

NEWS SNAPS

Youth killed by robbers in Narsingdi

UNB, Narsingdi

A youth was killed and three others sustained bullet wounds when robbers opened fire at them at Chinispur village in Sadar upazila Thursday midnight.

The dead was identified as Musharraf Hossain, 35, son of Motalib Miah of the village. Police and witnesses said some 20 bandits swooped on the house of Motalib by breaking open the door. As Musharraf tried to resist them, one of the robbers shot and killed him on the spot. Police recovered the body from the spot and sent it to Sadar hospital for autopsy Friday. A case was filed with police.

Businessman strangled in Benapole

UNB, Benapole

A local businessman was strangled at Shadipur village in Benapole on Thursday night.

The deceased was identified as Kabir Hossain, 30, of the village. Police said he was missing since Thursday evening. Local people found the body of Kabir in a haor (water body) at the village Friday morning. The body was sent to hospital morgue for autopsy. A case was filed with police.

Huge quantity of smuggled saris seized

UNB, Chapainawabganj

Anti-smuggling taskforce in a drive seized huge quantity of Indian smuggled saris from a night coach near 6 Rifles Battalion headquarter here Thursday night.

On information, the taskforce members searched the Dhaka-bound coach from Rahampur at about 10:30pm and seized the smuggled saris worth about Tk 10.38 lakh. Police arrested the driver, the supervisor and the helper of the coach. The seized clothes and the bus were handed over to the local Customs office. A case was filed with Sadar police.

Cash, valuables worth Tk 89,000 looted

UNB, Comilla

Armed robbers looted cash and valuables worth about Tk 89,000 from the house of an expatriate at Mahishmara village of Burichang upazila on Wednesday night. Police said some 15-20 robbers swooped on Anumia's house of the village at dead of night and confined the family members in a room. They took away Tk 17,000 in cash, 12 tolas of gold ornaments, a passport and an air ticket. A case was filed with police.

Fake journalist caught red-handed

UNB, Gaibandha

A fake journalist was caught red-handed while drawing a handsome amount from the Sonali Bank Puraton Bazaar branch with a forged cheque on Monday.

Bank sources said one Matlu Malik with the help of bank employees tried to draw Tk 21,000 against his debit balance of Tk 1,000 only. But the bankers caught him on detection of the forgery at about 10am. However, he was later freed due to the reasons unknown. Account holders of the branch complained that such incidents occurred earlier but there was no action against the offenders. Many of the customers shifted their accounts elsewhere due to recurrence of such incidents. The Branch manager, however, refused to divulge any information about the incident.

Club sealed off in Narayanganj town

UNB, Narayanganj

Police on Thursday sealed off a club belonging to a group of alleged miscreants at fertiliser ghat number 5 in Narayanganj town.

The law enforcers took the step following press reports that fertiliser business was on the verge of closure due to the activities of the criminals. Besides, police are continuing their efforts to nab the culprits. Muhammad Shahidullah, local president of Bangladesh Fertiliser Association, hailed the step taken by the police saying that traders want to carry on their trade peacefully.



PHOTO: STAR

A little girl looks in at a poster demanding immediate trial of the killers of Trisha, the ill-fated schoolgirl who drowned recently in a pond after being chased by some rowdy young men in Gaibandha.

7,000 families homeless in Sirajganj

Erosion threatens highway in Barisal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Erosion by the Sandha in Barisal has taken a serious turn posing a threat to Dhaka-Barisal highway while in Sirajganj 7,000 families rendered homeless by the Jamuna erosion.

UNB reports from Barisal: The Sandha has engulfed vast areas of Barisal-Dhaka highway on Barisal side making vehicular movement on it very risky.

Locals fear that the highway along the river will be washed away within 5-7 days if erosion continues at the present rate.

As a result, the road communication of Barisal will be snapped with the capital as well as other parts of the country.

Roads and Highways (R&H) Department floated a tender for constructing an approach road, but it was cancelled following a clash between two groups of BNP supported contractors on Monday.

Our Sirajganj correspondent reports: At least 7,000 families of 35 villages in five upazilas in Sirajganj have become homeless due to erosion by the Jamuna during flood.

The erosion affected people of Kazipur Sirajganj Sadar, Belkuchi, Chowhil and Shajadpur upazila took shelter on the Bangladesh Water Development Board

(BWDB) embankment, or on highland elsewhere. Officials concerned and witnesses said water level in Jamuna rises or falls due to erosion.

Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) official sources said, about 500 hectares of croplands in the affected upazilas have been devoured by the Jamuna.

Shuvagachha spar 1-2 in Kazipur upazila and Shimla spar in Sadar upazila with Shailabari Zia groylene in Sadar upazila have been damaged by the mighty river Jamuna. Many educational institutions including primary schools have also been devoured by the river.

Meanwhile, property worth about several crores of taka have so far been devoured by the river in the current flood and erosion. Thousands of affected family members are passing their days in hardship. The river has been damaging again and again the newly-built make-shidft shelters of flood and erosion victims. Betil and Enayetpur spar in Chowhal upazila is also threatened by the Jamuna.

In the meantime, many hadloom factories are under threat. District Relief and Rehabilitation office sources said houses of at least 5,500 families have been devoured by the Jamuna in the current season. The erosion affected upazilas are Kazpur, Sirajganj Sadar, Belkuchi, Chowhal and Shajadpur.



PHOTO: STAR

Erosion victims in Sirajganj have erected temporary makeshift structures on the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) embankment at Jechhara shoal.

Fortune betrays again jute growers in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Jute growers in Mymensingh are very confused and cannot understand what they should do as they are compelled to sell their produce much below the production cost due to lack of sufficient buyers.

Mymensingh is famous for quality jute since the British regime. Weather here favour jute cultivation. Growers here always cultivate jute as a 'cash crop'. But low price of jute has frustrated them for the last couple of years.

After the closure of Mymensingh Jute Mills a few years back, the growers lost their interest in jute cultivation.

But after official ban on polythene bags, the farmers have been encouraged to grow jute in large scale. As a result cultivation of jute increased this year.

According to the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) sources, total of 10,800 hectares of land had been brought under jute cultivation in Mymensingh with a production target of 2,52,752 bales of jute. Official sources also said, jute had been cultivated on 8,500 hectares of land in the 2000-2001 season and 6,800 hectares in the 1999-2000 season.

But this year growers incurred due to loss nor'westers and heavy rainfalls. Jute on 1409 hectares of land had been affected, official sources added.

At different bazaars and hats including Shambhuganj, Aamua Kanda, Balia, Tarakanda, Kharicha, Sirta, Muktagacha, Phulbaria, and other places jute trading is going on in full sway. But growers have to return home with grim faces after selling their goods below the output cost. Now they newly-harvest jute is being sold between Tk. 250-300, according to quality and variety. But sometimes the price also comes down when brokers show various pretexts to the needy farmers.

A farmer named Sated Alia came to Shambhuganj Bazar in Sadar upazila from village Rashedpur told The Daily Star that he waited for a long period in the hope of price-hike of jute but in vain. Ultimately he had been forced to sell his produce much below the cost of production.

Some jute growers Abul Hossain,

Nur Ali, Rahimuddin, Abdul Quadir, Abul Hasem came from different village in Sadar upazila told this correspondent that they cultivated jute on more lands this year than that of previous years, but its poor price has frustrated them.

Some jute growers told that for jute sticks, which is used in various household affairs, they cultivate jute in small scale every year.

Moreover, jute traders are yet to get their arrear dues of Tk. three crore 68 lakh at different jute purchase centres.

According to Mymensingh Jute Inspector's Office sources Tk. one crore 99 lakh remain as arrear dues at three centres of Adamje Jute Mills, Tk 36 lakh at Mymensingh Town Centre, Tk one crore 24 lakh is at Iswarganj Centre, Tk 39 lakh at Rayer Bazar (Atharabari) Centre, Tk five lakh at the purchase centre of RR Jute Mills at Atharabari, Tk 15 lakh 19 thousand at a purchase centre of Habib Jute Mills in Shamganj, Tk one crore six lakh at a centre of Bangladesh Jute Mills in Iswarganj and Tk. 43 lakh is arrear dues at another centre of Bangladesh Jute Mills in Iswarganj upazila.

It is learnt that without, paying the arrear dues, jute purchase started here. This year the rate is Tk. 261.50 for white variety and Tk. 281.50 for Tosha variety.



PHOTO: STAR

A farmer at village Gobindapur in Sadar upazila, Mymensingh drying jute sticks which are more valuable than its fibre for its growing demand. Jute growers are totally frustrated because of poor price of their produce.



PHOTO: STAR

Members of the Cable Operators' Association of Bangladesh, Chittagong division, submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister through the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Chittagong recently demanding withdrawal of what they termed 'illegal' VAT on their business.

500 workers of Kurigram Textile Mills in great misery

UNB, Kurigram

Some 500 workers and employees of Kurigram Textile Mills under BTMC have been passing their days in great hardship as payment of their salaries remained stopped for the last seven months.

Production in the mills also remained stopped for last two and a half months.

One worker, A.Jaili, 55, died of starvation early Thursday. As per rule of the Mills, his family did not get Tk 5,000 for the burial service of the deceased.

Freedom fighter Mozammel, husband of a female worker, and father and mother of two other

workers also died of starvation and for lack treatment facilities.

Many other workers are also apprehending same consequences if the mill is not reopened and salaries are paid immediately.

Acting manager Muhammad Nasir Uddin said there is no money in the Mills fund.

Frequent request to the high officials, including the Minister-in-Charge of Kurigram, in this regard failed to bring any positive result, he said.

Locals urged the authorities concerned to pay the dues of the workers and reopen the mills immediately to save the family members of 500 workers.

Azad threatens tough movement for gas export

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Awami League Presidium member and former Foreign Minister Alhaj Abdus Samad Azad MP, said that gas should not be exported.

If the government contemplates to do so, there will be a tough movement throughout the country. It will be initiated from Sylhet, he declared.

Azad was addressing the first joint meeting of the newly-reconstituted district and city committee of Awami League at a community centre on Wednesday night.

Referring to the reports of two national committees on gas, Azad said there is no sufficient gas in the country to export, whereas the government is conspiring to export the same for its narrow interest.

Moreover, the government says that gas will be exported after discovery of new gas field. It is nothing but a trickery, he added. We shall resist the move for the nation's grater interest, Samad Azad asserted. The nation is now facing a critical period.