

News snaps

People deprived of medicare facilities

NOAKHALI, Jan 31: Some 90 lakh people in coastal areas of three districts in the region are being deprived of medicare facilities for lack of physicians, medicines and logistic supports in their health complexes, reports UNB.

Patients alleged that the health centres in Rangati, Sadar and Raipur thanas of Laxmipur district and Hatia, Sudharam and Companiganj thanas in Noakhali and Sonagazi thana in Feni have virtually been unable to render medical service for lack of equipment. Criticising the physicians for their insincerity, one of the patients said, "they (doctors) are in fact busy practising in their private chambers depriving the rural people of treatment." More worrying is that the patients have to purchase live saving drugs from outside the hospitals. Besides, he said, the health complexes have no pathological laboratory, forcing the poor patients to go to towns for pathological tests.

Work on truck terminal starts

SYLHET, Jan 31: The construction of a truck terminal has started at the north side of Shahjalal Bridge of the town here, reports UNB.

The district authorities allocated 15 decimal land for this purpose and the officials said the allocation might be increased in future. The earthwork of the terminal has already started at the site. There is no terminal for the trucks in the city and parking of these vehicles here and there has been causing serious problem for the people. Local people hoped that the new terminal would help ease traffic congestion in the town.

Tubewells installation programme

MAGURA, Jan 31: The Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) has started work on a programme to sink 93 shallow tubewells and 43 Tara pumps in the district to ensure supply of drinking water, reports APB.

Magura Sadar will have 35 shallow tubewells and 15 Tara pumps, Shalikhtha thana 25 shallow tubewells, Mohmmadpur thana 29 shallow tubewells and Sripur thana 36 shallow tubewells and 28 Tara pumps under the programme. PHED sources said. The work is expected to be completed by May this year.

Wheat farming falls short of target

NATORE, Jan 31: Cultivation of wheat and mustard has fallen far short of their targets during the current 'Rabi' season, reports APB.

Targets were set to bring 15,500 hectares of land under mustard cultivation and 24,407 hectares under wheat cultivation in six thanas, sources in the Agricultural Extension Department said. But mustard has been cultivated on only 8,000 hectares and wheat on 17,000 hectares. Adverse weather conditions and water-logging in the last flood were the main reasons for non-fulfilment of the targets, they said.

Steps sought to check bird shooting

KISHOREGANJ, Jan 31: A section of amateur bird shooters has been killed local and migratory indiscriminately in 13 thanas defying the official ban, reports UNB.

Sources said, a large number of people are allegedly engaged in shooting down with impunity the guest birds that are settling in canal, 'haor' and other water bodies everyday. About 300 species of winter migratory birds usually settle on water bodies of Itna, Mitamoin, Bhairab, Kuliarchar, Bajitpur, Katiadi, Hossainpur, Pakundia, Tarail, Sadar, Ausagram, Karimganj and Niki thanas, said a bird watcher. The birds locally known as Dighar, Pigger, Kalighar, Sarails, Balhush, Pankauri, Kuaria, Platina, Radang and Karia fly into Bangladesh every year from Siberia and other parts of the north to escape the severity of cold winter. The number of migratory birds is decreasing alarmingly due to indiscriminate killing by unscrupulous hunters.

Fodder crisis in Natore

NATORE, Jan 31: The crisis of fodder in almost all parts of Natore district has become acute due to the after-effects of last year's devastating flood, reports APB.

Farmers have no stock of hay and pasturelands have been damaged. Taking the advantage, some people are bringing in hay from other districts and selling those at exorbitant prices. Farmers told that a bundle of hay for five cows costs about Tk 50 and it is not possible for any of them to spend this amount daily for cows. The crisis will continue in view of the fact that harvest of wheat and IRRI-Boro crops are months away. Many farmers said they have sold their cattle at throwaway prices because of the fodder crisis. Cultivation is also being affected because they can not afford to hire tractors.

Potato growers deprived of fair prices

JESSORE, Jan 31: Potato growers of Jessore, Jhenidah, Chuadanga, Meherpur, Kushtia and Satkhira districts have been deprived of fair prices of their products, reports UNB.

Market sources said the supply of potato is now adequate leaving its price to fall. At present, potato is being sold below production cost at Tk 6 in various markets. About 12,000 hectares of lands were brought under potato cultivation in these districts during the current season. The production target of potato was exceeded. Growers said inadequate numbers of cold storage have caused them to sell their products below the production cost. "Potato can fetch attractive price if cold storage facilities are available," said one of them. The potato farmers urged the authority concerned to take necessary steps to bring the situation under control.

Feni Biddut Samity AGM held

FENI, Jan 31: The 13th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Feni Palli Biddut Samiti, was held on January 29 at the premises of the office of the Rural Electrification Board, reports BSS.

Abdul Moteleb and Kamal Uddin Anwar have been re-elected president and general secretary respectively of the society.

Cow disease causes concern

MADARIPUR, Jan 31: Spreading cow disease has been causing deep anxiety among the farmers of the sadar thana area and the scarcity of preventive medicine has compounded the problem, reports UNB.

A farmer of the Rasti village said that incidence of 'Khura' and 'Jhora' increased alarmingly in the area during the last two months affecting a large number of domestic animals particularly calves. The situation, he said, turned worse as there was no medicine available in the livestock hospital. Another cultivator of Madra village said, nearly 50 cows and calves of Jaodi and Madra village Jaodi union died of khura and jhora during the last two months. When contacted, a livestock official of sadar thana said there was no curative available here for 'Khura' affecting calves. Adequate quantity of preventive vaccines have not been supplied from the central store despite repeated requisition, he alleged.

Three killed in road accidents

SATKHIRA, Jan 31: Three persons including a boy were killed and another 15 persons injured in two separate road accidents at Satani on Satkhira-Boikari road and at Dhulihar on Satkhira-Chapra Road in the sadar thana on Wednesday and Thursday, reports BSS.

Police and hospital sources said a baby taxi fell in a roadside ditch near Satani bazaar on Satkhira-Boikari road. Three persons were injured. One of them Abdul Latif, 45, a telegraph messenger of Satkhira succumbed to his injuries at sadar hospital on Thursday. Another two persons including a boy were killed when a Satkhira bound mini bus from Chapra skidded off the road as the driver lost control of the vehicle near Dhulihar. Akkas Ali 4, son of Mizanur Rahman of village Sriula in Assasuni thana died on the spot and Sajjad Hossain, 40, succumbed to his injuries at Satkhira Sadar Hospital.

Indian whisky, wine seized

SUNAMGANJ, Jan 31: Police seized 41 bottles of Indian whisky and wine from Ibrahimpur village in Sadar thana on Thursday, reports UNB.

Acting on a tip off, they raided a house and recovered the materials from a sack which was kept under a bed. Police, however, could not nab anyone.

Medical camp at Feni

FENI, Jan 31: A two-day medical camp organised by Bangladesh Diabetic Society, Feni unit began on January 29 in the newly constructed Feni Diabetic Hospital here, reports BSS.

Zainal Abedin Hazari MP, attended the inaugural function as the chief guest. Major General (ret) Dr A R Khan, Chief Adviser of BIRDEM, Dhaka, Debashish Nag, Deputy Commissioner, Feni, Abdus Sattar, secretary, Feni Diabetic Society and Dr Rasheduzzaman, Civil Surgeon, Feni, among others, spoke on the occasion. More than 2,000 patients had enlisted their name for treatment. A total of 20 physicians and surgeons attended the patients.

Alarming drug addiction in Shariatpur

SHARIATPUR, Jan 31: Alarming increase of drug addiction in the district is giving rise to various anti-social activities, reports UNB.

Most of the drug addicts are students, transport workers, rickshaw-pullers and sweepers, local sources said. They allege that the addicts openly take rectified spirit and contraband phensidyl syrup as these are easily available in medical store, grocery and stationery shops, and other points of the town. A section of dishonest homeopath doctors are allegedly engaged in selling rectified spirit to the delinquents at exorbitant rates.

RU turns into 'a den of corruption'

RAJSHAHI, Jan 31: The moral standard of a section of Rajshahi University employees have been called into question as the second largest university of the country turned into a den of corruption, reports UNB.

Four employees of the university — Abdul Mannan, Nurul Gani Tunu, Anowar Hossain and Sultan Ahmed — have recently lost their jobs as the Syndicate came down on them for their alleged involvement in corruption.

They were found guilty of altering the tabulation sheet of degree pass examinations 1994. The university Syndicate at a meeting on Dec 7 terminated them on the basis of a report submitted by the inquiry committee.

In another incident, a student of Narail Government Victoria College, identified as Samaresh Chandra Majumder, was given BSc certificate during the tenure of former Controller (Examination) Mansur Ahmed.

The incident came out in 1997, triggering a violent student protest on the campus. Later, it was learnt that Majumder collected the false certificate in exchange of money.

A teacher of Library and Information Department has been accused of making illegal arrangement for admission of three students to the department in the 1997-98 academic session.

The matter is now under investigation and the accused teacher has been asked to refrain from performing all the activities relating to examinations.

Former RU Vice Chancellor M Amanulla Ahmed had to appear before the court on several times on charge of embezzlement of Tk 47 lakh of the university's central library in 1995.

A registrar of the university had also been relieved of his duties on charge of corruption.

There have been reports that teachers are being recruited to the university violating its rules and regulations.

When attention of VC Prof Abdul Khaleque was drawn to the allegations, he said the present administration was pledge-bound to wipe out corruption, if any.



FARIDPUR: Acute accommodation problem has been prevailing at Rajendra Varsity College. The old hostel building on the original campus is in a dilapidated condition. No student resides there now-a-days. They are suffering a lot. They have demanded immediate construction of a new hostel building. — Star photo

Cultivators need sufficient bank loan 'Boro' farming likely to be hampered in Mymensingh

From Aminul Islam

MYMENSINGH, Jan 31: Farmers here are being forced to take money from the local money lenders at a higher rate of interest for 'Boro' cultivation. This is because they are not getting bank loans according to their demands.

Cultivators are now engaged in 'Boro' cultivation to make up their flood losses. But due to insufficient bank loan many farmers are yet to start 'Boro' cultivation. Taking this situation as a golden opportunity, the money lenders are doing a brisk business in many places. Farmers, especially of the flood-hit shoal areas are the victims of such situation.

Small and marginal farmers who turned almost pauper due to the devastating flood of last year are depending on money lenders locally known as 'Sudh Khor', for the on going 'Boro' cultivation.

Sensing the increasing need of the farmers, the money lenders have increased the rate of interest for the money at this time of crisis. At present they are providing money on weekly and monthly basis.

According to some sufferers of shoal areas, the rate of interest is high at many places, especially in the remote places

where the flood-revaged farmers are helpless. Farmers are also taking money in exchange of 'Boro' paddy.

Some farmers of shoal areas of the sadar thana told The Daily Star that they have no way out to overcome the crisis but to take money from these elements. They are taking Taka 175-200 for one maund of paddy which will be paid after the 'Boro' harvesting.

They also informed that the rate of interest is so high that it reached even 40-50 per cent per month which is unbearable. 'As we have no alternatives to face the crisis, we are taking money at so high rate,' added the victims.

Some farmers of shoal areas in Char Sirta Union Parishad also told that they are yet to receive any bank loan after repeated attempts. They are allegedly being harassed by the bank employees in the name of various papers and documents including 'Tax Receipt' from their respective union parishad charmen. The landless sharecroppers are the worst sufferers as they have no documents.

If the farmers do not get bank loan according to their demand, the current 'Boro' cultivation would be hampered

severely, said an official of the district Agriculture Extension Department (AED).

The authorities concerned should take necessary steps for providing sufficient bank loans to the farmers.

UNB reports from Kishoreganj: Unauthorised money lending business has been thriving in 13 thanas of the district. The landless farmers are the worst victims.

Local sources said a section of the rich people are involved in lending money to the poor farmers, small traders, landless people and the destitutes with high rates of interest.

The unauthorised money lenders here charge monthly interests between 20 and 25 per cent that is more higher than the bank rates.

Farmers are so hard pressed that they usually take loan from these money lenders against their standing crops despite high rates of interest to avoid the cumbersome process of bank loans.

The number of landless people is rising in the district as some farmers, who mortgage their lands against the loan, often could not repay the money.

Pourashava polls Electioneering gains momentum in Madaripur

MADARIPUR, Jan 31: Electioneering has gained momentum in the district with the announcement of the pourashava election schedule, reports BSS.

District election office sources said elections in three pourashavas of three thanas of the district would be held between February 23 and 25.

According to the schedule, election in Kalkini pourashava will be held on Feb 23, in Shibchar on Feb 24 and in Madaripur on Feb 25.

Candidates, including women, have already started door to door campaign. Tea stalls and other gossip and meeting places in the pourashava areas have turned into lively centres for evaluation and exchange of opinions.

Madaripur Bar Assoc polls held

MADARIPUR, Jan 31: Annual general meeting and election of Madaripur District Bar Association was held yesterday at the office of the Bar Association here, reports BSS.

Senior advocate Mujibur Rahman Khan was elected uncontested president of the association. Advocate Sujit Chatterjee was elected general secretary of the 13-member executive committee.

Eighty-eight out of 96 voters cast their votes, a press release of the Bar Association said.

Saline water damaging crops in Madaripur

MADARIPUR, Jan 31: Waters in Rajoir thana in the district contain salinity and other minerals beyond safe limits, affecting fertility of lands, reports APB.

Farmers say, IRRI-Boro paddy on thousands of acres of land have been damaged by saline water lifted and supplied by the 41 deep tube-wells in the thana.

When contacted the district office of Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (ADC) said they carried out tests but could not suggest any remedial measures.

Sources told APB that Sonali Bank had financed sinking of 25 deep tube-wells and the Krishi Bank 16. All these were sunk between 1988 and 1991 under a programme of the Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB), they said.

Farmers alleged that the deep tube-wells were installed without proper tests. They are now urging the authorities concerned to take away the deep tube-wells and write off the loans against those.

Sources in the BRDB and the Thana Central Cooperative Association said that the appeal for writing off the loans has been sent to the Ministry of Rural Development and Cooperatives.

Tk 26 lakh project to repair pry schools in Madaripur

MADARIPUR, Jan 31: The Facilities Department, Madaripur has sanctioned Taka 26 lakh for repairing 139 government primary schools damaged by recent flood, reports BSS.

The sanction has been made under post-flood rehabilitation programme in four thanas of the district.

Official sources said, the repair work is expected to be completed by next month.

Two housewives beaten to death by husbands

From Our Correspondent

SATKHIRA, Jan 31: Two housewives were allegedly beaten to death by their husbands recently in the district.

In the first incident, one housewife was allegedly beaten to death by her husband at Dhumghat in Shyamnagar thana recently.

The victim was identified as Shova Rani Mondal, 22, wife of Arun Kumar Mondal of village Munshiganj in Shyamnagar thana.

According to police sources, Arun Kumar Mondal married Shova Rani, daughter of late Sharat Mondal of village Chandipur of Shyamnagar thana one year ago.

Arun Mondal demanded dowry. She failed to pay the dowry. As a result, her cruel husband got furious and took her to his relative's house at Dhumghat village where she was tortured mercilessly. She succumbed to her injuries when she was taken to hospital.

In the other incident, another housewife was beaten to death by her husband at village Bell in Kalaroa thana recently. The victim was identified as Mahbuba Akhtar Mukta, 20, wife of Nazrul Islam of village Bell in Kalaroa thana.

Police sources said, following family troubles Nazrul Islam beat his wife Mukta mercilessly recently and later on she died. The body was found lying in her bedroom early in the morning. But her husband informed the neighbours that his wife committed suicide by taking poison. On suspicion, local people informed the incident to Kalaroa thana police. Police rushed to the place of occurrence, found several marks of wounds on the face. Police sent the body to Satkhira hospital for postmortem.

Police arrested Nazrul Islam on charge of killing his wife.

Four held with arms in Chandpur

CHANDPUR, Jan 31: Ansars, with the help of passengers, nabbed four young men along with some explosives and sharp weapons from a Matlab-bound launch from Dhaka in the early hours of Thursday, reports APB.

They are Shahadat Hossain, 20, of Naoagan and Khokan, 22, of Khalpar in Matlab thana, Shaiful Islam, 21, of Pallabi in Dhaka city and Humayun Kabir, 23, of Damudya in Shariatpur district. They were handed over to Matlab police.

Police said they were nabbed by the on-duty Ansars for their suspicious movement and after searching, recovered explosives and several knives from their possession.

Drug addiction among youths raises concern in Pabna

ISWARDI, Jan 31: The younger generation in Pabna district appears to have been gripped by narcotic addiction, much to the concern of guardians, reports APB.

Local people said that Pabna district has turned out to be a veritable safe haven for sale and consumption of drugs and narcotics.

This has also led to increase in anti-social activities and deterioration of law and order in the district.

Drugs and narcotics are being sold openly in different areas of Iswardi, Algharia, Chalmohar, Bhanura, Faridpur, Pabna Sadar, Bera, Sujannagar and Santhia thanas.

Informed sources told that drugs and narcotics like phensidyl, korex syrup, heroine, hemp, liquor, opium, rectified spirit are selling in these areas freely and openly.

Allegations have it that some dishonest dealers of these items have underhand deals with a section of officials and employees of the Drugs and Narcotics Control Directorate here.

Narcotics worth lakhs of taka are sold in iswardi almost everyday.

Various localities in Pabna municipal area have become places for open sale of drugs and narcotics. Although there are only a handful of licensed sellers of liquor, there is no dearth of illegal sellers of these items.

The sports where these items are sold include the Bus stand at Pabna town, Baro Bazar, Rupkatha road, Ananta Bazar, Iswardi Bus stand, Over Bridge, Loco Shed, Mashuripara, Purbo Tengri, Paschim Tengri, Babupara and Bracpara.

Besides, rectified spirit are sold at a number of drug stores in the town. Local people alleged that the authorities concerned are aware of this but no action is taken.

The Paksey divisional railway town has also become a safe haven for the addicts and prostitute, local people said. Anti-social activities are going on right under the nose of law enforcers, they alleged.

267 committed suicide in Gopalganj last year

GOPALGANJ, Jan 31: A total number of 267 persons including women, children and young men committed suicide here from January 1 to December 31 last year, according to police source.

A total of 90 persons committed suicide in the sadar thana of which 59 persons took poison, 16 persons were hanged and 15 persons died through other means.

A total of 55 persons committed suicide in Kasiani thana, out of which 35 persons took poison, 18 persons were hanged and two others committed suicide through other offences, according to Kasiani police sources.

A total of 42 persons committed suicide in Kotlalpara thana, out of which 23 persons took poison, 13 persons were hanged and six others were

hanged and six persons died through other means, according to Kotlalpara police said.

A total of 20 persons committed suicide in Tungpara thana, out of them 13 persons took poison, five persons were hanged and two persons died through other means, according to Tungpara police sources.

A total of 60 persons committed suicide in Maksudpur thana, out of them 34 persons took poison, 22 persons were hanged and four persons committed suicide by other means, according to Maksudpur police sources.

The victims include a good number of children, old men, women and young men.

Police records say that chronic abdomen pain was responsible for maximum suicide incidents which is considered to be number one reason for the suicides.

Police records also showed that about four fifth of the total suicide cases took place largely due to poverty, discord between married couple, failure in love affairs and physical torture carried out by guardians.

Nometa Rani Mondal, aged about 70 of village Golabaria in the sadar thana, told The Daily Star correspondent that she had attempted to commit suicide because her only son did not provide her with food and clothings.

When a senior police officer of the district was asked to give his view on the increasing number of suicide cases in the district said, dowry was one of the major reasons of higher number of suicides. He further said, this is a social problem. In many incidents the cases of suicides are not mentioned as parents tend to hide facts.

In 10 years 100 firearms looted from police by outlaws in 10 S-W dists

JESSORE, 31 Jan: At least 100 firearms were looted from police and security guards of different institutions by outlaws and terrorists in the 10 south-western districts in the last 10 years, police said, reports APB.

The firearms included 75 rifles. During the period, three policemen were killed and more than 50 people injured.

Police carried out some 20 combing operations during the period but only a few of the firearms could be recovered, police told.

The districts are Jessore, Jhenidah, Magura, Narail, Chuadanga, Meherpur, Kushtia, Khulna, Satkhira and Bagerhat.

The biggest case of arms looting took place in 1989. Political extremists looted 32 rifles, 12 guns, 3,700 rounds of ammunition and other weapons from Sripur thana.

In the year 1990, seven rifles were looted from GRP in a train in Ansarbaria in Jhenidah and another was taken away from police in Halsia in the following year.

In 1994, one policeman was killed and three rifles were snatched at Charbitha under Bagharpara thana.

Another policeman was killed and three were injured in an attack by extremists at Uthali station in 1995.

In 1996, seven rifles were snatched away from the Paikgachha police outpost.

In 1997, extremists killed one GRP man and looted seven rifles and a sub-machinegun from a train in Syedpur. Six more rifles were looted in the same year, five from Ruspah Sea Food and one from Rampal Sonali Bank.

In 1998, three rifles were looted during a launch dacoity in Rampal.

The latest case of arms looting took place at Jessore Akij Jute Mills on January 19 when extremists wounded three security guards and took away 12 rifles.



RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY: Post, Telecommunication, Housing and Public Works Minister Muhammad Nasim and Vice-Chancellor of the university Prof Abdul Khaleque addressing a seminar on "Role of Libraries and Information for Rural Development of Bangladesh" which was held recently at the Zilla Parishad auditorium. — Star photo

Unemployment rate up in Natore

NATORE, Jan 31: Unemployment problem in the district, particularly in the agricultural sector, has been intensifying since the country's devastating flood last year, reports UNB.

Farm labour in all the six thanas of the district have been pouring into the thana and district headquarters in search of jobs but they have to return home disappointed and often resorting to anti social activities giving rise to crimes in the rural areas.

The labourers seeking jobs belong to small and marginal farmers, landless, and erosion-affected families.

Besides landless people, a substantial number of people having some lands, have turned into day labourers due to unabated erosion of the river Padma. Farmers of moderate means are unable to employ day labourers for reaping crops, reaping, and renovation of their houses or any other purposes as their income has come down sharply in the aftermath of last year's flood.

The government could do nothing in generating job opportunities under post flood rehabilitation programme except distribution of VGF cards, said Prof Kazi Golam Morsheed MP from Shingra (Natore-3).

These job seeking labourers gather in a number of labour markets that have sprung up in the thana and district headquarters in the wake of flood.

Erosion renders 30,000 families homeless in Faridpur dist

SHARIATPUR, Jan 31: Some 30,000 families have become homeless in greater Faridpur district due to river erosion over the past few years, reports APB.

Vast areas of cultivable land and homesteads have been devoured in Tarabunia, Kunderchar, Rashid Beparir Kandi, Palerchar and Kachikata unions in Bhedarganj thana of Shariatpur district by the Padma, Modhumoti and Kirtinasha rivers, local sources said.

Over 1300 families have been rendered homeless in Rajoir and Kalakini thanas in Madaripur district.

The Padma and the Arial Khan have devoured 20 villages in the sadar and Charbhadrashan thanas in Faridpur district.

Hundreds of homeless families are leading a subhuman life on the banks of the Padma and other rivers, the sources said.

Another reports from Magura says: The Water Development Board (WDB) has sanctioned Tk 3 crore to control erosion by the Madhumoti and Gorai rivers in some areas in the district.

The Executive Engineer of WDB, Magura, told that work has begun to check erosion in Madanpur and Tikar Bila areas by Gorai at a cost of Tk 1.40 crore. Concrete blocks are being constructed and those will be dumped at vulnerable points to check erosion.

The work is expected to be completed by June, he said.