



Rural people are now in a great mood as the festivity of paddy harvesting swings their mind. Farmers harvesting paddy in the field and women engaged in preparing courtyards for thrashing paddy are a common scene in the rural areas in this harvesting season of late autumn. The pictures were taken from a remote village of Chhilonia under Fatikchhari upazila.

## Manpower shortage hits Chittagong Port

SHAHIDUL ISLAM

Premier seaport has long been facing an acute shortage of manpower.

It hampers usual and smooth functioning of official works regularly, a top official at Chittagong port said.

A total of 2617 posts, both technical and non-technical, are lying vacant, said Hadi Hossain Babul, Chief Planning of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA).

Shortage of over 2550 personnel ranging from the fourth-class employee to top ranking posts is causing problem to the day-to-

day works of Chittagong Port and its impact is very bad.

Sources said the port now is running with around 8,500 workforces and it need to recruit at least 1500 more to fill up the vacancies immediately to ensure smooth and efficient performance of the port.

Official sources said proposals for immediate recruitment in the vacant posts were sent to the ministry concerned on number of occasions but those have been shelved due to the bureaucratic tangle.

This shortage stand in the way of our efforts to render proper services to the stakeholders of Chittagong Port, Hadi said.

The port-based labour organisations had long been pressing for filling the vacant posts to reap their vested and political interests since bulk of the vacant posts are for the third and fourth class positions.

"The posts are mainly of non-technical and of no great importance for the Chittagong Port at all. The seaport would not suffer the pinch if devoid of those below-par and non-expertise hands," said another official seeking anonymity.

He said the labour leaders were shedding 'crocodile's tear' for the posts only to confirm and increase their volume of voters during election of the port CBA.

"International aid agencies had been insisting on the performance enhancement of Chittagong Port to cope with the world shipping trade. Following intervention by the labour organisations, the CPA lacks that much efficiency, a major concern for all stakeholders, he added.

Mahfuzur Rahman Khan, a labour leader, refuting the charges said those are merely self-made speculations based on utopian indiscretion.

"Those big bosses who always point fingers at us are members of the most privileged section of the port and they naturally won't feel the heartbeats of poor workers or their hardship," he said.

### BANSHKHALI CARNAGE

## Awake our conscience! Horror still haunts Dr Bimal

### Now or never!

MOHIT UL ALAM

On the fateful night of 18 November at a remote village in Banskhali eleven members of a Hindu family were roasted alive by a gang of 30 'beasts' who took only 70 minutes to accomplish mankind's one of the most heinous acts.

The psychology of these beasts needs to be well looked into, not because they have solely branded themselves as children of Satan by this abominable act, but because they are a part of the very society that consists of many more people like them. Therein lies the rub.

The foolhardy people, the political opportunists, a large part of the administration have attempted to wash their hands off by labelling the torching of the Shil family as an episode of dacoity, as if people didn't know how to separate a dacoit from a crime otherwise motivated. Nothing in the eyewitness reports does suggest that dacoity was intended at all. If an act of dacoity was contemplated, then why did the beasts carry gunpowder and petrol? There were other motives, which require to be

unearthed now.

The thread is important here.

Before this incident, on 9 May in another carnage at a nearby village, Purba Chambal, a Hindu widow, called Arati Bala, a mother called Zhinu Bala Devi and her daughter Champa Bala Devi were also burnt to death in a similar fashion, with petrol and gunpowder. Reportedly, in Patiya also a Hindu family was exterminated through torching.

The thread that runs through between these incidents does suggest that in the minds of a certain section of people something, that I would not like to name, has shaped like a possibility, especially, in the present culture of ineffective administration, and the chimera of which has struck terror in my mind, and in that of many others.

I often think of Ahmad Safa, about his famous essay "Bangali Mussalmaner Maan" (the mind of the Bangali Muslims). His thesis is that the Muslims of this region were converted from the scheduled castes of the Hindus, and therefore, though their religion has changed, their fate has remained as deprived as before.

Education, neither the Bengali education, nor the Islamic education, has ever taken place in them. So they remain as downtrodden as ever in body as well as in mind. They are (or we all are) an undeveloped mass on which culture does not take its hue. Such a scenario may be taken as an explanation of why certain people could become so lowly as to behave like beasts.

In one of his recent films, The Pianist, Roman Polanski, the Polish director, has shown the life of a Polish pianist who was kept a jimmy by the Nazis, and before whose eyes many incidents of extermination of the Jews took place.

I don't know why the Banskhali incident has brought back the film to my memory!

I don't think that the Banskhali carnage should be let go unaccounted for. Each and every culprit involved should be brought to book at once. Otherwise, the Banskhali incident will trigger off wrong signals in every sector of our national life.

Awake! Our conscience! Now or never!

NURUL ALAM

"The traumatic scene of that frightful night still haunts me and I can't forget the horror of the attack," said Dr Bimalendra Nath Shushil, the lone survivor of the arson attack in Banskhali.

Eleven members of a Hindu family were burnt to death in the raid on his house at the remote village of Sadhanpur at Banskhali coast on November 18 night. The incident whipped up uproar and sensation in Chittagong.

"The appearance of my parents and other family members flashes in my mind every moment," Dr Bimal told this correspondent at his cabin at a private clinic in the port city where he was undergoing treatment for his ankle injury. Dr Bimal was injured as he jumped from the roof of the earthen house during the arson attack.

"I don't want to go back to my homestead as it is a ghoulish abode now. It is no more secure. It is a dreadful place now," he said in an emotion choked voice.

"If I go back I might be attacked again. I want safety and security of my life and I want to stay in the town after recovery. I appeal to the government to help me stay in the city as my village home is unsafe for me now. I also want justice," a traumatised Dr. Bimal said.

"I don't have any hostility or dispute with anybody in my area. Even nobody attempted ever to grab our land properties. I want proper

investigation and justice".

During the incident, initially I thought that teargas shell was fired by the attackers when we refused to open the door of upstairs as I felt burning sensation in my eyes and white smokes were gushing out, Bimal said.

"Normally black smokes come out during fire incident that does not cause that much irritation in the eyes. But I guess the attackers might have brought some combustible substances to use for setting fire. Otherwise, it was impossible to spread the fire so quickly around our mud house though its ground floor roof was made of bamboo covered with earth. This thing makes me believe that the attackers were well prepared," he said.

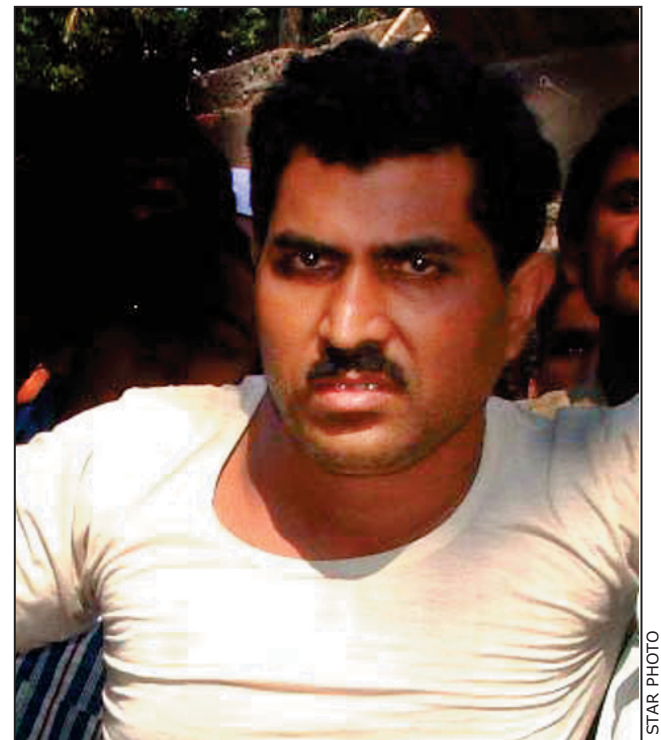
"But whatever may be, I don't want to go back there any more," Bimal said.

In reply to a question Dr Bimal said, "everything was burnt. So, I can't say what the attackers took away".

"I have been practising in my village for the last four years and everybody respects me there. Even no patient died due to wrong treatment. So, I get puzzled and failed to understand why we were attacked".

Dr Bimal said he was in Muskat before starting practice at his village.

Dr Bimal's wife, son and daughter escaped the macabre incident as they were at his father-in-law's house.



Dr Bimalendra Nath Shushil

### theweekthatwas

#### Lankan envoy meets mayor

High Commissioner of Sri Lanka, Gamini S Munasingha made a courtesy call on Mayor of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) ABM Mohiuddin Ahmed Chowdhury at the latter's chamber on Saturday morning.

They exchanged views on various issues of bilateral interest. City Mayor thanked the Sri Lankan envoy for visiting Chittagong and briefed him about the wide array of investment prospects in the port city.

Munasingha said the relations

between the two countries will be strengthened further in future and the Sri Lankan business community will avail the investment opportunities offered by Bangladesh.

Honourary Consul of Sri Lanka, Kaiser Ali and Chief Executive of CCC Abul Bashir were present at the meeting.

#### Islami Bank managers' confce held

The quarterly conference of the branch managers of the Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited, Chittagong region was held at the Chittagong Stock Exchange conference hall on Saturday.

Executive Vice President and Chittagong Region Chief of the bank, Md. Shamsul Haq presided. Executive President Abdur Rakib and Director Daud Khan were present as chief and special guests respectively.

The chief guest in his speech expressed satisfaction over the success of the bank. "The interest-free banking system as per Islami Sharia that we introduced in the country has won tremendous success and it is getting popularity day by day," he said.

He said, many other banks have also introduced Islami banking system being inspired by our success and acceptability.

Speakers at a memorial meeting recalled the sacrifice of Dr. Shamsul Alam Khan Milon during the anti-autocratic movement in 1990 and paid rich tribute to him.

Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA), Chittagong Chapter organised the meeting at BMA building on Saturday with its treasurer Dr. AKM Fazlul Haq in the chair. Former Director General (DG) of Health Professor Dr. Nurun Nabi was present as chief guest.

BMA Joint Secretary Dr. Shahadat Hossain, Milan Smriti Sangsad President Dr. Tamizuddin Ahmad Manik and General Secretary of Swadhinata Chikitsak Parishad Dr. Mohammad Sharif also addressed.

"The name of Dr. Milon will be remembered as long as democracy prevail," they said.

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#### Eye camp

A daylong eye camp was held at city's Jhauatala area on Friday. Organisation of Art for Children (OAC) arranged the camp in cooperation with Chittagong Lions Club of Khulshi.

A total of 350 poor patients including 60 children were treated free of cost. They also received some medicines.

Dr. Shahriar Kabir of Chittagong Lions Eye Hospital and his three

colleagues conducted the camp.

#### Diabetic hospital opens at Satkania

A diabetic hospital was established at Satkania Upazila.

Chittagong Diabetic Association President Professor Dr. LA Quaderi spoke as chief guest at the inaugural function on Friday.

Chaired by Dr. Mozaherul Haq, former director of Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) Dr Hosne Ara Begum, Association General Secretary Professor Jahangir Chowdhury, CMCH teacher Dr Mahtabuddin and Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) teacher Dr. Nazimur Rahman addressed the function.

They lauded the initiative to build such a hospital at Satkania. "This hospital will surely render healthcare services to the people of this far-flung upazila at their very doorsteps," they said.

#### Ramadan trophy golf tournament concludes

The 13th Ramadan Trophy Golf Tournament concluded at Bhatary Golf and Country Club (BGCC) on Friday.

Liakat Ali Chowdhury clinched the title this year. General Officer Commanding (GOC) of 24 Infantry Division and Senior Vice President of BGCC Major General Moin U Ahmed distributed the prizes among the winners as chief guest.

About 50 golfers from home and

abroad including six women players took part in the competition.

Other winners are: Major Mohammad Inamul Haq (runners up), Farid Uddin (best gross), Caroline Bower (ladies' winner), Anderson (ladies' runners up), Shirin Ispahani (ladies' best gross), MA Rahim (first best round), Peter O Bower (second best round), Captain Intikhab Ahmed Chowdhury (third best round), MH Murad (fourth best round), Lt. Col. Rezanur Rahman (fifth best round) and MA Hamid (sixth best round).

#### Trial of Poppy's killers demanded

Leaders of Chittagong District Bar Council at a meeting recently demanded immediate arrest of the persons responsible for the killing of

Rafeza Khanam Poppy, daughter of council member Advocate Mohammad Ilias.

They also demanded trial of the killers in the Speedy Trial Tribunal. Poppy was killed by some identified criminals after gangrape on the Eid Day at her village home in Banskhali a week ago, they said. But the real criminals are yet to be arrested except a domestic help, the Bar leaders added.

The meeting was held at council office with its President Ferdous Ahmad in the chair. Senior Vice President Showkat Hossain Chowdhury, Vice President Abu Naser Chowdhury, General Secretary Mujibul Haq and council leaders Kazi Nazmul Haq, Nishat Sultana, Anwarul Kabir Chowdhury, Sheikh Iftekhar Saimul Chowdhury and Chandan Das addressed the meeting.

#### Eid festival in

Raozan Club organised an Eid Festival and Reunion on the club premises in Raozan on Thursday. Discussion on Eid and a cultural programme featured the festival.

Assistant Vice President of Dhaka Bank Ekramul Haq, Depot Manager of Padma Oil Company in Chandpur Muslehuddin Mohammad Badrul, Principal of Imam Gazzali College Mohammad Ali, Vice President of Raozan Samity in Dhaka Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, Businessman Mahbul Alam Chowdhury and Club Secretary Nasiruddin Babul spoke at the function. Club President Abdus Zaher presided.

The speakers stressed the need for building stronger bond of friendship, which is the essence of Eid.



Ekkatturer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee, Chittagong unit formed a human chain on November 29 in front of the Chittagong Press Club demanding judicial probe into Banskhali carnage.



The 8th Annual General Meeting of Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) was held at the CSE conference hall here recently with outgoing CSE president Mirza Salman Ispahani (middle) in the chair.