

## News snaps

### Attack on houses in Mymensingh

MYMENSINGH, Jan 24: At least 10 people including a woman were injured in an attack by some miscreants near Trishal bus stand in the town on Saturday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said a group of armed miscreants attacked the residences of Hazera and Firoz in the area and looted valuables. The attackers also ransacked some other houses. Of the injured, Farooque, 30, and Shamim, 20, were rushed to Mymensingh Medical Hospital in a critical condition. Local people caught an attacker, identified as Moazzam, along with a sharp weapon and handed him over to the police.

### Four muggers arrested in N'ganj

NARAYANGANJ, Jan 24: Four muggers were arrested after they snatched goods from two businessmen near Kashipur El-dag in Fatullah thana on Sunday, reports UNB.

Police said four youths stopped Monir Hossain and Jahirul Islam when they were returning home by a rickshaw after Eid shopping at DIT market at 1 am. Local people caught three of them red-handed and handed over them to police. They were identified as Sirajul Islam, 22, Shamim, 21, and Humayun, 19. The police arrested Raju, 19, on the basis of information of other snatchers.

### Sugarcane cultivation in Pabna

PABNA, Jan 24: A total of 34,800 hectares of land have been brought under sugarcane cultivation in eight thanas of the district in the current season, fixing the production target at 132,890 mts, reports UNB.

Of the total lands, 730 hectares have been brought under the cultivation in Sujanagar thana with a target to produce 30,100 mts of sugarcane. Officials said 600 hectares of land had been brought under the cultivation in Atgharia, 350 in Chatmohor, 35 in Bhangura, 600 in Bera, 700 in Sathia and 465 in Sadar thanas.

### Fire kills one in Madaripur

MADARIPUR, Jan 24: A young man was killed in a fire in Razoor thana while trying to save cattlehead in the early hours of January 15, reports APB.

The victim was identified as Bikash Bala, 28, of Satpar village in the thana. Six other people were also injured. Villagers said Bikash Bala received severe burn injuries when he tried to bring out cattlehead from the burning cowshed adjacent to his blazing homestead. He was rushed to Faridpur Medical College Hospital where he died soon after admission.

### One hacked to death

MAGURA, Jan 24: A middle-aged man was kidnapped and killed by unidentified assailants at village Harishpur in Shalikha thana on Thursday night, reports UNB.

Police said the assassins took away Rajab Ali Mollah, 40, from the local UP office at midnight and hacked him to death. They also cut the tendons of both the legs of Rajab, leaving him dead on the spot. The motives behind the killing were not known immediately. A case was filed with Shalikha thana.

### 109 post vacant at Collectorate

MADARIPUR, Jan 24: Nearly 109 posts including those of nine officers are vacant at the Collectorate here, hampering normal office work for long, reports APB.

Official sources told that the vacant posts include those of Assistant Commissioner and Assistant Director. Twenty posts of Tahsildar, eight posts of Senior Assistant, two posts of surveyors, one post of Chief Assistant and one post of overseer is also vacant for long. Collection of land development tax is being hampered as 20 posts of Tahsildar and 27 posts of Assistant Tahsildar are vacant. Last year, the target for collection of land development taxes could not be achieved.

### 10,000 children attacked with pneumonia

PABNA, Jan 24: At least 10,000 children have been attacked with pneumonia, dysentery and cold diarrhoea in the northern districts of the cold wave now sweeping in the area, reports APB.

In Pabna district, over 500 children have fallen victims to these diseases. A local child specialist told that the diseases are being caused by a virus and children attacked with this virus become weak with every passing day due to loose motion. It may cause death if appropriate treatment is not done in time, he said. In different hospitals, quite a large number of children are now receiving treatment for these diseases at hospitals. Physicians said that children suffering from malnutrition fall victims to these diseases easily. Some 300 children have also been admitted to different thana health complexes with cold-related diseases, and one of them died so far.



Female learners of the UNESCO Club's literacy centres taking part in its sewing training programme in Keraniganj.

### Crime on the rise in Pabna

PABNA, Jan 24: Crime is on the rise in the district with the deterioration of law and order situation, reports UNB.

According to police records, 60 people were murdered in different incidents during 1998. The number of murder in the district was 47 in 1997.

Besides the killings, official sources said, 39 women were raped in 1998. They also recorded 58 incidents of acid burn, 26 incidents of robbery and mugging, 81 clashes, and four incidents of child repression during the period.

Police registered 29 cases under Arms and Explosive Act, 107 cases in connection with drug abuse and smuggling, 91 road accidents and 621 other cases.

### Aman cultivation in GK project area

JHENIDAH, Jan 24: About 3,74,000 tonnes of Aman paddy, worth about Tk 300 crore, is expected to be produced in the Ganges-Kabodak (G-K) project area in the current season, reports UNB.

The GK project covers areas in 13 thanas of Jhenidah, Rupsha, Magura, Rajshahi, Chuadanga and Meherpur districts.

An official source told APB that about 93,500 hectares of land have been brought under HYV Aman cultivation in the project area.

The Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) supplied inputs like HYV seeds, fertiliser and pesticides and the Agricultural Extension Department provided technical assistance.



A seminar on 'Gender relation and development' was held at Sujanagar Thana Parishad auditorium in Pabna under the auspices of Samata, a non-government organisation, recently.

## Poverty alleviation projects not being implemented properly

SIRAJGANJ, Jan 24: Government's poverty alleviation projects for employment generation in the northern region of the country, including the district, have failed to achieve the desired goal of helping the poor, reports UNB.

Sources said wheat was sanctioned for implementation of many projects to create employment for the poor and the day-labourers. But the intended beneficiaries have been deprived in many cases due to corruption, allegedly resorted to by Union Parishad chairmen and members. Thousands of poor people are now passing their days in agony for lack of food.

Government has allocated about 16,000 metric tons of wheat for implementing an

wheat for completing the works of some 8,500 TR schemes in various places of 16 northern districts as part of the post-flood rehabilitation programme.

The sources said allocations were given for the repair of roads, educational institutions, mosques and temples.

But it was alleged that after lifting wheat during the period from November to December, the UP chairmen and members sold nearly the entire quantity in the black market. However, they are carrying out some works of the projects to show their existence in name only.

Government also sanctioned about 40,000 metric tons of wheat for implementing an

other 1,700 "Kabikha" (food for work) projects at many places in the region.

In Sirajganj district, some 3,723 metric tons of wheat were sanctioned for implementation of 768 projects as part of the post-flood rehabilitation programme. But the future of many projects have become uncertain due to alleged malpractice and corruption.

When contacted, an official of the District Relief and Rehabilitation Office here told the news agency that 60 per cent work of the TR schemes and 30 per cent of "Kabikha" (food for work) have been completed.

The official, however, declined to say anything about the alleged corruption.

## Robbery in textile mill

MYMENSINGH, Jan 24: Production in a textile industry here remained suspended since Friday following a robbery in the mill, reports UNB.

Police said a group of robbers numbering about 25 came following sharp rise of its price, affecting the subscribers, reports UNB.

Sources said the crisis has been continuing for the last four months and each cylinder of gas is being sold at Tk 600 to 700 instead of its fixed price of Tk 300.

The authorities filed a case with the local police.

Some 700 workers of the mill have become jobless following the suspension of its production and they are passing their days in uncertainty.

The complainants said that the supply of gas was irregular despite its spiralling price. They have to wait for long for the supply.

Some of the stockpiles the cylinders to create artificial crisis and supply these to outside Khulna, the sources added.

## LP gas crisis prevailing in Khulna for 4 months

KHULNA, Jan 24: Scarcity of Liquefied Petroleum (LP) Gas has been prevailing here following sharp rise of its price, affecting the subscribers, reports UNB.

Sources said the crisis has been continuing for the last four months and each cylinder of gas is being sold at Tk 600 to 700 instead of its fixed price of Tk 300.

The users said a section of dishonest traders were responsible for the price hike though the dealers claimed that the crisis was due to supply shortage from the depot.

Some housewives said that the supply of gas was irregular despite its spiralling price. They have to wait for long for the supply.

In the city, there are three LP gas depots of Padma, Meghna

and Jamuna oil companies. The total number of dealers is 228.

Officials of the oil companies said the use of LP gas had increased much in the recent time but the supply was not increased proportionately. So there has been a crisis of supply at present.

Sources said only a few dealers were supplying gas to the subscribers regularly. Many two to seven cylinders per week, they said.

They complained that some dealers also bribed the officials of the oil companies to get more supply than the stipulated quota.

Some of the stockpiles the cylinders to create artificial crisis and supply these to outside Khulna, the sources added.

## Toll collection from vehicles on the rise

JESSORE, Jan 24: Travel by road in the district has become hazardous and expensive due to rampant toll collection by some self-styled labour leaders, reports APB.

They put up barricades at different points and forcibly collect tolls from buses, trucks, tempo, inter-district coaches and even private cars and jeeps.

Sources told APB that most of the people involved in extortion are unemployed youths and members of different transport workers unions.

These people have put up numerous barricades and checkpoints on Jessore-Khulna, Jessore-Benapole, Jessore-Satkhira and Jessore-Jhenidah highways.

Several unpleasant incidents have taken place and a good number of vehicles have been damaged by these extortions when their owners or drivers refused to pay tolls.

In one such incident at Kaliganj on the Jessore-Jhenidah road recently, a photojournalist from Japan was detained for an hour when he refused to pay toll.

He reported the incident to the TNO of Kaliganj and the OC of Kaliganj thana but to no avail.

Some people alleged that tolls are extorted right under the nose of the police and the law-enforcing agencies.

**Businessman mugged in Ctg**

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 24: Mugger took away Tk 7 lakh from a businessman at Teribazar in the city on Eid day (Tuesday), police said.

Police said, the businessman, Nurul Absar was mugged while he along with his three brothers was getting into an auto-rickshaw with the money kept inside a polythene bag.

The mugger fled the scene after exploding crackers, police added.

Later, police raided the neighbouring areas and arrested one person identified as Malu.



JHENIDAH: A drama was arranged on the occasion of Victory Day by Focus, a local cultural organisation here.

— Star photo

## Narsingdi AL leader hacked to death

NARSINGDI, Jan 24: Local Awami League leader was hacked to death by a group of miscreants on Wednesday, reports APB.

Police said the hoodlums, numbering 10-12, waylaid Dr Abdul Salam, 48, and his son, Mithun, 15, at Shristighar in Shibpur at about 6:30 pm and hit them with sharp weapons.

They were returning home from Narsingdi by a motor cycle.

Mithun was admitted to the sadar hospital in a critical condition.

Police said the attack was a sequel to previous enmity.

A case was filed with Shibpur police. None was arrested till filing of this report.

## 25 posts in Pirojpur Livestock Deptt lying vacant

PIROJPUR, Jan 24: At least 25 posts of the Livestock Department in the district have been lying vacant for long, hampering its activities, reports UNB.

Official sources said treatment of cattle and poultry birds is seriously being hampered due to shortage of manpower.

They said only two veterinary doctors, out of the total seven, are now working in six thanas of the district.

Besides, the posts of Veterinary Officer, Additional District Livestock Officer, Assistant Livestock Officer, Veterinary Field Officer and Thana Livestock Officer remained vacant in the district headquarters as well as in Nesarabad, Kaukhali and Mathbaria thanas.

Apart from this, there was no night guards to protect the offices of the department in six thanas.

The programme will cover Kamardia, Hajara, Natore, Jathibhan, Harishpur, and Goal Bhanga and Dhalat villages in greater Harishpur union.

The programme has already been launched in Kamardia on January 5, in Hajara Natore on January 6, in Jathibhan on January 7, in Harishpur on January 11, and in Goal Bhanga on January 12, and in Dhalat on January 13.

Special importance is being given on modern methods of rice cultivation and use of inexpensive and organic pesticides.

Classes are being held once a week at temporary 'field schools'. Twenty-five farmers have been selected for each course.

The AED officials are imparting the training.

## Erosion renders 24,000 families homeless in four years

MADARIPUR, Jan 24: Erosion by rivers has rendered about 23,800 families homeless and also devoured some 12,185 acres of agricultural lands in four thanas of the district in last four years, reports UNB.

During this period, 45 villages of 10 unions in Shibchar thana went under water due to erosion by rivers Padma and Arial Khan, local people said.

Besides, the erosion by rivers Arial Khan and Kumar has partially affected 18 villages of nine unions in Sadar thana of the district. At least 5,000 families were hit as some 500 acres of lands were grabbed by erosion.

During the last few weeks, local people said, the border areas

have become almost open for the smugglers to bring in their goods from India.

International smuggling rings are reportedly active in the region using the area as their transit for bringing in drugs and even arms.

A special police team on January 12 seized 11 revolvers along with two young men during their raids in Rajshahi and Nawabganj.

But, the inmates of border areas said the members of the law enforcement agencies are not active in curbing the smuggling, rather some of them were exporting money from the rings.

They said the smugglers are utilising the opportunity of open border situation in hoarding their goods for the next few months and some of these rings even hired godowns across the river Padma for this purpose.

They are using both the river routes and road links for transportation of the smuggled goods.

Though the number of crimes is high, only 824 cases were filed with the police. Explaining the cause, a police official said in most of the cases the victims prefer not to come to the police due to various reasons like threats from the terrorists and become victims again.

## 12 injured in Rajshahi clashes

RAJSHAHI