

NEWS SNAPS



Sabur Ahmed, General Manager (GM) of Rangs Electronics Limited, sole distributor of Sony colour television (TV) and other products opened its 48th Show Room in Faridpur on Saturday. Monirul Hassan Khan, Advisor, Rangs Electronics Barisal, Dhaka Area Sales Manager Wahidur Rahman, Senior Executive (Marketing) Tanvir Hossain, other senior officers, local journalists and elite were present.

Two school girls murdered

UNB, Chapainawabganj  
Two teenage school girls were murdered in one month in Nachole and Bholahat upazilas of Chapainawabganj district. Of the victims, Fancy, 16, daughter of Abdul Kuddus in Nachole Upazila was killed on January 28 and Selina Khatun, 13, daughter of Khabir Uddin of Bholahat upazila was murdered on February 20. Police said they recovered the slaughtered body of Fancy, a student of class IX of Golabari High School, from a ditch. Family sources said on the fateful day she left home for school, but did not return. Two youths Montu, 21, and Kazol, 20, were arrested following a case filed by victim's elder brother Matur Rahman. In another incident Bholahat police recovered the body of Selina, a student of class VII of Nekjan High School, from a canal on February 21. Selina went missing on February 20. Police suspected that she was strangled to death after rape. A case was filed with the police.

Man stabbed to death

Dacoits stabbed a house owner to death at South Rampur village in Companiganj Upazila under Noakhali district and looted valuables worth Tk 3 lakh on Saturday night. Police and witnesses said the bandits stormed into the house at dead of night and murdered the houseowner, Tazul Islam, 65, while he tried to resist them. They later on decamped with the valuables including cash, gold ornaments and television set. State Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs Obaidul Kader visited the victim's house on the following morning and conveyed his deep sympathy to the bereaved family members. A case was filed with police.

Sex worker commits suicide

A sex worker of a brothel in Madaripur town allegedly committed suicide recently by hanging herself in her room. Police on information recovered the body of Foti, 30, on February 17. Police said she committed suicide as her beloved, a Christian youth, Bappi, 30, married another prostitute, Laily, recently. Postmortem of the body was conducted at the Sadar hospital and a UD case was filed.

Scarcity of water

Water-borne intestinal diseases are spreading rapidly in Comilla district due to acute scarcity of safe water in the current dry season. Police of remote rural areas can not collect drinking water as a huge number of tubewells remained out of order and they are compelled to drink contaminated pond-water, which is the main cause of intestinal diseases, local sources said. According to Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), there are some 42,255 shallow tubewells in the district of which 2,212 remained inoperative. But number of inoperative tubewells would be much higher than the government figure, said unofficial sources. Local people urged the authorities concerned to take immediate steps to repair the disordered tubewells to ensure smooth supply of drinking water.

Baby girl raped

UNB, Tangail  
A six-year-old baby was raped at Betka in Tangail town on Monday evening. Local people, who took the girl to General Hospital in a critical condition, alleged that Joynal Mia, 17, of the area forcibly took the girl to the bank of the nearby pond and raped her while she was going to her father's tea shop. They said the culprit fled the scene when they came to the spot hearing the hue and cry of the victim. They also said some influential local people started threatening the father of the victim not to file a case with police against the culprit.

Incidents of cow lifting up

UNB, Panchagarh  
Incidents of cow lifting has increased alarmingly in Boda and Atowary upazilas of Panchagarh district in last two months. Police and local farmers said the organised gangs lifted 20 cows from the cowsheds of three villagers of Jholishalshiri union in Boda upazila in one night last month while 30 cows of 10 farmers were also stolen from Panchpir union on the same night. Besides, the thieves lifted over 100 cows from Toria, Aloakhoa, Aghamgorh, Mirzapur, Radhanagar and other areas of Balarampur union of Atowary upazila during the period. Farmers have expressed grave concern over the increasing trend of cow lifting and urged the authorities to take necessary action against the culprits.

Seed crisis hampers IRRI-Boro farming

UNB, Chapainawabganj  
IRRI-Boro cultivation in Gomostapur upazila of Chapainawabganj district may be hampered this season due to seed crisis and water stagnation. The crisis of seeds cropped up as the growers of the area could not preserve seeds following last season's flood that badly damaged their crops. Farmers are not getting quality seeds even after paying high prices. They said per mound of IRRI-Boro seeds are being sold in the local markets between Tk 4000 and Tk 6000. Moreover, the farmers are unable to prepare lands for sowing seeds due to water stagnation caused by unplanned construction of dams and roads in many places of the upazila.

Two youths with arms arrested

UNB, Bandarban  
Police arrested two youths along with arms from the bus-station in Bandarban on Monday. Acting on a tip-off, police arrested the two youths from the bus-stand area and recovered a foreign-made pistol and an LG from their possession. The arrested were identified as Mostafizur Rahman and Sajjad Mohammad Obaidullah of Hathazari upazila in Chittagong district. Later, they were taken to police remand. A case was filed with the police in this regard.

Three with drugs arrested

UNB, Munshiganj  
Police arrested three people along with huge quantity of drugs from a house in Sonarang area in Tongibari upazila in Munshiganj Wednesday. The arrested were identified as Malek Bepari, 48, an alleged drug trafficker, his nephew Jewel Bepari, 26, and his employee Sirajul Islam, 23. Acting on a tip-off, a team of police led by OC Fazlur Rahman Khan raided the house of Malek Bepari and arrested them red handed. During the raid, they also seized 55 bottles of foreign-made liquor, 250 bottles of phensidyl, 41 cans of beer and 250 gram of hemp worth about Tk one lakh. Malek has long been carrying out drug business illegally in different parts of the district, police said. A case was filed.

Agri-fair concludes

UNB, Jhalakati  
A three-day agriculture fair, organised by the Department of Agricultural Extension, concluded at children's park in Jhalakati town on Sunday. High yielding agri-products and modern technologies and methods of farming were demonstrated in the fair participated by NGOs, nurseries and departments of Forest, Fisheries and Livestock. A total of 44 stalls were opened by the participants in the fair, which concluded through a gathering of farmers. DAE Deputy Director M Bashiruddin chaired the function.

Diesel crisis in 8 N-dists

UNB, Kurigram  
Farmers of eight northern districts including Kurigram fell into trouble at the beginning of IRRI-boro season, as they can not operate their pumps due to scarcity of diesel. Supply of diesel from three main depots in the region was stopped as the stock in these depots has come down to the level of 'dead stock.' As a result, diesel is sold between Tk 18-20 per litre in the rural areas of Kurigram, Gaibandha, Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Dinajpur, Thakurgaon and Panchagarh districts. Parbatipur railway overhead depot in Dinajpur district and two floating depots at Chilmari of Kurigram and Balashi of Gaibandha district are the main sources of diesel supply in this region. But as the supply was ceased from these depots, diesel is now being brought from Baghabari depot in Sirajganj district multiplying the transportation cost of the suppliers. To make up the increased transportation cost, the suppliers are selling the fuel at higher price. Under the supervision of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, the country's second largest railway overhead depot was set up at Parbatipur in 1999 to ensure adequate supply of diesel in eight districts of greater

Rangpur and Dinajpur. Padma, Jamuna and Meghna Petroleum companies have nine tanks in this depot including six 4.20-lakh litre capacity tanks and three small ones with 1.55-lakh litre capacity. The three companies sold 1.88 crore litre diesel against its target of 1.20 crore litre in January this year that forced them to stop supply due to shortage of stock. But when contacted, officials at the depot could not inform when adequate quantity of diesel would be available there for meeting the huge demand in the current IRRI-boro season. They alleged that railway authorities are not so active in transporting diesel to the depot and taking back the empty tank-wagons. As a result, the depot is being dried. Meanwhile the stock of floating fuel depot at Chilmari has also come down hampering supply to the remote shoal areas of Kurigram, Jamalpur, Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat districts. Officials concerned said supply of fuel to the depot has become uncertain as oil tankers can not ply on the route due to declining navigability in Brahmaputra and Jamuna rivers. They said the demand of diesel in the region rose three times than those of previous years, but supply was not increased accordingly. "This is one of the main reasons of the crisis," said an official.

Sundarbans now a safe haven for smugglers

UNB, Bagerhat  
Authorities' failure to crack down on the diehard criminals has made the Sundarbans a safe haven for them to perpetrate all types of crime like abduction, murder and smuggling. The Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest, is now under the grip of 25 to 30 criminal groups, who abducted 1,000 woodcutters in last three months for ransom and killed two of them Salam and Razzak as their families failed to meet their demand. The fate of various development projects undertaken for the region hangs in balance due to crime galore. According to officials, the government has taken up a number of development projects involving Tk 450 crore with financial assistance from World Bank. But the progress of implementation of the projects is very slow. They said the forest resources are also dwindling fast as the smuggling of valuable Sundari timbers has marked an unusual rise in recent times. According to them, timbers worth Tk 2 crore were

seized while being smuggled out in last three months while timbers worth Tk 5 crore were pilfered from the forest during the period. BSS from Khulna reports: The Sundarban Forest Department recovered 30,000-cft wood worth about Taka 80 lakh from Khulna, Shatkhira, Chandpai, Sharangkholola range and the adjacent areas of the Sundarbans in over 50 special raids during the last three months. The Forest Department also arrested 45 forest dacoits and seized 20 trawlers and boats and filed 172 departmental cases against them. The recovered woods are Sundari, Pashur and different kinds of firewood, a press release of Divisional Forest Office, Khulna said. A combing operation has begun on February 21 with the cooperation of coast guard and forest guard by waterway vehicles in Chandpai range of the Sundarbans. The forest guard and the police are continuing their joint raids in Sharangkholola range till next week for the protection of the Sundarbans.

Downward trend in law and order in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira  
Law and order situation has deteriorated in recent days in Satkhira district, especially in Tala and Shyamnagar upazilas, causing concern among residents. Six people were killed in the last two months alone in Tala upazila. A decomposed body of an unidentified woman was recovered from the bank of the Kabadak River near Patkelghata in the upazila. Police said a group of hoodlums kidnapped the victim and strangled her. A body of a teenage girl was recovered from Khalishkhali Bazaar area on February 4. The victim was identified as Tanzila, 15, daughter of Ismail Hossain of Dudli in the upazila. Two bodies were recovered from Machchkhola village under Sadar upazila. The victims were identified as Abu Bakkar, 40, of Agalijhara and Hossain Ali, 45, of Dangle Nalta both of Tala upazila. The victims were active armed cadres of the

outlawed Biplobi Communist Party. Local people said rivalry between Biplobi Communist Party and other outlawed party Purbabangla Communist Party was cause of the murders. Another man named Abdur Razzak, 34, of village Dohar in Tala was gunned down by the rivals and the body of the victim was recovered from a water body at Khalishkhali on December 9 last year. A body of a young man was recovered from the bank of the Kabadak River near Patkelghata Bazaar in Tala upazila on December 20 last year. The victim was identified as Tamizuddin, 24, of Patkelghata in Tala upazila. An eight-year old boy was injured seriously in an armed attack at village Dudli in Tala upazila on February 7. In another incident, Sirajul Islam, 23, son of Morshed Sheikh of village Raghbakati in Tala upazila was abducted by a group of people on February 6. The kidnapers took him at village Taikupti of the same upazila and beat him mercilessly. Besides, robbery and abduction have become rampant in Shyamnagar upazila. On February 3 three robberies were committed at village Sora in Shyamnagar upazila. A group of robbers armed with deadly weapons attacked the houses of Lutfur Rahman, Ershad Sardar and Islam Sardar at the village. The robbers looted cash and other valuables worth Taka one lakh. Another robbery was committed in the house of Nimai Paik of village Khutikata in Shyamnagar upazila on January 31. Inmates of the house were beaten up by the robbers when they tried to resist. The robbers looted cash and other valuables worth Taka 50 thousand. Moreover, various incidents of burglary, mugging, and rape were committed in other upazilas of the district during the period.

Floods damage Tk 6cr betel leaf in 3 years in Rajshahi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Betel leaf worth about Taka six crore was destroyed by floods in the last three years in five upazilas of Rajshahi district, official sources said. About 500 betel leaf gardens were completely destroyed, making betel leaf farmers almost destitute. But no step has yet been taken to rehabilitate them. Many farmers are yet to start afresh. Betel leaf cultivation needs considerably amount of investment. According to local Agriculture Extension Department (AED), the betel leaf farmers were not covered in the agriculture rehabilitation programmes undertaken after the devastating floods. Rezaul Karim, Deputy Director of the district office of the AED, said no money had been allocated for rehabilitation of the betel leaf farmers affected by devastating floods in

1999 and 2000. Only Taka 80,000 was allocated for them in 1998, he added. He, however, admitted that floods seriously damaged betel leaf gardens in 1998, 1999 and 2000. "We wrote to the authorities concerned time and again to take steps for rehabilitation programme for the flood-affected betel leaf growers, but nothing had happened" said an official seeking anonymity. Huge amounts of betel leaf are produced in seven upazilas of Rajshahi district. According to the AED sources, there are at least 23,107 betel leaf gardens, popularly known as Pan Baraj, in the seven upazilas. The break-up is: 9,080 in Mohanpur, 8,450 in Bagmara, 3,540 in Durgapur, 650 in Puthia, 630 in Paba, 30 in Charghat and seven in Bagha. Each of the gardens covers 10-

decimals to 100-decimal land. A garden on 10-decimal land costs about Taka 25,000 and yields yearly income of Taka one lakh. Once set up, a garden yields crops for several years if no major problem like flood and pest attack happens. It requires only maintenance. Out of the total, about 12,000 betel leaf gardens were affected by floods during last two years, sources said. "Other flood-affected farmers get government assistance in the form of cash money, seeds and fertilisers every year but we are deprived of that", said Rahmat Hossain, a betel leaf garden owner in Mohanpur upazila. Betel leaf farmers have urged the government to take necessary steps to help them.



Councillor Mayor Soyful Alam of Tower Hamlets, UK, addressing a reception accorded to him and other councillors by Sylhet Chamber of Commerce and Industries (SCCI) at the Chamber Building on February 17. SCCI President Safwan Chowdhury presided over there.

Crisis of non-judicial stamps

UNB, Dinajpur/Jessore  
An acute crisis of various non-judicial stamps is prevailing in Dinajpur and Jessore districts. In Dinajpur district, scarcity of non-judicial stamps worth Tk 100 is prevailing hampering land registration seriously. The crisis cropped up in all the upazilas in Dinajpur following the introduction of new rules for land registration from the current month. Selling of land in Khanshama, Khaharol, Birganj and Bochoganja upazilas remained virtually stopped due to the crisis. As per the rule stamps costing Tk 100 are mostly required for registration purpose, official sources said. When contacted, a Biranj upazila SR official admitting the fact said that registration is being hampered seriously in the upazila. In Jessore district, an acute crisis of various non-judicial stamps is prevailing hampering deed writing activities. Deed writers said non-judicial stamps worth Tk 50 to 150 are out of

market since the first week of the current month. The local treasury also has no stamp, they said. A vendor, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said they were collecting stamps from neighbouring districts and selling it at higher prices. When contacted officials at the treasury office denied any crisis of low-priced stamp, but admitted its stock is inadequate.