

Bumper production makes no difference for poor Narsingdi farmers

NARSINGDI, June 2: Despite spectacular achievement in grain production, most farmers here do not have enough food to take as the lion portion of their crops go to the granaries of the landowners and service providers, reports UNB.

Agriculture officials here said the sharecroppers who produce paddy, toiling throughout the day have to give one-fourth of their produce to the service providers as cost of irrigation while half of the remaining ones to their landowners.

Although these poor farmers bear all costs of farming, including that of seeds, fertilisers and pesticides, they are not eligible for bank loan.

The landlords, who avail of

all bank facilities, hardly cooperate with the sharecroppers. Instead they spend bank loans in their household works.

"If 18 maunds of paddy are produced on one acre of land, a farmer gets only eight maunds after meeting the shares of the two groups," said an official preferring anonymity.

Another exploiter group is service providers. Most farmers depend on them for irrigation, as they cannot afford pump machines, the price of which ranges from Tk 12,000-Tk 20,000 depending on brand and horsepower.

Ali Hossain, a sharecropper of Baniachal village in Sadar upazila of Narsingdi is among them.

He said, "Our landowners take away a large chunk of our produce, although they share no expenses with us."

Echoing Ali, Jahangir Mia of the same village said the farmers have to hire spray machines at a high rate from private owners to spray pesticides on their croplands as the government facilities in this regard is inadequate.

The government allocates one spray machine for several thousand farmers in a union.

Almost same was the view of farmer Siraj Mollah of Narayanpur village in Belabo upazila. "Had I any alternative, I would have given up farming long ago," he said.

"If things go well," he said,

"We are also heading towards another bumper production this season. But it makes no difference for us."

They also accused bank officials of harassing the farmers in sanctioning loan. "They allocate loan without delay if we spare 10 per cent of it. And this has become a system."

He also alleged that many farmers cannot sell paddy at government procurement centres due to hindrance by middlemen.

On the other hand, many landless but enthusiastic farmers cannot go on farming due to shortage of croplands.

Acres of farmland is shrinking rapidly due to expansion of human settlements and rapid industrialisation.

Severe sound pollution in Jamalpur town

From Our Correspondent
JAMALPUR, June 2: The town dwellers have been facing severe sound pollution.

Residents said most of vehicles in the town use horns that cause intolerable sound pollution in violation of traffic rules. Drivers of vehicles use horns quite unnecessarily while playing on roads.

Besides, youths in different parts of the town play music in full volume through loudspeakers, causing immense sound pollution. Moreover, various audiocassettes and video shop owners play music in full volume.

Physicians said a large number of people have been visiting them with complaints of high blood pressure and headache. They said sound pollution leaves harmful impact on people especially heart patients, children and pregnant women.

Most of the vehicles, which cause severe sound pollution, do not have fitness certificates.

Local people have urged the authorities concerned to take immediate measures to fight sound pollution in the town.

Prices of fish, meat up in Jhenidah

From Our Correspondent
JHENIDAH, June 2: Prices of fish and meat have increased in local markets in recent days.

Fishes like ruhi, katta, mirgel and boal have almost disappeared from the markets. These fishes are sold between Tk 140 and Tk 150 per kg.

Besides, traditional sweet water fishes like patee, bele, tengra, padma and taki are also dear in markets. These fishes now sell between Tk 140 and Tk 150 against Tk 80 to Tk 90 two months ago.

Anil Chandra Biswas, 45, a fish trader at Rayvera bazaar in the district, said supply of fish has dwindled sharply over the years.

Now mutton sells between Tk 150 and Tk 160 a kg in markets against Tk 120 two months ago.

The price of beef has also increased. It is being sold at Tk 85 per kg against Tk 60 two months ago.

Meat traders have attributed the prices to the scarcity of cows and goats in recent days.

People of low-income groups are not in a position to buy the items.

'Amrapali' gains popularity

NETRAKONA, June 2: The cultivation of 'Amrapali' a high yielding variety of mango is gaining popularity among the growers in 10 upazilas here, reports UNB.

Agriculture Extension Department told that the saplings of this species of mango were imported from India.

The Indian scientists have developed the variety by cross-breeding with two local varieties of mangoes namely 'Neelam' and 'Deshahari', which is found in Andhra province of India.

The special characteristic of this variety is that from the age of one year it begins to give fruits. The mangoes of this variety are very sweet, delicious, juicy and fiberless.

Non-government organisation BRAC is distributing the saplings of 'Amrapali' among the growers at reasonable prices.

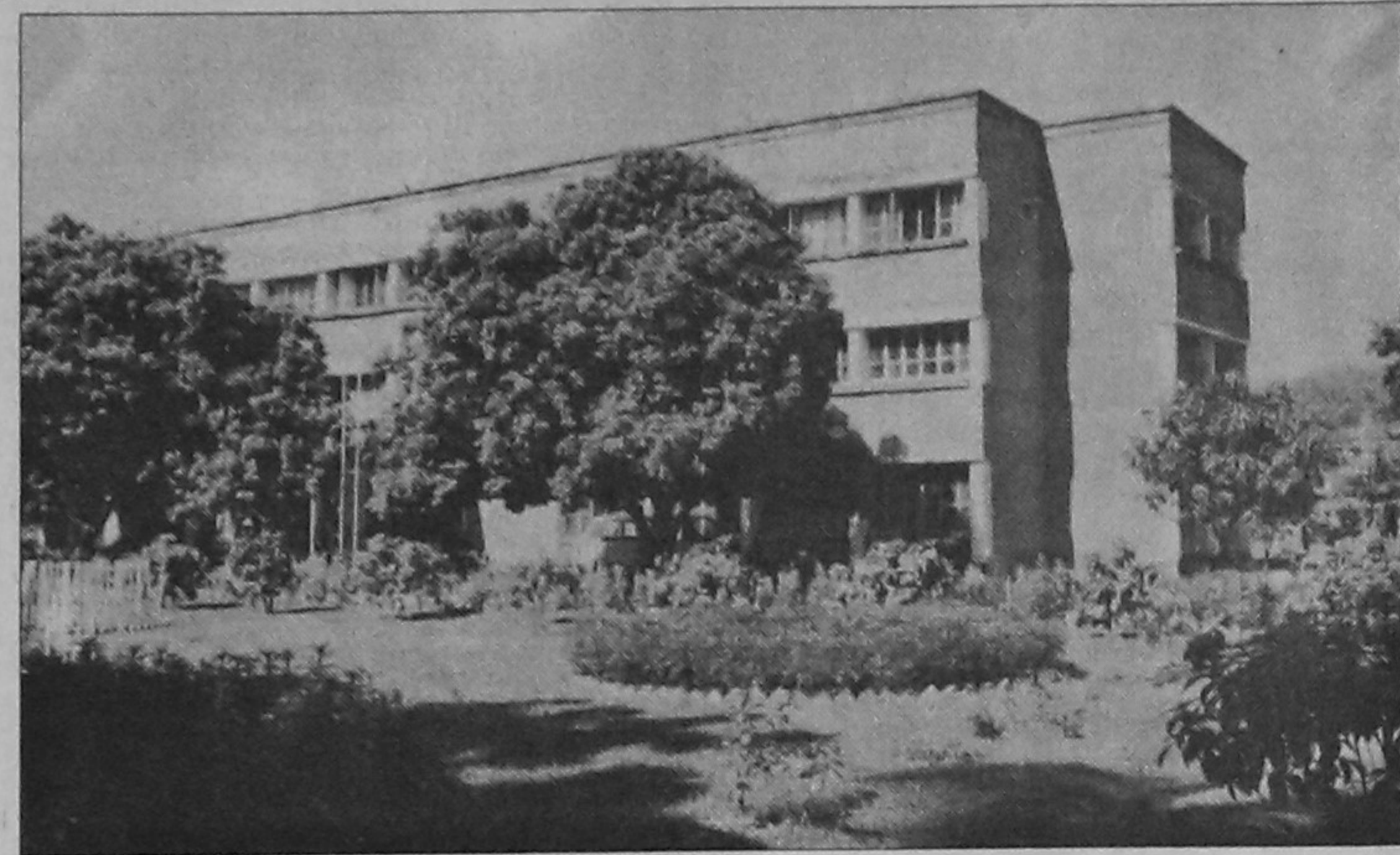
Sanction for community clinics

FENI, June 2: A total of Taka one crore seventy-four lakh has been sanctioned for the construction of 87 community clinics in the rural areas here, reports BSS.

According to an official source, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has undertaken the projects to ensure health service and population control in the rural areas.

Implementation of the projects will be completed within this year.

After execution of the projects, the health care and population control programme will be extended in the rural areas.



The silver jubilee of the Institute of Bangladesh Studies (IBS), the only institute in the country which confers M Phil and Ph D degrees on Bangladesh studies, will be held today (Saturday) on Rajshahi University campus. Prominent freedom fighter and former Vice-Chancellor (VC) of Rajshahi University Prof Khan Sarwar Murshid will be the chief guest, while the incumbent VC, Prof Sayeedur Rahman Khan and Pro-VC Prof M Wazed Ali will present there as special guests. The Director of IBS, Dr Priti Kumar Mitra will preside over there. A seminar on 'Bangladesh Studies' will also be held at the institute auditorium. Noted educationist Prof AHM Zahedul Karim will present the key-note paper there. It is worth mentioning that Prof Khan Sarwar Murshid and late Prof Safiuddin Joarder, a former senior teacher of Dhaka and Rajshahi universities who met a premature death at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka following an unsuccessful gall bladder operation there during the fag end of Ershad regime, were the co-founders of this institute. Photo shows the main building of the Institute.

— Star photo by Kamran Reza Chowdhury.

Farmers not getting fair prices of paddy in Feni

From Our Correspondent

FENI, June 2: With the harvesting going on in full swing the prices of IRRI and Boro paddy have fallen sharply in the district.

The farmers are not getting fair prices of their products mainly in absence of foodgrains procurement drive by the government. The procurement drive is yet to start this season here.

The poor growers are now forced to sell their products at throwaway prices in local markets to meet production expenses including loans they

took while planting the crops.

About 90,000 metric tons of paddy are likely to be produced in the district this season.

Farmers said they are selling paddy at between Tk 210 and Tk 230 in local markets against the government rate of Tk 320 per 40 kg.

The authorities have fixed the target to procure only 50 mts of paddy from the district this season.

According to local agriculture office source, some 29,350 hectares of land were brought under IRRI-Boro cultivation in

five upazilas of the district. Of them, 9,500 hectares of land were brought under the cultivation in Sadar upazila, 7,000 hectares in Chhagalniya, 8,850 hectares in Parshuram, 2,500 hectares in Daganbhiyan, and 1,500 hectares in Sonagazi upazila. The production target was fixed at 66,000 metric tons.

About 90 per cent of the crops were completed. The cultivation target was achieved here as seeds, fertilisers and inputs were supplied to the farmers timely, agriculture officials said.

CPB asks Govt to start paddy procurement drive

THAKURGAON, June 2: Thakurgaon District Committee of Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) in an extended meeting, held at the local old Balaka Cinema Hall on May 27, expressed deep concern at sharp fall of the price of Boro paddy at the beginning of the harvesting season, reports BSS.

At present, paddy sells at Taka 150 to 160 per maund in different hats and bazars here. The price is much below the production cost.

The party urged the government to start purchase of paddy immediately from the farmers at Taka 320, the price fixed by the government.

The meeting was presided over by Principal Syed Merajul Hossain, president of the district committee of CPB. Among others, Abdullah el Kafi Ratan, member of the central committee, Akhtar Hossain Raja and Mansurul Alam, General Secretary and Vice President of the district committee respectively, Abdul Quddus, Yakub Ali, Dabiruddin and Shahabuddin Ahmed spoke in the meeting.

In another resolution the party said that the Prime Minister has recently declared that two Science and Technology Universities, out of 12, would only be meant for agriculture education. Hailing the Prime Minister's declaration, the party demanded to transform Dinajpur Hattul Mohammad Dashed and Patuakhali Science and Technology Universities, into agriculture universities and to establish the Science and Technology University, meant for greater Dinajpur district, at Thakurgaon. Besides, the party demanded not to increase the price of fertiliser and not to disconnect the power lines of deep tubewells. The party also demanded for stopping of misappropriation of rice and wheat allotted for the food for works

schemes.

UNB from Chapainawabganj said: Farmers have run into trouble with their crops due to delay in launching the paddy procurement drive.

Food officials said they could not yet fully launch the drive for lack of space in godowns which are saturated with previous year's grains.

The procurement drive was scheduled to begin on April 20 last.

They said so far 40 mts of rice have been procured for Annura Godown, where a total of 32 godowns are located with a capacity to store 18,500 mts of grains.

Agriculture officials said farmers produced a record of amount of paddy this season from 40,970 hectares of land.

Meanwhile, paddy price continues to show a downward spiral, disheartening the beleaguered farmers.

However, the food officials said the paddy price would go up with the start of the procurement drive.

They said the government has a target to procure 5,180 mts of paddy at Tk 8.25 per kg and 3,273 mts of rice at Tk 13 per kg from here this season.

Paddy is now selling at Tk 7 while rice at Tk 11 per kg in the open market.

The ongoing IRRI-Boro procurement drive has been suspended in Natore district following a court order.

The court order came upon a petition filed with Baraigram Assistant Judge Court by rice trader Moslem Uddin, proprietor of Khan Rice Mills in Baraigram upazila, on May 29.

In his petition, the plaintiff complained that chief Advisor of the District Procurement Committee and State Minister for Fisheries and Livestock Prof Abdul Kuddus MP has unlawfully prepared a list of rice

suppliers, ignoring 70 genuine millers and suppliers.

He further alleged that the suppliers chosen by the state minister have no licence and rice mills.

Clamping an injunction on the grain procurement drive, the court issued show-cause notices to six high officials, including DC, DC (Food), UNO and AC (Food) of Baraigram, to explain their respective positions in this regard by seven days.

When contacted, the Deputy Commissioner of the district said a probe body, led by ADC (Rev) Abdul Quyyam, has been formed to investigate the matter.

Besides, low-lying areas, including croplands, went under floodwaters, causing huge loss to standing Irri and Boro paddies.

Another report from Manikganj says: At least 65 people were injured in a nor'wester in sadar upazila on Saturday morning.

The storm damaged 1,500 pucca and semi-pucca houses and uprooted trees in Seota, Manora, Bandutia, Nabogram, Tora, Muljan and Pouli villages in the upazila.

Rasheda, 23, wife of Amej Uddin at village Gagr was critically injured in a lightning during the storm. She was hospitalised.

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Nor'wester lashes 4 Madaripur upazilas

MADARIPUR, June 2: A severe nor'wester accompanied by thundershower lashed four upazilas here killing two people and injuring two others on Sunday, reports UNB.

Locals said Mona Boidya, 45, of Bahadurpur village in Sadar upazila and Farooq, 20, of Kalikapur village were killed in lightning during the storm.

Some 1,000 thatched dwelling houses were razed to the ground rendering many poor people homeless. The shelterless people are passing their days in distress.

The storm also uprooted a huge number of trees and electric poles besides damaging standing crops on a vast tract of land.

Another report from Netrakona says: Normalcy has been returning gradually to the tornado hit areas under five upazilas of Netrakona district as the government undertook massive relief and rehabilitation programme in the affected areas.

The relief and rehabilitation programme began at the directives of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The prime minister issued the directives following her visit to the tornado-hit areas.

The storm-hit people were

now busy in repairing their damaged houses and making their affected farm lands suitable for cultivation of next crops.

The educational and religious institution which were leveled to the ground by the storm, were being repaired and renovated by the concerned authorities.

According to officials sources, under the massive post tornado relief and rehabilitation programme, the government has, so far sanctioned Taka five lakh as house building grant, Taka 50 thousand in cash and 15 tonnes of rice for the tornado victims.

The government also allocated 300 tonnes of rice for repair and renovation of the storm-hit educational and religious institutions.

Meanwhile, the government has issued 19,000 VGF (vulnerable group feeding) cards to the tornado victims. Different state-run banks have also started disbursing agricultural loans.

Besides, a huge quantity of relief materials including saarees, lungis, shirts, pants and utensils were sent from the prime minister's relief fund to the tornado victims.

Unocal Bangladesh volunteers work in Sylhet on NID

A number of Unocal Bangladesh officials, their spouses and children spent a very busy day working side by side with the workers of Government of Bangladesh and different international health organisations in promote villages in Sylhet on the National Immunisation Day (NID) on May 29, says a press release.

Braving the inclement weather, Unocal volunteers travelled from one village to another, occasionally crossing the swollen rivers and administered polio vaccines and distributed Vitamin A capsules to hundreds of children, mainly from the adjoining tea gardens. The

his son Ira, and Heather Gritters, daughter of Cathy Gritters. Both Ira and Heather are college students in the US. Awards for the 'Youngest Participants' were given to Summer LeVeque, 14, son of Unocal photographer Windy LeVeque, and Zac Orr, 11, who went to Sylhet with parents Pete and Karen Orr and sisters Karindy and Analise.

Unocal Bangladesh, Limited (UBL) joined hands with Immunisation and other Child Health (IOCH) and Management Science for Health (MSH) in the anti-polio drive in Bangladesh. IOCH is a USAID-funded organisation, affiliated with MSH, a US-based non-profit organisation.



A volunteer of Unocal administering polio vaccine at a remote Sylhet village on the National Immunisation Day (NID) on May 29.

four-wheel polio truck, recently donated by Unocal Bangladesh was very useful for the Unocal anti-polio campaign in Sylhet.

The award for the furthest travellers went to Dr Jim Allen, flying all the way from Singapore to join the humanitarian polio immunisation drive in Bangladesh, accompanied by

tion dedicated to the prevention of polio and other health problems in urban as well as hard-to-reach rural areas of Bangladesh. IOCH and MSH work in close collaboration with WHO, Rotary International, UNICEF, the US Center for Disease Control, and the Government of Bangladesh.

School collapses during storm in Shariatpur

SHARIATPUR, June 2: Pan-chapali GR High School in Naria thana collapsed during a storm on Saturday morning, leaving at least 10 students injured, reports UNB.

The storm, packing a speed of 90-100 kph, also hit seven upazilas.

Three of the students — Itri Akhter, 14, Dulal, 12, and Tahirul Mahmood, 13, — were admitted to the thana health complex with critical wounds.

Some 500 mud-houses were razed to the ground, a large number of trees uprooted and 50 telephone and electricity poles toppled during the fury of the storm.

Besides, low-lying areas, including croplands, went under floodwaters, causing huge loss to standing Irri and Boro paddies.

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News snaps

Two dacoities in Kurigram

KURIGRAM, June 2: Two incidents of dacoities were committed at night on May 29 at two separate government offices in Kurigram town, reports BSS.

According to Executive Engineer Sirajul Islam of the Roads and Highways Division (RHD), Kurigram, some unidentified dacoits entered into his office at late night and tied security guards Rahman, Jabbar and drivers Abul Kalam Azad, Mobarak Hossain with ropes. The dacoits ransacked almirahs, iron chests and deranged valuable papers indiscriminately, but they apparently took nothing from the office, he said. In a separate incident at late night of the same day, some eight unidentified dacoits committed the same type of robbery in Kurigram Main Post Office Building. According to Post Master Torab Uddin, the miscreants tied night guard Birendranath Rana and broke iron chests and deranged documents. Deputy Post Master General (DPMG) from Rangpur Sushanta Kumar Mondal visited the affected post office on May 30, he said.

Killer gets life term

KISHOREGANJ, June 2: A court here on Monday sentenced four people to life term in prison for killing a moneylender, reports UNB.

The convicts — Liton, Abdul Mannan, Abdus Salam and Nurul Mia — were also fined Tk 5,000 each, in default, to suffer six months' more imprisonment. According to prosecution, Liton and his accomplices killed Abdul Kadar of Bishnubari village in Sadar upazila in April, 1994 following a brawl over loan. Police in the chargesheet indicted seven people after a case was filed. But the additional district and sessions judge acquitted three other accused.

Aus cultivation scheme

SATKHIRA, June 2: A total of 1,230 hectares have been brought under Aus cultivation with a production target of 2,070 tones in the seven Upazilas here in the current season, reports BSS.

Of the total hectares, 250 at Sadar, 200 at Kalaroa, 380 at Tala, 50 at Deghata, 250 at Kaliganj, 30 at Assasuni and 70 at Shyamnagar Upazilas, according to local Agriculture Extension Department (AED) sources. Besides, Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) has ensured adequate supplies of seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and irrigation facilities for optimum production.

Law and order reviewed

NARSINGDI, June 2: A meeting of the District Law and Order Committee was held in the Deputy Commissioner's conference room here recently, reports BSS.

Deputy Commissioner Rafiqul Islam presided over the meeting. Rajuddin Ahmed Raju, MP, attend the meeting as the chief guest. Among others, Superintendent of Police Mokhesur Rahman, Additional District Magistrate Nazrul Islam, local municipality Chairman Abdul Motin Sarker and District Awami League Vice President S A Hadi spoke on the occasion. The speakers discussed the overall law and order situation in the district and called upon the concerned officials to take effective measures against the criminals and the anti-social elements.

Poverty alleviation programme

RANGPUR, June 2: The District Social Welfare Department (DSWD) has disbursed over Taka 2.20 crore among the unemployed persons under the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) in the current fiscal, reports BSS.

At least 48 thousands unemployed persons would be benefited through PAP.

Body recovered

JHALAKATI, June 2: The body of an old man was recovered from a road near Rajapur Upazila Health Complex on Tuesday, reports UNB.

The unidentified man, aged about 60, is believed to have been killed in a road accident. Local people saw him roaming around the area for some days before the mishap.

Uplift projects progressing

MANIKGANJ, June 2: District Council has been implementing 14 development projects at a cost of over Tk 60 lakh during the current fiscal year, reports UNB.

The works include construction and reconstruction of different rural roads, culverts and repair and renovation of union parishad buildings in different upazilas. Seventy per cent of the work has already been completed and rest is likely to be completed by the next two months. With the implementation of these projects rural communication network and other infrastructures will be developed to a great extent.

Housewife succumbs to injuries

LAXMIPUR, June 2: A housewife of Jagabandhu village in Rangpur Upazila who was beaten mercilessly by the rival group on Thursday succumbed to her injuries at Sadar hospital on Monday, reports UNB.

The victim was identified as Jannat Begu, 20, wife of Rafiqul Islam. Family sources said the clash ensued following an altercation with Rafiqul over a land dispute and at one stage Jannat came under attack by the rival group. Five other people of both the groups were also injured in the clash.

Tiger skin trader arrested

BAGERHAT, June 2: A forest official arrested a trader of tiger skin and recovered a skin from his possession at Machhua in Motharia upazila near the Sundarbans area on Monday, reports UNB.

Being informed about selling of tiger skin at the house of Sohrab Hossain, station officer of Sharonkhola range went there in the guise of a buyer and caught him red-handed with the skin.

Training course

JHALAKATI, June 2: A month-long training course on pisciculture concluded in Kathalia upazila on Tuesday, reports UNB.

A total of 42 educated but unemployed youths of the upazila took part in the training programme organised by Youth Development Department. They were given training on modern pisciculture and fish farming.

Research equipment burnt

GAZIPUR, June 2: Research equipment worth Tk 10 lakh and samples of paddy were burnt in a fire that broke out at Bangladesh Rice Research Institute here on Thursday morning, reports UNB.

The fire broke out at Plant Physiology Department of the institute at about 10.30 am and was caused by the firemen and BRRI employees within half an hour. Employees alleged that the fire extinguishers preserved in the institute did not work.

Actual cause of the fire could not be ascertained immediately, but the firefighters suspected that it might be originated from a short circuit with an electric over dryer.

Inter-dist pirates arrested

PIROJPUR, June 2: Police arrested three members of an organised gang of inter-district pirates along with arms and ammunition from a trawler near Chirapara in Kauchali upazila on Wednesday, reports UNB.

Being tipped off by locals, police raided the trawler and nabbed Rafiq, Liton and Hira Mirdha while they were sharing their booty. Police said the pirates looted the goods from a boat near Srirankathi Bazar in Nazipur upazila on Tuesday. Arms and ammunition recovered from them were two shutter guns and eight rounds of bullet.

Best UP Chairman

COMILLA, June 2: M Golam Zilani, chairman of Bijoypur union in