

News snaps

796 killed in various incidents

RAJSHAHI, Feb 1: At least 796 people were killed in various incidents in 16 northern districts of Rajshahi division in last one year, reports UNB.

According to police, a good number of people were killed in different thanas of the districts over land disputes. The causes behind the killings also included family feud, clash, stabbing, enmities, extortion and kidnapping for ransom. Of the deaths, 44 were reported from Rajshahi while 70 from Naogaon, 39 from Natore, 33 from Chapainawabganj, 103 from Bogra, 29 from Joypurhat, 93 from Sirajganj, 60 each from Pabna and Gaibandha, 69 from Rangpur, 43 from Nilphamari, 26 from Kurigram, 18 from Lalmonirhat, 57 from Dinajpur, 30 from Thakurgaon and 22 from Panchagarh districts.

Pirates swoop on fishing trawlers

BARGUNA, Feb 1: Pirates swooped on seven fishing trawlers in the Bay, 100 miles off the town, and looted valuables, including spare parts, worth about Tk 15 lakh on Thursday and Friday, reports UNB.

President of Patharghata Trawler Owners' Association said the armed pirates looted the valuables from the trawlers, leaving 11 fishermen injured. The trawlers were FB Mayer Doya, FB Nupur, FB Bhai Bhai, FB Shahjahan, FB Nahar, FB Sonia and FB Gous-e-Pak. The injured — Sultan, 22, Jallu, 20, Jafar, 35, Kalu, 40, Moslem, 35, Babul, 26, Sunil, 25, Habib, 30, Nuru Mia, 40, Chan Mia, 28, and Alamgir, 23 — were undergoing treatment at Barguna General Hospital and Patharghata thana health complex.

672 criminal cases lodged last year

MAGURA, Feb 1: A total of 672 criminal cases were lodged with court and police in the district last year, reports APB.

These include eight cases of rape, 32 cases of repression on women, 12 murders, 11 dacoities and 41 cases of toll collection. Police and court sources told that out of these, 382 were filed with Sadar thana, 76 with the Sreepur thana, 120 with Shalika thana and 93 with Mohammadpur thana. Besides, some 3,000 cases relating to dowry, land dispute and other incidents were filed during the period.

Housewife burnt to death

RAJSHAHI, Feb 1: A newly married housewife was allegedly burnt to death in Mohanpur on Thursday, reports UNB.

Family sources said Babita Begum, 21, was roasted alive when her clothes caught fire in their kitchen while she was cooking. She was rushed to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital where she succumbed to her burn injuries after admission.

Man killed in road accident

MAGURA, Feb 1: A man died at Sadar Hospital on Saturday after receiving injuries in a road accident at Arunakandi in Shalika thana on Magura-Jessore highway on Friday night, reports UNB.

Police said Abdur Rashid was injured when a Dhaka-bound bus hit him at 9 pm while he was crossing the road. He was rushed to Sadar Hospital where he succumbed to his injury. Police arrested the driver along with the vehicle.

School teacher killed in road accident

KUSHTIA, Feb 1: A school teacher was killed in a road accident at Majampur gate in the district on Friday, reports UNB.

The victim was identified as Ashrafu Haque, a senior teacher of Kushtia High School. Witnesses said Haque met the tragic end of his life when a bus knocked his bicycle down on the road. He was rushed to Kushtia General Hospital where he died at midnight on the day.

Old man beaten to death

SUNAMGANJ, Feb 1: An old man was beaten to death by his rivals over a minor dispute in Jagannathpur thana on Saturday, reports UNB.

The victim was identified as Abbas Ali, 70, of Nadampur village. Police said one Kadris Ullah aided by his associates attacked Abbas when he went to Kadris's house in search of his missing hen. He died on the spot.

Kidnapped boy rescued

KHULNA, Feb 1: Police rescued a kidnapped boy from Chaterhat in the city and arrested a man in this connection on Saturday, reports UNB.

Police said one Badsha Mia picked up three-year-old boy Raqib, son of Abdur Rahman, from Shamsur Rahman Road on Friday and demanded a ransom of Tk 5,000 for his release. His father filed a case with the local police and police rescued the boy and arrested his kidnapper within 24 hours of his abduction.

65 schemes under RIDP completed

JHENIDAH, Feb 1: A total of 65 schemes has so far been completed under the Rural Infrastructure Development Programme (RIDP) in Jhenidah Sadar thana this financial year, reports APB.

Official sources said that the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation had allotted 118 tonnes of wheat worth Tk 10 lakh for the programme. The programme included digging of canals and repair of roads, educational institutions, mosques and markets. The programme created 100,000 job-hours for poor and jobless villagers.

Agri-loans disbursement progressing

JESSORE, Feb 1: Disbursement of agricultural loans under a 42.36 crore taka post-flood rehabilitation programme is in progress in eight thanas here, reports APB.

Sources said 15 crore taka loans have already been disbursed among about 10,000 farmers through Bangladesh Krishi Bank and four nationalised commercial banks. The disbursement began in October through 18 branches of the banks. The disbursement will be completed by June next.

Vegetables farming gains popularity

PABNA, Feb 1: Cultivation of winter vegetables in nine thanas here may reach the target of 59,000 hectares during the current season, officials of the district Agricultural Extension Department said, reports APB.

They said there has been a great enthusiasm among farmers for vegetable cultivation to recover their losses during the last flood. AED block supervisors are also advising farmers in improved methods of cultivation. Raising seed beds and selling saplings of vegetables like cauliflower, cabbage, chilly, tomato have become a good commercial venture in rural areas, they said.

Man crushed under wheels of train

KUSHTIA, Feb 1: One person was crushed under the wheels of a Puradah-bound goods train near Alamdanga rail station here Sunday evening, reports APB.

The dead was identified as Reazuddin, 26, of village Boalia under Alamdanga thana. He was a microbus driver, police said.

Old man killed in road accident

SATKHIRA, Feb 1: An old woman was killed in a road accident near Kumira Girls School on Khulna-Satkhira road in Tala thana recently.

Police sources said a Khulna-bound pick-up van ran over one Phuljan Bibi, 75, of village Islamkati in Tala thana near Kumira Girls School on Khulna-Satkhira road while she was trying to cross the road. She died on the spot. The body sent to the Satkhira Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

Acute scarcity of fodder

LAXMIPUR, Feb 1: Acute crisis of fodder and lack of institutional support have brought a good number of dairy farms in four thanas of the district to the verge of closure, reports UNB.

According to sources, 172 dairy farms have been set up in the thanas with the financial assistance from Bangladesh Krishi Bank in the wake of growing demand for milk. But these farms are hurtling towards closure due to fodder and medicine crisis and lack of farm credits. The farm owners alleged that they were not getting adequate support from the government although their farms were eligible for further credits. They urged the government to take necessary steps to prop up the sinking dairy farms by providing necessary loans.

95 FWP projects being implemented

THAKURGAON, Feb 1: Under the 'Food for Work Programme (FWP)' 95 projects are being implemented in Thakurgaon district in the current fiscal year, reports BSS.

According to an official source, the government has allotted 1,235 tonnes of wheat for implementation of the projects. The thana-wise break-up is as follows: Thakurgaon sadar 501 tonnes against 251 tonnes, Baladangi 189 tonnes against 171 tonnes, Pirganj 213 tonnes and Haripur 131 tonnes against 133 tonnes. The work of the projects being implemented under the programme includes excavation and re-excavation of ponds for pisciculture, repairing of roads, culverts, mosques, temples and madrasahs.



NATORE: 'Boro' seedlings being sown by the farmers at Uttar Patuapara in the sadar thana. — Star photo

'Boro' farming on 8.50 lakh hectares targeted in 16 dists

From Anwar Ali

NATORE, Feb 1: A comprehensive programme has been taken up for 'Boro' cultivation in the northern districts this year, to compensate the loss of 'Aman' paddy.

Agriculture Extension Department, in the mean time, have taken up necessary steps to ensure a good 'Boro' cultivation.

About 8.50 lakh hectares of land in the 16 northern districts have been targeted to bring under 'Boro' cultivation. The production target has been fixed at about 24 lakh metric tons of paddy.

The total land, targeted for 'Boro' cultivation this year is 16 thousand hectares more

than that in the last year, while the production target this time is one lakh metric ton higher comparing to the previous year.

In Natore district, about 51 thousand hectares of land would be brought under 'Boro' cultivation, while 'Boro' production is expected to cross 1.27 metric tons.

'Aman' paddy production in this region this year was thwarted by the prolonged flood and the attack of 'leda' pest. With a view to making up the loss of 'Aman' paddy, AED has taken up an elaborate programme to make the 'Boro' cultivation this year a success.

Fertiliser dealers and diesel sellers are warned not to make

any artificial crisis.

Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation has made necessary stock of urea fertiliser.

While visiting some villages in Natore sadar thana, this correspondent found many farmers sowing seedlings on their lands while many of them preparing their land for 'Boro' cultivations.

Growers said they would make their best for 'Boro' cultivation when cold weather and fog disappears.

Agri-experts in Natore expect, the cultivation of 'Boro' paddy would exceed the target if favourable weather persists.

In Nilphamari

20,000 children attacked with cold related diseases

From A Correspondent

NILPHAMARI, Feb 1: Cold waves has claimed three lives in the district.

One day labour Janab Ali, while at work in Baroipara village in Nilphamari Municipal area expired after he fell ill from the cold.

On the same day, Sufia Khatun, 40, wife of Abdul Hamid of Nilphamari town and seven-year-old Mithun, son of Dinesh Babu of Joichandi village of Kotwali PS succumbed

after being attacked with cold related disease.

Reports of deaths from cold have been reported from Kachukata Upjon and Kabirajpara of Nilphamari town.

Warm clothings, being provided by the district administration is inadequate to later to the requirements.

Diarrohea and other diseases have broken out in most parts of the district. Child death

from diarrhoea is also taking place.

About 20,000 children in the district have been attacked by diarrhoea, bronchitis, pneumonia and viral fever.

When contacted with the district civil surgeon's office, the office sources said, 66 medical teams have been working in various affected areas. They claimed, the situation is under full control.



JHENIDAH: Alpana painting in progress on the occasion of 'Poush Sankranti'. — Star photo.

Poush Sankranti fading into obscurity

From Delwar Kabir

JHENIDAH, Feb 1: Some traditional customs of Bangladesh which once helped strengthen brotherhood among people of all communities have now almost been abolished. Poush Sankranti was one of such traditional festivities which people seem to have forgotten.

Poush Sankranti was observed by the Hindu commu-

nity on the last day of the Bengali month Poush. Housewives of the Hindu community prepared many types of cakes like 'Puly', 'Chetai', 'Pakan', 'Kushli', 'Khira', 'Bhapa', 'Patisapta', 'Mutho' and other varieties to observe the day. Crushed 'Atop' rice, mollasses, cooking oil, coconut and spices were the main ingredients of the cakes. Relatives, especially

the brides were usually invited. Hindu women with new sarees used to draw 'Alpona' on the courtyard of their houses. Alpona was very charming as it was drawn like calligraphy. It attracted many guests and reminded the freshness of life.

Shipra Saha, a housewife of village Salkupa in Satkupa thana told that the importance of Poush Sankranti has been declining from the lives of Bangladesh as the people of the country have become very busy to earn their livelihoods. Further, the prices of essentials have shot up manifold. People most of whom are poor are not in a position to arrange Poush Sankranti due to financial constraints as it needed so much money to entertain a good number of guests.

Jaharna Khatun, 65, of village Salkupa said that Poush Sankranti was once an universal programme when they were young. People from both the Hindu and Muslim communities arranged Poush Sankranti or Poushury in their respective houses. But now those days have gone away from our lives, added Jharana.

Only 1 magistrate in Nilphamari Collectorate!

From A Correspondent
NILPHAMARI, Feb 1: Only one magistrate has been working in Nilphamari Collectorate for the last two months. As a result, normal work has been suffering tremendously.

There is provision for posting of six magistrates for conducting day to day law and order, trials for six thanas of the district. But after transfer of a few magistrates and after departure of few more for undergoing training, presently only one magistrate has been performing the entire responsibilities of the district.

As a result, no trials for six thana courts can be conducted except to take attendance. Court proceedings has to be continued till late night for hearing of bail petition and other proceedings causing great hardships for those seeking justice in the court of law. Apart from this, there exists vacancy in the post of NDC, RDC, General Certificate Officer, ADLG Trying, Treasury and Administrative Officer since a long time.

Reliable sources also reveal that the post of Assistant Commissioner (Land) in Kishoreganj PS and Protocol Officer in Saidpur PS also remain vacant. Deputy Commissioner, Nilphamari when contacted admitted this. He mentioned that apart from routine trials, normal works along with the law and order situation in six police stations of the district is being hampered tremendously due to shortage of district level government officers.

Snatcher gunned down

From Our Correspondent
BRAMANBARIA, Feb 1: One snatcher named Sakir, 22, was gunned down by an Ansar in Zia Fertiliser Company Limited (ZFCL) area in the sadar thana on January 10.

According to police sources, Md Sakir, who was the son of Lal Mia of village Charchar Tea was fleeing at 7:30 pm on January 10 after snatching money at ZFCL. At the same time when he tried to snatch a rifle from an on-duty Ansar Chandra Mohon Das, the other Ansar shot the snatcher from a close distance. As a result he died on the spot.

Acting on an information, OC of Ashugonj Police Station rushed to the spot and seized the body. Later police recovered 2,801 taka from the body.

Meanwhile, Sakir was also an accused of seven cases including two dacoities.

National training course on Use of Biofertiliser

From Our Correspondent
MYMENSINGH, Feb 1: A day long training course on 'Use of Biofertiliser in Leguminous Crops' was held at the Agricultural Extension Department (AED) offices of 20 districts on the same day recently.

The training course was jointly organised by Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture (BINA) and Agricultural Extension Department (AED). Dr M Idris Ali, Director General (DG) of BINA inaugurated the country-wide training course at RAIS Conference Hall of Jamalpur district. The inaugural session was also addressed, among others, by Enamul Hoque, Director General (DG) of AED, Director (Research) of BINA and Deputy Director of AED.

A total of 600 farmers, 360 Block Supervisors and 140 AED officers from 20 districts took part in the training course.

The districts are: Naogaon, Thakurgaon, Nilphamari, Gaibandha, Bogra, Natore, Chapainawabganj, Jessore, Chuadanga, Madaripur, Narail, Jhenidah, Patuakhali, Bhola, Munshiganj, Narisingdi, Brahmanbaria, Sherpur, Jamalpur and Netrakona.

In the inaugural session, the BINA DG urged the trainees to learn the method of biofertiliser using to extract the maximum benefit from this low cost and environmentfriendly technology. The DG of AED also told in the inaugural session that by using biofertiliser environment pollution can be checked and the production of pulses can be increased.

In the closing session, the speakers thanked the International Atomic Energy Agency for sponsoring the whole activity through a model project on Biofertiliser for Increased Legume production.

The training course was conducted by Dr M A Satter, Dr A K Podder, and M B Hossain of BINA and Dr Sayeed Ahmed, M A Sattar Khan and M Gofran of AED, Dhaka.

Road accident in Netrakona: 1 killed

NETRAKONA, Feb 1: One young man was killed on the spot when he was run over by a speeding passenger bus on January 25 at village Chhalishia, about five kilometres west from here on Netrakona-Mymensingh highway, reports BSS.

Police and witnesses said, the passenger bus was proceeding towards Mymensingh from Netrakona. The victim was identified as Joydeb Barman, 28, son of late Bodo Barman of village Nurpur under Netrakona Sadar thana.

He was knocked down and crushed under the wheels of the bus.

The driver of the bus managed to escape with the bus. A case was filed with Netrakona Kotwali police station in this connection, police sources said.

In Feni dist

Two new hospitals yet to go into operation

FENI, Feb 1: Even though the demand for health services is increasing everyday in the country, two newly built hospitals in the district could not go into operation even after completion of their construction works eight months back, reports UNB.

Officials here said the two hospitals — Feni Adhunik Sadar Hospital and Fulgazi Thana Health Complex — were constructed at a cost of Tk 9.20 crore in May last year with the financial assistance of OPEC and EEC.

They said the 50-bed Feni Adhunik Sadar Hospital could not be upgraded into a 100-bed one although construction of its second and third floors had been completed, spending Tk 4.75 crore.

'After completion of construction works, the hospital is now fully ready for operation. Necessary equipment has also been procured. But it can not go into operation for lack of adequate doctors, nurses and em-

ployees,' said an official wishing anonymity.

Feni Civil Surgeon Dr Rashiduzzaman told that on average about 125 to 140 patients are admitted to the hospital for treatment. 'But the patients have to suffer a lot for lack of adequate bed, medicine and physicians.'

He said repeated appeals by the health department to the higher authorities for immediate upgradation of the hospital fell on the deaf ears. 'We have not yet received the formal approval to open the hospital for reasons unknown,' the official said.

Besides, the two-story Fulgazi Thana Health Complex, built at a cost of Tk 4.45 crore, remained out of operation simply for lack of formal approval of the higher authorities.

Over 30 staff, including physicians and officials, at the 31-bed health complex in Munshirhat area had been drawing salaries without works since June last year.

Barisal farmers rejoice bumper 'Aman' harvest

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Feb 1: In eleven southern districts of Barisal Agri-Zone (BAZ) a bumper harvest of 'Aman' paddy has been achieved during the current season.

It has been possible due to favourable climatic condition in this region after the recent devastating flood that prolonged for months together.

Agriculture Extension Department (AED) sources here said, 12.40 lakh tonnes of Transplanted Aman (T-Aman) paddy production was fixed as target to be achieved during this season on 7.50 lakh hectares of cropland.

Farmers of these districts cultivated nearly 8.50 lakh hectares of land but due to prolonged flood 'Aman' production on 1.40 lakh hectares of land

was totally damaged.

But the farmers again cultivated T-Aman in their fields which achieved bumper production of more than 900 lakh tonnes of paddy which was beyond expectation after the flood.

According to the Department of Agriculture Extension (AED) here 1,02,140 hectares of land were brought under Transplanted Aman (T-Aman) cultivation in Barisal district, while 2,15,000 hectares in Patuakhali, 47,410 hectares in Jhalakati, 1,02,150 hectares in Barguna, 1,60,000 hectares in Bhola, 65,665 hectares in Pirojpur, 3,80,000 hectares in Faridpur, 70,000 hectares in Gopalganj, 17,800 hectares in Rajbari, 2,140 hectares in Sariatpur district.

No jobs for day labourers in Faridpur

From Abdul Matin Fakir

FARIDPUR, Feb 1: The day labourers here have been facing acute unemployment problem following the devastating floods which affected badly six of the eight thanas in the district.

As there was no post-flood special allocation of money to create job opportunities in the rural areas, landless people, marginal farmers and river-eroded people are not finding any job in their respective areas to earn their livelihood.

Though government has distributed a good number of VGF and VGD cards, there are still many others who could not be provided with either VGF or VGD cards or were given any kind of loan or assistance.

These unfortunate people usually earn their livelihood by selling their manual labour, but after the floods people of moderate means of the locality cannot afford to employ labourers for repairs and reconstruction of their houses damaged by the floods owing to financial constraints.

These unemployed people having no other recourse to fall back upon in their respective areas, are pouring in large number in upazila and district headquarters to sell their labour for mere survival. As a result labour selling markets have sprung up.

In the district headquarters, two labour selling markets sit every morning — one at Alipur crossing and the other in front of Baitul Mokaddem market. Hundreds of such labourers start from their respective houses in the small hours and assemble at these two markets before 7 am with their working tools such as buckets, axes, spades, seythes, bull-hooks etc. They walk a distance of 15 to 20 kilometres. They also carry with them

their mid-day meals in pots wrapped in napkins (gamchha). They remain seated there in eager expectation to have a customer to sell their labour. When a customer is seen approaching them, five to 10 labourers offer him to see their labour and after a close bargaining, the customer takes two or three of them to his choice as well as at the cheapest rate. Even a healthy and young labourer has to sell his labour at Taka 60 to 70 a day.

When interviewed some labourers said that they had come from far flung areas of sadar thana and they had five to six dependents who would go unfed if they were not provided with jobs a day. Such is the condition of the day-labourers here.

Under the perspective of this dismal condition, the government should allocate special fund to create job opportunities in the rural areas so that poor people are employed in jobs and make their living in their respective areas by the sweat of their brow.

Maghi Purnima celebrated in Comilla

COMILLA, Feb 1: Maghi Purnima, one of the religious festivals of the Buddhists, was celebrated in different monasteries of the district on Saturday, reports BSS.

The day's programme included recitation from the Tripitaka, Buddha Puja, Pindadan, Pradip Puja, cultural function and discussion on the teachings of the Buddha.

A mass prayer was held at Hakakstup Buddha Vihar at Thakurpara here. High priest of the temple Dharmarakhit Mathero conducted the prayer.

Farmers of 16 dists face 25,000 certificate cases

NATORE, Feb 1: Farmers of almost all the 16 districts in the northern region, including Natore, are reeling under the pressure of agricultural loans amounting to more than Tk 1,500 crore, reports UNB.

Competent sources said loan amounting to Tk 1,000.63 crore of Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank (RAKUB) and Tk 500 crore of other scheduled banks remain unrealised from nearly 30 lakh farmers, badly hit by the century's worst flooding this year.

The defaulting borrowers are facing 25,000 certificate cases. The farmers failed to repay the loans as they did not get fair price for their products in the previous years because of the influx of middlemen in the rural markets.

The middlemen are used to purchase the farmers' products at cheaper rates and sell at higher prices later after hoarding for some time.

The small and marginal farmers cannot wait for better price due to their acute financial crisis. Besides, they have to repay the dues of 'mahajans' (village money lenders) just after harvesting their crops.

In many cases, the farmers of Natore, Naogaon, Pabna, Bogra and Sirajganj district are forced to sell their standing crops from the fields at throw-away prices to meet the de-

mands of the 'mahajans.'

Natural calamities like excessive rain, drought and flood damage a large portion of crops in the country's northern district every year causing colossal losses to the farmers, forcing them to take loans from the 'mahajans' at high rates of interest.

Many of the defaulting farmers, who lost the ability of repaying loans, are passing their days in deep panic and staying away from home to escape police harassment in view of the certificate cases.

Opium addiction up in Chuadanga

CHUADANGA, Feb 1: Opium addiction among people is increasing at an alarming rate as some unscrupulous tea-sellers are mixing the drug with the brew, reports APB.

Local people told that these tea-sellers mix the narcotic with the milk. This not only helps to preserve the milk for a longer period, but also attracts customers.

According to informed sources opium is smuggled in from India and the practice of mixing with opium has become widespread.

If a person takes opium-mixed tea, he does not get satisfaction in normal tea.