

News snaps

Recognition of Feb 21 celebrated

NETRAKONA, Dec 20: The UNESCO recognition of historic February 21 as the International Mother Tongue Day was celebrated here, as elsewhere in the country, on December 7, amidst great enthusiasm, reports BSS.

To mark the UNESCO recognition, different political parties including Awami League, socio-cultural organisations, educational institutions and district administration organised colourful processions, discussion meetings, seminars and musical soirees based on patriotic songs. Netrakona Municipality decorated the main roads and islands here with colourful posters, banners and festoons inscribed with various slogans highlighting the significance of the International Mother Tongue Day.

Shrimps looted

BAGERHAT, Dec 20: Armed men looted a huge quantity of shrimps from an enclosure in Fakirhat thana on Thursday, reports UNB.

Police said the gang numbering about 15 looted shrimps worth about Tk 80,000 of the enclosure of Anadram and Subhash Mondal of village Hosia after confining its guard into a room. The hoodlums also destroyed shrimp fries worth about Tk 1.50 lakh pouring poison into the enclosure. A case was filed with the police.

Acreage of farmland decreases

GOPALGANJ, Dec 20: The acreage of farmland in all the five thanas has been decreasing with construction of more dwelling houses to accommodate increasing number of people, reports UNB.

According to a survey conducted by a local NGO, the popularity of nuclear family as well as polygamy is responsible for grabbing a good quantity of farmlands for construction of houses. The study conducted in 24 villages of Sadar thana showed that 40 per cent farmers and 60 per cent rural people constructed their new houses on arable land.

Youth with firearms arrested

KHULNA, Dec 20: Police arrested a young man, with two firearms, from a house in the city on Dec 8, reports UNB.

Acting on a tip, police raided the house of Murad at TB Cross Road. They arrested Ranga Delwar and recovered a foreign made gun and another shutter gun from his possession. Other members of the house managed to escape the police raid. A case was filed in the local thana in this connection.

SSC examinee electrocuted

FENI, Dec 20: An SSC examinee has been electrocuted at Uttar Kowali village in Parashuram thana, reports UNB.

Police said Sajju Mia, 16, son of Nurul Islam, died after a live electric wire snapped and touched his body on Dec 3. The accident occurred at a neighbour's house, where Sajju accompanied a bride party.

Police constable killed

HABIGANJ, Dec 20: A police constable has been killed by unknown assailants 3 km off the town, reports UNB.

Official sources said some unidentified assailants killed Sudhir Mohan Roy, 48, a constable of the court station police outpost, in Kalarodba area on Wednesday. His body was recovered on Thursday. Following a case with Baniachar Police Station, police arrested three suspects who are activists of two BNP front organisations — Jobo Dal and Chhau Dal. Jobo Dal and JCD supporters demonstrated in the town on Thursday night against the arrest of their men in the Sudhir murder case.

Housewife raped

BAGERHAT, Dec 20: A young housewife was allegedly raped by some terrorists at Mulghur village in Fakirhat thana early Friday, reports UNB.

Police and local people said Awal Talukder and Nurul Islam of the same village picked up the housewife of a day-labourer. They took her to a nearby garden and raped her repeatedly. The husband recovered his wife from the spot and admitted her to Fakirhat Thana Health Complex. A case was filed with the police in this regard.

Three smugglers arrested

JOYPURHAT, Dec 20: BDR Javans arrested three smugglers along with smuggled Indian sugar from Panchbibi border Friday night after a clash with them, reports UNB.

Official sources said several hundred smugglers bringing sugar into Bangladesh locked in clashes with the Javans of 5-Battalion BDR near frontier Hatkhola area following seizure of the smuggled item at midnight. BDR fired a shot in the air to disperse the mob and brought the situation under control. They also seized huge sugar sacks and arrested three smugglers.

Scarcity of X-ray films

PATUAKHALI, Dec 20: The poor patients in three thanas have been deprived of proper treatment facility due to want of X-ray films, reports UNB.

Hospital sources said supply of X-ray films from the central store to the three hospitals remained stopped since last three months. The hospitals are Patuakhali General Hospital, Kalapara and Bauphal Thana Health Complexes. Poor patients are not getting proper treatment, as they are not in a position to buy X-ray films from outside. Officials said local authorities called a tender in a bid to buy X-ray films from outside and sent it to the higher authorities for approval. But the authorities are yet to give any reply to the proposal.

Bheramara Awami League meeting

BHERAMARA, Dec 20: A meeting of Bheramara Thana Awami League was held at its office on Tuesday last, reports BSS.

The meeting was presided over by Abu Bakar Siddique, President of Bheramara Thana Awami League. The speakers in the meeting called upon the opposition parties to maintain sanctity of the holy Ramadan and refrain from harassing the fasting people. The meeting also called upon them to shun the path of destructive politics.

Judicial Employees' Welfare meeting

MANIKGANJ, Dec 20: The 10th Annual General Meeting of Manikganj District Judicial Employees' Welfare Association was held at District Judge's Court office recently, reports BSS.

The meeting was presided over by Md Akbar Hossain. Krishna Debnath, District and Sessions Judge, Manikganj was present in the meeting as the chief guest while ASM Jahurul Huq, Additional District and Sessions Judge was the special guest. A 19-member executive committee was formed in the meeting. Md Akbar Hossain, Md Aminul Huq and Md Wajkurun were elected as President, Secretary and Treasurer respectively for the year 2000.

Tender Notice 6th Time Tender

University of Dhaka: Fresh sealed tenders in Dhaka University form "Tender for works" are hereby invited from the enlisted Contractors (Civil) of Dhaka University for the works "Re-construction Road in front of MLSS quarter at Shib Bari" of Dhaka University and will be received by the undersigned up to 12.00 Noon on 30th December '99 and opened on the same day at 12.15 PM in presence of the contractors who may remain present. Contractors will have to deposit as earnest money a sum of Tk 3,000/- only in Demand Draft or Pay Order from any schedule Bank of Bangladesh in favour of the undersigned. Tender form, schedule and other particulars may be had from the office of the undersigned on all working days except on the date fixed for submitting the tender on payment of Tk 100/- (non refundable) to the Janata Bank, Dhaka University branch after obtaining permission from the undersigned. The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any tender without assigning any reason. The contractors are liable to abide by the decision of the authority. Contractor should write the name of work and their firm's name on the envelope clearly.

Matilal Sarker
Executive Engineer (4)
University of Dhaka

GD-1215

Arsenic panic in Chandpur dist

From Our Correspondent

CHANDPUR, Dec 20: Public health is being threatened in the district due to increasing arsenic contamination in ground water in both town and rural areas.

So arsenic has created panic in all seven thanas.

According to Chandpur Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) sources, about five lakh people are attacked with arsenic related diseases. About 80 per cent tubewells water in different thanas, are more or less arsenic contaminated. DPHE, Chandpur office has already tested the proportion of arsenic pollution in tubewells in different areas of the district.

Arsenic contamination in tubewells' waters have been found in large number in Faridganj, Haziganj, Matlab, Shahrastra Kachua and part of Chandpur Sadar thana.

A large number of people have been suffering in these thanas from arsenic related diseases for a long time. About two thousand tubewells in these areas have already been sealed off marking red and with warning signboard. Some other more tubewells are likely to be sealed off very soon. DPHE has expressed that dangerous level of arsenic contents in water is above .05 mg.

During examination of water sample from different tubewells arsenic contents are found below the danger level which is upto .02 mg in some areas.

The Executive Engineer of local DPHE told this correspondent that steps are being taken to examine the remaining tubewells. The department has already informed the concerned ministry about widespread arsenic contamination in the district.

The people of the town area are drinking boiled water. The people of the rural areas are drinking water from rivers and ponds. Arsenic contents have been found in the municipal areas of Chandpur Matlab, Haziganj and Cengarchar.

Despite sealing off arsenic contaminated tubewells many people of rural areas are found to be using water of arsenic contaminated tubewells.

No alternative arrangement have yet been made in the rural areas for supply of pure water.

DPHE experts opined that surface water, rain water, water of river, and ponds are free from arsenic contamination. Water of deep tubewells under 500 feet are also free from arsenic.

DPHE, Chandpur office has undertaken a comprehensive scheme to install about one thousand deep tubewells at a cost of Tk 2 crore 88 lakhs.

The work has already been started. According to DPHE sources, there are about 22,500 government tubewells in the rural areas. There are 40,000 tubewells in private sector. About 80 per cent tubewells are more or less affected by arsenic contamination.

BSS from Manikganj reports: A daylong workshop on "Survey Programme to Solve the Arsenic Problem" was held last week at Singair Thana Parishad auditorium, reports BSS.

Badiur Rahman, Secretary Local Government Division, was present in the workshop as the chief guest while Farid Uddin Ahmed Miah, Director, Arsenic Mitigation Water Supply Project was the special guest.

The daylong workshop, sponsored by Bangladesh Arsenic Mitigation Water Supply Project and assisted by Singair thana administration, was participated by all chairmen and members of 11 union parishads in Singair thana and local officials.

The workshop was presided over by Khandkar Raquibur Rahman, Thana Nirbahi Officer, Singair.

UNB from Meherpur says: Country's first Arsenic-Iron Removal Treatment Plant went into experimental operation here on Sunday.

The plant was set up at cost of Tk 7 crore with financial assistance from Netherlands government at Shahid Shamsuzzohra park.

Local Poursabha Chairman Masim Billah alias Matu inaugurated the plant.

Speaking on the occasion, the chairman said the government perceiving the disastrous consequence of arsenic has decided to set up such plants in different affected areas of the country.

Sugar production target may not be achieved in 15 mills

From Our Correspondent

PABNA, Dec 20: The target of production of sugar in 15 sugar mills may not be achieved during the current season, officials of the mills seeking anonymity, said.

The officials said sugar recovery rate from sugarcane is abnormally low this season, casting an adverse impact on the production.

They also said massive production of gur, or molasses, by power crushers in mill zone areas is also posing threat to the achievement of production target.

More over, target to bring lands under sugarcane farming was not achieved, they said.

Official sources said the target of sugar production was fixed at 1,73,800 metric tons by crushing 22,60,000 metric tons of sugarcane.

The mill-wise sugar production and sugarcane crushing targets are:

10,444 metric tons of sugar by crushing 1,40,000 metric tons of sugarcane in Chakuganj Sugar Mills; 9,396 metric tons of sugar by crushing 1,20,000 metric tons of sugarcane in Panchagarh Sugar Mills; 9,144 metric tons of sugar by crushing 1,20,000 metric tons of sugarcane in Setabganj Sugar Mills; 8,000 metric tons of sugar by crushing 1,25,000 metric tons of sugarcane in Pabna Sugar Mills; 18,792 metric tons of sugar by crushing 2,40,000 metric tons of sugarcane in Gopalpur Sugar Mills; 16,842 metric tons of sugar by crushing 2,10,000 metric tons of sugarcane in Natore Sugar Mills; 12,903 metric tons of sugar by crushing 1,65,000 metric tons of sugarcane in Kustia Sugar Mills; 12,270 metric tons of sugar by crushing

1,50,000 metric tons of sugarcane in Carew & Co of Darshana; 11,670 metric tons of sugar by crushing 1,50,000 metric tons of sugarcane in Morabaganj Sugar Mills; 10,439 metric tons of sugar by crushing 1,30,000 metric tons of sugarcane in Zeel Bangla Sugar Mills; 11,820 metric tons of sugar by crushing 1,50,000 tons of sugarcane in Faridpur Sugar Mills; 12,144 metric tons of sugar by crushing 1,60,000 metric tons of sugarcane in Joypurhat Sugar Mills; 7,850 metric tons of sugar by crushing 1,00,000 metric tons of sugarcane in Shyampur Sugar Mills; 8,820 metric tons of sugar by crushing 1,20,000 metric tons of sugarcane in Rangpur Sugar Mills; and 13,356 metric tons of sugar by crushing 1,80,000 metric tons of sugarcane in Rajshahi Sugar Mills.



Badruddin Ahmed Kamran, chairman of Sylhet Municipality inaugurated recently a boutique and handicrafts centre named 'Heritage Bangladesh' at Shahjalal satellite town in Sylhet.

Natore was liberated on December 21

From Anwar Ali

NATORE, Dec 20: The northern district of Natore is one of such places where the tales of brutality of the occupation Pak forces and of heroism of the freedom fighters remained ever fresh in memory of local people.

Because of indifference and negligence, the stories of heroism are disappearing from history.

Bangladesh was freed on December 16 in 1971, but Natore, the then sub-division under greater Rajshahi district, was not liberated till then. Natore fell on December 21.

The fall followed the massacres of Doadpara, Gopalpur and Chhatul villages and the crushing defeat of Pakistan occupation army at the battles of Kholabaria, and Augdigha, as revealed from informants at Rajshahi University Archive.

Massacre of Doadpara: Pak occupation forces attacked Bonpara areas under Boraimgram thana on April 20, '71. They killed five persons at Haroa village on that day. May 3 was the fateful day when the Pak occupation forces came to know that some freedom fighters had taken shelter at Bonpara. Christian Missionaries Hospital. In the afternoon, the occupation forces besieged the hospital and arrested many Bengalees from the neighbouring villages. They dragged all the young and old Bengalee people on their trucks and took them under Doadpara bridge, 10 kms off Bonpara. The Pak army gunned down at least 85 persons there.

Many people say that it was razakkar Abdul Rahman who was behind the massacre of Doadpara.

Massacre of Gopalpur: Lieutenant Md Anwarul Azim, the then manager of North Bengal Sugar Mills at Gopalpur, was one of our martyred intellectuals. He had contributed significantly to the freedom fighters' cause in Gopalpur. He closed the mill after Bangabandhu's call for non-cooperation on March 7.

One day in mid April '71, Pak Major Sherwani told him to run the mill and threatened him of killing the area dwellers. So, Azim resumed works at the mill when Major Sherwani swore by touching the holy Quran not to harm anyone of the area.

But the Pak Major broke his promise within a few weeks. The Pak forces killed Lt Azim along with 200 officials, workers and residents of the area on May 5.

On that fateful day, when some members of the Pak army and razakars entered into the mill, Azim went forward on behalf of his workers. The Pak armymen deceived the mill workers by telling them that they wanted to organise a meeting at the mill guest house. The officials and workers were told to stand in line by a pond of the mill. Realising their intent, Azim intervened and volunteered to sacrifice his life in order to save the others. But they were all gunned down by the Pak occupation army making water of the pond blood-red. Today, the pond is called 'Shaheed Sagar' (Martyr's sea) and Gopalpur Railway Station is known as 'Azim Nagar'.

From the second week of December, Pak army started to assemble in Natore from different

areas of the northern region. But efforts to occupy Natore was thwarted by our brave freedom fighters.

Battle of Kholabaria: On December 8, '71, our freedom fighters fought face to face against the forces comprising of Pak army and razakars at Kholabaria of Madhuanga village under Sadar thana. The enemy forces confronted a surprise attack by the freedom fighters while they were passing through the Kholabaria river with heavy arms on board 15 to 16 boats.

The villagers say that Kholabaria had been turned into a battlefield on that day. The Pak forces sustained heavy losses in the two-day long battle. A large number of Pak armymen and razakars were killed and about 12 boats were sunk. On the other hand, Abdul Razzak, a freedom fighter was killed. The place was full of dead bodies when some enemies fled from the battlefield.

Battle of Augdigha: This battle was a fierce one, launched by freedom fighters' under leadership of Commander Alek Uddin. It took place in Augdigha Primary School area on December 11. Our freedom fighters defeated the enemy forces within five hours since 11 am that day. Being informed of the presence of Pak army and razakars at the school, local freedom fighters laid siege to the school and fought face to face with enemy forces. The battle left nine razakars dead. The Pak army, however, managed to flee away.

Many freedom fighters of Natore like Abdul Rahman Khan Chowdhury alias Selim,



Mustard cultivation has gained popularity among the farmers of Magura district. Photo shows a farmer of village Aralia in the Sadar thana working in his land expecting a good production.

—Star photo

A journey to Cox's Bazar in winter season

COX'S BAZAR, Dec 20: The longest se-beach Cox's Bazar bearing Englishman Captain Hiram Cox's name, with its abundant natural beauty and resources resplendently attracts tourists and travellers particularly at the advent of winter when both local and foreign men, women of all ages dart to the sandy stretch ever-kissing the waves breaking off and on endlessly from the huge and vast blue sea-our dearest Bay of Bengal.

The tourists' heaven as Cox's Bazar is affectionately called can be reached by road and air, offers accommodation in hotels, motels, dormitories, cottages, rest and guest houses strewn all around the main beach point and affordable to all including students and youths at relatively moderate rates.

Secured and protected with special arrangements, there are extra-care vigilance for sea-bathers and swimmers.

Dipping and swimming is desirable and recommended only during the high tide to avoid occasional accidents.

Besides being blown and

flown by the sea-breeze pick-pebble cat-walks, driving along towards the eastern-most beach-point Teknaf, the border town on the River NAAF demarcating Bangladesh and Myanmar overlooks the hilly UMA range of neighbouring Myanmar (Burma).

In between, the Himachari Fall flows down into the sea against hillock 'ENONI' is an adventure by itself.

The beach-town, the abode of ethnic Rakhaines tracing their origin from the Arakanese Maung tribe, are Buddhists have their KEY ANG (Pagoda) four hundred years old perched on the slope of the hill, is adorned with the brass statue of holy 'Buddha' when visited, a saffron-robed Monk blesses you.

Along the Rakhain hamlet, the cottage crafts and their traditional hand-woven colourful robes and stoles will invariably steal the mind of a visitor and allure. Fetching one or the other piece, as a memento is a charm of the visit along with the conch-shell necklace and armblet is unavoidable.

Cruising across the mighty River Matamuhuri, islands of Maheshkhali and Kutubdia or for that matter Sonadia can be reached for collecting the freshly sun-dried saline-water dry fish Rupchanda (Pomfret) and Lucca and have a glimpse of the hill top Adinath Mandir, the holy ancient Hindu Temple.

St Martin the nearby coral island in the confluence of the River Naaf and the River Irarwati flowing down into the basin, is yet another tourist attraction. Rich coral garden and plenty of coconut trees with a scanty Rohingya local population inhabit the Plastocyn-age Island, is of great geologist's and research interest.

Foreign tourists are, however, restricted to visit the island.

Scientists and ecologists have warned not to allow predate the precious island like a pearl belonging to Bangladesh, as intrusion by bipeds might destroy the coral formation surfaced by layers of sands blown and flown by occasional wave and wind action. It is reachable, as well, by river transports. — BSS Feature

Motia says

Freedom Fighters remained cornered for 21 years

LOUHAJANG, (Munshiganj) Dec 20: Food and Agriculture Minister Begum Motia Chowdhury said here recently the foundation of infrastructure, laid by the present government, would usher in a new era of development in the next millennium, reports BSS.

She was speaking as the chief guest at a discussion or-

ganised by Louhajang Thana Muktiyoddha Sangsad at the Upazila ground here.

Motia Chowdhury said soon after the independence of the country the government led by Bangabandhu had reconstructed the war-ravaged country. She said, the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina during the last three and a half years has strengthened the foundation of development.

She said for 21 years the people of independent Bangladesh could not enjoy the fruits of victory of the country as the anti-liberation forces were in the limelight while the freedom fighters remained cornered.

"Ziaur Rahman honoured the razakars while Ershad made trickery with the freedom fighters," she alleged and said now the defeated forces have allied with Begum Zia to grab the state power by any means.

She said the government did not reduce development allocation for the freedom fighters, rather, she said, the allocation has been raised to Taka 14 crore from Taka 8 crore. The minis-

ter called upon all pro-liberation and patriotic people to remain alert to foil all conspiracies being hatched by Golam Azam and his mentors.

Dhali Moazzem Hossain presided over the meeting, while Segupta Yasmin, MP, freedom fighter Noor-E-Alam, Nazrul Islam Khan, Fakir Abdul Hamid, Abul Bashir, Jahangir Alam Fakir, Abdul Rab Khan and Mahbul Alam Bahar spoke.

Girl dies after taking poison unknowingly

From Our Correspondent

MAGURA, Dec 20: A baby girl died after she accidentally took poison at village Boroi under Sadar thana on Saturday.

The victim was identified as Sohagi, 6, daughter of Alim Mollah.

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



Defeated Pakistani army officers surrendering arms to the members of Allied forces at Dighapatiya camp in Natore on December 21.

— Photo: Courtesy RU Archive