

Sirajganj Industrial Park development work begins

Minister assures proper compensation for affected people

SOYDABAD (Sirajganj), Jan 24: Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed on Tuesday sought people's mandate for Awami League at the coming general election to complete the ongoing massive development works, reports UNB.

A second term is needed for the government to accomplish the development efforts for making the country a "Sonar Bangla" as dreamt by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, he said inaugurating development work of Sirajganj Industrial Park, at the gateway to northern region.

"We need another 5-year term to develop the country to Sonar Bangla ... in last four and a half years we could build the foundations for Sonar Bangla," he told the inaugural function.

The project on developing infrastructure for setting up 244 medium and 326 small-scale industries on 400 acres of land, beside the western approach road to Bangabandhu Bridge, would be completed by year 2004 at an estimated cost of Tk 197 crore.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina laid the foundation stone of the park, expected to create employment for one lakh people mostly from the northern region of the country, on November 30, 1999.

Home Minister Mohammad Nasim, local MPs Abdul Latif Biswas, Abdul Latif Mirza and Prof Shahjahan Ali, BSCIC Chairman Ziaul Islam Chowdhury, Sirajganj Chamber president Sirajul Islam Khan and local Awami League leaders also addressed the function. Industries Secretary Al-Amin Chowdhury presided.

"I believe you, the people, will again send us to power to complete the development works of our government," said the ruling party stalwart, Tofail, giving a resume of the development efforts, especially in Sirajganj.

The industries minister said a granular fertiliser factory with a production capacity of 1,750 metric tons per day would be set up at a cost of Tk 2,000 crore opposite to the industrial park, 2-km from the Bangabandhu Bridge.

He also asked local administration to take necessary measures to elevate the existing BSCIC office here to "A" category from category "B".

"The district will be the best district in the country if we can ensure its survival politically," said this minister.

Nasim said with the completion of the Bangabandhu Bridge, establishing direct road communications between the country's northern and eastern parts, the prospect of the region to be developed into an industrial area brightened.

He invited both foreign and local investors to set up industries in the park availing of its facilities and said the special economic zone would facilitate the investors with cheap labour, gas, land and transportation of all modes rail, road and marine.

On completion of the Paksey Bridge, the park will be connected with country's both the sea ports Chittagong and Mongla.

He informed the local people that in the second phase of the

rail connection through Bangabandhu Bridge, a rail line would be constructed up to Bogra through Kazipur in the district.

"I have fulfilled all of my election pledges under the leadership of the Prime Minister ... I would like to assure again that the town would become second commercial capital if you vote for Awami League. I hope we will win in all seven seats of the district," Tofail said.

The minister assured proper compensation for land acquired for the industrial park.

Besides traditional infrastructure facilities, the industrial park would offer special arrangement for customs clearing, container loading on rain water straight from the factories, helipad, industrial counseling centre, fire station, media centre, conference mall, investors club and police outpost, BSCIC sources said.

The facilities as a whole would cover from counseling to set up an industry to marketing of the products, one official told the agency.

River dredging needed to revive 6 Madaripur ports

MADARIPUR, Jan 24: Charmaguria Port on the river Ariakhan, once known as 'Dandy of Bengal' for jute business, is falling into disuse with the river bed showing up gradually, reports UNB.

Emergence of numerous shoals and unabated erosion of the banks have rendered three other river ports in the district almost inoperative. Two other river ports have almost been devoured in last half decade.

These ports are located in Rajoir, Tekerhat, Charmaguria, Kalkini, Madborerchar and Utrail.

Due to accumulation of silts, about 20km of the River Ninnakumar from Mostafapur of Sadar upazila to Tekerhat of Rajoir upazila, have dried up making Tekerhat port, a gateway of southern region, inactive. Rajoir Port has also faced similar fate.

The flow of the River Ariakhan became slow causing hundreds of shoals to emerge.

Devastating erosion engulfed Utrail Port in Shibchar area. Madaripur Port on the River Padma had been washed away by erosion.

Thousands of boatmen, river vessel workers and labourers lost their jobs because of closure of the once-busy ports in the district.

Experts said planned dredging work could revive the ports in the area.

JP (Ershad) procession in Magura

From Our Correspondent
MAGURA, Jan 24: The district unit of Jatiyo Party (Ershad) brought out a procession in the town on Saturday in protest against the recent attack on Advocate Hasan Seraj Suja, district unit general secretary and party's central committee member.

The procession paraded main thoroughfares of the town. The activists later submitted a memorandum to Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police.

A rally was also held later on the party office premises with Khan Ziaul Huq, district unit president of JP, presiding over. Among others, Abu Bakar Siddique and Advocate Ratan Kumar Mitra addressed the rally.

Hasan Seraj Suja was attacked allegedly by some activists of BNP and its student wing Jatiyatabadi Chattrra Dal (JCD) on the local Collectorate Office premises on January 15.



(L-R) Prof Anwarul Islam, Vice-Chancellor of Bangladesh Agricultural University in Mymensingh, Prof M A Qudus, State Minister for Fisheries, Livestock and Lt Gen (Retd) Muhammad Nooruddin Khan, Minister for Science and Technology delivering their speeches at the First Annual Scientific Conference organised recently by the Bangladesh Association for Laboratory Animal Science at Syed Nazrul Islam Conference building of the university.

Mohasthan Mazar land grabbed by dishonest men

BOGRA, Jan 24 : More than 35 acres of land of Mohasthan "Mazar" (grave of a saint) have been dispossessed by unscrupulous businessmen and some dishonest people without any resistance, according to local people, reports BSS.

Gross financial irregularities have also been reported in the construction of Mazar Extension Project. A total of 38.84 acres was originally recorded after the name of Mohasthan "Mazar". Mazar Committee now possesses only 3.71 acres. The rest of the lands has been occupied by the people who constructed residential houses, shops and cultivated as croplands there.

The dispossession of Mazar lands has been made in connivance with the dishonest officers of the Land Revenue Department due to carelessness of the Mazar Committee.

The 22nd meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of the Religious Affairs Ministry was held on October 26, 1999, under the chairmanship of State Minister Moulana Nurul Islam in the Mazar premises. The meeting discussed the matter, expressed deep concern over the irregularities and directed the authorities to realise the dispossessed lands from the hands of illegal occupiers. But no initiative has so far been taken. The

Administrative Officer of the Mazar Committee has, however, reported the matter to the ministry.

Khandaker Maqbul Hossain, Administrative Officer, Mazar Committee, when contacted, denied the charges of irregularities, mentioned in the audit report.

Deputy Commissioner Bogra M Shamsul Huq had been trying to stop the irregularities of fund collection from the visitors.

Local people urged the government to take immediate steps to recover dispossessed lands, stop financial irregularities and protect the sanctity of the Mazar.

Women repression, kidnapping incidents up in 10 dists

JESSORE, Jan 24: Women repression and kidnapping incidents in 10 southwest districts are on alarming rise, reports UNB.

According to officials, some 802 incidents of torture and kidnapping were recorded in Jessore, Jhenidah, Magura, Narail, Chuadanga, Khulna, Bagerhat, Satkhira, Meherpur and Kushtia districts during the last year.

They said some 775 such incidents in 1999, 750 in 1998 and 650 in 1997 were recorded.

Of these districts, sources said, Kushtia topped the list where 147 repression and 25 kidnapping incidents were recorded during last year.

Women repression, torture records in other nine districts are: Jessore-65, Jhenidah-63, Magura-98, Narail-48, Khulna-88, Bagerhat-115, Satkhira-70, Chuadanga-40, and Meherpur-71.

Kidnapping incidents of these

districts during last one year are: Jessore-8, Jhenidah-9, Magura-6, Narail-4, Khulna-10, Bagerhat-12, Satkhira-11, Chuadanga-8, and Meherpur-13.

Due to the different drives and combing operations by the concerned agencies, murder incidents in these districts have decreased to some extent.

They said in 2000, some 355 murders were committed in these districts where Jessore topped the list recording 58 murders.

District-wise murder as per record is: Kushtia-47, Jhenidah-50, Magura-20, Narail-24, Khulna-39, Bagerhat-42, Satkhira-26, Chuadanga-35 and Meherpur-12.

Official sources said they recorded some 525 murders in 1999 and 550 in 1998.

Besides, some 300 cases for possessing arms, 567 cases for drug abuse, 43 for possessing

explosives, 480 for smuggling, 52 for dacoity, 85 for robbery, and 144 for riot were filed with the police during the last year.

Girl gangraped From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Jan 23: A girl aged 10 was gangraped at Madhyadanga in Daulatpur here on Monday evening.

Daughter of a day labourer, the girl was abducted by four young boys who raped her till midnight in a classroom of nearby Agriculture College.

Local people rescued the girl and sent her to Khulna General Hospital.

A case was recorded at noon on Tuesday after local people laid a siege to Daulatpur police station demanding immediate arrest of the rapists allegedly belonging to Daulatpur unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League



Maj Gen (Retd) M S A Bhuiyan, a noted freedom fighter and former Principal Staff Officer (PSO) to ex-Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, on Monday addressing a gathering of people of Daudkandi residing in Dhaka at a city hotel. He announced his desire to contest in the next general election from Comilla-2 constituency.

657criminal cases lodged in Magura last year

From Hossain Seraj

MAGURA, Jan 24: About two crimes occurred every day on average in the district from January to December last year, official sources said.

Police sources said, some 657 crimes occurred last year while in

cases were registered with four thanas here.

Of the criminal cases 19 were in connection with murder, women oppression 56, dacoity 2, robbery 8, rioting 38, child oppression 2, theft 61, arms and

year, out of the total 56 women, 17 were raped, 2 acid burnt, one was seriously injured and 36 others oppressed in various ways.

Meanwhile, Magura police recovered 66 fire arms, 1,15,960

the previous year the number of crimes was 674.

Last year 657 criminal cases were lodged with four thanas of Magura district in connection with the crimes which took place here.

Of the criminal cases, 20 were in connection with murder, women oppression 98, dacoity 1, robbery 3, public safety act 11, rioting 19, child repression 2, theft 53, armed and explosive recovery 56, kidnaps 6, police assault 3, and other cases 385.

In the year 1999, total of 674 crimes took place in the district and same number of criminal

explosive recovery 93, kidnap 4, police assault 2 and other cases 389.

Last year the number of crimes decreased than that of the previous year 1999. But the incident of oppression on women in the year 2000 has increased alarmingly. During the year 2000, the number of women oppression incidents was 98 which is much higher than that of the year 1999.

Beside, out of the total 98 oppressed women, 18 were raped, one was seriously injured and 79 others were oppressed in various ways. In the previous

pieces of chocolate bomb, 517 rounds of live bullets, 1,526 bottles of phensidyl, 3,648 ampules of pathadrine injections, 364 sacks of Indian sugar, wrist watch 19 pieces, 4 motorcycles, 4 by-cycles, and 39 pieces of Indian shares during the last year.

During the same period, police also arrested 5,653 people in connection with different type of crimes. Of the arrested persons, 43 are listed terrorists, 1,685 accused of CRPC, 1,649 of GR, 1,566 of regular cases and 710 on section 54.



Farmers of Mollahpara under Sadar upazila in Jamalpur district using diesel engine while planting IRRI-Boro saplings during this season. --Star photo

IRRI-Boro output target may not be achieved in Jamalpur

From Our Correspondent

JAMALPUR, Jan 24: IRRI-Boro production target in the district may not be achieved this season due to problems, including seed crisis and 'interrupted' irrigation facility.

Farmers said frequent power outage and faulty irrigation equipment are responsible for the irrigation problem.

Besides, price-hike of agriculture inputs and shortage of bullocks for tilling the lands are also taking toll on the farming.

Frequent power disruption is hampering farming severely as about 1,200 shallow and deep tube wells depend on electricity supplied by Jamalpur Palli Bidyut Samity.

Power failure has become a regular feature in different parts of the district. Power remains suspended for hours together.

When contacted Jamalpur Palli Bidyut Samity authorities

said they depend on Power Development Board (PDB) as they purchase power from the PDB. The PDB cannot supply required quantity of power, they added.

According to local Agriculture Extension Department sources, a massive programme was taken up in all the seven upazilas of the district during the current season to bring a total of 97,000 hectares of land under IRRI-Boro cultivation.

According to upazila-wise break-up, 26,750 hectares of land were brought under the farming in Sadar, 16,200 hectares of land in Sarisabari, 15,920 in Malendah, 11,900 hectares in Islampur, 5,850 in Dewanganj, 11,900 in Maderganj and 8,480 hectares in Bakshiganj.

Farmers said supply of adequate seed by the government is

scanty. But seed can be found in the open markets, they added.

Besides, repeated and abnormal rise in the prices of fertilisers and fuel is another problem.

Our Netrakona correspondent adds: Acute seed scarcity is poised to hamper Boro paddy cultivation in Kalmaknda, Mohanganj, Khaliajuri, and Atpara upazilas of the district.

A large number of farmers of the upazilas could not cultivate paddy this season due to the seed scarcity.

Farmers said last year's flash flood caused havoc to 75 per cent standing Boro paddy in 'haor' areas of the upazilas. As a result, they failed to store seeds.

Although now is the proper time to cultivate Baro paddy, many farmers could not even prepare their seedbeds due to the seed scarcity.

To distribute loans under the project, farmers are selected by Agriculture Marketing Department of the Agriculture Ministry. Then they are given cards to take loan from local banks.

According to officials, growers of 24 districts took farm loans under the scheme depositing crops in 70 godowns. An amount of Tk 39.12 lakh was given among the farmers in Panchagarh last season.

But many farmers in Panchagarh district alleged that they faced unnecessary problems while receiving loan from their local banks. They said many fariachs (middlemen) were also given cards for receiving loan, depriving the genuine farmers.

Crop Warehouse Credit Scheme yet to make tangible progress

THAKURGAON, Jan 24: The government-sponsored Crop Warehouse Credit Scheme, aiming at ensuring fair price of the produces of small and marginal farmers, could not yet make any tangible progress, reports UNB.

The ambitious project, undertaken with financial assistance from Switzerland, was launched in 1978-79 after constructing some new godowns and renovating some old ones.

In last 21 years, the noble project could only be extended to some selected areas of 24 districts.

The districts are Panchagarh, Dinajpur, Nilphamari, Rangpur, Gaibandha, Bogra, Rajshahi,

Magura, Jessore, Narail, Manikganj, Jamalpur, Sherpur, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Joypurhat, Bhola, Barisal, Patuakhali, Kishoreganj, Gopalganj, Gazipur, Pirojpur and Faridpur.

According to the project rules, a farmer can deposit up to 10 quintal of crop in his nearby godown under the project every season and receive 80 per cent loan against the price of his deposited crops.

In the godown, a farmer can keep its produces for six months while seed for nine months as collateral. A seven-member committee comprising of local growers is supposed to supervise the warehouse scheme.

News snaps

Youth chopped near police station

BAGERGAT, Jan 4: A group of terrorists chopped a youth in front of the local police station here on Tuesday when he came to appear before a court, reports UNB.

Police and witnesses said the hoodlums numbering about 12 took Kishore Saha, 25, of Nagerbazar area in the town to a nearby place in front of the police station from the court premises at about 11 am. They hit Saha with sharp weapons indiscriminately and left the spot instantly. With critical wounds Saha was admitted to Bagerhat Sadar Hospital. A procession was brought out in the town in the evening in protest against the incident.

Two killed in mishap

FENI, Jan 24: Two people, including a Singaporean, were killed and another two injured when a microbus skidded off the road at Charipur on Dhaka-Chittagong highway Monday night, reports UNB.

Police said the accident occurred at about 10 pm when the driver lost his control over the steering, killing Singapore national Moktar-Bin-Jafar, 45, and Delwar Hossain, 35, of Gazipur on the spot. The injured Bakul Das, 26, and Makbul Hossain, 24, of Gazipur were admitted to Feni Sadar Hospital.

Pir slaughtered

KISHOREGANJ, Jan 24: Unidentified assailants slaughtered an old pir (preacher) at Deukhan village in Tarail upazila here Monday night, reports UNB.

Police said a gang of five people in the guise of devotees attended the weekly mehfil (discussion) of pir Abdul Bari Khan, 78, Monday night and later slept with him in the same room. He was found dead Tuesday morning, police said. The body was sent to the Kishoreganj Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy. A case was filed with local police in this regard.

Businessman murdered

SAVAR, Jan 24: A businessman was hacked to death at Amin Bazar area here on Monday night, reports UNB.

The deceased was identified as Saleh Muhammad, 42, of Hizla village and the owner of a brick-field. Police said a group of assailants numbering seven swooped on him at his brick field office and hacked him to death at 7 pm as a sequel to previous enmity. A case was filed with local police in this regard.

Wife to die for murdering husband

PIROJPUR, Jan 24: A court here on Tuesday sentenced a housewife to death and her brother to life-term imprisonment for murdering her husband, reports UNB.

The court also fined her brother Sabur Tk 10,000, in default, to suffer another one-year rigorous imprisonment. According to prosecution, Asmat Ali of village Baghajora in Nazirpur upazila was killed by his wife, Jahanara Begum and Sabur on August 16, 1997. Ali was knifed to death when he went to his father-in-law's house to bring back his wife against her will. Additional District and Sessions Judge M Ainul Huq pronounced her judgement acquitting three others Akkas Ali Sheikh, Ilias Sheikh and Shahida Begum. They were accused of helping the killers.

Scout rally concludes

THAKURGAON, Jan 23: The 15th regional scout rally of Rajshahi division concludes here on Saturday, reports UNB.

Earlier, State Minister for Primary and Mass Education Shatish Chandra Roy opened the rally. A total of 2,070 scouts including 216 girls and 250 officials from 230 high schools participated in the rally. Ramesh Chandra Sen, MP, Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Abdul Baki and regional scout officials addressed the inaugural function.

Man beaten to death

JESSORE, Jan 23: A man was beaten to death by unidentified assailants at Ektarpur village in Abhoynagar upazila last week, reports UNB.

The deceased was identified as Abdul Wahab, 42, son of Keramat Ali of village Bagda. Police said a gang of hoodlums caught Wahab on his way home from Noapara Bazar at about 10 pm and beat him to death on the spot. The cause behind the killing could not be known. Later, police recovered the body from a pond in the area and sent it to Jessore General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Rabi farming scheme

DINAJPUR, Jan 23: Some 14,000 hectares of land in nine unions of Nababganj upazila have been brought under Rabi crops cultivation in the current season, reports UNB.

Upazila Agriculture Extension Department said some 4,000 hectares of land have been brought under wheat, 1,500 hectares under mustard, 500 hectares under potato, 300 hectares under maize, 200 hectares under lentil, 210 hectares under chick-pea, 100 hectares under 'mashkalai' and 100 hectares under sweet potato cultivation. AED also has ensured supply of quality seeds, fertiliser and other necessary inputs among the farmers at fair prices to make the programme a success.

6 liquor-making factories found

BARISAL, Jan 23: Narcotics Control Department unearthed six liquor-making factories in the town last week, reports UNB.

Acting on a tip-off, a team from the department raided more than 20 houses at Amerkutir and Padmabati areas and found the factories. Later, they seized huge quantity of liquor and liquor-making equipment. Six cases were filed with Kotwali police station indicting Dulal, Sumon, Bijoy Pal, Deelip, Monju Rani and Khokan. However, police failed to arrest them.

200 houses burnt to ashes

NILPHAMARI, Jan 23: More than 200 houses were burnt to ashes in a devastating fire at Natib Dary Para of Gorgan union under sadar upazila of the district on Sunday, reports BSS.

The fire originated from a kitchen of Ali Hossain and engulfed the entire village within a few minutes. Other goods estimated at Taka 10 lakh were burnt to ashes.

1,420 bottles of phensidyl recovered

BRAHMANBARIA, Jan 23: Police in separate drives on Sunday recovered 1,420 bottles of phensidyl and 10 bottles of liquor from sadar upazila, reports UNB.

Police said 140 bottles of phensidyl and 10 bottles of liquor were recovered from the possession of three tempo passengers at Mirzapur area. The three passengers, who were nabbed, are Arab Ali, 25, Mostu Mia, 30, and Momena Khatun, 35. Besides, 200 bottles of phensidyl were recovered from Betbaria while 680 bottles from Kazlabael, east bank of the river Titas and 400 bottles from Gajaria area on Dhaka-Sylhet highway in an abandoned condition. Meanwhile, in another drive, police recovered 500 grams of hemp from the possession of five people at Singarbeel Bazar. The arrested were identified as Mohammad Ali, Joynal Mia, Sentu Mia, Musa and Mozammel.

Diarrhoea, fever break out

KUSHTIA, Jan 24: Various types of diseases like diarrhoea and viral fever have broken out in rural areas of the district with the change of weather, reports UNB.

According to hospital sources, some 10,000 people in rural areas were affected with diarrhoea, viral fever, stomach ailments and other gastrointestinal diseases in last one month. They said rural health complexes have been swamped with hundreds of diarrhoeal patients, mostly children and women. But the patients were reportedly being deprived of proper treatment for lack of necessary medicines.

Tk 1 cr contraband seized

MOULVIBAZAR, Jan 24: BDR personnel recovered contraband worth above Tk one crore in various drives in frontier areas of the district in last 10 months, reports UNB.

Officials said in Srimongal, the BDR personnel conducted the drives in 18 points from January to October last year and seized a huge quantity of smuggled goods. Some 728 cases were filed during the period in connection with smuggling. They said hemp, phensidyl, liquor and other kinds of drugs were among the smuggled items.

Ashrayan project complete

MOULVIBAZAR, Jan 24: Works on Saipur Banasree Ashrayan (housing) project at Shabbazpur union in Baralekha upazila were completed, reports UNB.

Army personnel from Moimamoti Cantonment implemented the project on about 10 acres of khas land.