

Navigation faces setback as water level falls

By Staff Correspondent

Navigation in Netrakona and Faridpur districts have been affected seriously due to rapid fall in water level in major rivers.

Our Netrakona Correspondent says: Many shoals have appeared in many places in the Dano, Kongsha, Mogra and Sumashowary rivers due to heavy siltation during the last flood.

According to Netrakona Water Development Board office sources, water level recorded in the river Dano, Kongsha, Mogra and Sumashowary are lower than normal requirement during the dry season. Water level now stands at 40 to 50 feet from 120 to 150 feet during the rainy season.

It has been alleged that about 10 to 12 feet layer of silt have appeared in the river beds of all major rivers.

It is feared that surface water level will go down further, affecting seriously the ecological balance and causing acute crisis of water.

Now water transports including launches and country boats plying between Netrakona-Kalmakanda, Netrakona-Madan, Netrakona-Khaliajuri have to cover an additional distance from 6 to 8 kilometers to reach destinations by diverting the original routes.

Passengers of launches plying in the routes have been suffering. Some-times passengers on board are stranded for hours in the middle of the rivers as the vessels hit shoals in the mid-stream.

Our Faridpur correspondent adds: Navigation in the Padma and Jamuna rivers has been badly affected owing to abnormal fall of water level and emergence of numerous shoals in both the rivers.

The rivers have been divided into three of four channels due to emergence of shoals big, small endangering the navigation especially at night.

Launches, trawlers and big country boats find it very difficult to ply through the narrow channels.

Sometimes, launches, trawlers and cargo vessels go aground on the hidden shoals causing tremendous troubles to the passengers.

The aground vessels reportedly take hours together to get out of the shoals.

The passengers boarding the aground vessels fall victims occasionally to the local bandits who forcibly take away the valuables from the passengers.

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Construction work of 8 food godowns nearing completion

KURIGRAM, Jan 8: Construction work of eight more food godowns are nearing completion in northern region which will increase the present capacity of 4.19 lakh tons by 4,000 more tons of foodgrains, official sources said, reports BSS.

The godowns, construction of which are nearing completion are: Bhullirhat and Jadu-Ranirhat in Thakurgaon, Ghoraghat and Bhaduria in Dinajpur, Faridpur in Pabna, Bagha in Rajshahi, Dupchanchia in Bogra and Khetlal in Joypurhat. Food grains are supposed to be preserved in these eight godowns from this season.

On the other hand all necessary formalities have been completed by government authorities to start construction work of another four food godowns of 500 tons capacity each.

These four food godowns will be constructed at Haripara Ghat of Dinajpur, Chowhali of Sirajganj, Fulcharighat of Gaibandha and Mokamtola of Bogra. A total of Taka 12 crore will be spent to construct these four godowns. Besides, another programme has been taken by the government to construct 11,000 tons capacity foodgrain godown in Rangpur district with financial assistance from the Japanese government.

Twenty godowns of Santahar CSD had been renovated which will increase food preservation capacity by more 12,000 tons from this season. Twenty more old godowns of Muladuli CSD have also been renovated and 12,000 tons of more foodgrains will be accommodated from this season there.

According to a source of Rajshahi Division Food Office, the present capacity of foodgrains preservation in the CSDs, LSDs and other godowns in the division is 4,19,000 metric tons. Construction and renovation of some godowns will increase this capacity by about more 30,000 tons from this season in the region. The food production has significantly increased in the division in recent years and the preservation capacity remained sufficient. As a result, food procurement drive of the government was frequently being stopped earlier for want of more places in the godowns. The government has a plan to construct required number of such more godowns with a view to preserving maximum quantity of surplus food production in the region.

On the other hand, farmers of the region said the system of food procurement drive has enabled them to sell foodgrains to the government purchasing centres. Some quarters and food businessmen in connivance with others are allegedly controlling the overall food procurement process in the region for years together, they said.



Vendors display vegetables at a bazaar in Sirajganj town. Locals say prices are comparatively high this winter. --Star

Some channels are too narrow for the vessels to negotiate. Immediate dredging in these channels is a must to keep the navigation in operation otherwise navigation in these channels will suffer greatly in a months of February and March when the water levels in the rivers Padma and Jamuna fall further.

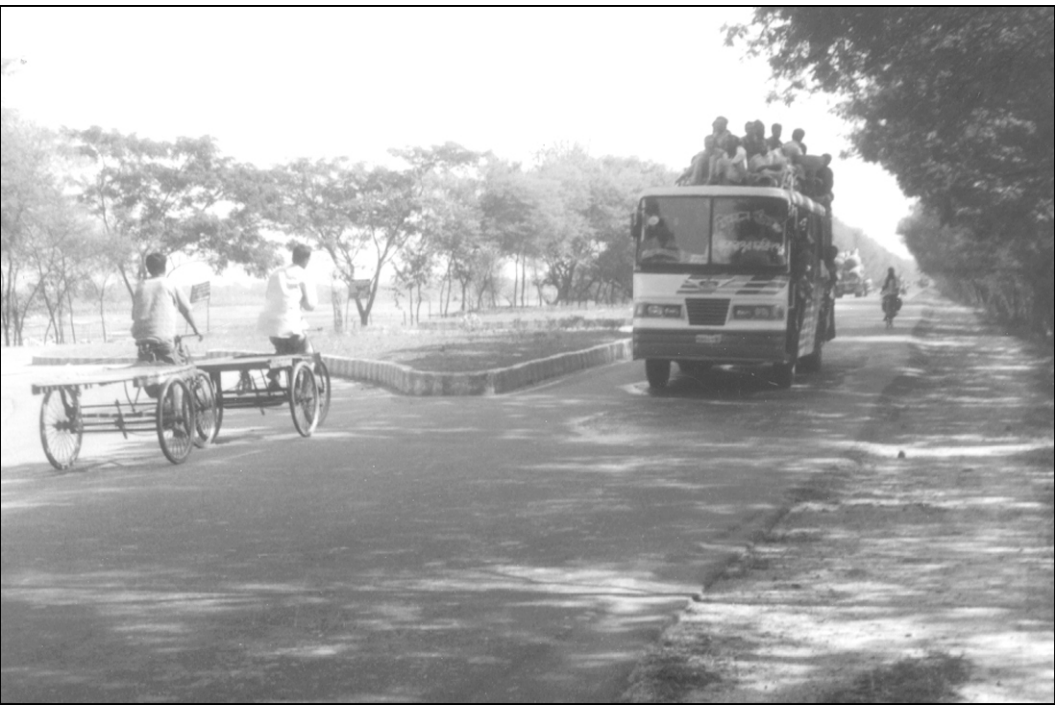
The road communication between the capital city and south-western districts of the country will be snapped if the navigation between Aricha and Daulatdia ghats is not kept running.

Thousands of road transports carrying passengers and goods are being ferried every day from Aricha to Daulatdia and vice versa.

The intensity of the on-going dredging in the rivers Padma and Jamuna from Aricha to Daulatdia ghat needs to be accelerated in a planned way so that the navigation in the said route continues.

According to official source, four dredgers have been al-work to maintain the navigation of the route.

The eight Kilometers long way of this route starting from Daulatdia ghat is very risky.



Flouting traffic rules passengers travel on rooftop of a bus in Jhenidah district. The malpractice, which draws little or no attention from the authorities concerned, is one of many reasons of highway mishaps. --Star photo

Faridpur Sugar Mills may miss output target

From Our Correspondent

FARIDPUR, Jan 8: Production target of Faridpur Sugar Mills may not be achieved this season because of mechanical flaw.

Crushing season of the factory began on November 17 last year, but after 18 days on December 4 it developed mechanical problem, halting the crushing of sugarcane.

Immediately repair work was done and the factory resumed production. But after the repair sugar recovery rate has decreased sharply to 6.60 per cent from expected 8.25 per cent.

The production target of the mills was fixed at 293 metric tons of sugar by crushing 149,000 metric tons of sugarcane.

Poet Jasimuddin's birth anniversary celebrated

From Our Correspondent

FARIDPUR, Jan 8: The 98th birth anniversary of Pali Kabi Jasimuddin was celebrated here on January 1.

Different socio-cultural and literary organisations organised several programmes to mark the day. The programmes included placing wreaths at poet's grave at Gobindpur on the outskirts of the town, discussions, poetry recitation and painting competitions and milad mahfil.

Deputy Commissioner Ashfaq Hameed, who is also ex-officio president of Faridpur Shilpakala Academy, placed wreath at poet's grave on behalf of the academy.

Faridpur Sahitya-o-Sangskritee Unnayan Sangstha, a literary and cultural organisation, held a discussion on the life and works of the poet.

Three succumb to injuries in Rajshahi

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Jan 8: Three people, who were injured in separate incidents, succumbed to their injuries at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) last week.

Mintu, 40, of Gajipur village under Shibganj upazila in Chapainawabganj district was injured in a clash between two rival groups at the village on the Eid day. He was admitted to RMCH on the same day.

Another Mintu, 20, was stabbed by a gang of miscreants at Boforampur village under Pabna district. He was admitted to hospital the following day.

Abdul Gani, 32, of Taragonia village under Doultapur upazila in Kushtia district was injured in a road accident in Natore district.

Food grains distributed

BARISAL, Jan 8: A total of 840 metric tons of food grains were distributed among the destitute people of ten upazilas of the district through 84,000 VGF cards on the eve of Eid-ul-Fitr, reports BSS.

According to an official source, of the total, 50 per cent of the food grains were rice and the rest 50 per cent wheat. Each destitute family got 10-kg of food grains through the VGF cards.

Seed crisis likely to hit wheat farming in Netrakona

From Our Correspondent

NETRAKONA, Jan 8: Wheat cultivation in the district is poised to face setback this season, as many growers could not procure seed in time.

The farmers alleged that they could not procure wheat seed from BADC (Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation) as middlemen with the help of a section of its employees bought the seed well before the farming.

As a result, the growers have been compelled to buy seed from the middlemen at a higher price. The middlemen are selling a 20 kg. sack of wheat seed at Tk 250-Tk 260 against the government rate of Tk 220.

According to local Agriculture Extension Department, some 24,500 hectares of land in the district have been brought under wheat cultivation in the current season.

Brushing aside the allegation of selling seed to middlemen, a BADC official here said the government has sanctioned only 109 tons of wheat seed for the district this year.

He attributed the crisis to inadequate supply of seed in the district.

Meanwhile, UNB adds: A total of 350 flourmills are on the verge of closure here due to acute scarcity of wheat.

Mill sources said that following consecutive bumper paddy production in the last four years the farmers lost interest to cultivate wheat and the demand for flour also declined sharply in all the 10 upazilas of the district.

As a result, the owners of the flourmills have been facing problems to run their business. The mills were set up here in the last two decades due to its business potentialities creating job opportunities for hundreds of workers.

Low income group of people were the main consumers of flour in the district in the past but now the days have changed as the price of rice is now much lower in the market.

28,000 saplings to be distributed in C'nawabganj

CHAPAINAWABGANJ, Jan 8: Some 28,000 saplings will be distributed free of cost among 1,400 farmers of the district under a special post-flood rehabilitation programme covering 11 flood-hit districts, reports UNB.

Officials said the government has taken up the programme to distribute five lakh saplings among 25,000 farmers of Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Satkhira, Meherpur, Jessore, Magura, Jhenidah, Chuadanga, Kushtia, Pabna and Sirajganj districts at a cost of Tk 50 lakh.

A large number of fruit-bearing trees were damaged in the districts by the last year's devastating flood, prompting the government to undertake the project.

Each farmer will be given 20 saplings under the programme being implemented in the district costing Tk 2.8 lakh.

BSS from Kurigram says: The Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), Kurigram has planned a total of more than five lakh saplings of different plants under two separate programmes.

According to official sources, the DAE, Kurigram planted a total of 3,84,619 saplings of different plants under its beneficial planting programme in homestead areas, schools, mosques, orphanages, graveyards, DAE office premises and other places.

The saplings included neem, shimul, babla, sajina, mango, jackfruit olive, black berry, tal and date.

Of them, 48, 631 saplings were planted in Sadar upazila, 50,206 saplings in Ulipur upazila, 31,620 saplings in Chilmari upazila, 29,676 saplings in Roumari upazila, 30,085 saplings in Rajivpur upazila, 48,586 saplings in

Bhurungamari upazila, 53,154 saplings in Nageswari upazila, 46,436 saplings in Fulbari upazila and 46,225 saplings in Rajarhat upazila.

Of them 335,737 saplings were planted in homestead areas, 7,880 were planted in school premises 2,800 were planted in 'madrasa' premises, 2,992, were planted in mosque premises, 2,580 were planted in Eidgah (ground for Eid congregation) premises, 732 were planted in orphanage premises, 2,512 were planted in graveyard premises, 29,635 were planted in other places and 651 were planted in DAE premises in all nine upazilas.

100 kg of date seeds were also sowed under this programme in the district.

Youth caught while collecting toll from truck driver

From Our Correspondent

MAGURA, Jan 8: A young man was caught red-handed when he was collecting illegal toll from a truck driver at Bhaina Square in the town on Wednesday.

Witnesses said magistrates Goutam Ayeesh Sarkar, Shahadat Hossain, Altaful Alam and Tahbubul Alam, who were passing the area together at about 11 pm, challenged the youth, identified as Mijan, 25, son of Rokman Mian of village Bhaina in Sadar upazila, when he was exacting money from driver of the vehicle laden with cattle.

Later he was handed over to police. A case under Public Safety Act (PSA) was lodged.

News snaps

Arms, ammunition recovered

SATKHIRA, Jan 8: Police, in separate drives, recovered huge arms and ammunition from Shyamnagar and Tala upazilas on Thursday, reports UNB.

Acting on a tip, patrol police challenged a gang of pirates in the Sundarbans area in Shyamnagar upazila while they were, on board a trawler, preparing to commit robbery. At one stage the pirates opened fire at the police. But when police returned the fire the pirates fled the scene, leaving behind their trawler, arms and ammunition. Police seized the trawler with one revolver, one pipe gun, seven bullets, 22 crude bombs and three cartridges. In another driver, police also recovered three pipe guns from Tala upazila. Separate cases were filed with police.

Old age allowance distributed

BOGRA, Jan 8: Some 9,720 elderly men of seven upazilas in the district have so far received Tk 2.91 crore as old age allowance till September last year, reports UNB.

Each of them has been receiving Tk 100 per month under the programme launched by the government, officials said. According to locals, there are allegations of politicisation and nepotism in preparation of lists of the elderly people. They said those who prepared the list included a number of solvent people.

One killed in clash

RANGPUR, Jan 8: One person was killed and 25 others were injured in a clash between two rival groups at Kotkipara in the town recently, reports UNB.

Police and locals said the clash ensued between the two groups of Kotkipara and Pasharipara areas over toll collection. Seriously injured, Rochi, 22, and Bullet were rushed to Rangpur Medical College Hospital where Rochi succumbed to his injuries Thursday. Other wounded people admitted to the hospital and clinics were released after first aid. Police arrested two youths, Iftekharul Alam Milton and Abul Bashar Ratan, in this connection.

House building grant for flood victims

CHAPAINAWABGANJ, Jan 8: The government has allocated Tk 80 lakh as house building grant from Prime Minister's Relief and Welfare Fund and Disaster and Relief Ministry for flood-hit people of the district, reports UNB.

The money is being distributed among 8,000 flood-hit families, said an official handout. As part of the programme, State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Talukdar Abdul Khaleq on Sunday distributed Tk 13 lakh among the flood-affected people at Sibganj and Chhatrajitpur in Shibganj upazila.

Misappropriation of fund alleged

JESSORE, Jan 8: Some officials of five fisheries schemes under Beel and Baor Fisheries Development and Management Project have allegedly misappropriated Tk 41 lakh, reports UNB.

The corruption was detected during a routine inspection of accounts of fiscal 1999-2000 by the district fisheries officer. As per the allegations brought by the fisheries officer, managers of the five projects, undertaken in the 1980s with assistance from World Bank, pocketed revenues of the projects. Though salaries and allowances of the five managers remained stopped, they have not yet been withdrawn from the projects, official sources said.

Reception to ten FFs

BRAHMANBARIA, Jan 8: Ten freedom fighters of the district were accorded a reception here Thursday, reports UNB.

Ashuganj Samannita Sangskritik Bikas Kendra (a cultural organisation) accorded the reception at local Labour Welfare Centre last week. Chaired by Dr Abdullah Al-Mahmud, the programme was attended, among others, by Chairman of Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad Central Command Council Ahad Chowdhury, unit commander Harunur Rashid, Adv Tafsirul Islam, Iqbal Hossain and Abdul Jalil Sarker.

Indian clothes seized

MADARIPUR, Jan 8: Police in a recent drive seized Indian clothes worth about Tk 20,000 from a bus at Tekerhat bus stand in Rajoir upazila, reports UNB.

The also arrested three people Mokhter Ali of Matbarchar village in Shibchar upazila, Babul Kazi of Choudhakkandi village and Babul Mia of Charkamlapur in this connection. A case was filed.

Wheat under TR programme

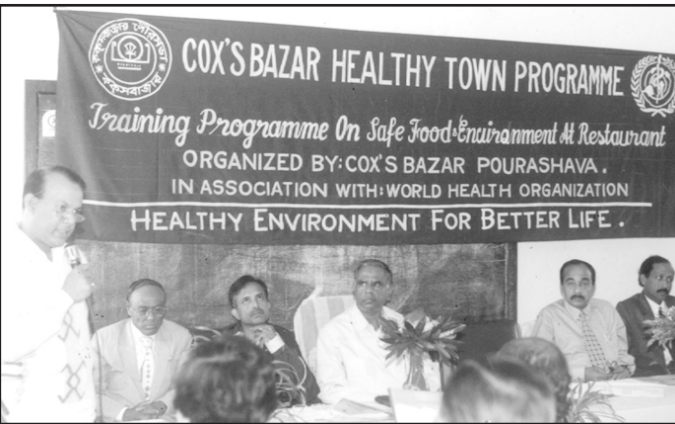
MEHERPUR, Jan 8: The government has allocated 350 tons of wheat to implement various projects under Test Relief Programme in three upazilas of the district during the current fiscal year, reports BSS.

Under this programme, the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief allocated 150 tones of wheat for Mujibnagar upazila, 100 tones for Sadar upazila and 100 for Gangni upazila. The projects include rural infrastructure maintenance, construction of roads and embankment, earth filling at various schools and colleges, tree plantation and clearing of drains and jungles.

Tk 20 lakh valuables gutted

BARISAL, Jan 8: Valuables worth about Tk 20 lakh were gutted at Torki port in Gouranadi upazila on Saturday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the fire originating from a shop of Radhe Shyam soon engulfed 11 shops on Saturday. Ten people received burn injuries when they tried to extinguish the blaze. Fire fighters from Sadar upazila and Madaripur rushed to the spot after one and half-hours, as there is no fire station at Gouranadi. The extent of damage was estimated at Tk 19.50 lakh.



Cox's Bazar Municipality recently organised a training course on 'Safe Food and Environment at Restaurants' in Cox's Bazar.