

NEWS SNAPS

Assailants chop widow to death

UNB, Jhalakati
Unidentified assailants chopped a widow to death at Narkelbaria village in Sadar upazila of Jhalakati on Wednesday night.

The assailants killed her husband two years back in the same way. The killing case of Abus Sattar is yet to be settled. The gang numbering about 25 swooped on the house of Ambia Begum, 55, wife of killed Abus Sattar, when all members of the house went to sleep at night. They brought her in front of the house wrapping with a quilt, beat mercilessly and then killed by hacking. Police suspected that the killing was a sequel to enmity over land property.

Eight killed by fire in Jessore last year

UNB, Jessore
Eight people were killed and 300 injured in 245 fire incidents in Jessore last year. According to district fire brigade office, the fires ravaged property worth over Tk four crore during the period. Among the fire accidents, 210 occurred at residential houses while the remaining in the industrial area. Two people were killed and property worth over Tk one crore damaged in 17 accidents in January while two in March and one each in May, October and December. The fire accidents originated mainly from electric short circuit, cigarettes, woven, lamps and gas cylinders.

Loan disbursed among 212 jobless

UNB, Chapainawabganj
Employment Bank has disbursed Tk 61.53 lakh as loan among 212 unemployed youths in Chapainawabganj last year.

Bank sources said the loan was distributed for setting up of poultry farms, hatcheries, cow fattening projects, grocery shops, cottage industry, medicine shops, purchasing rickshaw-van, setting up of nurseries and light engineering workshops.

Timber traders protest press report

UNB, Rangamati
Timber Traders Cooperative Society has protested the press report on kidnapping two boatmen along with timbers in Sublong area of Rangamati recently and demanded proper inquiry into the incident.

The society raised the demand in a press conference on Saturday and claimed the report based on the information given by Fazal Bhandari was not true. They said Fazal was not a timber trader and member of the society. They also alleged that an interested quarter is trying to create conflict between the timber traders and army personnel by misleading the people. Among others, society President Haji Abdul Khaleque, General Secretary Mohammad Shahidullah, Joint Secretary Anwar Khan, Motiur Rahman Matin, Shahidullah Kajol and Gobinda Borua spoke.

Bus passengers face problem

UNB, Gazipur
Passengers of various routes in Gazipur are facing problems, as most of the bus stands do not have sheds.

According to a survey, there are only six passenger-sheds out of the total 15 bus stands. Passengers alleged that they cannot even use these shed as the bus drivers stop the vehicles away from these stipulated places. Local vendors have also occupied many shades forcing the passengers to wait under the open sky. Recently, two passenger shades were recovered from the hands of rent-e-car businessmen. A large number of passengers, including students and office-goers, travel by bus from Gazipur everyday mainly due to nearness of the capital.

Top terror arrested in Narsingdi

UNB, Narsingdi
Police arrested a top terror and recovered a number of arms and ammunition from his possession at Dattapara in Narsingdi town on Sunday.

The arms and ammunition include one foreign made revolver, one pistol, one shutter gun and seven rounds of bullet. The arrested was identified as Ripon Sarkar. Acting on a tip off, police raided the Railway Station area and arrested Ripon. According to his confession the arms were recovered from Dattapara ghat area. Police said he was conducting terrorist activities in the area since long. A case was filed.

Primary education faces setback

UNB, Jhalakati
Primary education in Jhalakati is being hampered due to lack of proper management an inadequate number of officers and teachers.

A total of 88 posts of officials and teachers, including one TEO, five ATEO and 24 headmasters, remained vacant for long. At present Primary Education Officer of Sadar upazila has been carrying out the duty of District Primary Education Officer after Assistant Primary Education Officer went into retirement carrying the same duty as in-charge for two years.

Cash, valuables worth Tk 2.5 lakh looted

UNB, Sirajganj
Armed robbers looted cash and other valuables worth Tk 2.5 lakh from a house at Pangashi village of Raygonj upazila of Sirajganj injuring 19 people Sunday.

Police said a gang of armed bandits numbering 25/30 swooped on the house of Khapa Karmakar of the village. There was a marriage ceremony at the house the bridal party was staying in the house. The robbers beat up the inmates and looted valuables and cash. Police visited the spot and a case was filed.

Valuables including gun looted

UNB, Shariatpur
Armed robbers looted a licensed gun, six round of bullets and six tolas of gold from a house at Damudya upazila in Shariatpur Saturday.

Police said a gang of bandits broke open the door of the house of Syed Khalilur Rahman at dead of night. They tied up the inmates with rope and took away the valuables at gunpoint. A case was filed.

5,52,186 books allocated for students

UNB, Pirojpur
Primary Education Department has allocated 5,52,186 books for distribution among the primary school children of Pirojpur this year.

Of the total 33,427 books will be distributed in Kawkhali, 92,445 in Najirpur, 1,20,427 in Sadar, 80,275 in Bhandaria, 1,26,620 in Mathbaria and 98,992 in Nesarabad upazila. The book distribution is expected to be completed by February, official sources said.

Road transport owners in North Bengal divided over strike issue

ANWAR ALI, Natore

Leaders of North Bengal Road Transport Owners' Association (NBRTOA) have been divided over the call of an indefinite transport strike in 16 northern districts from January 27.

The elected committee of the association denied and protested the news item published in several national dailies regarding the transport strike.

"No decision of the strike was taken in the association's meeting in Pabna on January 10," claimed the association president Aminul Islam Biswas in a news conference in Natore town on Sunday night.

The news conference held late Sunday night at Natore was addressed by Manjur Alam Hasu, president of Natore Bus-minibus owners' group. Omar Faruk Khan, general secretary of Bogra transport owners' group, Hamidul Haq Chowdhury, general secretary Bogra motor owner's group, and Shahidur Rashid, convener of Rajshahi road transport group, among others.

The NBRTOA leaders said Aminul Islam Biswas,

general secretary of Natore bus-minibus owners' group is the elected president of NBRTOA, not Baby Islam who claimed to have chaired the association's meeting in Pabna from where the strike was called.

The leaders also cautioned Baby Islam to refrain from giving speeches using the post of president of NBRTOA.

In their Pabna meeting, the NBRTOA leaders raised a 7-point demand to place before the government. The demands include-reduction of fuel price, declaration of 20 years old vehicles having fitness certificates worthy of movement, confiscation of shallow-engine driven vehicles, reduction of toll of Bangabandhu bridge, withdrawal of toll of Shingra and Teesta bridges and stoppage of illegal toll collection by traffic sergeants, said the transport leaders.

A decision, however, was taken in the Pabna meeting to sit again on January 27 in Bogra to settle its next actions regarding implementation of the demands, the NBRTOA leaders explained before local journalists.

IU faces fund crisis VC vows to raise standard of education

RAHAT AHMED, Kushtia

Islamic University has been facing an acute fund crisis.

The newly appointed vice chancellor (VC) of Islamic University (IU) has pledged to work for elevating the standard of education at per with international universities.

New VC Prof Mustafijur Rahman told this while exchanging views with the campus reporters recently at the Syndicate room of the university.

"Islamic University was established with the vision of an international university. I shall extend my best efforts to raise the standard of education in the univer-

sity," said the VC.

Islamic University was established by the Islamic University Act-1980. Since then several initiatives had been taken by the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), but their efforts failed due to some unknown reasons.

However, this university has a budget deficit of about Tk 5.5 crore.

Session jam of one to three years has been prevailing in various departments. Prof Rahman also assured reduction of session jam. He vowed to check corruption in the university.

Seminar on ensuring safe drinking water

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A seminar titled "Commitment to ensure pure and safe drinking water-2002" were held at Singair upzila in Manikganj. It was organised by Palliseba O Kalyan Parisad, a socio-cultural organisation of Singair last week.

Professor of Chemistry Department of Jahangirnagar University Dr Syed Safiullah was the main discussant while Shadat Hossain Khan, Principal of Singair Degree College was in the chair.

Among others, Shahida Akhter Munni, Asrafur Alam Jewel, Aminur Rahman, Lion Yunus Ali Khan and Sarifuzzaman Kaikobad took part in the discussion.

The Dramatics Department of Jahangirnagar University staged a drama depicting the affect of arsenic while Abdur Rasid Khan enthralled the audience presenting *Jarigan*.

Later buckets, especially designed for purifying arsenic from water were distributed.



PHOTO: IQBAL SIDDIQUEE

Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, vice chancellor of BRAC University speaks as the chief guest at a day long workshop on "Vulnerability of Earthquake in Sylhet" at a hotel in Sylhet on Saturday. Sylhet Disaster Forum organised the workshop.

Sick tea industries need govt patronisation

RAJAT KANTI GOSWAMI, Moulvibazar

Bangladeshiya Cha Sangsad (BCS), an organisation of tea garden owners, declared 37 tea gardens 'sick' in 1998 and 37 gardens 'sick' in 2001.

According to BCS, average productivity of these tea gardens were only 370 kg of tea, whereas the country's national tea productivity was 1,176 kg. Sick tea industries need government patronisation.

Official sources said, the total land of 37 sick tea gardens which were declared sick in 2001, were 12 thousand 863 hectares. Of the total land only 4 thousand 226 hectares were brought under tea plantation though 2 thousand 427 more hectares of land of the gardens are completely cultivable, but still lying fallow.

The tea gardens which were declared as sick tea gardens by BCS in 2001, were Ayshabag, Keramatnagar, Andhermanik, Aajgurubad, Dadnagar, Zalia, Chhutalekha, Doluchhara, Diikusha, Elahinur, Sripur, Thandachhari, Wapdachhara, Fatehbag, Kashipur, Hafiz, Halda valley, Haripur, Kalikabari, Launi, Holychhara, Lubachhara, Muraichhara, Mohammednagar, Kumershai, Nameha, Rahmania,

Nahar, Shafinagar, Rajnagar, Rehana, Reaznagar, Aynal, Moulvi, Islambad, Allahbag, Agunia, and Burhannagar tea gardens. Sirajnagar tea garden which was declared 'sick' in 1998 has now become a healthy garden.

Bangladeshiya Cha Sangsad (BCS) has submitted a proposal to Bangladesh Tea Board (BTB) for development of 37 sick tea gardens.

BCS proposed some action plans in the submitted proposal for five-year period with a proposed expenditure of Tk five crore 90 lakh. According to this proposal, Tk one crore 18 lakh will be spent every year.

A source of BCS said the proposal which was submitted for recovery of the sick gardens included allocation of loan for extension of plantation area, replantation, purchase of factory and instruments at seven per cent interest rate, subsidy for supplying of tea saplings and collection of green leaf with the annual allocation of Tk 48 lakh 3 thousand.

The overall condition of the country's sick tea gardens were deteriorating gradually. A task force of Bangladesh Tea Board (BTB) which was constituted in 1986 submitted a statement in 1988 where a total of 59 tea gardens were

declared 'sick' tea gardens. After that declaration, seven tea gardens out of these 59 gardens became abandoned.

A source of BTB said tea gardens were declared sick after analysis of some components. These were extreme burden of loans, below productivity rate, insufficient use of land and problems into management and law related issues. The task force in that period not only declared 59 tea gardens as sick but also gave prescriptions to the garden authorities for recovery. Some sick tea gardens followed their prescriptions and became healthy.

The government, in the meantime, sanctioned Tk 45 crore for the overall development of sick tea gardens for three-year period from 2001 to 2003. A total of 39 tea gardens were already brought under this programme and another 48 tea gardens would be brought soon, BTB sources mentioned.

However, the country's tea industry suffered much for a long time. But initiatives which were taken so far were very little. So for the greater interest of earning good foreign exchange more pragmatic steps should be taken immediately. Problems of our tea industry should be removed by the government's initiative, opined tea specialists.