

**Violence, calamity push disabled numbers high**

World Disability Day observed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Violence, road accident and natural calamity, not malnutrition, are pushing up the number of disabled people in the country, a discussion in the city observed yesterday.

The National Disable Welfare Foundation, National Disable Forum, Department of Social Service and Ministry of Social Welfare co-organised the discussion marking the International Disability Day yesterday.

Ali Ahsan Mohammed Mujahid, minister for social welfare, said disability caused by malnutrition and lack of medical facility is on the decrease.

He said people in Bangladesh have better family life than in other countries, which reduces the number of cases of mental disability. "We face a fewer number of suicide cases and divorce cases that lead to mental insanity," he said.

Referring to this year's theme of the disability day, "A voice of our own", which was chosen by the United Nations, the speakers stressed that disabled people should be consulted first before any measure for their treatment is taken.

"There are some loopholes in the Disable Welfare Law 2001 since it was not discussed with the disabled beforehand," said Khondoker Zahurul Alam, president of the National Disable Forum. However, he added, the law is undergoing changes.

Disabled people generally face much inconvenience but disabled women are subjected to more dis

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PHOTO: STAR

Physically challenged people bring out a wheelchair procession marking International Disability Day near Savar on the Dhaka-Aricha Highway yesterday.

**Two more roads to be rickshaw-free in January**

SOHEL ISLAM

Two city roads will be made off-limits to rickshaws and other non-motorised vehicles from January 1.

The roads are Russell Square to Azimpur via New Market and Science Laboratory Crossing to Jatiya Press Club via Shahbagh.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB) yesterday. Representatives from

Bangladesh Transport Foundation (BTF), Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC), Dhaka Metropolitan Police, Dhaka Sarak Pariban Samity and Bangladesh Bus and Truck Owners Association were present at the meeting.

Earlier, a decision to ban rickshaws on the roads from December 1 was put on hold as the DTCB wanted a public awareness campaign.

The DTCB signed an agreement with Bangladesh Transport Foundation (BTF) yesterday, which will carry out the campaign by distributing leaflets and talking to the commuters, bus drivers and rickshawpullers.

"The BTF will also seek opinion from the media. By December 7, the BTF will come up with its plan for the campaign," DTCE Executive

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**BNP lawmaker finally appears in court**

COURT CORRESPONDENT

BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu, who stands accused in an extortion case, finally appeared before court yesterday after failing 23 consecutive dates.

Pintu's counsel advocate Masud Ahmed Talukder submitted a time petition before the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM), Dhaka at 10:00am. He told the court that Pintu could not appear before, as he was busy with legislative functions.

But Magistrate Sirajul Haider rejected the petition and asked the lawyer to produce his client before court by 2:00pm.

The lawmaker at 2:00pm went to the court, which set January 4, 2004 for his next appearance.

The court on February 25, 2002 served a show cause notice on

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**PM orders EPZ in Ishwardi for agro-based industries**

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday directed authorities to develop an export processing zone (EPZ) at Ishwardi exclusively for agro-based industries.

The PM gave the directives after inaugurating the first-ever three-day International Agri-processing Exposition at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city.

The Ishwardi EPZ will be using the abundance of agricultural outputs from the country's northern region.

The PM also ordered authorities to ensure necessary infrastructure facilities for the EPZ.

**Railway demolishes 200 illegal shanties in Chittagong**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The railway authorities yesterday demolished over 200 shanties and shops of a slum near the Chittagong Railway Station at West Madarbari in Doublemooring.

"The huge lands of railway had long been illegally occupied by the slum dwellers there, and they erected houses, shops and tea stalls flouting the law," said Divisional Estate Officer Mobarak Ullah, who led the daylong eviction drive of Bangladesh Railway Eastern Zone.

"We had no choice but to go for the eviction yesterday as our repeated reminders and notices over months fell on deaf ears."

The railway bulldozers, accompanied by two platoons from Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) and railway security men, demolished the illegal establishments during the over five-hour drive starting from 10:00am.

The eviction however caused little commotion among the slum dwellers, most of whom are rickshaw-pullers, day labourers and small vendors.

Locals meanwhile alleged that

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**Home ministry rejoinder to UNB report**

The home ministry in a rejoinder on a UNB report run by The Daily Star headlined "Govt probing third force links to arms cache recovery", which other newspapers also carried on December 1, dismissed that the home minister made such a comment either at the said venue or any other place.

A UNB report quoted Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury

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**Rare binturong pair seized in Bandarban**

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

A pair of long-tailed binturong, a critically endangered mammal species, was seized from the house of an indigenous family in Bandarban town on Tuesday morning.

The arboreal animals of civet family were kept at the local deputy commissioner's bungalow.

The binturong seizure comes weeks after a Loris was found and transferred to Meghla mini zoo in the district.

The deputy collector of Bandarban, Kazi Abed Hossain, told to the Daily Star that an indigenous man collected them from Baghmara Nachalangpara.

On Tuesday, the 18-inch long and nine-inch high animals with 18-inch long tails seemed gentle. They were eating banana and chopped meat.

Wildlife expert Anisuzzaman Khan told the Daily Star that bintu-

rongs are found largely in the bamboo forests in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and Teknaf in Bangladesh.

He appealed to the authorities concerned to reintroduce the binturongs as well as the slowloris.

Binturongs, found mainly in the tropical and sub-tropical forests of Southeast Asia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Palawan Island, Burma, Indochina, Sumatra, Bangka, Java, Borneo, and in Nepal, are very good swimmers and very playful.

They are known to leap five feet into the air and kill animals by leaping on them.

Although mostly nocturnal, the binturong sometimes comes out and can be seen sunning itself stretched out on a branch.

They usually eat moving prey and fruit. Carrion, rodents, eggs, birds, bananas, melon, grapes, apples, oranges, carrots and cooked sweet potatoes are their favourite food.

**Stay clear of fresh feuds**

AL warns Samad, Suranjit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) has asked its two feuding leaders to stay clear of fresh squabbles after suspending their separate programmes in Sunamganj to tackle the volatile situation there, party sources said.

Tension mounted in Sunamganj when the two non-toe-friendly AL

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**BDR thwarts push-in bid**

A CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) on Tuesday night pushed back four Indian nationals at Barokhata border with India in Hatibandha upazila.

The Bangla speaking Indians are Nur Mohammad Shaikh, 35, his wife Manowara Begum, 28, and their daughters Rubi, 11, and Marzina, 8, of Sanjumar Colony of Delhi, said sources in the BDR and police.

The Indian Border Security Force

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**Mahi, Babar squabble on Biman flight**

STAR REPORT

BNP lawmaker Mahi B Chowdhury and State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar Monday exchanged verbal salvo on a Biman flight back home from Bangkok.

Mahi, son of former president and founding secretary general of the BNP AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, and Babar attacked each other personally, but the issue

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**Ctg Victory Day events on course for conflict**

Political parties plan same programmes at same venue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A row between ruling BNP and Awami League (AL) and some left leaning political parties has made the holding of Victory Day celebration programmes in the port city uncertain as both blocs announced similar programmes at the same venue.

Pro-BNP Bangladesh Mukti-joddha Sangsad, Chittagong chapter (north and south command), under the banner of Mukti-joddha Bijoy Utsab Udjapan Parishad (Liberation War victory celebration committee) announced a 21-day long Bijoy Utsab (victory festival) on Chittagong Outer Stadium pre-

mises from December 5.

Meanwhile, the AL and some left leaning parties under the banner of Mukti-joddha Bijoy Mela Parishad (Liberation War victory fair committee) announced a 10-day long Bijoy Mela (victory fair) at the same venue

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**Haunted at home**

Males of 200 families in Habiganj hiding to evade arrest on 'false' charges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 200 families of Shibpasha village in Habiganj district were attacked by local goons on the Eid day and their males have fled home

since then to evade arrest having been 'framed' in cases.

"The male members of these 200 families have been absconding as several 'false cases' were filed against them by Motaher Hossain Chowdhury, younger brother of former inspector general of police (IGP) Modabbir Hossain Chowdhury," alleged Khaled Hossain, one of the victims, at a press conference at the National Press Club yesterday.

He also read out a statement. Some 100 people gathered at the press club premises.

Ex-IGP Modabbir Hossain Chowdhury said he had nothing to do with the incident.

"I am not concerned at all about the allegation and has not gone to my village home for a long time. So the question of influencing the police administration does not arise while I was IGP," Modabbir added.

Khaled however said, "For the last five years Motaher has been trying to establish dominance over the Shibpasha irrigation scheme sprawled over 700 acres."

He also alleged Motaher

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Prayer Timings		
December 4		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-15	5-40
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-15	5-21
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation