

News snaps

Child labour on rise

COMILLA, Oct 30: Though the country is a signatory to the UN Charter on Child Rights, the number of child labourers are increasing at an alarming rate, reports UNB.

A large number of children of 8-13 age group are seen working in the town and rural areas throughout the day at nominal wages. According to statistics provided by an NGO, 20,000 children aged between 6 and 11 are being deprived of primary education. These ill-educated children, some of them are orphans, have to work as domestic helps, farm workers and hotel boys, helpers of bus and tempo drivers or pull rickshaws and pushcarts and break bricks. They are also seen working in factories and workshops. Besides, some children vend groundnuts, ice cream and cold drinks at bus and railway stations. Although they work hard for minimum wages, their employers never bother to torture them for minor lapses. More agonising is that majority of these helpless children pass nights on footpaths, verandas of different offices and platforms of railway stations after day's hard labour.

Loan for potato growers

BAGERHAT, Oct 30: Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) has undertaken a massive loan disbursement programme for boosting potato production in Khulna division, including Bagerhat district, reports UNB.

Official sources said the bank has sanctioned Tk 27 crore for disbursement among the potato growers in 10 districts of the division during the current season. The farmers, owning 16 decimal to 82 decimal lands, will be eligible for the loan from the local branches of the bank. BKB has already disbursed Tk 23.88 lakh among 182 potato growers. The loan disbursement will continue till November 30. The district-wise loan allocations are: Bagerhat Tk 1.98 crore, Khulna Tk 5.05 crore, Satkhira Tk 3.90 crore, Jessore Tk 2.95 crore, Jhenaidah Tk 2.02 crore, Magura Tk 1.03 crore, Narail Tk 2.20 crore, Kushtia 3.05 crore, Chuadanga Tk 2.20 crore and Meherpur Tk 2.62 crore.

Special immunisation drive

RANGAMATI, Oct 30: In an effort to eradicate six killer diseases, a special immunisation drive will be launched in remote villages of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in January next, report UNB.

The special drive will be in addition to the programmes of the 6th National Immunisation Day (NID) to be observed in the country on Nov 2 and Dec 2. Vaccines will be provided in the hill districts also on both the days. "The special drive will be conducted in collaboration with UNICEF," said UNICEF Chittagong Divisional chief Dr Saiful Islam at a press briefing at Chittagong Circuit House on Oct 23. Dr Islam said the remote areas like Sajek, Faruia, Dumdumia, Taimudung of Rangamati and Tanchi of Bandarban districts where it is difficult to reach in a day will be brought under the special drive. He said steps have been taken to conduct the drive involving the volunteers of Integrated Society Development Project, which have centre in nearby hill areas. He hoped that the special drive would be able to help NID achieve its target.

Four get 3-yr-RI

CHITTAGONG, Oct 30: A special tribunal here has sentenced four people to three years rigorous imprisonment (RI) for possessing explosives and bombs, reports UNB.

The convicts are Mohammad Selim of Ramgarh thana in Khagrachari district, Abul Khair of Laksam thana in Comilla district, Milon Hossain alias Miru of Ramganj thana, and Kamal Hossain alias Kamal Molla of Raipur thana in Laximpur district. The court acquitted another accused Jainul Abedin. The case history in brief: police acting on a tip-off raided Hotel D Sultana in Bayejid Bostami area of the city on March 20, 1996 and arrested them along with 15 bombs, huge bomb-making equipment and other materials. After a long hearing, judge Osman Haider delivered the verdict recently.

Birth anniversary

BRAHMANBARIA, Oct 30: The 35th birth anniversary of Shaheed Sheikh Russel, the youngest son of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who was killed on August 15, 1975, was observed here on October 18, reports BSS.

Sheikh Kamal Smriti Parishad of the local district Committee organised a discussion on the occasion with its president advocate Abdul Quayum in the chair. The meeting was addressed, among others, by journalist Syed Mohammad Afzal, Prof Mohammad Ashraf, S M Aslam, Sukumon Chandra Saha, Ferdous Begum Poly. Md. Mizanur Rahman, Tofazzal Hossain Tareq, Shammi Khondkar and freedom fighter Md Ramjan Ali.

Discussion on agri-development

KURIGRAM, Oct 30: A discussion to exchange views on sustainable agriculture development without chemical fertiliser and harmful pesticide was held in Chhinnamukul Hall here on October 15, reports BSS.

Organised by Bio-village Project of Thikana Sangstha, the discussion was presided over by Abdul Mazid Hari, Deputy Commissioner of Kurigram Aminul Islam Khan, CIDA Representative Helen Thomas, USC-Canada-Bangladesh International Project Director Lora Brurier, USC-Canada-Bangladesh country Director M A Zaman, deputy Director Agriculture Abdur Rouf, Wajeda Begum and Aminul Islam Mondol, among others, took part in the discussion.

Man electrocuted

RAJBARI, Oct 30: A man was electrocuted at village Khanhanapur in Sadar thana recently, reports UNB.

Family sources said Bhikhari Rabidas, 50, met the tragic end of his life as he came in touch with a live wire in his house. In another incident, police recovered the body of an unidentified man, aged about 40, from Daulatdia launch ghat on the day. The body had several injury marks.

Workshop on gender issue

THAKURGAON, Oct 30: A three-day workshop on in-depth reporting on gender issue concluded in HADS auditorium here on October 18, reports BSS.

The workshop organised by News Network was inaugurated by deputy Commissioner of Thakurgaon Md Abdul Baki. Ten newsmen and 10 NGO workers participated in the workshop. Editor of news Network Shahiduzzaman, AP Dhaka bureau chief Farid Hossain, Special correspondent of The Ittefaq Hasan Shahriar, Sultan Begum of Diakonia and Masuda Khatun Shefai of Nari Udjog Kendra were present as resource persons. In the workshop, discussions were held on in-depth reporting on gender issues, techniques of feature writing, investigative report writing.

30 LGED schemes completed

MANIKGANJ, Oct 30: Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) has completed 30 development projects under Rural Infrastructure Maintenance Programme at a cost of Taka 1.45 crore in seven thanas recently, reports BSS.

The projects included construction of 10.598-kilometre road and 268.735-metre bridges and culverts in the rural areas.

Banana farming increasing

MEHERPUR, Oct 30: Banana cultivation has been gaining popularity here as a cash crop, reports BSS.

Agriculture Extension Department sources said, about 3,000 acres have been brought under banana cultivation in two thanas here. According to a farmer, he spent last year about Taka 6,500 for the cultivation of banana on one acre of land and gained profit of Taka 30,000.

Non-iodised brand of salt floods Natore

From Anwar Ali

NATORE, Oct 30: Rural markets in six thanas are flooded with non-iodised salt which has been causing serious health hazards.

In absence of any check by the concerned authorities, the sale of non-iodised salt which is coming from a neighbouring country goes on unabated in the local markets.

Most of the rural people buy this smuggled non-iodised salt as it is relatively cheaper compared to the locally produced iodised salt.

A competent source said the unscrupulous businessmen sell both iodised and non-iodised salt at random to the innocent people especially in the rural areas of Shingra, Boraigam, Gurudaspur, Lalpur, Bagatipara and Natore Sadar thana areas defying a ban.

The government passed the legislation in 1989 in favour of universal iodisation of salt and banned the production, storage and sale of non-iodised salt in the market.

People suffer from mental retardation, physical abnormalities, stunted growth, goitre, neo-natal death, miscarriage and stillbirth due to non-consumption of required iodine, an expert on public health said.

The National Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD) survey, carried out in Bangladesh in 1993 reveals almost 84 million people which is 70 per cent

of the population are iodine deficient while 56 million people which is 47 per cent have visible and palpable goitre.

The IDD survey also reveals, six lakh people which is 0.5 per cent have neurological deficiency syndromes. Due to iodine deficiency more than 250,000 people go mentally impaired while 33,000 infants die in the first month of life and another 41,000 stillbirths occur every year, the survey says.

The packets of such smuggled non-iodised salt sometimes contain the seal of iodisation, it is alleged. Some experts on public health observe that this salt in non-refined salt and contains sulphur which is usually used for processing of wet-blue leather.

The existing number of salt industries in the country is about 300, of which 265 salt industries are equipped with iodisation plants supported by UNICEF and government. UNICEF has supplied iodine mixing machine worth about Tk seven lakh each to these plants free of cost.

Knowledgeable circles advocated for strong monitoring and enforcement of law during the production and sale of salt and extensive campaign for creating awareness among the members of the public about the necessity for exclusive consumption of iodised salt.

Diarrhoea in Kurigram

KURIGRAM, Oct 30: Diarrhoea broke out in an epidemic form in some areas of the district claiming at least nine lives in five days till Wednesday, reports UNB.

Officials confirmed the death of Rubia, 35, Khezmatullah, 70, Kachu, 60, Habibur

Brahmanbaria DIARY

Tk 56,00,000 BRDB loan for women

From Our Correspondent

BRAHMANBARIA, Oct 30: Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB), Brahmanbaria unit recently distributed Taka 56,00,000 loan among 1,150 jobless women of four thanas, Sadar, Sarail, Kasba and Banchharpur, of the district.

The loans were distributed among the women for poultry, small-scale business activities, cow raising and vegetable farming.

Boy killed in road accident

A 12-year-old boy was killed at Prato Bazar under Sarail thana recently when an auto rickshaw hit him from behind.

The boy was identified as Md Rana Mia, son of Md Gulap Mia of village Salpa Naogon.

According to witnesses, the vehicles hit the boy when he was crossing road. The boy died on the spot. Police seized the vehicles. A case was filed in this connection.

Two housewives commit suicide

Two housewives committed suicide at village Kilamura and Nayonpur of Paharpur union under Sadar thana recently.

According to police and family sources, Kulsum Nahar, 20, wife of Rahim Mia of village Kilamura committed suicide by taking poison. The reason behind the suicide could not be known. In another incident Husna Begum, 19, wife of Md Oli Mia of Nayonpur village committed suicide also by taking poison. Separate cases were lodged.

Police will produce the arrested terrorists before the court for remand.

Bomb planting 2 alleged terrorists arrested

FARIDPUR, Oct 30: Madhukhali police recently arrested two alleged terrorists from an area in connection with the bomb planting in a cinema hall at Madhukhali bazaar last week, reports BSS.

A team of Madhukhali police, acting on a tip off, arrested Hafizur Rahman, 27, and Abu Bakar Sheikh, 52, from Mathurapur and Askandi village for their alleged involvement in planting a high powered explosive in the Nilaborna cinema hall.

Abdul Mabud, Superintendent of Police (SP) said arrested Hafizur Rahman was an alleged local agent of recently banned weekly 'Jago Muzahid', a newspaper of Harkatul Jehad Al-Islami and Abu Bakar Sheikh is a sacked naik of Bangladesh Army.

The SP said Abu Bakar was sacked from the army in 1990 for gross indiscipline in service and was involved in anti-social activities.

Police will produce the arrested terrorists before the court for remand.

Arsenic panic in Manikganj

MANIKGANJ, Oct 30: As arsenic panic has gripped the district, 90 per cent people in rural areas are using waters from ponds and ditches instead of tubewells, reports UNB.

People got into panic when

Public Health Engineering Department has declared that 20 per cent tubewells in seven thanas were pumping out arsenic contaminated waters.

According to the department there were 57,000 tubewells in the district of 12 lakh people.

Arsenic was detected in the tubewells on December 12, 1997.

Since then, water samples of 1,348 tubewells were examined and of them 278 or 20.62 per cent tubewells detected with arsenic beyond permissible limit of 0.05 mg.

Biennial meeting held

Biennial general meeting of Bangladesh Disabled Welfare Society of Brahmanbaria unit was held in the district headquarters recently.

Presided over by Md Mansur Kamal, the meeting was addressed, among other, by Taslima Sultana, Md Giasuddin, Nazrul Islam Badal, Md Arzoo and Al Mamun Sarker.

Rice trader robbed

A group of muggers robbed a rice trader of Taka two lakh at Paikpara in the town recently.

According to police sources, rice trader Md Maju Mia of Ashuganj was returning home in a tempo. The muggers intercepted the vehicles and robbed the passengers, including Maju Mia. A case was filed in this connection.

They said due to the heavy

precipitation from October 17 to October 22, transplant Aman paddy on 596 hectares of land in Sadar, 222 hectares in Sreepur, 1,117 hectares in Shalikha and 260 hectares in Mohammadpur thanas were damaged.

General Manager of Kushtia Sugar Mills said that he has received report that a similar condition was prevailing in Rajshahi zone.

He said the only way to combat the attack is to cut the affected stems and burn those, otherwise, it may spread to other plants.

The GM informed that the

National



The mobile island: Art of riverine navigation is demonstrated by two or three people, moving an island of bamboos hundreds of miles to a port. There are at least six types of bamboos grown in the country. Some are useful as strong pillars, some fences and various other purposes. The picture shows an island of bamboos being navigated through rivers in the Chittagong Hill Tracts which is famous for producing bamboos. On top of the island a small hut is home for the seasoned navigators who mainly depend on the tides to move on to their destinations. The painstaking journey from CHT to Dhaka could take as much as one month to complete.

— Photo and story by Morshed Ali Khan

Padma devouring fresh areas in Rajshahi district

From Abdul Wadood

RAJSHAHI, Oct 30: Erosion by the River Padma has taken serious turn again due to fall in water level of the river.

Vast tracts of lands in most villages situated on the bank of the Padma are being washed away everyday.

After recession of flood waters several weeks before, the water level in the river is now rapidly falling. Many shoals have been emerging in the river bed.

Godagari Municipality and Deopara, Gogram, Matikata and Basudevpur unions are situated on the bank of the Padma. Erosion is a common phenomenon in these areas, but no step has been taken so far to check it.

More than 300 families have already become homeless by the river erosion.

The seriously affected areas are Nimtola and Khorchaka villages in Deopara union, Alipur, Farhadpur and Haribikta villages in Gogram union, Premtoli, Shekherpara and Ujanpara villages in Matikata union, Kashimpur and Faridpur villages in Bashdevpur union and Madarpur and Sarangpur villages in the municipality area.

Local people alleged that they had tried to draw the attention of the concerned authorities several times in the past for building protection embankment.

Officials said 88 medical teams are working round the clock in the diarrhoea prone areas to combat the disease.

The Civil Surgeon visited some of the affected areas and distributed oral saline and other medicine among the victims, which proved quite inadequate. The Health Complexes in thanas reported inadequate supply of oral saline to meet the growing demand.

Meantime, erosions have created another major problem regarding territorial border of

the country with India. The midline of the Padma is considered here as the international border between the two countries.

For the last several years, The Padma has been eroding the Bangladesh side. The river has been shifting into

Bangladesh territory. For this reason some shoal lands possessed by Bangladesh has become 'disputed' as India has now been demanding the lands on the basis of the midline of the river theory.

Border clashes between the

common people and Border Security Force (BSF) of India and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) have been occurring very frequently. Unless the river erosions are checked, border disputes will aggravate in future, local people have apprehended.