

NEWS SNAPS

Tax raised for travelling Sundarbans

**UNB**, *Bagerhat*  
in a bid to increase earning from the tourism sector, Forest Department has raised tax for travelling in the Sundarbans.  
With the imposition of new tax from February, local and foreign tourists will have to pay Tk 50 and Tk 300 respectively against the previous rate of Tk 2 to Tk 4. Different tour agents alleged that imposition of increased tax without prior announcement created trouble for both agents and the tourists. Forest Department sources said the authorities have taken the decision to raise the travel tax for bringing dynamism in the sector.

Deer poacher arrested

**UNB**, *Barguna*  
Forest guards caught a deer poacher from Kachikhali range in the Sundarbans in Barguna on Thursday.  
Acting on a tip-off, the forest guards raided the area and nabbed Kabir of Chhoto Tengra village in Patharghata upazila while he along with his associates was setting up trapping materials for poaching deer. His associates, however, managed to escape.

Installation of electricity line completed

**UNB**, *Rangamati*  
Installation of 11-KV electricity line stretching over 25 kms under the Chittagong Hill Tracts Electrification projects second phase has completed.  
Official sources said work on another 19-km 11-KV line is progressing. They said the government took up 12 projects in the three hill districts to install power line on priority basis and initially installation work is going on over 44 kms. The areas where the electricity line is being installed include Betbunia Adarsha village to Lailachhari in Rangamati, Panchhari-Ultachhari-Gorangapara in Khagrachhari and Rajbari-Madhujiri-Nonnarbill in Bandarban.

Re-excavation work of canal begins

**UNB**, *Barisal*  
Work on re-excavation of Jail Canal in Barisal town started Tuesday with local people voluntarily participating in it.  
Whip Mujibur Rahman Sarwar inaugurated the re-excavation work. Eight canals, out of nine, in the town need immediate re-excavation as those have silted up. Existence of the canals has also been threatened due to encroachment.

56,646 ponds lying uncultivated

**UNB**, *Narail*  
A total of 56,646 ponds in 10 southwestern districts have been lying uncultivated for years together missing the opportunity of producing huge quantity of sweet water fishes.  
There are some 5,480 derelict ponds in Narail while 6,375 in Jessore, 13,432 in Jhenidah, 4,692 in Magura, 6,900 in Kushtia, 3,000 in Chuadanga, 4,067 in Meherpur, 4,000 in Satkhira, 6,000 in Khulna, and 2,700 in Bagerhat districts. Most of these ponds are full of hyacinths turning those into breeding centres of mosquitoes. An additional quantum of fishes worth Tk 22.09 crore could be produced annually if these ponds are brought under pisciculture.

Bookshops flooded with notebooks

**UNB**, *Kishoreganj*  
Local bookshops have been flooded with notebooks defying the ban on selling the same.  
Students from primary to high school have an affinity to read notebooks instead of textbooks for getting readymade answers giving the booksellers scope for carrying out their booming business. Government has imposed ban on sale and publication of notebooks up to class VIII, but the unscrupulous traders have been selling the same ignoring the ban. District administration remains silent on the issue. Moreover, most of the notebooks are substandard, and full with errors and distorted facts.

Launching ceremony of UNICEF report

**UNB**, *Sherpur*  
The launching ceremony of "Progotir Pathhey – End Decade Review Report 2000" was held at the conference room of Deputy Commissioner of Sherpur on Wednesday.  
Deputy Commissioner Abul Hossain of Sherpur attended the function as the chief guest and ADC Monwar Hossain Sarkar presided over. UNICEF District Coordinator Hira Khanom was also present. The report stressed on achievement of targets in reproductive health, mother and child health care and education. Government officials, doctors, local government representatives, journalists, NGO workers and teachers took part in discussion on the report.

Foodgrains allocated for uplift projects

**UNB**, *Tangail*  
Some 1,527 mts of foodgrains have been allocated for implementing various rural infrastructure development projects in Ghatail upazila of Tangail this fiscal year.  
This was disclosed at a review meeting on development programmes in Ghatail Wednesday. State Minister for Science and Technology Lutfur Rahman Khan chaired the meeting. The meeting was told that the grains allocated under food-for-work programme would be used for repairing roads and different educational and religious institutions. Disaster Management and Relief Ministry and Local Government and Engineering Directorate will implement the projects.

L

Fog, pest may affect mango output in greater Rajshahi

**ABDUL WADOOD**, *Rajshahi*

Fog and pest are likely to affect mango production this year.  
The mango trees have already begun to blossom at the advent of Bangla month 'Falgoon' and the bees are busy in collecting honey.  
Bairals – the traders who come from elsewhere to buy mango gardens from the garden-owners on contract, have started visiting the rural areas of Rajshahi region, the main mango-producing area of the country.  
Sources in Rajshahi horticulture office (RHO) and Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), Rajshahi office said, mango grows well every alternative year. "A bumper production of mango was harvested last year. So this year is off-season for mango production," an RHO official said.  
At least 30 per cent of mango trees have so far blossomed. We are expecting blossoming of 30-40 per cent more mango trees in the next two weeks," said Rabindra Kumar Majumder, District Agriculture Extension Officer of Chapainawabganj.  
It was also off-year for mango production in 2000, but about 70 per cent mango trees had blossomed and the harvest was very good that year, he informed.  
While explaining the reason of bumper harvest in off-year 2000, Majumder said, garden-owners have

become more conscious about taking care of their mango trees throughout the year. They are now using fertilisers, pesticides, and irrigation whatever is required, in their mango gardens, he informed.  
Weather is unpredictable this year, said Majumder. Moderate rains early in the last month worked as irrigation to the mango trees, he said. But at the same time cloudy sky and foggy weather is also being experienced now and then which is harmful, he went on saying. If this cloudy and foggy weather persists during the next one month, mango production may be hampered, he apprehends.  
Some garden-owners of Shibganj upazila in Chapainawabganj informed that pests had already attacked, though in small scale, in the mango gardens at places." If the pest attacks cannot be checked immediately, new blossomings will be affected," Abdul Jabbar of Ranihati in Chapainawabganj Sadar upazila said.  
According to the official sources, there are about 25 lakhs of mango-trees in the four districts of greater Rajshahi region -- 13,75,000 in Chapainawabganj, 5,00,000 mango-trees in Rajshahi, 3,75,000 mango-trees in Natore and 2,50,000 mango-trees in Naogaon.  
Almost 70 per cent of the total national production of mango comes from greater Rajshahi region.



PHOTO: STAR

At least 30 per cent mango trees have blossomed in greater Rajshahi. Forty per cent more trees are expected to blossom within the next few weeks. This snap was taken from Ranihati area in Chapainawabganj.

Law and order worsens in Gopalganj

**ALIMUZZAMAN MIAH**, *Gopalganj*

The law and order in Gopalganj has deteriorated alarmingly since February.  
Incidents of murder, armed robbery, acid throwing and clashes have increased. Fifty persons have been injured seriously in these incidents.  
On February 7 might Amena Begum, 25, wife of Azad Sikder was critically injured after becoming an acid victim at Paik Kandhi village in Gopalganj sadar upazila.  
Lipton Sikder, son of Badal Sikder of Paik Kandhi village threw acid on her body over a love affair long time ago. Once Lipton Sikder came to the house of Amena and gave an objectionable proposal to her. But Amena turned down his proposal which annoyed Lipton very much. As a result Lipton threw acid on her when she was sleeping in the house. Critically injured Amena was admitted to Gopalganj Sadar Hospital.  
A case was filed with Gopalganj thana in this connection.  
On February 9 night an armed robbery was committed in a high-way bus at Sonakair villager on Gopalganj-Khulna highway.  
The highway bus was heading towards from Dhaka from Bagherhat. When the bus reached Sonakair village near Gopalganj town, a group of armed robbers took control of the steering of the bus from the driver.  
They were travelling in guise of passengers. They looted cash and gold ornaments worth about Tk 5 lakh from the passengers.  
A case was filed with Gopalganj police station in this connection. Police could not arrest anybody till writing of this report.  
On February 11 night another

armed robbery was committed on Faridpur-Barisal highway at Sagalsera village in Maksudpur upazila. A gang of armed robbers barricaded the Faridpur-Barisal highway. They looted cash and gold ornaments worth about Tk 50 lakh at gun point. The robbers looted 12 night coaches and 10 trucks, one by one while 30 passengers became seriously injured.  
A case was filed with Maksudpur police station in this connection. No body was arrested till writing of this report.  
On February 12 night a theft was committed at Zaman Drug Centre at Islam Super Market in Gopalganj town. The thieves broke open the lock and entered in to the drug centre and took away valuable drugs worth about Tk 5 lakhs.  
A case has been registered with Gopalganj police station in this connection.

On February 23 morning at least 50 persons were injured, nine of them seriously in a clash between two villagers in the Eid prayer ground on the Eid-day at Kathi village in Gopalganj Sadar upazila. A serious armed clash ensued among the people of two villages Kathi and Taligati. The seriously injured persons are: Imran, 23, Milon, 22, Sariful Molla, 16, Enamul, 35, Masud Sardar, 20, and Sawkat 40, all of village Kathi while Mobin, 18, Ruhul Amin, 38, and Wahab Sheikh, 40 belong to village Taligati.  
A case was filed with Gopalganj police station in this connection.



A team of Rover Scout delegation of the Scout Association of Japan arrived in Dhaka on February 23. The team is participating in a work camp with local 190 Rovers and Scouts including Girl-in-Scouting in six villages of Noakhali Sadar and Begumganj upazila to promote Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT) for the prevention of diarrhoea including primary health care from February 26 to March 4.

Rovers working to prevent diarrhoea

The inauguration ceremony of Bangladesh-Japan Joint ORT Project was held at 11 am at the Medical Assistant Training Centre, Noakhali on Friday, says a press release.  
Barket Ullah, State Minister, Ministry of Commerce inaugurated the programme as the chief guest, while M. Fazlur Rahman, Chief National Commissioner, Bangladesh Scouts and Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Abdur Rashid, Director General, Secondary and Higher Secondary Division and Dr Tomimichi Goke, Contingent Leader, Scout Association of Japan delivered their speech as special guest.

Mihir Kanti Majumder, National

Commissioner (Community Development and Health), Bangladesh Scouts, Md Sayedur Rahman, Secretary, Bangladesh Scouts, Rover Region, Saiful Islam, Dr. Abdul Malek, Md Mesbahunnabi, Md Ayub Hossain spoke on the occasion, while Mostafa Kamal Haider, Deputy Commissioner, Noakhali presided over.  
A 20-member Rover Scout delegation of the Scout Association of Japan arrived Dhaka on 25 February 2002 under the leadership of Dr. Tomimichi Goke. The team will stay in Bangladesh from February 25 to March 8 to work under Bangladesh-Japan Joint ORT Project, 1998-2002, for the 5th time.

Declining catches Fishermen leaving profession

**UNB**, *Cox's Bazar*

The Bay was as smooth as silk on the day. No tidal surge, or any rough wind. And the fishing trawlers moved without much effort. Such a climate usually favoured the fishermen and gave them a good catch.  
But after a whole night's efforts, Mahmood and his group of fishermen that day returned to shore with only 2 kgs of fish.  
"More or less it's our daily experience nowadays. There is not sufficient fish in the sea," observed Mohammad Mahmood, a villager of seashore hamlet when off-loading fishing nets from the boat to sea-shore in the morning.  
Being confused how to share the insignificant amount of fish sale proceeds among themselves, Mahmood and his seven other colleagues decided to buy fuel for their next voyage on the same evening rather than sharing the money.  
Narrating their experience during a recent visit in Cox's Bazar, the fishermen's group said every evening they sail 10 to 12 kilometres into the Bay of Bengal and return at dawn. Whatever they catch, they sell and share the amount among them. It's a daily routine for the low income fishing community in the coastal area.  
Despite the time being a lean period for fishing, quantity was not so dismal in the previous years, said the 40-year-old Mahmood, who is in the profession since boyhood.  
Migrated from Mongdu, Myanmar (Burma) with the family in early 70s, Mahmood has been carrying on his forefathers' profession. But it is becoming hard for him to survive with fishing in the present circumstances, when fish stock is diminishing.  
He said this situation has been created over the last couple of

years. But the Bay was the main and easy means of survival and good economic support for coastal people. Malo, Koibarto, Jalodas community are exclusively engaged in fishing for generations.  
But due to cash constraints and catching of less quantity of fish, many fishermen are shifting to other professions. Higher class Hindus or Muslims, with enough money to invest, are coming in the business replacing the traditional ones.  
A huge number of people already changed their profession for mere survival, although some kept fishing as a seasonal or part time job.  
Mahmood's companion, Noor Ahmed, has no other explanation for such low catches but to blame destiny. He believes, "Fish is the gift of Allah. People are doing wrong, so Allah has withdrawn His blessing."  
But Kamal sees differently. This local youth and photographer, who lives close to the beach, said unwise fishing, catching of mother fishes and fish fry using nylon or similar type of nets were behind the gradual extinction of fish stock.  
Hampering of breeding, stopping of growing up process and notable increase of fishermen's number are also causes for the diminishing fish output, experts observed.  
There are around 475 fish fauna, including 25 species of shrimps, in 16,607,000 hectares or 480 km marine zone of Bangladesh, according to the Fisheries Directorate.  
Of these, 60 species of fish (sharks, skates and rays) and six species of prawns are exportable, mentioned a report of Bangladesh Frozen Fish Exporters Association (BFFEA).  
Vernacular names of exportable sea prawns (chingri) include bagda, galda, chapda, harina, kharkharia, lalia, kucho, gosa, kalia, roda and gulboni 'uchingri'.

Exportable marine fish species also include bhetki, hundra, chapa, kauwa, samudra koi, sada datina, rupa poa, churi machh, mailhya, rupchanda, kata, tapashi, bishtara, samudra sarboti, sukura, kala hanger (kamat), maisha hangar, haturi hanger, pitambori, haush, aishya hanger, chandana ilish, choukya, phatra, phaisa, chela, loitya, ginza, gongra, kamila, rangchowkha, tekka, lakhua and tailla.  
Local fishermen said half of

these species has become either rare or extinct. The species (marine) collected commercially at present are mainly ilisha, chanda, churi, liyta, datina, rangachowkha, phaisa, poa, kata, baila and tekka.  
Generally poor or mid-income fishermen communities catch these species within 12 nautical miles territorial waters while well-equipped fishermen, who are smaller in size, procure fishes from beyond the boundary.

31-bed Lohagara Health Complex in bad shape

**UNB**, *Narail*

The 31-bed Lohagara Upazila Health Complex in Narail is plagued with manifold problems since long hampering treatment facilities.  
Shortage of physicians and other staff members, poor supply of medicine and diet to the patients are the burning problems causing sufferings to the patients.  
Five posts of Medical Officer out of nine have been lying vacant for a long time. Fund crisis is said to be the main reason behind the scanty medical facilities in the hospital.  
Lohagara Health Complex is considered as the biggest medical service-providing centre for about 3 lakh people of the upazila.  
Posts of medicine and surgery specialists are lying vacant for a long time. The posts of dental physician and consultant have also been lying vacant for several years. There is no female disease specialist in the hospital that hinders the treatment of female patients.  
Besides some class III and class IV posts of employees are also lying vacant hampering day to day activi-

ties of the hospital. The hospital lacks power generator, which is essential to ensure power supply in times of emergency.  
The latrines and urinals are also dirty and emit bad odour posing threat to the health of the patients. The roofs and walls of the hospital building are in dilapidated condition and any serious accident may occur at any time.  
The storehouse of the hospital is also in shattered condition as the plasters are constantly falling off from the roof.  
It is alleged that 80 per cent patients are not provided with medicine and they are not getting pathological facilities in the hospital.  
The sufferings of both indoor and outdoor patients know no bounds due to negligence of on-duty doctors, nurses and other staffs.  
The local elite urged the authorities concerned to look into the matter and take necessary measures immediately to solve the problems of the health complex.