

## National

## Investigation sought for slow progress of Tk 75-cr WDB projects

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, June 23: The Executive Engineer of Water Development Board (WDB), Sirajganj, Abul Hasem recently said at least 18 kilometres area covering 100 villages of Sadar upazila, Meghal Bazaar and Shuvagacha union will be protected from erosion by the rivers Jamuna, Baral and Karotoa and 2,000 hectares of land will be recovered if the Tk 75 crore erosion protection projects of WDB are completed.

However, the local people have demanded of the concerned authorities to form an inquiry committee to investigate into the allegations of slow progress of work.

WDB already constructed Solibari groyne under the Sadar upazila at a cost of Taka Eight crores 67 lakh with the help of World Bank (WB).

Meanwhile, onrush of hilly water has been increasing daily and hampering the spars construction work.

WDB already completed the Korotoa river protection work

near the mazar of Hazrat Shah Mukhdum-ud-Doula (R) at a cost of Taka 80 lakh this year. The board also constructed the newly four-kilometre long ring dam at Sanatani Bazaar in Hatkola area under Shahjapur Upazila with the help of Food for Works Programme sanctioned wheat to save villages and croplands.

But ripe paddy on 20,000 hectares of land and 3,000 hectares of fallow land in Sirajganj, Pabna and Natore districts went under water due to erosion by the River Baral at Rawtara. The loss was due to damage in the ring dam at Baga Baji Nemaichara under Shahjapur upazila which was constructed by Sirajganj WDB.

However, when this correspondent asked the Executive Engineer of WDB, Sirajganj to give his comments regarding allegations of widespread corruption in the works of erosion protection projects, he denied the allegations terming those as baseless and motivated.

## Paddy procurement drive yet to start

### Mymensingh farmers not getting fair prices

From Our Correspondent

MYMENSINGH, June 23: Paddy procurement drive by the government is yet to be started here, although the harvesting is nearing completion.

The authorities concerned, however, have fixed the target to procure 5,000 mts of paddy at the rate of Tk 8.25 per kg.

The officials of Food Department said that the procurement drive would be launched through 18 purchase centres in different places of the district.

District Food Controller ABM Nazmul Huda said that the godowns of two purchase centres are totally unfit for use.

But it is learnt that the number of purchase centres is not sufficient to continue the procurement drive in 12 upazilas in the district. More purchase centres should be opened in remote areas, local people said.

The farmers are not getting fair prices of their products mainly in absence of the procurement drive by the government.

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.

Now the farmers here are

selling paddy between Taka 225 and Taka 250 against the government fixed price of Taka 320 per maund (37 kg).

Taking the advantage of the situation, middlemen are doing brisk business. Now they are almost controlling the prices of the newly harvested paddy.

Meanwhile, food grains procurement drive has started here. The drive will continue until August 31. A total of 804 metric tons of wheat has been purchased at the rate of Tk 8.25 per kg so far against the procurement target of 1,000 mts of wheat.

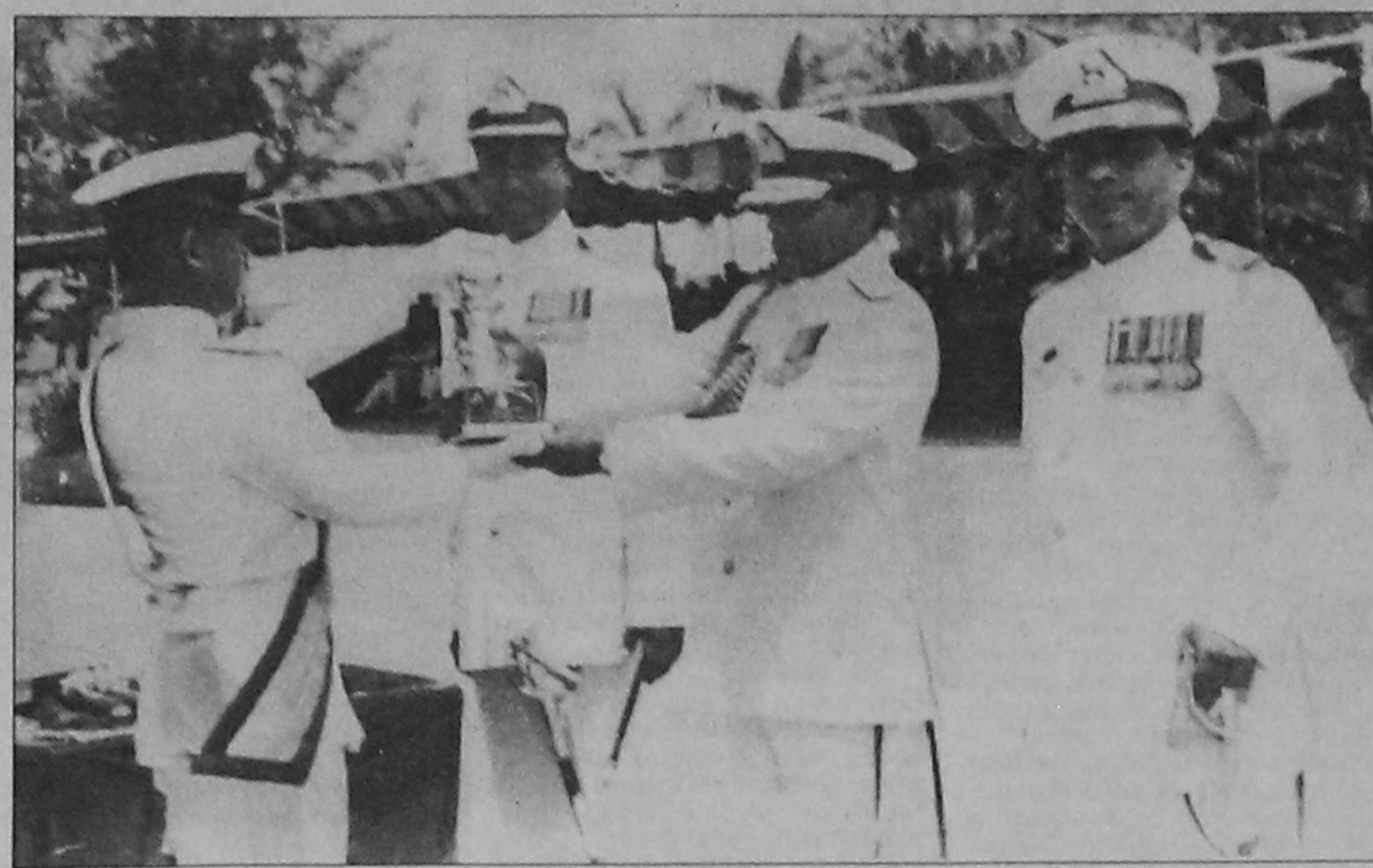
On the other hand, the food office has purchased 3,804 mts of rice at the rate of Tk 13.50 per kg so far against the procurement target of 7,000 mts.

## Girl stabbed in Patuakhali

From Our Correspondent

PATUAHALI, June 23: A Romeo stabbed a schoolgirl here in the town recently after his proposal was turned down.

Mahmud, 20, a resident at Sabujbagh Lane in the town, hit Tania Hugu with a knife. The girl was rushed to hospital immediately.



Chief of Naval Staff Rear Admiral A Taher giving away the trophy to the Best All-round Midshipman at the President's Parade marking the commissioning of a batch of Midshipmen of the Bangladesh Naval Academy at Patenga in Chittagong recently.

## Mango prices up despite bumper output in Chapainawabganj

CHAPAINAWABGANJ, June 23: Bountiful production of mango this season despite a 'Off Year' made no difference for the people of low-income group as its price still remains beyond their purchasing capacity, reports UNB.

Market sources said the mango, which was sold at Tk 800 per maund last year, is now selling at Tk 1,200 per maund.

Traders here said it's unlikely that the price would come down when the mango supply gets momentum as its demand across the country marked a substantial rise.

'The market has been glutted with mango, but the price is beyond our capacity,' said Rashid Ahmed, a shop assistant.

According to local Agriculture office, some 70,000 metric tons of mango are likely to be produced this year despite being an 'off year'.

Usually, 25,000 to 30,000 mts of mango are produced during 'Off Years' in Chapainawabganj, a major mango-producing district of the country.

Last year was the 'On Year' when over one lakh mts of mango were produced in the district. 'Off Year' or 'On Year' comes in rotation year after year.

After visiting a number of local markets it was found that there was a plentiful supply of various varieties of mango like Langra, Gopalbhog, Khirsapati, Mohananda, Bandaban and Himsagar.

More interesting is that the volume of wholesale in the markets was larger than that of the retail business.

The Langra variety is now selling at Tk 1,000-1,200 per maund while Gopalbhog at Tk 800-900, Khirsapati at Tk 800-1,000, much higher than the

previous years.

Another report from Kusthia says: Although different varieties of mango have hit the market, their prices continued to show upward spiral.

Market sources said the mango supply is poor compared to the last year. They said Lengra now costs Tk 35-40 per kg against Tk 20-25 last year.

According to another sources, mango production fell by 50 per cent in last 15 years for various reasons, including widespread logging to trees for brick-fields and tobacco factories.

Officials said mango is now produced in orchards on 45,000 hectares of land in Kusthia district and it produced three lakh mts of mango in 1985, but it came down to 1.80 lakh mts in 1991. The downtrend continues since then.

BSS reports from Kurigram: A bumper production of Jackfruit is expected in Kurigram district, famous for production of the fruit, according to local Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) sources.

Jackfruit grows well throughout the district. An important business centre at the heart of the district has been named Kantalbari, because of huge production of the fruit there. A large number of jackfruit traders from south-eastern parts of the country flock at Kantalbari every year to purchase.

The local *faris*, on the other hand, are very happy for bumper production of the fruit this year. They have already made necessary contacts with the jackfruit traders of other districts with a hope to earn more profits this year.

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GAZIPUR, June 23: Vehicular movement on Dhaka-Mymensingh and Dhaka-Tangail highways hampered for about an hour last morning following a road blockade at Chandna Chowrastra, reports UNB.

## Nine unnatural deaths in Mymensingh

From Our Correspondent

MYMENSINGH, June 23: At least 15 unnatural deaths were reported here recently.

At least two people were killed in a road accident on Mymensingh-Phulbaria road in Phulbaria upazila on June 5. The dead were identified as Mafizul Islam Mafiz, 28, and Mia Hossain, 30.

The accident occurred when a three-wheeler maxi cab collided with another three-wheeler tempo, killing the two and injuring eight others.

A motorcycleist was killed and 20 others were injured when a passenger bus collided with a motorbike at Digarkanda on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway on June 6.

In separate accident, two people were killed and 15 injured at Bagherapara near Seed Store Bazaar in Bhaluka upazila on June 11. The accident occurred when a passenger bus collided with a jeep.

The victims were identified as Abdul Latif Sarker, 45, an agriculture official at Barhiatta upazila, and Sunil Malakar, 30, driver of the jeep. The injured were rushed to hospital.

Two children drowned in a pond at village Baksmul in the district on June 4. The victims were identified as Shamsunnahar, 5, daughter of Kasimuddin and Rajib, 5, son of Akkas Ali, a

day labourer.

A schoolboy was killed and another rice mill worker injured in a boiler blast at village Baksmul in Tarakanda upazila on June 4.

Jhoton Rabi De, son of Gobinda Rabi De, died on the spot following the blast at Salam Rice Mill. Another man was killed at village Moheshbari in Muktagacha upazila on June 6 when a group of hoodlums attacked him with sharp weapons. The victim was identified as Md Abu Taher, 40, son of Md Jahau Ali.

An old man was killed and another five persons were injured when they came under an attack by a group of extortionists at village Kushnair in Gafargao upazila here on May 29. The victim was identified as Abdul Mutaleb, 65.

Police said the extortionists stormed into a shop and demanded toll. As the shopkeeper and others in the area resisted, the extortionists hit them with sharp weapons. Injured Mutaleb succumbed to his injuries at hospital.

An elder brother was killed by his younger brother at village Ram Krishanpur under Nandail upazila on June 1. The victim was identified as Subid Ali, 50, son of Shaheed Ali.

chase hundreds of tonnes of the fruit, as the place is situated on the Kurigram-Rangpur highway, only nine kilometres from Kurigram town.

Almost every jackfruit tree in the district blossomed to the full this year, indicating a bumper production of the sweetest fruit. There are nearly 40 lakh jackfruit trees in the district excluding the tender trees. Harvesting of the fruit is expected to start from the end of June this year.

According to jackfruit growers of Kantalbari area, they do not get fair price of their produce every year, for lack of preservation facilities of the perishable fruits. They are to sell the fruits at very nominal price during peak season of harvesting which continues for a shorter period. The *faris*, in connivance with the big jackfruit traders from other parts of the country, generally create artificial crisis of fund and transportation in the peak harvesting season every year to compel the growers to sell their produce at throw-away prices. The growers suggested the government to set up fruits processing industries in the fruit surplus district like Kurigram to provide them fair prices of their produce.

The local *faris*, on the other hand, are very happy for bumper production of the fruit this year. They have already made necessary contacts with the jackfruit traders of other districts with a hope to earn more profits this year.

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## Female students face problem due to lack of hostels

From Our Correspondent

JAMALPUR, June 23: Female students in the town face problem as educational institutions lack hostels for them.

The district town has three colleges with co-education system, a women's college and three girls' schools with nearly 4,000 girl students. But the students lack residential facilities.

Female students from outside the district headquarters have to make accommodation arrangement in relatives' houses.

Parents and guardians have urged the authorities concerned to construct female hostels here to address the problem.

## Fund shortage hits Gorai bridge construction work

From Our Correspondent

KUSTHIA, June 23: Fund constraint has been hampering the construction work of the bridge over the Gorai river.

The construction work, which began in 1998, is now progressing at a snail's pace mainly due to fund crisis.

When contacted the authorities of the construction firm concerned said no fund for the bridge has been received during the current fiscal year, hampering the progress of the work.

Upon completion of the Tk 16 crore project, distance between Kusthia and Dhaka via Rajbari by road will be reduced by at least 70 kilometres.

## College principal assaulted in Jhenidah

From Our Correspondent

JHENIDAH, June 23: A college principal was beaten up by a group of miscreants on the college campus recently.

Sujit Kumar Saha, principal of Sekhpara DM College in the district, came under attack launched by a gang of miscreants led by Jahangir Alam Joarder, who once failed to get appointment as a lecturer of Management.

In the morning, the gang entered the office of the principal and manhandled him. Later at noon the hoodlums, who used batons and stones, again swooped on him in the college premises. During the attack, Sahazan Khanam, teacher of Psychology, Nazma Sultana, teacher of Economics, Sahidul Islam, teacher of Islamic History, among others, who came in rescue of the principal, were injured.

The principal was rushed to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital in unconscious state.

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## News snaps

### Nazrul Joyanti celebrated

KISHOREGANJ, June 23: The 101st birth anniversary of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam was celebrated by Swarbaro Natya Monchya, Kishoreganj in a befitting manner recently, reports BSS.

On the occasion, a discussion meeting was held at the Shilpakala Academy here which was presided over by Advocate Muzammil Haq Khan, Adviser of Swarbaro Natya Monchya. Secretary of the local District Council Kishoreganj Soban Sarker was present as the chief guest and M Abdul Mannan, a retired education officer, was the special guest. A large number of people of all walks of life attended the function. General Secretary of Swarbaro Debashis Bhowmik welcomed all audiences. The meeting was addressed, among others, by Advocate Nasir Uddin Faruque, Advocate Anamika Reja Rozy. The meeting was followed by a cultural function, staged by the local artistes.

### Training on modern crops farming

SHARIATPUR, June 23: A daylong training course for farmers, organised by Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC), was held at local TTDC auditorium here on June 18, reports BSS.

A total of 60 farmers from different thanas participated in the training. The participants were imparted training on modern methods of the cultivation of crops and protection of crops from various disasters including attacks of pest and harmful insects.

### Outbreak of viral fever, jaundice

KUSTHIA, June 23: An outbreak of viral fever and jaundice affected some 2,000 people in last 15 days, reports UNB.

According to physicians, the symptoms of the viral fever are high temperature, muscle pain and headache. Jaundice has also broken out in an epidemic form due to widespread consumption of unwholesome foods and contaminated water. Most jaundice patients in rural areas are seen consulting quacks only to worsen their condition although doctors says complete rest and taking sufficient water are enough to recover from the disease.

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