

News snaps

Zahir Raihan's disappearance day

BHERAMARA, Feb 3: The 28th anniversary of disappearance of noted film producer-director and author Zahir Raihan was observed here on Saturday, reports BSS.

Different social and cultural organisations arranged various programmes to observe the day. Bheramara Sangskritik Academy held a discussion meeting at local dakbanglow premises on the occasion. Dr Amrendranath, president over the meeting, which was addressed, among others, by Azizar Rahman, Obaidulla Khan, Faruque Ahmed and Prof Amirul Islam.

Bijoyer Alo at Baghabari

SIRAJGANJ, Feb 3: Much enthusiasm has created among the people at Baghabari river port with the arrival of Bijoyer Alo-two, the second barge-mounted power plant of the country, reports UNB.

The plant, being constructed by Westmont Power BD (Pvt) Ltd, a private enterprise, will supply 96-megawatt electricity to the national grid. The project involves an investment of about Tk 650 crore. Hundreds of people crowded the river port to have a glance of the plant on the barge, which arrived on January 26. The authorities have taken special security measures for the plant, originally constructed in Malaysia. Work is going on round the clock to complete the remaining part of the project.

Farmers' training course

SHARIATPUR, Feb 3: A training course titled "Integrated Pest Management" was held in sadar thana last week, reports UNB.

Some 25 farmers took part in the training course organised by the Agriculture Extension Department. The training programme was aimed at making the farmers familiar with various methods to control pest attacks and the harmful effects of fertiliser if it is used in a unplanned way. Another report says: Local Government and Engineering Department has taken up a Tk 16.63 lakh project to construct a drain in Damuddah thana.

Betel leaf farmers being rehabilitated

SHERPUR, Feb 3: The government has allocated Tk 60,000 to rehabilitate the flood-affected betel-leaf cultivators in the district, reports APB.

Sources of the Agricultural Extension Department said 60 cultivators will be given Tk 1000 each, 30 in Sherpur sadar thana, 29 in Nakla thana and one in Nalibari thana. A list is being prepared. The disbursement will be made soon.

Theft at BSS employee's house

JHALOKATHI, Feb 3: A theft was committed at the village home of Abdur Rashid Mridha, an employee of BSS, at Tetulbaria in Nalchity thana on Saturday night, reports BSS.

The thieves took away household belongings, including clothes and valuables. Mridha's wife was asleep at the time with her son. None has been apprehended in this connection.

Tk 50,000 snatched away

CHAPAINAWABGANJ, Feb 3: A mugger snatched away Tk 50,000 from a man inside the main branch of Sonali Bank here on Monday, reports UNB.

Police said Ajim Uddin of Joynagar village in the municipal area drew Tk 80,000 from the bank at 1 pm and started counting the money in front of the cash counter. At one stage, the mugger, identified as Jamaluddin, 30, of Khulna, tried to run away with a bundle of notes. Local people caught the mugger but the money could not be recovered.

Book distribution begins

SHARIATPUR, Feb 3: Distribution of textbooks among primary school students here has begun recently, reports UNB.

Officials said 60,000 sets of books would be distributed free of cost among the primary school students this year. Another report adds: A housing project to rehabilitate landless farmers has been inaugurated at Dumsar union in sadar thana. The project, undertaken on 5.5 acres of land, will have dwelling houses, a mosque, one community centre, schools, one pond and a graveyard.

Training on quantitative sampling

KHULNA, Feb 3: A six-day training programme on quantitative sampling and statistical methodologies began from Monday at Khulna University, reports UNB.

Some 50 teachers of the university are taking part in the training, organised under the higher education programme of British Council. Two professors from UK are imparting training while Prof Dr Mohammad Saifuddin Shah is coordinating the programme.

Smuggled goods seized

SATKHIRA, Feb 3: Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) seized smuggled goods worth Tk three crore from different border areas during 1998, reports UNB.

BDR sources said that they arrested 136 people in connection with the smuggling of these goods during the period. The areas include Bhomra, Haroddhara, Kakkdanga, Taluigachha, Baikari and Gazipur. They seized cattle, cloths, stationary, sugar, wine, phensidyl, brassware, metals, polyester cloth and other goods in a number of raids and regular patrols in the border areas.

Eye camp at Baramachhua instt

PIROJPUR, Feb 3: A four-day eye camp will be organised on the Baramachhua United High Institution campus beginning on February 2 by the Lions Club of Dhaka Supreme Garden to provide free treatment to local eye patients, reports BSS.

According to a press release of the club, experienced eye surgeons and doctors of Bangladesh Lions Foundation will examine and conduct surgical operations free of charge. The club under Lions District 315A-1 will also provide medicines to the patients free of charge. The doctors will examine the patients from February 2 to 4 and conduct the operations on February 5. Dr Rustam Ali Farazi MP, will inaugurate the eye camp as the chief guest.

Satya Saha's death condoled

BHERAMARA, Feb 3: Bheramara Loco Sangskritik Academy condoled the death of eminent music producer and singer Satya Saha on Saturday, reports BSS.

A discussion was held in its office on this occasion with Atiar Rahman in the chair. Addressing, among others, by Rahul Amin, Suzan, Meer, Shamsur Rahman and Ansarul Hoque, the speaker expressed their deep shock at the demise of Satya Saha and said that the country has lost a noted and brilliant musician. They also paid due respect to his memory.

Massive pulse farming programme

CHUADANGA, Feb 3: The Chuadanga District Agriculture Extension Department has taken up a massive pulse cultivation programme in all the four thanas of the district in the current 'Rabi' crop cultivation season, reports BSS.

The four thanas are Chuadanga sadar, Alamdanga, Damurhuda and Jibannagar. According to an official source, of the total land 16,000 hectares are being brought under lentils (masur) and 15,000 hectares under gram cultivation. A total of 9000 hectares are being brought under 'masur' and gram cultivation in Chuadanga sadar thana, 8000 hectares in Alamdanga thana, 7,500 hectares in Damurhuda thana and 6,500 hectares in Jibannagar thana. The cultivation work of both the pulse varieties are nearing completion. The production target of 'masur' in this season has been fixed at 12,480 tonnes while gram 13,950 tonnes.

Pry school dropouts down

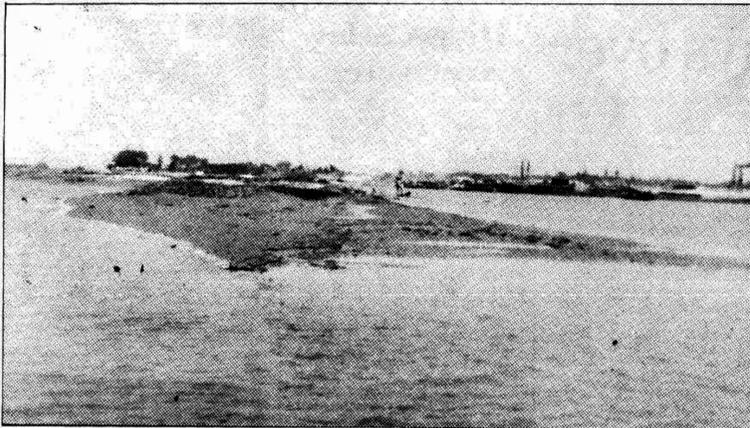
NATORE, Feb 3: Academic life of about 1.50 lakh primary school students in the northern region of the country is reeling under uncertainty for lack of teachers and other academic facilities, including reading materials, reports UNB.

Education officials here said there are 406 government primary schools in six thanas of the district in addition to 296 non-government ones. But 106 posts of teacher have long been lying vacant in the government schools alone, they said. Even though a large number of boys and girls of poverty-stricken families do not go to school, the number of school-going children now stands at 2,18,665, raising the literacy rate of the district to 44 per cent. Of the primary school students, 1,82,497 enrolled in various schools this year, officials said. According to a survey conducted by UNICEF, the average rate of attendance in schools during the last three years was 91 per cent while it was below 70 per cent in schools of the remote areas.

Unbearable traffic jam at Feni

FENI, Feb 3: Traffic jam in the town has become unbearable, residents say, reports APB.

Informed sources said that there are some 10,000 rickshaws including about 5,000 unlicensed ones in the small town. It is alleged that most of these rickshaws do not have valid driving licenses. Busy roads including the Trunk Road, Takia Road and Islampur Road experience traffic jams during most of the working hours. Unauthorised autorickshaws and bus and truck stands at various points of the town have aggravated the problem.



A view of siltation in the river Madhumati.

— Star photo

Launch services stopped Rivers Madhumati, Kumar, Ghagor silted up

From Alimuzzaman Mia

GOPALGANJ, Feb 3: Launch services in Dhaka-Khulna, Barisal-Khulna river routes via Gopalganj, Takerhat and Barfa, Talia, Suintanshahi, Suktail, Manikdaha, Hariduspur, Ulpur, Boltail, Satpur, Jhirpur and Shindiaghata in Gopalganj district. And Takerhat, Sreendoi, Kabirajpur, Kacharighat, Rajarhat and Lowkhala in Madaripur district within 16 hours at minimum cost.

When contacted Md Sheabuddin, Executive Engineer of Water Development Board (WDB) Gopalganj told The Daily Star correspondent, they have already made the estimate which amounts to about Taka 10 crore and despatched it to the higher authority for approval.

Water level has dropped in the Kumar river at Jogania Bazar, in Madhumati at old Manikdaha ghat, MBR canal at old Hariduspur ghat and Ghogor river near Char Gopalpur.

About 12 feet layer of silt is visible in the Madhumati at Manikdaha, 10 feet layer of silt in the Kumar at Jogania, nine feet layer of silt in the Madaripur Beel route (MBR) canal at old Hariduspur and 10 feet layer of silt have been carried along in the Ghagor river near at Char Gopalpur. About 225 kilometre area of different rivers routes and many areas of the rivers Madhumati, Kumar, Ghagor and Beel route have also silted up. According to official reports, 39 kilometre area in the Kumar river, 83 kilometre

(km) area in the Madhumati river, 20 kilometre (km) area in the Ghagor river, 30 km area in Madaripur Beel route canal (MBR) and 53 kilometre area along other rivers have been silted up.

People and small businessmen move and carry their goods to Dhaka-Khulna, Takerhat-Khulna, via Gopalganj and Barisal-Khulna via Mollarhat and Gopalganj and other stoppages of Dhaka-Khulna and Khulna-Barisal river routes at a higher cost.

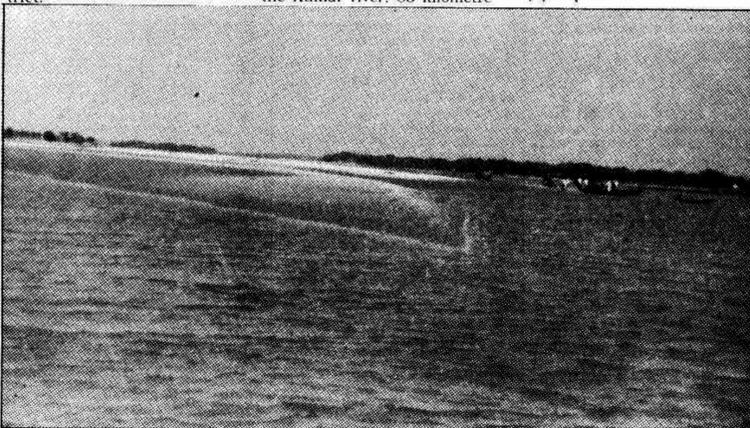
Meanwhile, country-made mechanised boats have become the main river route transport for carrying passengers and commodities. At present over one hundred such engine boats have been plying on different routes in Madhumati, Kumar, Ghagor and Beel route canal of the district. But journey by boats is very risky. Accidents occur frequently.

Moreover, the connecting canals and 'beels' have also dried up. As a result irrigation in the localities is being hampered to a great extent.

A large number of fishermen have also become unemployed due to large scale siltation in the rivers.

A comprehensive dredging is needed on emergency basis, experts expressed.

The authorities concerned have been urged to take immediate steps to dredge the silted up points of the rivers.



Navigation has been hampered greatly along Barisal-Khulna route via Mollarhat and Gopalganj due to siltation in the river Kumar near Jogonia ghat in Khulna. — Star photo

Industrial parks will be set up in N-region

NATORE, Feb 3: Giving a high profile to the private sector, the government has taken up a plan to set up a number of industrial parks in the country's northern region, reports UNB.

Moreover, a total of 13 sugar mills out of 17 are situated in the northern region. Three main by-products of these mills — soup, molasses and canebrine — remain unutilised in absence of processing facilities.

He said local industrialists and entrepreneurs had urged the government to conduct a feasibility study to assess the prospect of establishing industrial parks in Bonpara, 15 kms off the town.

Natore, especially Bonpara, is an ideal place for establishing industrial parks or a mini Export Processing Zones as it has been the centre of entire northern and southern parts of the country because of its smooth communication network, said entrepreneurs.

There are more than 1,000 acres of plain lands in the area suitable to setting up of industrial parks.

They said Rajshahi-Nagarbari-Kushtia highway went through Bonpara while a 55-km Bonpara-Hatikumrul-Nalka road was under construction to link the Bangabandhu Jamuna Bridge with the highway.

Bonpara also has well-connected waterways with capital Dhaka and the port cities of Chittagong and Khulna as the river Nondakua flows through the nearby area, having links with the country's major rivers.

Besides, Natore has a better railway network having links with the frontier districts of Jessore (Benapole), Chapainawabganj (Sona Masjid), Chuadanga (Darshana) and Dinajpur (Hilli).

Iswardi Airport is close to Bonpara while the national power gridline network passes through Bonpara.

Moreover, a total of 13 sugar mills out of 17 are situated in the northern region. Three main by-products of these mills — soup, molasses and canebrine — remain unutilised in absence of processing facilities.

The possibilities are also there to set up leather and edible oil industries as well as processing units of milk, fish, vegetables and fruits.

Tk 390 cr Rly rehabilitation project in western zone

RAJSHAHI, Feb 3: A Tk 390 crore rehabilitation project, aiming to bring down train mishaps, is underway in western zone of Bangladesh Railway, reports UNB.

Railway sources works of a 41-km railway track on Rajshahi-Abdulpur route, a 157-km track on Khulna-Iswardi, a 82-km track on Santahar-Bonpara, a 15-km railway on Lalmonirhat-Kaonia, an 87-km track on Poradah-Gaolunda and a 15-km track on Parbatipur-Syedpur routes were progressing fast.

The works include setting up of new wood sleepers replacing the old ones, replacing all track fittings with new ones, spreading pebbles and earth refilling.

The decision to undertake the scheme has been taken in view of the damages caused by the last year's prolonged flood to the railway tracks.

Meanwhile, repair works of a 35-km track on Khulna-Iswardi route has been completed procuring 50,000 sleepers. A tender has been floated to buy one lakh more sleepers in the current fiscal.

"In fact the project was un-

dertaken in 1995-96 fiscal and it was supposed to be completed in 2001, but fund crisis has delayed its implementation," said an official.

Upon completion of the project train mishaps in the region will come down remarkably, he said.

4 Khulna Jubo League activists sued

From Staff Correspondent
KHULNA, Feb 3: Ajmal Ahmed Tapan, Secretary of the sadar thana Awami League has lodged FIR on February 1 accusing four Jubo League activists for killing Anwar Hossain, Joint Convener of Jubo League city unit.

He was gunned down near Awami League office on Saturday night. All the four FIR-named accused belong to 'whip group' of the party. According to police, Idris Ali, 70, father of the deceased Jubo League leader refused to file any complaint for murder of his only son. The FIR-named accused are Shiplu, Rashed, Kalam and Sentu.

Khulna Shipyard to be handed over to Navy on Feb 15

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Feb 3: Khulna Shipyard will be handed over to Bangladesh Navy on February 15, said a highly placed source.

All official formalities in this regard have been completed. Khulna Shipyard was identified as a sick industry in 1997 by the Privatisation Board. The final decision to privatise it was, however, taken by the Ministry of Industries in the middle of 1997. Manned by 75 officials, 151 employees and 32 permanent workers, the shipyard will go under the Ministry of Defence after its formal handing over to Navy.

Educationist dead

From Our Correspondent

Faridpur, Feb 3: A tragic road accident snatched away the life of a poet and educationist of the town on January 25.

Abdul Bari, 70, a retired senior teacher of Faridpur High School and Translator of the entire Holy Quran and the Hadith in Bengali under the titles of Kabya Quran and Kabya Hadith was knocked down by a speeding truck in front of the head post office on Mujib Sarak at about 12:00 noon. He was returning home from his book stall at station road. He was immediately admitted to Faridpur General Hospital where he succumbed to the injuries at around 3:00 pm on the same day.

The whole town was shocked at the sad demise of Bari, a successful teacher of great repute and a poet by nature. He was laid to eternal rest at Alipur graveyard following a largely attended namaj-e-janaza after Zohar prayers at Chawk-Bazar Zame Masjid on the following day. His two books that have undergone three editions have received great appreciation all over the country.

He is survived by his wife, three sons, two daughters, a host of students, relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

Poura polls: 80 file nominations in Faridpur

From Our Correspondent

Faridpur, Feb 3: A total of 80 candidates submitted their nomination papers to the different posts to contest the ensuing pourasava election amid great zeal and enthusiasm on January 26.

Of the 80 candidates, six filed nomination papers to contest the post of a chairman, 59 candidates to contest nine posts and 15 women for three posts reserved for women.

Hasibul Hasan Labu and Md Faruque Hossain of Awami League, M A Kaiyum Jangi, Golam Rabbani Khan Mun and Alhaj Anwarul Islam of BNP and the sitting chairman Fazlul Kabir Chan filed their nomination papers to contest the post of chairman. Besides, there are a number of BNP and JP candidates who filed nomination papers to contest the posts of commissioners and women commissioners.

3 hurt as AL factions clash in Khulna

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Feb 3: Three persons were severely injured in an exchange of fire between two rival groups of Awami League at Gagan Babu road on February 1 evening.

The injured who were admitted to sadar hospital with bullet wounds soon after the incident have been identified as rickshaw drivers Hedayet, 40, and Shah Alam, 32, and a grocer named Khaleque. The place of occurrence is a few yards away from the rented residence of the State Minister for Disaster Management, Talukdar Abdul Khaleque and private residence of City Mayor Shaikh Tayabur Rahm in. Both the rival groups of AL used hand bombs. The attack was a sequel to the murder of Jubo League leader Anwar, police said.

Drinking water scarcity in Madaripur

PABNA, Feb 3: As most tubewells remained out of order, scarcity of safe drinking water has hit the district, giving an alarming rise to waterborne diseases, reports UNB.

Officials said 60 per cent tubewells, which went under water during the country's worst flooding last year, could not yet be repaired, forcing the people to drink pond and river waters.

According to sources at PHED, some 13,282 tubewells of 51 unions in the district were submerged by the flood waters. Of them, only 3,324 have so far been repaired while the pipes of 817 lifted, a figure disputed by unofficial sources.

They claimed that the number of disordered tubewells in the district would be much higher than the official ones.

Waterborne diseases like dysentery and diarrhoea are spreading fast in the district and it may take an epidemic turn if necessary steps are not taken in time, they said.

According to the district Civil Surgeon Office, two people died and 1,685 were affected by the waterborne diseases in last one month.

Tk 18.35 cr project for construction of edn instts

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Feb 3: Facilities Department here has undertaken a programme to construct and reconstruct 92 educational institutions with an expenditure of Taka 18.35 crore in three districts of Barisal, Bhola and Jhalakati under Barisal division during this fiscal year. Construction works of these projects are going on in full swing and 30 per cent of the construction works has already been completed, official sources said.

The projects included construction or reconstruction of

15 colleges, 55 secondary schools and 22 madrasahs in the three districts.

An amount of Taka 6.44 crore has been estimated for 15 colleges providing Taka 39 lakh for each college, while Taka 9.48 crore in total has been allocated for 55 secondary schools providing Taka 18 lakh in average for each school and Taka 2.46 crore has been allocated for 22 madrasahs providing nearly Taka 10 lakh for the reconstruction works of each madrasa.

Through Chapainawabganj

Gold worth Tk 3 cr smuggle out every month

CHAPAINAWABGANJ, Feb 3: Gold smuggling to India through the district has alarmingly increased and a competent source claimed that gold worth Tk three crore are being sent out of the country every month, reports UNB.

It said the smuggling rings are particularly active in the border areas of Sona Masjid, Monkosha, Hayatpur, Ranihat, Bahalabari and Khaser Hat. They send their dispatches using many tricks to evade the law enforcement agencies.

The rings maintain secret and organised team of people including women to carry the gold bars and ornaments. They use different vehicles including passenger coach, microbus, car and motor cycle to carry these from other parts of the country to their dens along the border.

The criminals keep the gold bars or 'biscuits' under the seats or inside the bodies of cars and other vehicles, or inside the soles of shoe and sandals.

"Some of the women carry gold bars attaching these to their bodies," said the source.

They normally carry gold in small pieces for their convenience.

The sources claimed that many of those involved in jewelry business in the town are also connected to the smuggling rings.

Five-yr-old girl raped in Khulna

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Feb 3: A five-year-old girl was allegedly raped by two youngmen on Sunday night at Phulbari gate area in Khanajahan Ali thana.

Police arrested one of the rapists named Meraj Ahmed, 22, an activist of BNP-backed JCD. The other accused has been absconding. The girl who was raped in an abandoned house is yet to regain here consciousness in the sadar hospital. As such she could not be medically examined on February 1.

Cold wave victims need warm clothes

From Fakhru Nessa

KUSHTIA, Feb 3: A cold wave accompanied by dense fog has paralysed the normal life in the district and its adjoining areas for the last few weeks.

The cold spell coupled with chilly wind blowing has caused immense sufferings to the poor people, particularly the people of shoal areas who had already been battered by the last year's deluge. This is because they could not rebuild their houses till filing of this report. They have now been living in makeshift camps and they are the worst sufferers. They have no money and they are unable to purchase warm clothes. The government has not allocated any warm clothes for them. Even Red Crescent Society did not come forward with warm clothes for them.

Most of the people who lost their homesteads by river erosion are vulnerable to cold. They are passing their nights by burning straws and trying to protect themselves from the biting cold. Buses, trucks and other vehicles to and from Kushtia reach their destinations late by several hours due to dense fog. Sometimes, they remain stranded at night since the fog is so thick that nothing is visible from a distance of three to four metres.

A large number of children and old people are regularly visiting the physicians with cold related diseases.

Meanwhile, prices of old warm clothes have registered a high price which the poor can not afford to buy. The town wears a deserted look as winter

chilly wind intensifies after sundown. The income of day labourers and rickshawpullers have fallen indoors to escape from the biting cold.

Birth anniversary of Fatik Thakur

MADARIPUR, Feb 3: The 103rd birth anniversary of Fatik Thakur was celebrated here with due solemnity on Sunday, reports BSS.

A day-long programme was arranged which included rally, sessions of devotional songs and discussion on the life and humanitarian work and spiritual teachings of Fatik Thakur.

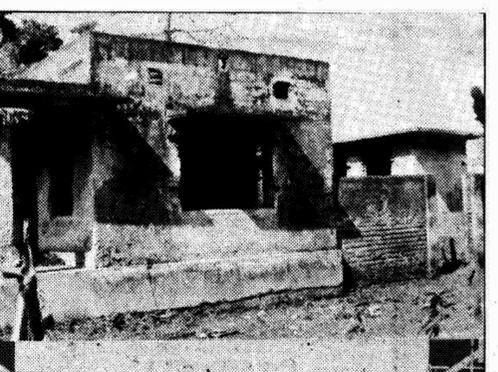
A discussion was held at Datta Kandua Ashram. State Minister for Religious Affairs Maulana Nurul Islam was the chief guest in the meeting, which was presided over by Chairman, Ashram, Puja Parishad Manik Goshai.

State Minister for Primary and Mass Education Satish Chandra Roy, Joint Secretary, Sechhya Sebak League ABM Bahauddin Nasim, President District Awami League Alhaj Ferdous Jamader, Secretary District Awami League Uddipan Sikdar and Secretary Madaripur Red Crescent Kajar Krishna Dey addressed the meeting.

State Minister for Religious Affairs Maulana Nurul Islam granted donation of Taka one lakh fifty thousand for the development of the Ashram.



MAGURA: IRRI-Boro fields being irrigated by the local farmers. — Star photo



JHENIDAH: Many residential quarters were constructed in different areas of Ganges-Kobadak (GK) project under Bangladesh Water Development Board during the then Pakistani period. All the quarters have been lying abandoned and damaged. This photo was taken from village Nagirat in Sailkupa thana. — Star photo