

NEWS SNAPS

Terrorists damage NGO office in Jhenidah

**UNB, Jhenidah**  
Terrorists damaged an NGO office in Sadar upazila of Jhenidah and took away a motorbike on Sunday after being refused to give tolls.

According to a written complaint to the police filed by the NGO named Action in Development (AID), the youths numbering 15/16 identified them as Chhatra Dal activists demanded a big amount of toll from the staffs of the office in Porahati area. On refusal, they equipped with ramdao, hockey sticks and other weapons attacked the office and damaged furniture and sanitary materials and took away a motorbike. The bike was recovered later, they added. Police visited the spot, but nobody was arrested so far. Filip Biswas and M Kamruzzaman, president and chapter coordinator of ADAB, Jessore respectively in a statement condemned the attack and demanded arrest of the culprits.

Rapist gets life imprisonment

**UNB, Rangpur**  
A court in Rangpur has sentenced a man to life term imprisonment in absentia in a rape case.

According to prosecution story, in brief, accused Monjur Morshed went to the house of college girl Shilpi Begum, 17, at Guptapara in the town and forcibly raped her in absence of her family members on March 8, 1997. Later, the poor girl failing to bear the shock committed suicide by hanging herself. The Special Tribunal Judge AMM Syed after examining the witnesses and records awarded the punishment on November 29. Assistant public prosecutor Advocate Rezaul Haque conducted the case on behalf of the state while advocate Sarwar Alam defended the accused.

Three outlaws arrested in Khulna

**UNB, Khulna**  
Police arrested three alleged members of the outlawed Purbabanglar Communist Party (PCP) from Goalkhali area in Khulna city's Khalispur thana Wednesday night.

Police said Alfaj Uddin, Esharat Hossain and Alamgir were arrested from the area when they came there to collect toll. Some letters of PCP were collected from their possessions and a motorcycle they used for coming to the spot was seized. Police said the arrested PCP members were wanted in a number of cases filed with Dighalia and



**Prof Faisal Islam Faruqi, vice chancellor of Rajshahi University (RU) hands over prizes among the winners of inter-hall sports, literary and cultural competition on Tuesday afternoon at Tapashi Rabeya Hall of the university.**



**A colourful procession of the disabled in Natore on Monday. Action on Disability and Development, a non-governmental organisation (NGO), organised the procession to mark the International Day of the Disabled.**

Aman harvest fails to bring smile on faces of farmers

**UNB, Jhenidah**

The harvest of aman paddy could hardly bring smile on the faces of a section of farmers as they were burdened with debt and loan.

Since the season of aman harvesting began last week, the farmers were engaged in the fields to reap their hard labour.

But the poor and marginal farmers are selling their paddy to repay the money they borrowed in high interest rate. Some also sold paddy in advance during the off-season to run their family.

Nizamuddin, a farmer of Meakundu village in Sadar, said he was compelled to borrow Tk 10,000 on condition of selling paddy at the rate of Tk 220 per maund for his daughter's marriage.

He also borrowed an extra amount of Tk 6,000 from BRAC.

"All my paddy produced will have to sell for repaying the loan and nothing will be left for me," he said in a choking voice.

Many poor farmers could not irrigate, and apply fertilisers, pesticides and other agricultural inputs in their fields properly resulting in poor yield.

They said per acre yield in the high land this year was not satisfactory due to lack of timely rain but the yield in the lowland is good.

A total of 82,200 hectares of land have been brought under aman paddy cultivation with a production target of 212,900 metric tons of rice this year.

Another report from Bogra says: Another bumper aman production is likely in Bogra, as the farmers have fanned out for harvest thanks to the weather for doing the favour.

Agriculture officials said the aman output in Bogra would surpass the target this year.

They said Utsi and local varieties of aman were cultivated on 1.81 lakh hectares of land in 11 upazilas of the district this season with an estimated production target of about 4.70 metric tons.

The officials said the output would mark a rise by 0.75 per cent compared to the last season.

Seed shortage likely to hamper boro farming

**UNB, Kishoreganj**

Boro farming in Kishoreganj is likely to be hampered this season due to shortage of quality seeds, frustrating the farmers.

Farmers in Kishoreganj have started preparing seedbeds, but are not getting seeds from Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) rather they have to buy these from black market.

According to Department of Agriculture Extension, this year, a total of 1,46,600 hectares of land have been brought under boro cultivation with a production target of 4,87,735 mts of paddy.

Of the total land, HYV paddy will be cultivated on 1,40,200 hectares and local variety on 6,400 hectares.

The growers need a total of 7,330 mts seeds for the total land as per hectare land requires 50-kg seeds. But BADC allotted only about 900 mts of seeds, said a grower.

On the other hand, the seeds, preserved by the growers in previ-

ous season have been damaged due to flaw in preservation system.

Meanwhile, BADC is distributing seeds of Subid-1, BR-14 and 28, BRI-29 and 36, BINA-5 and 6 and Irtan-28 varieties to the farmers.

BADC is selling seeds of per 10 kg bag between Tk 140 and Tk 145 through the dealers. But, the dealers, taking advantage of rising demand, are selling these at the black market, growers alleged.

As BADC has no control on the dealers they have created artificial scarcity of seeds for making windfall profit, they added.

Meanwhile, a dealer, wishing anonymity, told that they have to give bribe to the authorities during the lifting of seeds from the godown. But BADC deputy director (marketing) M Golam Mostafa, however, denied the allegation.

A report from Thakurgaon says: Authorities have planned to bring some 35,300 hectares of land under boro farming this season with an output target of 1.20 lakh mts.

According to the plan, boro paddies will be cultivated on 10,000

hectares of land in Sadar, 7,800 in Pirganj, 3,900 in Baliadangi, 7,700 in Ranishankoil and 5,900 hectares in Haripur upazilas.

State Minister for Agriculture Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, addressing a meeting in Thakurgaon recently, said steps were underway to keep some 1,217 deep tubewells operative during the season.

Extortionists sever hand of meat supplier

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Extortionists cut off the hand of a man and took it away at Ershad Nagar in Tongi on Saturday morning after the man refused to pay toll.

The victim, Abdul Khaleque, 42, is a meat supplier and a resident of Block-2, Ershad Nagar in Tongi. He was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and later shifted to the Orthopaedic Hospital.

BNP cadres attack Farazi Rice Mill in Natore

**ANWAR ALI, Natore**

BNP cadres captured a house, a rice-mill and looted rice, paddy and valuables of a BNP supporter at Kazipara Trimohini in Lalpur upazila during 21 hours long armed attacks in presence of police on Monday.

Witnesses and police sources said, local BNP's Zakir group attacked Farazi Rice Mill and house attacked to the mill of BNP supporter Kalam Farazi in the area, only 500 yards off Lalpur police station on Monday noon. The miscreants conducted attacks several times till Monday morning in presence of police and a number of area dwellers.

Witnesses alleged that police played the role of silent spectators during the attacks. The miscreants entered into the house of Farazi in the evening and beat up the family members including women and children with lethal weapons. They evicted the family of Farazi from the house.

During the whole night raids, Zakir's group looted 40 bags of rice, 150 bags of paddy and a 30 horse-

power motor.

A source in police told that police repeatedly requested the attackers to stop occupying Farazi's house and mill. But when the attackers defied police's request, police returned to the thana at late night. Later, the miscreants easily occupied the house and mill of Kalam Farazi.

Police said, there was a case

between BNP leader Zakir Hossain and BNP supporter Kalam Farazi in Natore court over the land of the rice mill. In 1997, Kalam Farazi got decree over the land.

Farazi alleged that Zakir and his gang occupied his rice mill and house to avenge the court's verdict that gave him the decree.

Two cases have been lodged in this regard with Lalpur thana.

British HC opens visa office in Sylhet

**UNB, Sylhet**

British High Commission (HC) opened a visa office in Sylhet Monday to render various services to the expatriate Bangladeshis living in Britain.

British High Commissioner in Dhaka David Carter formally inaugurated the office at Kumarpara in Sylhet town that will take interview of visa seekers and scrutinise their papers.

Most of all major tasks, excepting issuing visa, will be completed from this branch office, British High Commission officials said.

Opening of a branch office was a long demand of local people as huge number of Sylheti people are now living in UK and often need to consult with High Commission.

The British Government was also studying feasibility of opening the branch office in Sylhet for last few years. As a part of this development then Foreign Minister and Commonwealth Affairs Minister Kith Vass visited Sylhet on January 30, 2000.

This local branch will remain open from 8 am to 3 pm every from Sunday to Thursday. Different kinds of booklet, exhibition tool, cultural, educational and business related programme would be displayed at this branch office.

Prices of spare parts of shallow tubewells up

**UNB, Madaripur**

Prices of spare parts of shallow tubewells shot up abnormally hampering irrigation in the crop fields.

Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) sources said, the parts of shallow tubewell imported from China are now being smuggled into India and demand has also been increased in the country resulting in unexpected price hike of these machine parts.

Cultivators said in different shops of machine parts, plunger is now being sold at Tk 180 as against the price of Tk 65, ring at Tk 100 as against the previous price of Tk 65 and piston at Tk 550 as against Tk 400.

Besides prices of other machine parts have also increased causing concern among the farmers.

Local traders said price of the imported machine parts has been increased and they are compelled to increase the price of the same. But a section of unscrupulous traders, taking the opportunity of price hike, are selling the low-quality Indian machine parts to the cultivators at high price.

Arsenic detected in tubewell water in Shariatpur

**BSS, Shariatpur**

Arsenic beyond the permissible limit was detected in tubewells water in two upazilas of Shariatpur threatening public health of about three lakh people.

According to official sources, 115 people were affected by arsenic poisoning in Naria upazila. Of them, 65 were reported from Palong, the remaining from Naria.

The number of people affected by arsenicosis is much higher than that of the official figure, unofficial sources claimed.

Water of 4,500 tubewells collected from different areas of Damudda upazila was recently tested at a laboratory. Of the total sample, water of 1,300 tubewells was found contaminated with high level of arsenic. In different areas of Shariatpur 6.237 per cent arsenic was detected in water of 305 tubewells out of the total of 483.

Move to increase coconut output in Mymensingh

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh**

Mymensingh Horticulture Centre at Kewatkhali in Mymensingh has undertaken a massive programme to raise coconut production.

The centre has fixed a target to produce over 10 thousand coconut saplings this year, according to the horticulture centre sources. The saplings will be distributed among the interested people.

Some 21 thousand High Yielding Variety (HYV) of coconut saplings have already been distributed among

the consumers from July 1999 till this year. The varieties included short and long varieties of trees of Malaysia.

Assistant Horticulturist of the centre Zakia Begum told The Daily Star that this programme has been taken up following high demand of coconut. In this regard some local non-government organisations (NGOs), farmers of the horticulture centre and some other trainees have been motivated to make the programme a success, she added.

The official also informed that the planted coconut trees are likely to bear over 12 lakh fruits.



**Workers of Kewatkhali Horticulture Centre in Mymensingh uprooting saplings of coconut for distribution among the interested people. The centre has undertaken a massive coconut production programme this year.**