

## NEWS SNAPS



PHOTO: STAR

A workshop titled " Role of Information Media in Expansion of Bio-fertiliser" was held at the auditorium of Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture (BINA), Mymensingh on Thursday. National / Mufassil Page Editors/ In-Charge of major national English and Bangla dailies of Dhaka took part in the workshop.

### One crushed under wheels of speeding bus

UNB, Narayanganj

A middle-aged man was crushed under the wheels of a speeding bus at Rupshi on Dhaka-Sylhet highway on Thursday.

The victim was identified as Mizan, 40. The body was sent to hospital morgue for autopsy. Meanwhile, police recovered the body of a 55-year-old unidentified man from near a road at Pagla in Fatulla thana on the same day. It bore a number of injury marks. In another incident, five members of a family were injured in an attack by rivals at Pilkuni in the upazila on the day. The injured Ali, 55, his sons Zakir, 28, Amir, 25, Imam, 23, and Shawkat, 18 were admitted to local hospital. Witnesses said some 10-12 miscreants allegedly led by Didar and Mukul of Ailganj attacked them with lethal weapons following a land dispute.

### Baby dies of cold as mother commits suicide

UNB, Habiganj

A one-year-old baby boy died of cold an hour after his mother allegedly committed suicide at village Baro Bahula in Sadar upazila of Habiganj early Wednesday. Police said there was none in the house to take care of Shamsuzzaman, 1, when his mother Sajeda Begum, 35, wife of Rais Ali of the village, hanged herself from a tree. The little boy died being affected by severe cold. Sajeda took her own life following a conflict with her husband, who was now absconding. Police recovered the two bodies and sent those to hospital morgue for autopsy.

### Kidnappers chop, beat to death youth

UNB, Kushtia

Having failed to realise ransom, kidnapppers chopped and beat to death a youth near Ziarkhi Bazaar in Sadar upazila Wednesday.

Police recovered the victim's body, Shohel Rana, 22, son of Rushtam Ali Mollah of the village, from a pond in the area on Thursday. Family sources said the hoodlums kidnapped the youth from their house on Jan 28 and demanded a ransom of Tk 1 lakh from his father who could not meet their demand. The body was sent to hospital morgue for autopsy.

### Minorities leaves village amid atrocities

UNB, Brahmanbaria

A minority family has left their village amid atrocities on them allegedly a UP chairman in Nabinagar upazila.

Victim Sadhu Shil of Shibpur village at the upazila at a press conference in Brahmanbaria said he along with his family members deserted the village as atrocities by Shibpur UP chairman and local Awami League leader Nazrul Islam Monsur and his nephews on them crossed the limit. Sadhu told journalists that the nephews and other relatives of the chairman had attacked their house on June 24, 2001, beat up his elder brother Bijoy Shil and abused his sister-in-law. A case was filed against them under Public Safety Act. Meanwhile, police charge-sheeted eight people in this connection.

### Mongla police seize cargo vessel

UNB, Bagerhat

Police have seized the cargo vessel that hit a brick-laden engine boat, which capsized in the Mongla river in Bagerhat Saturday night killing nine boatmen.

Mongla police said they seized the cargo vessel 'Kazdir-4' from Noapara in Jessore on Tuesday. But the sunken boat could not be salvaged yet. The bodies of the nine boatmen were recovered by divers of Bangladesh Navy.

### One arrested for smuggling heroin

UNB, Benapole

A man was arrested from Benapole frontier area Thursday on charge of smuggling heroin from India.

Police said a mugger snatched one kg of heroin from A Rahim as he brought it from the neighbouring country. On information, police went on a quick action and arrested Rahim of Bara Achra village of the frontier area but failed to recover the heroin. Meanwhile, a tea seller was arrested along with five bottles of phensidyl from Chanmani area in the town on the day. Acting on a tip-off, police raided the tea stall of Alauddin, 35, and nabbed him with the banned Indian syrup.

### 4 arrested while stealing fuel from train

UNB, Habiganj

Four people were arrested from the outer signal of Sutang Railway Station in Sadar upazila of Habiganj on Wednesday while stealing fuel from the engine of a train.

The arrested were identified as Runu Mia, Mana Mia, Faruq and Toufiqul of Sutang area. Police said DC M Abdul Quaium and SP M Mostafa Kamal saw the accused stealing fuel from the Chittagong-bound train while they were returning from Madhabpur upazila and caught them red-handed. Police also recovered 100 litres of fuel from their possession. There have been allegations that an organised gang had long been pilfering fuel from various trains with the help of a section of dishonest railway officials.

### Police arrest infamous terrorist

UNB, Naogaon

Police arrested an infamous terrorist from his residence in the town and seized arms and ammunition from a shop on Monday night.

A contingent of police raided the Zokabila residence of Polish, 27, brother of alleged godfather of the criminal world Rafiqul Islam, at dead of night and arrested him. Later, on the basis of his confessional statement police raided a bicycle store in the ground floor of a residential hotel, owned by his brother Rafiq, and seized some arms. The seized arms and ammunition are one revolver, one gun, two shutter guns, some bullets and cartridges and a 'ram dao' (sharp knife).

### Work on four bridges begins in Dinajpur

UNB, Dinajpur

Construction work on four bridges in Fulbari upazila of Dinajpur at a cost of Tk 30 lakh began recently.

The small road bridges are being constructed in Doulatpur, Khoirbari, Eluari and Shibnagar union involving Tk 9.79 lakh, Tk 7.23 lakh, Tk 6.12 lakh and Tk 6.12 lakh respectively. Project Implementation Officer of the upazila is supervising the construction work funded by the Ministry of Relief and Disaster Management.

### Loan disbursement target not achieved

UNB, Jhalakati

Targets of disbursement and collection of agricultural loan of four banks in Jhalakati were not achieved in the first six months of the current fiscal.

The rate of loan disbursement was 30 per cent while realisation 27 per cent during the period. Sonali, Janata, Agrani and Bangladesh Krishi Bank set target to distribute Tk 13.74 crore in the current fiscal, but they disbursed Tk 4.63 crore among 1,866 farmers till December last. According to official sources, the amount of outstanding farm loans in Jhalakati is over Tk 28.50 crore.

### Computer fair begins in Khulna

UNB, Khulna

The five-day computer fair, which began at Jalli Tower in Khulna on Wednesday, gathered momentum with a large number of people visiting it everyday.

Inaugurating the fair, Khulna City Mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman said the IT sector has been the main thrust of the government and it would do everything possible for its speedy development. The Mayor said an IT village as well as an IT centre would be set up in Khulna soon. The fair remains open from 9 am to 8 pm everyday.

# Probable candidates start lobbying for next mayor election in Rajshahi

ABDUL WADOOD, Rajshahi

Probable candidates have started lobbying for the next mayor election of Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC).

They have been rushing from door to door of the local party leaders and activists to win their support. Some of them have also begun mass contacts.

The last RCC election was held on January 31, 1994. The next election was due in 1999. But the election could not be held for injunction of the High Court over delimitation disputes.

Recently, the government took a decision and took measures for early disposal of the cases and hold the election as early as possible.

There is a rumour that election of the city corporation will be held by April-May this year. The rumour has activated the probable candidates.

When contacted with the probable candidates, they said to this correspondent almost in a similar manner. Most of them said that though it is a local government body the election will be political. So nomination or support of the political parties is a very important factor, they said. That is why they are trying hard to win nomination or support from their respective parties.

BNP men have won in all the elections, mayor or parliamentary, in Rajshahi city in last one and a half decade. Prospect of BNP candidate is very much brighter this time also, observers say. This phenomenon has made lobbying and grouping in the party for nomination more complex and harder.

A good number of leaders of BNP and its wings have come out to lobby for the party nominations when the incumbent mayor Mijanur Rahman Minu announced that he would not contest the next mayoral election if he

wins the MP election.

The list of aspirants include senior BNP leader and president of Rajshahi Bar Association Advocate Abul Kasem, BNP city unit president Advocate Ekhlak Hossain, BNP city unit vice president Lufar Rahman, BNP district unit organising secretary Salehuddin Baby, Juba Dal city unit convener MosadddekHossain Bulbul, Chattra Dal city unit president Shafiqul Haque Milon, district unit president Mijanur Rahman, Juba Dal leader Aslam Sarker and former Chattra Dal leader Shahiduddin Syeed.

A source in BNP said, as Minu could not become a minister, the party is now considering to field him again in the next mayor election.

Aspirants from Awami League included city unit vice president Masudul Haque Dulu and Rajshahi Chamber of commerce and Industry president Omar Farooque Chowdhury.

Though there is no opportunity of lobbying in Jamaat, either its city unit Ameer Ataur Rahamn or city unit political secretary Siddique Hossain is going to be its candidate in the next mayor election, Jamaat sources said.

Jatiya Party (Ershad) aspirants are city unit general secretary Moshtaque Ahmed Labu, district unit president Advocate Ekramur Rasul and city unit joint secretary Selim Sardar.

Fazle Hossain Badsha, politbureau member of Workers Party is another aspirant.

BNP and Jamaat sources said, the two parties, being partners of the ruling four-party alliance, are thinking to unitedly contest the mayor election.

## Acid violence

# Six incidents recorded in Magura last year

HOSSAIN SERAJ, Magura

Six incidents of acid violence were recorded in four upazilas in Magura last year.

Two school girls, two college girls and two housewives were victims of acid violence.

Of the incidents, three took place

in Magura Sadar, one in Mohammadpur, one in Shalikhra and one in Sreepur upazila.

The victims were identified as Nila Khatun, 17, Rina, 20, Shakila, 22, Jahura, 35, Rita Rani, 14, and Shirina, 20.

Acid is easily available in Magura at very low prices.

"There are no suitable laws to regulate sale of such a dangerous product. You cannot stop sale of acid unless you ask the users to keep proper account of the quantity of acid purchased and used", a leading lawyer of Magura Bar Association Fakhru-Islam Farooque told this correspondent.

Advocate Shahina Akhter an activist of a Human Rights organisation said, "acid is a very dangerous product but easily available in Magura.

Investigations revealed that acid used for attack on women is mostly purchased from jewelry shops and motor vehicle garages or work-shops. A jewelry shop owner in Magura admitted that many of the shops in the area are engaged in selling concentrated acid, but at three times the actual price.

"Sometimes under pressure of local terrorists, we have to sell acid to a number of persons for the sake of our survival" said a shopowner in Magura town, not willing to be named.

A worker at a motor vehicle garage admitted that he sold acid to some persons last year as they threatened to kill him in case of failure to supply the same to them.



A drama on child rights progresses at Baghli K K High School ground in Sadar upazila of Tangail. Tangail Information Office in collaboration with Theatre Tangail arranged the drama on the occasion of the 10th National Immunisation Day on Friday. The programme was implemented under UNICEF aided motivational project "Communication for Women and Children."

## People of Kutubdiapara in Cox's Bazar leading sub-human life

UNB, Cox's Bazar

Everything is there: world's largest sea beach, lavish resorts, gentle green valley to attract tourists and all other facilities for a smooth civic life. But nothing awaits the poor dwellers of a hamlet in the resort town.

About 7,000 families of sandy Kutubdiapara village, along Cox's Bazar airport close to the Bay of Bengal, are leading a sub-human life for over a decade virtually deprived of education, medicare and other basic facilities mandated for all citizens in the country's constitution.

"It's darkness under the light. There is no apparent difference in the life of these poverty-stricken villagers with those of primitive age," said Shamsul Alam, a town dweller of panoramic Cox's Bazar town. Set up haphazardly in the 90s with thatched houses, narrow lanes and by-lanes, and sandy and dusty environment are a common sight of Kutubdiapara.

Mohammad Iqbal Hossain, a local official of the Family Planning Association of Bangladesh (FPAB), informed that population growth, illiteracy, early marriage and malnutrition are common features of the village which so far denied the blessings of the government.

During the visit, it was found that most of the couples in the village have an average of six children.

A local female NGO health activist, Anjuma Khanam, who works in the village, informed that the practice of polygamy is very high in the village and the number of abandoned wives very large.

The 3-kilometre long Kutubdiapara village was set up with people who lost their houses and belongings during the devastat-

ing cyclone in 1991. Later, some Rohingya refugee families also joined the community.

From the beginning, local people said, no government facilities were offered for improving the life of these wretched people, rather the local administration tried to evict them several times as the habitat is close to airport, but failed due to spirited resistance by the dwellers.

"Last year, they (administration) tried to evict us, but in the face of our resistance they were compelled to go back," said Abdus Salam, a middle-aged day labourer of the hamlet.

Despite all the frustrating aspects, a slow but steady psychic change has been taking place among the new generation in the hamlet, especially in the area of reproductive health and education with the help of FPAB.

To raise the awareness level among adolescent girls and fertile women, the local chapter of FPAB, a partner organisation of the EC/UNFPA's Reproductive Health Initiative (RHI) programme, has been making hectic efforts since last year.

The FPAB field representatives educating the villagers on how to overcome adolescent problems, ensure safe motherhood and make family size small in a bid to come out of poverty cycle.

Eleven-year-old Taslima, who did not get the chance to go to school, is now aware of health problem and the adverse consequences of early marriage and unbridled population growth.

When asked, Taslima said she doesn't like early marriage and early motherhood. "I'll not take seven children like my parents," said the shy girl sitting on a wooden bench at a counseling room of the village.

She said 'Apa' (female health worker) meets us once a week and advises us on different issues.

Anjuma Khanam, a community-based health worker under the RHI programme that includes adolescent healthcare and safe delivery, said most women of the village are malnourished and suffer from anemia. But despite poor health, they must work hard everyday to manage a square meal.

"As the women of this hamlet do not have any say in decision-making, they fail to play any role in keeping the family size small," she lamented.

To overcome the situation, UNFPA Representative in Bangladesh Suneeta Mukherjee, during a two-day RHI Annual Review meeting on January 21-22, emphasised on creating awareness among the male population to ensure their participation in the RHI programme for achieving a tangible and sustainable benefit from the programme.

Without ensuring participation the decision-making male population, any kind of development is impossible, she said. Dwelling on the subject, the UNFPA Representative urged the development partners to ensure gender equity and equality in the RHI programme.

Commenting on the RHI programme of Kutubdiapara, Dr Ashok Kumar Chowdhury, an official of local FPAB, remarked that the physic change that already took place among the adolescent and women community in the last one year is "a great achievement for us."

"We've a target to go for integrated and intensive programme for the neglected community. We're hopeful to bringing a change among them," he said.