

NEWS SNAPS

15 hurt as copy suppliers clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Sirajganj*
At least 15 people were injured in an SSC examination centre in Sirajganj town on Monday during a clash between two groups of copy suppliers.

Police and witnesses said two groups of copy suppliers locked in a clash at about 12:45pm. Police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control. Meanwhile, police arrested two copy suppliers from Sholonga Degree College SSC examination centre. The arrested persons - Abdul Hakim of Jalsuka village and Abdur Razzaque of Surabari village under Sholonga thana are both students of the college.

Tornado damages 50 houses

UNB, *Brahmanbaria*
A tornado lashed four villages in Nabinagar upazila of Brahmanbaria Tuesday afternoon razing some 50 houses to the ground.

The affected villages are: Maheshpur, Beughar, Kaitala and Goalee. A huge number of trees were uprooted and standing IRRI-Boro paddy on vast tract of land in the area was also damaged in the storm.

Man gets life term

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Sirajganj*
A man was awarded life term in Sirajganj recently after he was found guilty in a smuggling case.

The convict was identified as Shahidul Sheikh alias Nurul, son of Sabdul Sheikh of village Jamira under Charghat upazila in Rajshahi district. The convict was arrested with 573 bottles of contraband Indian phensidyl syrup in Raipur area in Sirajganj on 14 January. Additional District and Sessions Judge Khondoker Kamaluzzaman Miah after examining nine witnesses and records pronounced the verdict.

Two die mysteriously

UNB, *Jhalakati*
A little boy and a housewife died for mysterious reasons in separate incidents in Sadar upazila on Saturday. Police said a class-IV student Ashik, 8, son of Profulla Kumar of Amtala area in the town, reportedly hanged himself.

However, family sources said Ashik might have died after being strangled by a peace of cloth wrapped around his neck. In another incident, Nazma Aktar, 19, wife of A Matin of Baraigati village, suddenly fell down on the ground and died instantly at her house. The reason of her death could not be known immediately. Police recovered the body and sent it to hospital morgue for autopsy.

Body of youth recovered

UNB, *Munshiganj*
Police recovered the body of a young boy from a paddy field at Bhuichitra village of Srinagar upazila of Munshiganj district on Monday. Police suspect that unidentified assailants killed the boy at dawn. His body bore some marks of injury. A case was filed with Srinagar police.

Meanwhile, an old man allegedly committed suicide by hanging at South Paiksa village of Srinagar upazila on the same day. Police said Abdul Based Khan, 60, hanged himself at his house following a feud with his family members. A UD case was filed with police.

Discussion

BSS, *Dhaka*
Joy Bangla Sangskritik Oikya Jote of Keraniganj upazila unit of Dhaka district held a discussion at Jinjira on Wednesday in celebration of the 31st Independence and National Day.

President of the cultural organisation and valiant freedom fighter Salahuddin Badal was the chief guest at the discussion chaired by President of Keraniganj unit of the organisation Aman Ullah Montu. The discussion was also addressed among others by the organisation leaders Osman Gani and Sheikh Abdul Kader, Keraniganj Awami League president Mohammad Shahjahan, vice-president Haji Abul Kashem, general secretary Nasrul Hamid Bipu, central leader of Awami Juba League Amir Azam, president of Srinagar Awami League and eminent film personality Sukumar Ranjan Ghosh, chairman of Kalindi Union Joy Gopal Sarkar and president of Dhaka City (South) Bangladesh Chhatra League Mohammad Miraj. The discussion was followed by a musical programme titled "Juddha Diner Gan" and drama titled Ekatturer Joy."

Mosquito menace in Rajshahi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

Mosquito menace has gripped Rajshahi city dwellers. Mosquito population has increased alarmingly in recent days in the divisional headquarters, causing much suffering to the residents.

Just after dusk mosquitoes rule households, hampering normal life. Children and students are the worst sufferers. Sometimes in daytime mosquitoes reign in houses, offices and educational institutions.

People are seen using mosquito coils and other insecticides in daytime to drive away the flying insects. People are also hanging mosquito nets in houses in daytime.

The situation has become very grave in 19, 20, 21 and 27 wards in the city, as pesticides have not been sprayed for more than three months in these wards. When contacted, Rajshahi City Corporation officials said Bangladesh Sericulture Board (BSB) authorities had requested them not to spray pesticides in those areas. Spray of pesticides in those wards hampers growth of silkworms, BSB sources said.

BSB, Rajshahi Silk Factory, Bangladesh Sericulture Research Institute and their extensive mulberry graders are situated in these areas.

RCC authorities said no alternative measure has yet been taken in those areas to fight mosquito. However,

the RCC authorities claim insecticides are sprayed in others 26 wards regularly.

Local people said ponds and drains have become permanent places for mosquito breeding. An RCC official, unwilling to be named, said drains are not cleaned regularly. He said five cleaners are employed in each ward to clean the drains but their works are not at all satisfactory. As a result, spraying pesticides in these drains is not bringing expected results.

Another problem in controlling mosquito is that, he said, cleaning of the drains and spraying of pesticides are not co-ordinated.

Lack of adequate number of spray machines is also a big problem. Furthermore, mosquitoes are always migrating from the surrounding areas to the city corporation area, officials said.

Chief Medical Officer of RCC Dr Rezvi Sultan said mosquito population increases naturally during this period of year due to climatic change. "But we have started extensive activities for controlling mosquito and the city dwellers will get rid of it very soon" he said.

Despite increasing mosquito menace, sources with the Civil Surgeon Office and Rajshahi Medical College Hospital said the rate of malaria cases is yet to exceed the normal range. No case of dengue fever has been reported till now, sources said.

Meanwhile, traders of mosquito nets, coils, and other

KDACC leaders issue ultimatum Start construction of Rupsha Bridge by Apr 7 or face movement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Leaders of the Khulna Development Action Co-ordination Committee (KDACC) in a press conference on Tuesday threatened to completely paralyse the normal life in Khulna if the construction work of the much-hyped bridge over the Rupsha River does not start by 7th April.

The KDACC leaders warned of a greater movement from April 8, exposing the mystery behind the non-implementation of the Rupsha Bridge Construction Project that was always made a political issue by governments in the past.

The committee leaders called

upon the people of Khulna not to allow any political leaders to submit nomination papers for the upcoming parliamentary elections until the bidder selected for the job actually begins construction of the bridge.

But according to a reliable source, an agreement was signed on March 27 between the government and Pacific Consultant International (PCI) of Japan under which the Japanese firm will provide consultancy services for the construction.

Chief Engineer of RHD Md Fazlul Huq and President of PCI Kota Merita signed the agreement. A top official of RHD quoting the PCI president said construction of the bridge would be completed by the end of the year 2004.

UNB from Khulna adds: A frustrated KDACC member-secretary Daud Ali told the press conference that although Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had earlier announced that construction work of the bridge would begin in January, she has failed to keep her

commitment. He also mentioned of an 18-point memorandum submitted to the President on January 24 that contained the demand for the construction of the long-cherished bridge for direct link between Khulna and Mongla port.

As part of the current movement, Daud said they would submit a fresh memorandum reiterating the demands to the divisional commissioner and the deputy commissioner on April 1 and 2.

He said the entire scenario of the division would change once the Rupsha bridge is constructed. Nepal and Bhutan will be eager to use Mongla Port as the transit point of their import and export of goods. Entrepreneurs will be encouraged for investment. Employment opportunity will increase raising people's standard of living.

Besides the bridge, the committee also demanded an airport, EPZ and an uninterrupted dredging of the Pashur River for smooth navigation.

Soil fertility declining in three dists

UNB, *Narsingdi*

Soil fertility has been diminishing rapidly, causing reduction in production in Narsingdi, Brahmanbaria and Kishoreganj districts.

Continuous and improper use of chemical fertilisers and want of organic materials in the manure created the situation.

It is had become a direct threat to the nature of soil, according to experts of Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE).

They said, "fertiliser is one of the main inputs for crop production. It is well understood that soil's inherent ability to supply sufficient nutrients has drastically decreased with increased intensity of cropping associated with the growing human demand for food and fibre."

They also said to enhance the nutrients of soil for crop production to ensure sustainable development, the cow dung or organic manure can play a vital role.

According to them, previously, the farmers used only cow dung or decomposed wastage on their lands and harvested disease-free crops as cow dung contains all

the nutrients including nitrogen, phosphate, potash, magnesium, iron and silicon.

After invention of chemical fertilisers and to meet the fuel demand the people have been using cow dung as fuel instead of using the same as manure.

They said as a result we have been burning our fates in the oven whenever we burn cow dung during cooking or some other purpose.

The DAE experts said that the three main ingredients such as nitrogen, phosphate and potash remain in huge quantity in the soil. Percentage of nitrogen is normally 0.5 to 0.8 per cent and potash 0.5 to 1.9 per cent.

But testing some 63 samples one expert proved that there was no nitrogen in the soil. A high percentage of phosphate was detected in some samples while some other samples showed low and nil percentage of potash, which was really alarming, they added.

The experts said cow dung, which is rampantly being used as fuel, might play a vital role to regain the soil fertility. But the rural people massively collect cow dung and make cakes to sell the same in rural as well as in urban areas, they added.

Gaibandha DIARY

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Gaibandha*

1,181 SSC candidates expelled

A total of 1,181 candidates were expelled on the first three days of the ongoing SSC examinations for adopting unfair means in Gaibandha district.

Besides, 14 invigilators were also expelled for helping the students to cheat. According to official sources, on first day 341 candidates were expelled, 439 candidates on second day and 381 candidates on the third day.

Widow stabbed to death

A widow was stabbed to death at village Kumedpur under Palashbari upazila recently.

The victim was identified as Sufia Begum. Police said at night a gang of hoodlums entered the house of the victim and stabbed her to death. A case was filed. None was arrested in this connection.

Eight cattle burnt alive

Eight cattle were roasted alive in a devastating fire at village Purbo Gopalpur under Palashbari upazila recently.

The origin of the fire could not be known immediately. Villagers doused the fire after hectic effort.

Child drowns

A two-year-old child at village Baro Jamalpur under Sadullapur upazila drowned in a canal recently.

The victim, son of Lina Khatun of the village, fell in the irrigation canal when he was playing on the bank of the canal.

Life in Jamuna shoals

PHOTO FEATURE: AKHTERUZZAMAN BABLU



Sirajganj is an erosion prone area. The mighty River Jamuna devours vast tracts of land every year, rendering hundreds of people homeless. New shoals emerge frequently due to unabated erosion throughout the year. Facing all odds people carry on their grim battle for survival. But there is no basic amenity in the area. (Left) A full bloom 'Krishnachura' tree has enhanced the beauty of a shoal named Shohagpur Char, (top right) two little girls picking up wild vegetables from a land at Beltiar Char where 'Khesari' crop was cultivated a few months ago, (bottom right) a young cyclist makes way through a makeshift road.

Handloom industry faces setback in Kurigram

UNB, *Kurigram*

Handloom Industry in Roumari upazila in Kurigram district has been facing setback due to various reasons, including lack of modern equipment.

Despite having necessary training, many weavers of Bandber and Dantbanga unions of the upazila had to give up their occupation due to lack of working capital.

About 6,000 weavers have already engaged themselves in other occupations to eke out their living.

A few weavers from Tangail district migrated to Roumari in 40s. They used to earn profit and lead a decent living by selling various products, including saree, napkin, lungi and bedcover.

As the clothes, designed and knitted by local weavers, gained much popularity among the people, a good number of weavers joined the industry here in a bid to make them self-reliant.

"Those had been happier days," said an octogenarian weaver Zafar Ali Pir Saheb (85), who was involved in handloom industry since the very beginning.

A large number of traders from various districts, including Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Dinajpur, Lalmonirhat and Tangail, used to come here to buy clothes knitted by local weavers, he added.

Business was brisk when there were some 1,400 handlooms in the upazila, he said adding Bangladesh Handloom Board formed five associations in a bid to distribute loans among the weavers.

The President of Handloom Association, however, told this correspondent that the handloom industry has been facing setback due to lack of fresh loans for the weavers.

Man stabbed to death

UNB, *Comilla*

Armed robbers looted valuables from a house stabbing the house-owner to death and injuring two others at village Kotna in Devidwar upazila of Comilla district Friday night. The dead was identified as Khorshed Alam, 24, sales officer of National Life Insurance Company.