

Moulvibazar DIARY

New committee of Mohila Dal

From Our Correspondent
MOULVIBAZAR, May 28: The newly elected committee of Moulvibazar district unit of Jatiyatabadi Mohila Dal, women's wing of BNP, got approval of the central committee of BNP.

The committee was elected in the district conference which was held recently. The approved district committee of Jatiyatabadi Mohila Dal was formed with Begum Dilruba Khan as president, Begum Monwara Janir as general secretary, Begum Hafsa Akhter Rumi as organising secretary and Begum Asia Khan as treasurer. Begum Khaleda Robbani, former MP and former district president of BNP have been included in the committee as a member.

New committee of Moulvibazar BNP

A new district executive committee of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) for Moulvibazar district was formed and approved by the central high command of the party.

This new committee was formed without any council meeting of conference of party workers, it is learnt.

Moulvibazar district committee of BNP was abolished following the party's defeat in 1996 parliament election. A convening committee headed by former MP Advocate Ebadur Rahman Chowdhury was looking after the party programmes here.

At last the high command of BNP realised the demand of party workers and give them an executive committee.

Advocate Ebadur Rahman Chowdhury, Advocate Juned Ahmed and Musharraf Hussain Badshah were selected president, general secretary and organising secretary respectively.

Former finance minister and local MP M Saifur Rahman, former MP from women's reserve seat Begum Khaleda Robbani and chairman of Srimongal Pourasava Mohsin Madhu were included in the district BNP committee as members.

There are seven posts of vice-presidents and 31 posts of secretaries including general secretary and joint secretaries in the 101-member committee.

NID observed

The 7th National Immunisation Day (NID) was observed in Moulvibazar district recently.

The first dose of Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) was given on the day and the second dose of OPV will be given on May 29.

A total of 1,658 NID centres were set up in different areas. Of the total NID centres, 288 were in sadar upazila, 293 in Baralekha upazila, 192 in Rajnagar upazila, 412 in Kulaura upazila, 221 in Kamalganj upazila, 218 in Srimongal upazila, 15 in Srimongal Municipality and 19 in Moulvibazar municipality.

This time a total of three lakh one thousand 624 children of age group between one month and 59 months were targeted for OPV (Oral Polio Vaccine). Of this targeted children 49,717 in sadar upazila, 32,881 in Rajnagar, 77,077 in Kulaura upazila, 43,444 in Baralekha, 38,880 in Kamalganj, 46,669 in Srimongal upazila, 3,273 in Srimongal municipality and 9,574 children in Moulvibazar municipality area.

Fire Service Week observed

The fire service and civil defence week-2000 was inaugurated here at Moulvibazar Fire Station premises recently.

Faruk Ahmed, Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) presided over the function, while G K M Nurul Ameen, Deputy Commissioner (DC) of the district attended as the chief guest. A K M Shahidul Haque, Police Super of the district and Alhaj Mohamudur Rahman, chairman of Moulvibazar Municipality, attended as special guest.

19 more edn instts brought under MPO

Nineteen more educational institutions were included in the Monthly Payment Order (MPO) of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education here recently.

Of the total 19 new institutions, one is a college, nine are junior and high schools and nine madrasahs.

These institutes are Langla Modern College of Kulaura, Uluai Islami Dakhil Madrasa and Jagathpur Madrasa of Moulvibazar, Jalalia Dakhil Madrasa, Bhukshimul Darul Ulum Madrasa, Gourkanur Nurul Ulum Dakhil Madrasa, Babina Hasipur Nizamia Dakhil Madrasa of Kulaura, Islampur Dakhil Madrasa of Kamalganj, Golia Dakhil Madrasa of Baralekha, Roypur Junior High School of Moulvibazar, United Junior High School, Kesrigol Junior High School, Kansai Hakulki Junior High School of Baralekha, Sultanpur Mehernunessa Junior High School, Shah Sundar Junior High School, Agrani Junior High School of Kulaura and Ahmed Iqbal Junior High School and Abdul Fazal Chowdhury Junior High School of Kamalganj.

Pangs of a Shaheed Janani



Rizia Ahmed is the mother of a martyr of our Liberation War. She has lost her beloved son Captain Bashir in 1971. Since then she has been bearing the pangs of losing her dearest son with a consolation that her son laid down his life for the cause of motherland. In exchange of her son's life she expected a happy and prosperous Bangladesh. But in reality she finds instability, lawlessness and corruption all around. The situation makes her much more weaker physically. Mentally too she breaks down. But did her son shed blood for such a country? As a martyr's mother won't she be able to see peace in Bangladesh? It seems the photo shows she places this question before the nation while pointing her finger at the memorial plaque of *Shaheed* Bashir Gate at Jahanabad Cantonment in Khulna which she visited at the invitation of Bangladesh Army during the Army Service Corps Reunion in November last year. Today (Monday) is the 29th martyrdom anniversary of Captain Bashir. —Star photo by Z A M Khairuzzaman

Arsenic level alarming in 918 villages

Arsenic reached a dangerous mark in drinking water in 918 villages of the country, a study said, report agencies.

The study claimed after a five-year field level research that Bangladesh's arsenic calamity was the virulent in the world.

Researchers of Dhaka Community Hospital and the School of Environmental Studies (SOES) of Jadavpur University, India conducted the study recently.

In the executive summary of the study, the experts opined that the magnitude of the problem in Bangladesh surpassed the aggregate problem of all the 20 countries of the world where arsenic contamination has been reported.

"We have analysed 22,003 tubewell water samples from 64 districts in Bangladesh. Our result in five years up to February 2000, showed that arsenic in ground water was above 0.01 mg per litre in 54 out of 64 districts and in 47 districts it was above 0.05 mg per litre. We have identified 918 villages where ground water contains arsenic above 0.05 mg per litre," it said.

The researchers said that so far they had analyzed around 11,000 hair, nail, urine, skin-scale samples from affected villages (about 50 per cent of sam-

ples are from those developed skin-lesions and rest 50 per cent from those did not suffer skin lesions). Over 90 per cent of the people tested arsenic positive in their hair, nail and urine and it was above safe level, they said.

The joint study said of 17,896 people examined at random from the affected villages, 3,688 (over 20 per cent) tested skin-lesions positive.

"We have their full identification and details of skin lesions," the researchers said.

Even after five years filed survey in Bangladesh, we feel that we have seen only the tip of an iceberg of the actual calamity. The more we are surveying, the more we are finding people are suffering with arsenic skin lesion.

Our experience in the Indian state of West Bengal says more and more tubewell waters which were once safe for drinking are now being arsenic contaminated, they said.

Another report from Rangpur says: Arsenic, a deadly poison, has been detected in tubewell waters at four villages in Kandi union of Pirgachha upazila of the district.

The Executive Engineer of Public Health and Engineering Department disclosed this at a

meeting of local health service development committee held on Monday.

Its president and State Minister for Forest and Environment H N Ashiqur Rahman chaired the meeting.

Deputy Commissioner, Police Super, District Civil Surgeon, Deputy Civil Surgeon, Executive Engineer, Public Works Department, Deputy Director, Family Planning, Acting Principal, Rangpur Medical College and Hospital, all the upazila health officers, president, Rangpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry, among others, attended the meeting.

The PHED Executive Engineer said that they had tested waters of 168 tubewells in the four villages and found 50 of them arsenic contaminated.

The affected villages are Pathok Shekor, East Pathok Shekor, Dadon and Chapra.

The contaminated tubewells have been sealed and the people advised not to use waters of those tubewells, the PHED officials said.

The meeting was further informed that 11 people have been affected with arsenic related diseases in the four villages. They are now undergoing treatment at Rangpur Medical College Hospital.



Canadian High Commissioner in Bangladesh David Preston recently visited the Adarsha Secondary School in Bera Dakuri under Gopalpur in Tangail. The High Commission extended financial help for construction of an additional school building, a project of The Adarsha Gram Unnayan Sangstha. Picture shows Golam Mustafa, President of the School Management Committee and Habibur Rahman, President of the Gram Unnayan Sangstha receiving David Preston and Mrs Preston.

Drug addicts increasing

SYLHET, May 28: The smugglers are doing a brisk business of phensidyl and the number of addicts is increasing sharply in the district, causing a grave concern among the guardians, reports UNB.

Taking the advantage of open border in the 680-kilometre frontier of the district, Indian phensidyl syrup is flooding all bazaars in urban, suburban and remote rural areas of the district.

With easy availability of the drug, the number of addicts among the youths has increased sharply.

A large number of poor, in-

cluding women, work as carrier of phensidyl smuggled from across the border by organised groups of traders.

The guardians are worried with their school, college and varsity going children.

In the town, the main points of phensidyl trading are, Zinda Bazar, Jallapur, Subidbazar, Manikpur Road, Kastaghar, Baghabaria, Kajalshah, Akhalla, Chharapur, South Surma Terminal, Medical Colony, Mirza Dighi, Lamapara, and Shibganj.

The main dens of phensidyl addicts are the make shift small roadside huts on Sylhet-

Sunamganj, Sylhet-Salutitor and Sylhet-Jaintapur road. A large number of addicted youths come to these areas after the sundown everyday.

Besides, arrangement is there for delivery and transport of phensidyl through river route of Chenger Khal, informed sources said.

People usually blame the police for the widespread phensidyl trading. But a vested group with strong backing is behind the scene. Some guardians alleged that the police administration, for unknown reason, is overlooking drug trafficking.

Jute, Aus farming declining

From Aminul Islam

MYMENSINGH, May 28: Farmers here have lost their interest in jute cultivation.

This is because of low price of jute which is far below than the production cost. This has been happening for the last couple of years.

Jute cultivation has drastically fallen down in all 12 thanas. Cultivation of this crop, which was once called the 'Golden Fibre of Bangladesh' is being abandoned by farmers gradually. Jute which was once the cash crop has now become a bane for farmers.

Farmers are now showing no interest in cultivation of this crop.

According to Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) official sources, 4,000 hectares of land have been brought under jute cultivation this year. Of the total land, 3,000 hectares under local variety and 1,000 hectares under Tusa variety.

The chronology of last three years' jute cultivation here shows how fast cultivation of the crop is vanishing.

A total of 28,600 hectares of land were brought under jute cultivation in 1997 while achievement was 16,057 hectare.

A total of 13,720 hectares of land were cultivated in 1998 while the target was 30,716 hectares.

A total of 10,000 hectares of land were cultivated in 1999 against its cultivation target of 30,716 hectares.

AED sources also informed that the cultivation and production target could not be achieved here for the last couple of years.

Once Mymensingh region, especially the shoal areas if Mymensingh district were famous for quality jute production in the country. But those days are gone away because most of the farmers have aban-

doned jute cultivation totally.

Jute cultivation is being continued here in a very lower scale.

Most farmers continue jute cultivation for jute sticks only.

MD Ali Asgar of village Char Gobindapur in Sadar thana is one of those frustrated farmers. He also said that he has lost all interests for its continuous loss.

"Now I buy firewood from a local sawmill to meet the fuel demand," said an unhappy Ali Asgar adding "I shall cultivate jute again if the price becomes reasonable in future in comparison with the production cost."

DAE sources also said that following the nor'wester which lashed all the thanas here several times recently caused damage to the jute crops.

Aus cultivation is also facing serious setback here.

Aus cultivation has sharply been decreased here as the farmers showed their interest in *boro* cultivation for its good production with more profit. Now Aus cultivation has touched its last edge.

A total of 81,140 hectares of land have been brought under jute cultivation here this year. Of the total land, 54,540 hectares are under High Yielding Variety (HYV) and 26,600 hectares under local variety. But only 10,000 hectares of land have been cultivated this year.

A total of 41,000 hectares of land had been cultivated last year here, while the cultivation target was 91,159 hectares.

A total of 30,000 hectares had been brought under Aus cultivation in 1998 against its target of 106,000 hectares of land, officials said.

Following massive pest attack on Aus fields after *boro* harvesting production of Aus has been affected seriously causing a huge loss to the farmers.

Pottery industry on verge of extinction

From Abdul Matin Fakir

FARIDPUR, May 28: Pottery is on the verge of ruination in five districts.

The districts are Faridpur, Madaripur, Shariatpur Gopalganj and Rajbari.

It is gathered that this traditional small industry is on the verge of extinction for want of proper patronage. Hundreds of families connected with this industry for generation to generation find it difficult to continue this profession. Many potters have already given up the profession while others are thinking to give up.

Once this profession was a lucrative one thousands of people were engaged in making earthen jars, plates, small cauldrons, toys and various other thing to earn their livelihood.

When contacted, the potters of different areas of greater Faridpur told this correspondent that prices of earth, clay, dice colour, fuel and other necessary things of the industry have increased many times and went beyond the purchasing capacity of the potters. On the other hand, prices of and demand for the articles produced by them have been falling gradually giving rise to despair among the potters.

The potters added that as the

demand for their products is declining they can not work in their full capacity with their family members. They also can not compete with their products owing to lack of proper transport facilities and new designs. Moreover, the potters have no capital for running their industry smoothly. They have to borrow money from the local money lenders at high rates of interest.

It is unofficially gathered that a total of 150 potter families are living in Faridpur, 100 in Shariatpur, 125 in Madaripur, 90 in Gopalganj and 85 families in Rajbari districts.

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News snaps

Police officials sued under PSA

NETROKONA, May 28: Fazlur Rahman, Officer in Charge of Durgapur Police Station, Mahammed Hanif, an Assistant Sub-Inspector and other six police constables of the PS have been sued under Public Safety Act (PSA) on charge of forcibly entering into a house of Abdul Hashim of village Barabatta and beating up the inmates including females. They have also been charged for taking bribe from the inmates by giving threat of arrest, reports BSS.

According to Netrakona District Judge Court sources, Salema Akter Khatun, wife of Abdul Hashim of village Barabatta under Durgapur thana filed the case under Public Safety Act in the court of District and