



(Left): Trucks usually remain parked in Supanighat area of Sylhet town creating traffic jam. The situation is due to absence of a modern truck terminal in this divisional town. (Right): A common scene of traffic mess in Zindabazar area. — Star photo by Iqbal Siddiquee

Arsenic panic grips Tangail, Chandpur

By Staff Correspondent

People of Tangail and Chandpur districts have become panicky due to increasing arsenic contamination in ground water.

A correspondent from Tangail reports: Waters of a great number of tubewells in all 11 upazilas have been found contaminated with the deadly arsenic.

Local Department of Public Health and Engineering (DPHE) sources said, water of 420 tubewells are arsenic contaminated. The affected areas are Delduar, Nagarpur, Mirzapur, Shakipur, Basail, Gopalpur, Ghatail, Madhupur and Tangail Sadar Upazila.

DPHE checked water of tubewells of the aforementioned upazilas and after examination, 420 tubewells of the 11 upazilas have been sealed off.

Some persons have already been attacked by arsenic related diseases in Gopalpur Upazila. Arsenic has also been found to a great extent in the Deputy Commissioner's (DC's)

residence in Tangail and its adjacent areas.

DPHE installed two 300 feet deep tubewells in Nagarpur and Basail upazilas.

Mohammad Awaul, Sub-Assistant Engineer of DPHE told this correspondent that arsenic has been found in Tangail sadar upazila.

Meanwhile, DPHE taken up a programme to set up 1,000 feet deep tubewells in arsenic affected areas. Each such tubewell costs Taka 4,200 for its installation. But poor people can not afford the higher cost of installation of such tubewells.

The authorities concerned should spend the required amount of money for this purpose to protect poor people from arsenic contamination.

Meanwhile, many people are collecting water from ponds and other water bodies now after being panicky due to arsenic menace.

BSS from Chandpur reports: According to Chandpur De-

partment of Public Health and Engineering (DPHE) sources, about five lakh people here have been suffering from arsenic related diseases. Water of about 80 per cent tubewells in different upazilas is more or less arsenic-contaminated.

DPHE, Chandpur office has already tested the proportion of arsenic pollution in tubewells in different areas. Arsenic contamination in tubewell water has been found in large number in Chandpur, Faridgonj, Hajigonj, Matlab, Shaharati, and Kachua upazila.

A large number of people have been suffering in these upazilas from arsenic related diseases for long time. About 2000 tubewells have already been sealed off marking red and with warning signboard and some more tubewells are likely to be sealed off very soon.

After examining water sample from different tubewells, it has been found that dangerous level of arsenic contents in water is above .05 mg. arsenic

contents are found below the danger level which is up to .02 mg.

The Executive Engineer of the DPHE said steps are being taken to examine all the remaining tubewells. The department has already informed the concerned ministry about the widespread arsenic contamination.

Despite sealing off arsenic contaminated tubewells many people of the rural areas are found using water of the contaminated tubewells.

The Public Health Department experts said that surface water, rainwater, and water of rivers and ponds is free from arsenic. Water of the 500 feet deep tubewells is also free from arsenic.

DPHE has undertaken a comprehensive scheme to install about one thousand deep tubewells at a cost of Taka two crore and eighty-eight lakh. The work of the scheme has already been started.

No truck terminal in Sylhet town

From Iqbal Siddiquee

SYLHET, Aug 20: Because of absence of a modern truck terminal, the Sylhet town dwellers have been experiencing a severe traffic congestion.

The problem is getting serious day by day with continued rise in the number of vehicle. The situation has gone worse over the last few years as the town became a divisional headquarters, six years ago.

Especially, a grim picture is seen on the road from Sobhanighat and Nairpoot to the Shahjalal Bridge approach during the busy hours every day. Trucks in queue remain parked for hours together on these roads causing obstacle for the passers-by as well as for the vehicles plying on the roads.

Besides, other vehicles are also seen in the same areas facing no obstruction by any authority or law enforcing people. These are the main entry points from outside the town. The police has to face a lot of problem to control the

traffic arrangement.

A number of truck drivers said that, they had been compelled to keep the trucks on the roadside places getting no place anywhere. They also alleged that, they did not get any response from the authorities concerned for establishing a terminal for the last few years.

The district administration and Sylhet Municipality took up a joint programme for establishing a modern truck terminal in the town, years ago. But, it is yet to be implemented for reasons known best to the authorities concerned.

An official of the municipality said that, it has been searching for a suitable place for establishing a terminal. Though there was an initial allocation of Taka one crore for purchasing land for the purpose during the last financial year, yet it could not be done in time. The amount still remained unspent due to non-execution of the project.

Naogaon people yet to get a sugar mill

NAOGAON, Aug 20: The pledge to set up a sugar mill here is yet to be implemented discouraging the sugarcane farmers to cultivate the cash crop, reports UNB.

The past BNP government committed to constructing a sugar mill in the district considering prospects of sugarcane cultivation. After assuming power, the leaders of the present government also promised to set up the mills.

The decision infused enthusiasm among the growers to bring more land under sugarcane cultivation. But the promises are yet to see light, local leaders alleged.

Meanwhile, 1,750 hectares of land were brought up under sugarcane cultivation in the district in 1997-98 fiscal year while 2,875 hectares each in 1998-99 and 1999-2000 fiscal.

Some 1.18 lakh mts of sugarcane were produced in 1998-99 while the sugarcane production target was fixed at 1.49 lakh mts in 1999-2000.

The majority of the farmers now feel discouraged to cultivate sugarcane due to market-

ing problem of their produce. They have to sell sugarcane to the sugar mills either at Joypurhat or Natore.

As the farmers are losing interests in sugarcane cultivation, the production of sugarcane will drastically be come down in the years ahead. Agriculture Extension Department officials apprehended.

Another report from Joypurhat says: Farmers of Manginpara village in Joypurhat Sadar upazila embarked on sugarcane cultivation with a formal opening programme on Wednesday.

The programme was held in the premises of Manginpara Government Primary School with Managing Director of Joypurhat Sugar Mill M Golan Kibria presiding.

Deputy Commissioner of the district Abu Naser Ahmed attended the programme as chief guest.

Officials said the sugar mill has taken up a scheme to distribute Tk 3.75 crore loan among the sugarcane growers to bring some 18,000 hectares of land in its zone under sugarcane cultivation this season.



The Baghati branch of Janata Bank in Sirajganj district observed the National Mourning Day on Tuesday in a different way. On this occasion the bank distributed allowances to 20 distressed widows and divorced women. Md Endad Ali, Deputy General Manager, Pabna area of the bank distributed allowances as the chief guest. An amount of Taka 600 was distributed to each woman. Prokash Chandra Madak, Assistant General Manager of Janata Bank, Sirajganj area, other managers and local elite were also present on the occasion.

— Star photo by AZ Bablu

Govt regulation violated

RANGAMATI, Aug 20: Violating the government regulation, permit-holder stone collectors are gathering stones from hills blasting those with explosives threatening their existence and environment, reports UNB.

As per the rule, the permit holders are allowed to collect stones in natural ways at the foots of the hills and nearby areas where those are left scattered. Witnesses said many forest areas in Kaptai and its adjacent areas were demolished as these unscrupulous men destroyed the hills to collect additional stones. As a result, forest trees and animals in the hill tract areas are dwindling. It is also alleged that many of them supply more than 50,000 square feet stones against their allocation of one to two thousand sq ft. A section of forest officials are allegedly involved with the misdeeds of the stone collectors.

Fortnight-long fair begins

MUNSHIGANJ, Aug 20: A fortnight-long fair traditionally known as Manasha Dasani Mela has begun here in the district town from Saturday on the occasion of Manasha Puja -- a Hindu religious festival, reports BSS.

About 150 temporary stalls have been set up on the main road of the town from the Municipality Super Market to Red Crescent office for holding the fair under the management of Munshiganj Municipality Authority. Different articles of aesthetic pleasure such as toys, dolls, and also items of utilitarian value, namely, silver, plastic and earthen utensils, wooden furniture, small necessities of domestic use, snacks and sweets have been put on sale at the fair.

Accommodation facilities

JESSORE, Aug 20: Fifteen primary school buildings will be built by the government at Sadar upazila in Narail at a cost of Taka 89.25 lakh during this year, reports BSS.

Facilities Department has already floated tender for the projects. The work on the projects will be finished before December. These building will provide accommodation facilities for three thousand students.

17 cases filed under PSA

BARISAL, Aug 20: A total of 17 cases have so far been filed against 69 people under Public Safety Act (PSA), reports UNB.

Most of the cases lodged under the act are relating to snatching, abduction, ransom and extortion, police said. Of the total accused, 37 people, including local MP Mujibur Rahman Sarwar, are the leaders and workers of BNP while nine are ruling party activists. Meantime, police have submitted charge sheets in 12 cases while the special court has sentenced a man to 20 years imprisonment and seven other people to 10 years imprisonment each in three cases. Besides, nine other cases are under trial and investigation into three other cases filed recently is going on. On July 13 this year, police filed a case against plaintiff Humayun Kabir Naushad on charge of filing a false case under Public Safety Act.

Unnatural deaths increasing

By Staff Correspondent

Incidents of unnatural deaths have increased in the districts of Barisal and Kurigram recently.

Agencies report: Three unnatural deaths were reported in Gournadi and Agolijhara upazilas in Barisal district in last 48 hours till Saturday morning.

Police said Jahanara Begum, 55, of village Khanjapur in Gournadi upazila allegedly committed suicide by hanging herself at her house on Friday night.

She was one of the accused of the sensational Habul Mridha murder case and was on bail. Police recovered her body and sent it to hospital morgue for autopsy.

Grocer Susanta Halder, 22, of Kodaldhoo village in Agolijhara upazila allegedly took his life by taking poison on Friday night as he was refused to give money by his father for business. He was rushed to the Golla Hospital where he breathed his last.

Widow Beluka Rani Baroi, 60, of the same village also allegedly committed suicide by taking poison over a family feud on Saturday.

The bodies were sent to hospital morgue. Separate UD cases were filed with the police.

Another report from Borguna says police recovered the beheaded decomposed body of a local terrorist identified as Nasir, 30, from Basanda canal

Friday afternoon.

Quoting family sources police said some activists of his group called him out on July 9 from his house and since then he remained missing.

Police said Nasir of village Bibichini in Betagi upazila was wanted in connection with seven criminal cases.

Nasir's father filed a murder case with the police.

Meanwhile, four people of Baliaoti village in Sadar upazila were injured in a clash over demarcating lines of a disputed land on Saturday.

Witnesses said one Khabir of the village, his daughter Golchehara, 40, and granddaughter Maksudra, 26, were allegedly chopped by neighbour Ali Hossain following the dispute.

Another report from Kurigram says: At least 10 persons including five children died in separate incidents during the last one month at different places here.

According to various sources, these unnatural deaths occurred in Sadar, Rajarhat, Fulbari, Nageswari and Ulipur upazilas during the period.

A young man by name Rezaul Karim, 21, was electrocuted while he was repairing a water tank in Hospital Road of the town recently.

Abul Kashem, 35, son of Abdus Sobhan was also electrocuted at Rajarhat upazila town. The incident occurred when an

antenna fell on him which was allegedly electrified from power supply line.

Pappu, 3, son of Shafiqul Islam of village Taluk and Nijum, 1, son of Joyal Abedin of village Jekurtari under Rajarhat upazila drowned in ponds.

Rana, 7, son of Ali Hossain of Onanotpur village under Fulbari upazila also drowned in a pond on July 15.

In the first week of this month, Babu, 4, son of Abdul Haque of village Monnearpur under Nageswari upazila drowned in a nearby canal.

On July 9, Molla, 3, son of Abdus Samad of Boltitri village under Nageswari upazila also drowned.

Little girl Alpona, 7, daughter of Aminul Islam of village Chaitar Khamar under Sadar upazila drowned in a pond on July 11.

A college student Abul Hossain, 20, son of Abdur Rahim of village Punnakor under Rajarhat upazila allegedly committed suicide by taking poison recently.

A shopkeeper Chand Mia, 30, son of Johurul Haque of village Madhyapara under Ulipur upazila allegedly committed suicide by taking poison on July 8.

A report from Bogra says: Eight unnatural deaths, including two murders, were reported in Bogra district last week, ac-

cording to police and local sources.

Of the victims, seven were identified as Kalam, 35, Sumi, 18, Zinatunnesa, 5, Zakir, 15, Marian Akhtar Lata, 16, Liton, 26, and Zaheda, 60. Another was an unidentified man.

Kalam, son of Babar Mandal of village Kasahar in Sariakandi upazila, a molasses merchant, was stabbed to death by a group of muggers after snatching his money in the morning of August 13. Critically injured Kalam was rushed to Bogra Mohammad Ali Hospital, where he died the same morning.

Sumi, a class X student of Raininagar High School in Adamdighi upazila, was strangled to death by some unknown culprits on the same day (Aug 13) after the strangers kidnapped the teenage girl and raped her.

Zinatunnesa, daughter of Zin Ali of village Baramahar in Kachua upazila, was run over by a truck on Bogra-Naogaon road on August 15.

On the same day, Zakir in Kachua upazila and Lata in Adamdighi upazila died of snakebite while Liton, son of Abul Hossain, died of electrocution at suburban Nataipara.

Zaheda was crushed under the wheels of a speeding bus at Bibirpukur in Kachua upazila.

Another unidentified man was killed in a bus-truck collision at Mahasthangarh on August 17.

Rain boosts Aman output prospect

From Our Correspondent

MYMENSINGH, Aug 20: After welcome rainfalls farmers in the district are now very busy cultivating transplanted Aman paddy.

The growers experienced difficulties in cultivating the crop in the peak time due to shortage of rainfall.

Most of the farmers here depend on nature for cultivation. However, better off farmers cultivate lands with the help of deep tubewell water.

A large portion of land meant for Aman farming remain uncultivated. However, local Agriculture Extension Department (AED) sources said following adequate rainfall the cultivation target may be achieved in the district.

According to AED sources, a total of 2,66,000 hectares of land will be brought under the Aman cultivation in 12 upazilas of the district with a production target of 5,12,140 metric tons (MT) of paddy.

Of the total land, 1,42,000 hectares will be brought under High Yielding Variety (HYV) and 1,24,000 hectares under local variety.

The AED said 21,400 hectares of land will be brought

under the cultivation in Sadar upazila with a production target of 40,826 MT, 21,200 hectares with a production target of 40,736 MT in Muktagachia, 22,200 hectares in Phulbaria with production

target of 40,508 MT, 17,400 hectares in Trishal with production target of 31,112 MT, 20,100 hectares in Bhaluka with production target of 39,030 MT, 21,500 hectares in Gafarganj with production tar-

get of 41,152 MT, 22,100 hectares in Nandail with production target of 43,018 MT, 22,600 hectares in Iswarganj with production target of 40,392 MT, 20,600 hectares in Gouripur.



Now is the peak season of Aman transplantation. Photo shows the farmers are busy transplanting Aman saplings at village Char Gobindapur in Sadar Upazila of Mymensingh district. — Star photo