

Fruits, fish worth Tk 50 cr perish due to lack of preservation facilities

SYLHET, Jan 23: In absence of preservation, processing and transportation facilities perishable goods like seasonal fruits and fish worth Tk 50 crore are damaged in Sylhet division every year, reports UNB.

Jackfruits, pineapples, lemon and banana grow plenty in the frontier areas of Moulvibazar, Sylhet and Sunamganj and Srimongal.

Kulaura, Borolekha, Srimongal, Kamalganj, Rajnagar of Moulvibazar district are famous for jackfruits, pineapple, lemon and banana production.

Though these fruits grows on over 20,000 acres of hilly land in

greater Sylhet in the Bangla months of Joistha and Ashar but a huge quantum of these perish due to lack of adequate transport facilities.

Local growers said fruits worth over crores of taka could be saved from destruction if processing plants are established and smooth transportation facilities developed in the region.

On the other hand, the region is rich with fish resources, as vast tracts of land in the division are haor, baor and jolmohals (water bodies). But fish worth over Tk 40 crore are damaged every year due to lack of processing and preserving

facilities, local traders said.

There are over 2,000 jolmohals (water bodies) and over 25,000 ponds in the division.

There are also water bodies on over 60,000 acres of land in Sunamganj alone, suitable for fish production.

Official sources said the annual average production of fish in these water bodies is 70,000 to 80,000 tons.

The poor fishermen, traders and growers are forced to sell the fish at throwaway prices in absence of freezing facilities.

Besides, due to bad communication network and absence of marketing facilities the local fishermen and traders are deprived of huge income every year.

The government can earn at least Tk 25 crore every year by exporting fish abroad with the expansion of preservation, transportation and marketing facilities, local leaders said.

At present there are only four fish processing plants in Sunamganj and Habiganj districts in private sector.

Shailakupa Municipality polls Feb 27

JHENIDAH, Jan 23: The election to Shailakupa Municipality here will be held on Feb 27, reports UNB.

According to the election schedule announced by the Election Commission, the date for submission of nomination paper is Feb 4 while the last date for withdrawal of candidature is Feb 11.

Additional district magistrate of Jhenidah has been appointed Returning Officer while Shailakupa Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Assistant Returning Officer for conducting the poll.

Faridpur DIARY

Obituary

From Our Correspondent

FARIDPUR, Jan 23: Habibur Rahman, a valiant freedom fighter, died of liver disease on January 5 at the age of 65.

Habibur Rahman, who hailed from village Shakrail under Laskardia union in Nagarkanda upazila, was a member of the then East Pakistan Rifles.

He was buried in state honour at local graveyard. Rahman left behind wife, seven daughters and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

19 cattle stolen

Nineteen cattle were stolen from cowsheds at village Bahirdia under Sadar upazila recently.

The cattle lifters made away with the cattle worth about Tk 2.5 lakh at dead of night. Villagers said cattle lifting is on the rise in the area in recent days. No case was filed in this connection.

Body of woman recovered

Body of a woman aged about 30 was recovered from a ditch at Talma under Nagarkanda upazila recently.

Identity of the victim could not be known. Local people spotted the body and on receipt of information police recovered it. The body was sent to Faridpur Medical College Hospital for autopsy. A case was lodged with Nagarkanda police in this connection.

Cop killed in Rajshahi road accident

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Jan 23: A police constable was killed when a truck hit him at Haragram Bazaar in the city Friday night.

The dead was identified as Golam Arefin, 30.

According to eyewitnesses, the accident occurred when the speedy truck hit a bicycle the constable was riding from behind at about 9:00 pm. He was immediately taken to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) in critical condition. Later he succumbed to his injuries.

A case was filed with Rajpara police station in this connection. The driver managed to escape with his vehicle.

instigated the 'mastans' (hoodlums) to extract tolls from them. On November 1, the toll collectors demanded Tk 10,000. "Somehow I managed Tk 1,500 and gave them," Nikhil told this correspondent when met at Mutagachha this week. Nikhil would not name the 'mastans' for fear of further reprisal.

Narrating his woes, Nikhil said that in the morning of November 4 last year, he and his wife Subarna were returning home after taking bath in a nearby pond.

On way, Safur Mondal and some of his associates accosted Nikhil and Subarna and asked them to go to the house of Rina Akhter, said to be the wife of Manu of the village. The couple went to Rina's house without suspecting anything.

There Safur and his associates

who witnessed aghast the barbarous act.

It all happened on November 5 last year in village Adhpakhia of Mankone union in Muktagachha upazila of Mymensingh district.

The woes of Subarna and Nikhil have not ended there. Outcast in the society and haunted by the humiliation, they left their home. They are now living with relatives in Muktagachha upazila town.

Diligent and affectionate Subarna won the seat of woman member from her ward in the last election to Union Parishad. She defeated the candidate set up by village leaders Safur Mondal, Ismail Hossain, Helaluddin and others.

Since then she and her family became the eyesore of Safur Mondal and his associates who

Annual Botanical Confce opens Speakers put accent on saving of medicinal plants

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 23: Speakers at a conference have expressed concern over fast depletion of medicinal plants in the country and suggested restrictions be imposed on harvesting of the plants from natural reserves.

They said the medicinal plants should be cultivated instead of collecting from the wilds.

The speakers were addressing the inaugural session of Annual Botanical Conference-2000 on 'Floral Diversity of Bangladesh and its Conservation' on Saturday at the auditorium of Research Centre for Mathematical and Physical Science (RCMPS), Chittagong University.

They also called for mass awareness among people to conserve the plants.

Professor MA Aziz Khan, founder of the Department of Botany and former vice chancellor of Chittagong University, inaugurated the two-day conference.

Presided over by Chittagong University Vice Chancellor Professor Abdul Mannan, the inaugural session was addressed, among

others, by CU Pro-VC Professor Abu Yousuf, Dean of CU Science Faculty Professor M Nurul Mostafa, President of Bangladesh Botanical Society (BBS) Professor M Arshad Ali, BBS Secretary General Professor Abul Bashar and Secretary of the Conference Organising Committee Professor M K Pasha.

In his keynote paper, Professor M Salar Khan, Honorary Advisor of Bangladesh National Herbarium, said it is unfortunate that when we are realising the importance of floral diversity, which is under severe threat, the number of plant taxonomists in the country is decreasing. Potentialities of lower plants are not known enough compared to those of higher plants, he added.

"It is high time we conducted survey on lower group of plants. Utilising the indigenous knowledge base, efforts should be made to increase the use of the diversity for food, medicine and other purposes."

Guest birds not safe in Jamuna shoals

From Akhturuzzman Bablu

SIRAJGANJ, Jan 23: Indiscriminate hunting of guest birds is continuing along Kazipur shoal area, Chalan beel, a water body, and Chowhali shoal area.

Like previous years thousands of guest birds have started arriving in those areas since the beginning of winter this year. Migratory birds, our flying guests in the winter have been crowding the shoal lands along Jamuna river side, Kazipur shoal, Chalan beel and Chowhali shoal area.

These migratory birds coming from the Siberian region due to severe cold are taking shelter in these areas in search of comparatively warmer places.

The migratory birds, which are seen in the areas are of various species. Besides, professional as well as amateur bird hunters are rushing to these places, where the migratory birds are taking shelter sensing their presence in a bid to kill those. Some of the hunters also catch the birds and sell them in the open markets and on different footpaths of the district.

There are different ways of hunting the birds. Some hunters use guns and some other cages to catch the birds. They also apply a number of other methods to net the guests. The hunters do not bother to obey the government ban on hunting migratory birds. There is a law in the country for punishment to the illegal bird hunters. But hoodwinking wholesale hunting of the guest birds is continuing in the region due to lack of strict enforcement of law. On the other hand, the local administration is maintaining silence regarding indiscriminate hunting of the guest birds. If this trend continues unabated, the migratory birds would stop coming

in the country which would harm the ecological balance, fear weather experts.

According to the naturalists, the migratory birds come to these areas during the winter season flying from the ice-fields in Siberia, thousands of kilometers north of here, to escape the biting cold. While making a day long trip this correspondent saw that the areas had turned into a heavenly abode of guest birds. Some of the migratory birds had been seen plying cheerfully on the sandy fields, which have emerged along the river and some had been catching small fishes from water. The scene attracts lots of traveller and local people. Talking to this correspondent, the local people have alleged that natural movement of the guest birds is being hindered by the bird hunters. They have also complained that a section of professional bird hunters catch the guest birds daily for selling them at the local hats and bazaars despite the government ban on it. They underlined the need for intervention of law enforcing agencies to ensure the safe stay of the guest birds in their temporary winter home.

The birds hunting has turned into a trade for some unscrupulous people in the region. Anwar Hossain along with professor of an American university and his brother remained engaged in a dreadful clash between the people of shoal areas when they had gone for hunting guest birds.

They were caught by the people and mercilessly beaten up and later handed over them to police. A murder case has been lodged with Kazipur PS against the hunters but police dismissed the case in exchange of money.

No end to share croppers' woes in Panchagarh

PANCHAGARH, Jan 23: With the advent of Boro season, money lenders in rural areas of the district have geared up their illegal activities to hook up the sharecroppers and marginal farmers, reports UNB.

"Sharecroppers and marginal farmers have always been the targets of the money lenders as they cannot avail of bank loan," said a Krishi Bank official insisting on anonymity.

A farmer at Satkhamar village in Autorai upazila said, "banks do not sanction us loan as we have no collateral forcing us to borrow money from the money lenders at a high interest rate."

Giving a nod to him, another farmer, Hasibul, said the land owners take loan from banks against their lands, but they do not help the sharecroppers for cultivating lands.

"As a matter of fact, cultivation of IRRI-Boro in most areas completely depends on the money lenders," he said.

Meanwhile, cattle lifting, particularly in frontier Autoari, Tetulia and Boda upazilas has marked a rise

dealing a severe blow to the beleaguered farmers.

Many frustrated farmers said it would not be possible for them to bring all targeted lands under cultivation this season due to price-hike of diesel, pesticide and fertilizer.

Another problem they are now facing is rapid fall of water levels. They said shallow pump machines these days cannot pump out water.

Freedom fighter passes away

From Our Correspondent

JHENIDAH, Jan 23: Veteran freedom fighter Rustam Ali, who hailed from Jajpara village under Shailakupa upazila in the district, died on Saturday at a hospital in Dhaka.

He fought in the War of Liberation in Sector 8.

He was buried in state honour.

News snaps

Rivals' clash leaves 20 injured

SUNAMGANJ, Jan 23: At least 20 people of Bhatitahirpur village received bullet wounds in a gunfight between two rival groups at Tahirpur upazila headquarters on Saturday, reports UNB.

The clash ensued as a sequel to Friday's toll collection between the people of Bhatitahirpur and the armed youths of five villages of Uzantahirpur, Birnagar, Borodal, Kamarkandi, Dhutma and Chiksa. On Friday night a gunfight started over collection of tolls from the Tahirpur bazaar between the two groups. The armed youths of five villages again attacked the bazaar at 5 pm and ransacked and looted seven shops of the bazaar leaving 20 people injured. Five of the injured, one of them seriously, were admitted to the Sadar hospital. Riot police have been deployed in the area to avert any further clash.

Engineer rescued from jungle

BANDARBAN, Jan 23: The Security forces have rescued Engineer Aminul Islam from a jungle of Rowangchhari Upazila in Bandarban district on Sunday with the help of police and local tribal leaders, reports BSS.

He was abducted by armed tribal terrorists from work site of a bridge on Taracha canal at gunpoint on January 18. The kidnapers demanded Taka 10 lakh as ransom. According to police sources, acting on a tip-off nine troops of security forces and police raided the vast area of Rowangchhari Upazila and rescued him from the jungle of Baghmar area of the upazila. Local tribal leaders helped the forces in this connection.

25 more hurt in rivals' clash

NARAYANGNAJ, Jan 23: At least 25 people were injured, seven of them critically, in a clash between two rival groups in Ziartek area in Atrahazar upazila on Monday, reports UNB.

Police said the trouble ensued when the supporters of Anar Ali and Zahir groups locked in the clash over sowing paddy seeds in a disputed filed. Seven of the injured, identified as Kafiluddin, 70, Rasheda Begum, 40, Kazim Ali, 35, Abdul Ali, 45, Abdul Karim, 26, Abdur Rahim, 35, and Suraiya Begum, 35, were admitted to Atrahazar Health Complex in critical condition. Police arrested seven people in connection with the clash. A case was filed with the police in this regard.

Foodgrains distributed

MEHERPUR, Jan 23: A total of 500 metric tons of foodgrains was distributed among the flood affected family members of three upazilas including Meherpur Municipality through 36,000 VGF cards, reports BSS.

According to an official source of the total 50 per cent of foodgrains rice and the rest 50 per cent wheat. Meanwhile, 11,000 VGF cards were issued in Meherpur Sadar, 9,000 VGF cards in Gangi upazila, 10,000 VGF cards in Mujib Nagar upazila and 6,000 cards in Meherpur Municipality.

Warm clothes distributed

DINAJPUR, Jan 23: Warm clothes were distributed among 275 poor families in 11 unions of Birganj upazila as government assistance, reports UNB.

The unions are Shibrampur, Palashbari, Shatgram, Paltapur, Sujalpur, Nijpara, Mohammadpur, Bhognagar, Satar, Mohanpur and Maricha. Besides, winter clothes were distributed among 55 distressed families of freedom fighters in the upazila. Local UP chairman and members distributed the clothes in presence of UNO Mahbub-ul-Alam and PIO Abdus Salam.

850 arrested

DINAJPUR, Jan 23: Some 850 people including wanted accused were arrested from different parts of Birganj upazila during the last year, reports UNB.

Of the total, 795 were wanted criminals while 55 were arrested under section 54. All of them were sent to jail. Besides, some 154 cases were filed on various charges including murder, robbery, snatching and rape in the upazila during the same period. Of them, 26 were filed under Women and Child Repression Act.

20 injured in clash

SUNAMGANJ, Jan 23: At least 20 people were injured, two of them seriously, in a clash between two rival groups in Tahirpur upazila on Friday, reports UNB.

The seriously injured Rezaul, 22, was admitted to Sadar hospital while Ranju, 32, to Sylhet Osmani Medical College Hospital. Police said the two groups, one led by Tahirpur UP member Borhan Uddin and another by Shaiful Islam of Bhati Tahirpur, clashed with each other following a previous enmity. Local ASP Abdur Rahim visited the spot on Saturday.

150 kutcha houses gutted

NILPHAMARI, Jan 23: A devastating fire gutted some 150 kutcha houses of 60 families at Hazipara in Sadar upazila on Saturday evening, reports UNB.

Fire Service sources said the fire, originated from a kitchen, also burnt 350 maunds of paddy into ashes. Local fire fighters rushed to the spot and with the help of local people extinguished the flame after three hours' frantic effort.

Donation

BANDARBAN, Jan 23: Bandarban Army Regional Headquarters has donated a generator to Bandarban Press Club on January 18, reports BSS.

Bandarban Army Region Commander Brigadier General AKM Rafiqul Islam PSC handed over the generator to the members of Bandarban Press Club at Bandarban Army Brigade Sadar Headquarters as the newsmen were facing difficulties to send news at the time of load-shedding.

Poultry farming suffers setback

BRAHMACHARI, Jan 23: Poultry farming is suffering a setback due to numerous reasons, reports BSS.

According to the local people, there is no cold storage here for storage of eggs. Besides, there is hardly any treatment facilities for poultry birds. There are about 1,800 poultry farms in the district, but for want of a cold storage, eggs and broiled chickens can not be preserved. Owners of the poultry farms in absence of cold storage can not preserve so many eggs for long and they are compelled to sell those at throwaway prices. Moreover, the marketing facilities for eggs are not up to the requirement. As a result, poultry farming is being affected.

Workshop concludes

KHAGRACHHARI, Jan 23: The four daylong training workshop on 'Essential Service Package' ended here in the Press Club auditorium on Friday last, reports BSS.

Organised by Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) the training workshop was held under the CHT development programme for health workers of three hill districts. A total of 27 health workers, eight from Khagrachhari, 10 from Rangamati, eight from Bandarban and one assistant field worker participated in the training workshop. Khagrachhari District Council Chairman Jatindra Lal Tripura inaugurated the workshop on January 15. Member of Central Managing Committee and Adviser of CHT Affairs Ministry Nurun Nabi Chowdhury was in the chair.



Some Islamic University students recently brought out a colourful procession in Magura town in observance of Eid miladun nabi. --Star photo

Victory in UP polls proves to be a bane for Subarna

MYMENSINGH, Jan 23: Victory in the Union Parishad (UP) election against an influential candidate proved to be a bane for Subarna Rani Mitra.

Apparently inflamed by the audacity of an ordinary housewife, the influential coterie accused Subarna's husband Nikhil Chandra Mitra of illicit relation with another married woman and brought him before village arbitration.

The arbiters, allegedly under influence of the coterie, pronounced punishment for Nikhil in accordance with a 'fatwa' (an Islamic edict) that prescribed 101 'dorra' (whiplashes) for infidelity.

Happy Nikhil was dug up to his waist in the earth and meted out the 101 lashes with a cane in presence of several hundred people

who witnessed aghast the barbarous act.

It all happened on November 5 last year in village Adhpakhia of Mankone union in Muktagachha upazila of Mymensingh district.

The woes of Subarna and Nikhil have not ended there. Outcast in the society and haunted by the humiliation, they left their home. They are now living with relatives in Muktagachha upazila town.

Diligent and affectionate Subarna won the seat of woman member from her ward in the last election to Union Parishad. She defeated the candidate set up by village leaders Safur Mondal, Ismail Hossain, Helaluddin and others.

Since then she and her family became the eyesore of Safur Mondal and his associates who

instigated the 'mastans' (hoodlums) to extract tolls from them. On November 1, the toll collectors demanded Tk 10,000. "Somehow I managed Tk 1,500 and gave them," Nikhil told this correspondent when met at Mutagachha this week. Nikhil would not name the 'mastans' for fear of further reprisal.

Narrating his woes, Nikhil said that in the morning of November 4 last year, he and his wife Subarna were returning home after taking bath in a nearby pond.

On way, Safur Mondal and some of his associates accosted Nikhil and Subarna and asked them to go to the house of Rina Akhter, said to be the wife of Manu of the village. The couple went to Rina's house without suspecting anything.

There Safur and his associates

accused Nikhil of illicit relation with Rina Akhter. Rina, who was in collusion with the group, admitted the fact.

The arbitration and punishment to Nikhil, based on a 'fatwa' by Kazi Ayub Ali, attracted attention of human rights organisations. Most villagers avoid journalists visiting the area for fear of muscle-men.

Kazi Ayub, however, denied that he gave the 'fatwa'. "I was present in the arbitration meeting that day, but I have not given any fatwa," he told this correspondent during a meeting at his home in Mankone union.

Jahan Ali, chairman of Mankone Union Parishad, who presided over the arbitration meeting that awarded the punishment to Nikhil told this correspondent

that he had no alternative. Safur Mondal and his associates gave the meeting "wrong information" on which the villagers got angry and demanded exemplary punishment to Nikhil.

"But I was not in agreement with the 'matbars' (village leaders) for awarding such punishment," added Jahan Ali.

The brutality stirred the conscience of the people in the area. Human rights organisations, women organisations and local Trinamul Sangathan organised processions and rallies at Muktagachha upazila town condemning the arbitration and demanding punishment to the arbiters.

All this also drew attention of the police. "We've immediately extended help to the victims to file

case against the offenders." OC of Muktagachha thana SM Kabir informed. Thirteen people were accused in the case. After speedy investigation, police submitted chargesheet against 14 persons accused Gaful Mondal, Ismail Hossain, Helaluddin, Abdul Mannan, Hossain Ali, Abul Hossain, Kazi Ayub Ali, Noor Hossain Farazi, Abdur Rahim, Sultan Ali, Taleb Ali, Abdul Hamid and Hasen Ali, and UP chairman Jahan Ali. On surrender, they were all granted bail by the court.

OC Kabir said despite assurance of security, Nikhil and Subarna are afraid of returning home in their village Adhpakhia.

"Why have I gone for election?" lamented Subarna cursing her fate. "They will kill us if we return to the village," she said in a trembling voice. UNB Feature