



Jamil Sarker at his vineyard nursing plants (L) and saplings planted by youths on both sides of Sonali embankment at Konapara village are now timber trees. Rafiqul Islam Sarker (inset) initiated development programmes in the village.

Grapes, greens and affluence

Cent percent literacy in Konarpara village in Gaibandha: Day labourers now well off from fishery, poultry

KM REZAUL HOQUE, Gaibandha

People of Konarpara village have done a miracle. It is hard to believe unless seen. Most of the villagers were poor and illiterate, mainly dependent on farm labour. Crop damage by flood from Ghagor river was usual every year. Those days of hardship are gone. They are well off now. No one works as farm labourer. Literacy rate is cent per cent. Children go to the high school, set up in the village. They have changed their lot by joining hands and doing other income generating activities like fishery, poultry, fruit and vegetable.

neering role in changing the village is Rafiqul Islam Sarker known as Ratan Bhai. Initiated by Islam, the villagers formed Konarpara Unnayan Samity. All the families were enrolled as its members. They began thinking how to develop themselves. They were made aware of the need for literacy and the vast potential they had. A desire to change the lot and joint efforts are necessary. The Hunger Project came forward to help them. Rafiqul Islam first introduced grape cultivation in the village in 1998, collecting saplings from Kashimpur government agriculture farm. But the people showed little interest. But he was not disappointed. He started motivation through holding group meetings and workshops. Now, grape plants are seen in majority of the home-

steads. "I harvested nearly 60 kg grape last year", said Jamil Sarker. He has also a small dairy farm with five cows. He earns around Tk 400 a day from sale of milk. There are many like him in the village. In 1999, some 16 jobless youths of the village took training on poultry farming. They jointly set up a farm with 300 ducks. This was the beginning. Now over sixty families who worked as day labourers earlier are well off from poultry farming. Even housewives have small scale poultry farms. "Poultry farming has changed our condition. I have over 100 poultry birds now," said housewife Mallika Begum. Mosharaf Hossain is a commercial beekeeper. Konarpara was a flood prone

area. Crop damage by flood was usual every year. The situation changed after construction of the 14-kilometer Sonali embankment with joint efforts of people of Konarpara and neighbouring villages. Once completed, youths of Konarpara and adjacent villages under an arrangement with the authorities planted tree saplings along the embankment. Now there are over 20,000 grown up trees on the embankment. Many of the villagers are engaged in fish cultivation, either individually or collectively by forming cooperative societies. To spread education in the village, Rafiqul Islam set up a high school in the village in 1981. The school has about 300 students now including female ones. Their success drew many digni-

ties to this model village at different times. They include Shipping Minister Col (Retd) Akbar Hossain, Dhaka mayor Sadek Hossain Khoka, Environment Minister Tariqul Islam and Dr. Badul Alam Majumder, Country Director of Hunger Project in Bangladesh. But the villagers have qualms also. Talking to this correspondent, many of them said kutchra roads turn muddy during rainy season. But construction of pucca roads need huge amounts of money. They ponder how to have pucca roads in the village. This will develop the communication system and be a boot to economic activities, they feel. Rafiqul Islam was not available during this correspondent's visit to the village last week. He is in the United States on a tour.

Protest against killing of Rajshahi AL leader

Immediate arrest of killers demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Killing of an Awami League (AL) leader allegedly by BNP activists at Damkudhat in Paba upazila on Wednesday night has triggered widespread protests. The victim is Abdul Malek, 55, also a freedom fighter. Ten BNP cadres equipped with firearms and sharp weapons swooped on Malek while he was taking tea at a stall. He died on the spot as killers ensured his death by cutting his tendons. Killers fled away brandishing firearms, according to police.

At noon on the day, BNP cadres Toufi and Shaheb threatened to kill Malek while they engaged in a quarrel over keeping a pile of straw in front of a store at Paba, according to sources. The incident triggered widespread protests by AL leaders, workers and freedom fighters. They brought out processions and held protest meetings demanding immediate arrest to killers. Additional police forces were deployed to quell the situation. Rajshahi district AL and Jubo League held demonstrations in Rajshahi city protesting the inci-

dent. Malek's brother Alauddin filed a case accusing 10 persons including Paba upazila BNP Joint Secretary Shahjahan Ali, and BNP and Jubo Dal workers Shaheb, Toufi, Mahtab, Zahangir, Majdar, Ibrahim, Rustom and Bablu. On contact, Paba Thana Officer-in-Charge (OC) Golam Rahman told this correspondent three Jubo Dal leaders named Shaheb, Mahtab and Majdar were arrested. Malek's autopsy was done at Rajshahi Medical College. He was buried with state honour at his family graveyard at Rampur village.

Magistrate stabbed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

A magistrate was stabbed by a group of miscreants near 'Abakash' colony here on Wednesday. He is Md Ataul Gani, also an assistant commissioner. Gani was going to Chittagong to report before the court of Additional Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong court by order of Brahmanbari Deputy Commission (DC). When he went out of his house at 'Abakash' colony in Brahmanbaria, a group of miscreants followed him and attacked near Farooki Park here. They snatched his mobile set and stabbed on his hand. In a critical condition he was sent to Brahmanbari Sadar hospital. A general diary was filed at Brahmanbaria police station. On contact, ADM Bonomali Bhawmik informed that magistrate Md Ataul Gani went out to get on Chittagong bound train to reach the Chittagong court at night.

5 hurt as criminals attack newspaper office at Bhola

UNB, Bhola

Five people, including three newsmen, were injured in an attack by criminals at the office of local daily Ajker Paribartan here on Thursday. The criminals also looted Tk 50 thousand and three cellphones from the office. Witnesses said a gang of criminals led by JCD cadre Iqbal attacked Moniruzzaman, a lecturer of Bhola Government College, when he went to the newspaper office about 2:00pm. They beat him up mercilessly. They also beat up Dainik Janakantha Correspondent Hasib

Rahman, Bureau Chief of Dainik Paribartan Shams-ul Alam Mithu, Correspondent of The Sangbad and Channel i Harun-Ur Rashid, and Associate Professor of Barisal Women's College Parvin Akhter as they tried to save Moniruzzaman. Moniruzzaman was admitted to the hospital under police protection following a threat by the criminals. He said the gang had earlier demanded toll from him. Local journalists condemned the attack and demanded immediate arrest of and punishment to the culprits. A case was filed with Sadar Police Station.

30-60 pc fare hike in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Transport owners are realising fares 30 to 60 per cent higher than normal in different land and river routes from Barisal, taking the advantage of rush ahead of Eid. They are continuing this for about a week on the nose of law enforcers. Launch tickets are available in the black market, not at counters, many passengers alleged while talking to this correspondent yesterday. According to sources, 224 launches ply 28 major routes from Barisal daily. One way launch fare to Dhaka from Barisal is Tk 50 to Tk 80 on deck, Tk 300 for non-AC single cabin and Tk 500 for double cabin. Extra taka one hundred was charged for AC cabins. But launches are now realising Tk 100 for deck, Tk 600 for non-AC single cabin and Tk 900 for double cabin. When approached for advance ticket, officials at counters at launch the launch terminal say those are sold. But those are available in the black market. At least 112 launches ply routes from Dhaka to different areas in Barisal region daily. There are at least 30 cabins in a launch. During Eid, launched usually ply overloaded, carrying at least 2000 passengers each. Some sources estimated that the launch owners will earn at least Tk 1.12 crore on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr by increasing fares. But Launch owners claimed

that the fares they are charging are less than those fixed by government, which is Tk 123 for deck and four times more for single cabin. Bus owners are also realising fares more than usual in different routes, passengers said. MP demands removal of Netrakona Civil Surgeon OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona Lawmaker and president of Netrakona district BNP MA Karim Abbas has demanded removal of Netrakona Civil Surgeon Mainul Abumeh Chowdhury and cancellation of appointments recently made in the district Health Department in an 'irregular' way. He has sent a written complaint to Health Minister Dr Khondakar Mosharaf Hossen against the Civil Surgeon regarding irregularities in appointment in 62 posts of third and fourth class employees. He made the demands at a press conference held at the Netrakona Press Club on Tuesday. Several hundred people who had applied for the jobs brought out processions in Netrakona yesterday and the day before demanding cancellation of the appointments and removal of the CS. Civil Surgeon Mainul Ahmed Chowdhury told journalists at his official residence that the appointments were given as per instructions of higher authorities and influential persons.

SNAPS

Kalapara JCD leader expelled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Fatuakhali

A Jaiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader of Kalapara unit was expelled from party on charge of committing crimes on Sunday. The expelled leader is Kalapara JCD Assistant Publication Secretary Masum Billah. The decision was announced publicly in the town through loud speaker on the day. According to police, Masum Billah is a listed criminal. There are about four to five criminal cases against him with Kalapara Thana.

Dipali festival held in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

The Hindu community observed their traditional Dipali festival here befittingly on Thursday. Local administration took all-out measures to ensure peaceful observance of the festival called 'Maha Shamsan Dipali Utsav'. Several hundred Hindus from home and abroad came to participate in the festival. On the first day of new moon after Durga Puja, Hindus went to new and old crematoriums in the city. They offered food and flower on the altar of their nearest one's crematoriums, performed special puja for blessings of the departed souls and illumination of crematoriums. Sudhir Sen, 80, an ex-ward commissioner, journalist and a leader of local Hindu community informed the ritual started here about 200 years ago.

Women entrepreneurship Meena Bazar raises hopes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

An initiative by Brahmanbaria Ladies Club to create entrepreneurship has raised great hopes among women in the town. A Meena Bazar (fair) for women entrepreneurs and a series of seminars and workshops organised by the Ladies Club drew a large number of women who have shown interest in different traders including handicrafts making. Twenty-four women entrepreneurs from different areas of the

district displayed their products in 25 stalls in the five-day fair, first of its kind in the district. Held on the Industrial School ground, it concluded on Tuesday last. With help of the districts administration, the Ladies Club also arranged short training for women on handicrafts making and other businesses at the fair. About 100 women participated in the training course. The fair concluded with a meeting chaired by the Club Chairperson Sarmina Khan. Deputy Commissioner Md.

Jahirul Haque was the chief guest and Police Superintendent ATM Tarek was the special guest at the concluding function. The fair also encouraged handicrafts producers in the district. Talking to this correspondent, Ayesha Begum of Proma Handicrafts said she supplies products to firms in Dhaka as market is yet to grow Brahmanbaria. Talking to this correspondent, the DC said the fair will encourage women entrepreneurs and create jobs for them.



A partial view of the Meena Bazar organised by the Brahmanbaria Ladies Club to encourage women entrepreneurship.

Tk 390 cr uplift project undertaken by RCC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A Tk 390 cr development project has been undertaken by Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC). The projects include development and construction of infrastructures, roads, protection of environment and increasing amusement facilities and civic amenities. After implementation of the project, Rajshahi city will be turned into an attractive, secured and ecologically balanced city, according to City Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu MP. On conclusion of the project review meeting on November 6, the mayor also said ward commissioners, engineers and experts were asked to strictly ensure the quality of work. Meanwhile, work on construction of a modern children's park at a cost of Tk 10 crore, expansion of 38-kilometre city roads at Tk 22 crore and widening of 18 road crossings at Tk 10 crore were already started. Modern construction machines and equipment will be procured at Tk 17 crore to decrease construction cost. The Bypass Link Road project from fire brigade crossing involving Tk 25.60 crore was approved at ECTEC last month, RCC sources told this adding land acquisition will start from next month.

3 killed in Kushtia, Chuadanga

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Three persons including a hatchery owner and a businessman were killed in separate incidents in two districts on Thursday. Of them two persons were killed in Kushtia and Chuadanga by outlaws while another was killed over land dispute in Kushtia. A young man was killed over land dispute at Belgachi village in Mirpur upazila in Kushtia. According to police, Zafar Ali Khan and Abul Hossain of the village had rivalry over a piece of land for a long time. On the day, Manir Hossain, son of Zafar Ali and Saidul, son of Abul Hossain were engaged in altercation over the issue. At one stage, Saidul beat up Manir severely. He was shifted to local health complex where he died. A case was filed with Mirpur Thana. In another incident, outlaws killed a hatchery owner at Dohokola village in Sadar upazila.

Woman killed for dowry

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

A woman was allegedly killed by her husband in collaboration with her mother-in-law for dowry at Dakkhin Jagatshar village in Sadar upazila on Thursday. The victim is Sufia Begum, 20. According to villagers and police sources, since marriage of Sufia with Md Mustafa, family members of Mustafa were creating pressure on Sufia for dowry. On the fateful day, Mustafa along with his mother started beating pregnant Sufia. At one stage she became unconscious. Then Mustafa dropped his wife in the emergency room of Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital where she died. Sufia's husband and in-laws fled from the house. The autopsy of the body was done at the same hospital. Sufia's father filed a case accusing six persons with Brahmanbaria Sadar police. However, accused persons are yet to be arrested.

Yasmin rape and murder case RDRS saves hanged cop's daughter from being divorced

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Timely interference by a local NGO has saved Salma Akhtar, 19, eldest daughter of hanged police Constable Abdus Sattar, from being divorced by her husband Abdur Rouf, 23. Constable Sattar and SI Moinul Islam, both convicted in the Yasmin rape and murder case, were hanged in Rangpur jail on September 1. Yasmin was raped and killed in Dinajpur in 1995. After Sattar's mercy petition to the President was rejected, Rouf's parents demanded Tk one lakh as dowry. Her family said they had no means to pay Tk one lakh. The Daily Star published a story headlined 'Man cashes in on in-law's death sentence' on July 20. Seeing the Daily Star report, Executive Director of RDRS (Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service) Kamaluddin Akbar in Dhaka tele-

phoned it's officials in Nilphamari on the same day and asked them to look into the matter, its Senior Programme Manager here Liaquat Ali Khan told this correspondent. On July 21, Liaquat Ali Khan and its Women Rights Protection official in Nilphamari Mejbahun Nahar met the two families. But Rouf's father Mofizuddin refused to accept Salma. However he denied that he had demanded Tk one lakh as dowry to accept her. Constable Sattar was hanged on September 1. Local people's sentiment went in favour of orphan Salma Akhtar. The RDRS officials told Rouf family that they would stand beside Salma and go for legal action. Finally, Rouf's parents realised their fault and formally accepted Salma as their daughter-in-law on October 31. This correspondent visited her at her husband's house on Wednesday. She said she was happy.

One killed, 20 hurt in B'baria clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

One person was killed and 20 others were injured in a clash between two groups of villagers at Bhalakoot village in Nasirnagar upazila on Thursday. According to eye-witnesses, hospital and police sources, Jalal and Burhana of the village started an altercation for fixing the time of sailing of engine boats. Following the altercation, both the groups equipped with lethal weapons locked in the clash. Of the 21 injured, Hasan Uddin, 22, died on the way to hospital. In critical condition, five persons including Jalal were sent to Nasirnagar Upazila Health complex. The rest others were given first aid treatment at Nasirnagar hospital and local privets clinics. Being informed, police rushed to the spot and arrested Mafiz Mia, 40, Baha Uddin, 20, and Md Basir Mia, 23. Jalal Mia filed a murder case at Nasirnagar Thana accusing 12 persons.

Tk 12 lakh forgery Bank manager, 3 others get life

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A court here on Wednesday gave life term to four persons including two bank officials for misappropriating Tk 12 lakh through forgery in 1994. The convicts are Ruhul Amin Mollah, the then manager of Sonali Bank Gangni branch in Meherpur, its staff Abdul Mannan and account holders Saifull Islam and Farid Hossain. The court also ordered them to return Tk 12 lakh or to remain in jail for two more years. The two bank officials in collaboration with two account holders has misappropriated the money of a pay order for Tk 12 lakh, issued from another bank. It was detected during audit. The case was handed over to Anti-corruption Bureau, which submitted its report on July 11, 1995. Kushtia Additional District and Session Judge Abdur Rashid Mia pronounced the verdict. Manager Ruhul, bank staff Abdul Mannan and account holder Saifull Islam are in jail. The other account holder -- Farid Hossain -- is absconding.

Clash at Iftar party in state minister's presence

Two B'baria BNP leaders suspended

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Two BNP leaders in Sarail union were suspended following a clash at an Iftar party at Sarail Annada High School ground on Wednesday. It was learnt from Md Jahirul Haque, Acting General Secretary of district BNP. They are Sarail Sadar union BNP President Md Eafuiddin and its Secretary Mino Mia. The two were also served with show cause notices to reply as to why their party membership will not be cancelled. They were asked to reply to the notices within seven days of receipt of the notices, BNP sources told this correspondent. At least 50 persons were injured at the clash. State Minister for Land Advocate

Abdus Sattar Bhuiyan was chief guest at the party. Two groups of ruling BNP locked in the clash as soon as Iftar was served to guests. The clash erupted fast along the surrounding area. Being informed, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control. The injured persons were given first aid at Sarail Upazila Health Complex and local clinics. In a critical condition Sarail upazila Srantik Dal president Ayub Hossain, Nanmu mia, 50, Jadu Mia, 45, Khukan Mia, 30, Satchu Mia, 25, were admitted to the health complex. Local people informed that intra-party conflict for years together is the cause of the clash.