

National

2 storm-hit pry schools yet to be repaired

From Aminul Islam

MYMENSINGH, Feb 19: Two government primary schools in Bhaluka and Gafargaon thana were destroyed by storm in 1998 are yet to be repaired.

Mukhi Government Primary School of Gafargaon thana and Rangchakra Government Primary School of Bhaluka thana were damaged seriously by tornado two years ago. But the authorities concerned did not take any step to repair the damaged schools.

In the storm the tinshed of the Rangchakra Primary School was blown down totally. Grabbing this situation,

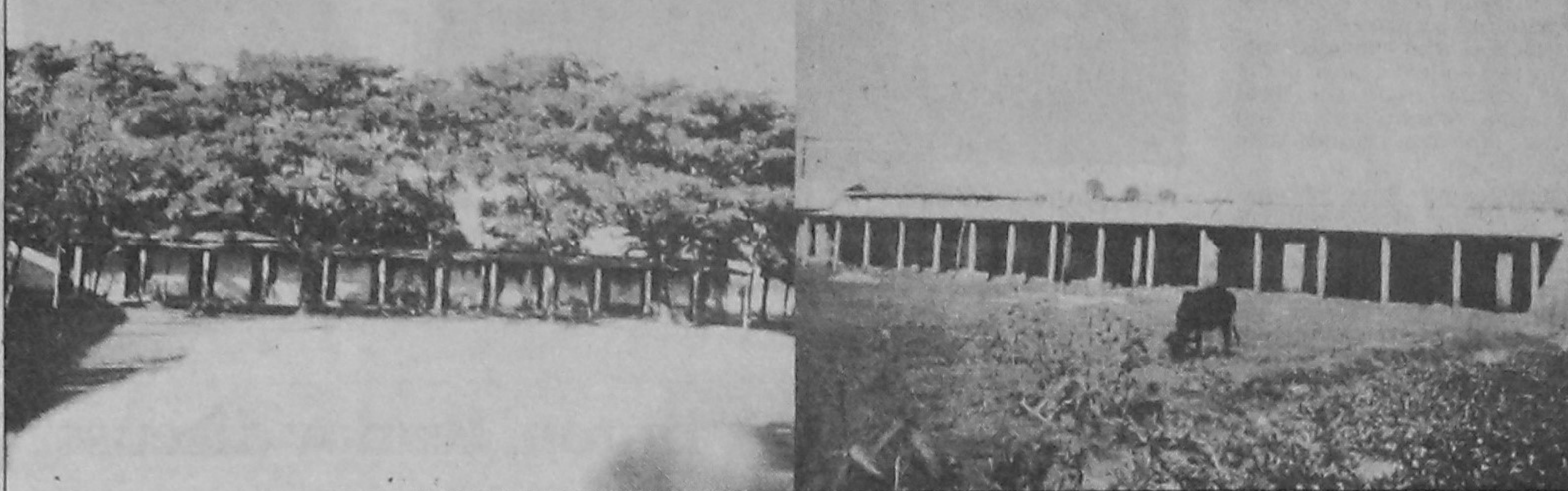
the miscreants took away some materials and benches of the school. The school committee built a temporary shed by the destroyed materials to conduct the school which is totally inadequate to meet the regular situation. In the rainy season, the students can not run their studies there as rain water drops from the roof of the temporary arranged class rooms. Students and teachers also said that after slight rainfall, rain water enter into the school and hamper the total activities of education.

Due to lack of benches, students have to take their lesson standing. It is also alleged that some local youths built a room in the school premises and claiming the room as their association office. But the authorities concerned did not take any step after being informed several times.

The students of the Mukhi Government Primary School are taking their lesson in the shedless school. Because the tinshed of the school was blown away by severe storm in 1998 which is yet to be repaired or

reconstructed. Following this situation, the academic activities of the school is being hampered seriously. Due to rain and scorching heat in the summer the students can not sit in their class rooms. Sometimes, the students sit under the trees of the school compound.

Local people urged the authority concerned to take necessary steps as early as possible for repair and reconstruction of the schools in the neglected remote places of the two thanas.



Two damaged primary schools named Rangchakra Government Primary School under Bhaluka thana and Mukhi Government Primary School under Gafargaon thana in Mymensingh district —Star photo

Arsenic panic grips Jhenidah

From Delwar Kabir

JHENIDAH, Feb 19: Severe arsenic panic grips the district as the contamination has been detected recently in waters of 159 tubewells.

According to local Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) sources, out of 5,733 tubewells in the district 802 were tested and arsenic beyond permissible level in waters of 159 tubewells was found. Waters of the 159 tubewells are quite harmful for human consumption.

According to thana-wise break-up, arsenic contamination was detected in the waters of four tubewells out of tested 154 tubewells in Sadar thana, 18 out of 185 in Shailakupa, nine tubewells out of 42 in Harinakundu thana, 13 out of 246 in

Kaliganj, one out of 42 tubewells in Kotchandpur and 114 out of 133 tubewells in Moheshpur thana.

When contacted Basanta Kumar, executive engineer of Jhenidah DPHE, said they are motivating people to test tubewell waters from DPHE.

According to the engineer, Kaliganj, Shailakupa and Harinakundu thanas are most affected areas.

Kumar said DPHE officials are advising people not to use waters of affected tubewells. They are also motivating people to use surface water.

This correspondent during his visit to village Parbatipur under Shailakupa thana found 13 members of four families, who are affected by arsenic re-

lated diseases.

They developed the diseases four months back. However, they are now recovering.

UNB from Magura says: Public Health Engineering Department installed four deep tubewells in the municipality area under 18 Town Water Supply Project for arsenic free water supply.

The tubewells have been sunk in Vaina Crossing, Shishu Park, Parnandul Primary School ground and Natun Bazar areas at a cost of Tk 50 lakh.

BSS from Barisal adds: A day-long workshop on arsenic mitigation was held Sher-e-Bangla Medical College premises recently.

Organised by the Health and

Family Welfare Department, the workshop was presided over by Dr Nawab Hossain, President of Barisal district unit of BMA.

Dr Kamalendu Biswas, vice-principal of the college, was the chief guest and Dr Amia Ranjan Dey, director, Sher-e-Bangla Medical College, Dr Abdur Rahman divisional health director, were the special guests.

The function was addressed, among others, by Dr Abulabuddin Ahmed, Civil Surgeon, Dr Goni Mollah, BMA central leader, Dr AZM Iftikhar Hossain, deputy programme manager (arsenic).

A total of 60 people including doctors, teachers, journalists, public health officials and lawyers, took part in the workshop.



Syeda Zebunnesa Haque MP, former minister AMA Muhit and Anisul Haque, member of Planning Commission, addressing the inaugural session of the two-day reunion of ex-students of Sylhet Government Pilot High School in Sylhet last week. —Star photo

Jessore date molasses loses past glory

From Atiur Rahman

JESSORE, Feb 19: Date molasses of Jessore is very famous in the country. This traditional reputation goes on from time immemorial.

Date molasses is locally called 'Gur'.

The process of its production is simple, though traditional. The period from the Bangla month of Kartik to mid-Falgun, which falls in the winter season, is proper time for extraction of juice from date trees.

According to regular practice, much before the winter, tractors, locally called Gachhi trim date trees and start extraction right from mid-Kartik.

In a bid to get the juice from trees, they set bamboo made nozzle in the trimmed area of the tree and hang jar to collect juice drops. They put jars in the afternoon and collect them full of juice in the next early morning braving cold.

This is the normal practice of extraction during the season. The production of molasses is done by another professional group. The juice is poured on a big pot set on an oven and hit till it turns into molasses.

There are two types of molasses, one is of special quality and the other is ordinary. The cur of special quality is white, crystallized and scented. It is not always available in the markets. Its supply is made against order. It is costlier.

Ordinary one is cheaper in price and easily available in the markets. Its colour, taste and flavour, are quite different from the special one.

All farmers are not Gachhi. There is a class of farmers who are professional Gachhi. Most of them are poor, landless and remain unemployed during off season. They are picked up

during the peak season and employed for this purpose. This season offers them work to earn living.

Similarly women of landless families are employed to boil the juice and prepare molasses. Thus they also earn a lot.

In the winter unemployed poor and landless group get a chance to earn something. Chowgachha, Jhinkergachha and Kaliganj thanas of greater Jessore district are still famous for date juice and molasses.

The date cake of Jessore is equally popular across the country.

Its quality in production, fragrance and taste is unique. It excels any product of sweets of the country.

Date cake looks like hard nut, apparently dry. But if cracked it melts with palatable and milky smell.

In fact, date trees in the area are natural gifts. Thousands of rural people depend on date juice during the season.

But unfortunately date molasses production has largely declined in the district recently following indiscriminate felling of date trees.

Hundreds and thousands of old and new date trees are being cut down for use as fuel in brick fields these days. According to an unofficial estimate, over seven lakh date trees have been destroyed this way during the last one decade. Mushroom growth of brick fields and lack of coals have triggered this situation.

time the Forest Department took steps to stop such destruction.

A former deputy commissioner of Jessore urged to install a project for production of date cake in refined and more hygienic condition to meet the internal demand and also for exporting abroad for earning valuable foreign currencies. But his appeal went unheeded.

During pre-partitioned days, Jessore molasses fed markets in Calcutta, the then capital of Bengal. Happily the major share of the total supply used to be shipped from Chowgachha, Jhinkergachha, Kotchandpur and Kaliganj.

Previously Mridha family of Chowgachha monopolised the markets during hey-day of the season and thus Chowgachha occupied a vital place in this business. But now the date molasses market is virtually dull and dead. The crowd of buyers and sellers are gone and none from outside come here in search of molasses.

Recalling the past glory of Chowgachha molasses, a senior member of Mridha family in the tone of lamentation said that those days would never come again. It is gone for good affecting rural economy. He added that the whole backdrop had been changed. People are no more content with any country-made products based on traditional method.

Date molasses may enter the world market if efforts are made to set up research centre at Jessore to produce quality cake or molasses by applying modern methods.

This can be possible only when the government comes out to patronise such projects.



A young villager preparing for date juice extraction at a Jessore village during this ongoing season. —Star photo

Number of nurseries increasing

From Our Correspondent NERAKONA, Feb 19: The number of nurseries has increased in the district over the years as people are showing interest in tree plantation.

At present, there are at least 100 nurseries, both government and private, in the district where at least 1000 people are employed.

Government nurseries are set up under the supervision of local AED (Agriculture Extension Department).

Meanwhile, Novartis, a multinational pharmaceuticals, has set up a centre here under its IPM (Integrated Pest Management) programme. The centre is providing assistance to people regarding setting up of nurseries and creating awareness to plant saplings to check environmental degradation.

Arms recovered from mosque in Jhenidah

From Our Correspondent JHENIDAH, Feb 19: A double barrel gun and a SLR were recovered from a mosque at village Kadali in Jhenidah thana on Tuesday night.

Police said Musallis saw the arms during their Esha prayer.

Meanwhile, Khan Sayeed Hassan, SP of Jhenidah urged the armed activists to surrender their illegal arms a few days back in an opinion sharing meeting in the locality.

Soil fertility decreasing in Satkhira

From Our Correspondent SATKHIRA, Feb 19: Soil fertility is decreasing gradually in the district because of excessive cultivation and use of chemical fertilisers on croplands.

Agriculture officials said more and more cultivation on a single cropland without break and indiscriminate use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides are contributing to the decrease in soil fertility.

They said continued non-availability of manure is also aggravating the situation.

Farmers said they are not using cow dung in these days on croplands, as they have to use it as fuel following shortage firewood. Cow dung is a rich source of traditional fertilisers.

30 injured as villagers clash in Magura village

From Our Correspondent MAGURA, Feb 19: At least 30 people were injured in a clash between two rival groups at village Mohishadanga under Sadar thana on Monday.

Of the injured, Abdul Gaffar, 45, Isharat Ali, 35, Abdus Samad, 25, Alamgir, 27, Shaheb Ali, 32, Tipu, 22, and Lal Mian were admitted to Magura Sadar Hospital in critical condition.

Local people said the clash was sequel to previous enmity between village leaders.

The villagers used sharp weapons in the clash.

For establishing kilns illegally

MAGURA, Feb 19: Authorities here have filed cases against 37 people for illegally establishing kilns and burning firewood there, reports UNB.

Official sources said a total of 47 kilns were set up in four thanas here without prior permission and the owners were engaged in burning firewood defying the government ban.

Meanwhile, a mobile court seized 50,000 maunds of firewood from the 37 kilns.

News snaps

902 committed suicide last yr

JHENIDAH, Feb 19: Some 902 people, mostly women, have committed suicide in the district during the last year, reports UNB.

Of the victims, 190 took their lives in Sadar, 192 in Shilakupa, 145 in Laliganj, 140 in Kotchandpur, 71 in Moheshpur and 164 in Harinakunda thanas. Family feud, poverty, illness, frustration and failure in love were the reasons behind the tragic incidents. Unnayan Dhara, a non-government organisation, conducted a survey that rated the district on top for suicide incidents. The report also disclosed that women constitute the vast majority in the list of unnatural deaths.

Father hands over son to police

BARISAL, Feb 19: A man handed over his unruly and terrorist son to police personnel, police said, reports BSS.

One person Dulal Sikder of Badurtala village under Rajapur thana of Jhalakati district handed over his son Hiru Sikder, 21, to police personnel at Rajapur thana. Leaving educational activities Hiru became a terrorist in the local area. Now and then he sold the household belongings and demanded excess money from his father. Sometimes, Hiru threatened his father for want of money. As a result he took him to police custody.

Workers in misery

THAKURGAON, Feb 19: Workers of the Thakurgaon Sugar Mill are passing their days in utter despair as production in the mill was suspended on February 12 due to shortage of sugarcane, reports UNB.

The mill has produced only 5,500 metric tons of sugar as against the target of 10,444 tons during the current season. Growers in the mill zone was supposed to give 1.40 lakh metric tons of sugarcane but the supply fell short only 86,000 tons. Nine out of 10 sugar mills in northern region have already been closed due to lack of sugarcane and each mills produced much less sugar than its target.

Discussion by police admin

NETRAKONA, Feb 19: A discussion organised by local police administration was held here in the conference room of the District Bar Council recently, reports BSS.

It was presided over by Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Qudus Khan. The discussion was addressed, among others, by Police Super Kazi Joyal Abedin, BP, Principal of Government University College Subash Chandra Ray, president of District Bar Council Durgesh Chandra Patranabish, Commander of District Muktiyoddha Sangsad Golam Mustafa and General Secretary of District Awami League Advocate Amirul Islam.

Donation

BARISAL, Feb 19: The Southern NGO Network (SNN) donated a sum of Taka 2,22,31,000 for the socio-economic development of six southern districts through 42 organisations during the current fiscal, reports BSS.

The districts to be covered by this programme are: Barisal, Jhalakati, Bhola, Pirojpur, Patuakhali and Barguna. The central coordinator of Proshika Mahbub Alam handed over the cheques to the respective organisations at a simple ceremony which was presided over by SNN president S H Kadir Badal and director of Bangladesh Development Society (BDS) here.



Traffic jam is a common feature in Borobazaar area situated in the middle of Sirajganj town. Haphazard parking and indiscipline movement of rickshaws are behind such unbearable jams. —Star photo

Rivals' clash leaves man dead

SIRAJGANJ, Feb 19: A man was killed and 15 people were injured when two rival groups clashed over taking possession of a disputed land at village Balva in Tarash thana on Tuesday, reports UNB.

Police said Salam, 28, died on the spot when musclemen of Abu Bakar of the village went to take possession of the land in the morning. Seven of the injured were admitted to Sirajganj General Hospital and Tarash thana health complex. Police arrested three people — Abu Bakar, Raisuddin and Shamim Akhter — in connection with the clash. The body was sent to hospital morgue for post-mortem.

Reception

BARISAL, Feb 19: A warm reception was accorded to local journalists by the River Erosion Resistance Coordination and Development Sangram Parishad here recently, reports BSS.

The journalists, who got reception for their outstanding contribution on 'River Erosion' were Mainul Hasan of Daily Ittefaq and Munir Hossain of local daily, Aiker Barta. The function was presided over by Prof Mahbub Alam Dulal, Mosarraf Hossain Manju, MP, attended the function as the chief guest. It was addressed, among others, by Dalilur Rahman, Dewan, Shahidullah and Shahansha Chowdhury Samu.

Bridge construction starts

BARISAL, Feb 19: Work on the construction of 2 bridges over River Sandhya at Doarika and Shikarpur have been started with an estimated cost of Tk 112.76 crore, reports UNB.

A Chinese construction firm has undertaken the project funded by the Kuwait government. The bridges will be constructed at 1.5 km and 2.5 km downstream of the present ferry ghat, officials said. Both bridges will have double track and footpath. It is expected to be completed in 33 months. The length of Doarika Bridge is 388 metres and Shikarpur 242 metres.

75,000 acres remain fallow

NAOGAON, Feb 19: A total of 75,000 acres of land remained uncultivated this season for want of irrigation, reports UNB.

According to agriculture officials, tubewells for irrigation purpose could not be sunk as layer of hard rocks hit at 65 to 70 feet below the ground in Porsha, Shaphar and Namatpur thanas. Some agronomists suggest construction of water reservoirs to provide irrigation facility in the area that can produce additional 27.39 lakh maunds of paddy.

Tragic end of mother

PIROJPUR, Feb 19: An old woman died of heart stroke at news of death of her dear son on Tuesday, reports UNB.

Villagers said unidentified assailants on Monday hit Firoj Molla, 23, with a sharp weapon (dao) leaving him injured fatally in Jolagati under Kaokhal thana. The victim, a sardar of a brick-field, was taken to district hospital where he succumbed to injuries on Tuesday afternoon. Being unable to bear the grave shock, Enaz Banu, 60, mother of Firoj, died of heart failure in the evening. A case was filed with thana.

Agri-fair concludes

JESSORE, Feb 19: A three-day 'Krishi Mela' concluded at the rail gate office premises of Deputy Director of Agriculture on Tuesday, reports UNB.

State Minister for Power and Mineral Resources Prof Rafiqul Islam inaugurated the mela as chief guest that was organised by Agriculture Extension Department. Deputy Commissioner Amirul Rasul and Police Super Abdur Raul attended the occasion as special guests. A total of 18 stalls were put up in the mela. Various kinds of agricultural and fishery products were on display at the fair.

LGED schemes implemented

MANIKGANJ, Feb 19: Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) implemented 221 schemes costing Tk 58.15 crore during the four fiscal years from 1996-97, reports UNB.

Of the amount, Tk 6.76 crore was spent in 1996-97, Tk 11.79 crore in 1997-98, Tk 26.49 crore in 1998-99. An amount of Tk 14.98 crore was sanctioned for 1999-2000. The work included rural infrastructure development, reconstruction of primary schools, mid-town infrastructure development, bazar renovation, rural roads and culverts repair and bridge construction.

Three get life term in Jessore

JESSORE, Feb 19: A court here has sentenced three people to life term rigorous imprisonment in a murder case, reports UNB.

The District and Sessions 1 and Special Tribunal Court also fined Shafiqul Islam, Abdul Khaleel and his son Nasir Tk 5,000 each, in default, to suffer another three years RI.

According to the prosecution, the three convicted hailing from village Bittichakra in Sarsa thana kidnapped a co-villager Rowshan Ali, 16, son of Shahjahan and stabbed him to death on December 21, 1996.

After examining records and witnesses, Judge Abdus Salam Sikdar delivered the judgement on Monday.

Robbery case: 3 youths held in Munshiganj

MUNSHIGANJ, Feb 19: Three youths were arrested from a village in Louhajang thana early Tuesday in a robbery case, reports UNB.

Acting on the confessional statement of an alleged bandit caught earlier, police detained Mahbub Alam, Muhammad Farooque and Sohel Mia.

They also recovered one gun, one SLR and three bullets from their possessions.

Police said they arrested them in connection with a robbery committed in a house at Mouchhamanda village on January 30 that left a youth killed.

Office bearers of Rangpur Bar Assoc



President Secretary

From Our Correspondent RANGPUR, Feb 19: Sarwarul Alam Dudu, Nazrul Islam Mondal and Abdul Gani have been elected president, vice president and secretary respectively of Rangpur Bar Association.

The biennial election of the association was held here recently. Other office bearers are Badrul Islam Churni and Abdur Rahman — joint secretaries, Amal Kumar Chakravarti — treasurer, Rafat Ali — religion and social welfare secretary, Abdul Baten Mia — sports and cultural secretary.

The executive members are Ashutosh Kumar Sarker, Merazul Islam Liton, Golam Mowla, Ainun Nahar Papri, Jahidur Rahman Dulala, Abdul Malek, ASM Mahmudul Karim Liton, Halida Akhter and Afzalul Islam.

A total of 281 voters out of 299 cast votes. A five-member election commission headed by Advocate Abdus Salam conducted the election.

Man killed in clash in Natore

From Our Correspondent NATORE, Feb 19: A man was killed and five were injured in a clash at Thakra village under Gurudaspur thana recently.

The victim was identified as Abdur Rauf, 30, of the village. The injured were admitted to Natore Sadar Hospital.

Witnesses said farm labourers locked in a clash over distribution of shares of wages. They together worked in a paddy field.

A case was filed in this connection.

Two cops suspended

JESSORE, Feb 19: Two policemen of Jessore Court were suspended for negligence of duty on Wednesday, reports UNB.

Jessore Police Super issued order of suspension of Hossain Ismail Hossain and constable Malek following an under-trial accused, Akhter Hossain, slipped out of their hands from the Court Hajat.

Akhter Hossain, an accused in a dacoity case, was brought to the court.

Urea price up in Naogaon, Narail

NAOGAON, Feb 19: With IRRI-Boro cultivation gaining momentum, price of urea has shot up in the district dampening the enthusiasm of farmers, especially the sharecroppers, reports UNB.

Market sources said urea fertiliser was now selling at Tk 300-310 per bag against Tk 280-290 two weeks ago.

Villagers attributed the price hike of fertiliser to illegal hoarding of the agri-input by a section of dishonest traders and dealers.

They also accused the authorities concerned of not taking necessary steps to regulate the fertiliser market.

An earlier report from Narail adds: Price of urea in local markets is showing an upward spiral.

Market sources said a 50kg-bag of urea was now selling at Tk 300 last week against its earlier price of Tk 270.