

NEWS SNAPS

KCC Mayor Gold Medal for brilliant students

BSS, *Khulna*

Khulna City Corporation (KCC) has introduced 'Mayor Gold Medal' for the students who will secure highest numbers in the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Dakhil examinations in the city from next year.

KCC Mayor Sk Tayebur Rahman announced the decision Tuesday at a reception at the Zila hall hosted in honour of the brilliant students who obtained distinction in this year's SSC and Dakhil examinations. Speaking as the chief guest at the function Tayebur Rahman said that without giving proper emphasis on learning English in this era of information technology, the nation would not be able to cope with the ongoing advancement in the world. "Without proper nourishment of our brilliant scholars and students, the development of the nation will remain a dream," he said.

T-aman farming exceeds target in Narail

BSS, *Narail*

The cultivation of transplanted aman (T-aman) in Narail has exceeded the target fixed by the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in the current season. The district DAE fixed a target of cultivating T-aman on 19,200 hectares to produce 45 thousand tons of rice. But the farmers brought 22,100 hectares of land under T-aman cultivation in the district. Of the total land, 18,050 hectares have been brought under high yielding variety and 4,050 hectares under local variety in three upazilas -- Narail sadar, Lohagora and Kalia. The farmers of the district expected a bumper production of T-aman. But the target may not be achieved due to pest-attack and poor rainfall, they feared.

Kala-azar claims 12 in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Mymensingh*

Kala-azar has broken out in an alarming proportion in five upazilas of Mymensingh in recent days. At least 12 persons died so far and over 1,600 have been affected with Kala-Azar in the five upazilas. About 1,293 affected patients have been treated so far according to official sources.

Of the dead, five in Muktagacha, three in Phulbaria, three in Trishal and one in Gafargaoan upazila local Civil Surgeon (CS) office sources said. But the identity of the victims was not available at the CS office.

At least 331 persons affected with Kala-azar have been treated here in July and August this year. Of the affected people, 41 in Muktagacha, 38 in Gafargaoan, 68 in Phulbaria and 30 in Bhaluka and 154 in Trishal upazila, official sources said.

Kala-azar, which is transmitted to human body by infected female sand fly is going to take on alarming turn due to lack of medicine, proper motivation and care of the concerned authorities.

In the affected areas, supply of necessary medicine is not adequate, while motivation is yet to be conducted there.

In the affected areas DDT powder is sprayed two times a year. One is in May-June and the other is in October-November. The authorities are now waiting to spray DDT in coming October and November, but the situation is gradually going from bad to worse.

When contacted Civil-Surgeon of Mymensingh Dr Md Akbar Ali told The Daily Star that DDT powder is not available in Mymensingh adequately and it is collected from other districts which is not sufficient according to demand. When asked why he did not take immediate steps to spray DDT powder to combat the Kala-azar, he replied, the powder is sprayed two times a year when sand flies breed.

The Civil Surgeon also admitted that proper motivation is yet to be conducted is yet to be conducted but "We have distributed leaflets posters to make people aware about the disease. An acute crisis of medicine of Kala-azar i.e. Stibatin Injection has made the situation more vulnerable. A section of unscrupulous medicine traders are selling this Stibatin Injection several times higher than the actual prize sometimes it goes out of market keeping the patients in great distress.

Now one vial of Stibatin Injection is being sold at Tk 500 against its retail price of Tk 109 while Indian manufactured Stibatin is being sold at Tk 250, said a drug seller at Durga Bari road in Mymensingh town.

When asked about the acute crisis of Stibatin Injection, the Civil Surgeon told this correspondent that "we have no budget for buying this injection and it is supplied from Dhaka. He also informed that the supply of this injection is very poor.

A Kala-azar patient needs 17 vials (per vial 10cc) of Stibatin Injection for his cure, he admitted.



PHOTO: STAR

Small traders and hawkers parade the streets of Sylhet town in a protest procession under the banner of Sylhet Zila Hawkers' Oikyo Parisad (council of united hawkers in Sylhet). They were demanding their immediate rehabilitation.

Many in Madaripur earn a living thru' snail collection

UNB, *Madaripur*

Collecting and selling of snails have been gaining popularity everywhere in Kalkini upazila of the district due to its multifarious uses.

The use of snail and conch has been prevailing in the country since time immemorial as raw materials of lime and various crafts.

Nowadays it is being used widely in many purposes, including as a feed in poultry farm and shrimp farm.

As a result, a large number of people of the upazila have engaged themselves in collecting snails and selling them in order to earn a living.

Even many people of the upazila have chosen collecting and selling of snails as their profession as they can earn between Tk 300 and Tk 400 a day from it.

Most of the poor people of Chardoulakha, Shashikar, Chowmohi, Nabagram, Chabai and other beel (water body) areas of the upazila are engaged in this profession.

Locals said a basket of snails is now being sold between Tk 60 and Tk 70 while a sack of snails between Tk 140 and Tk 160.

But without shells, the flesh of the snail is sold between Tk 250 and 280 per maund.

"On average some 400-500 metric tonnes of snails are being sold in the upazila everyday," a snail collector told.

"The owners of the poultry farms and shrimp farms of the southern region purchase the snails through middlemen."

Acute scarcity of food in Kurigram

UNB, *Kurigram*

Aziza Begum was boiling 'kachu' (arum roots to feed her four hungry children. And next door, Zarina, who is expecting fourth child in her mid 20s, was found taking 'fen' (rice water collected from a better off neighbour.

These are the common pathetic scenes along the road in Chilmari where, in makeshift huts, live several hundred families uprooted by river erosion. Spectre of hunger looms large in every face with the advent of 'monga', a lean period of two-and-a-half month beginning early October.

About five lakh people in the district are living in distress; many of them half-fed or forced to take unwholesome stuff. They have no work to earn a living. Day labourers and peasants from shoal areas and remote villages stream to towns every day in search of work or doles from the government.

Monga is an annual phenomenon known to the authorities. But this year it appears acute and many well-to-do families are in the grip of crisis.

Deputy Commissioner Mesbahul Alam admitted the worse situation. "This year farmers suffered loss of boro crop due to hailstorm. Again, flood and river erosion left many people destitute. This is why some areas in the district are experiencing crisis," he said.

The worst hit areas are Dwipchar, Chargram and Chilmari. Peasants and day labourers were

living in utter distress. Some 85,000 people in six unions of the upazila are in deep crisis.

But there is no shortage of foodgrains in government godowns or in the market. Coarse rice is sold at Tk 13 per kg.

The DC said 153,400 distressed families were given 10kg of rice per month in August and September to avert the crisis. The programme will continue. Besides, work under test relief will start soon to help the distressed people.

Informed sources, however, said that about 24,000 families in the district were given 10kg of rice each in August. The number of VGF cardholders were raised to 57,000 in September, but the dole has not yet reached the people. The allotment for September has just been sent to the upazilas. Many of the distressed families are deprived of the dole as the allotment is far from the requirement.

The sources further said that the government sanctioned 478 metric tons of rice in early August under test relief. Under the programme, village infrastructure damaged by the flood was to be repaired. But the work has not yet started.

Some 12,000 metric tons of food grains were sanctioned for the district before June this year under test relief and food-for-work programme. But it is alleged that none of it reached the people. Violating the rules, work on projects was carried out on cash. But in many places no trace of such projects is found.

Housewife beaten to death allegedly by husband

UNB, *Bagerhat*

A housewife was beaten to death allegedly by her husband for dowry at Aruabunia village in Chitolmari upazila Saturday.

Family sources said Elias married Selina Khatun, 17, four months back taking Tk 16,000 including cash and valuables as dowry. Later her poor father also gave him Tk 2,500 for purchasing commodities for his grocery shop.

But the greedy husband subsequently started torturing her to bring

Tk 5,000 more from her father's house.

On Friday night Elias sent her to her parents' house for bringing the money. When she returned empty handed he became furious and beat her mercilessly. Later the following day when she died at noon the killer husband along with his family members went into hiding.

On information police recovered the body and sent it to hospital morgue for autopsy. A case was filed.