

Steps sought to save ecosystem in 16 N-dists

PABNA, Apr 1: The steady rise in agricultural output and economic expansion have probably obscured the real troubles of the country such as degrading ecosystems.

Challenging the idea of rapid development at the expense of the environment, experts said unwise and unplanned development activities might lead the country to reversals in economic progress.

They said widespread use of synthetic organic insecticides and banned chemical fertilisers in croplands throughout the country, especially in northern region, have started taking their toll on living organism and the environment.

Sources at the Agricultural Extension Department said 20 banned items of chemical fertilisers and a dozen of dirty pesticides were being smuggled into the country from various countries.

These include DDT, HCH, Dieldrin, Basudin, Dimecron, Endosulfan, Chlormek, DF, Santar, Pirikks, Hisonon, Kupravat, Golteer, Thilove, Rovral, Regent, Malthion, Sumodi, Darshan, Nogan, Ekalaks, Roustar, Ekalaks, Nucrovin, Maltok, Segkos and Takgar.

The countries from where these items are being taken into

Bangladesh are: India, Singapore, Pakistan, Malaysia and Germany. These are imported in liquid, powder and solid forms and marketed with the labels of reputed companies.

As prices of sinister-insect killing chemicals are cheaper than the indigenous items, farmers prefer the substandard ones and thus badly affect the land fertility in addition to causing extensive damage to the ecosystems.

There are some more items on the list of "dirty dozen" groups. These included Aldicarb, Camflor, Chlor-dane, Heptachlor, Chlordimercron, DPCB, DDT, Eldrin, SDB, HCH, BHC, Linden Parquet, Parathion, Methyl and PCP. These items are also imported, defying government restriction.

"All these items are prohibited in the western countries, including USA. Even then a section of businesspeople import these items in collaboration with some dishonest government officials," said a senior BARC official in Dhaka insisting on anonymity.

According to the records of US Customs Service (1991-94), nine items enlisted in "dirty dozen" groups are exported to various countries.

The Indian pesticides, which are banned in Bangladesh, include DDT, Azanal, Butakural,

Hilaton, Gamakine, Sumithion, Nagas, Shankum, Basudin and 90G.

But these are smuggled into Bangladesh through the borders of 16 northern districts, including Pabna, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Meherpur, Rajshahi and Chapainawabganj.

Block supervisor of Pabna Agriculture Extension Department said frequent use of Gamakine, Hilaton other pesticides have far-reaching ill effects on plants and soils.

The BARC official said only a small amount of the pesticides — more than one per cent — applied to a crop reach the target pests while the remaining 99 per cent enters into different components of the environment contaminating soil, water, air, food, feed, forage and other commodities.

According to a study, nearly 100 per cent of human population have been found containing some residues of pesticides like DDT and HCH.

The major source of human exposure to pesticides is food, but drinking water, inhaling air and dermal contact with pesticides may also leave residues in humans.

Agriculture officials here said poisonous effects of these pesticides cannot be removed even by 600 degree Celsius of

temperature. "So, we are having it unknowingly by taking vegetables or parts of which the poisonous pesticide had been used."

They said a large number of people at Atakula, Himayetpur, Bharara, Malanchi and Dogachi in Sadar thana, Fulbaria, Demra and Kashinathpur in Sathia thana, Fojilana, Haubhali, Mujgram and Fashwadanga in Chatmohor thana of Pabna district and Palashbari, Kuchula Pukur, Depur, Sonura, Hakimpur, Ghoraghat, Mongalpur and Nabaganj in Biral thana of Dinajpur district have long been suffering from pesticide related diseases.

Besides, presence of residues of pesticides in food commodities and other components of the environment has been proved toxic for humans, domestic animals, birds, fishes and non-target fauna of agro-ecosystems.

Various kinds of living organisms helpful to maintain fertility of soil and ecological balance are also under the threat of extinction due to adverse effects of poisonous chemicals.

Frog different kinds of water-birds, including dive-bird, water snakes, earthworm and various kinds of spineless insects which are the components for balancing the ecology are

also disappearing rapidly.

According to soil scientists and agronomists, each milligram of soil should contain 75-300 micrograms of nitrogen, phosphorus (2-75 microgram), zinc 2-18 microgram, boron 2-4 microgram and bronze 1-10 microgram.

They said each 100 milligram of soil should have 2.0-18.0 microgram, magnesium and calcium 0.8-9.0 microgram, calcium-magnesium 1.2-3.1 microgram, potassium-magnesium 1.6-1.7 microgram while bio-compost 1-27 microgram.

Unfortunately, the presence of these elements in soils of some areas of the region is at zero level while somewhere at dangerous level.

During a survey on soil quality in Rajshahi division, a group of experts found bio-compost materials at zero level in more than 90 per cent areas while in the remaining areas below one per cent.

Presence of other elements — bronze, iron and manganese — is also at dangerous level, the survey showed. It said there have acute shortage of phosphorus in soils of Barendra and Tista sediment areas.

Acidic-elements in soils of different parts of the country were either found alarmingly low or high — somewhere 2-6 microgram and 10 elsewhere.

News snaps

Allowances for distressed women

THAKURGAON, Apr 1: Social Welfare Department disbursed Tk 3.42 lakh among 855 distressed women of 19 unions on Monday, reports UNB.

State Minister for Primary and Mass Education Satish Chandra Roy distributed the allowances of four months (September-December, 1999) among the women abandoned by their husbands and widows. Each woman is being given Tk 100 per month. Officials said from now on, the payment would be made in each month. Presided over by the Deputy Commissioner the function was also addressed by Romesh Chandra Sen MP, District Awami League president Mirza Rafiqul Islam, General Secretary Asgar Ali.



The Australian High Commissioner in Bangladesh and the First Secretary of the high commission recently visited the children's development activities of Upama Women Development Institution in Tangail. Photo shows they were observing a training session on child rights at Sandhan Shishu Parisad at Thana Para in Tangail municipal area. The country director of Save the Children, Australia, project coordinator and the acting chief executive of Upama were also present.

Training programme

SHERPUR, Apr 1: A three-month training programme for bloc supervisors of Agriculture Extension Department under greater Mymensingh began at Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) here on Monday, reports UNB.

The training programme, organised by the Agricultural Training Institute, will continue till June this year. A total of 210 bloc supervisors from five districts of greater Mymensingh splitting into seven groups are taking part in the course. Deputy Commissioner Nawfel Mia inaugurated the training course for the first batch. A total of 30 bloc supervisor from four thanas took part in the first batch.

Discussion

NARSINGDI, Apr 1: A discussion organised by the district administration was held on March 26 at the local Shilpakala Academy here on the occasion of Independence and National Day, reports BSS.

It was presided over by Prof Sha Hallmuzzaman. Deputy Commissioner Rafiqul Islam attended the discussion as the chief guest while it was addressed, among others, by District Awami League vice president Advocate S A Hadi, superintendent of police Mokhesur Rahman, TNO sadar thana Nurul Islam, District Jubo League president Akramul Islam and Prof Pronab Chakrabarty. The discussion was followed by a cultural function, jointly organised by Shilpakala and Shishu Academies.



Homage to martyrs
Vice-Chancellor of Bangladesh Agriculture University Prof Anwarul Islam placing wreaths at the Freedom Fighters' Monument at the campus premises on the occasion of the Independence Day on March 26 — Star photo

Timbers seized: One arrested

BAGERHAT, Apr 1: Police arrested a man and seized smuggled Sundari timbers from Moniganj ferry ghat in Sadar thana on Wednesday, reports UNB.

Acting on a tip-off, police raided the ferry ghat at 9 am and arrested Abdul Barek, 45, for smuggling 360 pieces Sundari timbers. A case was filed with Sadar thana.

Two youths commit suicide

MANIKGANJ, Apr 1: Two young men have committed suicide, one by hanging himself and another taking acid in Sadar and Harirampur thana during this week, reports UNB.

Police said Anis Mia, 35, a poor peasant and father of two children, committed suicide by hanging himself at village Poul in Sadar thana on Tuesday following an altercation with his wife. In another incident Farhad Ali, 22, worker of a jewelry shop, killed himself by taking acid on the Independence Day at Kailyanpur village in Harirampur thana. The reason behind his committing suicide was not immediately known.

Body recovered

JHALAKATI, Apr 1: The body of a widow was recovered from a pond at Tulatala area in Rajapur thana on Thursday, reports UNB.

Police said Zamila Khatun, 35, mother of a child, who would maintain her family by quackery after her husband's death, was missing since March 24. She went out for Rajapur on the day. The body was sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy. A UD case was filed with the police in this regard.

Massive small credit scheme

PANCHAGARH, Apr 1: Social welfare department, Panchagarh has under taken a massive small credit scheme in order to uplift the social economic condition and for self-employment under Special Poverty Alleviation Programme, reports BSS.

An amount of Taka 99 lakh and 80 thousand has been distributed among 63,291 persons in 9821 projects of small credit help for self-employment of poor and hapless people of five Upazilas here municipality areas under this programme. This loan has been given for small business, cattle and poultry farming, husking paddy and for many other money generating activities, according to the Deputy Director of the Social Welfare Department. This credit programme is playing a vital role to alleviate poverty and to uplift the socio-economic condition.

People deprived of medical service

THAKURGAON, Apr 1: People of 38 unions out of 51 here are being deprived of medical services as there is no health complex in their unions, reports UNB.

Although the other 13 unions have health complexes, only 11 of them have physicians, official sources said. The health complexes, which have no physicians, are virtually run by health assistants and pharmacists.

Shallow, deep tubewells out of order IRRI-Boro cultivation threatened in Jessore

JESSORE, Apr 1: A large number of shallow and deep tubewells went out of order in eight thanas due to sharp decrease of underground water level threatening IRRI-Boro cultivation alongside various seasonal crops, reports UNB.

According to competent sources some 438 shallow and deep tubewells out of 21,972 and 54 tara-pumps out of 1,236 remained inoperative due to supply of underground water.

They said underground water level in the town and suburban areas has already decreased by about 25-27 feet.

Besides, various canals, beels and rivers have also been dried up for the same reason threatening ecological balance.

Following drying up of the tubewells, an acute scarcity of pure drinking water has been prevailing.

Lifting of water for irrigation in an unplanned manner, environmental change and low

rainfall are the main causes of decreasing of water level.

Another report from Panchagarh adds: Underground water level declines day by day due to misuse of water resources in an unplanned way.

Agriculture Extension Department sources said there are 70 deep and 8,000 shallow tubewells and 10 power pumps in the district.

The irrigation appliances, set up in an unplanned way, have been doubled to cultivate Boro on only 14,940 hectares lands.

Pisciculture has also been hampering as various canals, beels, wells and ponds dried up due to lifting of underground water.

Besides, the cultivation of various fruits, including mango, blackberry, jackfruit and litchi has been facing setback due to decline of underground water.

Shameful indeed!

PABNA, Apr 1: Rape victims prefer to be examined by female physicians for obvious reasons, but their choice could hardly be honoured for lack of female doctors in rural areas, reports UNB.

Official sources said like many other thana health complexes of the country there was no female expert in Sadar thana health complex here to examine rape victims.

In most cases, rape victims are found unwilling to be examined by male doctors for shame causing unusual delay in judicial process.

Recognising the fact, an official at the Civil Surgeon Office said rape victims are examined here by male doctors with the help of expert nurses just for lack of female experts.

Emphasising the need for

trained female physicians in each thana complex of the country, the official said they had dispatched a letter to Health Ministry seeking female experts for conducting medical test on rape victims, but their request went unheeded.

When contacted a high official at the Health Ministry said the government has decided to recruit expert female doctors in each thana health complex of the country in phases to deal with the rape victims.

Zeon Uddin Welfare Trust formed

From Our Correspondent SIRAJGANJ, Apr 1: A new welfare trust named Zeon Uddin Welfare Trust was formed at village Guner Gati in the district recently. The trust was aimed at welfare of poor and distressed people of the society.

The new trust was formed at the Eid Reunion meeting held at the local "Talukder Bari" under the chairmanship of noted social worker Md Aminul Haque Rokoni. The meeting was conducted by Shahidul Islam Talukder, former chairman of Sirajganj Municipality.

A cultural function followed the meeting which was attended by the people of all walks of life.

Office bearers of Faridpur Diabetic Assoc

From Our Correspondent FARIDPUR, Apr 1: 19-member executive committee of Diabetic Association of Bangladesh, Faridpur unit was elected unopposed for a three-year term recently.

Dr Abdus Salam Chowdhury and Prof Sheikh Abdus Samad were made president and general secretary respectively of the organisation.

The other office bearers are: vice presidents: Zahurul Haq and Chowdhury Sabir Yusuf, joint secretaries - Md Atiar Rahman and Mahabubur Rahman Khan, treasurer-Prof Rabindra Nath Saha and members- Fatema Begum, Prof M A Samad, Shamsuddin Ahmed, Shahjahan Molla, Mizannur Rahman, Abdul Hye Mia, Md Murad Mia, Chittaranjan Ghose, Awlad Hossain Babar, Md Shahidul Islam Niru, Kazi Md Mahubul Haq and Khondaker Mafizur Rahman.

President Secretary

20 injured as BCL factions clash in Barisal

From Staff Correspondent BARISAL, Apr 1: A clash between two factions of ruling Awami League-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) on Monday at Babuganj thana headquarters in the district left 20 people injured.

According to witnesses, during the clash a faction ransacked local Chhatra League office in Bandar area. House of Atahar Mridha, vice president of thana Awami League, also came under attack during the attack.

21 BCL men held in Feni

From Our Correspondent FENI, Apr 1: Police arrested 21 ruling Awami League-backed BCL activists on Thursday at Alipur village under Daganbhuiyan thana.

Police said the activists were arrested following a series of clashes between two factions of local BCL.

In the clashes, at least 20 people were injured and ten houses and shops ransacked.

Meanwhile, BCL activists brought out a procession protesting the arrest.

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Rivers Chitra, Nabaganga need dredging

From Our Correspondent NARAIL, Apr 1: The rivers Chitra at Narail and Nabaganga at Lohagara are getting dried up day by day.

Forty years back steamers and launches used to run to and from Narail and Khulna through these rivers. Green trees and plenty of fish could be found on both sides of the rivers. Tributaries and river-side canals all over the district supplied water and there was no problem of irrigation. But now the rivers got silted up which hampers plantation of paddy, jute and other crops.

This trend has caused a great havoc in the area and the increased quantity of rice and other crops are not produced now. If the rivers can be dredged up and sufficient flow of water is ensured then the people will greatly be benefited. It is most essential now to dredge the rivers at the earliest so that people of the area can be saved from ruin.

'Ershad Sikder' of Sirajganj arrested

From Akhteruzzaman SIRAJGANJ, Apr 1: Abu Syed Kabiraj of village Jitniganj in sadar thana who is popularly known as 'Ershad Sikder' of Sirajganj area was arrested recently at Panchalish thana in Chittagong district.

District police sources said Abu Syed was arrested from there for his alleged terrorist activities throughout Sirajganj district. He was a wanted criminal who was involved in assaulting the present home minister Mohammad Nasim on June 9 in 1996 when he was returning to Sirajganj from Kazipur after an election campaign. Besides, the arrested person hacked Iman Ali, of village Bahuli, businessman Farid, Nuru and Daruzzaman of the Sadar thana to death at day light during the last three years. He was also wanted for murder, robbery, rape and many other criminal activities.

Following interrogation Abu Syed confessed his guilt that he had attacked the present home minister Mohammad Nasim and his nephews Jwell and Zahangir and snatched away gold chain and sun glass.

Clandestine liquor factory unearthed

From Our Correspondent SIRAJGANJ, Apr 1: A clandestine liquor factory was discovered at village Rawtara under Shaljadpur thana recently.

The factory was unearthed in the house of Shuk Lal Chowdhury, 8 km west of Shaljadpur thana headquarters.

Acting on a tip-off, a special team of Narcotics Department raided the house and recovered a huge quantity of liquor and liquor producing chemicals.



Token strike
The playwrights and drama artistes of "Rangpur Betar" staged a token hunger strike recently in Rangpur town to press home their demands. — Star photo

Bauls enthral audience in Lalan festival

KUSHTIA, Apr 1: The five-day 110th Lalan Festival concluded on March 23 in Lalan Academy premises at village Seuria, two miles off the district headquarters.

Researchers, artistes and disciples of baul Lalan from various parts of the country attended the function. They rendered Lalan songs and took part in discussions on the great

bard.

Baul is a class of unorthodox religious devotees singing devotional songs in a special mood.

Bauls and disciples of Lalan Shah converge in the premises of mausoleum of the great baul twice a year, during full moon in the Bangla month of Falgun and on the occasion of his death anniversary.

In the festival, bauls enthralled the audience through their enchanting songs.

The inaugural ceremony was presided over by the president of the Lalan Academy, Abdus Salam, the Deputy Commissioner of Kushtia.

Dr Anwarul Karim, a noted baul scholar attended the function as chief guest. In his speech, Karim paid glowing tributes to Lalan Shah and said that the great baul preached humanism and non-communalism through his songs.

Interpreting his songs and philosophy Dr Karim said Lalan Shah truly represented Bengali nationalism.

Poet Rabindranath Tagore was greatly influenced by the bard. Tagore's many songs and poems were inspired by baul songs.

The inaugural session was also participated by Abul Hossain, the Additional Deputy Commissioner.

The Deputy Commissioner, in his speech, said the present government had sanctioned Taka 3 crore and 55 lakh for setting up Lalan Complex at Seuria, the native village of Lalan Shah. He said that the construction work would begin

soon.

Lalan Shah, whose religious identity was not known, died at Seuria village in 1890.

Office bearers of IBS Alumni Association

From RU Correspondent RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY, Apr 1: Dr Muhammad Makhlesur Rahman, and Prof Muhammad Rafiqul Islam have been elected president and general secretary of Institute of Bangladesh Studies (IBS) Alumni Association respectively.

The new committee was formed by the members of the association in the 4th biennial council of the organisation which was held recently on Rajshahi University campus.

The other office bearers are: Vice Presidents - Prof M Zainul Abedin, Prof M Abdur Rahman, Prof M Abu Taher; Joint Secretaries - Prof M Foyzer Rahman, Prof Shamima Hamid; Treasurer - Prof M Hafizur Rahman; Publicity secretary - Dr Andrew Alope Kuman Dewari; Education Secretary - Dr M Zulfiqar Ali Islam; Cultural Secretary - Prof Abeda Sultana; Welfare Secretary - Prof M Afrozuzzaman Khan Chowdhury; Organising Secretary - M Azizul Haq; Members - Prof M Fazlul Haq, Prof Shamsushtha Roy, Mobarra Siddiqua, Prof Mollah Jalal Uddin, Prof Imaz Uddin, Prof M Wajid Alam and Uttam Kumar Das.

Crimes up in Gaibandha

From Our Correspondent GAIBANDHA, Apr 1: A total of 2,757 criminal cases were recorded in the district last year, showing an increasing trend in criminal activities.

In 1998, a total of 2424 criminal cases were recorded in the district, according to police.

Gaibandha Sadar and Gobindaganj thanas topped the list, 584 crimes were recorded each in the two thanas. Besides, 429 cases were recorded at Sundariganj, 428 cases at Sadullapur, 389 cases at Palashbari, 226 cases at Shaghata and 177 cases at Fulchhari.

In 1999 a total 74 cases were filed under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act in Sadar thana and 61 cases in Sunderganj thana.

Besides, many other incidents occurred during the period, but those were not recorded with police, local people said. The incidents were settled through village arbitration, they added.



Neglected graves of the Liberation War martyrs of Kamanna in Jhenidah district. — Star photo