

In Pabna

No progress in work for distribution of ID cards

PABNA, Feb 9: There has virtually been no progress in the work for distribution of voters' identity (ID) cards in the district since the 1996 parliamentary election, reports APB.

The programme hits snags due to alleged lack of cooperation from a section of government officials and people. Many eligible voters even refuse to be photographed, they said.

About 50 per cent of the voters were issued ID cards in the '95-'96 fiscal year. "But all work virtually remained stopped since the '96 polls", Abdus Sattar, who is officially linked

with the programme, told this correspondent.

"The Deputy Commissioner held a meeting on January 12 where he assured us that all-out cooperation would be extended to us by his administration, but to date we have received no help from them at all. Without the active cooperation of the administration it will be impossible to implement the programme by June, as scheduled," he said.

As per Election Commission rules, the Deputy Commissioner is supposed to play the main role in coordinating and

implementing the programme, he claimed. The district administration is also responsible for creating awareness among the people about the usefulness of ID cards, he said.

There has been an adverse reaction among the people due to sudden stoppage of the work in 1996. Many of them refuse to be photographed, another source said.

There were about 10,35,976 voters in the district in 1995. The Election Commission claims that 9,12,319 ID cards have already been prepared.



JHENIDAH: Prices have come down considerably due to abundant supply of fish in the local markets in this season. — Star photo

News snaps

Privatisation meet in Rangpur

RANGPUR, Feb 9: A meeting for exchanging views to create mass awareness on privatisation of industries was held at the local Circuit House here on Thursday, reports UNB.

Privatisation Board Chairman Kazi Zafarullah attended the meeting as chief guest while British High Commissioner to Bangladesh David C. Walker was the special guest. Ashiqur Rahman MP, Anisul Haque Chowdhury MP, NK Alam Chowdhury MP, Privatisation Board member SM Zakaria and Director KC Shah, Press Club President Sadrul Alam Dulu, FBCCI Director Golam Mostafa and Rangpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Mosaddek Hossain Bablu, among others, spoke on the occasion. Presided over by Deputy Commissioner Moazzem Hossain, the meeting was also attended by local elite, industrialists, journalists and officials.

Chuadanga hospital to be upgraded

CHUADANGA, Feb 9: The Chuadanga District Sadar Hospital will be upgraded from 50 bed to 100 beds. This was disclosed by the Health Minister, Salauddin Yusuf at a meeting with the elite of Chuadanga held at the conference room of the Deputy Commissioner of Chuadanga recently, reports BSS.

The minister further told that all the district level hospitals of the country will be upgraded to 200 to 250 beds gradually. He also said that the 3rd and 4th year nursing training courses will also be introduced at Chuadanga Nursing Training Centre as early as possible. The minister, who visited two thana health complexes of the district at Jibannagar and Damurhuda expressed dissatisfaction for the service standard.

Triennial confce of Krishak League

GAIBANDHA, Feb 9: Triennial conference of Gaibandha District Krishak League was held on February 2 at the local municipal park, reports BSS.

Alhaj Rashed Mosarrat, State Minister for Land and President, Bangladesh Krishak League attended the conference as the chief guest. The conference was inaugurated by Mohammad Khaled, president, Gaibandha District Awami League. The conference was presided over by Shah Ali Sardar, president, Gaibandha District Krishak League. Speaking on the occasion, Mosarrat said that the farmers have been playing a vital role in the national economy and the present government has taken various measures for ameliorating the socio-economic condition of the farmers. A new committee of Gaibandha District Awami League has been formed with Shah Ali Sardar as president and Dipak Pal as general secretary.

Bright prospect of guava farming

PANCHAGARH, Feb 9: Guava cultivation has bright prospects in Panchagarh, Thakurgaon and Dinajpur districts because of suitable climatic conditions, reports APB.

Very good qualities of guava are produced in Boda, Atowari, Thakurgaon, Birganj and Dinajpur Sadar thanas which are ideal of commercial orchards. High yielding Kazi and Mukundapuri varieties can be grown very well in the areas, horticulturists say. About 500 hectares of land are now under guava cultivation in greater Dinajpur district, about 5,000 tonnes of guava worth Tk 30 crore can be grown in these lands if scientific methods are applied, they said. A grower now gets Tk 500 to Tk 800 from a full-grown tree per year.

Potato farming exceeds target

RANGPUR, Feb 9: The target of potato cultivation has exceeded in eight thanas of the district during the current season, reports UNB.

Agriculture Extension Department said some 22,375 hectares of land have been cultivated against the target of 15,000 hectares. Of the total, 4,500 hectares of land were cultivated in Sadar, 1,600 in Kaunia, 1,045 in Gangachara, 5,345 in Mithapukur, 3,240 in Pirganj, 3,200 in Pirgacha, 2,065 in Badarganj and 1,350 in Taraganj thanas. Officials said after successful implementation of the scheme a total of 4.90 lakh metric tons of potato will be produced in the district.

Teachers shortage

MADARIPUR, Feb 9: Academic life of the students of Government Nazimuddin University College here is being seriously hampered as some 25 posts of teachers have been lying vacant for long, reports UNB.

The vacant posts included nine Assistant Professors, seven Associate Professors, six Lecturers and three demonstrators. There is no Associate Professor in Philosophy, History and Political Science departments, said the sources adding that Bangla, English, Political Science, History and Philosophy departments have no Assistant Professor and Physics and Economics departments lacks lecturers. Students and local guardians have urged the authorities concerned to fill up the posts on emergency basis.

Rat killing drive begins

JESSORE, Feb 9: A month long rat killing drive began from Tuesday at a simple function in the district to save the destruction of crops by the small animal, reports UNB.

Local MP Ali Reza Razu attended the inaugural function as chief guest while Sirajul Islam, Additional Director, Agriculture Extension was present as special guest. The function, held at the auditorium of thana Parishad was chaired by SM Abdus Sattar, Deputy Director, Agriculture Extension, Jessore Zone. Ali Reza Razu in his speech stressed the need for coordinated efforts to make up food deficit caused by natural calamities as well as by rats every year. He urged the participants, engaged in the drive, to work sincerely to motivate the people to make the drive a success. The drive will continue till 28 February.

Tubewells installation programme

RAJBARI, Feb 9: The Public Health Engineering Department (PHED), has launched a programme to sink and repair 332 tubewells in three thanas of the district to supply drinking water, reports APB.

The 40-lakh taka programme will benefit about 40,000 people of Rajbari Sadar, Pangscha and Goulundo thanas, sources in the PHED said. About 211 Tara pumps and 54 shallow tubewells will be sunk and 67 tube-wells will be repaired. Besides this, the government has allocated Tk 11.48,000 under a post-flood rehabilitation programme to ensure smooth supply of drinking water in Rajbari municipal area. ADB is providing financial assistance for the programme.

5 people with Indian wine arrested

COMILLA, Feb 9: Detective Branch of police arrested five people with 24 bottles of smuggled Indian wine from a residence in Sadar thana on Thursday, reports UNB.

Acting on a tip-off, the DB police raided the residence of Rais Mia of Sriballapur village and arrested him with four others and recovered the wine from their possession. The four others were identified as Anjan Kumar Ghosh, Mofizul Islam, Sham-sul Islam and Alamgir Hossain. All the arrested were sent to jail custody.

Official documents stolen

RAJSHAHI, Feb 9: Important official documents of the district Registry office were stolen on Tuesday night, reports UNB.

Rajpara thana police on Wednesday nabbed Shankar Kumar, a night guard of the office, on charge of involvement in the incident. An official of the office admitting the incident said that the miscreants, engaged in deed forgery, managed to take away their valuable documents by breaking open the chest of the dilapidated office room. It may be mentioned here that similar undesirable incident occurred in which the volume no 265 of over 100 documents compiled in 1975 was also stolen. An organised gang of criminal deed writers with some interested people are engaged in making fake and forged deeds with a view to grabbing the land of genuine owners.

2,791 crime recorded in Comilla last yr

COMILLA, Feb 9: A total of 2,791 crimes were recorded in 12 thanas of the district in the last year, police said, reports UNB.

Police, however, arrested 3,634 people from different parts on various charges during the period. The crimes included 283 theft, 106 smuggling, 81 killing, 85 relating to drug abuse, 70 torture on women, 57 armed vandalism, 105 riot, 30 rape, 35 abduction, 1,203. According to statistics, about eight crimes were committed on average in the district per day and one was killed after every four days. Police said during the year 1997, some 2,778 crimes were committed in the district.

Loan for jobless youths

MADARIPUR, Feb 9: Kalkini thana office of Youth Development Directorate has disbursed an amount of Taka one crore 15 lakh 19 thousand as loan among 1,900 unemployed male and female youths during 1997-98 financial year, reports BSS.

The loan was given for creating self-employment opportunities. According to official sources, the directorate has also imparted training to the borrowers. The directorate realised outstanding loan amounting to Taka one crore six lakh 82 thousand from the borrowers in Kalkini thana during the same period. The directorate has also set-up a target for the year 1998-99 to disburse Taka one crore thirty lakh for Kalkini thana. The credit will be disbursed to unemployed male and female youths for creating self-employment opportunities through income generating activities like poultry, dairy, pisciculture, cow-fattening, small business and other self-help schemes.

60 file nominations for Nilphamari Poursabha polls

From A Correspondent

NILPHAMARI, Feb 9: Despite hartal and obstructions by the opposition parties, the candidates of BNP and Jatiya Party (JP) filed nomination papers along with the ruling party, Awami League for contesting elections in Nilphamari and Saidpur Municipalities.

Nilphamari Poursabha is a second class municipality. Three candidates will be contesting from here. The sitting chairman Dewan Kamal Ahmed will contest with Awami League ticket, while former Chhatra Dal leader and ex-Vice President of Nilphamari College Students

Union Johurul Alam will contest with BNP ticket and President of Sadar thana EPZ Project Implementation committee Anisur Rahman Coco will contest with JP ticket.

A total of 43 candidates will contest for the posts of commissioners in nine wards here, while 14 candidates will contest for the reserved three woman seats.

In Saidpur Poursabha which is a first class municipality, four candidates will contest for chairmanship. Mozammel Haque, General Secretary of Truck Owners Association will contest with Awami League

ticket. BNP nominated Amjad Hossain Sarker Bhoje, who is the sitting Chairman of this municipality and a veteran BNP leader, former Chairman of this municipality and Founder President of Urdu Speaking Welfare Association.

Besides, 103 candidates will contest for the posts of commissioners in 15 wards. Twenty-two candidates will contest for the reserved woman seats.

The total number of voters are 19,743 in Nilphamari. There are 47,914 enlisted voters in Saidpur Poursabha.

Production of Rajshahi Sugar Mills may fall short of target

From Kamran Reza Chowdhury

RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY, Feb 9: The production target of Rajshahi Sugar Mill (RSM) may not be achieved this season because of manifold problems.

The main cause of the imminent shortfall is the last year's deluge in the sugarcane growing areas of the district and other neighbouring areas.

The other causes are: lack of quality sugarcane, labour unrest, flooding of local markets with the black marketed low quality Indian sugar.

The production target during the current season has been set at 14,400 metric tons. The last season's target was 13,000 metric tons.

The last year's deluge has caused severe damage to the sugarcane cultivable lands. So

sufficient quantity of sugarcane are not available to run the mill well.

Again due to adverse effect of the deluge, the quality of sugarcane has been degraded though some cultivable lands were saved from the catastrophe.

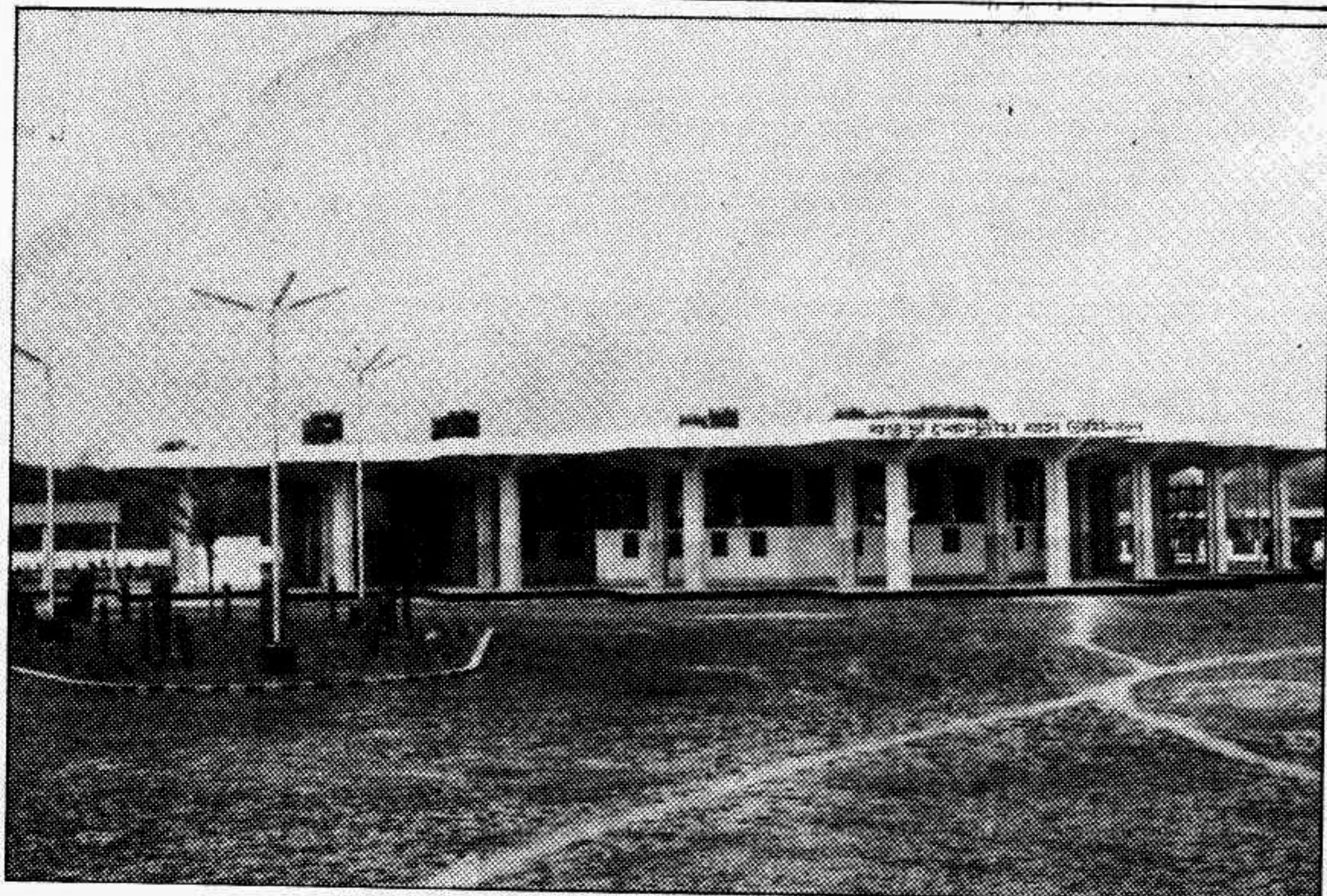
Labour unrest also causes shortfall in production of the mill where the labourers do not get incentives, overtime bonus and crushing bonus due to deteriorating economic condition of the mill. Again, the number of officers and workers are around 2,000, which is much more higher than the actual requirement. Their negligence of duties also aggravated the problem.

The unhealthy trade unionism creates a great deal of prob-

lems. On contacted, an officer expressed on condition of anonymity that this practice was the main hindrance to bring back discipline in the sugar mill. There is no administration in the mill, but to endorse their claims of the trade unionists, as they have a deep rooted network.

The rampant supply of black marketed low quality and cheap Indian sugar affects the sugar market.

Meanwhile, the government has almost finalised a plan to privatise Rajshahi Sugar Mills, a close source of the mill administration said. The mill administration sources also expressed that trade unionism might delay the privatisation process.



A partial view of the newly constructed Bogra central bus terminal. — Star photo

Special steps to ensure supply of agri inputs to farmers

NATORE, Feb 9: The government have taken up special measures to ensure supply of agricultural inputs to the farmers of North Bengal to overcome their massive losses caused by the last devastating flood, reports UNB.

A coordinated effort of Agriculture Extension Department (AED), Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) and Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) in this regard has created much optimism among the farmers.

Local sources said the growers are now confident about achieving the production target of IRRI-Boro paddy and wheat during the current season.

AED divisional office sources in Rajshahi said some 8.62 lakh hectares of land in 16 northern districts have been brought under Boro cultivation with a production target of 24.30 lakh tons of paddy.

Wheat also will be cultivated on 4.50 lakh hectares of land with an expected production of 9.85 lakh tons.

In order to achieve the production targets of different crops, AED authorities kept the field staff alert to face any adverse situation. The special measures would help the department to cope with any crisis that might hamper production, said the sources.

As part of the special mea-

sures, BPC increased its reserve capacity in the region for ensuring supply of fuel oil to the growers in February and March, considered as the peak season of irrigation.

BPC would ensure supply of fuel oil to about 25,000 diesel-driven deep and shallow tubewells in 16 northern districts, said officials of the corporation.

Accordingly, BCIC stockpiled urea fertiliser at 20 buffer stocks across the region. Besides, 121 dealers have been asked to sell a 50-kg bag of urea at a maximum rate of Tk 285. Farmers and local businessmen said the present market rate of per-bag urea in different rural areas is over Tk 300.

In comparison with the previous year's price, the market prices of different varieties of rice are on average higher by Tk 5 to 8 per kg.

50 houses gutted in Nilphamari

From A correspondent



FARIDPUR: The Eid reunion of Universal Debating Society was held recently at Poet Jasimuddin Hall here. District and Sessions Judge Md Josan Ali speaking as the chief guest. — Star photo

Indian goods, timber worth lakhs of taka seized

SYLHET, Feb 9: BDR and police in separate drives in the district seized Indian goods and timber worth about Tk two lakh last week, reports UNB.

Acting on a tip-off, they raided a Sylhet-bound mail train at Moglabazar station and seized timber worth about Tk one lakh recently.

Local people alleged that a section of dishonest railway officials had a link with the smugglers.

In another drive on the same day, Jakiganj police arrested two people along with smuggled goods worth about Tk 75 lakh raiding a Sylhet-bound bus in Dalipara area.

The goods were handed over to the district customs office.

Another report adds: Police arrested 44 people from different parts of the district on various charges on January 29 and 30.

Tk 3 cr Bogra bus terminal bldg completed

From Our Correspondent

BOGRA, Feb 9: Local Government Engineering Department, Bogra completed the construction of Bogra central bus terminal at a cost of Taka Three crore under Secondary Town Infrastructure Development project with the financial aid of Asian Development Bank.

There are 44 ticket counters in the main building of the terminal constructed on 30 thousand 4 hundred square feet area including a police box, 16 urinals, four latrines and four bathrooms.

Besides, there are separate waiting rooms for males and females, transport drivers and owners. There are also sufficient additional space of 60 thousand 8 hundred 64 sqft for parking of cars, including four ramps and arrangement for washing the transport vehicles.

The traffic jam of Bogra town will be removed following opening of the big sophisticated and beautiful bus terminal at Chhatra.

All the capital city bound buses as well as the district towns of the country will ply from this terminal. It was a long felt demand of the people of the industrial town.

Compulsory pry edn faces setback in Kushtia

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA, Jan 9: The compulsory primary education programme undertaken by the government has been facing a serious setback here.

According to the primary education department, there are 549 primary schools here out of which 430 are government managed. The rest are run by private initiatives having no government grant.

But the total number of villages in six thanas of the district are 1023. There are no schools in 274 villages. Children of these villages are being deprived of education. Condition of most of the schools is dilapidated.

Moreover, inadequate number of furniture and shortage of teachers are the main causes of hampering the education.

High prices of paper and other educational implements, financial crisis and social problems are also hindering the programme. Moreover, the schools which were damaged by the last year's floods are yet to be repaired.

Shortage of teachers and accommodation problem have also aggravated the situation. Most of the school buildings have no roof and the students have to study under the open sky.

8,835 kg FEP wheat allegedly misappropriated in Naogaon

NAOGAON, Feb 9: The authorities of two educational institutions in Damoirhat thana here have allegedly sold the 8,835 kg of wheat sanctioned under Food for Education Programme (FEP) in the black market, reports UNB.

It is alleged that some officials of Chakchandia Ebedaye Madrasa drew 3,900 kilogram of wheat and the authority of Chakchandia Registered Primary School drew 4,935 kg wheat of Food for Education Programme from the thana food godown on January 12.

But some officials of the two institutions allegedly sold out the wheat in the black market in neighbouring Joypurhat district on the same day instead of distributing the same among the deserving students.

The heads of these institutions were not available to comment. But the truck driver who carried the wheat to Joypurhat admitted the fact on condition of anonymity.

The local elite urged the authority concerned to probe into the allegation and take necessary action in this regard.

APB reports from Magura: A case has been filed against a Union Parishad chairman in

Sreepur thana for alleged misappropriation of relief wheat sources in the TNO's office said.

The Thana Nirbahi Officer (TNO) carried out an investigation and found the allegations to be true.

It was alleged in the case that the UP chairman had lifted some 500 kilograms of wheat from a local food godown on June 30 last year and misappropriated it.

The case was filed on January 6 after two members of the Union Parishad and some people of the locality submitted a written complaint to the TNO.



CHANDPUR: Prizes being distributed to the captain of Number Four Government Primary School here who became champion in the annual sports meet. — Star photo

3,926 certificate cases filed in Pabna

PABNA, Feb 9: A total of 3,926 certificate cases have been filed against farmers in nine thanas of the district for realising outstanding loan amounting to Tk 55.58 crore, reports UNB.

Different banks and government agencies including Janata, Sonali, Rupali and Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank along with Bangladesh Rural Development Board provided the growers with this loan for purchasing various agriculture inputs, official sources said.

Of the total, highest number of cases were filed in Algharia thana while the lowest in Sujanagar thana. But the highest amount of loan remained outstanding in Chalmohor thana, officials said.

The defaulters said they could not return the loans in time due to devastating deluge that seriously damaged their standing crops last year.

The government following

the devastating catastrophe declared that the loan recovery would be suspended and fresh loan would be given to the affected farmers.

But the farmers alleged the bank authorities have been insisting them to pay back the loan and are harassing them by sending police force to their houses.

When contacted, officials of some banks said they are only asking for repayment of loan from those farmers who did not suffer due to the flood or the losses incurred by them was the minimum.

However, the sources said during the first seven months of the current fiscal year, the banks recovered Tk 21.03 crore loan while it was Tk only 9.2 crore during the corresponding period of the last year.

The amount of total outstanding loan in the district is about Tk 87.97 crore.

In Narsingdi

Production target of Rabi crops may not be achieved

NARSINGDI, Feb 9: Despite efforts for increasing agriculture production after the flood last year, growers in the district feared that the production target of Rabi crops might not be achieved in the current season, reports UNB.

They further apprehended that a vast tract of land might be left uncultivated due to various reasons.

Agriculture Extension Department (AED) said the cultivation target of Rabi crops has been fixed at 56,559 hectares of land.

Of the total, Boro paddy will be cultivated on 42,354 hectares, wheat on 2,600 hectares, mustard on 49,000 hectares, potato on 18,000 hectares and vegetables on 4,028 hectares.

The production target of Boro has been fixed at 1.05 lakh metric tons, wheat 7,000 metric tons, potato 25,000 metric tons, mustard 4,500 metric tons, maize 1,700 metric tons, vegetables 2,700 metric tons.

The cultivation would continue till the middle of the current month. But, only 42,250 hectares of land have so far been brought under cultivation against the total target.

The growers said they were facing problems in cultivating the land due mainly to shortage of bullocks and necessary irrigation, price spiral of fertiliser, pesticides and other inputs and shortage of capital.

A number of poor farmers were compelled to sell their bullocks during the flood to maintain their livelihood. They said they received a small amount of relief as part of the post-flood rehabilitation programme.

Acute scarcity of fodder also forced many farmers to sell out their bullocks at throwaway prices.

Another opponent group of CHT peace accord

From Our Correspondent

RANGAMATI, Feb 9: Another opponent group of peace accord has allegedly been formed here. The group has been named as United People's Democratic Front (UPDF).

Their main demand is now full autonomy for Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

The members of UPDF have kidnapped five persons on January 28 from Kaokhali in Rangamati. They have acknowledged it and taken the responsibility of the kidnapping. They have done this with a view to introducing themselves among the local residents. The kidnapped persons were released unconditionally on January 31 though UPDF demanded an amount of Taka Two lakh as ransom.

According to statement given to Rangamati court by Mohammad Rezaul Karim, a kidnapped person under Section 164, on January 28 eight armed tribal youths kidnapped them at gun point. Four kidnapped persons agreed and signed the statement. The name of UPDF leader is Arilash Chakma, they added in the statements.

The other opponents of peace accord is Prasad Sanchay Group (PSG). Eyewitnesses from Nariachar area have confirmed that on February 4 an engine boat was taken by PSG at gun point.