

Only awareness can do a lot

7 Patuakhali villages 100 pc sanitised

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Seven villages in Kalapara upazila have been declared 100 percent sanitised.

All in the villages, rich or poor, use sanitary latrines and are aware of primary health care measures.

The villages are West Chapli in Dhulasar union, Bainbunia and Chunga in Chakamaiya, Salimpur in Nilgonj, Modda Londa in Dhankhali, Badurtali in Tiakhali and Hasuapara village in Lalug union.

The achievement is the result of creation of awareness by some NGOs including Dhaka Ahsania Mission and SSDP, with cooperation from local union councils, government officials and DANIDA, a Danish aid agency, according to the Department of Public Health and Engineering Department (DPHE).

"We only created awareness among the villagers that sanitation will keep them free of common diseases like diarrhoea dysentery and they did the rest", a DPHE official told this correspondent.

Abdul Mannan, 40 and his wife Habiza Begum 35, of Salimpur village said, NGO activists made them aware that diseases like diarrhoea and dysentery spread from unsanitary latrines. "So we bought ring slabs and made a sanitary latrine. "We are free from those diseases", Mannan said.

SNAPS

JU admission test result on May 29

JU CORRESPONDENT

The result of Jahangirnagar University (JU) admission test will be published on May 29.

The selected candidates' admission will begin on June 14 which will continue up to June 21 following their viva-voce examination from June 2 to 3.

Admission of the candidates in the waiting list will be held from June 22 to July 8.

Application forms for admission under the quotas of freedom-fighters, cultural activists, players and tribal students will be available at the university branch of Agrani Bank from May 30 to June 5.

Classes will begin on July 22. The result will also be published in the national dailies.

Three 'outlaws' arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Police arrested three 'outlaws' along with arms and ammunition from Kazipur village in Daulatpur upazila on Tuesday.

A team of Daulatpur police led by SI Sahin and AB Siddique raided the house of notorious criminal Anwar Hossain alias Anu also the chief of self-styled 'Anu Bahini' and arrested his elder brother Rakib, 30, and a member of his force Mahbul and Sattar at about 9 pm on the day.

Police recovered a rifle and a shutter gun with three rounds of bullets from their possession.

Police disclosed the criminals were holding a secret meeting when they were arrested.

A case was filed against them with Daulatpur police station.

Netrakona road mishap kills 1

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

One person was killed and 15 others were injured in a road accident at Salpa Doshal on the Netrakona-Mohanganj Road in Barhatta upazila on Wednesday morning.

Police and witnesses said when a Netrakona-bound passenger bus reached the aforesaid spot the vehicle's driver lost control over steering and fell in a road side cropland.

Noiajuddin 60, an inhabitant of Bashatta poura area was killed on the spot and 15 others were injured.

The injured were sent to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) and Netrakona Sadar Hospital.

2 police among 20 hurt in B'baria road mishap

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

At least 20 persons including two police personnel were injured in a road accident on the Brahmanbaria-Sylhet Highway at Suhilpur in Sadar upazila on Monday.

According to eye-witnesses and police sources, a bus was coming from Modhupur. At the same time another truck coming from Comilla collided head-on with the bus at Suhilpur bus stand. Twenty persons including 2 police constables of Aruail outpost, Sirajul Islam and Ali Azam were injured. The injured were released after first aid treatment at a local hospital.

Pearl being smuggled out

Pink pearls found in Mymensingh are of world class variety

JAHANGIR ALAM, back from Mymensingh

NETRAKONA: Natural pearl collected from waterbodies in greater Mymensingh are smuggled to India and exported from there.

The country and the poor pearl collectors are being deprived for long in absence of any initiative by any quarter to exploit and utilise the resources properly.

An organised syndicate, controlled from Tantibazar in Dhaka buys pearls from collectors at throwaway prices. The collectors get Tk 500 to 700 for each pearl against its price of Tk 1500 to Tk 3,000 in Bangladesh, depending on variety.

One carat natural pink pearl sells in the market at Tk 2500 to 3000, yellow pearl at Tk 2000 to 2500 and white pearl at Tk 15000-2000.

One carat cultivated pink pearl sells at Tk 1000 to 1500, yellow pink at Tk 750 to 1000 and white pearl at Tk 500 to 750.

Natural pearl is superior to artificial

pearl produced with chemical and cultivated pearl grown in ponds. Unlike those, the dazzling colour of a natural pearl never fades.

Natural pearl has high value in western countries. It is used as ornament and is embedded in gold jewellery.

Natural pearl grows inside the 'belly' of oysters when silica enters it accidentally.

Pearls can also be cultivated in ponds. In the artificial system, silica is put into oysters and those are kept in ponds. After some years, pearls grow inside. But these pearls lose brightness within a very short time.

Greater Mymensingh is famous for natural pearl because oysters are found in plenty in haors, rivers and other waterbodies.

The collectors collect oysters from waterbodies and find out pearls from inside. Oyster shells are used for making lime and the 'flesh' is used as poultry feed.

It is a difficult and time-consuming

job as finding a pearl is a matter of luck. One pearl can be found after searching hundreds of oysters, according to collectors.

They said pearls available in Mymensingh region are brighter than those found in other areas of the country.

Pink pearl, available only in this area, is more valuable than yellow and white pearl.

Natural pearls are available in different sizes in Mymensingh region. Those vary from one sixth carat to three carat in weight, they said.

Some pearl collectors this correspondent talked to said they sell pearls without measurement as they do not have any tool.

People from Dhaka and Mymensingh town come and buy the pearl.

Babul Rama of Hat Gobindapur village in Kalmakanda upazila in Netrakona said he gets only around Tk 500 from a big size pink pearl (weighing about two carats) whereas jewellery shops sell such a pearl at

around Tk 6,000.

Islamuddin of Billpar village in Fulbaria upazila in Mymensingh district said they are deprived because they themselves can not market the pearls.

A jewellery shop owner at Mymensingh preferring anonymity said there are five big pearl traders in the town. Their men go to villages and buy pearls from collectors.

He said the business is controlled by traders in Tantibazar in Dhaka.

He said pearl is smuggled to India, from where it is exported to other countries.

"We collect (pearl) and sell those to traders in Tantibazar", he said without elaborating.

Bishawnath Sarker an old jeweller, said the natural pearl found in Mymensingh region is one of the top varieties in the world.

About one thousand people are engaged in pearl collection from waterbodies in Mymensingh region but they have no training.



Pearl is being searched out from oysters on the bank of hilly river Mongalashowary at Gobindapur village in Kalmakanda upazila in Netrakona district (left) and children collecting oysters from a pond at Gopalpur village in Atpara upazila.



PHOTO: STAR

A potential unutilised in Patuakhali

WDB irrigation facilities illegally occupied by influentials, two-thirds land remain fallow half the year

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A little attention can exploit the great unutilised agriculture potentialities in Patuakhali.

Although a surrounded by rivers and criss-crossed by canals, two-thirds of two lakh 22 thousand hectares of cultivable land fertile lands in seven upazilas of the district remain fallow half the year only due to lack of irrigation.

An additional ten lakh tonnes of food grains could be produced if irrigation could be provided, Mrinal Kanti Dev, Deputy Director (DD) of DAE (Department of Agriculture Extension) said while talking to this correspondent recently.

Aman, the main rice crop is harvested in December- January. After that lands remain fallow till the next sowing with the advent of wet season in July-August. During the interim dry season, a small percentage of farmers grow less value-added crops like pulses and vegetables which do not need irrigation.

The lone irrigation project in the Sadar upazila, built with the assistance from World Bank, was closed four years ago as the project tenure expired.

On the other hand, most of the 630 sluice gates built by the Water Development Board (WDB) to provide irrigation from canals in the seven upazilas are illegally occupied by local influentials for pisciculture. Farmers do not benefit from those for growing rice or other cash crops, DAE officials in different areas said.

The WDB had constructed 981 km embankments and set up the sluice gates to check flooding during wet season and high tide and to provide irrigation facilities in dry season.

This correspondent during a survey found most of the sluice gates in the Sadar, Galachipa, Kalapara, Dishmina, Boupchal, Dumki, and Miryagonj upazilas illegally controlled by local influentials for fish cultivation.

Abdul Mannan, 45, a farmer in Aliapur village in the Sadar upazila said cropping in his village depends on rain or tidal water as the irrigation canals and sluice gates are controlled by local influentials. "The canals and sluice gates are under their possession for fish farming. Even fishermen have to pay them for fishing in the government

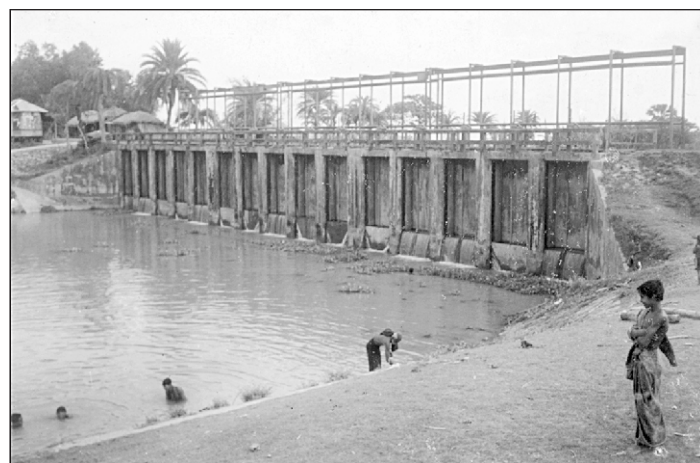
waterbodies", he alleged.

In the Boalia canal in Galachipa, all the 16 sluice gates were seen closed. Farmers can not use the canal water for irrigation as those are occupied by local influentials, one Habib Fakir alleged.

When contacted, WDB officials said they did not get any complaint.

They said they will investigate and take action against illegal occupation of canals and sluice gates.

DAE officials said they have nothing to do to free the canals and sluice gates from local influentials. They however said they are trying to organise farmers to go for small irrigation projects.



A sluice gate in a canal in Galachipa completely closed to stop flow of water for fish cultivation. The photo was taken on Tuesday.

PHOTO: STAR

A noble effort by a freedom fighter

HOSSAIN SERAJ, Magura

He is not a reputed artist but doing a great job.

Freedom fighter Abdul Aziz has opened an art school at a remote village where teachers teach children art and painting voluntarily.

There is no art school even at Magura district town.

Every Friday, about 200 children

from nearby areas display their creativity at Mustafa Aziz Art School at Rawtana village, about 15 kilometres from the district town.

The school was established by Abdul Aziz in 1985 at a rented house after noted sketch artist Mustafa Aziz.

As the school faced financial crisis and Abdul Aziz could not pay the monthly rent, he shifted it to a tin-

shed house on his own land in 2002.

Founder Aziz who acts as the 'headmaster' and nine other teachers do not take any salary.

School authorities offer tiffin to students and charge Tk 15 per month for this.

Aziz tries to give the teachers doles as 'bonus' on occasions like Eid and Puja.

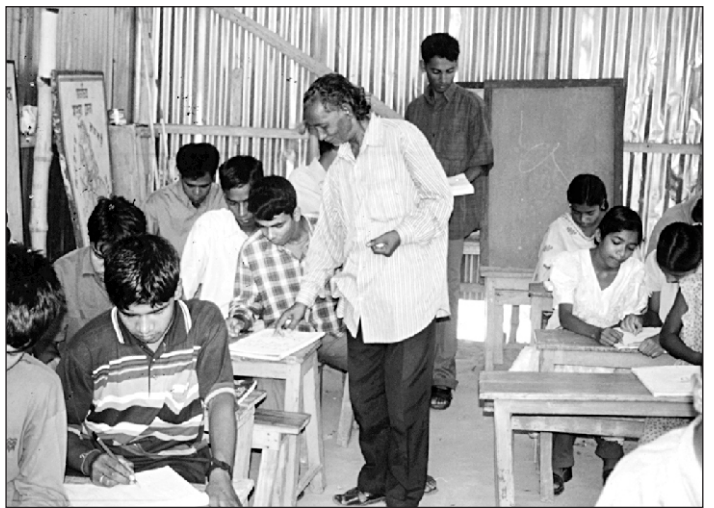
The poor atmosphere can not dampen the spirit of students and teachers.

During a recent visit, most of the teachers and students were seen poorly dressed but they were lively.

"Childhood is the appropriate period to instill creativity and help them broaden their outlook", Abdul Aziz said. Our devotion is our success", he added.

A distinctive feature is that Pahela Baishak (Bangla New Year day), Independence Day, International Mother Language Day, Victory Day and such other national occasions are observed at the school with participation of students, teachers and villagers.

This has created a cultural atmosphere in the village. Some of the villagers this correspondent talked to said they are proud of the school.



Freedom fighter Abdul Aziz with his students at school.

PHOTO: STAR

New govt decision on schools

Several hundred teachers not getting salary in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Several hundred schoolteachers in Barisal district are not getting salaries for about a year.

District education office sources said their salaries have held up by the Education Directorate as there has been a decision that teachers getting 'third division' in their education carrier will not be included in the MPO (monthly pay order) any more.

Due to this decision, salaries of those promoted from the rank of junior teacher to assistant teacher, from assistant teacher to assistant headmaster, from assistant headmaster to headmaster have been held up, according to Barisal District Education Officer Mokammel Hossain.

Mentionably, the past Awami League government had enforced a decision that schoolteachers would be taken from among people who got second division throughout their

career. The present government had withdrawn the restriction but imposed it again, with new harder conditions.

Some of the affected teachers this correspondent talked to said the former government's decision was

applicable only in case of fresh recruitment, not for teachers already listed in MPO.

They demanded immediate cancellation of the order and inclusion of "experienced teachers" in the MPO.

Indian leopard injures 5 in Nilphamari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

After intrusion of two wild Indian elephants through Meherpur and their fanfare take-back, a leopard strayed into bordering Jhar Sinhessar village in Dimla upazila, albeit to an unwelcome situation.

It was shot dead by police after it critically injured seven villagers.

The leopard entered the village at about 2 pm on Tuesday. Villager Sona Mia first saw it and informed BDR. It walked four kilometres inside and took shelter in a bamboo cluster of Tota Mia at Chhatnai village.

When Tota Mia unknowingly entered the cluster to cut a bamboo, the leopard jumped on him. He was seriously injured.

As Tota Mia cried out for help, villagers gathered with sticks and pointed weapons.

The frightened animal became furious and attacked the crowd, injuring four more. The hide and sick and attack in the bush continued for over an hour.

At this stage some people informed Dimla thana. Police rushed to the spot. Constable Nurul Islam shot it and villagers beat it to death.

Hundreds of people gathered on Dimla thana premises to see the dead tiger when it was brought there. Police said they faced trouble to control the crowd.

The officer-in-charge of Dimla thana said the leopard was over six feet tall including the tail.

The five injured persons were first admitted to Dimla Upazila Health Complex and then shifted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

Anti-drug body formed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

A new 31-member committee of 'Dhumpan-O-Madok Birodhi Sangathan, an anti-drug and non-smoking organisation, was formed at a meeting held at Madyapara in the town on Monday.

The meeting decided to observe the World TB Day on May 31.

The president of the organisation, advocate Tanvir Buiyan presided over the meeting while it was addressed, among others, by its vice president Al-haj Abul Foyez, general secretary also a freedom fighter Md Jamal Uddin, Md Fazlul Karim, freedom fighter Abul Kasem, labour leader Jasim Uddin Jamsed, advocate Tarikul Islam, advocate Md Hanif, Kazi Anusur Rahman, Md Shah Alam and woman leader RawsanAra.

Tk 2 lakh valuables looted: 20 hurt by dacoits

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

At least 20 persons including a woman were injured and valuables worth about two lakh taka were looted by armed dacoits at a house at Mukandapur-Madoerbag village in Sadar upazila on May 18, villagers said.

A gang of masked dacoits numbering 20 to 25 attacked Abdul Ali's house in the early hours of the day. They entered the house by breaking open the door. As the family members started a hue and cry, villagers rushed to the spot for help. At once the armed dacoits fired gun shots and stabbed the villagers indiscriminately.

In a critical condition house owner Abdul Ali, 52, his son Abdul Awal, 18, others named Sulaiman, 20, Mutalib, 50, Abdul Khaleque, 55, Aminul Islam, 18, Nazrul Islam, 17, Razia Khatun, Satchu, 14, Abul Bashar, 18, and Jakir Hossain, 15, were admitted to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital.

Killer gets life in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A killer was awarded life term rigorous imprisonment (RI) by the Additional District and Sessions Judge Court here recently.

The convict is Neherul Islam, 33, son of Manjil Seikh of Ramkrishnapur in Bheramara upazila.

According to court, a gang led by Neherul stormed into the house of Kartik Kumar Mondol at Kuthibazaar Mathpara village and looted his belongings on October 20, 2000. At one stage Kartik's son Pradip Kumar Mondol resisted the armed looters. Being resisted the criminals gunned down him killing him on the spot.

Judge Tapos kumar Dey of here who pronounced the verdict also fined the accused 5,000 taka, in default, to suffer one year more RI.

Slain IU ICS activist's body not recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Police could not find out the severed body of slain Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) activist Monwar Hossain Shohel of Islamic University here even after five days of his murder.

Police said search operation is going on but the killing spot is yet to be identified.

Police apprehended that the body might have been buried at an unknown place.