

News snaps

Number of narcotic addicts up

ISWARDI, Feb 16: The number of narcotic addicts as well as narcotic sellers in nine thanas here has gone up alarmingly, reports APB. The younger generation is the victim of this curse. Local people allege that neither the local administration nor police are taking any effective steps to curb this dangerous social evil. Police, however, arrested some 140 people last year in this connection at the instance of the Drug and Narcotics Control Department here, but they managed to come out, local people allege. As many as 132 cases were filed with police. Eighty-four people were arrested in Pabna Sadar in connection with 67 cases, 19 in Iswardi with 34 cases, 19 in Shantahar in 16 cases and 17 in Sirajganj in 15 cases, police said.

Govt being deprived of revenue

NARSINGDI, Feb 16: The government is being deprived of Tk 40-50 crore revenue every year as almost half of the brickfields in the country are being operated without licence, reports APB. The licence fee is only Tk 500 annually. According to an official source, there are about 3,000 registered brickfields in the country and as many are operating without licence which do not have to pay anything to the government. Owners of unauthorised brickfields evade income tax, commercial land development tax and value-added tax (VAT). The VAT is Tk 69,000 for a brickfield now which was Tk 10,000 in 1991.

Train passengers suffering

PANCHGARH, Feb 16: Train passengers in the Dinajpur-Panchgarh route have been suffering a lot owing to lack of adequate number of compartments and irregular service, reports APB.

The 104-kilometre railway line from Dinajpur to Panchgarh passes through the districts of Dinajpur, Thakurgaon and Panchgarh. Tracks in the line were laid during the British rule. The Bangladesh government, however, added 23 kilometre tracks from Rubha to Panchgarh, but did not provide necessary amenities for the passengers, local people alleged. The two local trains do not have any fixed timetable. They run late by three to four hours on average everyday. The compartments of these trains do not have any light, fan, and often lack water supply.

Agri-sector to get govt support

FARIDPUR, Feb 16: Forest and Environment Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury on Saturday said the government would give all out support to agriculture sector aimed at achieving self-sufficiency in food production, reports UNB. Inaugurating a three-day agricultural fair at Nagarkanda thana complex in Faridpur on Saturday, Sajeda said the government's main objective is to fulfil the production target by making available the modern technology-based agriculture inputs to the farmers. Quality seeds and agricultural appliances are being displayed in 15 stalls set up in the three-day fair. Besides, information on use of modern technologies in agriculture are also available in the fair. Laying emphasis on practical training for the growers to introduce newer technologies, the Minister said, "change of the traditional agricultural system is a must to achieve food autarky."

Mustard farming to exceed target

NETRAKONA, Feb 16: The target of mustard cultivation has exceeded in 10 thanas here in the current 'Rabi' season, reports BSS. Netrakona District Agriculture Extension Department (AED) office sources said, a total of 1,700 hectares of land had been brought under mustard cultivation against the target of 10,000 hectares. AED took necessary steps to ensure supply quality seeds, fertilisers, insecticides and other agricultural inputs to the farmers. The field workers of AED rendered field level service for making the mustard cultivation programme a success.

NGO official murdered

SYLHET, Feb 16: An NGO official was mysteriously murdered at his rented residence in Golapganj area at the out-skirt of the town early Tuesday, reports UNB. The deceased was identified as Dr Salahuddin alias Khokan, 40, an official of a local NGO. Police said a colleague of the victim who was residing at a room beside him, broke the news of his death early in the morning but he later went into hiding. The wife of the deceased was living outside the town in her workplace. Police recovered the body and sent it to Sylhet Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Husband's bid to kill wife

SATKHIRA, Feb 16: A greedy husband poured petrol on the body of his wife and set her afire at Nakipur in Shyamnagar thana for failing to meet his dowry demand on Friday, reports UNB. Family sources said, Aminur Rahman, husband of Rashna Khatun, forced her wife to go to her father's house to bring the dowry money. But Rashna returned empty as her poor father expressed his inability to comply with the demand. At this, the cruel husband became angry and at one stage of altercation, he took the attempt to burn her to death. The victim was rushed to the Khulna 250-bed hospital in a critical condition.

Potato farming on 1,700 hectares

NETRAKONA, Feb 16: A total of 1,700 hectares of land has been brought under potato cultivation in 10 thanas in the district in the current season, reports BSS. Netrakona District Agriculture Extension Department office sources said, the production target of potato has been fixed at 20,400 tonnes. Besides, 450 hectares of land has been brought under sweet potato cultivation with a production target of 4,500 tonnes this year.

3 incidents of snatching in a day

SHARIATPUR, Feb 16: Three incidents of snatching were reported from different parts of the district on Thursday, reports UNB. Police sources said, a gang of miscreants snatched away gold ornaments from a woman on the College Road of the town. Local people caught red-handed one of the muggers identified as Kader, 22, and gave him good beating. In another incident, the miscreants robbed off the belongings of pedestrian at Kuarpur of town road at 5 pm. Another man came under attack by a group of terrorists on Jajira-Kazir Hat road at 6 pm. They took away all the valuables from the victim. The victims never dare to inform the matter to the police for fear of reprisal, said the locals.

Science Week in Netrakona

NETRAKONA, Feb 16: The National Science and Technology Week '99 began here on February 8, reports BSS. In observance of the week, a week-long science fair began at Netrakona Anjuman Government Model High School premises here under the auspices of Netrakona District Science and Technology Week Observation Committee. Dean of Science and Technology, Faculty of Bangladesh Open University Prof Mafizuddin Ahmed inaugurated the science fair. Deputy Commissioner, Netrakona and president of Netrakona District Science and Technology Week Observation Committee Ali Akber Hussain Akhand presided over the inaugural function. It was addressed, among others, by Associate Professor of Netrakona Government University College GM Haider, Headmaster of Netrakona High School Saidur Rahman and assistant teacher of Netrakona Datta High School Parimol Roy.

Agri loan disbursed among farmers

RANGAMATI, Feb 16: A total of 11,734 farmers received Taka 4 crore 65 lakh as agricultural loan in 10 thanas here during the last six months, reports BSS. The loan money was distributed among the farmers to start Boro and Aman farming and to facilitate the production and marketing of agricultural goods. According to Sonali Bank regional office, Rangamati, the loan was distributed by Sonali, Agrani, Janata and Bangladesh Krishi Banks. Sonali Bank distributed Taka 54 lakh and 29 thousand against a target of Taka 1 crore and 47 lakh. A total of 1413 farmers received the loan.

Cattle diseases in Madaripur

MADARIPUR, Feb 16: Cattle diseases have broken out in alarming proportion here, reports APB. At least 275 cattlehead die in the last three months and 1,200 are attacked now in different areas of the district, sources in the district livestock office said. A disease locally called *khura rog* causes infection in jaws and hooves and another disease called *galafala rog* cripples the animals. Both are killer diseases. The worst affected thanas are Rajair, Kalkini, Shibchar and Sadar. The sources said they do not have adequate vaccines to fight the diseases.

Urs مبارক at Tangail

TANGAIL, Feb 16: A two-day long Urs of Shah Sufi Maolana Makmuddin Ahmed Peer will be held at Tangail Paradise Para Darbar Sharif on 16th and 17th instant instead of February 23 and 24, reports BSS. *Khatm-e-Quran, milad mahfil, zikir azkar and waz mahfil* will be held on the occasion. The Urs will be concluded on 17th instant morning through *akhert munajat*.

Panic grips CHT

7 abducted, killed in three weeks

KHAGRACHHARI, Feb 16: Panic gripped the remote tribal villages of Dighinala, Sadar and Matiranga thanas here as seven people were abducted and killed in deep forests during the last three weeks, reports UNB. The latest incident of murder took place in Dighinala thana. On Sunday, police recovered two bodies, identified as Anindamoy Chakma, 25, son of Sattya Kumar Chakma of Jarulchhari village and Mrinal Kanti Chakma, 26, son of Chan Kumar of Shankhola village, from deep forest of Shamuk Pajya in Dighilana. The deceased were abducted by a group of terrorists on February 8.

A faction of Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP), known as Prasi-Sanjoy group, claimed that the victims were the activists of their organisation, which opposes the CHT peace accord. Police on Saturday arrested one Muruti Chakma from Kabakhali, area on charge of the sensational double murder. On Friday, police recovered bodies of Harendra Dewan and Horikko Chakma from the deep forest of Shimulchhara area of Sadar thana. The victims, claimed to be the members of the same faction of PCP, were kidnapped on February 3. Besides, Biral Chakma, 40, was murdered by the terrorists on January 31 while he was re-

turning home from a village-arbitration. They killed another tribal man, Rajgva Tripura, 32, calling him out of his house on February 1. They also gunned down a Bengali settler, Nur Hossain, 30, at Palashpur in Matiranga thana on January 1 as he refused to pay tolls as demanded by the abductors. Police arrested Chikon Muni Chakma in this connection. Sources said murder and abduction in the hilly villages became a regular phenomenon with the increasing internal conflicts among different groups campaigning in favour and against the CHT peace accord.



JHENIDAH: An advocacy meeting of the Coordination Council of Human Rights in Bangladesh (CCHRB), Khulna division was held at the RIGHTS Jessore office on Sunday. The meeting was held with a view to ensuring fair observation of the ensuing pourasabha elections. — Star photo by Delwar Kabir

Elections stayed over delimitation in Chuadanga Ruling party more active in Gaibandha Municipality

From Rezaul Hoque

GAIBANDHA, Feb 16: Elections will be held in two municipalities here, namely Gaibandha and Gobindaganj. A total of 27 polling stations will be erected in Gaibandha and 11 polling stations in Gobindaganj municipality. As many as 29,676 voters will exercise their franchise in Gaibandha and 15,068 voters in Gobindaganj municipality. The elections dates have been fixed on February 23 at Gobindaganj and on February 25 at Gaibandha Municipality. Six candidates will vie for the post of chairman and 57 others for ward commissioners. Besides, 15 women are in the race for reserved seats in Gaibandha Municipality. Ten candidates are fighting for the post of chairman of the newly formed Gobindaganj Municipality. More over, 14 women are contesting for reserved seats and 58 others for ward commissioners. In Gaibandha Municipality, the candidates for chairman are Abdul Mannan Sarker of JP, Anowarul Hasan Sabur of Awami League (AL), Shahadat Hossain Sutta (Independent), Ferdous Ahmed of Jatiya Party (JP), Fazley Karim Sarker of AL, Sadequul Islam Murad of AL. The names of chairman candidates in Gobindaganj Municipality are Abul Kalam Azad of AL, Ataur Rahman Sarker of AL, AFM Mojibar Rahman of AL, Faruk Ahmed of BNP, Shahinur Rahman Belal of BNP, Akhter Hossain Jewel of BNP, Akhter Mossaddek Ali Titu of BCL, Ashrafal Alam (Independent), Nazrul Islam Akanda (Independent), Enamul Kabir Torab of Jaker Party. The ruling party candidates have taken up initiatives to gear up polls campaign, but other candidates are yet to boost up their polls campaign. Out of total eight chairman candidates in Gaibandha Municipality, two candidates namely Wahiduzzaman Khan Titu, the sitting chairman of BNP and Shah Shariful Islam Babul of JSD withdrew their candidatures from the forthcoming municipal polls. While talking to BNP candidate Wahiduzzaman Khan, he told that he had withdrawn his candidature in response to polls boycott call by BNP. Our Chuadanga correspondent Quamrul Arefin says: Elections will be held in Alamdanga and Jibannagar out of four municipalities in the district. The elections will not being held in Chuadanga and Darsana because of stay order of the court. The court order came in response to separate writ petitions filed by two voters over delimitation of pourashava areas. In Alamdanga Municipality two persons are contesting for the post of chairman. They are the sitting chairman, Md Sobed Ali (JSD) and Md Hasan Kadir Gonu Mia (AL). A total of 37 candidates are contesting for nine posts of ward commissioners and 13 candidates are contesting for three posts of reserved seats for women. Elections will be held here on February 23. The total number of voters in this municipality are 13,684 including 6,763 female voters. Great enthusiasm is visible among the voters in Alamdanga Municipality. Besides, three candidates are contesting for the post of chairman in Jibannagar Municipality. They are Md Ashrafal Hoque (Jamaat), Md Nazrul Islam (AL) and Md Mafiar Rahman (BNP). A total of 27 candidates are contesting for the post of nine ward commissioners and 10 candidates are contesting for the post of three reserved female seats in this municipality. The total number of voters in this municipality are 8,471, of which 4,199 are females. Elections in this municipality will be held on February 25.



RAJSHAHI: ADAB chairperson Dr Kazi Faruque Ahmed addressing a mass rally of Trinomul organisations at Rajshahi Madrassah ground on Monday. — Star photo

Installation of modern digital system in Jamalpur sought

JAMALPUR, Feb 16: Telephone subscribers in Jamalpur, suffering from various shortcomings of the outdated analogue system, are eagerly looking forward to the installation of a modern digital system as promised by the Prime Minister, reports APB. The Prime Minister had assured the people, at a recent meeting in Jamalpur town, that a 2000-line digital telephone exchange would be set up soon. Telecommunications Minister Mohammed Nasim had also made a similar commitment. Officials of the Telecommunications Ministry, after carrying out a survey the Jamalpur area, also made assurances to the same effect. But till date no work has been done on the project. Meanwhile, telephone-users have been suffering due to technical faults like a sudden loss of function, loss of dial tone, cross-connections and failure to get the right number inspite of correct dialing. When the users complain to the concerned authorities, they are told that the analogue system is old and unreliable and that the only way to improve the situation is introduction of the modern digital system. The present telephone exchange was set up with 1200 lines in 1983. After that no changes have been introduced and no improvements made. The people of Jamalpur point out that digital system has been installed in the nearby districts of Mymensingh and Sirajganj, so there is no reason why they should be deprived of it. The hope that the government will soon take steps in this regard.



SYLHET: Erosion by the river Kushiara has taken a serious turn along several villages in Jakiganj thana. The erosion is reducing the country's territory for the last few years. Steps taken by the Water Development Board so far are not satisfactory. This photo was taken from village Gangajal. — Star photo by Iqbal Siddiquee

Boro output will exceed target in 8 districts

RAJSHAHI, Feb 16: Boro crop is being cultivated on nearly six thousand hectares of land in eight districts of Rajshahi region during the current season, reports APB. The target of production has been set at 14.77 lakh metric tonnes, according to the Agriculture Extension Department (AED) sources. Sources told that the target of production has been set at 97,395 metric tonnes on 39,326 hectares in Rajshahi district. In Naogaon, the target has been set at 476,000 metric tonnes on 125,591 hectares of land. In Natore district, the target has been set at 126,053 metric tonnes on a little over 51 thousand hectares of land. The target for Chapainawabganj district has been set at 62,196 metric tonnes on 25,012 hectares of land, while in Bogra

district more than four lakhs tonnes is to be cultivated on 168,062 hectare of land. In Pabna, 103,839 metric tonnes of Boro is to be cultivated on 42,410 hectares of land, while in Joypurhat district 129,175 tonnes of Boro is to be cultivated on 51,670 hectares of land. In Sirajganj district, on the other hand, target of production has been set at 228,261 tonnes on 92,989 hectares of land. Informed sources told that till the month of January, Boro has been cultivated on 125,500 hectares of land, which comprises only 20 per cent of the target. Sources said that during the last season, some 20.64 lakhs metric tonnes of Boro was cultivated on 630,000 hectares of land in eight districts of the region. Officials of the concerned department, however, told that during the current season Boro production will exceed the target because of favourable weather and supply of adequate fertiliser to the cultivators.

Girl commits suicide in Sylhet

SYLHET, Feb 16: A girl committed suicide by taking poison in Jaintapur thana here on Friday following a family feud over a petty matter, reports APB. The deceased was identified as Nehara Begum, 12, daughter of Shatu Mia of village Asampara in the thana and a student of Class-IV of Asampara Government Primary School.

Arsenic contaminated water creates panic in 3 dists

RAJSHAHI, Feb 16: The presence of arsenic beyond permissible limits in the water of tube-wells in two districts of greater Rajshahi is on alarmingly rise creating panic among the people, reports UNB. People of this region are scared of using tube-well water due to increasing number of patients affected by arsenic contamination. At least 3,500 people of various parts in Rajshahi and Chapainawabganj districts have so far been affected by arsenic contamination. But unofficial sources said the number of arsenic patients is much higher than the official one. Villagers are using water from the tube-wells with arsenic contamination including even 150 identified tube-wells with high arsenic limit, as the concerned authorities did not seal the tube-wells. Local people also alleged that they are compelled to take contaminated tube-well waters as the concerned officials shows reluctance time to time to test waters. Presence of excessive arsenic in this region was first detected in 1993, but the authorities concerned did not take measures to solve the problem rather it failed to identify those tube-wells, which have arsenic beyond permissible limits. Presence of arsenic beyond permissible limits was identified in water of tube-wells in Charchat, Puthia, Sarda, Mohishbathan, Harpur, Shroil, Khalishpur, Miapur, Yusufpur,

Gopalpur, Balupara, Chandan of Rajshahi district and Shibganj, Rajarampur, Barogharia, Chamargam, Ranihat, Durlapur, Kanshat and Monalaha of Nawabganj district. When contacted, Chairman of Geology and Mining Department of Rajshahi University Mushfiq Ahmed said there are three ways to make free water from arsenic contamination: To test water of a place before installation of a tube-well taking water after making it free from arsenic contamination and drinking pond water after boiling. It is learnt that three water treatment plants under the Department of Public Health Engineering in collaboration with Rajshahi City Corporation will be installed at Tk 26.40 crore for making water free from arsenic pollution. Villagers urged the authorities concerned to immediately install the water treatment plants to protect the people of this region from arsenic contamination. Another report from Laxmipur says: Acute scarcity of drinking water is prevailing as most of the people of four thanas of Laxmipur district ceased to use waters of tube-well after detection of arsenic contamination. Finding no other alternative, most of the common people have been forced to use contaminated water from river, pond and canal to meet their necessity. There are 4,515 tube-wells given by government for about 15 lakh people of four thanas and 10 wards of Laxmipur and Raipur pourashavas which is less than the requirement. Experts of Public Health Engineering Department in a test carried out in the shallow tube-well waters in four thanas found excessive presence of arsenic in 1997. The deadly poison was detected 100 per cent in waters of Ramgati and Laxmipur Sadar thanas and 99 per cent in Raipur and Ramganj thanas. Ninety eight per cent shallow tube-well of 500 villages has been sealed off owing to presence of dangerous level of arsenic. The same was found in waters of municipality town areas. Many people of the thanas have been affected with various diseases including putrefaction and skin diseases after drinking arsenic contaminated waters. Hence, experts asked the people not to use waters from shallow tube-wells. Officially, supply of shallow tube-well has been stopped in 1997. The well off people, with a view to meeting the necessity of drinking water, resorted to using waters from deep tube-well. But the common people are forced to take contaminated waters from pond and open water bodies. Meanwhile, most of the deep tube-wells, installed in various institutions, are lying inoperative since long, officials said causing scarcity of pure water.

Production of winter vegetables up

SHERPUR, Feb 16: The production of winter vegetables in the district this year has been encouraging, but the growers are facing tough situation due to sharp fall in prices in the local market, reports UNB. Local sources said the farmers across the shoal areas of the district cultivated different winter vegetables to recoup the losses of last year's flood. The weather condition favoured high yield, but the good harvest failed to bring any good to the growers due to its low price. In the markets of the district town and adjoining areas, at least 20 pieces of large size cauliflower is available at Tk 10 while potato is being sold at Tk 2 per kg and eggplant only Tk one per kg. The growers became frustrated with the bottom low price of the vegetables and even compelled to sell their yield at the field level to avoid the transportation cost. A grower said at the field, the average price of a pushcart loaded eggplant is only Tk 20 while similar quantity of cauliflower is Tk 30-35. In some cases it has been found that out of frustration the farmers abandon their vegetables in the market. Many farmers are using the vegetables including eggplant, cauliflower and bottle gourd as fodder due to absence of customers. On the contrary, the prices of fodder including hay and bran have also shot up in the market.

Tk 20 cr educational instt bldg work completed

JESSORE, Feb 16: A number of academic buildings for educational institutions in eight thanas here and three thanas of Narail district have been constructed by the Facilities Department of the Ministry of Education during the last fiscal year at a total cost of Tk 20 crore, reports APB. The educational institutions include colleges, non-government secondary schools, madrasas and primary schools. Construction of academic buildings of six non-government colleges were completed at a cost of Tk 2.50 crore. The colleges include Chowgacha Mridhapara Mahila College, Bagharpara College, Mashihati College, Afluddin Degree College, Itna Mahila College and Talbaria College. Besides, the commerce building of Jessore Government MM College was also constructed at a cost of Tk 50 lakh. As many as 70 high school buildings were also constructed at a total cost of Tk 10 crore during the period. Of these, 23 were constructed at Keshabpur, 12 in Monirampur, six in Bagharpara, four in each of Abhoynagar and Chowgacha, two in Kalia and one in Narail sadar. Meanwhile, 25 government primary school buildings were constructed at a cost of Tk 2.52 crore. BRAHMANBARIA: APEX Club distributing educational equipments among the poor students of Chaoyghoria High School in Akhaura thana. — Star photo