

181 RU teachers condemn Prof Aftab

From Our Correspondent
RAJSHAH, Dec 20: A total of 181 teachers of Rajshahi University in a joint statement last week condemned Professor Aftab Ahmed for his derogatory comment regarding the national anthem.

In the statement the teachers said Pakistani agents who enjoy easy access to BNP-Jamaat are out to destabilise the country parading national anthem and making audacious statements against the martyrs of War of Liberation.

Signatories to the statement, among others, were Prof Hasan, Azizul Hoque, Prof Zulfikar Matin, Prof Shahidul Islam, Prof Mizan Uddin, Prof Mozaffar Hossain, Dr Abdul Kaseem, Prof Abdul Halim, Prof Ziadul Karim, Prof Abdul Jalik Mia, Prof Syed Shamsuddin Ahmed and Prof Abdul Rahman.

Prof Aftab recently at a seminar in the capital said that 'the national anthem should be changed as it was written by an Indian Hindu poet'.

Six expelled in junior scholarship exams in Sirajganj

From Our Correspondent
SIRAJGANJ, Dec 20: Six examinees were expelled for adopting unfair means in junior scholarship examinations at Jamtali Dhopakhandi centre in Kamarkhanda upazila here on December 9.

Kamarkhanda Upazila Nirbahi Officer Monirul Islam expelled the examinees during a visit to the examination centre.

However, guardians said examinees, students of class VIII, were expelled on 'flimsy' ground. The UNO could not be contacted for comment.

Tk 5cr heroin seized in Cox's Bazar

From Our Correspondent
COX'S BAZAR, Dec 20: Five kg heroin worth about Taka five crore was seized from a cargo trawler on Friday noon.

Police, acting on a tip-off, raided the trawler and recovered the contraband. Details could not be known.

Three firearms recovered in Rajshahi

From Our Correspondent
RAJSHAH, Dec 20: Three firearms were recovered in the city on Sunday in two separate raids.

Acting on a tip-off, police rushed to Bus Terminal area and recovered an Indian revolver and a German made pistol from the possession of Nayan, 22, who was travelling in a Dhaka-bound coach.

Police arrested Nayan in this connection.

Police, in another drive, recovered a pipe gun in Khulipara area. Police found it in abandoned condition. Two separate arms cases were filed.

Husband kills wife in Barisal

From Staff Correspondent
BARISAL, Dec 20: A cruel husband allegedly beat his wife to death at Bhanga village under Mehadinjan upazila here last week.

According to police, Bahauddin beat his wife Mukta, 23, following an altercation. Mukta died before she was taken to hospital. Neighbours said the husband used to torture and put pressure on her to bring dowry from her parents' house.

Bahauddin went into hiding the death of Mukta.

Azhar Bepari, father of Mukta, lodged a murder case with police. The body was sent to hospital for autopsy.

60pc suffer from malnutrition in greater Faridpur

MADARIPUR, Dec 20: About 60 per cent people in greater Faridpur district have been suffering from malnutrition-related diseases, reports BSS.

This was revealed in a survey conducted by some NGOs in collaboration with Health and Nutrition Department in some remote villages of Madaripur, Shariatpur and Gopalganj districts.

Women and children are the worst sufferers of malnutrition. Some 9 per cent male, 35 per cent female and 16 per cent children have been suffering from malnutrition.

The badly affected areas are Shariatpur and Kalkini upazilas of Madaripur district where nearly 80 per cent people have been suffering from malnutrition.

A nutritionist said, a healthy man needs 43.30 gm protein daily. He said scarcity of fish is one of the main causes of protein deficiency, 80 per cent animal protein comes from fish. Now fish has become dearer in the area.

However, neither any NGO, nor government agencies have come forward to combat the situation.



With the Eid-ul-Fitr just round the corner, prospective buyers take a look at saris at a shop in Chawk Bazaar area in Barisal town on Sunday. — Star photo

Barisal Eid shopping gains momentum

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Dec 20: Shopping for the ensuing Eid-ul-Fitr has gained momentum in different shopping centres in the divisional headquarters.

People from all walks of life are seen crowding different shopping centres in the town like Venus Market, Mahmud Market, Sajarini Shopping Complex, Sobhan Plaza and Chawk Bazaar where most ready-made garments shops are located.

Sellers said clothes like shirt, salwar-kamiz, panjabi and saree are in great demand. Cosmetic items also sell well. Customers are thronging shoe stores in the Chawk Bazaar area.

Besides, people of low-income group are visiting old-clothes shops in front of the Old Collectorate Building in the town. Rickshaw-pullers, day labourers, lower grade employees of different offices and factories are seen buying mainly warm clothes.

Sellers said volumes of sale are bigger in old cloth

shops than those in new cloth shops.

While visiting an old cloth shop, Barek, a rickshaw puller, told this correspondent he prefers warm clothes as gift for his relatives as winter sets in.

Like the previous years this year too Indian saris of different brands are in great demand, said a cloth shop employee in Chawk Bazaar, the biggest shopping centre for saree.

Abdul Kader, a shop owner in Sajarini Shopping Complex, said customers are also visiting shops after breaking their fast.

A wholesale shop owner in the town said buying spree will hit the peak two or three days before the Eid-ul-Fitr, one of big festivals of Muslims.

A shopkeeper, however, said on Monday that number of mugging incidents, a common phenomenon during festivals, is comparatively less this year.

Sit tight for cockfight

From Sk Md Shahidul Islam

BRAHMANBARIA, Dec 20: As the winter sets in enthusiastic people here start arranging cock-fights, a traditional favourite pastime. The game is very popular throughout the district, especially Sarail upazila headquarters and in Kazipara area in the town where at least 20 fights are organised every year.

During the competitions, the areas adjoining the venues wear festive look with organisers erecting colourful stands and announcing coveted prizes.

Local people here have been enjoying the game since the British regime when zamindars or landlords mainly patronised the

pastime. Landlord Kutub Dewan of Sarail had various kinds of pet roosters including 'aseel' variety, locally known as asil marag or the real cock. The landlord used to organise competitions in the area.

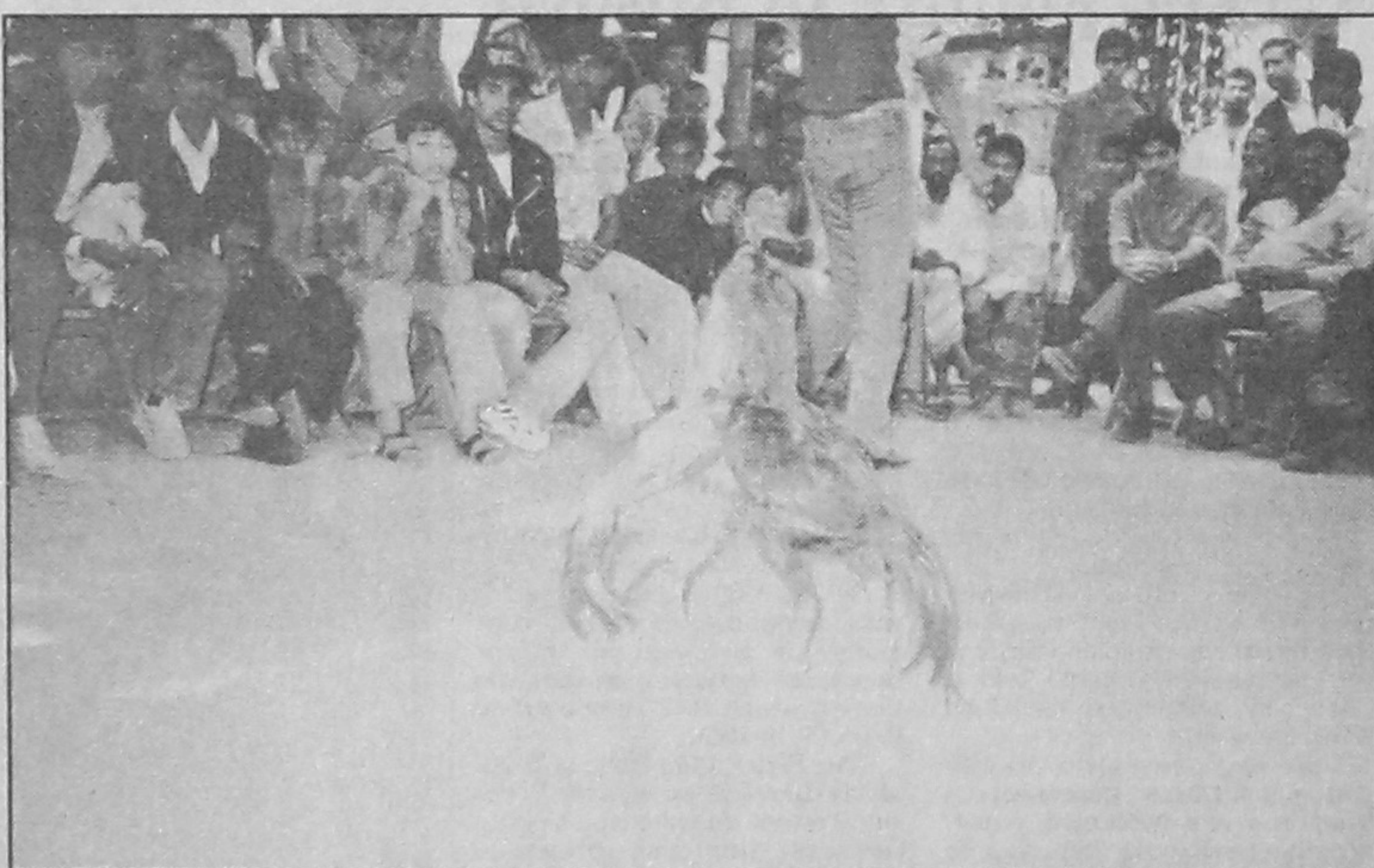
In the competitions, only asil marags are allowed to fight. The lanky roosters weighing 1.5 kilograms to 2.5 kilograms each can fight till death. Md Jaru, an owner of an asil marag, said the fowls never give in and stop fighting each other.

An asil marag sells between Taka 2,000 and Taka 6,000 now in local markets. But a cock fresh from victory can fetch up to Taka 10,000, local people said.

The fight has always been ruthless. None is ready to spare his opponent. During fighting, a rooster often gouges eyes of his rival. These days organisers cover the big nails of fighting cocks with cotton or cloth.

After fight cocks suffer from high fever when they need proper treatment. Kazi Shafiuddin, an owner of the variety of the cock, often the birds are not given special treatment, resulting in illness.

Kazi Shafi Uddin said owners of the roosters have formed an association, which will help popularise the game throughout the country.



The duel: Two roosters lock horns as spectators enjoy a cockfight competition held in Brahmanbaria town recently. — Star photo

Massive Boro, Rabi cultivation schemes undertaken in dists

Massive Boro and Rabi cultivation programmes have been taken up in eight districts under Rangpur Agriculture Zone and Thakurgaon district, reports BSS.

An extensive Boro cultivation programme has been undertaken in eight districts of Rangpur Agriculture Zone this dry season, official sources said.

The production target of Boro rice has been fixed at 15,78,800 tons by cultivating 5,28,250 hectares of land.

According to Additional Director's office of the Agriculture Extension Department (AED) Rangpur zone, all steps have already been taken to make Boro cultivation programme a success in the eight districts.

The seed requirement has largely been met by the farmers themselves from their preserved seeds, cultivated under the direct supervision of AED.

Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADCO) has also distributed more than 510 tons of hybrid variety of Boro seeds this time, the source added.

Farmers have already started preparing their seed beds at most places along with harvesting their ripe transplanted Aman crop.

All departments concerned are taking necessary steps for supplying fertilisers, pesticides and

other necessary inputs for the farming.

The district-wise target of Boro cultivation programme is as follows: 2,03,500 hectares of land in Kurigram, 92,300 hectares of land in Rangpur, 90,000 hectares of land in Gaibandha, 38,200 hectares of land in Lalmonirhat, 60,200 hectares of land in Nilphamari, 1,25,000 hectares of land in Dinajpur district, 37,500 hectares of land in Thakurgaon, and 16,050 hectares of land in Panchagarh.

In Thakurgaon local AED has undertaken massive cultivation programme for Rabi crops in the current season.

An AED source here said a target to cultivate wheat on 63,000 hectares, mustard on 5,500 hectares, pulses on 8,050 hectares, potato on 5,500 hectares, vegetables on 3,500 hectares and maize on 600 hectares has been fixed.

The crop-wise production target has been fixed as follows: Wheat 1,44,900 tons, potato 55,000 tons, mustard 4,950 tons, pulses 6,130 tons, vegetables 70,000 tons and maize 1,150 tons.

Meanwhile, the BADCO has started selling seeds of wheat, potato, mustard and vegetables among the growers.

About 500 tons of wheat seeds had already been sold. The quantity of wheat seeds sold this year is a record in last 10 years.

The huge demand of wheat seeds indicates that this year the cultivation of wheat would surpass the target. Due to the low price of paddy and increase of the price of diesel and electricity the farmers become disinterested in cultivating paddy, the growers say.

Scarcity of fried rice in Faridpur

From Our Correspondent

FARIDPUR, Dec 20: An acute scarcity of tasty fried rice locally called 'Muri' has been prevailing in the town for the last few months creating much inconvenience especially to the fasters.

This is one of the best food items for Iftar. Without this item Iftar very often becomes unattractive.

Tasty fried rice is not available at all in the markets. Local fried rice is being sold at Tk 30 to 35 a kg in the local markets whereas tasteless fried rice is being sold at Taka 20 to 24 a kg.

When asked some vendors told this correspondent that the paddy meant for producing fried rice has not been produced well this year in the entire district owing to the natural calamities.

Smuggling rises as Eid nears

KHULNA, Dec 20: Smuggling of Indian goods has marked an unusual rise in the region ahead of Eid sidelining local products in the market, reports UNB.

"Local industries will see a dwindling consumer demand for their products if the government fails to check the trend of smuggling," said a professor of Economics at Khulna University.

Local markets have been swamped with Indian goods, particularly saris, readymade garments, electronic goods and imitation ornaments, ahead of the Eid.

Cattleheads, poultry birds, egg, sugar, salt, onion, potato, fertiliser, pesticide and drugs are among the other items being smuggled into the country from India.

"It's fact that local items have been cornered by Indian products and the demand for

Indian items is also high here," said the owner of a clothes store.

There have been allegations that the smugglers buy tokens from border guards and transport their smuggled goods to their various destinations without check, showing the tokens at various check spots.

The border areas in Satkhira and Jessore districts have become safe routes of smuggling Indian goods into the country. Smuggled goods are supplied to various parts of the country, including capital Dhaka, by bus, truck and private car, from these areas.

Poor people, including women and children, are increasingly getting involved in the bootlegging, particularly after the recent flooding.

The situation is equally grim in Bagerhat, Jessore, Satkhira, Mushita, Narail, Magura,

Chuadanga, Meherpur and Jhenidah districts.

Indian goods, particularly the readymade garments and saris, are openly being sold in different markets of the districts.

A young smuggler, who declined to be identified, told the news agency, "It's impossible to smuggle goods into the country without the favour of border guards and there is no denying that we have deals with them."

Another source said police have appointed a 'cashier' in Chaugachha and Jhikargachha border points to collect toll from the smugglers, an allegation denied by police.

Meanwhile, police and BDR personnel seized three vehicles, including a private car, along with Indian goods worth of Tk 50 lakh from Khulna-Satkhira road during the last week.

60 die of malaria in 11 months in Bandarban

From A Correspondent

BANDARBAN, Dec 20: Malaria claimed at least sixty lives in seven upazilas in the hill district during the last eleven months this year from January to November, district Health Department sources said.

During the period, the disease also attacked some 70,000 people.

However, medical treatment facility in the district is very poor. Some 60 posts of doctor remain vacant in health centres here, much to the frustration of local people.

Bandarban is one of the thirteen high-risk malaria-prone districts in the country. Local people said many deaths are not

recorded with the Health Department, as many poor people do not visit doctors.

A pilot research project styled 'Roll Back Malaria Programme' was launched in the district in March this year to combat the disease.

Under the research programme, sponsored by the World Health Organisation (WHO), researchers dwelled on ways to mitigate the menace.

Usually during the period between April and October the disease attacks people.

Local people have urged the authorities concerned to take effective measures to fight malaria in the hill district.

Guest birds start arriving

From A Correspondent

KURIGRAM, Dec 20: Guest birds have started arriving in the northern districts, including Kurigram, with the advent of winter.

The migratory birds are crowding wetlands like 'haor', 'bil' and canal and shoal areas. However, local people said number of the birds from the cold is less this year compared to that in the previous years.

Scarcity of fish, poaching violating government ban, water pollution and destruction of water bodies have been attributed to the decrease.

Several kinds of birds locally known as balihass, dighari,

baghari, kalighari, sarails and samukhanga are coming here to escape the biting cold of Siberia.

According to experts, more than 250 species of such winter birds every year visit the country. The birds live mainly on small fish and insects in water bodies during their stay from December to February.

Poachers hardly care the government ban on snaring and sale of migratory birds. As the vigilance on the ban is almost non-existent and customers are eager to have the birds on their menu, the illegal practice of snaring the guest birds hits the peak during the winter.

Influentials grab ponds on khas land in Rajshahi

RAJSHAH, Dec 20: Lack of proper policy guidelines has left over 14,000 ponds on khas land in the Barind region unused for long, depriving the government of huge revenues, reports UNB.

Taking advantage of tussles over the ownership of these ponds among different government offices, a section of influential people grabbed most of the ponds showing fake documents.

Sources at Barind Multipurpose Development Authority here said they would re-excavate and look after the ponds, which were under the integrated Barind Development Project.

As per the Land Ministry's directive, the ponds are supposed to be leased out by local UNOs and UP chairmen.

According to the sources, the ponds smaller than three acres should be open to public under the supervision of Union Parishads (UP) for which the UPs have to pay Tk 5,000 in revenue to the AC land.

But local people alleged that the UP chairmen, violating the government order, were frequently leasing out the ponds to the people of their own choice, depriving the common people of using the ponds.

The chairmen are reportedly leasing out the ponds at Tk 200-300 per pond against the government rate of Tk 1,000 or above.

UNOs are supposed to lease out the ponds larger than three acres to the registered landless youth associations for fish cultivation. In this case too, there are allegations of violation of government rules.

The UNOs are reportedly leasing out the ponds at a rate, which are three to four times lower than that of the Barind Authority.

An inter-ministerial meeting once decided that Barind Authority would oversee the management of those ponds that need to be re-excavated.

But the decision could not be implemented in absence of official circular from the ministry, giving influential people to grab the ponds.

Some 60 ponds on khas land in Niamatpur upazila of Naogaon district have already been grabbed by local influential people.

Meanwhile, Barind Authority has filed a number of cases against illegal occupants. It has so far re-excavated 2,000 ponds and is farming fish in 65 ponds.

Primary school drop-outs increasing in Madaripur

MADARIPUR, Dec 20: Number of drop-outs in primary schools is increasing in the district day by day mainly due to poverty, reports BSS.

Primary education for the children between the age group of 6 and 11 years has been made compulsory. According to the District Primary Education Office, there are 2,03,312 children between the age group of 6 and 11 years in the four upazilas of the district.

Out of the total children, only 1,79,776 have been enrolled in the primary schools of the district this year. The figure shows that about 23 per cent children have not been enrolled in the primary schools.

Shortage of schools and teach-

ers and lack of motivation are some of the reasons that are causing setback in implementing the government's Compulsory Primary Education programme. Many children, who are enrolled in the primary schools in the beginning of the academic year, later leave schools because of poverty and other reasons.

Most of the drop-outs work in the motor garage, welding workshops, hotels and restaurants, while some pull rickshaws to support their families.

The school managing committees are formed mainly to motivate the guardians to send their children to schools. It is reported that many managing committees do not discharge their responsibilities properly.



A field day was organised under the auspices of Agriculture Extension Department at village Laxmipur under Sadar upazila in Jhenidah district recently. Speakers in the function put accent on organic farming. — Star photo

News snaps

Prices of essentials up

KUSHTIA, Dec 20: Prices of all essential commodities, including winter vegetables, have gone up in different markets of the district, affecting the people of low-income group, reports UNB.

Market sources said prices of flour and pulses have soared abnormally but rice price remained static. Flour is now selling at Tk 14-Tk 17 while pulses at Tk 38-40. Although winter vegetables have hit the market, their prices did not mark fall. Basil is now selling at Tk 5-6 per kg, brinjal at Tk 15-18, potato at Tk 11-12 and green chili at Tk 40-50.

Police official closed

PATUAKHALI, Dec 20: A police sub-inspector has been closed for setting 11 arrested forest robbers free from Kuakata River police outpost in Kalapara upazila, reports UNB.

Police Super Muhammad Mainur Rahman Chowdhury recently issued the order against SI Musharraf Hossain for releasing the robbers along with 400 cubic feet of timber. They were arrested from forests in Kuakata. Local people said smugglers steal timber from the forests with impunity, as the forest officials have become just onlookers for reasons better known to them.

Four robbers held

BAGERHAT, Dec 20: Police arrested four robbers along with five guns after a fierce fight with them at Sundartola in the Sundarban area Monday night, reports UNB.

Five policemen and three of the gangsters were injured in the gunbattle in which some 200 shots were exchanged. Mongla police said, Officer-in-charge of Mongla thana SM Badrul Alam and four sub-inspectors sustained bullet injuries during the two-hour gunfight. The injured SIs are Golam Mostofa, Abdullah Al Sayed, Humayun Kabir and Hedayetul Islam. Three members of the gang, also injured in the battle, managed to escape. But four others, Billal, Malek, Alam Sheikh and Razu were arrested with four foreign-made guns and one shotgun. Acting on a tip-off, police launched a raid while the gang was preparing to commit dacoity in the area at midnight.

Two convicted

JESSORE, Dec 20: A local court recently convicted two people and sentenced them to seven years rigorous imprisonment each in a bus robbery case, reports UNB.

The convicts, Rafiqul Islam of Mathbari village in Jhikargachha, and Mostafa of Shyamlagachhi village in Sharsa upazila, were also fined Tk 1,000 each, in default, to suffer six months more RI. According to prosecution, a gang of robbers looted cash and gold ornaments from the passengers of a bus bound for Jessore at Bagh Achra bazaar on August 2, 1993. After examining records and witnesses, Additional District and Sessions Judge Afzal Hossain handed down the punishment acquitting eight others.

Workshop on arsenic

JHALAKATI, Dec 20: An 18-day workshop on arsenic began here recently, reports UNB.

Prism Bangladesh, a non-governmental organisation, has organised the workshop in cooperation with Arsenic Mitigation Water Supply of Public Health Engineering Department (PHED). Some 1,000 chairmen, members, freedom fighters, teachers, imams, health workers and elite from 10 unions in Sadar upazila are taking part in the workshop. The unions are Binoykati, Keora, Kirupasha, Ramchandrapur, Nathulabad, Gabkhan, Dhansiri, Shekherhat, Nabagram and Ponabalia.

Body recovered

SHARIATPUR, Dec 20: Body of a young man was recovered from a pond at Majhikandi village in Naria upazila recently, reports UNB.

Villagers said Monsur Shipai, 35, of Nashashan village in the upazila, was missing. The body was sent to local hospital morgue for autopsy. A case was filed.

30 schemes to be implemented

PIROJPUR, Dec 20: The district council under its Annual Development Programme (ADP) will implement 30 development schemes during the current fiscal year, reports UNB.

Official sources said a total of Tk 38.69 lakh has been allocated for the implementation of these schemes. Of the schemes, 11 will be implemented in Sadar, 10 in Mothbaria, five in Nesarabad, two in Kaukhali and one each in Bhandaria and Nazirpur upazilas. The schemes included construction and reconstruction of roads, bridges and culverts and repair of rest house and a UP office. The work is progressing fast and is likely to be completed by next June.

One electrocuted

NAOGAON, Dec 20: Abdul Quddus, an electrician of Palli Bidduyat, was electrocuted on Tuesday while he was repairing a transformer on Naogaon Palli Bidduyat office premises, reports BSS.

He was rushed to Sadar Hospital where the doctor on duty declared him dead. A case was registered with police in this connection.

Five commit suicide

CHUADANGA, Dec 20: Five people including two housewives allegedly committed suicide in separate incidents in the district in the last month, reports UNB.

The victims were identified as Anu, 49, of Moshjidpur, Sakura Begum, 28, of Shalua village in sadar upazila and Argila Khatun, of Jirat village in Damurhuda upazila. Besides, Jamal Sheikh, 26, of Abdulbaria village and Nazrul Islam, 16, of Laxmipur village in Jibnagar upazila allegedly committed suicide during the same period.

Flood victims get Tk 2.15 lakh

CHUADANGA, Dec 20: The government has distributed Tk 2.15 lakh among the flood-hit people in the district for re-building their damaged houses, reports UNB.

State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Talukdar Abdul Khaleq at a function distributed the house building grant Tuesday. He said that more money would be given to the distressed people to rebuild their houses. He also called upon the affluent section of the people to come to the aid of the flood-hit people.

Woman killed in road mishap

GOPALGANJ, Dec 20: A woman was killed and her minor sister critically injured in an accident on Dhaka-Khulna highway near the town on Sunday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said Taslima, 25, daughter of Shahar Ali Chowdhury of Narail district, died instantly and her sister Nila, 10, suffered critical injuries when a bus knocked them down. Nila was admitted to Sadar Hospital. The bus driver fled the scene with his vehicle. A case was filed.