

National

Arsenicosis claims 7 lives in Bogra

People of Bogra, Barguna, Patuakhali and Bhola districts are now passing their days in fear of arsenic, report agencies.

Arsenicosis has so far claimed seven lives and affected 106 others in Bogra district owing to intake of arsenic contaminated water.

Government and other sources said the total number of tube-wells throughout the districts is over one lakh. Of them, 30,175 were installed by the government.

Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) sources said till last November they had tested waters of 1,063 tube-wells and detected arsenic contamination beyond the permissible limit in 143 tube-wells. They also listed 57 as worst affected.

Local sources said five people died at Meghnagachha village in Sadar upazila and two at Shikoir in Kahalai upazila. Besides, 50 were affected at Meghnagachha, 22 at Shikoir, 27 at Ulipur village in Gantali upazila and seven at Hindukandi in Shariakandi upazila.

When contacted (DPHE) officials said they knew nothing about arsenic-related death and affliction.

The official concerned claimed that cent per cent pure water is available in the district and they found no arsenic contamination in Bogra town.

"As part of the arsenic-mitigated water supply programme across the country the first phase detection work in Sadar, Sariakandi and Gantali upazilas has already been

started in Bogra," said one official.

Local elite expressed doubt about the success of the multi-million-taka project as no programme was taken under it to treat arsenic patients.

Meanwhile, arsenic is being found in the shallow tube-wells water in Barguna, Patuakhali and Bhola districts.

The NGO Forum has been examining water of the tube-wells in these areas.

Cent per cent arsenic contaminated water was found in the shallow tube-wells of the districts of Barisal, Pirojpur and Jhalakati. The highest quantity of arsenic 1.70 milligrams has been found in Jagua, Ulania and Barisal Sadar of Barisal district and Nazirpur Upazila of Pirojpur district. DPHE has marked these tube-wells with green colour in the meantime.

Arsenic contaminated water affects breathing system, digestive system, nervous system and blood circulation system of human bodies. It may turn into a cancer in the long run. Arsenic is also responsible for high blood pressure and diabetes.

Fifty-nine arsenic stricken people were found in Barisal Sadar, 11 in Mehdigonj Upazila and two in Agailjhara Upazila till now. Meanwhile, 14 people died of the disease in Barisal district.

The NGO Forum has taken up different programmes and technology for the distribution of safe water among the people of arsenic stricken areas. These projects included Rain Water Harvesting Plant (RWHP), Pond-

sand-filters and Arsenic Removal System.

Meanwhile, 11 RWHPs have been set up here in 11 upazillas of Patharghata, Agailjhara, Bhabanipur, Mehdigonj, Ulania, Rajapur, Jhalakathi, Muladi, Babuganj and Saestabab. About 4,000 people of the region have been getting pure drinking water from these plants.

A total of 18 Pond-sand-filters have been set up in eight upazillas of Patharghata, Agailjhara, Mathbaria, Bhabanipur, Mehdigonj, Ulania, Kathalia, and Babuganj upazillas of the southern region. About 3,000 people of the upazillas have been taking pure drinking water from the filters now.

Besides 2,550 families have been getting arsenic free pure drinking water from Arsenic Removal System, set up in 13 upazillas of Jhalakathi, Nazirpur, Pirojpur, Wazirpur, Amirkonj, Mehdigonj, Ulania, Mathbaria, Babuganj, Bakerganj and Muladi.

The NGOs like Sangram, BSUS, BVDO, ASUK, Kashara, CSC, BDS, BUK, PISI, Speed Trust Foundation, Annesa, Sardo, ATM, RTO and AVAS, have been trying to prepare arsenic free water in different processes here in the division.

The NGOs have been taking steps to set up a hospital for the arsenic stricken people of this division soon.

News snaps

Attack slated

From Our Correspondent

MAGURA, Jan 19: The lawyers here brought out a procession on Wednesday in the town, protesting the recent around attack on Advocate Hasan Seraj (Sujal), general-secretary of Magura unit of Jatiya Party (JP).

The lawyers headed by advocate Shafiqul Islam (Mohon) and Advocate Abdur Razzak, respectively the president and general-secretary of the local Bar Association, also submitted two different memorandums to the Deputy Commissioner (DC) and Superintendent of Police (SP) demanding exemplary punishment to the culprits. Later on a rally was organised by the District Bar Association which was addressed, among others, by Advocate Rafiqul Alkar, Advocate Abdul Majid, Advocate Abdur Razzak, Advocate Eskender Azam Bablu, and Advocate Ratan Kumar Mitro. Advocate Hasan Seraj was seriously injured on Jan 15 by the armed activists of the local Jatiyatobadi Jubo Dal and Chhatra Dal. Now he is undergoing treatment at Chamorita Hospital in Dhaka.

Freedom fighter laid to rest

COLMILA, Jan 19: Habibullah Bhuyan, a freedom fighter of Sadar Upazila was laid to rest on Monday with state honour, reports BSS.

Habibullah Bhuyan died of heart attack in his residence. He left behind three sons and four daughters. A number of freedom fighters attended his funeral and expressed their deep shock to the bereaved family.

Housing problem in Madaripur

MADRIPUR, Jan 19: The town-dwellers here have been facing an acute housing problem since long, reports BSS.

Taking advantage of the situation landlords are realising high rent from tenants, it is alleged. The total population of the town is about one and a half lakh, but construction of new houses and residential quarters has not been taken up to cope with the demand of increasing population due to high prices of lands and other construction materials. Most colleges, high schools and other educational institutions of the town have no hostels for the students. The educational institutions which have hostels for the students have no accommodation facilities for the teachers and other staff. As a result teachers and staff of those institutions have to reside in rental houses.

Tk 15.57 cr projects implemented

JHALAKATI, Jan 19: Facilities Department implemented 97 projects in the district at a cost of 15.57 crore in last four years, reports UNB.

The projects included construction and expansion of college and school buildings and reconstruction of old educational institutions. According to officials, 54 educational institutions were constructed in sadar upazila at a cost of Tk 8.49 crore, 22 in Nalchiti at a cost of Tk 3.22 crore, 11 in Rajapur costing over Tk 1 crore and 10 in Kanthalia at a cost of 2.19 crore.

Valuables gutted

SHERPUR, Jan 19: Valuables worth about Tk 15 lakh were gutted in a fire in the town on Wednesday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said two offices, one of an NGO and another of a rice agency and the house of Janakantha district correspondent were gutted in the fire originated from an electronic short circuit. Another report from Jamalpur adds: A poultry farm was gutted in a fire at Gopalpur in Sadar upazila on January 8, burning down valuables worth Tk 1 lakh.

WB aided projects launched

PATUAKHALI, Jan 19: A World Bank-aided Municipal Service Project (MSP) was kicked off here on Wednesday, reports UNB.

State Minister for Textiles AKM Jahangir Hossain launched the project unveiling a plaque in front of Sonali Bank regional office in the town. Under the first and second phases of the project, development works costing Tk 22 crore will be carried out here under the supervision of Local Government Engineering Department. A bridge, 17 kms of road, a sluice gate, 905 meters of drain, one bazaar and a bus terminal will be constructed in the first phase of the project. In the second phase which involves Tk 14 crore, an auditorium and a children's park will be constructed apart from development of slums and waste disposal management.

Youth commits suicide

BAGERHAT, Jan 19: A young boy allegedly killed himself at Musidpur village in Sadar upazila, on Wednesday, reports UNB.

Ibrahim Molla 24, said to be a drug addict, hanged himself when his demand to his mother for some money went unheeded. A UD case was filed.

Three 'kidnappers' arrested

MANIKGANJ, Jan 19: Police in a predawn raid on Purba Sahil village in Shibalaya thana arrested three people on Wednesday in connection with the kidnapping of a schoolgirl, reports UNB.

But they could not rescue the girl, Ratna Akhter, 15, a class nine student of Borongan High School. She was kidnapped on December 5 at gunpoint. The arrested Selim Miah, 27, Nazrul Miah, 28, and Arshed Ali, 40, were produced before the court later on the day.

Man gets 10-yr RI

TANGAIL, Jan 19: A court here has sentenced a man to 10 years Rigorous Imprisonment (RI) in an arms case, reports UNB.

The convict was identified as Joyenuddin alias Junu of Gozian village in Trishal upazila in Mymensingh district. According to the prosecution, Joyenuddin and Habil alias Habibul were caught along with arms and ammunition by local while fleeing after committing a dacoity in the house of Abdul Khaleq of Telia village in Mirzapur upazila on March 3, 1998. Joyenuddin was handed over to police, but his associate Habibul died in a mass beating. After examining the witnesses and records, the Judge handed down the judgement on January 10.

Smugglings on rise

KUSHTIA, Jan 19: Smuggling of different brands of Indian motorcycles has become rampant in the frontier areas of greater Kushtia district, reports UNB.

Hero Honda, Yamaha, Vespa Bajaj and other bikes, coming illegally through the borders, are being sold here at Tk 30,000 to 35,000 each. Many of these Indian motorcycles are being driven in the rural areas of Kushtia, Chuadanga and Meherpur districts without any valid documents. In some cases, the organised gang of smugglers is providing forged documents to the customers in exchange of Tk 5,000. But the law enforcers kept silence on the issue.

Seven BCL activists sued

HABIGANJ, Jan 19: Seven activists of ruling party's student front Chhatra League have been sued for allegedly manhandling the Bahubol Upazila Nirbahi Officer, reports UNB.

According to the case filed on Wednesday, a group of Chhatra League activists attacked UNO Muhammad Abdur Rouf while he was playing badminton on a ground near the upazila council on Tuesday. The BCL workers, who were holding a meeting at the upazila council, attacked the UNO as their request to stop the play went unheeded.

10 injured in clash

CHAPAINAWABGANJ, Jan 19: A drive by the municipality authorities to demolish unauthorised shops in the town led to a violent clash that left 10 pourasava (municipality) employees wounded on Wednesday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the angry shop owners attacked the municipality employees and ransacked a pourasava truck when they tried to evict them. Police picked up two people Hossain Ali, 50, and Babu, 20, from the scene.

Workshop on farming

SHARIATPUR, Jan 19: A day-long workshop on farming, organized by Agriculture Extension Department, was held here on Monday, reports BSS.

A total of 25 officials including agriculture and subject matter officers and block supervisors participated in the workshop. Discussions on pest attack, harvesting, seed-bed development and seed preservation were held. Some recommendations were adopted in the workshop.

Development schemes undertaken

BOGRA, Jan 19: Local Government Engineering Department will implement 17 development projects in the town at a cost of Tk 24.16 lakh, reports UNB.

The projects include road carpeting and construction of box culverts, gates and road dividers.

Winter is not the season of hilsha. Even then there has been a glut of the delicious fish in the markets of Chandpur situated on the confluence of the rivers Padma and Meghna, surprising the fish traders. Hilsha price has unexpectedly declined across the district. However, the size of the fish is small and the weight varies from 500 to 1,200 grams.

--Star photo by A KM Mohsin

Dacoities in Sundarbans increase alarmingly

SATKHIRA, Jan 19: Dacoities in the Sundarbans area have increased alarmingly in recent times, reports BSS.

About 25 armed groups of dacoits who control the entire Satkhira forest range of the Sundarbans making over thousands of fishers and bawalis hostage. These small and big groups were collecting extortion and also looting fish, fishing nets and other goods from the fishermen and bawalis using several kinds of fire arms including country made light gun. Of the total groups at least 10 groups were come from Indian side, according to local people.

These armed dacoit groups have tightened their grip and exaggerated their torture to the fishermen and bawalis in different parts of the Sundarbans area to leave their ancestral profession. There are also allegations that Indian fishermen intrude into Bangladesh waters crossing the border river Kalindi everyday and catch fishes indiscriminately driving out the local fishermen.

A large number of fishermen and bawalis from the entire Satkhira forest range of the Sundarbans were coming back to their own villages for fear of the dacoits torture. Of them Daud Molla, Arsal Gazi, Ismail Morol of village Bichat under Assasunni upazila, Sawkat Gazi, Moniruddin of Patuakhali village, Tazul Islam and Mianur of Katulia village under Shymnagar upazila returned from the Sundarbans recently. They informed that several groups of armed dacoits were usually torturing the fishermen and bawalis and collecting extortion at the rate of Taka 100 to 500 per boat.

The Indian dacoits often abduct Bangladeshi fishermen and release them after payment of an amount of Taka 5,000-10,000. As a result, local fishermen are gradually losing their interest in fishing and some of them have already switched over to other profession.

According to the fishermen and bawalis, there are over 25 groups of armed dacoits who were controlling the entire Satkhira forest range in the Sundarbans. The dacoit groups were known to the fishermen and bawalis as Mujib Bahini, Aziz Bahini, Mozam Bahini, Sawkat Bahini, Shounnashi Bahini, Mejho Bahini Party and Lethmara party of Bangladeshi groups and Mohon Bahini, Tetul Bahini, Giren Bahini, Boro Bhai Party, Mama Bhagne Party and Kala Party of Indian groups. The dacoit groups were known according to the name of their gang leader.

Most of the Indian dacoits were inhabitants of villages Shomshernagar and Kumirmari under Goshaba thana of South 24 Pargona district, West Bengal. Bangladeshi dacoits were inhabitants of several villages under Shymnagar upazila of Satkhira district, Koyra, Paikgachha upazila under Khulna district, Rampal,

about 50 dacoits and also recovered about 20 firearms from their upazilas.

Last year, the Indian dacoits killed three fishermen and a fish trader on revenue for arrest of Tetul dacoit. They were identified as Abdul Aziz, 35, of village Shora, Sukur Ali, 40, of village Tarapur, Nesab Ali, 35, of village Shymnagar upazila and Mokul, 25, of village Bichat under Assasunni upazila of Satkhira district.

While contacted with Police Suber Aminul Islam informed that the police personnel of the district are patrolling every day in different areas of the Sundarbans in Satkhira range to arrest the dacoits and resist all kinds of terrorist activities in the Sundarbans.

Police sources said the police

Sumi murder: Autopsy report submitted

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, Jan 19: The autopsy report of murdered Sumi Roy, 20, was handed over to Sirajganj police on Wednesday, after four days of her murder.

All the accused persons went underground following submission of the report by a seven-member board constituted by seven physicians. The local Civil Surgeon formed the board.

Meanwhile, many clients who deposited money at "Shila Jewellers" situated at Mujib Sarak in the district town for purchasing ornaments, feared that they had lost all their money for good. Because, they feared, the owners would never come back home again who had already gone to India, shutting down their business here. The clients suspected that some local wealthy traders helped them flee the country.

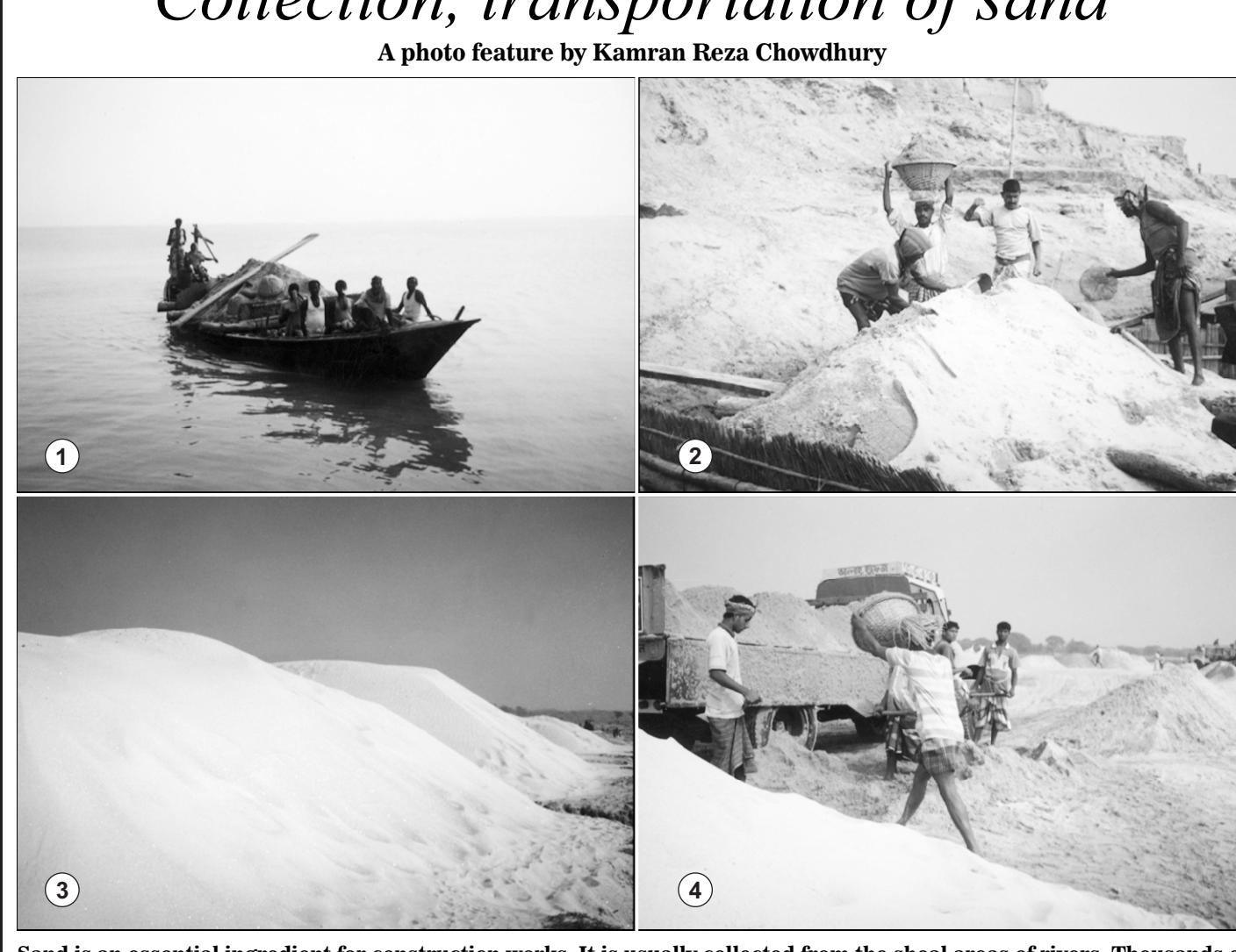
Sumi Roy, beautiful wife of Subir Roy and a second year student of HSC class of Roshiduzzoha Government Women's College here was murdered by her husband and his relatives following torture on her on January 12 night.

Sumi, the only daughter of Gopinath Roy, an wealthy person in Tangail was married to Subir Roy.

It has been alleged that the

Collection, transportation of sand

A photo feature by Kamran Reza Chowdhury



Sand is an essential ingredient for construction works. It is usually collected from the shoal areas of rivers. Thousands of workers are involved in this work. Pictures on top show (L-R) (1) a boat has been carrying sand from a shoal in the River Padma near Rajshahi. (2) some labourers have been unloading sand from a boat to pile up the same along the river bank, (3) sand has been piled up by the workers in Talaimari area in Rajshahi, (4) some day labourers are seen loading a truck of sand before going to the destination from the ghat (terminal) area.