

NEWS SNAPS



PHOTO: STAR

The students of Fine Arts department in Rajshahi University welcoming the Bengali new year by arranging an open air colourful cultural programme at the university campus.

Jubo League activist killed by criminals

UNB, *Meherpur*

A Jubo League activist was killed by assailants in Gangni upazila in Meherpur on Thursday. Witnesses said a gang of criminals hacked Ashraf Ali, 35, Vice-President of Gangni upazila Jubo League, to death when he was returning his village Shahabati from Gangni bazaar in another incident, criminals injured Ahmed Ali, Joint Secretary of Awami League of Gangni upazila, with a sharp weapon on Wednesday. He was rushed to Kushtia General Hospital in a critical condition.

Assailants strangle young man

UNB, *Jessore*

Assailants strangled an unidentified young man and left the body in Jamdia area in Bagharpara upazila in Jessore last week.

Locals said they found the body on Apr 22 near a brick-field wrapped with a piece of cloth in his neck. The reason behind the murder could not be known. On information police recovered the body and sent it hospital morgue for autopsy. Villagers said a group of miscreants after a gang rape also murdered an unidentified woman and left the body in Adampur area of Jamdia on April 15. Separate cases were filed with the police.

Flood damages crops on 19,275 hectares

UNB, *Sunamganj*

Standing crops on 19,275 hectares of land in 10 upazilas of Sunamganj were damaged as the flash flood inundated 40 haors due to incessant rain and collapse of the dam, constructed to protect crops.

District Administration and Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) sources said of the total, crops on 13,340 hectares were washed away totally while crops on rest of the land were damaged partially as the dam collapsed recently owing to the heavy downpour. Farmers brought 249 haors under IRRI-Boro cultivation this season. The extent of damage was officially estimated at about Tk 47 crore till Saturday. Meanwhile, State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Ministry Ebadur Rahman Chowdhury visited the spot.

Little girl gangraped in Nilphamari

UNB, *Nilphamari*

A little girl was gangraped at village Thokshabari in Sadar upazila in Nilphamari on Thursday night.

Police said three youths Zahid, younger brother of Chowra Baragachha UP Chairman, Shafiqul and Babul picked up the 12-year-old girl when she was going to see her ailing sister at the nearby village Kanchanpara along with her nephew. Later they took her to the chairman's house and raped her throughout the whole night. Local people rescued her from the house in profusely bleeding condition. A case was filed.

Fraud gets 14 years RI in Dinajpur

UNB, *Dinajpur*

A court in Dinajpur has sentenced a man to total 14-year of rigorous imprisonment RI for two counts of fraud.

The Additional Sessions Judge Court also fined the accused Abu Sayeed Tk 1000, in default, to suffer 30 days more RI. According to the prosecution, local people caught Sayeed from Sarangai village in Birol upazila on October 21, 1997 when he tried to purchase goods from a shop with a fake note of Tk 500 denomination. Four more fake notes were recovered from his possession. After examining the records and witnesses, Judge M Shahjahan Majumder found him guilty and handed down the punishment on April 23.

Bumper production of IRRI-Boro expected

UNB, *Madaripur*

Farmers of Madaripur are expecting bumper production of IRRI-Boro this season though they could not irrigate their land properly.

All hopes of farmers in four upazilas of Madaripur were shattered as they could not irrigate their land due to lack of water in the rivers Padma, Arial Kha, Kumar and Kirtinasha and fall of underground water level. But the farmers have become very happy at present, as their paddy plants are growing well due to sufficient rainfall in proper time. Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) said farmers have brought 40,000 hectares of land under IRRI-Boro cultivation exceeding the target of 35,500 hectares.

Five rivers in Narail need re-excavation

A CORRESPONDENT, *Narail*

An integrated action plan is needed to re-excavate the five silted rivers in Narail.

All the rivers of Narail have silted up affecting ecology, navigation and causing scarcity of irrigation water.

Experts said, it is imperative to bring back ecological balance, check falling ground water level, developing pisciculture and ensuring availability of surface water for irrigation.

The river Nabaganga which was once a mighty river, flowing through Lohagora upazila, is now virtually dead. Once goods laden boats plied along the river sending merchandise to different places. This river played an important role in flourishing the economy of the district. The 50-mile long Nabaganga has been silted up. The river-bed has now become cultivable land. There the farmers are now cultivating paddy.

One of main tributaries of the Padma is Modhumati. This river is flowing across the Lohagora and Kalia upazilas of the district. Previously when it was mighty, it ensured soil moisture and ecological balance in the area.

The condition of the river Chitra which flows through Narail town is also similar and it is now virtually dead. The Chitra river is flowing through two other districts Magura and Jhenidah. If the river Chitra is re-excavated, a vast area of the above-mentioned three districts can be irrigated by its water, experts said.

The river Afra and Kazla flowing across the Sadar upazila in Narail is gradually losing navigability due to emergence of shoals.

Experts said, in absence of dredging the rivers flowing through the district have dried up in the dry season giving rise to environmental degradation, salinity, arsenic problem, scarcity of safe drinking water and decrease in moisture content of soil.



PHOTO: STAR

A large shoal has emerged in the river Modhumati flowing near Lohagora upazila in Narail. If the shoal continues to grow then the river will dry in near future. So, it needs reexcavation on emergency basis to save the river.

Diarrhoea claims 3 in one week

UNB, *Barisal*

Diarrhoea broke out in an epidemic proportion in six southern districts and claimed three lives and attacked 631 people in last one week.

Official sources, however, confirmed two deaths. Of them, one died in Mehendiganj of Barisal while another in Dashmina of Patukhali.

In addition, one died in Char-Mohishadi village in Patarhat area. He was identified as Kanchan Ali Khan, 60.

Unofficial sources said the number of deaths and attacked people were much higher than that of the official figure.

A total of 290 people were afflicted with diarrhoeal disease in Pirojpur in last week while 113 in Patuakhali, 110 in Jhalakati, 53 in Barguna, 40 in Bhola and 25 in Barisal districts.

Some special medical teams have already been constituted alongside the existing ones to combat the waterborne disease in these southern districts, local health department sources said.

Youth held for possessing arms

UNB, *Tangail*

Police arrested a youth and recovered some arms and ammunition from his house at Beparipara in Tangail town on Saturday.

The arrested was identified as Mohammad Alauddin. Police said when the youth was moving around the area suspiciously local people caught him and handed over him to police. Later following a confessional statement a foreign made revolver and six rounds of bullets were recovered from his house.

Reception

A reception was accorded to the newly elected office-bearers of Pabna district Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal on Saturday at the ground Water Development Board (WDB), Pabna, says a press release.

Presided over by Sramik Dal President Shafi Howlader of WDB, the meeting was also addressed by the new president and general secretary (GS) of Pabna district unit of Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal Abdus Salam and Abdul Gofur. Sramik Dal leaders KG Mostafa, Fiروز Sheikh, Zillur Rahman, Abdul Hamid, Samsur Rahman Swapan, Rabiul Islam and KSA Safiqul Islam also spoke on the occasion.

A large number of activists from all the units of Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal in nine upazilas of Pabna attended the reception. Workers of all the units of Jatiyabadi Sramik Dal attended.

Earlier, a 49-member executive committee of Pabna district Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal (JSD) was formed.

Cane mat weavers seek bank loan, patronage of BSCIC

RAJAT KANTI GOSWAMI,

Moulvibazar

Munshibazar, Dasherbazar and Banglabazar in Rajnagar and Bralekha upazilas of Moulvibazar were once famous for Sheetal Pati (cane made mat).

But due to lack of raw materials and shortage of 'murta' cane, the lone raw material, the age old traditional handicraft is waning. Mat weavers seek bank loan and patronage of Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC).

The mat weavers are also passing very hard days. Many of them are now unemployed while some others already left their ancestral profession.

Sheetal Pati weavers live in groups in different villages in Ranjgar and Baralakh upazilas. Now they have no working capital or no bank gives loan to them to buy raw materials at high price.

Some weavers have told The Daily Star that Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) and some commercial banks are supposed to look after them, but till now no step or initiative has been taken in this regard by any of those bodies.

However, some Non-governmental Organisations

(NGOs) who are working on micro-credit have been working with the cane mat weavers in some areas, but it is still not sufficient, the weavers added.

Some craftsmen at villages Gobindapur and Bhagirpur in Baralekha upazila and Dhubjura and Nidanpur villages in Rajnagar upazila which was once famous for 'murta-cane,' told this correspondent that a piece of cane mat is being sold between Tk 100 to 2,500 depending on quality and design.

Previously traders and people used to come to Munshibazar, Daserbazar and Banglabazar from for flung areas of the country to buy Sheetal Pati, but now the rush is not there.

This correspondent learnt from the craftsmen that about 250 families would face financial crisis, if sufficient 'murta cane' is not available.

The production of 'murta cane' has fallen sharply because of various problems. Fund shortage and lack of bank loans have aggravated the sufferings of the cane growers. Finding no other alternative, they are to borrow money from money lenders at high rate of interest. As such many 'murta' growers are compelled to leave their ancestral profession.



PHOTO: STAR

One weaver showing his manufactured *Sheetal Pati* (cane mat) to a prospective buyer for sale at his show room in Moulvibazar town. Weavers need bank loan and government patronisation for continuation of this traditional trade.