

## SNAPS

## Listed criminal nabbed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A listed criminal was arrested by Sadar thana police on Tuesday. The arrested criminal is Ashraf Ali, 25, also a drug trader and a convict in a criminal case. Police arrested him after raiding his house in Kalatala area. He was sent to court.

## Phensidyl king Jakir arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in a special drive arrested Phensidyl king Jakir Hossain, 30, from Gupinathpur village in Kasba upazila in the early hours on Friday. He was handed over to Kasba Thana police. Later, Jakir was sent to court. He is accused in several cases, according to police sources.

## UPGRADING BM COLLEGE TO VARSITY

## ECNEC approval likely today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A proposal to upgrade the Barisal Government Brojomohon College to a public university has been approved at a pre-ECNEC meeting.

It is likely to be approved by the ECNEC (Executive Committee of the National Economic Council) today, sources said here.

When asked, college principal Prof Nurul Huq corroborated the information and said that the matter will be sent to the parliamentary committee after ECNEC approval.

The decision will be effective from 2005-2006 academic session.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia during a visit to Barisal on April 8 last year had declared that BM College would be turned into a public university.

## RU BCL protests decision to rename NU

RU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League at a meeting on Rajshahi University campus yesterday protested National University Senate's decision to rename the university as Ziaur Rahman National University and urged it to reverse it.

This is part of a government plan to "politicise" the education system, speakers at the meeting said.

BCL central join secretary Kamruzzaman Chonchol was present chief guest while BCL RU unit president Ibrahim Hossain Moon presided over the meeting.

The BCL leaders demanded immediate cancellation of the decision and threatened of agitation movement for non-compliance. They also urged other student bodies to join their agitation to stop renaming of the National University.

The meeting was addressed by, among others, RU BCL vice president Mamunur Rashid, join secretary Wabidur Rahman and organisation secretary Masud.

The BCL units at Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology (RUET) and Rajshahi Medical College in a separate statement protested the NU Senate.

## Pneumonia claims 12 children in Netrakona

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Pneumonia has broken out in an epidemic form in 10 upazilas in the district.

Twelve children died of the disease and about 2,000 children were attacked by the disease in last five days, according to Netrakona Civil Surgeon (CS) office sources.

In Durgapur upazila, two children died and 300 others were affected, in Kalmakanda upazila, two children died and 250 others were affected, in Kendua upazila, one children died and 400 others were affected, in Atpara upazila, one children died and 200 others were affected, in Madan upazila, 220 children were affected, in Khalajuri upazila, one children died and 180 others were affected, in Netrakona Sadar upazila, two children died and 450 others were affected, in Barhatta upazila, one children died and 230 others were affected, in Purbadhal upazila, 150 children were affected, and in Mohorongi upazila two children died and 270 others were affected, according to the CS office sources.

Netrakona CS Dr Mairuddin Ahmed Chowdhury told The Daily Star, change in season is the main reason of its outbreak.

Scarcity of medicine deteriorated the situation, locals alleged.

However, the CS denied the allegation of scarcity of medicine in government hospitals. He asserted that pneumonia had been in his control. The report of its outbreak in epidemic form is also totally false, he added.

## TEA PLANTATION IN PANCHAGARH-2

## Small farmers sidelined

Tk 1.6 cr loans to 3 estates, Tk 1.24 lakh to small farmers: Saplings, training not provided

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, back from Panchagarh

**Nilphamari:** Small farmers and owners of small holdings are facing problems in getting loan, tea saplings and technical support.

As tea plantation is something new in the area, the growers need training and all other facilities but the government assistance is very limited.

RAKUB (Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank) provides Tk 45,344 loan per acre to tea growers. But small farmers are sidelined in the process.

RAKUB gives preference to those who have recommendation from the Technical Committee and have created tea garden in one tenth of the land. The technical committee is comprised of four members from Bangladesh Tea Board (BTB), Tea Research Institute and RAKUB.

Getting loan is a lengthy and troublesome process for small farmers. Many of them said their loan application has to be approved by the technical committee, but it has no fixed date for meeting.

BTB sources said four meetings of the technical committee were held since launch of the pilot project.

Even after getting recommendation from the technical committee, farmers have to face hassle from a section of employees in getting bank loan.

According to data available from BTB Panchagarh regional office, 15 small farmers so far got Tk 1.24,300 loans while two small holding got Tk 8,26,200 Tk and three tea estates got Tk 1,06,35,100.

Of the three tea estates, Karotia Tea Estate got Tk 25.91 lakh for 28 hectares, Dahuk Tea Estate got over Tk 58.11 lakh for 60 hectares and Moinaguri Tea Estate got Tk 22.35 lakh for 20 hectares.

The loans bearing 9.2% interest are repayable in eight years. Repayment will begin from the fifth year but interest will be counted from the day of loan disbursement. BTB takes one per cent of the loan as service charge, many farmers said.

When contacted, RAKUB Regional Manager SM Smamsul Alam said in giving loan the bank considers the tea garden of farmers not the valuation of the land mortgaged.

Farmers said loans are given only after they create garden on ten per cent of the land, a condition which is very difficult for them to fulfil. This condition should be waived, as in the case for other crops like paddy, potato, sugarcane etc, the said. The BTB is supposed to give subsidy to small farmers at the rate of Tk 14,000 per hectare (Tk 5,668 per acre) for buying tea saplings and to meet other expenses but any farmer is yet to get it.

BTB Senior Development Officer AKM Shahidullah said they have received many applications from small farmers for subsidy but could not say when disbursement will start.

One hectare of land needs 16,000 to 18,000 tea saplings, each costing Tk 3 to 4.

BTB Senior Development Officer AKM Shahidullah however said BTB provides tea growers with many facilities like helping them to do registration, soil test, technical

support, training, recommendation of scheme and subsidy for purchasing tea saplings.

Another great problem for small farmers and small holdings is arranging tea saplings and acquiring cultivation skills.

The BTB has a two-acre exhibition nursery at Buraburi village in Tentulia upazila. But is is only for display and saplings are not sold.

The big tea estates have their own nurseries but they also do not sell tea saplings to others.

Shahidullah said they do not supply tea saplings but recommend parties and small private nurseries so that they can procure saplings and clones from the Tea Research Institute in Srimongol in Moulvibazar district.

But it is very difficult for small farmers to bring saplings from Srimongol, they said.

Taking the advantage, some dishonest people have started smuggling tea saplings and clones from across the border, but their quality can not be ensured.

Many of the farmers this correspondent talked to said they approached the BTB officials for training but were disappointed. As this is new, they need adequate technical knowledge but the BTB can not provide this due to shortage of manpower.

When contacted, BTB Development Officer Amir Hossain said they arranged three training courses so far, each lasting two days. A total of 200 people were trained so far.

But farmers said the training courses were too short and inadequate.

BTB sources said farmers interested in better training should go to Srimongol and they will give recommendation for this.

The farmers said as tea plantation is new in the area, the BTB should set field level trained workers like the Agriculture Extension Department to advise them on its cultivation.

NGO (non-government organisation) activities are not seen as regards tea cultivation in the area.

RDRS (Rabnigpur-Dinajpur Rural Service), an NGO, had shown some initial interest in the field but their activities are not seen now, local people said.

Another problem for small farmers is that they can not sustain the gestation period after engaging their lands in tea plantation. Many of them said they are losing interest because they can not survive four years after plantation to reap the benefit.

There are propaganda, problems and also optimism, but the great prospects will be lost if small farmers are not considered as the mainstay in the project, experts and observers said.

Very little has been achieved so far. Out of 65,000 acres, slightly over 1000 acres have been brought under tea plantation so far—about 959 acres by big estates and 71 acres by small farmers.

Small farmers should be encouraged to exploit the potential fully because there will be limitation to areas of big estates after a certain stage, they said.

## Influentials grab lands along roads in Satkhira

## Authorities yet to take action

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

After two years of demolition of thousands of illegal structures, influential people are again out to grab lands on both sides of the 75-kilometre Satkhira-Munshiganj highway in last one week.

They are rebuilding illegal structures under the very nose of the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) authorities who bulldozed those, built at a cost of Tk 10 lakh.

Local people expressed their dissatisfaction over the mysterious role played by local administration and the concerned department in this regard.

Former Deputy Commissioner Abdul Matin Chowdhury took the initiative to demolish the structures by deploying magistrates and police.

The drive continued for two months during the Clean Heart Operation-2002.

Influential people are creating false documents to grab the lands. Over 100 unauthorised structures were built along the busy Kamalnagar-Itagachha area in the town while over 1,000 unauthorised structures were rebuilt on both sides of Satkhira-Munshiganj highway. But no action is in sight till filing of the report on Tuesday.

A source in the RHD, on condition of anonymity, told this correspondent no step could be taken against the illegal occupants and unauthorised structures due to departmental complicity, political pressure from the ruling party and influential people.



PHOTO: STAR

An illegal structure is being built along the Itagachha-Kamalnagar road in Satkhira.

Satkhira over phone to take action against illegal occupants.

If needed, the unauthorised structures will be demolished by deploying magistrate and police again, the DC added. Abdul Mannan, Executive Engineer of the RHD, Satkhira told this correspondent that he is helpless 'because of political pressure'.

He, however, informed that the list of illegal occupants was sent to the higher authorities concerned for taking action against them.

## Diarrhoea: Seven die in Gaibandha, 2 in B'baria

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Diarrhoea claimed seven persons in Gaibandha in three days and two others in Brahmanbaria in a day.

Our Gaibandha Correspondent reports: Over 300 persons were attacked by the deadly disease in three days in the district.

Of the seven dead victims three died at Sundarganj, two at Gaibandha Sadar and two others at Palashbari upazila.

The victims are Rekha Begum, 29, Tasir Bewaya, 40, Ruhul Amin, 2, of Sundarganj upazila, Manjila Begum, 27, Sima Khatun, 1, of Gaibandha Sadar upazila and Shapla Begum, 40, Khamid Ali, 55, of Palashbari upazila.

The Civil Surgeon of Gaibandha told this correspondent, about 106 medical teams were working in remote areas to tackle the situation.

BWDB Executive Engineer Abdul Majid Mollah told this correspondent following receipt of environmental clearance, the project file will be sent to the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC) for prevailing in the remote areas.

Working health assistants told The Daily Star many patients died due to wrong treatment of quacks in remote areas.

Our Brahmanbaria Correspondent reports: The two dead victims are Md Nabi Hossain, 35, and Faysal, 12, of Gupinathpur village in Kasba upazila.

At least 100 others were attacked by the disease at Gupinathpur village, Deli village, Pataisha village, Khaura village, Akshina village, Lattua Mura village and Chandidhar village.

Meanwhile, over 15 villages in the upazila were affected.

## People vow to nab drug peddlers

RU CORRESPONDENT

An anti-drug meeting was held yesterday at Guripara in Rajshahi city, where people promised to help police nab drug peddlers and addicts in their area.

The Madak Birodi Sangathan, an anti-drug body organised the meeting, presided over by local ward commissioner Mansur Rahman.

Civil society members, members of youths' organizations and local people of all walks of life took part in the meeting spontaneously.

It was addressed by, among others, Masud Rana, Habibur Rahman, Khorsheed Alam, Rabiu Islam and Akber Ali.

The ward commissioner urged the local people to identify drug peddlers and submit their lists to police.

Earlier, they brought out a large anti-drug procession. The processionists paraded the main streets of the city.

The programme is part of a RCC anti-drug movement programme in all wards in city to create awareness against the drug and AIDS.

## Effective waste management in Patuakhali

MD SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Patuakhali Pourashava has been implementing a waste management project successfully to keep the town clean since 1999.

Initially, the Household Waste Management Project started in collaboration with the international agency DANIDA, in three crowded areas of Kathpatti, Old Hospital Road and Charpara.

Under the project, 1,000 buckets were distributed free of cost among the residents to put their household waste in it. Visiting from door to door, appointed workers collect the waste from the buckets. They carry the waste by rickshaw-vans, supplied under the project.

A collector collects Tk 20 from every house as monthly waste charge. A charge collector, three vanpiller, three women waste collectors and an inspector are working under this project.

Conservancy Inspector Nazrul Islam told this correspondent at his office, the project has already turned the town clean. Ultimately the authorities will extend the project in the entire pourashava area, he disclosed.



PHOTO: STAR

A rickshaw-van puller in Kathpatti area, Patuakhali collecting wastes from houses under the Household Waste Management Project taken up by Patuakhali Pourashava in collaboration with DANIDA.