

NEWS SNAPS

Young man stabbed to death

UNB, Rajbari
A young man was stabbed to death by unidentified assailants in the outskirts of Rajbari town on Tuesday evening.

Police and family sources said some youngsters called Khokan, 27, out of his house at Laxmikot and stabbed him to death taking him to a cross-dam in Sonakandar area. Motives behind the killing were not immediately known. Later police recovered the body from the spot and sent it to the hospital morgue.

Shrimp worth Tk 7 lakh looted

UNB, Gopalganj
Armed terrorists looted shrimp worth over Tk 7 lakh from three shrimp enclosures at Balagati village in Tungipara upazila of Gopalganj Saturday.

Witnesses said the terrorists, numbering 25-30, swooped on the shrimp enclosures at the dead of night and looted the shrimp.

Price-hike of fuel in Bogra

UNB, Bogra
Over 50 mills and factories run with furnace oil have been shut down in the northern region following price-hike of the fuel, throwing some 25,000 workers out of jobs.

Official sources said the government raised the price of furnace oil by 92 per cent in December 2001. Mill and factory owners said the government should not have gone for raising the price of furnace oil before ensuring supply of gas to the northern region and this "unwise" decision has forced them to close down their mills and factories. Mill owner said the government raised the price of furnace oil 35 times in last 28 years.

Rivals clash in Narail: 40 injured

UNB, Narail
A clash between two groups of people at village Kumri in Lohagara upazila in Narail left 40 people wounded Tuesday.

Police and witnesses said supporters of Sohrab Sheikh and Badsha Sheikh locked into the clash over establishing supremacy in the area. A number of houses were damaged and looted during the one-hour fight. Fifteen of the injured were admitted to the upazila health complex and Sadar hospital in a critical condition.

Nine policemen sued

UNB, Naogaon
Nine policemen, including a sub-inspector, were sued on charge of beating up a housewife and her daughter, and raping them.

Zahir Ali of Nagendranagar village in Atrai upazila filed the case with the Naogaon Criminal Court on February 5. Zahir, now in jail, filed the case through his lawyer Rafiqul Alam. The petitioner alleged that the police constables led by SI Zahir broke open the doors of his house at about 1 am on January 25 and beat up his wife Atezan and daughter Rezia and raped them. Police also beat up Zahir Ali and another person Abdul Kader and sent them to the court for detention, the petitioner said. The court later asked the ASP (Circle) to look into the incident and submit report in this regard. It also gave order to the jail authorities to submit medical report after carrying out test on the victims.

No alternative source of safe water

Most people in two dists use arsenic contaminated water

ABDUL WADOOD, Rajshahi

Though the people in Rajshahi and Chapainawabganj have heard of arsenic contamination of water and its fatal effects, yet they take the poison continuously.

"We cannot but take it (arsenic contaminates water) as we are yet to have any alternative source of safe water," said Shefali, 38, a house wife in Laxmipur Schoolpara village in Barogharia union of Sadar upazila in Chapainawabganj.

She said water of their own family tubewell was contaminated with arsenic of more than the acceptable range. The NGO workers have marked it with red colour and advised them not to use the tubewell water for drinking and cooking purpose. But the nearest source of safe water is about 400 yards away from house. "It is not always possible to collect water from that distant source," Shefali said. So they often use arsenic-contaminated water from their own red marked tubewell.

In their village, 48 tubewells, out of 63, have been detected having excessive amount of arsenic (more than 50 micrograms per litre).

WATSAN Partnership Project (WPP), financed by Swiss Development and Cooperation (SDC), conducted a survey through its partner NGOs from January to May this year in seven unions of Poba, Charchhat, Bagha and Bagmara upazilas of Rajshahi and in seven unions of Shibganj and the Sadar upazilas of Chapainawabganj. There are 640 villages in the area of

survey. Results coming from 618 villages revealed that arsenic had been found in 258 villages in excessive amount. A total of 9,234 families use arsenic contaminated water.

There are 384 confirmed patients of arsenicosis and some 2,462 suspected cases who are yet to give clear signs and symptoms.

According to the survey, in 45 villages, water of more than 50 per cent of tube wells contain excessive arsenic.

Cent percent tubewells have been found to contain excessive arsenic in Nichu Dhumi village of Moharajpur union in Sadar upazila of Chapainawabganj.

In 13 villages, 81 to 99 per cent tubewells and 61 to 80 per cent tubewells in 20 villages have been found to have arsenic of more than the acceptable range.

While visiting some villages in Bagha upazila of Rajshahi and sadar and Shibganj upazilas of Chapainawabganj last week, a cross section of people including females, children and illiterates, had been informed of arsenic problem. They have come to know about it through the propaganda of NGO, radio, television and newspapers.

"They come and advise not to use arsenic-contaminated water, but do not arrange arsenic-free water for us," Shefali said and added, "So we cannot but to risk our lives by drinking arsenic-contaminated water even after knowing its fatal consequences."

Ctg Photographic Society executives

CU CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The biennial election of Chittagong Photographic Society (CPS) for the year 2002-2003 was held at the port city recently.

Moidul Alam has been elected the president while Shoaib Faruqi has been elected the general secretary in the new executive committee of CPS.

The election was held at the CPS office at Lovelane in the city. Other office bearers are—vice presidents: Devu Prasad Das Devu, and Ranjit Das, assistance general secretary; Anuj Kumar Borua, treasurer; Bhasab Shil, Organising secretary; Mohin Hasan, Exhibition secretary; Robindra Chowdhury Robi, Library and Information secretary: Kamrul Islam Khokon.

The executive members are Mihir Chakrobarti, Motiul Islam Babul, Bishwajit Ronjan Dutta, Shishir Ranjan Ghosal Sarkar and Munir Hossain Munna. Eminent Tax Advisor RK Mojumder conducted the election.

Postal deptt's money looted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

An 'organised' gang of frauds looted postal department's money amounting to Tk 4 lakh from the treasurer of Natore main post office at a money-transaction counter of Sonali Bank main branch in Natore recently.

Afaz Uddin, the treasurer caught one of the frauds from the scene, but was later temporarily relieved of his duties.

Police sources quoting witnesses said, the gang first swindled the treasurer and snatched his bag carrying revenue money when he was waiting to deposit it at the bank. But the postmaster in an official letter relieved Afaz Uddin, treasurer of the post office from his duties.

When contacted, postmaster Sohel Sultan told this correspondent that Afaz Uddin went to the bank at around 12:30 pm along with two other employees to deposit the day's surplus revenue money amounting to Tk 4 lakh. A man beside him scattered several bundles of Tk 1,000 and Tk 500 on the floor and asked him who owns the money. The moment Afaz looked down, another man from behind snatched away his bag. The man managed to flee the scene with the bag, witnesses say.

Afaz caught an associate of the frauds instantly and later handed him over to police. The arrested was identified as Mujibur Rahman Bepari, 45, son of late Hatem Ali Bepari of Haruapara in Kushtia. Primary investigations say treasure Afaz has a little chance to be involved in the incident, police said.

A case has been filed with Sadar thana in this connection.

Malaria claims 114 in one year in Bandarban

UNB, Bandarban

Malaria claimed 114 lives and affected about 37,250 people in last one year in Bandarban, Civil Surgeon office sources said.

The alarming figure was revealed after compiling the data from seven upazila health complexes.

Unofficial sources, however, contradicted the official figure saying that the number of deaths and affected people were much higher than the number given by the Civil Surgeon office.

They said malaria-related deaths in remote areas were not recorded by the health department. They only counted the deaths at government hospitals and health complexes.

According to unofficial sources about 300 people died from malaria in last one year.

IU faces fund crisis

RAHAT AHMED, Kushtia

Meanwhile, the university demanded Tk 16 crore in the revised budget in the last fiscal year.

In the last fiscal year UGC suggested to the IU authorities to collect Tk 95 lakh each year from its internal income whereas the university earns Tk 50 lakh each year from its own resources.

As the university is situated in a rural area it has no other source of income except tuition fees from the students only.

However, the authorities already increased all kinds of tuition fees of the students to cover its budget deficit. For the same purpose last year the authorities sold valuable trees of the campus and floated tenders to lease out its land for cultivation to earn money.

According to the university officials, UGC did not grant money till February this year for salaries and other allowances to 125 teachers and employees in six departments of Applied Science and Technology Faculty. The university authorities paid their salaries from own fund when these teachers and employees were appointed. This is one of the factors behind the present fund crisis.

Unabated use of firewood in brick-kilns in Gopalganj

ALIMUZZAMAN MIAH, Gopalganj

Despite ban wood is being burnt at random in most brick-kilns in Gopalganj.

So, firewood is now being sold not here at high rate. Garden owners are also selling their mango trees while the kiln owners are burning such wood without any hesitation.

At least 50 brick-kilns have been set up in different parts of Gopalganj without any permission of the Department of Environment.

A reliable source said at least 2,50,000 maunds of fire-wood will be burnt in 50 kilns in violation of government rules.

Sarder Noorul Islam, a teacher of a women's college in Gopalganj said the kilns are threatening the environment.

He said most brick-fields have sprung up on crop lands, close to human settlement, threatening public health.

Living plants also suffer because

of these brick-fields. People in Gopalganj are increasingly suffering from various skin and respiratory diseases due to emission of harmful smoke of brick-kilns.

Some villagers here even said they are forced to sell their trees during the Bangla months of Ashwin and Kartik when they face food crisis.

Another source said some brick-kiln owners, who have applied for permission with the local authorities, have already started their business without taking any proper approval. As per brick burning control Act, 1992, one may be sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment or fined Tk 50,000 for violating this law.

Local people said brick-field owners buy trees from poor villagers and use those in connivance with a section of dishonest government officials, although there has been a taskforce for keeping vigilance such