

NEWS SNAPS

Diarrhoea claims one in Comilla

UNB, *Comilla*
Diarrhoea that broke out in Chowara union of Sadar upazila of Comilla has claimed one life and affected over 100 people.
Hospital sources said Abdulla Al Mamun, 17, son of Abdur Rahman, of North Golapnagar village, died of the disease at Sadar hospital on Thursday. The seriously affected were identified as Joygun, Sufia, Momin, Jamal, Milon, Mofiz, Monwara, Habib, Jasim, Syeda, Masum, Anwar, Sabbir, Halima Shamsu, Imam, Malek, Sharif and Shakir of North Golapnagar and Fatema of Ramchandrapur. A medical team has been working in the affected areas to combat the spread of the waterborne disease, the civil surgeon office said.

BIWTC steamer runs aground, salvaged

UNB, *Barisal*
BIWTC rocket steamer PS Lepcha, which ran aground at a shoal in a tributary of the Meghna at Kaliganj, finally reached Barisal on Sunday after 25 hours delay.
The Khulna-bound steamer left Dhaka Friday afternoon with over 500 passengers aboard and ran aground in the shoal at about 3 am due to dense fog, BIWTC sources said. The steamer was salvaged on Sunday with heavy tide and help of other river vessels. It is scheduled to leave Barisal for Dhaka, instead of Khulna, on Sunday evening. Almost all the passengers of the pedal-steamer, however, left the vessel on Saturday and reached there destinations in alternative ways.

Valuables worth Tk 15 lakh gutted

UNB, *Noakhali*
Valuables worth Tk 15 lakh were gutted in a devastating fire at Maizdi bazaar in Noakhali on Saturday.
Fire Service sources said the fire originated from an electric short circuit of a shop and soon engulfed six shops in the area. After one hour of the incident Fire Service reached there and brought the blaze under control.

Huge quantity of smuggled goods seized

UNB, *Joypurhat*
BDR jawans seized huge quantity of smuggled goods from frontier Noapara area in Hakimpur upazila in Joypurhat on Thursday.
The border guards, on information, chased a gang of smugglers and seized smuggled goods, including phensidyl syrup worth about Tk 5 lakh. Sensing presence of BDR the smugglers fled the scene leaving behind the contraband goods. Earlier BDR personnel in separate drives seized smuggled goods, including spare parts, sugar and clothes, worth Tk 3 lakh from Dangapara area. The seized goods were later handed over to the local Customs officials.

Valuables worth Tk 1 lakh looted

UNB, *Thakurgaon*
Armed robbers looted valuables worth Tk 1 lakh from a house at Shibganj village in Thakurgaon in Sadar upazila on Tuesday.
Police said the bandits numbering 10 swooped on the house of Jamaluddin, a local businessman, and looted valuables including cash and gold ornaments at gunpoint. A case was filed.

String of robberies in Manikganj

UNB, *Manikganj*
In a string of robberies in three villages in Sadar upazila of Manikganj bandits looted cash and valuables worth over Tk 3 lakh on Saturday midnight.
According to locals, a band of some 20-25 bandits swooped on the house of Nitai Babu of Charmakimpur village at dead of night and looted cash and valuables worth Tk 1.50 lakh.

Public establishments in Rajshahi owe PDB Tk 28.32 cr

ABDUL WADOOD, *Rajshahi*

Power Development Board (PDB) cannot realise the electric bills from the government, semi-government and autonomous organisations.
As a result the amount of outstanding bills if increasing every year.
According to the sources in the local office of PDB, more than Tk 28.32 crore electric bills have remained outstanding till December last with these organisations. Number of defaulting organisation is more than 50.

The biggest defaulter is Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC), sources said. Its outstanding electric bills amounts to about Tk 13.25 crore. Out of the total, about Tk 4.74 crore lies with PDB Distribution Division-I (PDBDD-I), Tk 3.92 crore lies with PDBDD-II and about Tk 4.59 crore lies with PDBDD-III.
RCC consumes PDB electricity for its road-lights, traffic signals and water lifting pumps.

PDB sources allege that the RCC authorities are not 'sincere' in payment of the electric bills. "RCC is a service oriented organisation and it collects taxes from the city dwellers for its services", said a PDB official, on condition of anonymity, adding, "so it is not at all acceptable that it will keep such a huge amount of electric bills outstanding".

When contacted, RCC officials informed that RCC had also a claim of big amount of outstanding bills that was not being paid by PDB. There are several thousands of electric poles in the city corporation area. RCC demands rent for these poles. The total amount of the outstanding rant will exceed Tk 20 crore, RCC sources said.

PDB sources, however, said that the claim of RCC had been rejected by the ministry.

"We cannot disconnect the electric lines as it will cover the city with darkness at night, collapse the traffic system and stop the water supply, all easing much sufferings to the city dwellers said a high official of PDB who added in despair, "the RCC authorities are taking the situation as on advantage that is certainly unfair."

Aftermath of Feb 4 violence

Vested land of puja committee demarcated in Sirajdikhan

BSS, *Dhaka*

The Munshiganj district administration demarcated 35 decimals of vested land of Barmanpara Maa Rakkha Kali Puja Committee developed by the Union parishad at Shekharnagar Bazaar in Sirajdikhan upazila of Munshiganj on Saturday.

The demarcation was done following a clash on February 4 between the lessees of the disputed vested property and government khas lands that led to an attempt by vested quarters to give colour to the incident as communal discord.

The land was leased out to the Barmanpara Maa Rakkha Kali Puja Committee on yearly basis by the then Pakistan Government in 1971, according to records.

Subsequent governments continued the lease initiated by the Pakistan government, said Lutfar Rahman, Assistant Commissioner (Land) of Sirajdikhan upazila.

The demarcation of the land was witnessed by all the four parties in the dispute, namely the local administration, Kali Puja Committee, lessees of the khas land and the Bazaar Committee. ADC (Revenue) of Munshiganj Hasan Jahangir Alam was also present.

Locals said that the dispute arose after illegal occupation of the land allegedly by the lessees of Government khas lands. The land is question was developed with fund from Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Mystery shrouds death of JCD worker

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Natore*

Mystery shrouded over the death of a Jatiyatababi Chhatra Dal (JCD), ruling BNP's student wing worker at Gopalpur in Lalpur upazila of Natore.

Payel, 26, a JCD worker was recently strangled to death at his house, it was alleged.

Police recovered the body from his bed-room, and claimed that Payel committed suicide. The victim was accused in several cases. An unnatural death (UD) case was recorded with Lalpur thana in this connection.

Boro farming on 17,700 hectares

UNB, *Pirojpur*

A scheme has been taken up to bring 17,700 hectares of land under boro cultivation in Pirojpur in the current season with an output target of 59,190 mts.

Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) land, 17,000 hectares will be brought under high yielding 'Ufsi' variety while the rest 700 hectares under local variety. DAE said of the land, 1,550 hectares would be cultivated in Sadar, 75 hectares in Kaukhali, 2,300 hectares in Nesarabad, 10,300 hectares in Nazirpur, 50 hectares in Bhandaria and 3,425 hectares in Mathbaria upazilas. Some 11,950 hectares of land have so far been cultivated in Pirojpur.

The second biggest defaulter is Rajshahi Jute Mills. Upto November last, its outstanding electric bills stood at Tk 1.82 crore.

Rajshahi government college is the third biggest defaulter whose outstanding electric bills amounts to Tk 74.77 lakh till December last.

Other big defaulters are Rajshahi Medical College Hospital whose outstanding electric bills amounts to Tk 40.83 lakh till September last, Rajshahi Police Line and Officers Mess Tk 40.50 lakh till September 2001, Rajshahi Silk Factory Tk 12.44 lakh up to November 2001, Rajshahi Medical College Tk 10.83 lakh till September last, seven government primary schools Tk 9.67 lakh till December 2001, sadar hospital Tk 7.81 lakh upto December last, Water Development Board Tk 7.71 lakh till December 2001, Rajshahi Central Jail Tk 3.89 lakh till November last and Rajshahi University Tk 2.94 lakh upto December 2001.

When contacted, the authorities of the defaulter organisations informed, the government sanctions for electric bills are so little that a handsome amount of the bills remain unpaid every year causing rise in the total amount of outstanding bills.

"We are issuing notices giving ultimatumts but most of the time these are not followed by the concerned authorities," said a PDB official. As for example, Rajshahi City Corporation was asked on last January 6 to pay its outstanding bills by January 20.

"These big organisations are not paying there bills even after repeated request and lobbying but we are to face continuous pressures and sometimes punishment from our higher authorities", said the PDB official intending not to be identified.

These huge amount of outstanding bills are increasing the workloads of the employees and officials and causing hazards. As a result, normal functioning of the offices is also being hampered, the official said. He suggested the ministries should give specific rules and regulations and decision in this concern.



PHOTO: STAR

Slippers and rails have been separated from the ground in Brahmanpara area of Rajshahi city situated along Rajshahi-Amnura railway route. Train journey has become very risky in this route.

Listed criminal hacked by 'identified' miscreants

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Natore*

A listed criminal was injured critically when some 'identified' miscreants, in their bid to kill, hacked him mercilessly at the south gallery of Natore stadium at the outskirts of the town on Saturday night.

Nur-e-Islam Jibon, 22, son of Zalat Uddin of Patuapara in the town was rushed to Natore hospital at around 1 am when his relatives recovered him in a pool of blood at the gallery. He was later shifted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) with critical injury.

Jibon received several severe injuries of sharp weapons, tendons of his two legs were cut, he was operated upon and his condition was deteriorating, sources in

RMCH told on Sunday evening.

Police suspects, the miscreants attacked Jibon while he was engaged in illegal activity with a floating prostitute on the scene, illegally entering into the stadium through a hole.

Police recovered three condoms, including an used one smeared with blood from the gallery.

An injured Jibon named his attackers to his relatives as Zia, Suruj, Rana and Javed, police said.

Jibon, arrested in 1999 in an arms case, was released on bail on February 4.

One worker of Awami League backed Jubo League, he was a target of local terrorists since his release following disputes over extortion in the bus terminal area. No case was registered in this regard.