

Gaibandha DIARY

Primary students face scarcity of textbooks

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Students of primary schools in Gaibandha district face acute shortage of textbooks.

As the scarcity has been continuing for one, attendance drops in many schools. Teachers said the required number of books is yet to be supplied by the authorities, despite repeated requests. According to District Primary Education Department, the district needs 12 lakh 73 thousand and 639 pieces of books for class-I to class-V this year. But till January 27 the department received only 3 lakh 48 thousand and 239 pieces of books. Guardians said only Mathematics and English books of class-II are available in markets. On the other hand, secondary students are also facing textbook crisis as elsewhere in the country.

IRRI-Boro cultivation programme

An extensive IRRI-Boro paddy cultivation programme has been undertaken in the district with a production target of 2.68 lakh metric tons.

According to district Agriculture Extension Department (AED), a total of 90,000 hectare of lands will be brought under the IRRI-Boro cultivation. Of them, HYV variety of paddy will be cultivated on 89,000 hectares of land and local variety on 1,000 hectare. Under the programme, the production target has been fixed at 41,260 tons in Sadar upazila; 36,228 tons in Sadullapur; 31,012 tons in Palashbari; 79,440 tons in Gobindaganj; 38,860 tons in Sunderganj; 9,940 tons in Fulchhari; and 31,820 tons in Shaghata.

Fuel lifting from locomotives rises

Fuel lifting from locomotives running between Trimohoni and Balashi Terminal and ferries plying between Balashi and Bahadurabad terminals is on the rise.

Local people said a section of railway and BIWTC are involved in the crime. The stolen fuel is selling almost openly in Sadar, Fulchhari and Shaghata upazilas. Usually the fuel is being used in irrigation in the district. Local people have urged the authorities concerned to take immediate action against the organised gangs.

17 fall sick

Sixteen children and a woman fell sick after they ate 'poisonous' potato at village Falia under Sadar upazila in the district recently.

They were shifted to hospital. The victims were identified as Parveen, 40, Arif, 5, Khadija, 3, Laju, 7, Nurunnabi, 10, Leeza, 4, Lipi, 2, Chaina, 4, Nayan, 7, Kohinoor, 5, Shaheen, 5, Morium, 5, Asik Babu, 5, Russell Mia, 3, shraf, 14, Milon, 10, and Akbar, 3.

Price spiral of construction materials in N region

UNB, Kurigram

The prices of construction materials have shot up in the northern regions, including Kurigram hampering construction work on infrastructures by government and private organisations seriously.

As construction works on buildings, bridges, culverts, roads, houses and business establishments by both the government and private organisations are going on in different parts of the northern regions, the prices of construction materials, including sands, bricks and rods, have gone up sharply in local markets.

One metric ton of rod is now being sold between Tk 22,000 and Tk 23,000 as against Tk 17,000-18,000. The price of bricks per thousand increased by Tk 200-300 while prices of iron-materials rose by Tk 5-7 per kg.

Apart from this, the price of sand has gone up in the local markets due to an increase in transport cost, sources said adding that the owners of factories has increased the price of rods due to price hike of its raw materials.

The importers have already shrunk their imports as the government has imposed heavy customs duty on raw materials of rods.

In addition, the crisis of raw materials of rods has been prevailing in the region as Bangladesh has not yet bought abandoned and wrecked foreign ships, used for manufacturing rods. Meanwhile, it also decided to import rods from India to check price spiral of rods.

Although the price of cement remains stable, local markets have been flooded with substandard cements. Some dishonest traders and importers are allegedly selling adulterated and poor quality Indian cements to customers sticking labels of quality Bangladeshi cements.

Besides, most of the mini cement factories set up in northern region have neither laboratory nor silo, an ingredient of cement, depriving the customers of quality cements.

If provided with necessary facilities, the mini cement factories could export quality cement to foreign countries within four years after meeting the local demands.

Jail terms for 23 in Satkhira, Kishoreganj

UNB, Dhaka

Twenty-three people were sentenced to different terms of imprisonment in Kishoreganj and Satkhira districts in separate cases recently.

Of the accused, 22 were convicted in Kishoreganj of whom 21 were jailed for committing two separate robberies and one for drug trafficking. Besides, a man in Satkhira was sentenced to life term imprisonment for killing his wife.

Court sources said the Assistant Sessions Judge of Kishoreganj Mohammad Akbar Hossain Mridha sentenced 16 people to different terms in a dacoity case.

Of them, Kitab Ali alias Ketu was awarded two years Rigorous Imprisonment (RI) while Renu Mia one year simple imprisonment and Isamuddin, Saifuddin, Abbas Sheikh, Taher Uddin (absconding), Mahmood Hossain, Nurul Islam,

Dulal, Kanchan, Momtaj, Kitab Ali, Muslim, Matiur Rahman, Rashid and Sabu six months simple imprisonment.

The accused committed dacoity at a shop at village Jaluapara in Sadar upazila on January 7, 1985.

The same judge on February 1 awarded Dhirmol Rabi Das two years simple imprisonment for possessing wine illegally. The court also fined him Tk 200, in default, to suffer one month more.

In a raid at his house at village Zafrabad in Kuliarchar upazila on July 24, 1997, officials of local Narcotics Control Department recovered wine from his possession.

Five people Liton Mia, Rajat Ali, Fazlu, Arab Khan and Mohammad Ali were awarded 10 years in jail in absentia in another dacoity case.

In the verdict Assistant Sessions judge of the same district Nanda Kumar Sarker fined each of them Tk

1,000, in default, to suffer six months more RI.

According to the prosecution, Bhairab police arrested them while taking preparation to commit a dacoity at village Bhoirabpur on December 1, 1993. Police recovered a pipe gun, three rounds of bullet and a number of sharp knives searching their bodies.

In Satkhira, Hossain Ali, 30, of frontier village Bolkari in Sadar upazila was awarded life imprisonment in absentia on February 6 for murdering his wife.

According to prosecution, Hossain Ali strangled his wife Taherunnessa, 20, to death following a family feud on March 4, 1993.

After examining records and witnesses Additional District and Sessions Judge Mohammad Sirajul Islam handed down the verdict.

The court also fined him Tk 50,000, in default, to suffer two years more RI.

Two uplift projects undertaken in Mymensingh

BSS, Mymensingh

Mymensingh Municipality has taken up two major projects under its development programme in the current fiscal year. The projects include re-construction of SK Town Hall and construction of a new administrative office building of the municipality.

The government approved the estimated cost amounting to Taka two crore three lakh twenty-five thousand for the re-construction of Town Hall and Taka 73 lakh 40 thousand for the construction of new office building of the municipality.

According to an official source, Minister of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Zillur Rahman laid the foundation stones of both the projects when he came over here on May 23 last year.

As per plan of re-construction, the Town Hall will be 750 seated and it will have 11 rooms and seven

toilets. The Town Hall will be re-constructed on the same place of the old one with 22 thousand sq ft floor space. The primary work for re-construction is undergoing fast.

It may be mentioned here that the 300-seated old Town Hall was constructed by the then Zaminder (landlord) of Muktagacha after the name of Zaminder Surya Kanta Acharya Chowdhury more than 100 years ago.

Construction of the new two-storied administrative office building with 11,290 sq ft floor space has already been started on the bank of the River Brahmaputra near Sonali Bank. This new office building will have 24 apartments.

Construction work of these two projects are expected to be completed by the year 2002.

Besides, Mymensingh Municipality is going to take up some projects under development programme at a cost of Taka 55

lakh during the current fiscal year.

The projects will include repair and re-construction of roads, improvement of drainage and development of hat-bazars and parks.

Literacy rate up by 14 pc in Jessore

UNB, Jessore

The rate of literacy has gone up by 14 per cent and population by 20 per cent in Jessore district during the last 10 years.

According to the preliminary report of the current population census, held from January 23 to 27, the population increased to nearly 25 lakh from about 21.06 lakh in 1991 in the district.

It was the fourth census after the independence.

Female members of 15 UPs in Madaripur neglected?

UNB, Madaripur

Blaming their male colleagues for sidelining them in decision making, female members of 15 union parishads (UPs) in Sadar upazila under Madaripur district have threatened to resign en masse.

In a written complaint to local UNO, they said their chairmen had been neglecting them since their election to the UPs and they hardly allow them to take part in any development activities.

They further alleged that the chairmen did not allow them to involve in distribution of VGF and VGD cards, and sometimes force them to sign on project documents. "They also offer bribes for such illegal business," said one of the aggrieved UP members.

The UP members also held a press conference on January 26 to ventilate their grievances.

In their written complaint, the UP female members alleged that the chairman of Jhawdi Union had threatened female member Ranu Begum to strip off and drive her out of the office for raising her voice against his misdeeds.

They said their appeal to the UNO to take necessary action against the UP chairmen went unheeded.

The UP chairmen in another press conference on Tuesday denied the allegations brought against them and described the movement of the female members as a deep-rooted conspiracy against them.

Defending their positions, the UP chairmen said they could not assign any specific jobs to the female members, as there was no job description for them.

Tk 33cr project for Jhum cultivation

BSS, Bandarban

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB) has taken up a Taka 33 crore project for socio-economic development of the traditional jhum cultivators in three hill districts.

Official sources said that his seven-year project covering the districts of Bandarban, Khagrachhari and Rangamati will start in 2001 and concluded in 2007.

A total of 1,500 tribal families of the three hill districts will be brought under the project. Each family will be provided with five acres of land, fruit saplings, paddy seeds and agriculture inputs free of cost.

Community centres will be set up at the remote villages to impart training to the unemployed youths to increase their skills in producing crops. Besides, loan will be sanctioned for pisciculture, poultry farming and cow rearing.

Base line survey of the project started simultaneously in all the three districts on Friday. Seventy persons have been engaged for the base line survey. One hundred and six workers including three officers will implement the project in three districts.

The project director told news-men that work in 25 upazilas of three districts will begin simultaneously. He expressed the hope that the project will change the lot of the poor jhum cultivators quickly.

Tawfiq Aziz Khan's death condoled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

A meeting to condole the death of Tawfiq Aziz Khan, renowned journalist, sports commentator and Executive Editor of The Daily Star, was held at Sirajganj Press Club on Sunday afternoon.

Presided over by Jakirul Islam, the meeting was addressed, among others, by Helal Uddin, Tofiq Uddin, Akhteruzzaman Bablu, Masud Rana, Saiful Alam Daler, Nazrul Kabir Rana and Hirok Goon.

The speakers prayed for the salvation of the departed soul.

Khan breathed his last on Sunday at 10: 05 am at Salahuddin Hospital in Dhaka. He was 64.

He had been suffering from lung cancer.

Guest birds need safety in temporary abodes

UNB, Netrakona

Indiscriminate catching of guest birds is going on with impunity in water bodies and hilly areas of Netrakona district by the professional and amateur hunters violating the government ban.

Like previous years, thousands of guest birds from the Siberian region poured into the open water bodies and marshy areas of Kaliazuri, Mohonganj, Madan, Atpara and Barhatta upazilas and hilly areas of Durgapur, Kalmakanda upazilas.

The professional as well as amateur hunters are seen catching the birds at random and selling those in the local markets before the eyes of the law enforcing agencies.

When visiting some spots, this correspondent found that hunting spree is going on in different ways. Some hunters use guns and some use cages to catch the birds. They also apply a number of methods to net the birds.

It was found that bunters do not bother to obey the government ban on hunting the migratory birds and

local administration is maintaining a mysterious silence in this respect.

When contacted, the local environmentalists said that if this trend continues, the migratory birds would stop coming into the country jeopardising the ecological balance.

They called upon the concerned authorities to take adequate measures to ensure safety of the guest birds in their temporary abodes.

Jeep driver shot dead by muggers in Ctg

UNB, Chittagong

Muggers shot dead a jeep driver and took away one lakh taka from him at Fatikchhari in Chittagong district at 9 am on Saturday.

Police said driver Mohammad Hossain, 50, was carrying the money of a business house. Four gunmen stopped him on the way to Bibihat, shot in his head and took away the money. Hossain died on the spot.

NEWS SNAPS

Diarrhoea claims two in one month

UNB, Joypurhat

An outbreak of waterborne diseases like diarrhoea has claimed two lives in Joypurhat district in last one month.

Hospital sources said some 228 diarrhoeal patients, mainly children, were admitted to District Modern Hospital in last month. Two children died during the period.

Rivals' clash leaves man dead

UNB, Pabna

A man was killed and 10 people were injured in a clash between two groups of villagers at Jamalpur in Sadar upazila under Pabna district Wednesday, according to a delayed report. The deceased was identified as Shahidul Islam, 27. Two of the injured were admitted to General Hospital.

Witnesses said the clash between the two rival groups took place over establishing supremacy in the area. In another incident, the body of an unidentified man was recovered from Tebunia Bazar in Sadar upazila Thursday. In last eight days till Thursday, six people were killed in various incidents, according to police records.

Capital punishment to killer

UNB, Laxmipur

A court in Laxmipur on Thursday gave capital punishment to two persons for murdering a man. The convicts are identified as Harun (absconding) and Zahirul Islam of Aladadpur village in Sadar upazila. The court acquitted three accused Manzuma Khatun, Kamal Hossain and Abu Taher as the allegations brought against them were not proved.

The case history, in brief, was that Harun and Zahirul stabbed Sharif, son of late Ana Mia of the same village, to death on December 11, 1995. After examining the witnesses and records, District and Sessions Judge Moinul Islam Chowdhury handed down this verdict.

Seven JCD, Jubo Dal activists injured

UNB, Munshiganj

Seven activists of JCD and Jubo Dal were injured in an attack allegedly by Chharta League workers at Srinagar in Munshiganj Wednesday.

Witnesses said Wednesday's attack was a sequel to their earlier clashes which took place on Jan 27 and 28 following the harassment of a girl, said to be the sister of a JCD worker, by the BCL men.

Movement of river vessels disrupted

UNB, Manikganj

Movement of river vessels on a number of routes in the Padma and Jamuna rivers is being disrupted for the last several days due to foggy weather.

Sources with BIWTC said river vehicles could not move on the routes due to thick fog. Apart from foggy weather, quick loss of navigability in many parts of the rivers was also hampering movement of river vessels. The authorities had to suspend ferry services on Aricha-Doulatdia route on a number of occasions in last several days.

Four alleged muggers held

UNB, Kishoreganj

Four alleged muggers were arrested from Utharia in Sadar upazila in Kishoreganj Sunday night.

The arrested were identified as Sidique, 25, M Chand Miah, 22, Mujibur Rahman alias Golap Miah, 25, and Meer Hossain, 35. Police said locals caught them red-handed as they tried to snatch cash and gold ornaments from two milkmen. Acting on their confessional statements, police later recovered two local-made pipe guns, some ammunition and other sharp weapons. Separate cases were filed.

Youth with fake note arrested

UNB, Noakhali

Police arrested a young man along with a counterfeit note of Tk 500 denomination from a bazaar in Chatkhil upazila on Wednesday.

On information, police arrested Abdul Karim, 22, as he tried to shop with the forged note. He was sent to jail jailat.

The traditional pottery

PHOTO FEATURE: DELWAR KABIR



Potters continue making pitchers, bowls and other household utensils at a village in Jhenidah district, although the items are not in great demand. These days aluminium, melamine and plastic products have almost replaced the pottery items in the district as elsewhere in the country. Potters say dearth of capital, price-hike of raw materials and lack of marketing facilities are taking toll on the traditional profession. Many are contemplating to opt for other professions. The potters have urged the government to take measures to help them. The pictures show a woman prepares clay, the main ingredient of pottery (1), a man is busy making a pot on wheel (2), another woman puts finishing touch to a bowl (3) and two potters take pots to market after these were baked in oven (4).