

SNAPS

Workshop on AIDS held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A day-long workshop on HIV/AIDS was held at the District Council auditorium here on Saturday. Local NGO, Association of Voluntary Action for Society (AVAS) organised the workshop. AVAS Executive Director Rahim Sultana Kazal presided over the workshop while Shaikh Kabeedul Islam was present as chief guest. Patuakhali General Hospital Medical Officer Md Zakir Hossain Dr Mazharul Islam and Patuakhali Press Club President and AVAS team leader Zia Uddin Khan were present as special guests. Forty participants including journalists, government and non-government officials took part in the workshop.

All-party panel wins Jessore Bar polls

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

The panel of All-party Alliance won by absolute majority in Jessore District Bar Association election on Friday. Out of 16 posts, the panel won 15 posts including those of president and secretary. Only one post of executive member was won by Advocate Abul Kais of the rival panel. BNP leader advocate Nazrul Islam was elected president and Awami League leader advocate Sharif Abdur Rakib won the post of secretary unopposed. Out of the 389 voters 370 cast votes.

20 hurt in clash over land

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

At least 20 persons were injured in a clash over land between two groups of villagers at Bador village under Kasba upazila on Thursday. Sultanuddin and Nasiruddin had a rivalry over land for a long time, according to eye-witness and police sources. The clash ensued when both the groups tried to take possession of the land. In a critical condition, Kazol Ahmed, 30, and Nasir, 38, were admitted to Kasba Upazila Health Complex.

Shal forests shrink to 40,590 hectares from 1,20,000

9466 hectare forestlands grabbed illegally in Mymensingh region, says DFO: Deforestation for pineapple, banana cultivation continues

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Shal forests in Mymensingh and Tangail districts are disappearing fast because of plunder by thieves and deforestation for pineapple and banana cultivation.

There were 1,20,000 hectares of Shal forests in the central plains and north-eastern regions of the country, according to Abdul Latif Mia, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Mymensingh Forest Region. The forests have been reduced to 40,590 hectares now -- 15870 in Tangail and 7808 in Mymensingh -- according to a government survey done in 1999 and 2000.

The DFO also said that 9466 hectares of forestlands have been grabbed illegally in Mymensingh Region.

The disappearance of forestlands is affecting the environment, biodiversity and livelihood of tribesmen in Mymensingh, Tangail, Jamalpur and Natrakona districts, environmentalists and different NGOs say.

A government plan is also responsible for disappearance of Shal forests, sources said.

The government started plantation of Eucalyptus, Acacia and Menjam plants in Madhupur Shal forest in Tangail under a programme titled Thana Afforestation and Nursery Development Project (TANDP), funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 1989. The project was completed in 1995.

Later the project area was expanded to all four forest ranges in Madhupur and one in Muktagacha forest area in Mymensingh district.

Local people including Garo tribesmen had expressed their resentment when the Forest Department had started the programme by cleaning the Shal forests indiscriminately without taking into consideration the severe environmental consequences that would follow, said officials of the Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD), a local NGO that works on environment. Cleaning of the Shal forests

have reduced soil fertility and damaged the environment, they said.

Indigenous people are the worst sufferers because the Shal forests used to provide them with food and shelter.

"Shal forests provided us with food and shelter and other requirements for ages. But now the situation has changed totally, keeping us in great difficulties", said Rana Chisim, a student of Madhupur Degree College.

Elderly Benedict Mangung at Aronkhola village in Madhupur said that during British rule, indigenous people would take lease of forest lands for "thom" cultivation and return the lands to the authorities after planting Shal trees to create new forests. The forests were created by local people in this way.

Other valuable timber trees such as Koro, Chambal, Jogini Chakra and Kaikha were also raised.

During a recent visit by this correspondent, some local people at Aamlitala village in Madhupur forest area expressed their deep

sorrow over the fast disappearance of Shal forests.

Subash Norkerk, a student of Government Ananda Mohan College in Mymensingh town said that there is no need for afforestation in Shal forest areas if steps are taken to protect the Shal trees. This will also protect the bio-diversity and ecological balance, he said.

DFO Abdul Latif Mia however said they have started planting saplings of Gamar, Sal, Garai, Aurjun, Telsur and Akashmoni in forest area, which are not harmful for environment. He also said pineapple and banana cultivation has no bad effect on forests.

The government's Social Forestry Project has benefited local people.

On pilferage of timber trees, he said this is due to shortage of forest guards, employees and vehicles of the Forest Department. But illegal felling of trees has been reduced over the years, he claimed.

Pneumonia: 4 killed, 500 attacked in 3 days in Sarishabari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natrakona

Pneumonia has turned alarming in different areas of Sarishabari upazila in Jamalpur district.

Four children died from the disease and 500 were attacked in last three days, according to sources at Sarishabari Upazila Health Complex.

The dead are Rithu (four months), daughter of Monuhor, Sudhandshu (six months), son of Shirish Sarkar of Badalia in Sarishabari Pourasova, Yushuf (eight months) son of Shaha Ali, Neuton (five months), son of Abdul Mannaf of Kumariabari village in Satpua union in Sarishabari upazila.

Sarishabari Upazila Health Officer told this correspondent that pneumonia has broken out in an "epidemic form" in different villages in the upazila.

On an average, 50 children are being brought to Sarishabari Upazila Health Complex every day for treatment.

scarcity of medicine is hampering their treatment, he said. The Jamalpur Civil Surgeon however said there is adequate supply of medicines at hospitals and the disease is under control.

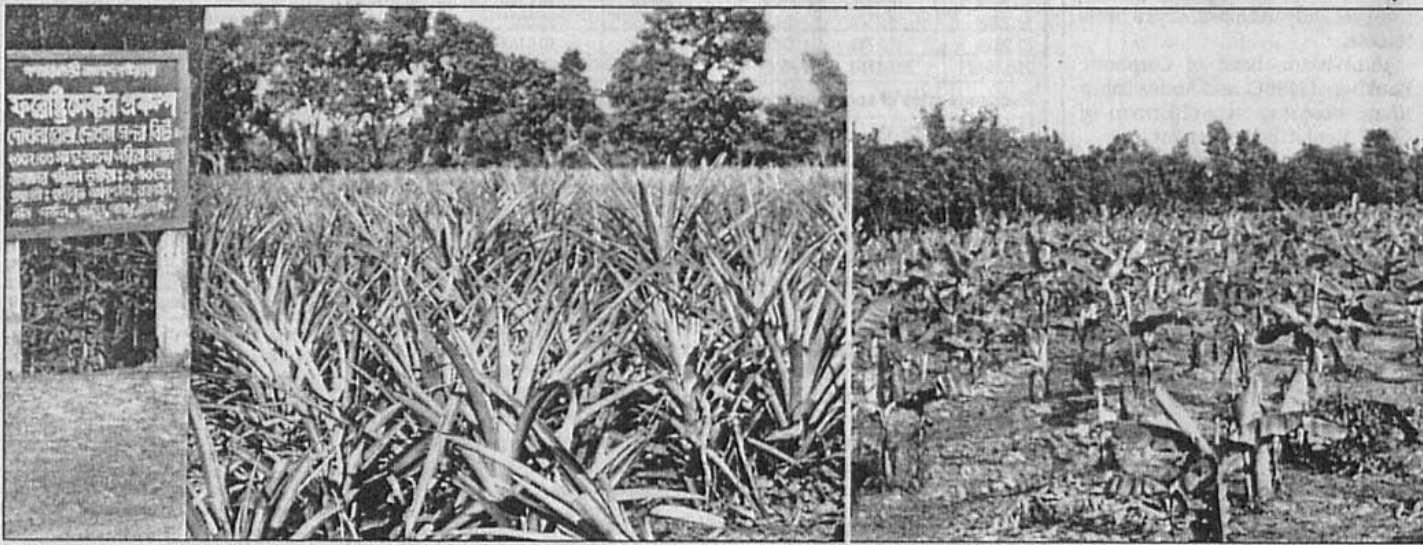
18 police camps set up in Patuakhali shoal areas

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Eighteen temporary police camps were set up in different shoal areas to protect farmers' crops from the clutch of musclemen of influential persons in the ongoing paddy harvest season.

The camps were set up according to a decision taken at an emergency meeting held between police and district administration on Wednesday.

At least 300 armed police personnel were deployed at the camps. The shoals are Char Gongmoti, Kauar Char, Chakamowya, Pajunia, Char Mominuddin, Char Wadel, Char Pakdal, Rajnagar, Char Bashbaria, Char Hadi, Char Borhan, Char Shahjalal, Char Beret, Char Kazal and some other shoals.



Pineapple (left) and banana plantations created by removing Shal forests in Dukkhol Forest Range in Madhupur. The photos were taken on Saturday.

SPEAKERS AT PROTHOM ALO DIALOGUE Set up industries to remove monga in northern dists

RAFIQUE SARKER back from Kurigram

Rangpur: Speakers at an open discussion at Kurigram stressed the need for setting up of agro-based and other small scale industries in greater Rangpur region to eradicate monga (lack of work in rural areas during pre-harvest period).

Bangla national daily The Prothom Alo organised the discussion, held at Kurigram Town Hall on Sunday.

The speakers said monga is a recurring phenomenon, which occurs due to lack of work, not for scarcity of food. Poor people can not buy food during pre-harvest Bangla months of Aswin and Kartik because they do not have any purchasing power due to lack of work.

Several lakh hardcore poor in five northern districts are affected by the monga every year. Most of them face food crisis during the period.

Representative of different NGOs and other organizations working in Nilphamari, Gibandha, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram and Rangpur districts participated in the open discussion on ways to remove monga.

Kurigram Deputy Commissioner Azizur Rahman opened the discus-

sion. The DC said, monga is not incidental. It has been affecting the poor people in the region for decades. Suggestions of the open discussion will help the government take up long term steps to remove monga. But it will take time.

He called upon industrialists, well to do people, the government and NGOs to come up with plans to establish agro-based industries in the region to create jobs for the poor.

The DC also thanked the management of The Prothom Alo for organising the discussion.

Among others, the discussion was participated by The Prothom Alo Editor Motiur Rahman, Joint Editor Anisul Hoque, Grameen Bank Deputy Managing Director Dilip Borua, CARE Project

Officer Imamul Hasan, Dhaka University teacher Prof Mahub, RDRS (Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service) Senior Programme Manager Najrul Gani and Kurigram Municipality Chairman Abu Bokor Siddique.

Motiur Rahman said the monga problem can not be solved by the government alone or any organisation. Well to do people and NGOs

should come forward with programmes for setting up industries and other sustainable development programmes to create jobs for illiterate people who have no training on any vocation.

Prothom Alo with tried to help the monga-hit people in certain areas but it was a drop in the ocean.

Dilip Chandra Borua said handicrafts manufacture can be a prospective sector, which needs micro-credit and training. NGOs can do the job best, he said.

CARE Poverty Officer said long term poverty alleviation programmes and proper use of resources can remove the monga.

Abu Bakar Siddique said about Tk 10 crore was given to different NGOs this year to support monga stricken people in

Kurigram. There should be an investigation on how the money was spent. Giving micro-credit to the poor without any vocational training does not actually benefit the recipients.

Nazrul Islam said river erosion is one of the main reasons for Monga in Kurigram. The problem will not be solved unless river erosion is stopped, he said.

Man drowns, 10 hurt as boat capsizes in Titas

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

An elderly person drowned and 10 others were injured when a boat capsized in the Titas on Saturday.

The dead is Abdul Latif, 70.

The boat capsized when a trawler hit a passenger boat from the opposite direction at Shitarampur ferry ghat (terminal) in the Titas in Nobinagar upazila.

A boat loaded with 30 passengers was coming to Brahmanbaria from Barikandi village in dense fog, according to eye-witnesses, hospital and police sources. When the boat was passing through the ghat, a big trawler hit it from the opposite direction.

Injured passengers were sent to Nabinagar Upazila Health Complex.

Acting on information, a police team rushed there. The autopsy of the body was done at Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital.

153 Ctg newsmen demand Start work on 3rd Karnaphuli Bridge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

One hundred fifty three journalists working in different local and national dailies including electronic media on Saturday demanded of the government to start work on the third bridge over the Karnaphuli immediately.

They also criticised the government's dilly-dally attitude in implementing an election pledge. Terming it as a popular demand of people, they said the bridge is an integral part of proposed Asian Highway which had been okayed in the first ECNEC meeting of the government.

Millions of people living in the southern part of the city are fully depended on the second bridge named Shah Amanat Bridge, they said.

Signatories to the statement are Resident Editor of Prothom Alo Abul Momen, Chittagong Press Club

President Abu Sufian, General Secretary Kalim Sarwar, Chittagong Union of Journalists (CUJ) President Mostak Ahmad, General Secretary Shahid-Ul-Alam, Journalists Nasiruddin Chowdhury, Mohammad Idris, Ataul Hakim, M Nasirul Haq, Nurul Amin, Helal Uddin Chowdhury, Moazzemul Haq, Iskander Ali Chowdhury, Omar Kaiser, Helal Humayun, Osman Gani Mansur, Tamal Chowdhury, Ali Abbas, Anjan Kumar Sen, Nirmal Chandra Das, Kamrul Islam, Asif Siraj, Nawsher Ali Khan, Biswajit Chowdhury, Daisy Moudud, Jahidul Karim Kochi, Mostafa Naim, Shamsul Haq Haideri, Chowdhury Farid, Abul Hasnat, Kshem Mahmud, Mamun Abdullah, Rafiqul Bahar, Samir Barua, Nazimuddin Shyamol, Kamal Parvez, Mostafizur Rahman, Didarul Alam, Zobaer Hossain Sikder, Shahidullah Shahriar, Hasan Ferdous, Mohammad Shahnawaj, Mohsin Chowdhury and Komal Dey.

Ducks draw many to business

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Duck farming is gaining popularity in all eight upazilas of Brahmanbaria district.

Besides the poor, a large number of rich families are now involved in the profitable business.

The poor and middle class families are doing the business by taking loan from different non-government organisations (NGOs) and the government's co-operative department.

The rich people are involved mainly as financiers lenders to small farms. They finance small farmers on profit-sharing basis. They hardly come to the farms.

Some small farm owners this correspondent talked to said they are earning good profit by selling ducks and eggs even by taking loans from financiers. Most of them repay their loan in time.

Fourteen year-old Amin, son of a day labourer in Bariura village in Sarail upazila said he along with his father had started a duck farm last year. His father took loan from a local money lender at a high interest rate. They have to pay Tk 3000 as interest per month.

After paying loan installments, they are earning around Tk 3200.00 every month, Amin said.

Abul Hashem, a day labourer at Shahbajpur village in the same upazila said he started a duck farm by taking loan from a local moneylender. He has to give sixty percent of the profit to the financier. He is now earning a profit of at least Tk 1000.00 every

month after meeting all costs and repaying the loan installment.

Like many, Abdul Khalek of Akhaura, Arif of Shuhagpur in Ashuganj, Abdul Kadir of Biddakud in Nabinagar, Karam Chand of Shahjadpur in Sarail upazila are now better off from duck farming.

During a recent visit to some areas many of the small farmers said they chose duck farming because it is easy to rear ducks in flood plains where natural feed is available almost round the year. Usually ducks are not attacked with diseases, they said.

The profitable business has lured many in unemployed and educated

youths. According to sources at Brahmanbaria District Livestock Office, there are 1,034 farms with at least 1,87,590 ducks in the district.

The farmers said certain diseases break out on the winter season which affect ducks. The livestock department should give more attention to encourage the profitable business. Medicines for diseases should be supplied for free, they said.

When contracted, officials at the District Livestock Office said they have taken measures to prevent ducks from attack of diseases. They vaccinated 76,350 ducks in last three months.



Small duck farm at a village in Nabinagar upazila in B'baria district.



Several hundred pro-BNP teachers of Rajshahi University (RU) brought out a silent procession on Sunday protesting assault of teachers, damage of university property and violence on October 30. The procession led by Student Advisor Prof Zahid Hassan Milky terminated with a rally on Senate Bhaban premises.

BANGLADESH Power Sector Development Technical Assistance Project Credit No 3913 BD and Grant No H092 BD REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST CONSULTING SERVICES: TRANSACTION ADVISOR FOR O&M CONTRACTING OF POWER PLANT

This request for expressions of interest follows the General Procurement of Notice for this project that appeared in UN Development Business online on April 22, 2004. The People's Republic of Bangladesh has received a credit and grant from the International Development Agency in the amount of US\$15.5 million equivalent towards the cost of the Power Sector Development Technical Assistance (PSDTA) Project and it intends to apply part of the proceeds of this credit and grant to payment under the contracts for consulting services to prepare a performance based contract and help identify an Operations and Maintenance Contractor for Siddhirganj Gas Turbine Peaking Plant. Brief background and description of services is provided below:

In April 2004, Government of Bangladesh has formed the Electricity Generation Company of Bangladesh (EGCB) Ltd, a wholly-owned power generation company of the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB). EGCB will own three 120MW open cycle gas turbine peaking plants to be built at the existing Siddhirganj power station site. Other plants at the site may be added later in a staged way. IDA has agreed to finance one of the three 120MW peaking units. In parallel, GOB and EGCB will build the other two 120MW gas turbine peaking units at the same site with funding from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). All three peaking units are expected to be operational by 2007.

EGCB will retain a qualified firm to be responsible for operations and maintenance of EGCB's 3x120MW peaking plants in Siddhirganj under a performance-based contract. The selected firm should have proven experience in O&M of similar power plants and will be hired for a fixed term of at least 6 years. The O&M contractor may also provide general management advice to the core senior management of EGCB.

A Transaction Advisor (consulting firm-consultant) will now sought to advise GOB and EGCB/BPDB: (i) to prepare, design, market, bid, evaluate and negotiate a performance-based O&M contract; (ii) to review EGCB governance arrangements and recommend measures to achieve commercial independence and develop sound operational guidelines; and (iii) to prepare the financial projections for EGCB and draft the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) between EGCB and BPDB. The consultant will review acquiring of the existing operating assets by EGCB, its impact on EGCB's financial health and recommend when this plant should be added to the proposed O&M contract.

The Power Cell, Ministry of Power, Energy, and Mineral Resources now invites eligible international consulting firms (Transaction Advisor-consultant) to indicate their interest in providing the services. The Transaction Advisor will be a reputable international financial, management or economic advisory firm and will possess all necessary legal, financial, accounting, human resources, engineering, project management and other capabilities necessary for this assignment. The Advisory Team should also be structured to ensure a good balance between international experience and knowledge of local business conditions and legal/regulatory issues and the firm may associate local consulting firm/individual experts to assist them in performing their job. EOIs should include brochures, description of similar assignments, experience in similar conditions, summaries of firm's capability, availability of appropriate skills among key staff with short biographies (one paragraph), availability of resources, and snapshots of relevant transactional experience.

A consultant will be selected in accordance with the procedures set out in the World Bank's Guidelines: Selection and Employment of Consultants by World Bank Borrowers, May 2004.

Interested consultants may obtain additional information from the office at the address below during office hours, i.e., from 0900 to 1600 hours, Saturday to Wednesday and 0900 to 1400 hours on Thursday.

Expressions of interest (5 copies) must be delivered to the address below by December 20, 2004.

Submission of EOI through E-mail and fax will NOT be accepted.

Director General Power Cell Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Govt of the People's Republic of Bangladesh BTMC Bhaban (8th Level) 7-9 Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh. Telephone: 880 2 8118940 DFP-28275-27/11/04 Fax: 880 2 9121673, 8118941 G-1171 E-mail: dgpcmemr@citechco.net