



M.N Khan public library, which has been shut down for 16 years at Kacherkol union, has been occupied by locals.

Library locked down for 16 years

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

The M.N Khan public library, established during the reign of the British period at Kacherkol union under Shailkupa upazila, had been locked for 16 years due to political feud. As a result, citizens of the upazila are deprived of studying different types of necessary reading materials. Official sources said that Jamindar (landlord) Khan Bahadur Kazi Sarowar Uddin and Dr. Habibur Rahman of Kacherkol union took the initiative of establishing this public library in 1936. The first construction was a tin shed at Kachua. During that time, newspapers were provided to this library from Kolkata. In 1942, a more permanent building was established at Kacherkol bazaar, through initiative from the then Jessore district magistrate M.N Khan. He also provided funding for this building, inaugurated and named

it Kacherkol M.N public library and village hall. As time went on, the collection of the library developed even further and became a haven for valuable books. Over time, the library became popular and number of people visiting the library increased. At one time, even a radio was provided there. People from all walks of life used to throng to the library from 5/6 miles away to listen to news on the radio. Jamilur Rashid, retired headmaster of Benipur secondary school under Kacherkol union in Shailkupa upazila, said that most of the students flocked to the library to study its rich collection of books covering many different topics. Moli Mia of the Jamindar family used to look after the library. After his demise however, political feuds started between the local leaders. In 1998, the library was locked down because of this feud. During this lockup, many valuable books and other furniture got

damaged, and locals have grabbed the land in front of the library. Makhon Biswas, 85, of Kacherkol village said, "Once upon a time we, the students of the upazila, used to get together and studied there and prepared quality notes with help from the relevant books. It is one of the great learning places in the greater Jessore district". Kacherkol UP chairman Salauddin Joardar Mamun said that he is trying heart and soul to run the library. He also added that nobody comes to the library in the fear of an attack as this upazila is full of outlaws. He plans to call a meeting, inviting the elite of the upazila and take necessary action in this regard. Shailkupa upazila UNO Mohammad Ali Prince said that this is an ancient and famous library in Jhenidah district. The plan is to get this library up and running soon and necessary steps needed will be taken soon.



Unauthorised fuel shops, like this one in Nilphamari Sadar upazila, openly sell petrol, octane and diesel, making the highly combustible items easily available. The unscrupulous act, in defiance of a government ban, causes worry among people as criminals use the liquid fuels to make fire bombs, now being used as a dangerous weapon to threaten and harm commuters during the non-stop countrywide blockade enforced by the BNP-led 20-party alliance.

Unauthorised petrol sale continues in Nilphamari

TEAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Indiscriminate sale and use of petrol, octane and diesel is going on across the district although the government has imposed ban on such unauthorised sale to prevent subversive activities by using petrol bombs in the name of blockade and hartal across the country. With easy availability of the liquid combustibles, criminals make fire bombs with the items and hurl those at vehicles on roads and highways, often causing serious casualties. In neighbouring Gaibandha district, nine people were killed including women and children as petrol bombs were thrown on a passenger carrying bus at Tulshighat on Friday night.

They are among dozens of people, mostly bus passengers and drivers of buses and trucks in different areas of the country, who were burnt to death by fire bombs. There are 28 authorised filling stations in the district along with 14 license holder dealers in six upazilas of the name of blockade and hartal across the country. district administration sources said. But the fuels are being sold at around 500-600 unauthorised shops standing beside highways, village roads, intersections, and bazaars. However, the district and upazila administrations do not have any list of the names of such unauthorised fuel sellers. Visiting different areas of

the district on Monday, this correspondent saw illegal petrol, octane and diesel selling shops at roadside markets of different places including Duhuli, Babrihar, Jadurhat, Ramganj, Poolhat and Bhabaniganj in Sadar upazila, and Mirganj, Shimulbari, Koimari, Golmunda and Balagram in Jaldhaka. Many grocers illegally sell petrol, octane and diesel along with other household commodities. Similar situations prevail in Domar, Dimla, Kishoreganj and Saidpur upazilas under Nilphamari districts. A number of fuel shop owners seeking anonymity said they do not know that license is required to sell petrol, diesel and octane

and there is a government ban on unauthorised sale of the fuels. They said they still procure the fuels from nearby petrol pumps or dealers with lucrative commission. Contacted, Shamsul Islam, owner of Huque Filling Station in the district, said they had already stopped sale of petrol and octane to unauthorised sellers as soon as the government imposed the restriction. Nilphamari Deputy Commissioner Zakir Hossain said, "Sale of fuel by unlicensed people is strictly banned. Along with mobile court drives against such unlicensed traders, we are now conducting awareness building programmes among people."

Innovative rice farming in the north

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Back in 2014, people living in the low-lying districts of northern Bangladesh suffered from a devastating flood, submerging traditional Aman rice varieties for 15 days, causing full or partial damage. Most of the low-lying areas of Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Nilphamari and part of Rangpur district are affected by these recent flash-floods, causing huge losses in agriculture in around fifty thousand households while more than fifty thousand hectares of Aman rice crops are damaged in three districts of Lalmonirhat, Kurigram and Gaibandha, said sources. According to them, the loss is around 1.5 lakh tons of paddy, which is quite alarming. Some of the affected farmers who live in Teesta and Dharla, said that this is now a common crisis because of climate change. Flash flood is becoming a big threat for Aman rice production during monsoon seasons. Aman rice is one of the most important crops in Bangladesh and connected with the nation's food security. Due to climate changes, flash-floods occur almost every year during monsoon and heavy rainfall. These flash floods occur twice or thrice in the

same monsoon, said an affected farmer Azizar Rahman, 65, from the flood affected village of Kalmati in Lalmonirhat sadar. He also said, "On the other hand, due to heavy silt deposition, most of the rivers have lost the free-flows they once had in the past which causes reduction in the depth and breadth of rivers year after year." "Just after continuous rainfall during monsoon, these rivers overflow their banks and flow into the adjoining fields. As a result, most of the standing rice fields are affected for about 1-2 weeks, causing severe damage of Aman rice crops," said another affected farmer, Altaf Hossain, 58, at Char Kulaghat village in Lalmonirhat sadar. Agriculture officials from three districts said that due to changes in climate, farmers lose around one million tons of rice grain almost every monsoon, leading to food shortage in the country while more than one million hectares of Aman rice fields are affected partially or fully by flash-floods throughout the country. Official sources at NGO RDRS Bangladesh said that Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) and Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture (BINA), under joint collaboration with International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) has devel-

oped submergence tolerant rice varieties which can withstand submergence for up to 15 days whereas other existing rice varieties succumb to submergence within 4 to 6 days. The submergence tolerant rice varieties have the submergence gene (Sub1) that helps crops to renew its growth after the water recedes. The Agriculture and Environment Coordinator of NGO RDRS Bangladesh Mamunur Rashid said that considering the geographical vulnerability, the STRASA (Stress Tolerant Rice in Africa and South Asia) project, which is supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, carried out a number of demonstration trials of this submergence tolerant rice varieties in a couple of fields from flash-flood affected areas. "Immediately after the water receded, these submergence tolerant rice plants started forming new shoots and thus proving that this new rice variety can survive even if fully submerged for fifteen days", he said. Deputy Director AED Safayet Hossain of Lalmonirhat said, "After observing the outstanding performance, farmers of the flood-prone areas are now very much optimistic about these submergence tolerant rice varieties".



A farmer in one of Lalmonirhat's flood prone areas shows the Binadhan-11 variety he planted, the flood tolerant variety of Aman plants were submerged for 15 days but still survived.

Youth shot dead in Rangamati

UNB, Rangamati

A youth was shot dead by a gang of criminals at Sapchhari Khamarpara in Sadar upazila on Monday night. The deceased was identified as Babu Gula Chakma, 24. United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) leader Milton Chakma said a group of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) men arrived in the area on a CNG-run auto-rickshaw at around 8:30pm and swooped on Babu. They shot Babu point blank and left the scene, leaving him dead on the spot, Miton added. Being informed, police went to the spot, recovered the body and sent it to the hospital morgue for autopsy. The law enforcers also recovered 13 bullet shells from there. Officer-in-Charge Manu Imtiaz of Kotwali Police Station they are trying to arrest the killers.

Pistol, bullets seized in C' nawabganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, C'nawabganj

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized a pistol, two magazines and five bullets from a field at Lalapara village in Sadar upazila of the district on Monday. On secret information, a team of Rab-5 from Chapainawabganj town went to the village in the afternoon and seized the gun, magazines and bullets, said Commander Major Kamruzzaman. None was arrested in this connection.

Farmers buy IRRI-Boro saplings for high prices

A section of traders doing brisk business, taking advantage of blockade, hartals

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

A section of traders are doing brisk business by selling IRRI-Boro saplings at high rates in the local markets of the district taking advantage of countrywide nonstop blockade and hartals, much to the worry of the farmers. Farmers are compelled to buy the saplings for high prices as it is the peak cultivation season. Local farmers said lately prepared many seedbeds and seedlings in the district were damaged due to severe cold and dense fog at the end of the winter. Taking the advantage of sapling crisis, the traders are doing brisk business by selling seedlings for high prices to cash in amid the country's volatile political situation, they alleged. A large number of farmers are facing trouble as they

are not getting enough seedlings for farming. Poor and marginal farmers bear the brunt as a bundle of 200 seedlings is being sold at Tk 8 against Tk 4 last year. However, the production cost of two bundles of seedlings is not more than Tk 3, farmers said. At least 150 bundles of seedlings are needed to cultivate one bigha of land (30 decimal), said the growers. Suruj Miah, 55, a farmer of Karnapur village in Sadar upazila, said seedling crisis has made his IRRI-boro cultivation uncertain. Another farmer, Narayan Chandra Barmon, 55, of Kumrighat village in Aditmari upazila, said he prepared boro seedbeds on 15 decimals of land this current season. "But 50 per cent seedlings were damaged due to severe cold and heavy fog. So I have to purchase seedlings from the

local market for high prices." Habibur Rahman, 48, a seedling trader at Durakuti Haat (market) in Sadar upazila, said due to countrywide nonstop blockades and hartals, they have to spend additional money for purchasing seedlings from different districts. According to the sources of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Lalmonirhat, farmers of the district prepared seedbeds on 1,885 hectares of land to cultivate IRRI-Boro on 51,000 hectares of land this season. Deputy Director of Lalmonirhat DAE Safayet Hossain said, most farmers have already completed cultivating IRRI-Boro in their lands and only a few farmers are facing seedlings crisis. They prepared seedbeds late, because of which those were damaged by fog, said Hossain.



IRRI-Boro saplings see price hike amid the transport problem due to the countrywide blockade enforced by BNP-led 20-party alliance. The photo was taken from Durakuti village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.