

News snaps

Loan for jobless poor men

BRAHMANBARIA, Oct 10: The Social Welfare Department recently disbursed Taka 47,500 as interest free loan among the unemployed poor persons of village Ghatra in the sadar under the poverty alleviation programme of the government, reports BSS.

According to an official source, the loan has been given to utilise in cattle rearing, dairy farm, small trade and other economic activities aiming at the socio-economic development of the rural poor. The department has been distributing this interest free loan in other villages.

Elderly Day observed in B'baria

BRAHMANBARIA, Oct 10: The International Elderly Day was observed in Brahmanbaria town and different upazila headquarters on October 2, reports BSS.

To mark the occasion a discussion meeting organised by the district social welfare office was held in the zila parishad auditorium here. Presided over by Al-Amin Jamali, Social Welfare Registration Officer, the discussion was addressed, among others, by Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Ananta Kumar Chowdhury.

Khas land distributed

CHUADANGA, Oct 10: A total of 888 acres of arable khas land has so far been distributed among 3,000 landless families of four upazilas, reports BSS.

According to an official source, 192 acres were distributed in Chuadanga sadar, 215 acres in Alamdanga upazila, 392 acres in Damurhuda upazila and 89 acres in Jibannagar upazila. A total of 1,442 acres of cultivable khas land will again be distributed among the poor farmers in phases. The distribution has been going on.

Flood damages betel leaf

RAJSHAHI, Oct 10: Betel leaf on 600 bighas of land in Mohanpur thana was severely damaged by recent flooding inflicting a loss of about Tk 6 crore to the growers, reports UNB.

The floodwater submerged most of the betel leaf fields in the thana and water is yet to be removed. Some farmers tried to drain out water from their lands but their efforts failed. Local farmers said they have to spend Tk 20,000 for cultivating betel leaf per bigha of land. If the harvest is good they can earn upto Tk 80,000 from one bigha of land.



Sarat Anjali: Shewly heralding the advent of Autumn now all over Bangladesh. Photo shows two children collecting Shewly, the flower of Autumn in the morning, at village Kabirpur in Sailkupa thana of Jhenidah district. —Star photo

Health complex opens

NETRAKONA, Oct 10: Health and Family Welfare Minister Salahuddin Yusuf opened the Khalajuri Thana Health Complex constructed by the Construction, Maintenance and Management Unit (CMMU) of the Health and Family Welfare Ministry at a cost of Taka 8 crore financed by the World Bank, reports BSS.

The well-equipped 31-bed hospital, which has two operating theatres, will offer medical care mainly to about two lakh people of haor area. In his speech to the opening ceremony, the health minister said the present government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is firmly committed to providing better health services to the people, particularly those in the far-flung rural areas. The government attaches top priority to ensuring health care for all by the year 2000 as a national goal and has brought reforms to the health sector by launching the Health and Population Sector Programme (HPSPP) in June 1998, he said.

Phensidyl seized

JHENIDAH, Oct 10: Police seized 100 bottles of phensidyl from a coach at Hatgopalpur in sadar thana on Friday, reports UNB.

Acting on a tip-off, police halted the Faridpur-bound bus and recovered the Indian drug from under a seat. In another raid, BDR personnel seized a truck, carrying Indian goods worth about Tk eight lakh, from Purapara bazaar in Moheshpur thana on October 1. The haul, including onion, sugar and spare motor parts, have been deposited with Jessore Customs department. Another report from Jessore adds, BDR Javans and members of Narcotics Control Department (DNC) recovered 230 bottles of phensidyl and 20 bottles of Indian wine from separate places of the district on October 6. On information, BDR Javans raided a bus, coming from Benapole, at Laujani on Jessore-Benapole road and recovered 130 bottles of phensidyl.

Telephone exchange project

RANGAMATI, Oct 10: A Tk 120 crore project has been undertaken to set up a 3000-line digital telephone exchange in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, reports UNB.

A Japanese expert has already visited the district while a Chinese expert team is scheduled to visit the three hill districts this month to make a preliminary assessment on the project. Under the project, a Bhāban will be constructed for the modern telephone exchange. The project works also include installing a new cable network. They said each and every thana of the three hill districts would gradually be brought under the telephone exchange.

Power outage affects normal life

KUSHTIA, Oct 10: As other parts of the country, economic activities in the district are also seriously being hampered due to frequent power outages, reports UNB.

Production in almost all mills, factories and other establishments remain suspended for nearly six hours a day because of erratic power supply. Local people alleged that the entire town plunges into darkness with the sunset everyday, affecting normal life. More alarming is that at times emergency operations have to be put off in hospitals due to power outages attributed to short supply from the national grid. Shop owners of busy markets of the town are occasionally seen to shutter their shops soon after the sunset due to power failure.

21 seed storehouses in shamble

MADARIPUR, Oct 10: Twenty-one seed storehouses are in shamble due to lack of renovation and maintenance, reports UNB.

There were once 27 storehouses and six of them, located in Shibechar and Kalkini thanas, went into the gorges of rivers. Agriculture officials said the seed granaries were set up in the 60s to preserve seeds and distribute those among the farmers. But the storehouses of Madharerchar, Bandarkhola, Kathalbari, Charjanajat and Shiruail in Shibechar thana and Alinagar in Kalkini thana were devoured by rivers Padma and Arial Khan in last few years. If the seed storehouses could be repaired, they said, the block supervisors would be able to use those as their residences.

Relief goods distributed

COMILLA, Oct 10: Bangladesh Red Crescent Society in collaboration with the Federation of International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies recently distributed relief goods among the flood victims and persons affected by the breach in the embankment on the River Gomti, reports BSS.

An official source said, about 13,000 affected people of 10 unions of Burchang, Chandina and Debidwara upazilas received per capita 10 kilograms of rice and two kilograms of pulse. Red Crescent officials, government officers and public representatives were present on the occasion.

Telephone booths inoperative

SHARIATPUR, Oct 10: Card Phone, a good venture of the government, suffered a setback in the town in absence of proper maintenance of the booths and shortage of cards, reports UNB.

Five booths in the telegram office and the railway station remained inoperative since long. Residents alleged that five other booths give wrong connection most of the time. It is further alleged that the T&T employees sell phone cards outside the windows at higher rates and create artificial crisis. After closure of the markets and the post offices, people cannot use card phone as the booths are located there.



Administrative building of the Institute of Bangladesh Studies (IBS). — Star photo

Problems grip IBS

From Kamran Reza Chowdhury

RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY, Oct 10: The Institute of Bangladesh Studies (IBS), a unique institute to confer M Phil and PhD degrees for advanced studies and research work on the society and culture of Bangladesh, has been facing manifold problems.

The problems include fund crisis, absence of adequate teachers and modern telecommunication facilities.

Located to the East of Rajshahi University (RU) campus, the institute was founded in 1973 by, among others, noted personalities like Prof Khan Sarwar Morshed, former Vice-Chancellor of Rajshahi University, late Prof Safiuddin Joarder, former Professor of the Islamic History and Culture Department of Rajshahi and Dhaka universities. The institute, however, is totally dependent on the Rajshahi University authority for financial grants.

Since its inception, the institute has not allotted any grant against development funds to flourish the separate entity of the institute. IBS office sources said.

The main IBS building was built with the money saved from the budgets of the institute. Prof Atul Hye Shibly, Director of IBS, said while talking with The Daily Star.

The university authority only provides funds for revenue and other purposes. No money comes for development purpose, so we cannot model the institute to the desired level," he informed.

However, the institute enrolls 18-20 M Phil and PhD fellows through widely advertised competitive admission test. It provides Tk 1,500 and Tk 2,000 as scholarship to the students of M

Phil and PhD programmes respectively.

The institute fellows are very frustrated with this 'meagre' amount of scholarship. They have been demanding increase of the stipend money for a long time. A few months back, they met the Vice Chancellor (VC) and handed over a memorandum to him and the institute's director simultaneously. But no step was taken in this regard till filing of this report.

"Two pay scales have been declared by the government, but our scholarship remains the same as before," one M Phil student regretted. "The amount of scholarship granted by other institutes and universities as well as the University Grants Commission is almost double than that of IBS," he observed. "On the other hand, all the previous fees of the institute have been increased between 400 per cent to 900 per cent, but there has been no increase in stipend, he lamented.

Asked on the issue of raising fees, the director said that the fees had been raised for all the M Phil and PhD students of IBS.

The university authority provides us so meagre amount of money that we cannot even think of increasing the scholarship of the fellows," the director commented on the issue of scholarship. "Had we been given more money on the scholarship head by the university authority, we could increase the amount of scholarship," the director expressed candidly.

The institute has only two full time teachers excluding the director. The director is appointed by the vice chancellor of the university for three years' term. He may be the teacher of IBS or of any department of the university.

On shortage of teachers, the director said, "Advertisement for teachers were made twice, but none were found suitable."

"Unless we offer them some incentive in the form of higher initial salary with extra increment or special research allowance, it would almost be impossible to get trained and research oriented people who can teach and guide the M Phil and PhD fellows," he added.

Interestingly such an important and only research institute of its kind in Bangladesh has no computer laboratory and telecommunication facilities in the dormitories.

"When the research fellows in Dhaka are getting day to day literature, relevant to their research, through Internet we do not even simply get telephone facility here, let alone Internet, E-mail," another student (M Phil) regretted. "We have to go to the commercial IT centres in Dhaka to get Internet facility at a higher rate," he said.

However, the institute has two telephones, one for the director and the other for the secretary. It is quite impossible to communicate with the institute and the fellows in the holidays or after 2 pm in the working days. There is no telephone facility in the dormitories though brilliant students come here to achieve M Phil and PhD degrees.

In addition to the aforesaid problems, there is lot of space constraints at the institute. The seminar room, the conference room and the library building are very congested.

Many scholars from home and abroad come here to attend seminars, but the conference room and seminar room are not up to the desired level.

Chowhali food scandal

Punishment to culprits demanded

From A Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, Oct 10: Hundreds of people in Chowhali thana on Friday brought out a procession and demanded 90 metric tons of inferior quality rice supplied to Chowhali warehouse be seized immediately.

They also demanded punishment to those involved in the scandal.

Earlier, three food contractors were suspended in the last week of September 1999 for supplying low-quality rice to the godown following submission of a probe body report.

District food control office sources said the three — Korbani Ali, Abdul Khaleq and proprietor of Mohana Enterprise — were entrusted to carry 90 metric tons of rice to Chowhali thana godown from Sirajganj district warehouse in the last week of August this year. But the trio supplied inferior quality of rice to Chowhali instead of quality rice.

It was alleged that the contractors sold the quality rice in black markets and supplied low-quality rice to the thana warehouse.

When contacted Ashraf Ali, In-Charge, Sirajganj food warehouse, said he had supplied quality rice from the district godown. The three contractors, however, denied the allegation.

Chairmen of seven union parishads of the thana also demanded fair investigation into the scandal. They said stern action should be taken against culprits.

Local people said food department officials are trying to save the three food contractors. They alleged the officials are trying to replace inferior quality rice in the warehouse with approved quality only to hide the scandal.

'Govt encouraging hospitals in private sector'

GAZIPUR, Oct 10: State Minister for Health and Family Welfare Dr Amanullah on Tuesday said the government is encouraging hospitals in private sector to help ensure medicare for all, reports BSS.

"It is not possible on the part of the government alone to ensure adequate health service for the country's huge population without the help of the private sector,"

The state minister said this while inaugurating an ENT health camp organised by Faria Lara Foundation at Haldoga village in sadar thana.

Dr Amanullah said the government is continuing its efforts by establishing temporary camps across the country with a view to reaching medicare to the doorsteps of the people.

Referring to different steps undertaken by the government in the health sector, he said it (government) has given utmost priority to the sector for reducing the death rate of mothers and children.

Among others, local lawmaker Ahsanullah Master, General Manager of Bangladesh Biman Anwar Hossain Khan, spoke on the occasion with local Union Parishad Chairman Abdul Latif in the chair.

The foundation is conducting the health camp on "ear, nose

and throat" to provide free treatment to the distressed people in the area. A total of 537 were so far enlisted for the treatment.

Faria Lara, a pilot of private airlines 'Air Parabat', along with another co-pilot died in a plane crash last year.

Miscreants attack lawyer in Chuadanga

From Our Correspondent

CHUADANGA, Oct 10: An advocate of local bar association was injured severely when a group of miscreants attacked him at Damurhuda, six km from here, on Wednesday.

Eunuch Ali was immediately taken to Danurhuda thana health complex in a critical condition.

The advocate was returning home in Damurhuda on a motorbike from the district headquarters.

The miscreants, who were equipped with sticks and iron rods, also took away the advocate's motorbike.

Members of local bar association condemned the incident.

Rickshaw pullers observe strike in Natore

From Our Correspondent

NATORE, Oct 10: Rickshaw pullers in the town observed a 24 hours strike on Wednesday, protesting the killing of a rickshaw van puller.

Rickshaw-van puller Nannu, 35, who was shot in the head accidentally by miscreants in an engineering workshop in Kalur Mor area in the town, succumbed to injuries in Rajshahi Medical College Hospital on Tuesday night.

A case was filed accusing two persons—Suman and Shanta. They are activists of ruling Awami League-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL).

Natore Rickshaw Peddlers' Union (NRPU) called the strike. During the strike, a big procession of rickshaw pullers paraded the town roads.

Later the union leaders submitted a memorandum to the ADC (general) demanding fair investigation into the killing of Nannu, son of Forman Gazi of Rathbair Amhat under the Sadar thana.

The district administration promised to donate Tk 5,000 to the family members of the victim.

Tragic!

From A Correspondent

MAGURA, Oct 10: A baby girl died after she accidentally took poison at village Ghulia under Mohammadpur thana on Wednesday.

The victim was identified as Shanta, 1, daughter of Moniruddin.

Family sources said the baby unknowingly drank the poison, which was stored in a bottle in the house, on Tuesday.

The baby was rushed to Magura Sadar hospital where she died.

A UD case was lodged in this connection.

Workshop on NGO management

COMILLA, Oct 10: A three-day workshop on the management of non-government organisations (NGOs) concluded on September 30 in the auditorium of the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) here, reports BSS.

Thirty NGOs participated in the workshop organised by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The concluding session was presided over by Khondkar Shahidul Islam, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Finance.

The function was addressed, among others, by Project Director of the Non-formal Education Project Md Serajul Islam and ADB Media Consultant Mahtab Uddin.

Outbreak of influenza in Shariatpur

SHARIATPUR, Oct 10: An outbreak of influenza in six thanas has affected hundreds of people in one week, reports UNB.

Sources at the Civil Surgeon office said 50 per cent people have virtually been affected by the disease.

Bhedarganj and Damudda were said to be the worst-affected thanas with each family in the areas having at least one patient.

Doctors attributed the outbreak of the fever to the changing weather.

Five killed in separate incidents

THAKURGOAN, Oct 10: Five persons were killed in four separate incidents in different places of the sadar thana in two days last week, reports BSS.

Churachuri, 45, wife of Dabibul Islam and Hasina, 40, wife of Samaru Mohammad of village Fatehpur were killed by lightning on Wednesday.

Sandhya, 15, daughter of Nazimuddin and a student of class 10 of village Hariharpur committed suicide by hanging herself with the ceiling fan in her room on Thursday night.

Dinesh Chandra Ray, 17, son of Haren Chandra Ray of village Maheshali also committed suicide by taking poison on Thursday night.

Zillur Rahman, 10, son of Raja Miah of village Munshirhat drowned in the River Shuk when he was taking bath on Thursday.

Tributes to Faizunnesa

COMILLA, Oct 10: Speakers at a discussion held at Lakhsam Upazila Parishad last week paid tributes to Nawab Faizunnesa Chowdhurani on the occasion of her 96th death anniversary, reports BSS.

The function was presided over by Principal Ali Ashgar Mollah.

The function was addressed, among others, by Lakhsam Upazila Nirbahi Officer and ex-officio Mutwali of the Nawab Faizunnesa Waqf Estate MTH Siddiqui, Headmistress of Nawab Faizunnesa Girls High School Setara Begum, Dr Zobaidda Hannan, Principal A H Mohiuddin and Syed Mohammad Shahedul Huq.

The speakers recalled the contribution of the Nawab to education and culture and said that she would be remembered for ages for her philanthropic activities.

Faizunnesa Memorial Library and Research Centre was inaugurated on the occasion.

Fertiliser price up in Netrakona dist

From Our Correspondent

NETRAKONA, Oct 10: Price of urea fertiliser has shot up recently in local markets, casting adverse impact on Aman paddy cultivation.

Market sources said a 50-kg bag of urea was selling between Tk 340 and Tk 350 as against fixed price of Tk 275 to Tk 290.

Local fertiliser traders have attributed the poor supply to price-hike. But they denied any artificial crisis in markets.

Farmers said price of urea might go up further due to growing demand.

When contacted concerned officials expressed their ignorance about the price-hike.

Urea is needed by the growers for top-dressing in Aman fields for getting better harvest.

UNB from Barguna adds: Crisis of urea fertiliser in Barguna district is over after a consignment of 365 metric tons of urea reached here from Chittagong Fertiliser Factory on Thursday.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) office sources said distribution of fertiliser has already been started among the dealers under the supervision of the DC.

It is expected that the consignment would meet the demand of urea in the current season, they said.

Another source said the demand of urea has also reduced in the area with only a week to spend the Bangla month Ashwin, which is the best time for top dressing urea in Aman field.

Every year, a section of deal-

ers creates artificial crisis of urea during this season. This year the crisis has been prevailing since beginning of this month when the price of a sack of urea rose upto Tk 500.

Facts-finding mission of ADB visits CHT

KHAGRACHHARI, Oct 10: The government is going to undertake a massive development project in the Chittagong Hill Tracts with financial assistance from Asian Development Bank (ADB), reports UNB.

An ADB Facts-Finding Mission, led by Masahiro Osaka, has recently visited the hill districts to examine the feasibility of the proposed project.

During his visit, the ADB mission chief said the bank has also planned to formulate a regional master plan and assess the long-term strategies for the overall development of the region.

Osaka said ADB has decided to take up development schemes like other donor agencies and NGOs as peace has restored in the region.

The ADB Mission attaches priority to the areas like agriculture, forest, health and communications in undertaking projects.

Meanwhile, the ADB chief exchanged views with officials of various NGOs and public representatives.

Events of districts in picture



Hafez Mohammad Aman Ullah, founder of Sikderpara Chhalimul Ulem Yatimkhana and Hefzkhana in Chakaria thana has been awarded the Best Social Service Gold Medal Award'98 by Chattagram Samajkalyan Parishad. Alhaj Zillur Rahman, Minister for Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives awarding him the prize recently at Ichhamati Hall of Hotel Agrabad in Chittagong.



Rajshahi University Vice-Chancellor Prof Sayeedur Rahman Khan inaugurating the Inter-Hall Debating Competition'99 which was arranged recently by the university debating society. —Star photo



Grow trees, save environment: An afforestation campaign is progressing at Gangachhara in Rangpur district. Agriculture Extension Department recently launched the drive. —Star photo



Mosharrar Hossain, Chairman of Jhenidah Municipality speaking recently as the chief guest in the inaugural function of a community centre in Jhenidah. —Star photo