

Only 10pc people of Noakhali pourashava get water supply

From Our Correspondent

MAAJDI COURT (Noakhali), Apr 26: Drinking water crisis in Noakhali municipal area has become acute causing untold suffering to the dwellers.

The dwellers said, at present only one lakh gallons of water are being supplied to the people covering only 10 per cent of the poura area and the rest 90 per cent are deprived of the facilities.

Due to acute scarcity of drinking water the local people are compelled to use contaminated water from ponds and canals to meet their daily household needs including cooking and bathing.

Meanwhile, many people have been suffering from diarrhoea and skin diseases.

Following union workers clash: Bus services remain suspended

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Apr 26: Passenger bus services remained suspended for an indefinite period from Friday in at least four routes from Patuakhali following clashes between two groups of the local Road Transport workers union over domination and taking possession of the union office.

Suspended routes are Patuakhali to Kalapara, Mirzaganj, Amtali and Baulfali.

Half-hour-long chase and counterchase and brickbating between two groups were, however, controlled by the police.

Fake loan in favour of a dead man

From Our Correspondent

GAIBANDHA, Apr 26: Sonali Bank Bonarpura branch reportedly issued a fake loan in favour of a dead man, it is alleged.

One Rezauddin son of Nazibullah Fakir of village Dhana, Naraha under Shaghata Thana died about 20 years back. Sonali Bank, Bonarpura branch issued a fake agriculture loan of Tk 2,500 in favour of the said person in 1991.

According to the undertaking of Ahsan Ali, member of Muktinagar union parishad, one Saidur Rahman a field staff of Sonali bank misappropriated the amount showing fake loan against the dead person. A departmental allegation was brought against Saidur Rahman, the field staff.

Indian tortoise seized

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Apr 26: A special squad of 20 rifle battalion seized a huge quantity of Indian tortoise worth about Taka 21 lakh by searching a Naogaon-bound truck near Manda ferrighat here Tuesday morning, reports BSS.

BDR personnel, in another raid, also seized 20 thousand Indian eggs by searching several night coaches near Biraldaha majjar on Monday.

These smuggled items were deposited with the concerned customs office. BDR sources said.

Joke ends in tragic death of a friend

From Our Correspondent

MOULVI BAZAR, Apr 26: A young man fell victim to his friend's jokes recently in Moulvibazar district.

It is gathered that drought had been prevailing in Rajnagar thana for quite some time. Old aged people of Jahirpur village under Rajnagar thana of the district are in belief that 'Bura-Burir Kheta', a special kind of prayer is one way of seeking rainfall to the God. According to this superstitions, some young men of the village had arranged 'Bura-Burir Kheta'.

Raju Das, 28, son of Sailendra Das of the village volunteered to play the part of 'bear' wearing pieces of gunny bags and was dancing along with his team in the festival prayer like a bear wearing pieces of gunny bags and was dancing along with his team in the festival prayer like a bear. But all of a sudden, one of his team metes, Afzal, 14, reported to have set Raju's bear dress on fire for making fun and enjoy. Soon fire engulfed the body of Raju. People on the spot, after frantic efforts brought the fire under control. But seriously burnt, Raju could not be saved. He succumbed to his injuries on arrival at the Balagonj thana health complex.

A case (No-5 of 8/4/95) has been registered with Rajnagar police in this connection.

In Sylhet, Sunamganj Fresh attack of Malaria

From Iqbal Siddiquee

SYLHET, Apr 26: Fresh attack of Malaria has created panic in the districts of Sylhet and Sunamganj. The killer disease has already claimed at least 45 lives in different thanas of the region during the last two weeks. Besides at least four thousand others were still suffering from the disease.

Of the total, 25 people died in Gowainghat, Jaintapur and Companyganj thanas in Sylhet district. Of them Gowainghat thana is the worst affected followed by Jaintapur. People of some villages in Companyganj thana also fell victim to this killer disease.

The Civil Surgeon of Sylhet when contacted, informed that, the situation was now under control admitting that the death toll now stands at 21 in the district. It includes 10 in

Jaintapur, 10 in Gowainghat and one in Companyganj thana. He further informed that necessary preventive measures had already been taken by.

He said, there is sufficient stock of three lakh 'Choloroquine', tablets a medicine to cure the disease, in the district adding that another one lakh tablets will also reach the affected areas soon.

In total six medical teams have already started working in the affected thanas. He further informed that, blood had been collected from 780 patients in Jaintapur and 700 in Gowainghat for test. Among them, 95 in Jaintapur and eight in Gowainghat thana, were found carrying 'Plasmodium Feliciferum', the germ of Malaria. Beside, 229 and 31 patients were found carrying

'Plasmodium Vixen' another malaria germ in the said thanas respectively.

Some physicians from Chittagong were now visiting the affected areas the source added.

In Sunamganj the affected areas are in Sunamganj sadar Doarabazar and Tahirpur thanas. The total death toll in this district stands at 20. About one thousand others were also suffering from the disease in the remote villages.

However the official sources here confirmed only 10 deaths in the district adding the situation was now under control. Necessary measures have been taken with strengthening the activities of Medical teams, the source added.

Water crisis takes serious turn in Netrokona

From Staff Correspondent

NATROKONA, Apr 26: Acute scarcity of irrigation and drinking water is prevailing in the district due to sharp fall in ground water level, reports UNB.

About 50 to 60 per cent tubewells have become inoperative causing serious water crisis in irrigating the dried up fields. Only Tara-pumps are functioning properly.

Farmers are facing uncertainty in cultivating Irri-Boro this season due to lack of adequate irrigation water. The river Mogra has also been dried up and now people can cross the river on foot.

Drinking water supplied by Public Health Engineering Department is not adequate for the inhabitants of the district town. It covers only a portion of the town, dwellers said.

A large number of hand-driven tubewells have also gone out of action and lying inoperative due to want of repair as spare parts are not available here.

Local people urged the concerned authority to look into the matter and take necessary steps to solve the drinking water crisis in the district.

Corruption charges against UP chairman

From Our Correspondent

MATRANGA (Khagrachhari), Apr 26: The investigation on the alleged misappropriation of Matiranga College fund amounting to Taka, 27.5 lakh has been started by the Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) under the direction of the Deputy

smooth functioning of the college.

Beside, all other sources of collection of fund for newly established Matiranga College, the inmates living in the cluster villages in Matiranga thana compulsorily donate at the rate of two kilogram of rice from

Sales proceeds from the monthly ration supplied to the poor inmates of the cluster villages in Matiranga thana was allegedly misappropriated by the chairman of the concerned union parishad who had collected the said amount during the last two years to deposit to college fund considering the

their monthly quota to the college fund considering the bare necessity of the higher secondary education for their children.

The executive committee of the college headed by the Thana Nirbahi Officer had entrusted the concerned union parishad chairman to collect and deposit the sales proceeds of the cluster villagers' donation to the college, which the chairman had misappropriated.

One killed as dacoits attack villagers from across border

From Our Correspondent

CHUADANGA, Apr 26: A young man was killed and another seriously injured when a gang of Indian dacoits stormed two houses at Saimary village of sadar thana on Sunday, reports UNB.

According to the villagers, the armed dacoits numbering around 15 to 20 forcibly entered the houses of Amjad and Shuckchand and tried to decamp with their cattle. When the inmates of the houses resisted them, they opened fire killing one Surju, 25, on the spot and wounding Alam grievously.

Alam was admitted to the sadar hospital in a critical condition.

Local people said the dacoits from the other side of the border frequently swoop on the villagers at dead of night and take away cattle and other valuables.

Chars hampering riverine transport in southern region

From Our Correspondent

BARISAL, Apr 26: Plying of passenger launches, cargo vessels, steamer and oil tankers in the river routes is being hindered due to emergence of numerous chars in the major rivers of southern region, reports UNB.

Absence of riverine guideline markings in these routes is also hampering the river transport. Abnormal fall in water level in some rivers in the southern region has further aggravated the situation.

Plying of river vessels has become highly risky particularly during the night due to absence of guideline markings and path finding lighting in certain points of the rivers.

Launch passengers said sometime they have to wait in the river during the night for hours together on way to Dhaka particularly in the Meghna during low tide fearing the double decker launches may run aground in the sunken chars. They have to wait for high tide amidst fear of being attacked by the pirates.

They urged the authorities to dredge the routes regularly for smooth plying of the vessels.

Little more care needed to save the wild life

From Our Correspondent

BANDARBAN, Apr 26: While incubating, a mother-python was killed by the tribals of Jouthakhamarpara in the adjacent hill hardly three kilometres from the district town recently, throwing a challenge to the local wild life lovers, who have been taking care in hatching the eggs left off.

Twelve incubated eggs, out of 39, were also roasted by the killers to fulfil their appetite. Fifteen eggs were recovered and the rest three damaged in course of killing the mother python.

Believed to be not damaged or harmed, 15 eggs are kept in the office of the Bandarban-based Weekly Matrie under the warmth of silk-cotton and straw to allow hatching of the to-be-born pythons, said Osman Ghani, a councillor of Bandarban Hill District Local Government Council. Lokman

Hakim, his younger brother, recovered that left off eggs, Osman added.

The python eggs rescued are four inches in length and eight inches in diameter with comparatively softer shells, a bit brownish on white in colour. The python was 12 feet in length and one feet in girth, the tribals who distributed the flesh of the prey among themselves said. Surya Sen Chakma with few others reportedly killed the python.

This is a very rare case of sighting pythons eggs. It is sighted in Bandarban in immemorial time. The elderly people of the locality believe according to hearsays that sighting of python's eggs somewhere is very ominous. A terrible natural disaster may follow at the appearance of pythons eggs in the locality, they added.

4 caught nude red-handed Mob raids fake peer's den in Bandarban

From Our Correspondent

BANDARBAN, Apr 26: Mob raided the den of a fake peer and detained four of his followers — a man and three young women — at the local bus stand early this week at dawn. They were hiding in the underground bunker, sensing the arrival of the agitating mob, said the Chairman of Bandarban Municipality.

To carry out anti-social activities including gambling, sales and drinking of wine, smoking of ganja and to enjoy exhibition of blue-films, an organised group of disorderly people set up a den beside local bus stand under the cover of a 'peer house', the sources said.

Recently they had arranged a programme of dancing and singing throughout the whole night announcing the programme in the town over loudspeakers. In course of dancing and singing, the participants both male and female dropped

their dresses and continued nude programme. The neighbouring people on hearing this news raided the den and reportedly found them nude.

The participants except the four — one man and three young women — somehow escaped from the furious mob. The mob caught the four from the well-built underground bunker.

Housewife commits suicide

From Our Correspondent

BHOLA, Apr 26: A housewife allegedly committed suicide by drinking poison at Char Khalifa in Daulatkhan thana of the district, reports UNB.

According to police, Moni Begum, 22, took poison on April 7 and was rushed to the thana Health Complex where the attending doctors declared her dead.

Besides, BDR also seized smuggled Indian spare parts of motor vehicles, sarees and sugar worth of Tk 31,535 from Akhaura, Mukundapur and Singerbeel areas.

All the smuggled goods were handed over to Akhaura Customs office.

Local people alleged that the smugglers are active in the district for a long time under the patronisation of some influential.

Bus falls in road side ditch: 28 wounded

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Apr 26: At least 28 passengers were injured, seven of them critically, when a Patuakhali-bound passenger bus fell into a roadside ditch near Talukdar Textile Mills of Rupatali on Barisal-Patuakhali road, some 3 kilometres from Barisal town, on Sunday.

According to witnesses, the passenger bus was on its way to Patuakhali from Barisal. Around 12-30 pm the driver of the ill-fated bus lost control and tried to stop the bus at the roadside but he failed and the bus loaded with passengers fell into the road side ditch.

Of the injured passengers seven were admitted to the Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

Driver of the bus managed to flee after the incident. The bus is still at the spot. A case was filed with Kotwali thana in this connection.

Another news adds: At least 25 persons were injured when two groups of bus workers of Patuakhali Road Transport Workers Union were locked in a clash over some previous disputes on Sunday.

Huge quantity of smuggled goods seized

From Staff Correspondent

BRAHMANBARIA, Apr 26: Bangladesh Rifles seized a huge quantity of Indian smuggled goods from Faudauk, Akhaura, Singerbeel and Mukundapur areas in the last week, reports UNB.

According to BDR sources, the jawans of 23 rifle battalion seized smuggled Indian carpet and 324 metre long clothes worth Taka 1.06 lakh from Faudauk area in Nasir Nagar thana.

Besides, BDR also seized smuggled Indian spare parts of motor vehicles, sarees and sugar worth of Tk 31,535 from Akhaura, Mukundapur and Singerbeel areas.

All the smuggled goods were handed over to Akhaura Customs office.

Local people alleged that the smugglers are active in the district for a long time under the patronisation of some influential.

Unfit engines, false certificates, violation of traffic rules contribute to frequent riverine accidents

From Ehsanul Haque

NARAYANGANJ, Apr 26: River journey by motor launch in the country is always hazardous. Overloading and poor maintenance of the launches are the most common complaints heard. Though major accidents are rare, minor ones are manifold, an official of the Department of Shipping informed.

As per Inland Mechanically Propelled Vessel (IMPV) Act 1917 motor vessel of any horse power (HP) should be registered in the survey section of the Department of Shipping for plying in the river route. But water transports propelled by less than 16 HP engine are not required to obtain any registration or fitness certificate under an amendment in the IMPV Act (1976). A consequence of the amendment was that many under-16 HP vessels and the vessels falsely claiming to have engines less than 16 HP, which were unfit for carrying passengers and goods, hazardously started sailing without registration. Frequently these transports violate river traffic rules and contribute to accidents, the official pointed out.

The sources at the Department of Shipping also informed that in foreign countries a brand new motor launch is allowed to sail for 20 years, whereas motor launches in Bangladesh, normally with reconditioned engines, run more than 40 years in ramshackle condition. Failure of steering system and other mechanical trouble are inevitable for these old vessels. Besides, gusty winds, inferior quality of wooden body, negligence of Serang (master) are responsible for accidents. Even a good number of launches sail at night without search lights. The launch owners and masters are considered blameless in case of any motor vessel disasters and this immunity under existing shipping laws, knowledgeable people think, contributed to the launch owners' carelessness behind their running unfit vessels.

Bangladesh is the only country in the world where launches with wooden body are still in operation. "In one of the launch disasters it was found that the roof of the launch was blown away. This was fantastic," an investigating officer observed. "I do not know whether the roof was fastened with ropes or pasted with glue," he noted. It is mentionable that about 60 per cent of the passenger launches are of wooden body in the country. An expert expressed that government should ban sailing of, under a special circular, all the wooden vessels and the vessels which have exceeded their operational age of 20 years.

Launch owners employ driver and masters having no competency certificate, it was alleged. It is also learnt that some drivers and masters obtain their competency certificates in exchange of bribes.

According to present shipping rules the registered vessels should employ masters and drivers — 3rd class master for the vessels having between 16 HP to 50 HP range, 2nd class master for the vessels having 50 HP to 600 HP and 1st class master for the vessels having more than 600 HP.

Because the examinees for the competency certificate examination do not get any allowance during their training period, they do not show interest about training. This is why they cannot pass the examination. On the other hand, launch owners avoid hiring trained masters worrying higher wage to be paid to them.



An over loaded passenger boat in river Dhaleshwari. —Star photo

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Concerning the safety measures on board, the requirements by law are lifebuoy, life-jacket and fire-extinguishers. Although some launches have necessary safety system, this cannot be utilized in time due to their lack of know-how.

According to Department of Shipping sources, the number of registered vessels is about 7,000 out of about 22,000 vessels having more than 16 HP still in operation, only about 2,500 vessels have updated the renewal of their registration. Though under Inland Shipping Ordinance, 1976, every mechanically propelled vessel having more than 16 HP should undergo annual survey, in which keel, hull, engines, navigation lights, safety equipment are checked and accordingly fitness

certificates are given. Even, whenever a vessel is withdrawn from operation it has to be reregistered. But this procedure is not followed strictly. Even more surprisingly, about 19,500 vessels sail without any survey certificate out of about 7,000 registered and about 15,000 unregistered vessels. Considering these problems and complications a comprehensive survey of the inland water transportation and navigational conditions of the country's entire, about, 5984 kilometres river routes is of utmost importance.

There are only four qualified surveyors and five survey inspectors in four survey offices in Sadar Ghat, Narayanganj, Barisal, Khulna. The number of survey officers are inadequate for a river route having 5984 kilometres in length.

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The survey offices even do not have minimum transport facilities like speed boat.

Under existing shipping law, launch owners have to pay a penalty of Taka 100 per passenger taken on board in excess on the launches. But still then incidence of overloading has not declined because of lack of activity of the river traffic police and mobile team of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), the sources added.

Launch dacoity is also rampant. Every year hundreds of cases are recorded. Launch owners association complains that Ministry of Home Affairs has not responded despite repeated appeals by them for security measure in the riverine routes.

Launch owners have to pay various types of taxes such as income tax, mooring charge, channel charge etc. The owners more or less sincerely want to pay these taxes except income tax. At present, the owners of the vessels have to pay income tax on unit basis (per vessel) and not upon capacity of the vessels.

But if the taxes were imposed according to the capacity of vessels the amount of tax would increase to a great extent. It is also learnt that about five per cent income tax were realised by Income Tax department for few years.

Launch owners complain that they purchase VAT-paid machinery and equipment during the building of a vessel but they have to pay VAT once again after the ship-building is completed — which is a case of double taxation.

When contacted, a spokesman of Launch Owners Association said that about 55 per cent of passengers travel through river routes and approximately 60 to 70 per cent merchandise is carried by the cargo vessels. Though these river routes are playing a vital role in our economy, this sector is not getting proper supervision of the concerned authority.

Continuous siltation of the major rivers is reducing the length of navigable waterways maintained by the BIWTA, affecting river communication in the country, official sources said.

The length of classified navigable water ways under the BIWTA declined from 8433 km in 1984 to 5,984 km in 1992, the sources said, adding that the length shrinks to only 3,800 km during the dry season.

According to BIWTA sources, the total length of navigable waterways including channels for low draft country boats is about 13,000 km and more than half of the country's land area is located and three-quarters of all commercial activities take place within a distance of 10 km from a navigable waterways in all the seasons.

Although maintenance of the waterways (river routes) system is becoming more difficult due to continuous siltation of the rivers, it is generally much less capital-intensive than the construction and maintenance of land transport modes, an official noted.

The annual maintenance cost of bituminous roads stands around Taka one lakh 50 thousand per km without the periodical upgrading and rehabilitation costs whereas the estimated cost of development and maintenance dredging of the classified inland waterways is about Taka 42 thousand per kft, the official said.

Investments in this sector should be undertaken in coordination with other transport authorities for developing a well-integrated transport network.

Notes from Satkhira

From Our Correspondent

SATKHIRA, Apr 26: Prem Chandra Das, 20, son of Jogendra Chandra Das of village Chandipur under Shyamnagar thana was beaten to death by his neighbour Korban Ali recently.

According to Shyamnagar thana police source, the victim Prem Das, in quest of his lost pet pigeon, went to his neighbour Korban Ali's house in the evening of April 11. At that time hot words were exchanged between them and at one stage with the help of his men, Korban Ali beat Das. As a result, he died on the spot. Later they hid the body in a nearby ditch. Acting on secret information police recovered the body from the ditch on April 15. A case was lodged with Shyamnagar PS. None was arrested in this connection yet.

Indian national arrested

The Jawans of 21 Rifles Battalion of BDR Satkhira arrested one Indian national Abdur Rahim Par of village Hakimpur under Swarnnagar PS in 24 Parganas, West Bengal and recovered Bangladeshi Taka amounting to 1,37,700 from his possession on April 16.

According to local BDR sources, Abdur Rahim crossed the border illegally, at Jhikra village under Kalaroa thana. The BDR noticing his movements challenged him and caught him red-handed. A case was lodged with Kalaroa PS.

Son-in-law beaten to death

Idris Ali of village Sonatala under Kaligonj thana met tragic end of his life when his mother-in-law Jamila Khatun lashed him with a broom on April 16. The incident occurred at village Kali Jaga of the same thana. Kaligonj thana police sources said, the victim, Idris Ali had admitted his ailing wife in Kaligonj Health Complex. Later his mother-in-law Jamila Khatun brought her daughter to her house from the complex. Hearing this news, he went to his mother-in-law's house and disagreed with the decision.

At one stage the angry mother-in-law hit her son-in-law with a broom. Seriously wounded, Idris Ali later met tragic end of his life at dead of night.

A case was lodged with Kaligonj thana in this connection. Police arrested Jamila Khatun.