

News snaps

HSC examinee commits suicide

JHENIDAH, Mar 1: An HSC examinee allegedly committed suicide by throwing himself under a running train at Ekterpur in Kaliganj thana on Saturday, reports UNB.

The dead was identified as Manirul, 22, of Betal Chadipur village in Sadar thana. Police said Manirul jumped on the rail track on the Khulna-Parbatipur section near Mobarokganj rail station in the afternoon. The body was sent to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

Six arrested in Sylhet

SYLHET, Mar 1: Detective Branch of police arrested six people including two gay girls from a house of Subid Bazar area in the town on Tuesday, reports UNB.

Acting on a tip-off, police raided the house and arrested the gay girls Razu and Renu including their clients Gafur, Anil, Azad and Jitendra on charges of immoral activities. Balaganj Police also arrested one rickshaw-puller Salamati Ullah along with smuggled Indian bidi worth about Tk 35,000. Salamati of Rampur village in Balaganj thana was arrested while carrying the bidi by his rickshaw, but police could not arrest the owner of the bidi.

Acute scarcity of fodder

SHERPUR, Mar 1: An acute crisis of fodder has been prevailing here following total damage of 'Aman' crop by the last flood, reports APB.

Hay is being sold at Tk 5-6 per kilogram at local markets, which is impossible for average farmers to afford. Sources at the District Livestock Office told that there were over 3,28,000 cattle here. There are also some 44 private dairy farms. They said Tk three lakh has been distributed among the flood affected farmers in five thanas to help them procure cattle feed.

Attack condemned

SYLHET, Mar 1: Different political parties, including Awami League and non-political organisations here strongly condemned the recent attack at the residence of Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury, reports BSS.

Protest meetings were held and processions were brought out in this connection. A protest meeting, organised by Jubo League and Chhatra League was held on Thursday at Amberkhana point of the town. The meeting, presided over by district convener of Jubo League Nazrul Islam, was addressed, among others, by leader Misbahuddin Shiraj, Mahmud Hossain Manju, Jagadish Das, Shaiful Alam Nadem and Juthipada.

Indian goods seized

SATKHIRA, Mar 1: The members of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) seized various kinds of Indian goods worth over Taka 5.7 lakh during the last week, reports BSS.

The BDR members of 21 Battalion of Satkhira raided the Bhorra, Jhaudanga, Boikar, Tolouigachi, Shakra and Kakkandanga border areas and seized various kinds of Indian goods smuggled into Bangladesh from India. BDR said, the goods included saree, sugar, nylon net, grapes, and three-pieces dress. The goods were deposited to the Satkhira Customs authorities. None was arrested in this connection.

Attack on health administrator

FARIDPUR, Mar 1: Kamrul Islam, Thana Health Administrator of Sadarpur Thana Health Complex was grievously injured on Saturday by a group of miscreants. They attacked him at his residence when the doctor refused to pay Taka 10,000 demanded by them, reports BSS.

The doctor was shifted to Faridpur General Hospital for treatment. A case was registered with Sadarpur thana. Police Super is personally investigating the case.

Arsenic related diseases claim 22 lives in Jessore

From Atiur Rahman

JESSORE, Mar 1: Arsenic related diseases killed 22 lives in two thanas here recently.

Out of them 18 died in Sharsa thana, while four others in Jhinkargachha thana, according to local people and Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) sources.

Arsenic has been detected in water of tubewells in seven out of eight thanas here. Over 40 per cent of the total population have been affected in the aforementioned thanas.

The worst affected thanas are Sharsa, Jhinkargachha, Keshabpur, Monirampur and Abhoynagar, said an official of DPHE in a monthly meeting of the district development coordination committee here in February last.

DPHE has sealed up 91 tubewells in different villages under

Jhinkargachha thana. The areas are Gongonandapur, Magura, Panishara, Navaran, Nirbaskhola, Harjirbagh, Shankarpur, Shimulia, besides Jhinkargachha municipal area.

T&T cables, poles worth Tk One cr missing in Nilphamari

From Our Correspondent

NILPHAMARI, Mar 1: About 200 KM telephone cables and over 3,000 telephone poles worth about Taka one crore are missing from the abandoned physical line of the district due to gross negligence of Telegraph and Telephone(T&T) authorities.

The break-up of sealed up shallow tubewells is as follows: 10 out of 14 in Gongonandapur union, seven out of 11 in Magura union, 11 out of 23 in Panishara union, 10 out of 18 in Jhinkargachha Poursabha, four out of eight in Navaran union, seven out of 14 in Nirbaskhola union, three out of 10 in Hazirbag union, two out of six in Shankarpur union, three out of six in Shimulia union and two out of six in Jhinkargachha union.

When this correspondent asked the DPHE officials regarding sealing up of tubewells in other affected thanas, they failed to give any satisfactory reply.

Local people have urged the authorities concerned to take preventive measures to fight the contamination.

Process of desertification on along entire south-western region

CHUADANGA, Mar 1: A process of desertification is evident in the entire South-Western region of the country due to excessive withdrawal of ground water for irrigation and very lean flow of rivers during dry season, reports APB.

This may lead to an environmental disaster in the region, experts say.

Sources in the district agriculture department told this correspondent that some 17,000 crore cubic feet of ground water is used in a season for cultivating Boro crops on about seven lakh acres in 10 districts of Khulna division alone.

There are some 2,000 deep tubewells, 70,000 shallow tubewells, 1200 power pumps and nearly 2,500 hand driven tubewells in 10 districts. Only power pumps lift surface water and others lift ground water.

Environmentalists have been warning against excessive

use of ground water and stressing the need for increased utilisation of surface water, by way of constructing more embankments for preserving water. This could also help increase flow of water in morbid rivers.

Re-examination of morbid and silted up rivers could help preservation of water and irrigation, they said.

Sources said that the Water Development Board (WDB) took up a number of projects for water resources development in the South-Western districts in the last few years but none of those have been properly implemented.

The WDB's 'Upper Bhairab Mathabhangga Project' has not been implemented in more than one and a half decades' time. 'ICO' had prepared yet another project for utilising surface water by constructing a barrage at the confluence of Mathabhangga and Bhairab rivers.

This project was aimed at

providing irrigation facilities in Chuadanga, Alamdanga, Damurhuda, Meherpur, Jhenidah, Kotchandpur areas during dry season. A total of Tk 3.22 crore was sanctioned for implementation of the project.

But work on the project was abandoned after a few days of work owing to lack of funds. Later, the government prepared a new, more costly project profile but work on that also did not start. At least 25,000 acres of land could be irrigated with surface water through this project.

Experts opine that water can be preserved for irrigation by constructing barrages along the Kabodak, lower Bhairab, Nabaganj, Betna and Chitra rivers, among others.

The sources said that a Tk seven crore barrage in the Rik Kumar in Magura district has improved water preservation and irrigation situation there.

Govt being deprived of huge revenue

NARSINGDI, Mar 1: The government is being deprived of at least Tk 1 crore revenue here per month due to under-valuation of land in sale deeds, reports APB.

This is being done by buyers of land in collusion with a section of corrupt officials at the Bhairab sub-registry office to evade fees, sources at the office alleged.

According to a government report, the price of one decimal of land was fixed at Tk 20,000 in Bhairab municipal area and at Tk 3000 to Tk 5,000 outside it.

Lands are sold at prices much higher than those. Sources said, the actual price of one decimal of land in Bhairab municipality ranges from Tk 30,000 to Tk 2 lakh and in the unions from Tk 1,000 to Tk 50,000.

In 95 per cent of the sale deeds, the prices are shown much lower in collusion with the corrupt officials.

Every day, sale deeds of land worth Tk 25 to Tk 50 lakh are regularised at the sub-registry office. As a result, the office earns Tk 3 to Tk 5 lakh from sale of stamps and collection of fees and taxes.

Jhenidah fishermen in miseries

JHENIDAH, Mar 1: A large number of fishermen here have been facing serious setbacks due to fund shortage, high price of fishing equipment and scarcity of fish in six thanas here, reports APB.

The prevailing situation threatens their only source of income.

This was revealed in a press conference held at Jhenidah Press Club recently by the District Fishermen Association. The leaders of the association said that some 19,000 poor fishermen have no nets, no boats and other fishing necessities of their own. As a result they have to work on share-basis.

Besides, some fishermen are compelled to borrow money from the money-lenders at a high-rate of interest for purchasing their fishing equipment.

The leaders of the association also alleged that the genuine fishermen don't get bank loans due to complex banking procedures but the local elite, with the connivance of bank officials, grab the lion's share of the loan by pretending to be fishermen and thus divert the loan to other sectors.

Sanctuaries needed for guest birds

SHERPUR, Mar 1: The number of guest birds arriving in the region during winter has been gradually decreasing, reports APB.

This region which used to throb with the chirping of guest birds in yesteryears have now become comparatively silent.

Guest birds in their thousands used to fly into this region of the country from colder regions like Siberia and the Himalayas and take refuge in water bodies, hills and jungles.

But of late they are flocking to the neighbouring Indian states of Assam and Meghalaya, bird watchers said.

The birds are locally known as Pyong, Bhuti, Chiti, Pankouri, Shamuk Kana, Shoalchana, Gangcheel, Kajla, Kechali, Bajunia Hash, Kada Kiecha and the like.

Increased human habitation in the area has affected the natural temporary habitats of these guest birds. Besides, menace by hunters, less food is available for them now as use of pesticides in crop fields has reduced small fish in the water bodies.

Biennial confce of Pabna Rabindra Sangeet Sammilan Parisad

From Our Correspondent

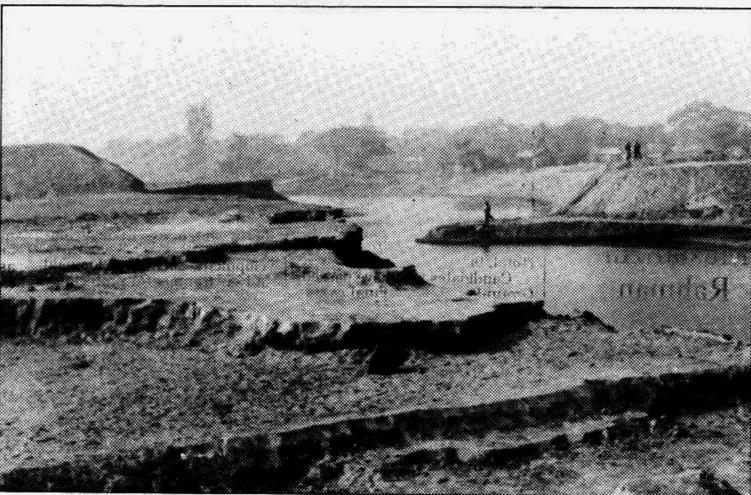
PABNA, Mar 1: Jatiya Rabindra Sangeet Sammilan Parisad, Pabna district branch, will hold its biennial conference and Tagore songs competition on March 8.

This was decided at a meeting of Pabna district committee of the organisation held recently with Principal Fakhrul Islam, president of the unit, in the chair.

The competition will begin at 10 am at Annada Gobinda Public Library. A good number of competitors will participate from different thanas.

A new district committee of the organisation is also likely to be elected.

A team of judges comprising noted Tagore singers will also join from Dhaka.



GAIBANDHA: Construction work of Gaibandha town protection embankment progressing fast. — Star photo

Grameen Check project has brought a new life to Sirajganj weavers

SIRAJGANJ, Mar 1: The Grameen Check Project, a venture of Grameen Bank, has brought a new life to weavers here, reports APB.

The Grameen Bank introduced a new dimension to cloth production in the country by launching the Grameen Udyog Prakalpa (Rural Initiative Project) in 1992. Weavers were supplied with new designs and colour.

In Belkuchi thana under Sirajganj district, there are about 5,000 hand-operated looms. The weavers were slowly losing the markets for their products due to numerous problems including outdated designs and shortage of capital and raw materials. Many of them were forced to abandon their traditional occupation. The Grameen Bank project acted as a life-saver.

The weavers can now operate without capital since the Grameen project supplies the yarn, colour and designs. The cloth is woven according to specifications and handed over to project personnel who pay the weavers their remuneration. The responsibility for the sales of these fabrics lies entirely with the Grameen Udyog.

These fabrics and designs were displayed in the national trade fair in 1993 and foreign

buyers were so impressed that they placed orders for 50,000 yards of this fabric. Following their example the local garments factories started using the Grameen Check fabrics.

In 1995, an exhibition of Grameen Check fabrics was held at Cologne in Germany which provided a fillip to its

export.

Observers say that the benefits of the Grameen Udyog are now being enjoyed by only a small percentage of rural weavers. Thousands of traditional weavers in other districts will be rescued from extinction if the Udyog enhances its operation and coverage.

Lessees realising higher fares at ferry ghat

PABNA, Mar 1: Ijaradars (lessees) at Bheramara-Paksey ferry ghat are realising fares two to three times the officials rates, users have alleged, reports APB.

Even passengers are charged fares for using the ferry service, although it is illegal, they alleged.

The official rates are: bus, truck, truck lorries—Tk 144, minibus, coaster, microbus, pick-up—Tk 44, jeep, car and tempo—Tk 22, autorickshaw—Tk 13, motorbike—Tk 7, push-carts—Tk 7, van, rickshaw—Tk 3, bicycle—Tk 2, cow, buffalo, sheep—Tk 3 and goat Tk 1.

The charges depend on whims of the lessees. Loaded

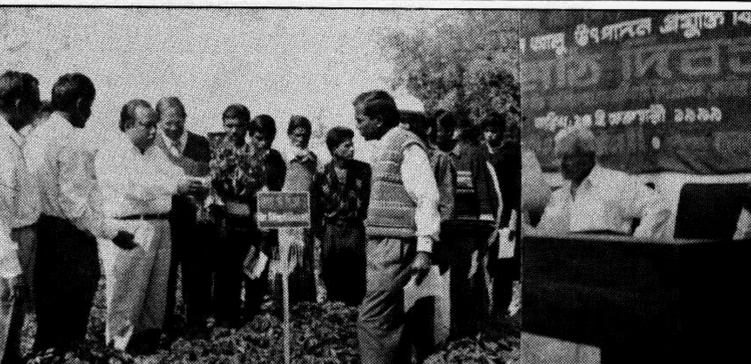
vehicles often have to pay six to seven times the official rates, it is alleged.

Even engine-driven boats also charge two to three times the regular fares from passengers and for transporting goods.

The users say they can not protest the irregularities and corruption as they have to wait for one to two days to get an opportunity to avail of a ferry boat.

The ferry ghat is the only one connecting the northern and southern districts by road.

Apart from the exorbitant high fares, the lessees also charge Tk 10 to Tk 15 per vehicle in the name of giving serial numbers for boarding ferry boats.



MYMENSINGH: Prof Lutfur Rahman, Chairman of Bangladesh Seed Foundation speaking at the field day programme on 'Seed Potato Technology' which was held recently at Kazir Shimla. Dr Ronald P Black, chief of ATDP-IFDC and eminent seed pathologist Prof Abdul Wadud Miah also seen in the picture. — Star photo

In Habiganj Poursabha A defeated candidate demands re-election

HABIGANJ, Mar 1: Demanding re-election a defeated candidate of the local poursabha said he supported the idea of holding the local government body polls under a caretaker administration, reports UNB.

Punyabrata Chowdhury, a Chairman candidate in Habiganj Poursabha election which was held on February 23 brought allegations of widespread irregularities in vote counting and said the result was manipulated in favour of the winner, who enjoyed the support of the ruling party.

Addressing a news conference following the announcement of the unofficial result, he said that Shahid Chowdhury was announced elected by manipulating the result in a subtle way.

Punyabrata, who was defeated by 537 votes, alleged that a central leader of the ruling Awami League, who also enjoys the status of Minister, stayed in the poursabha till the day before the election violating the election rules and campaigned

for his party candidate.

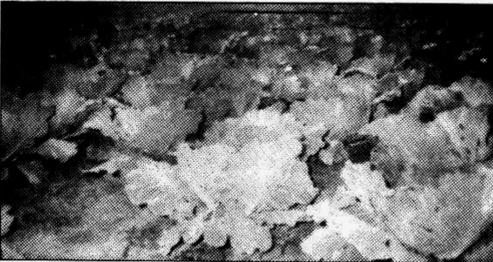
He said the leader influenced the local voters by calling the opinion leaders to the Circuit House and asking them to vote in favour of Shahid Chowdhury.

The chairman candidate further alleged that the counting of votes for the post of chairman was suddenly stopped at MKJC Government Girls College and armed goons had forced his agents out of the centre.

Besides, he said the terrorists in the night of the day before the voting created panic among the voters in different parts of the municipality including Jasser Abda, Noahati, Batirpur, Khattia Natirpur and Anwarpur.

Punyabrata said he was leading in vote counting at 15 centres, but the result was changed at BKJC centre to give the Awami League candidate a clear lead.

The winner Chowdhury bagged 9,507 votes in the election while the defeated candidate got 8,970 votes.



GOPALGANJ: A bumper production of cabbage has been reported at Tantulia village in the sadar thana during this season. — Star photo

Alleged corruption in Sherpur T&T exchange

SHERPUR, Mar 1: The district's telephone system has become extremely un dependable due to technical shortcomings at the T&T exchange and alleged corruption by a section of employees, reports APB.

Users complain of loss of dial tone, extraneous noise from the receiver, sudden malfunctioning, and wrong connections despite correct dialing. Over these, there is the menace of over-billing, they alleged.

There are allegations that some of the T&T employees regularly tamper meters to inflate or lower bills. They have secret understanding with many unscrupulous users who pay them monthly bribes to lower their bills to a bare minimum.

They also earn extra money by providing unauthorised connections, giving NWD facilities to non-NWD lines and allowing illegal public call offices (PCO).

No significant improvement has been made in the Sherpur exchange even after introduction of auto-dialing in 1989. The exchange continues to function on makeshift arrangements.

Telecommunication experts say, the number of connections should be 20 per cent less than the capacity to ensure trouble free operation. But now the number of connections is 100 per cent, which partly accounts for the problems faced by the subscribers.

Meanwhile, about 500 applications for new telephone connections are lying with the T&T office, which has decided to increase the capacity of the exchange by 200 more lines.

But no provision has been made to increase the number of channels. At present, the exchange has eight incoming and eight outgoing channels, but most of those remain inoperative due to lack of trained personnel in the switch room. The equipment is also in a decrepit condition and gets out of order frequently.

One source at the exchange said, it is due to operation of illegal PCOs that the outgoing channels of the switch room always remain occupied. The result is that the subscribers can rarely phone outside the district.

The source said, introduction of digital telephones may remove the corruption to some extent.

UNB reports from Comilla: The T&T Board will provide 600 more telephone lines in the town very soon, said an official source.

The source said a new analogue telephone exchange was set up in the town with a capacity of 1,600 lines and cable connection for 600 lines has already been completed by now.

It said the board is issuing 'demand notes' against the applications and the subscribers would be given connections after submission of the demand note following proper formalities.

More than 2,000 applicants of the town are now waiting telephone connections. The new analogue exchange would meet the demand partially, but there was no possibility of turning the telephone exchange into a digital one in near future, the source added.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Office of the Executive Engineer (RHD) Ferry Division, Topkhana Sylhet

Tender Notice

- Tender Notice No: 38 (98-99) Dt 16-02-99.
- Name of work: Repairing and painting the damaged portion of pontoon No-PM-047 at Fenchuganj Ferryghat under Ferry Division, Sylhet during the year 1998-99.
- Estimated cost: Tk 2,54,363/- (Tk two lac fifty-four thousand three hundred sixty-three) only.
- Earnest money: Tk 5,087/- (Tk five thousand eighty-seven) only.
- Time allowed for work: 20 (Twenty) days from the date of work order.
- Tender Form: Bangladesh Form No-2911.
- Nature of contractor: 1. A to C General Category of (RHD). 2. D General of Dhaka Ferry Circle. 3. E General of Ferry Division, Sylhet.
- Name of offices where tender documents will be available: 1. Executive Engineer (RHD), Ferry Division, Sylhet. 2. Executive Engineer (RHD), Ferry Construction Division, Dhaka. 3. Executive Engineer (RHD), Ferry Maintenance Division, Dhaka. 4. Sub-Divisional Engineer (RHD), Ferry Sub-Division, Sylhet.
- Name of offices to receive tender: 1. Superintending Engineer (RHD), Ferry Circle, Dhaka. 2. Executive Engineer (RHD), Ferry Division, Sylhet. 3. Executive Engineer (RHD), Ferry Construction Division, Dhaka. 4. Executive Engineer (RHD), Ferry Maintenance Division, Dhaka.
- Last date of selling the tender documents: 14-3-99 up to office hours.
- Last date and time of receiving tender: 15-3-99 up to 12-00 Noon.
- Date and time of opening tender: 18-3-99 at 12-30 PM.
- If lowest tender is more than one then date and time of lottery: To be announced later.

Naseem Ahamed
Executive Engineer (Mech) (CC)
(RHD), Ferry Division
Topkhana, Sylhet.

DFP-3818-24/2
G-357

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Office of the Executive Engineer (RHD) Ferry Division, Topkhana Sylhet

Tender Notice

- Tender Notice No: 37 (98-99) Dt 16-02-99.
- Name of work: Repairing the damaged portion of pontoon No PM-022 and painting the same at Fenchuganj Ferryghat under Ferry Division, Sylhet during the year 1998-99.
- Estimated cost: Tk 2,11,392/- (Tk two lac eleven thousand three hundred ninety-two) only.
- Earnest money: Tk 4,228/- Tk four thousand two hundred twenty-eight) only.
- Time allowed for work: 20 (Twenty) days from the date of work order.
- Tender Form: Bangladesh Form No-2911.
- Nature of contractor: 1. A to C General Category of (RHD). 2. D General of Dhaka Ferry Circle. 3. E General of Ferry Division, Sylhet.
- Name of offices where tender documents will be available: 1. Executive Engineer (RHD), Ferry Division, Sylhet. 2. Executive Engineer (RHD), Ferry Construction Division, Dhaka. 3. Executive Engineer (RHD), Ferry Maintenance Division, Dhaka. 4. Sub-Divisional Engineer (RHD), Ferry Sub-Division, Sylhet.
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(RHD), Ferry Division
Topkhana, Sylhet.

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