programme of the Urs

extremely cheap, now has also