



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Saturday inaugurated the Mollahat Bridge in Bagerhat. --PID photo

FFs receive monthly allowance

From Delwar Kabir

JHENIDAH, Dec 24: The heroic sons of the soil who fought to wrest the national independence from the clutches of Pakistani occupation forces in 1971 received government allowance at a function here on Thursday.

Having received the allowance after 29 years of the independence the freedom fighters expressed gratitude to the government. Held at Jhenidah Municipal Community Centre the function was attended, among others, by State Minister for Disaster Management, Relief and Rehabilitation Talukder Abdul Khaleque as chief guest.

Arranged under the auspices of the Department of Social Welfare, the gathering was presided over by Deputy Commissioner of Jhenidah Shoyebur Rahman and addressed by Jhenidah district Awami League President Advocate Ayub Hossain, Commander of the district unit of Bangladesh Mukti Joddha Sangsad (Council of Freedom Fighters) Golam Mostafa Loton, Deputy Director of Social Welfare Nur Taj Ali, freedom fighter Abdul Rahman and Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer Abdul Halim, among others.

On the occasion the speakers urged the freedom fighters to be united against the anti-liberation

forces that are out to damage the nation's progress by destroying the values of the independence.

The speakers recalling the heroic role of the freedom fighters in 1971 said the nation is grateful to them as they brought a flag for Bangladesh. They said the evil forces cannot bear the country's progress, adding that it is high time the freedom fighters resisted them.

Abdus Samad Mollah, 61, of village Char Aushia, Daud Ali, 52, and Toazuddin, 59, of village Debtala, Abdul Hakim, 65, and Roushan Ali, 62, of village Panchpakkia, Parimal Chakravarty, 59, of village Fulahari under Shailakupa upazila, Abdul Mazid, 60, of village Binni Radhanagar under Harinakundu and Khorshed Ali, 57, of village Aliar Bakri under Sadar upazila who fought in Sector Number Eight said they are living in a society where freedom fighters are almost neglected.

Each freedom fighter will receive Taka 300 per month until death. A total of 381 distressed freedom fighters received allowance in the function. Of the recipients, 81 are from Sadar, 33 from Kotchandpur and Harinakundu each, 119 from Shailakupa, 46 from Kaliganj and 69 from Maheshpur upazilas.

Timber smugglers open fire on forest officials at Ukhia

10 including Forest Range Officer hurt

From Our Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, Dec 24: Ten persons including a Forest Range Officer were injured when a gang of organised timber smugglers opened fire on the Forest officials at Ukhia recently.

According to the Forest Department sources, a team of Forest officials recently went to the Modur Chara forest area to visit a nursery. On way to the nursery area they found some illegal houses on the land of they Forest Department. The Forest officials broke some illegal houses. After visiting the area,

The Forest officials were returning to their office. On way to office a gang of local timber smugglers attacked the Forest officials with arms. Farid Mia and Shahjahan led the attackers.

Ten persons including the Ukhia Range Officer, Dherendra Nath Adhikari were injured in this incident. Six officials including the Range Officer received bullet injuries. Bullet injured five persons are Bit Officer Abdul Mannan Mia, Assistant Bit Officer Mozammel Haq Bhuiya, Forest Guard Ruhul Kader, Abul

Manjur and Anwar Zahid. Range Officer Dherendra Nath Adhikari and Bit Officer Abdul Mannan were admitted to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital in a critical condition while the rest of the local health centres and clinics.

A case was filed against timber smuggler Farid Mia and Shahjahan with Ukhia Police Station in this connection.

On the other hand, the Forest officials alleged that, police are not allegedly taking necessary action without bribe.

Abducted school girl yet to be rescued

MANIKGANJ, Dec 24: Police could not yet rescue the school-girl, who was abducted on Dec 5 from her house at East Mahili village in Shibhalaya upazila, reports UNB.

The victim was identified as Ratna, 14, a class VIII student and daughter of Chand Mia of the village.

Meanwhile, in recent village arbitration some local youths confessed their involvement in the abduction and promised to return the victim to the local UP chairman and a former upazila chairman. But after the arbitration they disappeared from the village.

A case was filed against eight people.

Sirajganj BNP factions at odds

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, Dec 24: Speakers at a meeting on Friday demanded immediate withdrawal of suspension order against local BNP leaders TRM Nur-E-Alam Helal and Alamgir Al-Amin Kazol, two suspended leaders of BNP.

The demand was made at a meeting held on Friday at Bazaar Station intersection. The meeting also demanded unity of both the factions of the party. The meeting also announced BNP leader Iqbal Hassan Mahmud Tuku persona non grata at Sirajganj.

The meeting was arranged by the rival group of BNP which was presided over by the rival group sadar upazila president Mokbul Hossain Chowdhury.

It was addressed, among others, by Alamgir Al-Amin Kazol, TRM Nur-E-Alam Helal, Ershadur Rahman Niru, Munshi Kamal Uddin, Saidur Rahman Baechu, Abdul Mannan (Doll) and others.

Meanwhile, other group of the district BNP brought out a procession and organised a meeting against their rivals. Both the groups blamed each other for disunity of the party.

A tense situation has been prevailing in the district town now.

The district administration has deployed armed police at the important places in apprehension of bloody clashes between the two groups of BNP. Police have been patrolling round the clock along the important places.



Lt Gen (Retd) Nuruddin Khan, Minister for Science and Technology distributing cheques for compensation to the family members of the garments factory fire victims at the conference room of Narsingdi DC in Narsingdi recently. A KM Selim Osman, acting President of BGMEA is also seen. --Star photo

Sirajganj traders join hands to fight extortion

From Our Correspondent
SIRAJGANJ, Dec 24: Traders in the district headquarters have joined hands to fight extortionists who have become active ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr.

Traders in SS Road and Bania Patti areas on Friday formed a 101-member committee to resist the illegal toll collectors.

All shop owners in the areas are requested to keep sticks and whistles and blow whistles when extortionists approach.

Hearing the siren the traders armed with sticks will rush to the spot and resist extortionists, traders said.

Diarrhoea affects 1,000 in Kishoreganj

KISHOREGANJ, Dec 24: Diarrhoea and viral fever that broke out in the district in an alarming proportion have affected 1,000 people during the last one month, reports UNB.

Physicians said diarrhoea broke out due mainly to intake of contaminated water and adulterated food, as adulteration is rampant in different markets of the district.

Hundreds of diarrhoea patients are being treated in different upazila health complexes, sub-centers and hospitals.

According to the doctors, the symptoms of virus fever are high temperature, body pain and headache. The patients gradually become weak. There is no curative medicine for the disease, they added.

Meanwhile, a large number of patients with stomach ailments and other gastrointestinal diseases are pouring into the hospitals. But in absence of adequate supply of medicines in the health complexes and hospitals they are facing a lot of problems.

Patients urged the government to supply necessary medicines to the health complexes and hospitals for their better treatment.

Contributions of two martyrs recalled

KHULNA, Dec 24: The 29th anniversary of martyrdom of Bir Shrestha Ruhul Amin and Mohibullah Bir Bikram was observed here recently with due honour and solemnity at Purba Rupsha, reports BSS.

Commodore M S Kabir PSC, BN placed floral wreaths at the mazar (grave) and the martyrs. The naval personnel presented a guard of honour and played the last post in memory of the valiant fighters who sacrificed their lives for the independence of the country in 1971.

Present on the occasion were commandant of BNS Titumir Captain HMS Alam, BN and other staff officers.

Later on a milad mahfil was held at the BNS Titumir Mosque at Khalishpur where special prayers were offered for the salvation of the souls of the martyrs.

It may be recalled here that on the eve of the independence of the country on December 10 Bir Shrestha Ruhul Amin and Mohibullah Bir Bikram were coming to Khulna by gunboat 'Palash'. When the gun boat passed Khulna shipyard area on the River Bhairob it came under heavy air attack and exploded in the mid river.

Ruhul Amin and Mohibullah did not leave the boat. Rather, they desperately tried to save the boat and were seriously injured in the process. The valiant fighters succumbed to their injuries while the other injured occupants of the boat somehow swam ashore.

The two intrepid Bengalis were laid to rest on the bank of the River Rupsha in Purba Rupsha area.

Meanwhile, Birshrestha Memorial Committee and Rupsha Upazila reporters club observed the day by laying floral wreaths at the mazar of saheeds and holding milad mahfil and Qurankhwani followed by special prayers.

Rich tributes paid to Ambedkar

From A Correspondent
JOYPUHAT, Dec 24: A discussion meet on the occasion of 44th anniversary of death of Dr BR Ambedkar, the undisputed leader of the oppressed, was held recently at Aramnagar Rabidas community compound by Joypurhat Guru Rabidas (Dham) Mission.

Dr Ambedkar was born in a poor low caste cobbler family and after attaining education and leadership he fought for the right of the oppressed, against the inhuman caste system.

The meeting held with Ramnagina Rabidas in chair was attended and addressed by Master Kanailal Rabidas Mohanto, Director General, Bangladesh Guru Rabidas (Dham) Mission, as chief guest, Jagadish Rabidas and Nripendranath Mandal, PP, Jaipurhat Judge's Court, as special guests, Abdullah Al-Majid, lecturer of the local college and Shyamal Saha, General Secretary, Joypurhat Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikya Parishad, among others.

The meeting was conducted by Advocate Babul Rabidas. The speakers observed that Dr Ambedkar fought for equal right of all people indiscriminate of race, religious and caste all through his life, but regrettably yet even in this modern times some covert or overt demeaning discriminations prevail in the society.

The meeting also noted with concern that at places in the country miscreants have become active to evict the weak Rabidas community members from their homesteads and grab their property. They cited incidents on Salfal Rabidas of Biala village under Kalai upazila of Jaipurhat and Kailash Rabidas of Madhupur, Iswarganj. They drew attention of the administration to such heinous activities.

News snaps

Cold multiplies flood victims' misery

SATKHIRA, Dec 24: Misery of the poor people of the district who were severely affected by the recent flood knows no bound in the shivering cold for want of warm clothes, reports UNB.

It was reported that 10 people died by severe cold in five flood-affected upazilas during the last one week. So far, the government distributed 4,779 warm clothes here against the requirement of 2.5 lakh, district administration sources said. Some NGOs are distributing warm clothes to the distressed people but these are also quite inadequate.

An official statistics showed that about 6.5 lakh people of 1,11,065 families in five upazilas were affected by the recent flood who could not save their valuables from the floodwaters. After the recession of floodwater, the families returned to their battered homesteads but they are yet to recover the losses.

The distressed people appealed to the government to provide them with adequate warm clothes to save their lives from the clutches of the shivering cold in the region.

Anniversary of death

From Our Correspondent

MAGURA, Dec 24: Tomorrow (Monday) is the death anniversary of former Member of Parliament (MP) Advocate Asaduzzaman.

Asaduzzaman, former president of Magura district unit Awami League was elected MP five times in his life. He died on December 25 in 1993 after sufferings from various diseases. Magura district unit of Awami League and other social organisations here have taken various programmes to mark the day.



Sweet potato farming scheme

KISHOREGANJ, Dec 24: An extensive sweet potato cultivation scheme has been taken up in seven districts of Dhaka agricultural region in the current season, reports UNB.

According to Agriculture Extension Department a total of 4,350 hectares of land have been earmarked with a production target of 48,500 metric tons. Of the total, 2,000 hectares will be cultivated in Tangail, 750 hectares in Narsingdi, 250 hectares in Gazipur, 650 hectares in Manikganj, 200 hectares in Munshiganj and 500 hectares in Dhaka and Narayanganj districts. AED will ensure supply of necessary inputs to the growers at fair prices to make the scheme a success. Due enthusiasm has been noticed among the farmers in the region.

Revolver recovered

PATUAKHALI, Dec 24: Police recovered a revolver from the cabin of a launch at local launch terminal on Friday, reports UNB.

An unidentified passenger left his briefcase in the cabin and went into hiding in the name of bringing his other belongings after locking the cabin. On information, police searched the briefcase and recovered the revolver. A case was filed. Another report says that muggers looted belongings and Tk 10,000 in cash from an army man making him faint when he was travelling in a Patuakhali-bound bus on early Thursday. Family sources said muggers made A Bareq Shikdar, 28, faint by giving toxic food and looted the belongings while he was returning home from Shonadanga in Satkhira district.

Phensidyl recovered

JOYPUHAT, Dec 24: Police in a raid recovered 400 bottles of Indian phensidyl from a field at Niltapara village under Panchbibi upazila on Thursday, reports UNB.

Acting on a tip, a contingent of police led by a DB inspector laid an ambush in the area at dead of night and recovered the phensidyl after chasing the drug sellers. But they could not arrest the drug traffickers. Another report says that BDR in separate drives seized two vehicles carrying Indian sugar and salt worth about Tk 2.5 lakh from Banglalahill Bus Stand on Wednesday and Thursday. The bus laden with 12 thousand kg salt and 1,110 kg sugar were seized on Wednesday while the truck carrying 6,390 kg salt on Thursday. Separate cases were filed with the police.

Boro farming on 16,050 hectares

PANCHAGARH, Dec 24: A scheme has been taken up in 16,050 hectares of land here under Boro farming this season with an output target of 48,080 mts, reports UNB.

Of the total, high yielding variety 'Iufi' would be cultivated on 16,000 hectares of land while the rest under the local variety, local Agriculture Extension Department (AED) said. An AED official said irrigation facilities have been extended to a great extent to achieve the production target successfully. He said that 1000 hectares more could be brought under the cultivation if seeds were taken to reinstall the inoperative deep tubewells in Sadar and Tentulia upazilas. He said several demonstration plots have been set up to acquaint the farmers with the modern methods of cultivation. Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation will supply quality seeds from its stock and necessary inputs among the farmers at fair prices to make the scheme a success.

Traffic mishap increases

KURIGRAM, Dec 24: Traffic mishap has been increased on different routes of the district, including Kurigram-Rangpur Road, mainly due to reckless driving by the drivers ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr, reports UNB.

At least 13 people were killed and 50 others injured in four separate road accidents during last five days till Friday. Of the deaths, 12 people were killed on the spot while one succumbed to his injuries at Rangpur Medical College Hospital. On Monday, at least 10 people were killed and 31 others injured in an accident at Mustafihat area on Kurigram-Rangpur Road. Besides, one person was run over by a minibus and another by a microbus at Meerbagh and Kathalbari respectively on Wednesday.

Markets flooded with Indian goods

THAKURGAON, Dec 24: Local markets have been flooded with Indian goods on the occasion of ensuing Holy Eid, reports UNB.

Indian sarees and cosmetics are coming into Bangladesh everyday through border and these are supplied to local shops for sale. The contrabands are also being sent to the capital for sale. From the activities of the smugglers, it seemed that they are in a race for bringing Indian sarees and other garments. Police and members of other law enforcing agencies are not sitting idle in the smuggling race as they, in the name of so called Eid bonus, have been engaged in collecting money from the illegal traders. Hundreds of women are also moving door to door for selling Indian goods like sarees and blouses. Most of the Indian goods are pouring in through the Baliadangi border.

Rice, lentil for flood victims

MEHERPUR, Dec 24: Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BRCS) Friday started distribution of rice and lentil among the flood affected people, reports UNB.

Each family receives 20 kg of rice and 4 kg of lentil. District acting chairman of the society Mutasim Billah said the society allocated 55 mts of rice and 11 mts of lentil for distribution among flood affected families. The relief materials would be distributed among 2,750 families in Sadar, Mujibnagar and Gangni upazilas and Meherpur Municipality before the holy Eid-ul-Fitr, he said.

Youth with 114 fake notes arrested

RAJBARI, Dec 24: Police arrested a youth along with 114 fake notes of Tk 100 denomination from Dadamabazar in the outskirts of the town on Thursday, reports UNB.

Police said shopkeepers caught Shahid Sarder, 25, when he gave a forged note of Tk 100 to a cigarette vendor after buying cigarettes. They also recovered 13 more notes from his possession and handed over him to police. A case was filed with Rajbari police.

New bank branch opens

RAJBARI, Dec 24: Another branch of Employment Bank was opened here on Thursday, aiming to provide soft loans to unemployed youths so that they could undertake income-generating projects, reports UNB.

Environment and Forest Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury inaugurated the bank. Speaking on the occasion, the minister said the government has taken up various programmes for poverty alleviation and created self-employment opportunities.

40 commit suicide in one month in Chuadanga

CHUADANGA, Dec 24: Some 40 people, mostly women, allegedly committed suicide here in last one month on different grounds, reports UNB.

Conjugal feuds, failure in love or examinations, frustration due to poverty, dowry, chronic and complex diseases are the main causes of the deaths.

Seventeen victims of the unnatural deaths were identified as Naima Khatun, 50, Sufia, 70, and Laboni, 19, of Damurhuda; Rabeya, 40, of Darshana, Suleman, 12, Manik, 55, Farid, 25, Moni, 17, and Hannan, 30, of Sadar; Ruksa, 38, Alamgir, 4, Jahura, 40, and Azizun, 25, of Alamdanga; Rashida, 22, Sohrab, 25, Baby, 20, and Mizanur, 27, of Jibannagar upazilas.

Generally the southwestern districts are considered as suicide-prone area as country's major portion of the suicide incidents took place in the area.

At least 719 people committed suicide in the country in 1999 while 652 persons in 1998, according to the report of "State of Human Rights in Bangladesh, 1999" of Coordinating Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh (CCHRB).

Majority of the cases were from the southern districts.

The report said as the country faces a number of economic and social problems, the complex life realities prompted them to commit suicide.

1300 leprosy, 5834 TB patients cured in 6 yrs in Mymensingh

From Our Correspondent

MYMENSINGH, Dec 24: Some 1,300 leprosy and 5,834 tuberculosis (TB) patients abandoned by their families have returned to normal life after being treated at free of cost during 1993 to June this year in different hospitals and clinics under Mymensingh Tuberculosis and Leprosy Control Project (MTLCP).

These patients were treated in Shambhuganj TB and Leprosy Control Hospital and combined TB and Leprosy unit in upazila health complexes in Dhubaura, Haluaghat Gouripur, Nandail, Iswarganj, Gafarganj and Bhaluka and four leprosy centres in upazila health complexes of Muktagachha, Trishal, Phulpur and Sadar in six and a half years.

Out of the total leprosy patients, 208 were treated in 1993, 236 in 1994, 125 in 1995, 152 in 1996, 158 in 1997, 149 in 1998, 180 in 1999 and 92 up to June this year.



Maj Gen (Retd) M S A Bhuiyan, a noted freedom fighter and founder of Juranpur Modern Complex addressing a meeting arranged recently by General Bhuiyan Supporters' Forum on the occasion of an Iftar party at Raipur Iman Ali Market at Daudkandi upazila in Comilla district.

364 TB patients were treated in 1995, 803 in 1996, 1,075 in 1997, 1,314 in 1998, 1,498 in 1999 and 780 up to June this year.

The MTLCP is getting financial assistance from Damien Foundation, a non-governmental organisation of Belgium.

Once leprosy was regarded as cure in the rural areas. Patients never disclosed the disease they were infected with due to prejudice. The MTLCP also worked hard to eradicate the superstition.

Kazi Ataur Rahman Saki, project director of MTLCP, said at any stage of the disease leprosy patients can be cured totally.

He also said due to ignorance and superstition many cases of leprosy remained undisclosed. Socio-cultural organisations should come forward to launch a strong anti-leprosy campaign for creating mass awareness among rural people, he added.