

NEWS SNAPS

Sugarcane crushing begins

BSS, Thakurgaon
Sugarcane crushing for the season 2002-2003 has begun in Thakurgaon Sugar Mills recently.
Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, State Minister for Agriculture inaugurated the sugarcane crushing by throwing sugarcane into the cane carrier. Sirajul Haque, Director, Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation (BSFIC) was present there. The mill authority fixed a target to produce 13,950 tons of sugar by crushing 1,80,000 tons of sugarcane at the rate of 7.75 per cent sugar recovery for the season. Last year, the mills produced 12,960 tons of sugar by crushing 1,70,000 tons of sugarcane. On the occasion, a milad mahfil was held on the factory premises where sugarcane growers, officials, employees and workers of the mills and elite of the area were present.

Wheat for VGD cardholders

BSS, Bheramara
Some 50195 tons of wheat are being distributed under Vulnerable Group Development programme (VGD) in six upazilas of Bheramara in the current fiscal.
The upazilas are Bheramara, Daulatpur, Mirpur, Kumarkhali, Khoksha and Kushtia Sadar. Some 30 kg of wheat are being distributed among each of the total 7080 card holders in the district who were enrolled for two years term to be ended in December, official sources said.

One held with two guns in Rajbari

BSS, Rajbari
The combined forces arrested one notorious criminal Mohammad Shaheed Mia from his house at Kajibanda village in Sadar upazila of Rajbari on Friday.
Police said the combined forces raided the Suruj Nagar area and recovered two country-made guns from near Satter Mondal's residence. A case was filed with the concerned police station in this connection.

15 uplift schemes to be implemented

BSS, Chuadanga
A total of 15 schemes will be implemented in two Jatiya Sangsad constituencies of the district like Chuadanga-1 and Chuadanga-2 at a total cost of Tk 2.83 cr.
According to official sources, of the total schemes, six will be implemented in Chuadanga-1 at a cost of Tk one crore and nine schemes will be implemented in Chuadanga-2 at a cost of Tk 1,83,00,000. The Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) will implement the schemes. The undertaken schemes include, construction of roads and bridges and development, rehabilitation of roads. The implementation works of all the schemes are expected to be started shortly and to be completed by June next.

'New faces' collect illegal tolls in Sirajganj shopping centres

AKHTERUZZAMAN BABLU, Sirajganj

With the Eid-ul-Fitr just round the corner, 'new faces' of illegal toll collectors are seen active in Sirajganj. New young faces are 'harassing' buyers, especially the female clients of the 5-storied Mukta Plaza shopping centre on Mujib Sarak in the Sona Patti area of the district town.
These new illegal toll collectors are also active in the S S Road area and some other markets here. They demand tolls from the traders secretly. At the same time they are threatening them not to disclose the matter to the army personnel or to policemen. In case of non-compliance, they would face punishment, they threaten the businessmen.
Traders and people of all walks of life have demanded of the authorities to nab these new illegal toll collectors immediately.
However, a few days ago a sense of security prevailed in Sirajganj and the peace-loving people and businessmen in nine upazilas of Sirajganj district heaved a sigh of relief. Extortion, mugging and other criminals activities decreased here significantly following the army crackdown. Motor-bikes of yellow, red, black and violet colors which were smuggled from India and local 'Tana Gari' were out of the scene. Some of the

owners of these marked motor-bikes went into hiding. Some of them are now seen moving by rickshaws. Most of the motor-bike owners were engaged in extorting money from the local businessmen in the town silently. 'Always we were compelled to meet their demands whenever they or their representative came to us with their multi-colored motor-bikes, said a businessman in Sirajganj town on condition of anonymity. While talking to The Daily Star, more than half a dozen shop owners at New Market and AB Supper market in the town told that they got rid of silent extortion by these extortionists. They said the criminals are not seen after the army crackdown on miscreants. But prominent businessmen in the town have expressed their doubts whether the criminals would claim toll including the arrears after the withdrawal of army.
They demanded a permanent solution so that criminals do not return on conclusion of the crackdown. 'Earlier, we used to receive telephone calls or letters demanding money for holding meeting, cultural function and many other purposes. But it has been stopped totally,' said a renowned businessman in the town. The drivers of bus and trucks also said that toll collection on the highway has been stopped in Sirajganj following the army crackdown on criminals.



(Left) Unauthorised structures were demolished in a joint drive conducted on November 19 by army and police on Ram Babu Road in the Mymensingh Municipality area while (right) in Sirajganj another drive was conducted recently where 200 illegal structures on the New Dhaka Road and Sher-e-Bangla Road areas were demolished by the Roads & Highways Department authorities.

Seed crisis to affect onion farming in Gopalganj

ALIMUZZAMAN MIAH, Gopalganj

Onion cultivation faces setback in Gopalganj due to acute shortage of seeds.
The seed is being sold at Tk 32,000 per maund which was Tk 16,000 a maund last year. The marginal farmers might not be able to cultivate onion this season because the Bengali months of Kartik and Agrahayan months are considered to be the high time for sowing onion seeds.
Farmers at village Korpara in Sadar upazila said they would be able to cultivate only 50 per cent of their lands this year due to high price of seeds.
According to official sources of

the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), over 1200 hectares of land in five upazilas of the district would be brought under onion cultivation with an output target of 10,200 metric tons (MT) in the current season. But the present seed crisis may seriously hamper the output target. In Gopalganj Sadar upazila 500 hectares of land have been brought under onion cultivation with a production target of 8,250 metric tons (MT), in Muksudpur upazila 500 hectares have been earmarked with a production target of 8,250 (MT), in Kasiani upazila 100 hectares have been earmarked with an output target of

850 MT, in Kotalipara upazila 50 hectares have been earmarked with a production target of 425 MT, in Tungipara upazila 50 hectares have been earmarked with a production target of 425 MT.
Gopalganj is one of the quality onion producing districts in the country. It is also famous for producing quality onion seeds. 'Onion seed traders from Mymensingh, Jamalpur and Tangail district are now visiting different parts of the district to purchase onion seeds' local farmers said.
Immediate measures should be taken to supply onion seeds to the farmers.



Patenga Private Container Terminal Implementation Action Committee organised a protest rally following a procession in Chittagong recently in protest against 'conspiracy' to thwart the move to establish private container terminal and investment.

Gradual decline of winter birds in Kurigram

A CORRESPONDENT, Kurigram

Winter birds are diminishing due to scarcity of fish in the beels, haors water bodies and other marshy lands in Kurigram.
Only a few years ago, migratory birds were available in plenty in Kurigram in the winter. The beels and haors were full of various kinds of wild ducks like Kaldighari, Sarails, Balihas, Buri, Storks, Herons and Dahuk. Fishes were the attraction of these birds. But now-a-days, five per cent birds are hardly found in the area.
According to zoologist, most of the winter bird come from the

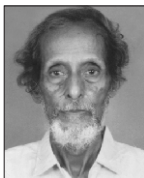
Siberian region where severe cold prevails from November to February. Perhaps, these birds migrate their homeland to tropical countries like Bangladesh and with the advent of spring they return to their permanent abodes.
According to zoologists, 580 species of birds are available in Bangladesh. More than 200 (particularly the winter birds) out of 580 are Siberian migratory birds.
The gradual decline of migratory birds is attributed to hunting of birds and scarcity of fish in the beels and haors. The number of hunters has increased considerably since the emergence of Bangladesh.

If the hunting of birds is made effective, migratory birds will be available again here as of the past.
Some zoologists say that we should have to apply modern methods like Russia and other developed countries to breed more birds.
It will not be out of place to mention that birds are being preserved in the beels and canals in Russia in a planned way. Well-informed circles opine that such steps can easily be taken in our country also. They said if birds are protected and reared, the burden of unemployment in the country could be lessened to a great extent.

Obituary

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

Former president of Magura District Bar Association and a distinguished social worker advocate Abdul Majid passed away on November 14 due to old age ailment. He was 86.
Majid left behind six sons, many grandchildren and a host of well-wishers.



Bean farming popular among jobless youths

BSS, Narsingdi

Bean cultivation is gaining popularity in Narsingdi. Successful yield of bean brings substantial amount of money to the farmers, local people said.
A large number of unemployed youths and farmers of the district have involved themselves in bean cultivation in recent times considering its economic aspect.
Farmers usually cultivate bean on abandoned lands and on their house premises. Now many youths and farmers are used to cultivate bean on commercial basis.
According to Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), about 2000 hectares have been brought under bean cultivation in six upazilas of the district.
Many farmers in different areas of Raipura, Shibpur, Belabo and Polash upazila had changed their lot by growing bean.
According to bean farmers, two to three thousand taka is needed to cultivate bean on one bigha of land from which they can earn Tk 10,000 to 12,000 in a season.

Arable land shrinking rapidly in Kurigram

A CORRESPONDENT, Kurigram

Arable land in all the nine upazilas of Kurigram district is rapidly shrinking gradually.
Nearly 25,000 acres of cultivable land went out of cultivation in Chilmari, Rowmari, Rajibpur, Bhurungamari, Nageswari, Rajarhat, Ulipur, Fulbari and Kurigram upazilas of the district during the past few years.

There are various reasons for this shrinkages. The population of the district is increasing at an alarming rate. New dwelling houses are being built for the increased population on the agricultural lands. A section of greedy person is setting up brick field on the farm-land not considering the loss of crops on which the country depends most.

With the decentralisation of administration, nine upazilas have been erected and upazila complexes have been constructed on a large portions of agricultural land causing loss of crops worth lakhs of taka.

Roads are being built on the cultivable land in an unplanned way. These are the cause of shrinkage of agricultural land and recurrent floods.

Erosion of the rivers Dharla, Teesta, Brahmaputra, Halhalia, Sankosh, Dudkumore, Fulkumore and Sonavory is another cause. Experts say that rapid9 shrinkage of cultivable land will shatter the economy of Kurigram district unless necessary steps are taken by the authorities concerned immediately.