

NEWS SNAPS

Three killed in Comilla road accident

UNB, Comilla Three persons riding on a motorcycle were killed in a road accident at Suaganj area of sadar upazila on Dhaka-Chittagong highway Thursday. Police and witnesses said M Nazrul Islam, 40, died on the spot when a Chandpur bound bus hit his motorcycle from behind at 10 am. The two other co-riders of the motorbike Abdul Momin, 42 and Abdul Motin, 42 died on way to hospital. The deceased were the forest guards of Comilla Forest Extension Department. The driver fled away along with the vehicle. A case was filed with the police.

Body of youth recovered in Nilpahmari

UNB, Nilpahmari The body of a youth was recovered from Shutpara village in Sadar upazila Monday. Police said Rashidul Islam, 28, son of late Masud of Koya Golahat of Sayeedpur Municipality area, was missing from Sunday. Local farmers found the body next morning when they went to work at their paddy field and informed the matter to local police.

Tempo driver killed in road accident

UNB, Faridpur A tempo driver was killed and his helper injured in a road accident at Dhuldi on Dhaka-Khulna highway Monday. Police said a passenger bus hit the soap-laden tempo killing the driver on the spot and injuring the helper. The agitated people damaged the bus. Later, police seized it.

Three JCD members expelled

UNB, Moulvibazar Three members of Jatiyatabadi Chharta Dal (JCD) district committee were expelled on Saturday for violating party discipline. The decision was taken at the instance of local MP and District BNP President M Nasir Rahman. District JCD President Mizanur Rahman Mizan and General Secretary Kazi Abdullah Al Mamun in a joint statement said they were expelled for their involvement in toll collection and other anti-social activities.

Sona Masjid LC station earns good revenue

UNB, Chapainawabganj Sona Masjid LC station earned Tk 8.15 lakh as plant quarantine fees in last 10 months of the current fiscal year. Official sources said Plant Quarantine Department of Agriculture Ministry tests the agricultural products imported through the station and collects fees from the importers. Various agricultural products like apple, orange, grape, mango, onion, wheat, lentil and fodder are being imported through the LC station. Month-wise breakup of earning quarantine fee is as follows: Tk 55,086 in July, Tk 95,454 in August, Tk 62,995 in September, Tk 65,620 in October, Tk 65,600 in November, Tk 32,635 in December, Tk 55,145 in January, Tk 1.41 lakh in February, Tk 72,530 in March and Tk 1.67 lakh in April.

Five smugglers arrested

UNB, Sirajganj Five people, including four women, were arrested along with 79 bags of Indian sugar worth Tk 90,000 from a bus at Ghurkabazar on Dhaka-Bogra highway Monday. On information, police arrested five people Madhubirani, Kohinur Begum, Zamela Khatun, Sufia Khatun and helper of the bus Muktar Hossain for their involvement in carrying the contraband item.

'Woman trafficker' arrested

UNB, Jessore Police on Sunday arrested a woman from Jhumjhumur BADC area in Jessore town for her alleged involvement in trafficking a teenaged girl. Police said they caught Mariam Begum, 25, daughter of Afsar Sheikh of the area following a complaint lodged by the father of a trafficked girl. Police said Mariam took Jesmin, 14, daughter of Abdur Rahman of the same area, to India on February 25 in the name of giving her a good job. Police recovered some Indian telephone numbers from Mariam's diary. They said Mariam has already sent four women to India and sold them there. Mariam, however, said Jesmin was with her sister in Bangalore of India, where she also stayed and returned a few days back.



A May Day rally of rickshaw pullers in Bazaar Station area in Sirajganj town in the morning of May 1. The historic May Day was observed in the district town befittingly. Various trade unions including the workers' front of ruling BNP Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal arranged colourful programmes. State Minister for Power Iqbal Hassan Mahmud attended the programme of Sramik Dal as the chief guest.

Use of solar electric system up among villagers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

The people of remote villages in Mymensingh are now enjoying the power facility using solar electric system. Now, the use of solar electric system is increasing in different upazilas of Mymensingh where electricity is far beyond their reach in this modern age. At present more than 3,000 families of Dhobaura, Phulpur, Haluaghat and Gouripur upazilas in Mymensingh and Sreebardi and Nalitabari in Sherpur are using Solar Electric System for enlightening their houses and playing radio and television (TV) sets, cellular phones and computers. The solar system is a modern technology of producing electricity from sunlight with a low cost. A battery to deposit electricity and a charge controller are needed to run the system. It needs no fuel expense or monthly bill. A solar system can be used for at least 20 years after its installation. The system has also created many income generat-

ing facilities for the remote people. "My income has increased than ever before as I can continue my work as long as I wish," said Imam Hossain, owner of a tailoring shop at Baghbari village in Dhobaura upazila. Sukkur Ali, owner of a carpentry shop at Goshgoan Bazaar of the same upazila also expressed his satisfaction over the solar power system as he is earning much than his previous income. Grameen Shakti, a sister concern of Grameen Bank took up this plan for the socio-economic development of remote people in greater Mymensingh in 1997. Grameen Shakti has been providing all the instruments of Solar Electric System at the cost of between Tk 46,000 and 41,000 according to electricity producing capacity. Any interested person can purchase this system paying 15 to 25 per cent price of the system and the rest money would be paid in 24 or 36 monthly installments with 8 to 12 per cent service charge, said Abdul Matin, Manager of Dhobaura unit of Grameen Shakti.



A cyclonic storm damaged tin-shed house of Amodpur College in Pirganj upazila in Rangpur. Total loss of the college caused by the natural calamity has been estimated to be Tk four lakh. Furniture and other valuables of the institute have been completely damaged due to the storm which lashed recently over the entire Rangpur district.

UNFPA move to change lifestyle of 300,000 tea garden workers



United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Goodwill Ambassador noted film actor Abdur Razzak playing 'Tabla' in an awareness creating programme for tea plantation workers at Sreemongal in Moulvibazar recently.

UNB, Moulvibazar

For generations, they are born and brought up within the boundaries of tea garden. Finally, they breathe their last to draw the curtains on a life marked by neglect and deprivations. The tea garden workers hardly know what changes have been taking place over the years just beyond the garden's boundary. "They're neglected in all sense health, education and other basic amenities. Surprisingly, they still don't know how to use safe sanitary

system," said Mohammad Hafizur Rahman Sarder, project officer of Tea Industry Labour Department (TILD), Sreemongal. "Even they're ignorant about their own rights," he added. There are nearly 300,000 workers in 138 tea gardens in greater Sylhet. They have been languishing in miseries for more than two centuries since the then British rulers brought them from Indian states of Bihar, Orissa, Tamilnadu, Assam and Tripura in early 1770s. The colonial rulers framed some rules and regulations to restrict their

life in the gardens, keeping them out of the light of all development prospects found outside the domain of tea gardens. High population growth, risky lifestyle and addiction to liquor alongside high maternal mortality or morbidity and child death are a common feature among the tea plantation workers, said Hafizur Rahman. On average, each couple of tea garden workers has 6-7 children while the rate is half at the national level. Most children of this neglected community are often

denied basic education facilities, as there are no government-run schools inside the gardens. To bring a change in their life and behaviour, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) came forward to assist and support the Tea Industry Labour Department (TILD), Sreemongal, to launch a project titled "Tea Garden Workers' Family Welfare and Reproductive Health Project." Started in February 2001, the project initially covers 222,000 labourers in 55 gardens more than half of them are female. Already, it has witnessed a slow but positive change. Under the project, the workers are given motivation in reproductive health, family welfare, sanitation, education and other family healthcare issues through meetings, locally known as "Uthan Boithok" (yard session). Due to existing taboos and high illiteracy alongside linguistic barriers and low male participation in such sessions, the project experienced a slow yet positive progress in the initial stage, explained the TILD project officer. About the causes of high population growth, he said from the very beginning, tea planters offered lucrative maternity support and incentives to pregnant women that prompted them to have for more children. As per a garden law, each pregnant woman enjoys four

months of maternity leave plus other benefits. Initially, the aim of such liberal support was to raise the workforce to meet the growing demand of manpower in the tea gardens. But now the perspective has changed. Owners now consider it a financial burden, but as per law are compelled to pay the maternity benefit. "Although we are facing financial constraints and don't need more work force, but garden law compel us to pay during the pregnancy," said a garden manager preferring anonymity. Project officials informed that they are planning to take a move to motivate tea garden owners and trade union leaders to make a change in the law. "But it is a tough task," said TILD project officer Hafizur Rahman. However, as part of the motivation initiative, UNFPA Bangladesh's first ever Goodwill ambassador, popular film actor Abdur Razzak, visited the project area. About his first visit to the tea gardens as UNFPA Goodwill Ambassador, Razzak said: "They (tea garden workers) are leading an acutely neglected and subhuman life... the situation should change."

The movie idol visited gardens, talked to workers, stakeholders, trade union leaders and local people. Attending a session of training course for traditional 'panchayat' leaders and plantation workers, he explained the necessity of reproductive health and family planning, primary healthcare, sanitation, education and other basic development issues. "I got spontaneous response from all parties. I'm hopeful of a change in their attitude," said Razzak, who acted in some 400 movies all dealing with social issues starting his career as stage actor in 1954. Talking to this correspondent, Razzak termed his trip "very successful" and informed that he would soon visit Rajshahi with UNFPA officials aiming at creating awareness among the neglected communities like Santals. About tea garden workers, the UNFPA Goodwill Ambassador stressed the need for continued and expanded support for them to get rid of the cycle of poor health and risky lifestyle. To ensure broader opportunity for them, TILD project officer Hafizur Rahman informed that alongside a d v o c a c y programme, they are going to introduce service programmes like contraceptive distribution and primary healthcare system aiming to reduce high population growth among tea garden workers and to ensure their better health.

Free eye camp in Faridpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Rotary Club of Faridpur New Town arranged a month long eye camp in Faridpur recently. The club implanted Intra-ocular lens to 10 cataract eye patients free of cost. Besides, a good number of cataract eye patients were operated upon and given spectacles free of cost. The function was rounded off with a fellowship dinner. Meanwhile, the club held its Eid

Reunion at the auditorium of River Research Institute on the night of April 29. Rotarian Abdul Ahad PHF, district governor, RI District 3280 Bangladesh accompanied by District First Lady Rosy Ahad attended the function as the chief guest. Among others, Rotarian Md Ismail Jabiullah, Deputy Commissioner (DC), Faridpur, Rotarian Md Abul Basher, Police Super, Rotarian Abdul Kuddus

Molla and Rotarian Abdur Rob spoke on the occasion highlighting the aims, objectives and activities of the club. Rotarian Md Nazmul Hasan, President of the club, took the chair. Rotarian Md Hafizur Rahman, Secretary of the club conducted the function. The speakers mentioned that the main objective of the club is to reach the humanitarian services to the door-steps of the poor.

Tagore's Kutchery Bari at Patisar remains obscure

A CORRESPONDENT, Naogaon

Patisar is a small village, seven miles east of Atrai railway junction in Atrai upazila of Naogaon. The village should have received proper attention and wide publicity like Shelaidah and Shajadpur. This is because of Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore's long association with the village. The main 'Kutchery Bari' (land revenue office) of Parayannan Kaligram having a vast area was situated at Patisar which stands on the bank of Nagar, a small river. The river becomes totally dry in summer. In the rainy season the village looks like a small island surrounded by water all around. The village presents an excellent panoramic view. The small river, Nagar covers a distance of about 20 miles long. Hundreds of villagers residing around the river will be benefited, if re-excavated soon. The enchanting scenic beauty of Patisar inspired the great poet to write many of his world famous poems from here. He explored the scenic beauty of Patisar and drew its pen picture in "Chhinnapatra". During his stay here Tagore composed several of his best poems like "Chaitali," "Asha" and "Purnima." In "Chaitali" the poet gave a vivid pen picture of Patisar and its surroundings. Tagore first came to Patisar in 1895 when he was entrusted to look after the entire Tagore estate. He again visited here in 1896. He visited Patisar for the last time in 1937 on the occasion of Punnah

ceremony of Kaligram Parganah. An address of welcome was read out by late Moulvi Kafiluddin Ahmed, a prominent tenant of Ratoal village in the neighbouring Patisar. The poet visited this village 14 times. The historic Kutchery Bari still bears the everfresh memories of the poet. But no attempt has been made so far to preserve the old Kutchery Bari. Here Tagore used to stay with his wife Mrinalini Devi. Loken Palit, District Judge of Rajshahi and one of the poet's close friends most often came here to enjoy the beauty of the peaceful village. Andrews of London Oxford University also accompanied the poet here time to time. Tagore was a benevolent Zamindar besides being a great poet. He always did welfare activities for the tenants of his vast zamindari estate. He established one high school at Patisar in 1937 which was the third high school in the entire Naogaon district. Poet's wife Mrinalini Devi opened the school which was named after his eldest son Rathindranath Tagore. The old school is now in a dilapidated condition. No development work of the school, established by the poet has been done so far. There were two tanks near the Kutchari Bari, one was called "Rabi Sarobar" where the poet used to take bath. He introduced mechanised cultivation system in this tiny village. He bought a tractor for ploughing at this small village. But then there was no tractor operator. His eldest son Rathindranath had

undergone agriculture training in the USA. He brought his son here from Kolkata to operate the tractor. As the engine of the tractor roared, thousands of villagers from far and near assembled there to see the 'magic'. The poet established the first ever Agriculture Bank in the entire Naogaon district at Patisar, with the fund available from his Nobel Prize money in 1920. He did this to enable his tenants to get loan at a very easy term. Tagore also established a full-

fledged dispensary and posted a medical graduate at Patisar. Steps should be taken immediately to protect the historic Kutchari Bari, turning it into a full-fledged museum and converting Patisar into an attractive tourist spot.



A view of the historic Kutchery Bari, land revenue office of Tagore estate, at Patisar in Atrai upazila in Naogaon. Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore came here 14 times to look after the affairs of his estate, but the Bangladesh Government took no measure so far to preserve the evergreen memory of the great poet.