

SNAPS

Pneumonia taking its toll in cold spell

A CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat
As cold wave started sweeping the district, pneumonia is taking its toll. Monowara Begum, 31, wife of Samad Ali of Chr Kulaghat village under the Sadar upazila died of pneumonia in the early hours of yesterday.

Official sources said another at least 100 people have been admitted to Lalmonirhat Sadar Hospital and the five upazila health complexes in the last three days. Most of the patients are children.

Sources at the district health department said drizzles in the last two days intensified the cold, spreading the disease.

The cold spell has partially paralysed life in char areas, inhabited by poor people, from where most of the patients are coming to hospitals, they said.

BSF abducts Bangladeshi in Lalmonirhat

A CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat
A Bangladeshi young man was abducted by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) from bordering Srirampur village in Patgram upazila yesterday morning.

Local people said Noor Mohammad, 21, son of Miaz Uddin, was abducted when he went to plough his land near the border.

When contacted over phone, Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) however denied this.

Outlaw killed by rivals in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia
A cadre of the outlawed Biplobi Communist Party (BCP) was shot dead by rival party cadres at Piyarpur village in Sadar upazila on Sunday night.

The dead was identified as Helaluddin alias Hilla, 30, of the village.

Police said Hilla, an accused in three cases, filed with Sadar and Kumarkhali police stations, came under attack while he was returning home from Kamrapur Bazaar at about 9pm.

Ten armed cadres of to the outlawed New Biplobi Communist Party (NBCP) waylaid and swooped on him. They shot at him point blank resulting his death on the spot.

Police said Hilla was arrested six months ago and bailed out.

Police recovered the body the same night and sent it to Kushtia General Hospital for autopsy. No case was filed.

Guest bird hunting on

ABU AHMED, Sakhira

Sale of guest and wild birds by poachers and traders are going on in full swing in the district due to non-enforcement of law.

The birds are sold in large numbers at markets in Banshdah, Satani, K a t h a n d a, J h h o w d a n g a, Baladanga, Kazirht, Sarashkati, Patkelghata, Jethna, Magura, Khalish Khali, Bardal, Budhata, Parulia, Sakhipur, Gazirhat, Nalta, Nazimgonj, Montala, Iswaripur, Munshigonj and Kaikhali in the district.

This illegal trading is going on with virtual impunity as law enforcers do not enforce wildlife laws, sources said.

Heron, Snipe, Duck, Dove, Wild Duck, Stork, Swan and other guest birds are on sale now.

Abdul Hamid, 30, of Aruakhali village in the Sadar upazila collects guest birds from poachers at Tk 40 to 80 each depending on size and sells those at Tk 70 to 120 each at Banshdah Bazar and also in villages.

Asked by this correspondent, he said he purchased the guest birds from poacher Arshad Ali of the area.

"I maintain my family by selling guest birds during winter". The profit is good, he said.

Saiful Islam of Satani village in the Sadar upazila said at Satani Bazar, "I sell these (guest) birds in every winter".

Hundreds of poachers and traders catch the guest birds and sell those in markets, they said.

Sale of such birds on the nose of law enforcers at bus stoppages at Sakhira town is also a common sight.

"The Wild Animal Conservative Act, 1974 has not been enforced strictly due to lack of wide publicity and seriousness on the part of law enforcing agencies," said Shahidul Islam, Director of Uttaran, a local NGO.

"Though the law is very stringent, their enforcement is rarely seen" he said.

The law provides for six months' jail or Tk 5,000 fine or both and confiscation of firearms used for hunting guest birds. Only the District and Sessions Judge has the authority to hear bail petitions in cases filed under the Act, sources said.

"People of the country including law enforcers regard bird hunting a minor crime" observed a retired government college principal, Prof Asit Kumar Majumdar.

About 80 species of birds come to Bangladesh from Siberia and other cold regions during winter to escape chilling cold and due to lack of food there.

Environmentalists say more than 50,000 birds used to come to the district earlier from Siberia to escape chilling cold there. The number will not exceed 20,000 this year, they said.



Abdul Hamid of Aruakhali village under the Sadar upazila is seen with guest birds for sale at Banshdah Bazaar on Saturday.

Lathials arbitrate crimes in 'courts', police say law and order 'good'

31 gang leaders in 16 'blocks' of Char Zahiruddin

AKTER FARUK BACK from Char Zahiruddin

Nearly 30,000 people of Char Zahiruddin of Bhola are now virtually hostage in the hands of a Lathial Bahini (armed musclemen) patronised by the local Union Parishad chairman.

Killing, robbery and torture on women are going on unabated, but residents hardly speak out against these fearing reprisal.

There is a police camp in the Char Zahiruddin but police men are almost inactive, some residents this correspondent during a recent visit. Rather, the police men maintain good relations with the Lathial Bahini and the chairmen. So, they have no alternative to surrendering to the chairmen's Lathial Bahini, they said.

The residents were reluctant to talk to this correspondent. They finally opened their mouth on

persuasion.

Mansur Mia, 52, said people of Char Zahiruddin are "ruled" by the UP chairmen, mostly backed by the ruling party because officials hardly visit the area, 30 miles off Tazumuddin upazila Sadar of Bhola district. Poor people from different areas of Bhola started coming here when human habitation started in this shoal in 1965, he said.

During Awami League rule the Char was "ruled" by AL-supported UP chairman Salim Khan and his Lathial Bahini.

Misceants committed crimes under his direct backing, he said.

After changing of government, leadership of the Lathial Bahini was transferred to BNP-supported chairman Hafij Hasan Masud Bablu, divided the entire Char into 16 "blocks" and "appointed 31 leaders of his Bahini.

Besides, there are two clubs whose members act like "courts", arbitrate crimes and offences and even give punishment.

Fisherman Nazir Mia said, "We can not go to court or police to seek redress.

"Thirty-one block leaders and their Lathia Bahini gave us punishment for our offenders. Often, the punishment is fine, which is taken away by the Bahini".

Housewife Rabeya Khatun said, "We cultivate the land but when the crop is forcibly taken away by the Lathial Bahini. Police do not help us to save our crops. They are associated of the chairman's Lathial Bahini".

Out of the 31 "block leaders", six are Union Parishad members. One of them, Nurul Alam, member of Ward No 6, when contacted refuse all the allegations.

Banskhali revisited

Life at standstill, arson survivors scared to return to Shilpara

SHAHIDUL ISLAM, Ctg

Life is yet to return to normalcy in Sadhanpur Shilpara in Banskhali upazila where 11 people of a family were burnt to death.

Nightmarish memories of the November 18 carnage still haunt the surviving family members of Tejendra Lal Shil, 37 days after the incident.

Just-harvested bundles of paddy were strewn all over the courtyard when this correspondent visited the house of Tejendra Lal on Monday.

The house where the 11 people were roasted alive was dismantled eight days ago at the directive of local lawmaker and State Minister for Forest and Environment Jafrul Islam Chowdhury. Five labourers were leveling the uneven mud floor to build a new tin-roofed house.

"The minister assured us of donating Tk four lakh as grant to build the new house", said Dr Bimal Shil, son of Tejendra, killed in the incident. Dr. Bimal, the only survivor in the arson, is undergoing treatment at clinic in Chititagong since November 19.

Some pale-looking women of the family were seen thrashing the harvested paddy and drying those in

sunlight.

"Hell befell us", said a woman who lost her three daughters-- Babuty, Prasad and Annie on that fateful night.

"We are unlucky as the crops is also so poor this year", she said in a dejected tone.

"We have 10 kani (1 kani is equal to 20 katha) land property including the homestead and usually get 60 to 70 hari (1 hari is equal to 10 kg) paddy."

"But, this year we got only 25 hari paddy", she said.

There is shock and despair all around, but the ripples do not reach law enforcers.

Police so far failed to make any real breakthrough in probing the incident.

Police said they could not make any clue even after taking the arrested persons on remand twice.

The Investigation Officer of the case, Clarence Gomez, also ASP of Sankaria Circle, did not have time to talk to this correspondent as he was going to Comilla to be on duty for the Prime Minister's visit there.

Dr. Bimal, a survivor, said he is scared of returning to Sadhanpur village.

"Whether I fully recover or not from my leg injury, one thing is sure that I will not go back to my village home," he told this correspondent in Chititagong.

"Since, I'm the lone survivor, I might be a target of the criminals."

Bimal said he informed the state minister about his apprehension and sought security to his life.

He said, as per the state minister's advice, he will make an appeal to the Prime Minister soon for providing his family a plot in the city to live there.

All those this correspondent talked to said they only want that the culprits behind the incident be punished.

Meanwhile, Kalipur Union Parishad Chairman and local BNP leader Aminur Rahman Chowdhury dismissed allegations of his involvement in the incident and claimed himself to be a friend and tested well-wisher of the Hindu community.

"I was elected UP chairman twice with votes of Hindu voters. In the last election, I got nearly 6,000 votes. Only 1,500 voters were Muslims and the rest were Hindu votes," said Aminur, also a cousin of State Minister Jafrul Islam.

Meeting ends in chaos

BNP leader snatches minister's microphone to declare his candidature

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A local BNP leader snatched the microphone from a minister to declare his candidature in the upcoming Mundumala municipality elections, ending the meeting in a chaos.

The meeting was called on Friday night for nominating the party's candidate for the post of chairman of newly formed Mundumala municipality, party sources said.

Mozammel Haque, Mundumala BNP president, took away the microphone from Post and Telecommunication Minister Barrister Aminul Haque while he was announcing the name of district BNP General Secretary Shish Muhammad as the party nominee for the post.

Mozammel declared that he would contest for the chairman post in Mundumala municipality elections and left the meeting along with his supporters, chanting slogans against the minister, the sources said.

The Mozammel-led faction also declared that Shish Muhammad is not acceptable in Mundumala municipality.

Barrister Aminul who was chief guest at the meeting of nearly 100 leaders and workers also left the place after seeing most of the local leaders following Mozammel.

The meeting had started at 9pm with Mozammel in the chair. The minister had stood up to addressing the meeting following an hour-long discussion.

"Shish Muhammad is general secretary of district unit and presi-

dent of Tanore upazila (BNP) unit. Why he should be nominated also for the municipality (election)?" Mozammel told journalists later.

Aides close to the minister told this correspondent that Shish Muhammad was "chosen" by the party for the chairman post because of his experience as administrator of the municipality since its inception last year.

Rajshahi Election Commission official Sayed Muhammad Musa told The Daily Star that the election schedules for Mundumala municipality would be announced soon.



PHOTO: STAR

A partial view of the grain silo complex on over 100 acres of land in Barisal, which will soon be left useless.

The giant silo to remain unutilised

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal.

Food grains will not be stored at Barisal CSD warehouse from next month.

Regional Controller of Food, Barisal, Md Tabibul Huda told this correspondent that no decision has been taken about the fate of the 25,000 MT godown built about 40 years ago, but the 56 employees there will get salaries. The food grains stored at the godown will be removed soon.

The giant silo was built on over 100 acres of land to store food grains from different areas of greater Barisal.

It has become useless now with development of road network with district and upazila headquarters and construction of warehouses at upazila level for storing food grains, he said.

Moreover the warehouse has become old, causing loss of stored grains.

Some employees at the C S D warehouse also told this correspondent they had to compensate for loss of food grains stored in improper condition of the ware-

house though they were not liable. They said they are not willing to work at the Barisal CSD godown.

Tabibul Huda admitted that employees had to compensate for no fault.

6-month training programme for midwives

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A six-month training programme for midwives started here at the Family Welfare Visitors' Training Institute here on Sunday.

Dr Nazrul Hossain Chowdhury presided over while Khulna divisional health director Dr Abul Kasem inaugurated the programme.

Divisional director of Family Planning, Khulna Syed Shanewaz Khan and Dr Ivy Rokhana of MC HTI, Dhaka were present as special guests.

Dr Mohiuddin of M CIITI Kushtia said a total of 90 midwives will be trained from all the six upazilas here.

Alliance govt pushes country towards ruination: Tofail

CU CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Awami League (AL) presidium member Tofail Ahmed told that the Alliance Government had pushed the country towards ruination where killing, rape and abduction became a regular feature.

"People's life is absolutely insecure as abductors, criminals and killers rule all over the country under 'patronisation' of ruling BNP", Tofail said.

"Starting from barbers to tea stall owners everyone has to pay illegal toll to BNP cadres now," the AL leader said while addressing as chief guest at a grand rally at Laldighi Maidan in the port city on Saturday afternoon.

The party's city unit organised the rally protesting deterioration in the law and order, increasing crimes and price-hike of essentials. Former minister for labour and the city unit

AL president MA Mannan presided over.

Tofail strongly protested the infringement of democratic and political rights of Opposition party leaders. He also decried killing of AL leaders and activities by the ruling BNP and its allies, adding that the government is trying to thwart the activities of Opposition parties and gag their voice.

He vehemently criticised the government for decline in foreign investment in the country due to worsening law and order situation. He called upon people to build a strong movement against the government.

Among others, city mayor and party leaders ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, Nurul Islam B Sc, Moslem Uddin Ahmed, Khorshed Alam and Ataur Rahman addressed the rally.

No headway in charge framing in Zahida murder case in Magura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

Little headway was made in framing charges in the sensational college girl Zahida rape and murder case even after one and a half years of the incident.

The case was transferred to the criminal investigation department (CID) in July this year for further investigation and submission of fresh charge-sheet following a 'Naraji' (no-confidence) petition regarding earlier charge-sheet of the detective branch (DB) of police.

After investigation for about eight months of filing of the case, DB police inspector Shahidul Islam submitted two charge-sheets on April 26 this year

under Section 302/34 of Bangladesh Penal Code and Section 9 (Cha) (Kha) of the Woman and Child Repression Prevention Act, 2000.

Zahida Khatun, daughter of a poor farmer named Raihan Iqbal of Boroichara village in Sreepur upazila appeared in the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examination in 2002 from Dariapur college.

She secured first division in the HSC examination from Humanities group. But she could not know the result as she was gang-raped and strangled by local miscreants allegedly led by Manun of Dariapur village on July 5, 2002 while she was returning from her friend's house at noon.

A demand finally met

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gopalganj

A long-time demand of the townspeople have been fulfilled with commissioning of the water treatment and supply plant at Gopalganj.

The plant, set up by the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) at a cost of Tk 25 crore, can purify and supply 118800 gallons of water per hour. The project includes 62 km underground pipeline for supply of water to about

one lakh users, official sources said.

The plant has been set up on nine acres of land at Latifpur in on the outskirts of the town.

Work on the project was started in 1996-97 financial year.

The project includes a treatment plant and an overhead.

Sources in Gopalganj Pourasabha said the town dwellers are getting water twice a day and are happy with supply of pure water.



PHOTO: STAR

The overhead water reservoir on the outskirts of Gopalganj town now supplying treated water to the townspeople.