

News snaps

Arsenic invades Bheramara

BHERAMARA, Oct 19: Arsenic has been detected in the water of the tubewells in Dharampura Union of Bheramara. Police Station of Kushtia district, reports BSS.

A team of Pipasha, a NGO, detected arsenic after testing the water of tubewells of the area. Water of 200 hand tubewells was tested and 30 of them were detected to have presence of arsenic more than the normal limit.

2 held for stealing power cables

MYMENSINGH, Oct 19: Two people were arrested while they were stealing electric cables from an electric line in Sadar thana early Saturday, reports UNB.

Locals caught red-handed Rafiqul and Ali Akbar with 60kg of electric cables from Charughat Bangamadal transformer at about 5am. They were handed over to police.

47 unnatural deaths in Feni

FENI, Oct 19: Forty-seven unnatural deaths, including five political ones, were reported from six thanas in last two months, reports UNB.

Of the deaths, 22 were reported in August and 25 in September, according to police and local press reports. Among the political victims, two were the activists of ruling party's student front BCL, one was the worker of BNP's student wing JCD while two of pro-BNP Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal. In August, four people were killed in rivalries while five in road mishaps, eight committed suicide, one was electrocuted, one died of liquor poisoning and two others died mysteriously. In September, eight people were murdered while eight others killed in road mishaps, two electrocuted, three allegedly committed suicide, three were poisoned to death and another died mysteriously.

Shishu hospital AGM held

FARIDPUR, Oct 19: The annual general meeting of Dr Zahed Memorial Shishu Hospital managing committee was held on Friday at a local community centre, reports BSS.

The meeting was presided over by Rakibuddin Ahmed, president of the hospital committee. Veteran social worker Khondkar Mosharaf Hossain attended the meeting as the chief guest. Secretary of the hospital committee Shahjahan Mollah presented the annual report of 1998-99. Prof Md Shahjahan, Prof Sk Abdus Samad, Md Yunus Ali and AK Azad took part in the discussion on the report. The privately managed 50-bed hospital since its establishment in 1983 has been providing both indoor and out-door facilities to the children and mothers.

Rat killing drive

COX'S BAZAR, Oct 19: A month-long rat killing drive is going on, reports BSS.

Agriculture Extension Department (AED), Cox's Bazar launched this month-long drive in seven thanas from September 22. Deputy Director of Agriculture Extension Department M Ruhul Amin inaugurated the drive at a function at the Cox's Bazar Government Boys High School auditorium. Large number of farmers, students, teachers and officials attended the function.

Foodgrains allotted under FWP

KISHOREGANJ, Oct 19: Government has allotted a total of 2,769 tonnes of rice and wheat under its Food for Works Programme (FWP) in 13 thanas in the 1999-2000 fiscal year, reports BSS.

According to official source, the foodgrains have been allotted for the construction and reconstruction of rural infrastructure. The thana-wise break up of rice and wheat are: 170 tonnes in Astagram, 224 tonnes in Bajitpur, 157 tonnes in Bhairab, 191 tonnes in Hossainpur, 171 tonnes in Itna, 305 tonnes in Karimganj, 341 tonnes in Katiadi, 309 tonnes in Sadar, 171 tonnes in Kuliarchar, 143 tonnes in Nikli, 270 tonnes in Pakundia, 178 tonnes in Tarail and 139 tonnes in Mitham.

Smuggled goods seized

SHERPUR, Oct 19: The Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and a task force by a magistrate in an anti-smuggling drive seized 100 bags of sugar smuggled into Bangladesh from India from the border area last week, reports BSS.

The price of the smuggled sugar was estimated at Taka 2.50 lakh. In another drive, the BDR personnel seized 1,875 kilograms of smuggled Indian onion worth about Taka 27,75 from Meherpur-Kushtha road recently. None was arrested in this connection.

Workshop on news editing

FENI, Oct 19: A four-day workshops on news editing and newspaper design ended here Wednesday, reports UNB.

Ten editors of local dailies published from Feni, Noakhali and Laxmipur districts took part in the follow-up workshop organised by Mass line Media service (MMS), a non-government organisation. Another four-day workshop on reporting for local correspondents of national dailies concluded Sunday. Twenty correspondents from the three districts took part in the workshop, also organised by MMS.

Smuggled cigarettes seized

COSX BAZAR, Oct 19: Cox's Bazar police seized smuggled cigarette and fishing nets worth about Taka 18 lakh from the Bank Khal river on Monday, reports BSS.

Police said, acting on secret information police challenged a fishing trawler at Kastura Ghat on the River Bank Khal and recovered 135 master cartons of foreign cigarette and some fishing net. Police also seized the trawler. None was arrested.

Workshop on self-development

CHANDPUR, Oct 19: A workshop on self-development organised by the Social Welfare Department in collaboration with The Hunger Project, a non-government organisation, was held last week in Chandpur sadar thana Parishad auditorium here, reports BSS.

The workshop was addressed among others by country director of the Hunger Project Dr Badul Alam Mazumder, Md Rafiqul Islam Sarkar, Sayed Ahmed and Rezaul Karim of the Social Welfare Department. Some 200 members of different voluntary organisations participated in the workshop.

Foundation training

SHERPUR, Oct 19: A day-long foundation training course for Ansar-VDP personnel was held at local Town Hall here on Wednesday, reports UNB.

Presided over by acting district adjutant Joynal Abedin, the function was addressed, among others, by Ansar commander Abdul Halim and union leaders Dil Mohammad and Hasna Hena. A total of 143 leaders and commanders from various unions of five thanas took part in the course.

Discussion on natural disaster

MYMENSINGH, Oct 19: A discussion meeting to mark the international decade for Natural Disaster Reduction Day was held in the conference room of the deputy commissioner here on October 13, reports BSS.

The discussion was presided over by DC Md Rafiqul Islam. The key-note paper on this year's theme 'Prevention Pays: Science and Technology for Disaster Prevention' was presented by district relief and rehabilitation officer Nawab Ali Khan. Chairman of Mymensingh Pourashava advocate Mahmud Ali Noor Tareq, Vice-chairman of Red Crescent Society, Mymensingh branch Captain (Rtd) Dr Mujib, Advocate A K M Mymurul Haque and chief reporter of Dainik Jahan Kazi Md Yasin among others took part in the discussion. The speakers stressed the need of early warning for various types of natural disasters which help minimise losses considerably.

Truck seized

MANIKGANJ, Oct 19: Police seized two trucks, carrying Indian sugar, from Khalgarh area in the town on Friday and arrested two people in this connection, reports UNB.

Acting on a tip-off, plainclothes police halted the trucks coming from the northern region and recovered smuggled sugar worth of Tk 10 lakh. The arrested were identified as Anwar Hossain and Jhili Datta, hailing from Pabna and Kushtia districts respectively.

Youth commits suicide

NETRAKONA, Oct 19: A young man has allegedly committed suicide by taking poison at Station Road area here on October 11, reports BSS.

Police said, the youth was identified as Murad, 22, son of Anisur Rahman of village Baisder in sadar upazila. The cause of the suicide could not be ascertained immediately. An unnatural death case was recorded with Netrakona thana in this connection. The body was sent to Netrakona Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

National

Jhenidah growers deprived of fair price of jute

From Delwar Kabir

JHENIDAH, Oct 19: Jute farmers have been deprived of fair price as price of their products has been decreasing day by day in the markets. The farmers are actually not in a position to recover their production cost this year. The low price of jute may discourage the farmers in cultivating jute from the next year, said some jute farmers.

In different markets of the district one maund of *Shamla* (tosa) variety of jute is being sold between Taka 340 and 360 while the *Lalti* (red) variety between Taka 375 and 400. But the same variety was being sold between Taka 410 and 425 per maund about a month back.

According to Agriculture Extension Department (AED) office sources, they have set a target to produce 153,175 bales of jute on 15,325 hectares of land in six thanas.

District-wise break-up was 2,785 hectares in Jhenidah

sadar thana, 2,845 hectares in Sajlikupa, 2,285 hectares in Harinakundu, 2,455 hectares in Kaliganj, 1,830 hectares in Kotchandpur and 3,125 hectares of land in Mohesphur thana. But a total of 4,810 hectares of land was brought under the same programme which was 10,515 hectares less than the target.

AED sources said, the farmers virtually did not show their eagerness to cultivate jute on their lands for low price of jute for the last couple of years.

Furthermore, there was no sufficient rainfall in Chatra and Baishakhi months during the sowing season.

Talking to Arsal Mandal, 52, of village Harihara, Monzuddin Sheikh, 37, of village Chatra, Ibadat Hossain, 43, of village Shyampur and Dulal Chandra, 40, of village Dhala-chandrapur who came to sell jute at Sajlikupa hat, told, jute farming is not a profitable concern now.

According to them, all of

them were compelled to cultivate jute in small scale due to its low price.

They said, at least Taka 500 is being spent to produce one maund of jute. The money is required to prepare land, to purchase seeds, day labourers' charge, for purchasing fertiliser and pesticides, for cleaning weeds rotting jute sticks, for separating fibres from and for transporting the product at various markets.

The farmers have been moving here and there to sell the golden fibre, but in vain.

The middlemen and traders do not show their eagerness to buy jute of a higher rate than the market price.

Kamalendu Saha, 34, a middleman of jute at Sajlikupa bazaar told that the market price of jute in Jhenidah district fluctuates depending on the market of Daulatpur in Khulna district. But the rate of jute is lower there. It compels them to stop purchasing jute from the growers.



Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria and Home Telecommunication Minister Mohammad Nasim inaugurating 1200-line telephone exchange in Habiganj on Sunday by talking with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the capital.

— PID photo



Farmers waiting for a long time at a rural bazaar in Jhenidah district recently with jute, but in vain. Ultimately they were compelled to sell their produce below the production

— Star photo

Acute housing problem in Cox's Bazar

From Our Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, Oct 19: House rent has increased manifold in recent years in this resort town due to acute shortage of accommodation.

Tenants, especially from fixed income group, find it difficult to keep pace with the rent hike.

Because of accommodation crisis, a large number of professionals, both of private and public organisations, are facing hardship to maintain their families in the district headquarters.

The accommodation crisis both for residential and commercial purposes has been attributed to lack of adequate investment in housing sector here.

The crisis mounted especially after the 1991 devastating cyclone and tidal surge.

When asked whether any step has been taken by the authorities concerned to recover the outstanding loans, a HBFC official on condition of anonymity told this correspondent 350 cases has already been filed with courts. Besides, more cases will be filed soon, the official added.

The regional office of the HBFC is located in Chittagong and hence the interest of the town was ignored.

HBFC loan disbursement programme has remained sus-

pendent in the district for the last 8 years. Suspension decision was taken by the authority in view of slow pace of recovery of loans, according to official sources.

After the devastating natural calamity, Rohingya influx aggravated the crisis. After the influx, accommodation problems became acute again following the setting up of the new offices of NGOs and United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) here.

On the other hand, absence of the Bangladesh House Building Finance Corporation (BHBFC) activities for many years has also added fuel to the crisis, local people said.

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HBFC loan disbursement programme has remained sus-

17,934 certificate cases filed in Netrakona

From Our Correspondent

NETRAKONA, Oct 19: A total of 17,934 certificate cases were filed for realisation of over Tk 24 crore agriculture loans in the district till September this year.

Five commercial banks, including Bangladesh Krishibank (BKB), filed the cases to realise the outstanding loans. The loans were disbursed among farmers by the banks to help them overcome heavy loss caused by natural calamities.

Bangladesh Krishibank (BKB) alone filed 14,831 cases for realisation of Tk 21 crore 28 lakh. Agrani Bank filed 1,772 cases for Tk 1 crore 88 lakh. Janata Bank filed 1,032 cases for Tk 1 crore 31 lakh. Sonali Bank filed 284 cases for Tk 33 lakh 50 thousand, and Rupali Bank filed only 15 cases for Tk 6 lakh 54 thousand, official sources said.

Gaibandha road in bad shape

From Our Correspondent

GAIBANDHA, Oct 19: Gaibandha-Sundarganj road now remains in pitiable condition.

Numerous holes and cracks have developed on the 32 km road, causing much suffering to local people. The portion of the road between municipal area and Laxmipur Bazaar needs immediate renovation.

Local people said vehicles ply with risk on the road which links Sundarganj thana to the district headquarters. They urged the authorities concerned to take immediate steps to repair the road.

Plan to introduce master's courses in KC College

From Our Correspondent

JHENIDAH, Oct 19: Initiative has been taken up to introduce master's degree courses in five subjects in Jhenidah Government KC College in the next session.

According to the college sources, authorities are trying to introduce master's courses in Bengali, Political Science, Economics, Management and Mathematics. A high-profile meeting, held at the office of the college principal, with Sheikh Nurul Islam, Joint Secretary of Education Ministry, in the chair took the initiative recently.

Among others, principal of the college Prof Abdus Sattar, Matiar Rahman, additional district magistrate, Prof Anwarul Islam, Principal of Government Nurunnahar Women's College, Taborek Hossain, Principal of Jhenidah Degree College and Aminur Rahman, Principal of Narikelbaria College were present in the meeting.

PIB training course in Mymensingh

MYMENSINGH, Oct 19: Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) organised a training course for the journalists of Mymensingh in association with Mymensingh Press Club here from October 10 to 17, reports BSS.

Some 17 journalists of national and local dailies of Mymensingh region participated in the training course held at the press club.

Director General, Press Institute of Bangladesh, Dr Sheikh Abdus Salam attended the concluding function as the chief guest and distributed certificates among the participants while Editor (acting) Daily Ittefaq Rahat Khan was present as guest of honour.

Deputy Commissioner M Rafiqul Islam presided over the function.

Among others, Director (Training) PIB Rafiqul Islam Nasim, Dainik Jahan Editor Habibur Rahman Sheikh and Press Club Secretary Mosharraf Hossain spoke on the occasion.

Dr Salam said the regional newspapers have been playing a very important role in the country and keeping this in view the PIB has been organising training course for mofussil journalists within its limited resources.

Because of lack of awareness

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Oct 19: Lack of awareness among the city dwellers is greatly hampering the cleanliness activities here, said an official of Rajshahi City Corporation.

"Cooperation from the city residents is urgently needed to keep the metropolitan clean," the official said, seeking anonymity.

Most of the residents do not deposit garbage in dustbins. They drop litters and garbage in roadside areas.

Besides, stray dogs and cats make the situation worse. The animals often visit the open dustbins and rummage through wastes, causing much suffering to pedestrians.

The city corporation conservancy authorities collect about 200 metric tons of garbage everyday.