

## News snaps

### 127-year-old man dies

THAKURGAON, Jan 12 : In Bangladesh where average life expectancy is still below 60, a man in Sadar upazila died at the age of 127, reports UNB.

A resident of Ghurangach village, Abdul Baset alias Bachcha, who was seen cycling barely two years back, breathed his last on Tuesday (Jan 9). He left behind his second wife Joytun, 60, and seven daughters to mourn his death.

### Two die in Kalindi boat tragedy

SATKHIRA, Jan 12 : Two persons died and five others were missing when a boat capsized in the border River Kalindi near Koikhal Hulothar area under Shyamnagar Upazila on Saturday night, reports BSS.

The deceased were identified as Radharani, 50, wife of Poshupoti and her son Gopal Chandra, 32, of village Srifalkati under Shyamnagar Upazila. A passenger boat loaded with Indian sugar illegally coming to Koikhal Hulothar under Shyamnagar Upazila from Gobindokati of India, capsized in the border River Kalindi near Koikhal Hulothar area when the Indian Border Security Forces (BSF) chased and opened fire to the boat. BSF recovered the two dead bodies from the border River Kalindi of Indian side. The other missing five were not yet rescued.

### Rabi farming on 13,400 hectares

RAJBARI, Jan 12: Some 13,400 hectares of land has been brought under Rabi crop cultivation in four upazilas this season, reports UNB.

Meanwhile, Department of Agriculture Extension has provided necessary agri-inputs, including high yielding variety of seeds, to the farmers for farming various pulses. The department expects that over 12,000 metric tons of various pulses, including lentil, keshari, pea, maskalai and arohor would be produced in the district this year.

### Housewife commits suicide

MONGLA, Jan 12: A pregnant housewife allegedly committed suicide by hanging herself at her residence of the New Colony here on Friday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said Nargis Akhter, 20, daughter of Abdul Mannan and wife of Selim, took her life at about 10 pm apparently to escape from the torture of her husband. Locals said Selim who took second wife recently used to torture her and their conjugal life was not happy. A case was filed with the police.

### Boro farming on 35,300 hectares

MADARIPUR, Jan 12: A total of 35,300 hectares of land in four upazilas have been brought under boro cultivation this season, reports UNB.

Of the total land, high yielding 'ufsi' variety will be cultivate on 31,700 hectares while local variety on the rest 3,600 hectares. The production target has been fixed at 1,00,860 metric tons of paddy. Upazila wise break-up of lands: Sadar-10,500 hectares, Kalkini-12,300 hectares, Rajoir-8,600 hectares and Shibchar-3,900 hectares. Meanwhile, Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation has supplied seeds and other necessary inputs at fair prices among the farmers to make the programme a success.

### Freedom fighters' assembly

MANIKGANJ, Jan 12: An assembly of freedom fighters and freedom fighter's families in Manikganj district was held with a special programme at Manikganj Shaheed Miraj-Tapan Stadium on January 6, reports BSS.

The programme included sports, discussion and prize giving ceremony. Prof Abdul Ahad Chowdhury, Chairman, Freedom Fighters, Central Command Council was present at the assembly as chief guest. Later on, the chief guest distributed prizes among the winners.

### School bldgs constructed

RAJBARI, Jan 12: Facilities Department of Education Ministry constructed building for 18 educational institutions at a cost of Tk 3.47 crore this fiscal, reports UNB.

Of the buildings, 11 were constructed for high schools, four for madrasas and three for colleges in four upazilas, officials said. They said there are over 4,000 students in the educational institutions.

### School ransacked

BARISAL, Jan 12: Outraged by the delay in announcement of its admission test results, some youths ransacked Oxford Mission High School in the town on Monday, reports UNB.

They damaged the room of the school principal and dishonored the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman during the attack. Police said an admission test was held at the school on Sunday and the results were scheduled to be published on Monday noon. As the school authorities failed to announce the results, the youths attacked the school. A case was filed.

### Body recovered

KUSHTIA, Jan 12: police recovered a body from a ditch near the Dakbanglo in Bheramara union on Sunday, reports BSS.

The body was identified as Zahir Hossain, 16, son of Abdul Hannan of Kazipur village at Daulatpur upazila. He was a student of class nine and also a hawker. He was missing from Friday night. According to police sources, the body was recovered from a ditch behind a super market of Bheramara. He was brutally killed by stabbing. Amjad Hossain, a phensidyl businessman was arrested in this connection with a dagger and phensidyl bottle.

### Little girl killed by truck

KUSHTIA, Jan 12: One little girl Rima, 5, was killed by a truck while she was crossing the road on Sunday on Bheramara road, reports BSS.

According to police sources, the incident occurred when Rima went to Bheramara to visit her maternal aunt. She died on the spot. After postmortem police handed over the body to her father. The driver fled away with the truck. A case has been registered in Bheramara thana in this connection.



As usual the Rajshahi University authorities are cutting trees on the campus in the name of implementing various development works. As a result the environment of the campus is also threatened. Some timbers are seen ready for use near the university medical centre. ---Star photo

## Poor health care facilities for Jamalpur people

From Muhammad Ali

JAMALPUR, Jan 12: The basic health care facilities for the people of 68 unions in seven upazilas are poor.

The 250-bed general hospital at Jamalpur is in bad shape. Everyday a large number of patients come here from different parts of the district and go back without any health care service.

Because of shortage of medicine, the patients have to purchase those from outside.

The doctors engaged in general hospital and other local health complexes are allegedly busy with their own private practice neglecting the hospital patients. It is also alleged that some doctors charge extra fees from the patients. Every day five to 10 patients come from the remote places for normal delivery, but doctors allegedly unnecessarily make those surgery easier by taking a good quantity of money. Child specialist, gynaecologist, orthopaedic, medicine specialist, surgical doctors and anaesthetic experts are always busy with their

private practice, it is widely alleged.

Acute scarcity of water, gas and irregular supply of electricity have been causing untold sufferings to the patients. There are two lift pumps, one deep machine and 11 tubewells in the hospital, but the deep machine and 11 tubewells are out of order for a long time. Most of the time the lift pump remains inoperative in absence of repair. The RMO of the hospital told this correspondent that water supply remains suspended in the hospital for the last two years due to technical problem of the pump.

Most of the fans and lights are out of order. The patients have to suffer much for want of sufficient lights and fans. Besides, most of the switch holders and sockets are broken which may cause any accident in the hospital. The main collapsible gate of the hospital is out of order for which security of the patients has been threatened.

Water leaks through the roof of the newly constructed operation theatre during rainy season. The

anaesthetic expert remains always absent in the time of operation, according to relevant sources of hospital.

Civil surgeon and superintendent of hospital told this correspondent that PWD is responsible for the repair work but due to hassle between PWD and CMMU, the work of the hospital is being hindered for a long time. PWD had shown reluctance to repair those despite repeated appeals. Though the district has been provided with gas supply, the hospital authority is deprived of the facility.

Moreover the uplift project of Jamalpur General Hospital is being hindered due to fund shortage. Work of upgradation of the 100-bed hospital into 250-bed one, is still uncertain.

Public Works Department (PWD) took up the project to implement the pledge of former Prime Minister of the erstwhile BNP Government. Expenditure of the project was estimated to be taka eleven crore eighty lakh including

construction work of taka eight crore 70 lakh.

Later on ministry of health handed the project over to the Construction Maintenance and Management Unit (CMMU) to mobilise it and enhance the additional expenditure of Taka one crore as increased staff values and consultants' fee of CMMU amounting to Taka 70 lakh. Work of only Tk 4 crore has been done which is 45 per cent of the project since its inception on December 12, 1995. It is impossible to complete the rest 55 per cent work in schedule time.

Concerned sources said while making project proposal (PP), some important works of post-operative ward, cabin and modern store were excluded.

The contractors have reportedly received Tk Two crore 12 lakh as bill after the completion work of Tk 4 crore due the procrastination of the Health Ministry.

## Glut of hilsa surprises fish traders in coastal districts

BARISAL, Jan 12 : Winter is not the season of hilsa. Even then there has been a glut of the delicious fish in the markets of coastal districts, including Barisal, surprising the fish traders, reports UNB.

Hilsa price has unexpectedly declined across the country and it will drop further if the oversupply of the fish continues. "The drop is due to its oversupply," recognised a hilsa trader.

For many hilsa traders, the last season was a bugbear. Hilsa was beyond the reach of common people due to its high price caused by short supply.

Usually, presence of hilsa, except Jatka (small hilsa), in the sea during winter is very low. But there

is plenty this winter. "We didn't see such huge hilsa in the sea in the last 12 years," said a beaming fisherman, disclosing that over 50 tons of hilsa is being supplied to India and across the country everyday.

However, he said although there is an oversupply of hilsa, the size of the fish is small and the weight varies from 500 gram to 1,200 gram.

Braving the biting cold, fishermen are catching hilsa in the sea overnight and rushing to hilsa Mokam (hilsa wholesale market) in the district with hilsa-laden trawlers every morning.

Many fishermen said they even could not catch hilsa in the peak season, but this winter has made a difference for them.

Hannan, 35, a local fisherman, said maximum quantity of hilsa was being caught at Baullah Khola point of the Bay. Besides, there has been a huge catch of the fish in the coastal districts of Bhola and Patuakhali.

Ajit Kumar, a fish trader, said on average four trucks of hilsa are being exported to India everyday from the local hilsa Mokam.

Besides, exporting, they are also supplying seven to eight trucks of hilsa to the country's northern region everyday from here.

During the peak season, hilsa is usually sold at Tk 6,000 per maund while at Tk 2,400 in the off season.

According to exporters, a hilsa weighting over one kg is exported at 1.5 dollar, while that of 500 gram to

one kg at one dollar.

The number of hilsa vendors, selling the fish from door to door, has also increased in the district town and capital Dhaka.

Hilsa has also swamped the markets in Luxmipur district, knocking down its price there. It was selling at even cheaper prices on the bank of the Meghna river in Ramgati, Raipur and sadar upazilas. Four hilsas of 12 inches size were selling at Tk 100 to Tk 120.

In capital Dhaka, four pieces of hilsa, weighting over three kgs, were selling at Tk 150 to Tk 170.

## Terrorists force newly-wed couple to stay separate for toll

FENI, Jan 12 : They married seven days back. But they could not yet make their wedding night as terrorists forced them to stay in separate houses for toll, reports UNB.

M Yusuf, son of Abdul Mannan of Sundarpur village in Baligaon union of sadar upazila, married Fahima Akhter, daughter of Abul Khair Master of the neighboring village, on January 5.

After the marriage, Yusuf took the bride back home. Dressed in her bridal costume, the meek and mild bride, a college girl, was waiting to meet her husband at the bridal chamber. But that's not to be.

Hearing the news of the marriage, Rabiul Haq, son of Siddiq Mia and Aminul Haq, said to be terrors of the village, rushed to the residence of the bride to collect toll. But

they got frustrated when they came to know that the bride was already taken to her husband's house. They did not stop there.

The armed hoodlums stormed the house of the bridegroom firing gunshots and exploding crackers when his family members received the bride with sweets in the evening.

"You'll face dire consequences for holding the marriage ceremony without paying us toll," they shouted terrorising the guests celebrating the wedding.

The frightened guardians first took the bride to a nearby house and then sent her back to her parent's house at night.

Having failed to realise toll, the ruffians assaulted Yusuf's elder brother Abul Kalam. They demanded Tk 30,000 and warned

that the newlywed couple would not be allowed to enjoy the wedding night until their demand of toll was met.

They asked the guardians of the two families to keep the bride and bridegroom in their respective houses until the payment of the toll.

Recently, Yusuf paid a handsome amount of toll to the same terrorist group when he returned from abroad and thought that his family would be spared from paying wedding toll.

Locals said Rabiul Haq and Aminul Haq, leaders of a major political party, were enjoying the blessing of police and thus perpetrating terrorist acts in the area.

"Vandalism in the trouble-torn district has perhaps neared the mediaeval age," lamented an old man of the village, who declined to

be identified.

He said over 30,000 people of the Baligaon union have become hostage to dacoity, rape, murder, arson and extortionism for the fast four years.

They said everybody has to pay toll on each occasion like marriage, Khotna (the practice of circumcission) and other occasions.

Toll collection has become the order of the day in the district. If any body returns from abroad, gets a job, fares well in business, purchases or sells a land, reaps a good harvest and builds a new house has to pay toll to the terrorists.

Fed-up with the growing trend of barbarism, a good number of people have already left the union in the last few years, locals said.



A section of influential people build many illegal structures on railway lands in Sirajganj Bazaar Railway Station area. ---Star photo

## Influentials grab railway lands in Sirajganj

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, Jan 12: Lands owned by Bangladesh Railway alongside the rail track in the district are being grabbed by a section of influential people.

The influential people always remain with the party in power. They use political influence to grab land. Besides, khas, or disputed lands in Sirajganj Bazaar, Ranigram Old Ghat, Bahirgola and Katakhali areas are also being grabbed.

Many illegal structures on railway lands from Sirajganj Bazaar Railway Station to Malshapara Rail Gate and Sirajganj Bazaar to Raipur have been erected. According to a survey conducted by a non-governmental organisation, the influential people grabbed lands worth about Tk three crore.

Local people say a section of governmental official and members of law enforcing agencies always back the land grabbers.

Local people have urged the authorities concerned to take immediate steps to stop the illegal practice.

## Netrakona farmers face 18,000 certificate cases

From Jahangir Alam

NETRAKONA, Jan 12: A total of 18,000 certificate cases have been filed for realisation of Tk 25 crore agricultural loan in 10 upazilas by five commercial banks including Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) this year.

According to an official source, a total of 25 crore has been lying outstanding as agricultural loan among the farmers. The loans were given earlier by five banks among the farmers in order to overcome heavy loss caused by flood and other natural calamities. The bank authorities have filed 18,000 certi-

cate cases for realisation of the outstanding agricultural loans.

The bank-wise certificate cases are: Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) filed 14,831 cases for realisation of Tk 21 crore 28 lakh, Agrani Bank filed 1,772 cases for realisation of Tk 1 crore 88 lakh, Rupali Bank filed only 15 cases for realising Tk 6 lakh 54 thousand, Sonali Bank has filed 284 cases for realising Taka 33 lakh 50 thousand, while Janata Bank filed 1,032 certificate cases for realisation of the outstanding amount of Tk one crore 31 lakh.

The five bank authorities have already taken up special drives

separately in different hats and bazaars for recovery of loans.

### KU convocation February 14

From Staff

Correspondent

KHULNA, Jan 12: The second convocation of Khulna University (KU) will be held on February 14. Chancellor of the university President Shahabuddin Ahmed is expected to inaugurate the convocation as chief guest. He will distribute certificates among students who obtained graduate and postgraduate degrees during 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99 academic years.