

Compensation to JFF gas leakage victims assured

Body formed to probe into incident

TARAKANDI, Jamalpur, June 14: Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed on Tuesday assured compensation to the people for minor damages caused by ammonia gas leakage in Jamuna Fertiliser Factory, reported UNB.

The minister dashed to the factory from the capital this morning to see for himself the extent of damage following reported leakage on June 9.

He formed a 3-member committee to resolve the problems in Jamuna Fertiliser Factory that frequently leaked poisonous gas affecting crops and environment in the vicinity.

Hasanul Moshed, Director of Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) that hushes the factory, will head the committee. It will submit report within three months, the Minister told a meeting at the factory conference room.

Local MP and State Minister for Religious Affairs Maulana Nurul Islam said ammonia gas blows out frequently from the

plant that sometimes cause damage to standing crops around the factory and pollute the environment. He demanded a permanent solution to the problem.

Advisor to the Prime Minister on agriculture M Anisuzzaman, BCIC chairman, senior officials of Jamuna Fertiliser Factory (JFF) were present at the meeting.

UNB correspondent who visited the area found leaves of some trees and jute plants were faded out but they are now reviving gradually.

After visiting places around the factory Tofail termed the damage as minor. This type of incident is not abnormal in a chemical plant like the ammonia plant of the Jamuna Fertiliser Factory, he said.

The minister formed another 5-member committee to probe into the incident which, the residents claimed has led to sickness of many people by inhaling highly concentrated ammonia.

The committee was assigned to identify the reason for the leakage.

Tofail also asked the DC of Jamalpur to assess the damages for giving compensation. "Definitely, we will give compensation on the basis of the assessment report," he said.

"It was a sudden accident that took place in natural process. It caused damage, although it is not possible to treat 100 per cent in a chemical plant, which is 10-year-old. The emission is not beyond the permissible limit, but cause some damage to crops, he added.

He, however, said the emission will be mitigated to some extent after the overhauling, and it will be improved further following implementation of a de-bottlenecking programme, correcting measures of old machinery of the factory.

Setting up chemical plants like fertiliser factory in a locality will have environmental impact on the surrounding areas, he said.

Local people claimed that continued leakage of poisonous gas from the factory lead to deterioration of fertility of the soil, damages to poultry birds and caused health hazards.

General Manager (operation) informed the meeting that the permissible limit of ammonia gas is 100 PPM (parts per million). If ammonia constitutes 26 per cent of the air volume it may form "explosive (corrosive)," he said.

But the ammonia concentration in the air is yet not measured that could ascertain

New initiative to cultivate Chhota Golda

From Kamran Reza Chowdhury

RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY, June 14: Chhota Golda, or small size prawn, now can be cultivated in stagnant sweet water.

A research project of the Department of Zoology of Rajshahi University has developed the method of cultivation. The project was financed by Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) and the Rajshahi University.

Usually Golda, each measuring 23 cm long, is being cultivated in sweet water in the country.

The initial works of the project started in 1969. But it was abandoned for some 'unavoidable reasons'. It resumed in 1977 after a long recess. However, the project got a new lease of life on February 01, 1999 when it received a financial support from the BARC and the university as well.

The research reveals that Chhota Golda can be cultivated simultaneously with ruhi, katta, mrigal and other traditional fish.

The cultivation of Chhota Golda will be economically viable if the method developed by the project is followed," Prof Altaf Hossain, the project director, said while talking to this correspondent at his office recently.

250-300 kg Chhota Golda can be produced in a water body measuring one hectare within 6-7 months, the project director said.

Chhota Golda, each measures

A sample of small size Golda shrimp — Star photo

Patients deprived of healthcare services in Kushtia hospitals

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA, June 14: Kushtia General Hospital and all the health complexes here have been facing multiple problems including shortage of physicians, staff and inadequate water supply.

The power supply in the hospital is irregular. The unhygienic atmosphere, absence of blood bank and shortage of medicines and apparatus have multiplied the miseries of patients, many of whom come from the far flung areas for treatment. Everyday a large number of the patients go back without treatment due to absence of proper healthcare facilities.

Most of the health complexes have no X-ray machines, blood banks, dental or ophthalmic and infectious disease treatment facilities. Besides, shortage of physicians, their irregular services and indifference of other staffers have aggravated the situation. Most of the doctors of the health complexes including those of the general hospital here are found busy with their private practice, alleged patients and local leaders. The sufferers alleged that some senior doctors practice in private clinics and some technicians also work in private clinics. The life saving and essential drugs supplied to the health complexes and the gen-

eral hospital are sold in the markets by some dishonest staffers there, it is widely alleged. The patients are compelled to buy the medicines from the market at an exorbitant price.

Many doctors of different health complexes and hospital are found absent most of the time, it is further alleged. As a result, poor patients coming from remote villages to the health complexes go back without treatment. On the other hand, scarcity of drinking water, lack of proper conservancy services, inadequate number of beds, supply of sub-standard food to the patients have multiplied the woes of the patients.

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Traders sell narcotics virtually in open markets, residents said, adding that the members of law enforcing agencies do not pay attention to the illegal trade.

Drugs like hemp, Indian phenisidyl syrup, heroin and rectified spirit are very popular among the addicts here.

It is reported that just after dusk the addicts, who also include young activists of different political parties, assemble at several spots in the town and take drugs.

Besides, drug addicts often resort to various crimes like mugging and extortion in order to meet the expense of drug. The addicts also steal valuables from their houses to meet the cost, guardians said.

Lack of job opportunities and frustration over family troubles have been attributed to the rise in drug addiction among youths.

Local people have urged the authorities concerned to take immediate steps to check the illegal trade.

From Our Correspondent

FENI, June 14: Narcotics traders are doing brisk business in the district and the number of drug addicts is increasing alarmingly, causing grave concern among parents and guardians.

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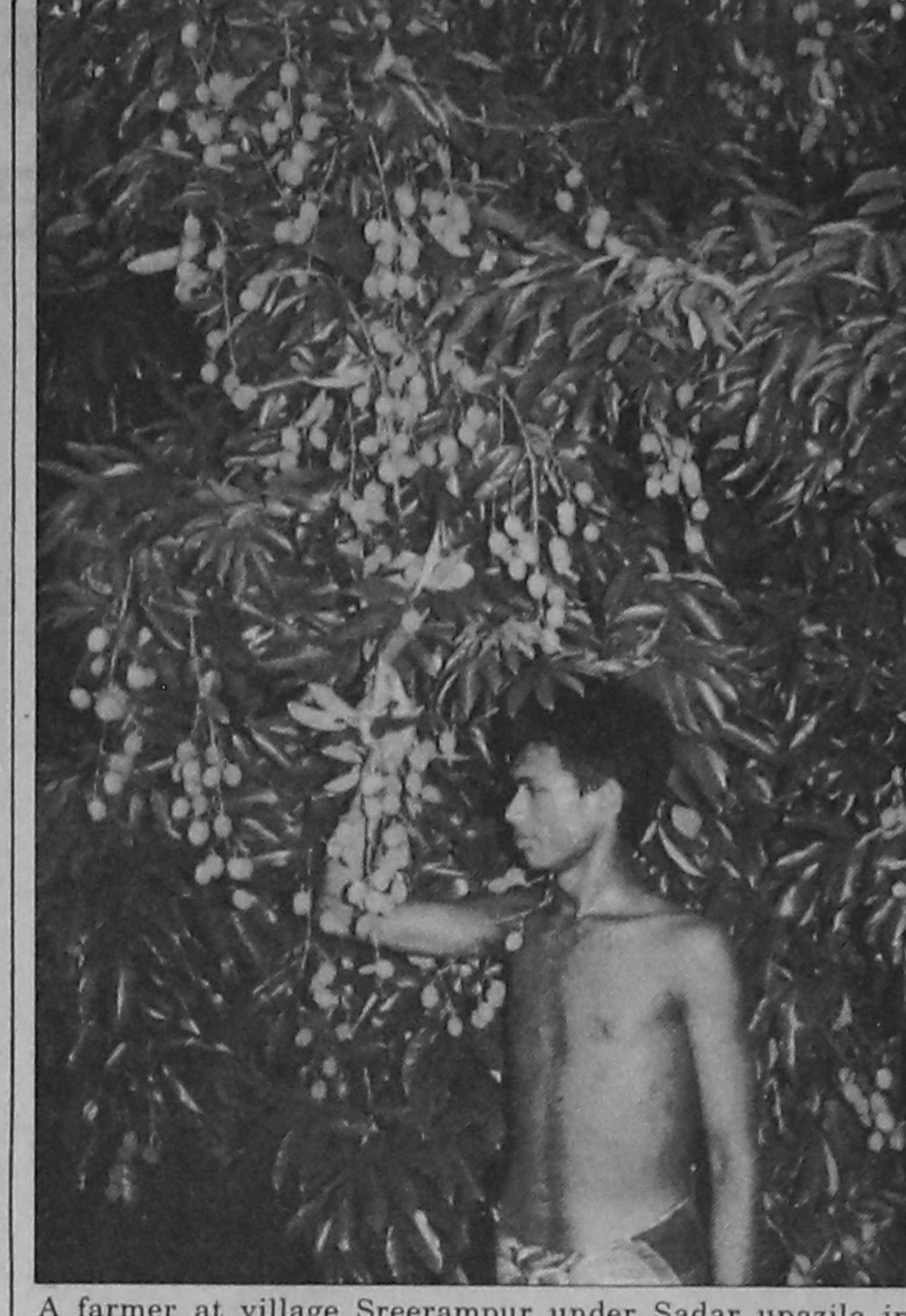
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Local people have urged the authorities concerned to take immediate steps to check the illegal trade.

The officials said the lake has already lost eight feet of its



A farmer at village Sreerampur under Sadar upazila in Jamalpur district poses with a lichi tree recently. Newly harvested lichi has started arriving in local markets. At present, the summer fruit sells between Tk 50 and Tk 70 per hundred. — Star photo

Bumper lichi output likely in Jamalpur

From Muhammad Ali

JAMALPUR, June 14: Farmers expect bumper production of lichi, the juicy summer fruit, in the district this year.

Local Agriculture Extension Department (AED) sources said lichi trees on about 5,000 hectares of land in seven upazilas here may yield at least 10,000 tons of the fruit this season, subject to favourable weather. Usually seasonal storms cause huge damage to lichi.

In some areas, the farmers have just started harvesting this year. Last year about 5,000 tons of the fruit were produced in the district. The low production was attributed to severe drought.

AED officials said the weather has so far been favourable. High humidity and temperature and low rainfall are helpful for good production of the juicy fruit. The officials also said they helped the lichi growers to get acquainted with the latest planting method and pest management.

Varieties like golapi, bedana, bombai, kathali and sitamata are produced in Sadar, Islampur, Malendah, Madarganj, Bakshigan, Dewanganj and Sarisaburupur upazilas.

Many farmers here are showing interest to cultivate lichi in commercial basis. During the last four years many lichi trees were planted in Kendua and Sharifpur unions in Sadar upazila.

Sreerampur, Barapathalia, Godashimla and Shital Kursha villages on the outskirts of the town are famous for lichi cultivation.

RANGAMATI, June 14: Kaptai Lake, known for its hydroelectric plant, is rapidly being silted up hampering power generation in the plant, reports UNB.

According to the plant officials, the lakebed is being swelled up as rainwater brings mud into it from hills during monsoon due to indiscriminate felling of trees.

They said large-scale logging of trees, triggered by jhum farming, created countless holes on nearby hills, pushing mud down the panoramic lake.

The history of the lake goes back to 60s when a water reservoir was constructed by making an embankment on river Karnaphuli to generate power. It later turned into a 350-square mile Kaptai Lake.

When the authorities are planning to put the 230-MW power plant into full operation, they are facing undue problems caused by siltation. Its power generation has now reduced to 70-80 MW a day.

Apart from power generation, Kaptai Lake has another objective: fish farming.

depth although it needs 109 MSL depth for smooth generation of power in the plant.

The lake overflows with a slight rainfall as it has lost the capacity to hold adequate water due to massive siltation, inundating the nearby croplands.

An official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the lake would soon be silted up unless the government comes with effective steps to stop large-scale felling of trees on the hills.

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News snaps

Milad-un-Nabi programme

TANGAIL, June 14: The Holy Eid-e-Miladunnabi (SM) will be observed here in a befitting manner, reports BSS.

A daylong programme on the holy occasion has been chalked out by the district administration and different organisations. The programmes include hoisting of the National flag on the top of public and private houses, competitions on recitation of Islamic poems for school students, *fateha khawani, milad mahfil*, discussion on the life and work of the Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM) and distribution of special diet among the inmates of orphanages, hospitals and jail. Tangail branch of Islamic Foundation will also hold special programmes to mark the holy occasion.

Environment Day observed

KHAGRAKHARI, June 14: World Environment Day was observed in Khagrachhari Hill District on May 5 with a pledge to materialise programmes to maintain safe environment, reports BSS.

This year's theme of the day was "2000-The Environment Millennium Time to Act". The district administration and non-government organisations arranged various programmes including rally and discussion meeting to mark the day. A rally was brought out in the morning, which paraded main roads of Khagrachhari town. Deputy Commissioner of Khagrachhari led the rally. A discussion was held in the evening. Deputy Commissioner Ashraf Maqbul presided over the meeting.

32 mess bldgs shut down

BARISAL, June 14: Fed-up by growing terrorism, 32 mess owners in the town have shut down their living quarters throwing hundreds of students out of shelter, reports BSS.

One of the mess owners of Lutfar Rahman Road said they have been compelled to close down their messes without any prior notice as terrorists from Sadur Bat Tala, Khaipar and South Kauna areas regularly snatched wallets of the students live in their quarters. There are some 200 mess buildings in the town where over 8,000 college students live in due to accommodation crisis in their college dormitories. In response to a question, the mess owner said police hardly come up in aid of the helpless students.

Housewife commits suicide

KISHOREGANJ, June 14: Hafsa, 20, wife of Asraf of village Hajrjal under Kishoreganj upazila committed suicide recently, reports BSS.

According to eyewitnesses, she committed suicide by drinking poison. Family feud might be the reason behind the incident. Police recovered the body and sent it to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

Alleged dacoits arrested

PATUAKHALI, June 14: Police in a surprise drive arrested three alleged dacoits from Shali village in sadar upazila with a firearm and ammunition on Saturday night, reports BSS.

Being tipped off by villagers, police ringed the house of Ishq Chowdhury where six men were planning to commit a robbery. They caught three of them — Forkan, 32, Mostafa, 20, and Janir Hawlader, 22 — red-handed while three others fled the scene. Acting on their confessional statements, police later recovered a firearm, three LMG and two rifle bullets from the house. Forkan was also held by locals along with a revolver a few months back and handed over to police. But he was later released from jail on bail.

Separate incidents kill 3

SIRAJGANJ, June 14: Three people were killed in separate incidents in Sirajganj and Jhenidah districts on Saturday, reports BSS.

In Sirajganj, unidentified miscreants slaughtered a betel-leaf trader Abdur Rasheed, 45, in Paiksha Bazaar in Kamarkhand upazila on Saturday night. The cause behind the killing could not be known. Besides, Raiganj police recovered the body of a six-year-old girl, Farida Khatun, daughter of Abdul Fazal of Devgati village, from a beel. Police said the girl was abducted by miscreants and later strangled to death. Meanwhile, a farmer, Golam Rasul, 45, of village Mandaripara in Shalakupathana of Jhenidah was killed by his rivals.

Sanctions for rural development

CHAPAINAWABGANJ, June 14: Government