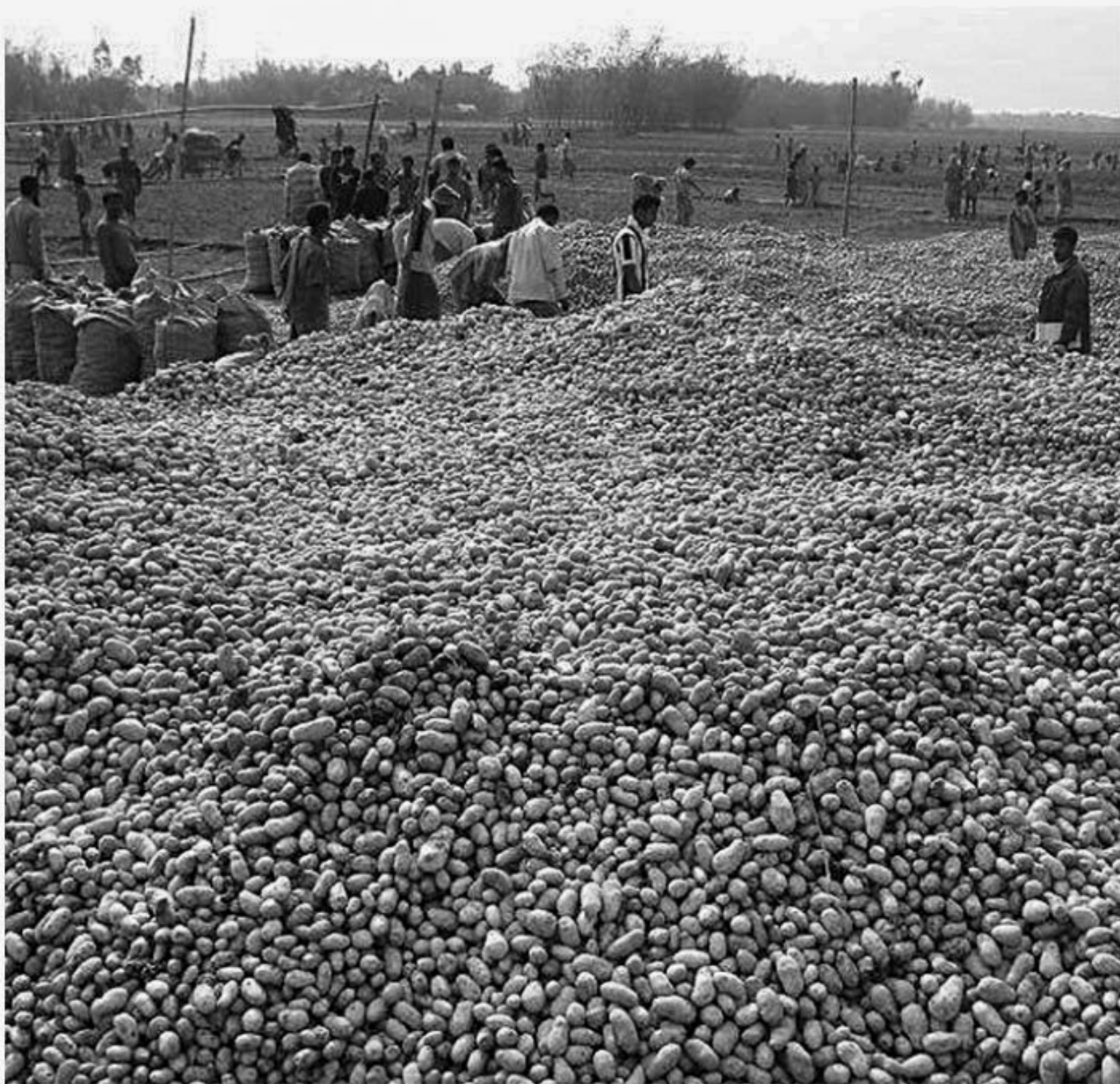


Burdened by bumper potato

Growers in 8 northern districts to count loss for poor storage facilities



Farmers put into sacks huge potato at a field of Chira Bhiza Golna in Jaldhaka upazila under Nilphamari district that saw bumper production of the winter vegetable this season.

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Bumper potato yield in eight northern districts this season hardly makes the farmers happy as 57 cold storages in the country's largest potato producing region can accommodate only 13.5 percent of the total production.

Average yield of harvested potato in a hectare this year is 19.5 tonnes and accordingly total production in the region is expected to be about 37 lakh tonne, said officials of the regional office of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Rangpur.

Seventy percent of the winter vegetable in the region has already been harvested.

"We are expecting bumper production as the weather is favourable, fertiliser and pesticide supply is stable and farmers are getting them at fair price," said Mamunur Rashid, acting deputy director of DAE in Nilphamari.

Farmers cultivated potato on 1.87 lakh hectares of land in Rangpur, Dinajpur, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Thakurgaon, Panchagarh and Nilphamari districts, which is 12.6 thousand hectares higher than the target set by DAE this year, said DAE sources.

"We are expecting bumper production as the weather is favourable, fertiliser and pesticide supply is stable and farmers are getting them at fair price," said Mamunur Rashid, acting deputy director of DAE in Nilphamari.

"Farmers are opting for high yielding potato varieties and adopting scientific methods of cultivation, resulting in bumper yield. Farmers cultivated high yielding varieties like

Granula, Patronize, Diamond, Hira, Dhira and others in vast tracts of land in this region," Mesbahul Islam, horticulture specialist of regional DAE office in Rangpur, said.

There are 28 cold storages in Rangpur, seven each in Dinajpur, Thakurgaon and Nilphamari, four in Lalmonirhat, and two each in Gaibandha Kurigram districts, said sources of Cold Storage Association and regional DAE office. There is no cold storage in Panchagarh district.

The total storing capacity of the 57 cold storages is 4.7 lakh tonnes or 13.5% of total production, they said.

About 25.72 lakh tonnes of potato will remain outside the cold storages and a large amount of it will remain vulnerable to damage.

Sayed Ali, owner of a big cold storage in Jaldhaka, said farmers have already booked all the available room in advance for storing potatoes.

"Considering the interest of potato farmers in this munga-prone region, commercial banks should relax their rules and conditions for giving loans on easy terms so that interested entrepreneurs may come forward to set up new cold storages," Md Selim, an American expatriate, also owner of newly set up cold storage 'Ankur Himagar Ltd' in Nilphamari.

"Potato farmers are facing storage problem as there are not inadequate cold storages. We are suggesting farmers to follow traditional ways to store potatoes in well-ventilated place, using bamboo floors enclosed with bamboo fences," Md Mohsin Ali, additional director of DAE in Rangpur region, said.

SNIPPETS

Day-labourer 'tortured to death'

UNB, Keraniganj

A day-labourer was allegedly tortured to death at Akchai under Model police station here on Friday. The deceased was identified as Mohammad Ali of Belna area. Ali's wife Farida Begum said her husband went to Elem Munshi's house at Akchai to realise his arrears Thursday night. At one stage Elem locked into an altercation with Ali over the matter and Elem's people tortured him mercilessly leaving him unconscious. Farida said she rescued him from Elem's house Friday afternoon and rushed him to a local hospital where the attending doctor declared him dead.

Criminals loot cattle laden truck

UNB, Narayanganj

A gang of armed criminals took away a cattle laden truck in Jangal area of Bandar upazila on Dhaka-Chittagong highway early Friday. Police said, the gang numbering 4/5 halted the Dhaka-bound Indian cattle laden truck from Noakhali in the area at about 4:00am. Taking the driver, helper and two cowboys hostage at gunpoint, the gang took control over the steering and at one stage dropped the hostages on the road. Later, the gang left the place along with the truck. Cattle trader Ohidur Rahman estimated the value of the looted 18 cows at Tk 6.75 lakh. Police recovered the truck in an abandoned condition from in front of Modhumoti filling station in Sonargaon upazila in the early morning.

Brickfield fined in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A mobile court here fined a brickfield Tk 30,000 on charge of polluting environment by using firewood at Bardal in Assasuni upazila yesterday. Locals said, acting on a tip-off, the mobile court led by executive magistrate Md Sadequr Rahman and aided by a Rab-6 team raided Messrs UMB bricks owned by Bardal Union Parishad (UP) chairman Yunus Ali Sana at Bardal. The team also seized 400 maunds of firewood from the brick field. Later the court fined the kiln Tk 30,000 for illegally using firewood instead of coal and polluting environment.

Fisherman's body recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Body of a fisherman who went missing on February 7 from the Sundarbans was recovered from river Kalindi near village Durmujkhali in Shyamnagar upazila yesterday. The deceased was identified as Arshad Ali Gazi, 28, son of Abdul Gafur Gazi of Ghona village in Shyamnagar upazila. Quoting locals police said Md Arshad Ali Gazi went to the Sundarbans to catch fish on February 7 morning. Since then he was missing and his relatives looked for him at different places but failed to trace his whereabouts. BGB sources said, Indian Border Security Force (BSF) men of Gobindapur camp in India found the body floating in the river Kalindi and informed the matter to Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) at Durmujkhali camp yesterday. Later police recovered the body and sent it to Satkhira morgue for postmortem. Police suspect Arshad was killed after abduction.

Five injured in clash

UNB, Comilla

Five people were injured in a clash between students and transport workers over bus fair near Thomson Bridge in the town yesterday afternoon. Witnesses said a college student locked in an altercation with the helper of a 'Jamuna Paribahan' bus over fair on his way to college from Chaudagram at around 1:30pm. The student got down from the bus at Thomson Bridge and called fellow students from the dormitory of the college. They attacked the counter of Jamuna Paribahan at Thomson Bridge, triggering a clash with transport workers, which left five people injured. The students also vandalised a Jamuna Paribahan bus.

Fugitive convict arrested

UNB, Natore

A fugitive convict, sentenced to life term imprisonment in a rape case, was arrested from Amhati Kalikapur area of the district town Friday afternoon. The arrestee was identified as Shahin of the area. On a secret information, police conducted a drive and arrested Shahin from his house. Police said Shahin was convicted and sentenced to life term by a Rajshahi court recently.

AL leader jailed for contempt of court

UNB, Satkhira

A court here on Wednesday convicted a district Mohila Awami League (AL) leader and sentenced her to six months imprisonment in a contempt of court case filed by a college teacher last year.

Convict Rifat Amin went into hiding from Assistant Judge's Court soon after Judge Mohammad Zahidul Islam pronounced the verdict in the morning.

According to prosecution, Rifat owns a house at Mujitpur in the district town which she leased to Anisur Rahman, a resident of Sultanpur area and lecturer of a private college, for 12 years on 31 December, 2000.

Following the contract Anisur took possession

of the house and turned it into a school.

Nine years later Rifat tried in vain to evict Anisur from the house breaching conditions of the lease.

On 17 Dec, 2009, she hired a few goons and vandalised Anisur's school, causing huge economic loss to the tenant.

The victim lodged a civil suit with the court against Rifat on January 6 last year.

Angered at filing of the suit, Rifat rallied her goons and launched fresh attack on the school on the night of 7 Jan, 2010, damaging documents and properties of the institution.

It prompted the tenant to file a contempt case against the owner as she did not comply with the court's earlier directive regarding the civil suit.

Infant dies allegedly after vaccination

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

An 18-day-old boy died allegedly after taking polio vaccine at Dighapatia Ghospara village under Sadar upazila yesterday.

Parents claimed that their son was in sound health before taking vaccine. But Health Officer of Natore Sadar upazila Health Complex Abul kalam Azad denied the allegation, saying the boy, Khaled Saifullah Saad, son of Saiful Alam of the village, might have died of pneumonia as the vaccine takes sometime to take effect.

Family members said Saad fell sick immediately after taking vaccine at around noon. His mother took him to Natore Sadar Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

40 hurt as AL rivals clash in Munshiganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

At least 40 people were injured as two rival groups of the ruling Awami League (AL) clashed at Mollakandi in Sadar upazila yesterday.

Police arrested Alamgir Sikder, 30, in connection with the clash and seized a shot gun from his possession.

Gunfires and explosions of homemade bombs rocked the area during the clash. Injured Oliullah, 38, Sharif Meer, 35, Rubel, 18, Babu, 23, Nurul Islam, 50, Khabir, 48, Harun, 35, and Kala, 37, were sent to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.

Locals said Mostafaripon and Farhad-Shah Alam groups of the ruling party frequently locked in clashes for establishing supremacy in the area.

Youth gets life for rape, two kids violated

STAR NATIONAL DESK

A youth was jailed in Tangail on Thursday for rape while two kids were violated in Chuadanga on Tuesday.

A court in Tangail on Thursday sentenced a youth to life term imprisonment for raping a seven-year-old girl at Mirzapur upazila in 2006, reports our correspondent.

Judge Mohammad Mohsin Mollah of Women and Children Repression Control Tribunal in the district delivered the verdict in a crowded courtroom against Mohammad Bakkar, 25, son Sadek Ali of Pakullah Purbo Para village in the upazila.

The judge also fined the convict Tk 50,000, in default, to suffer two years more rigorous imprisonment (RI).

According to prosecution, Bakkar took the seven-year-old daughter of Sanwar Hossain of the village to a bush and raped her when she came out to collect mango on April 2, 2006.

Victim's father filed a case against Bakkar with Mirzapur police station the next day.

In Chuadanga, two girls were raped at Jehala village in Alamdanga upazila on

Tuesday afternoon, reports our Kushtia correspondent.

According to police, the kids -- one nine-year-old and the other aged about 10, were students of Jehala Brac School.

On the day, both were returning home on foot from the school.

Three youths -- Rocky, 25, son of Mongol, Sohel, 16, son of Muktar Ali and Asik, 18, son of Basir Mollah gagged them and forcibly took them to a nearby tobacco field. There they raped both the girls.

Another student, Liza, while returning home from school found the girls lying unconscious. Hearing Liza's hue and cry, people of the nearby area rushed to the spot and rescued the hapless girls.

Family members of the victims tried to hide the matter. But it came to light on Wednesday after they were forced to take the girls to Chuadanga Sadar Hospital as both were profusely bleeding.

On information, officer-in-charge (OC) of Alamdanga police station Ahsan Habib visited the hospital and went to the spot.

Later, a case was filed with Alamdanga police station after medical test on Wednesday evening.

Robbers loot filling station, garments factory

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Robbers looted a filling station and a garments factory yesterday and the day before.

An armed gang looted Tk 60,000 in cash from Chandraban Petrol Pump on Dhaka-Chittagong highway in Daudkandi upazila of Comilla yesterday.

Petrol pump employees said a microbus carrying 10/12 people came to the petrol pump as if to take compressed natural gas at about 3:15am, reports UNB.

Later, at one stage they got down from the microbus and tied up the employees and looted cash Tk 60,000 from the cash counter at gunpoint.

In Narayanganj, robbers looted cotton and cloths from a garments factory in Tokkar Math area of Sadar upazila early Friday.

Police and the factory owner said, entering the

factory, a gang of armed robbers numbering 15/20 first tied up hands and legs of three night guards at gunpoint and later looted 156 sacks of cotton and cloths at about 4am.

Monir Hossain, factory owner, claimed that the gang looted cotton and cloths worth Tk 45 lakh. A case was filed with Fatulla police station.

Another report from Manikganj adds: Robbers looted gold ornaments, cash and other valuables from a house at Vatbour village in Sadar upazila Friday early hours.

Police and local people said, cutting the grills of the window, the gang numbering 10/12 entered the house of school teacher Hazi Shahid Uddin at about 3am.

Later, the gang looted 13 tolas of gold ornaments, cash Tk 1.5 lakh and other valuables worth Tk 6 lakh keeping the house members

hostage in gunpoint.

Meanwhile, Jamalpur police arrested two members of a gang who were allegedly involved in robbery at Uttara Bank Ltd, Jamalpur branch, on Friday night. They were caught from Dhaka-Mawa highway area of Shyampur police station in Dhaka, reports our correspondent.

Investigative officer (IO) SI Badruzzaman said a six-member police team with the help of Dhaka Detective Branch (DB) captured Moshir Rahman Alias Raju, 40, son of late Mahiuddin Hawlader of village Nazira Bazar under upazila Tongibari of Munsiganj district and Md. Raja Mia, 42, son of Bhola Mia of village south Lashkarpur of the same district.

The team also recovered four mobile sets, six SIMs, two international passports along with Tk. 30 thousand from their possession.

Drug peddlers, addicts jailed

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Mobile courts in Dinajpur and Natore on Friday jailed eight drug peddlers and five addicts.

A mobile court in Dinajpur on Friday convicted six people and sentenced them to two years rigorous imprisonment each for possessing drug, reports UNB.

The convicts were identified as Ali, 45, son of late Sheikh Romar, his wife Parul, 38, Milton, 24, son of Nur Islam, Nur Mohammad, 48, son of Shamsul Haque, Nur Islam, 70, son of Hafiz Uddin and his wife Haowa Begum, 35, of Sipahipara area of the district town.

Officer-in-charge of Kotowali PS Hasan Iqbal said on a tip-off, a team of police raided the houses of Mohammad Ali and Haowa Begum late at night and arrested them along with 3kgs of hemp. Later, on the basis of their confession, police arrested the four other drug peddlers the same night.

Later, the mobile court led by executive magistrate Sumi Akter instantly handed down the verdict.

In Natore, a mobile court on Friday evening convicted two drug peddlers and awarded them one month imprisonment each for selling hemp at Lokmanpur village in Bagatipara

upazila.

The convicts were identified as Delwar Hossain and Ayez Ali of the village.

On secret information, police conducted a drive in the area and arrested the duo while selling hemp.

Later, the mobile court led by upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) Yeamin Khan handed down the verdict.

The same court conducted a drive in Bansbaria area of the upazila on the day and arrested five addicts -- Pintu, Anowar, Babul, Kismot and Koli Begum -- while taking hemp and awarded them seven days' imprisonment each.



Artistes of Darpan Sangkritik Gosthi stage street drama Swadhinatar Dirghaswash in Pabna town on Friday as The daily Star and Bangladesh Pathanatak Parishad jointly organised the programme marking 20th anniversary of the daily and 40th anniversary of the country's independence.

PHOTO: STAR