

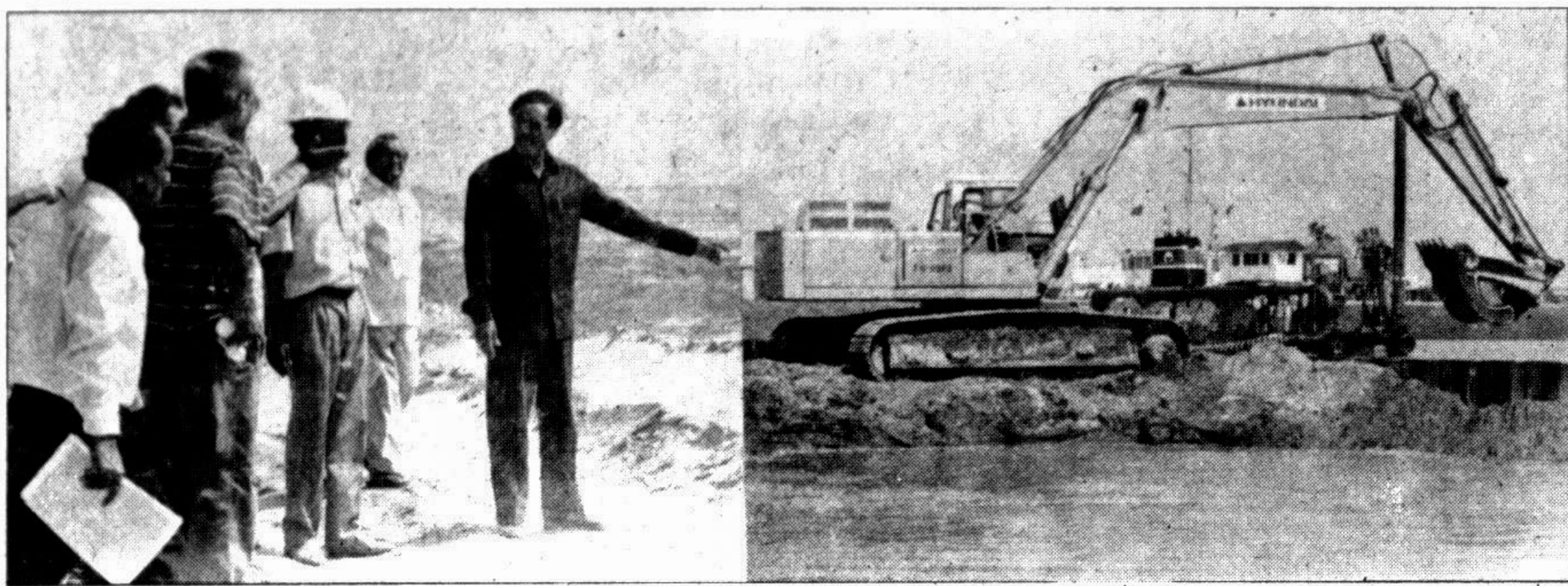
'Nazrul — a poet of humanity'

COMILLA, May 26: Housing and Public Works Minister Barister Rafiqul Islam Mia inaugurated the 3 day 96th birth anniversary of the National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam at Comilla town hall on Thursday, reports UNB.

Organized by Nazrul Birth-day Observance Committee, Comilla, the function was addressed, among others, by Deputy Commissioner Kabeer Rahman, Principal of Comilla Victoria College Ameer Ali Chowdhury and the local Nazrul scholars.

"Nazrul was a poet of humanity", Rafiq said adding that he was not a poet of any religion or race.

Earlier the Minister placed floral wreaths at the "Chetona Nazrul", a monument constructed to commemorate poet Nazrul at Comilla, says a PID handout Thursday.



Communications Minister Oli Ahmed along with the editors of national dailies inspecting the progress of work of the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge at Bhuapur in Tangail on Thursday, May 25. — Photo PID

Three commit suicide in Tangail

TANGAIL, May 26: Three persons including two women allegedly committed suicide in the last few days in Mirzapur thana area, report BSS.

Rahima Akhter, 25, allegedly committed suicide by hanging herself from a branch of *gajari* tree in village Banshtail. On the same day Shahjahan of village Bawakurjani also allegedly committed suicide by hanging from a tree. He was suffering from financial stringency.

On May 8, Bilkis Akter, 22, a housewife committed suicide by drinking acid. Three UD cases were registered with the Mirzapur thana.

Besides these, Zahurul Islam, 14, of village Kolaha under Kalihati thana was electrocuted while he came in contact with an electric circuit.

19 arrested, arms recovered

SATKHIRA, May 26: Police arrested 19 criminals with arms and ammunition from different areas in sadar thana during the current month, reports UNB.

According to police, in separate drives, they recovered 12 fire arms, 24 rounds ammunition, 21 cocktails, one private car, knife and *randao*.

The arrested people were sent to jail hazat and recovered goods were deposited to police *Malkhana*.

A total of 14 cases have been registered, with the police.

'BNP does not believe in lip service'

PATUAKHALI, May 26: Religious Affairs Minister Keramat Ali has said the government will carry out all-out efforts to help the people affected by natural calamities, reports UNB.

"The BNP government does not believe in lip service, it had extended cooperation to the affected people in the past and will do everything to fulfil the commitments made to the people", he said while visiting the tidal surge affected areas in the district on Thursday.

The Minister said the BNP government is determined to ensure welfare of the people and giving the democracy an institutional shape.

Later, the minister held a discussion on the recent tidal surge with the government officials at the DC's office.

Coal with high sulphur content smuggled into Bangladesh

From Ratan Chowdhury

SHERPUR, May 26: Inferior quality coal containing high level of Sulphur imported from India has been polluting the country's environment.

Due to the absence of restrictions and any proper step of the concerned department regarding coal, a huge quantity of harmful coal is entering Bangladesh through Sherpur and Jamalpur border since 1989.

According to a local expert (a college teacher in chemistry), one per cent sulphur in coal is permissible.

Higher than this level is not only injurious to health, but also affects crops, industrial machinery, buildings, structures, flora and fauna of the locality where this kind of coal is used. Burning of this coal also increases the danger of acid rains.

Sources confirmed that the coal available from the mines in Meghalaya contains sulphur ranging from two to ten per cent. The Meghalaya coal is much cheaper than the high grade coal imported from Ranigonj (India) or other countries which contains sulphur at permissible level.

A chemical test of a sample of the Meghalaya coal conducted in February 1988 by a construction firm showed that

it contained 10.07 per cent sulphur. Another analytical consulting and technical chemist confirmed the same result.

The sources said that the Indian Mineral Resources Directorate of Meghalaya also confirmed the presence of sulphur at high percentage in the coal available.

Sources said, the coal found in the Garo Hills in western Meghalaya contains sulphur from two to four per cent while the coal from Bapong in Jayulia Hills area has 3.2 to 8 (eight) per cent sulphur content. The coal extracted at Zangrim of Khasi Hills contains sulphur that varies from 3.02 to 4.2 per cent. The large scale import of Meghalaya coal started in 1989 when the trade was liberalised for the private sector while the import under the public sector was stopped.

According to official sources, over four lakh tonnes of coal were brought into Bangladesh through Sherpur-Jamalpur border during 1992-93. Two lakh tonnes of Meghalaya coal were imported legally by private sector traders through land route and the other two lakh tonnes were smuggled into the country.

Local experts said, brick-

field owners are gradually interested to use coal and they are very much interested to use Maghalaya coal due to cheaper price. The Meghalaya coal sells at Tk 1500 per tonne, while other superior quality coal cost about Tk 3000.

Experts maintain that the loopholes in the import policy provide the traders with ample opportunity to import low-grade coal having high sulphur content.

The clause on coal in the import policy (1993-95) says a pre-shipment inspection certificate from an internationally reputed surveyor should be obtained to import coal which would certify that the declared quantity, measurement and qualitative standard of the commodity is accurate.

An expert said that the sulphur content in coal must remain below one per cent for protecting the environment. He, however, mentioned the lack of facilities for monitoring the quality of minerals like coal.

Meanwhile the coal importers alleged that the customs authorities in India are not accepting any letter of credit for importing coal from Meghalaya below the rate of 42 US dollars per tonnes.

Farmers selling paddy at throw away prices in Natore

NATORE, May 26: Farmers of the north Bengal region are deprived of fair prices of their newly harvested boro paddy due to shortage of buyers, reports UNB.

According to a market survey, it has been revealed that the paddy per maund is being sold at Tk 150 in Natore, Naogaon, Bogra, Dinajpur, Joypurhat and Rangpur districts.

The survey said, the number of the buyers for the paddy, is less than the previous year resulting in less competition for purchasing the paddy.

Last year, buyers from different areas of the country including Dhaka, Narayanganj, Ghorashal, Khulna and Chittagong procured paddy in competitive prices.

Local sources said, small, marginal and share-croppers who cultivated their land taking loans from local traders on

a high rate of interest, have been facing problems as they are to sell the paddy below the production cost.

Visiting different *hats* including Palashbari, Tulshighat and Baneswarar of the district, this correspondent witnessed that hundreds of marginal farmers were waiting with their boro paddy throughout the day with the hope of arrival of big purchasers from other parts of the country.

Taking advantage of the situation, the middlemen or *forias* are seen purchasing paddy at throw away prices in the absence of purchasers. The farmers are also forced to sell the paddy to purchase their daily necessities.

The farmers urged the concerned authorities to open paddy and rice purchase centres at different markets

PHED to implement water supply project in G'bandha town

From Our Correspondent

GAIBANDHA, May 26: Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) has undertaken a programme to supply drinking water in northern part of Gaibandha pourashava. Government has sanctioned Tk 25 lakh for the implementation of the programme.

The dwellers of northern part of Gaibandha pourashava were deprived of pure drinking water since the implementation of water supply scheme in 1987. Water supply scheme implemented here in the district spending Taka six crore under a Japanese grant. The scheme included construction of two overhead tanks with a volume of 300 and 400 cubic meters at Khankabari and Masterpara respectively, three production deep tubewells, two water treatment plants

Mobilising the poorest

From Fakhrunessa

KUSHTIA, May 26: Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), one of the biggest NGOs working relentlessly in every corner of Bangladesh to mobilise poorest class of the society specially the women folk and to utilise them in improving their lot. The NGO has taken up interesting programmes in Kushtia zone.

It has started programme with Sericulture Development Project employing 27 women who are earing their livelihood by working and learning how to change their lot and making

the project viable.

In charge of the Kushtia Project Ibrahim told The Daily Star that this project has been running very well and their products are being sold in every corner of the country.

The Daily Star correspondent while visiting the project located at Gagoti two miles away from Kushtia town observed that village girls are working in the factory to produce silk thread out of 'Gotti Poka' (silk worm) step by step which ultimately are producing silk *panjabi*.

Anirudha Biswas, local Manager of BRAC told The Daily Star that they have a plan to expand the mills by increasing reeling machine and planting more saplings of trees which produces 'Gotti Poka' in Kushtia area.

He also said that the soil of Kushtia is very suitable for growing 'Gotti Poka' trees and quality of the same are also very good. He further added that they have employed considerable number of village women for looking after those trees planted by the side of roads and rail lines. These women are also entrusted for nursing the trees. Of course, they are being paid adequately for their service and in this way this project helps in earning their livelihood apart from those who are working in the mills for making thread out of 'Gotti Poka'.

Chicken pox breaks out in Faridpur

From Our Correspondent

FARIDPUR, May 26: Chicken pox has broken out in an epidemic form in different villages under Nagarkanda thana of the district.

It is reported that at least twenty to twenty five persons have been attacked with the disease. No death has so far been reported, however. Of the affected villages Radhanagar is the worst affected.

According to Nagarkanda hospital source, the patients are suffering from fever for two or three consecutive days.

Scarcity of fish in Madaripur

MADARIPUR, May 26: Acute shortage of fish in the markets has been prevailing all over the district for the last two months, consumers said, reports UNB.

Pisciculture has been badly affected here due to massive siltation in the rivers Ariakha and Kumar and in the different *beds* and *canals*.

Experts said unplanned use of chemical-fertilizer and pesticides in crop fields, has also affected fish production thereby-reducing the production of fish.

Besides, hundreds of fishermen in the district are facing numerous problems including shortage of funds, fish-fry and price-hike of other inputs.

Moreover, a large number of ponds of the district remain uncultivated due to proper patronisation of the concerned authorities, local people said.

Heroin worth Tk 50 lakh seized in Gopalganj

From Our Correspondent

GOPALGANJ, May 26: Five hundred grams of heroin worth Tk 50 lakh was recovered by police from a residence of Rabin Bairagi, 25, of village Kaligram under Muk-sudpur thana of Gopalganj district recently.

It is learnt that a confidential source informed Mofizuddin S I of police in Shindhi-ghat police camp under Muk-sudpur thana. Mafizuddin and a group of police raided Kaligram village and arrested Rabin Bairagi and according to his confessions police recovered 500 grams of heroin from his possession.

Clashes leave 13 hurt in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, May 26:

Thirteen people were injured, eight of them seriously, in separate armed-clashes in Saikania and Fatikchhari thanas of the district today, reports UNB.

Police said eight people were injured as supporters of Saied Mia of Nayapara village in Saikania thana attacked the supporters of Saifuddin of the same village following a dispute over land demarcation.

Both the sides used fire arms and lethal weapons in the clash that lasted about an hour from noon. Police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control. They also picked up 12 people from the scene with two LMGs and one bullet.

Of the injured, five people were admitted to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital. Of them, condition of Shah Alam, 45, Abdul Haq, 40, and Shamsul Haq, 45, were said to be critical.

In another incident, five people received bullet wounds when the rival groups of two areas in Fatikchhari thana clashed to establish supremacy in the locality.

Two beheaded bodies found

NARSINGDI, May 26: Police

recovered beheaded bodies of two young men from a field in Dashuria Char area under Sadar thana of the district today, reports UNB.

Identities of the youths aged about 30, were not available. The bodies were found at two different places of the field.

Some villagers rushed to the spot after hearing screaming of a boy, who went to till a patch of land at neighbouring village, Chintishpur, 6 km today. He came across those bodies while he was crossing the field.

Police suspect that both the youths might have been killed that night. Reason behind the murders could not be known immediately.

Ancient mosques declared protected monuments

DHAKA, May 26: The *Qilla*

of Shamsur Gazi and three ancient Mosques in Kishoreganj, and Feni districts have been declared as the protected archaeological monuments by the government, according to a recent gazette notification, reports BSS.

Shamsur Gazi's *Qilla* is located on 10.06 acres of land at Jagannath Sonapur village under Chhagalnaiya thana, Feni bordering the Indian Tripura state in the north and the east, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs said.

The three ancient Mosques which have been declared as the protected archaeological monuments by the Cultural Ministry are, the Saheb Bari Jame Mosque at Sekander Nagar under Tarail thana in Kishoreganj district, the Mohammad Ali Chowdhury *Masjid* at Khan-e-Bari and Sharshadi Shahi *Masjid* at Uttar Khan-e-Bari under Feni sadar thana, Feni.

Mysterious cattle disease in Bhola

BHOLA, May 26: Eight cows

died in a mysterious disease in sadar thana of the district within two days, farmers said, reports UNB.

According to the farmers, six cattle died at Charpolli union on May 17 and two other at a village in Dhania union on May 18.

These animals died shortly after their return from the grazing fields. Details of the diseases, particularly symptoms, were not available.

However, the district Livestock Office, when contacted, said that food poisoning could be the reason behind the death of the cattle.

Meantime, the death of the animals has caused panic among the farmers.



Women at work at a factory in Kushtia

— Star photo

No doctor or any field worker visited us, say villagers

RANGAMATI, May 26: Malaria and diarrhoea, have taken an alarming turn. So far 302 including 18 in 48 hour has died while over one lakh people in 138 days along with a countless numbers of troops, including army personnel, constables, members of Village Defense Party and Ansars, and forest personnel has been infected in the last as well as persons who served in government and other organisations in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) region—reducing the present state of medicare services.

Measles and chicken-pox which broke out in the CHT region with the advent of summer are yet to recede. Some 15 thousand people have suffered from the diseases, majority of whom were babies. Twelve of them died during the period at Kaptai, Rajasthali, Belachari, Rangamati sadar, Kankhsli, Borkal of Rangamati hill district, social workers, and relatives of the deceased said.

Jaundice, almost a regular phenomena in the CHT region, attacked not less than five per cent of the malaria cured patients. At present at least five thousand people have been suffering from jaundice, who were attacked immediately after recovery from malaria in the three hill districts of Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban.

With the breaking out of malaria, now appeared to be hard to eradicate, the rate of death due to it is on rise. It claimed at least 600 people including 25 from the police, ansars, VDP, BDR and armed forces and affected about two lakh in 1994 in Khagrachhari hill district alone. The majority of the decades were from the cluster villages and inaccessible areas. The officials from the Health Department admitted the death of 379 and infection of 1,75,000 in 1994 in Khagrachhari district. The sources apprehend that casualty might be higher this year in comparison with last year.

According to a statistic of the local Health Department malaria claimed 192 and attacked 91,138 in 1992 as well as 160 and 96,939 in 1993 but the unofficial survey says, the malarial death and attack was more than double the official figure.

From A K M Zahoorul Huq

Over one lakh people attacked by malaria, diarrhoea diseases while some 15,000 people suffered from measles, chicken pox. Jaundice attacked not less than five per cent of the malaria cured patients. The majority of the victims were in cluster villages in CHT. Till May 18 this year the officials confirmed deaths of 60 from malarial attack while another 50,000 were attacked.

The steady rise of death from malaria and spread of the disease, is of course, matter of concern which is being ignored by the concerned authorities, said Monoranjan Bhattacharya a range officer of Forest Department who was attacked 10 times last year while engaged in plantation at Noapatana range of pulp wood division.

Till May 18 this year, malaria claimed at least 92 and attacked over 50 thousand in Khagrachhari hill district against which the concerned authority admitted the death and attack of 60 and 19 thousand respectively till April 30 this year.

The outbreak of malaria in the district in the inaccessible regions especially in the cluster villages was observed in Khagrachhari sadar, Dighinala, Panchhari, Mohalchhari, Matiranga, Ramgarh, Luxmichhari and Manikchhari thanas. Majority of the death occurred in the poverty-hit cluster villages. Those who died of it were children upto under age 12, pregnant women and sexagenarians.

In conducting a survey, the inmates of the villages of Boalkhali, Rashiknagar and Betchhari in Dighinala thana told The Daily Star that no DDT or any sort of insecticides was sprayed in the areas during the last 3/4 years to combat the spread of mosquitos causing a rapid and undisturbed postering of the malarial germ carrier mosquitos.

Services of the officials of the Health Department in the malaria-prone areas is far from satisfaction. Rather they allegedly falsely demonstrate themselves in the

areas, said the inmates of the cluster villages of Pakuzachhari and Nunnchhari in a body, where 2/3 of more malarial patients were found in every family. No doctor nor any field worker have visited the villages, they alleged.

Admitting the out break of malaria and tightening of its impacts Dr Fariduddin Bhuiyan, the Civil Surgeon of Khagrachhari told The Daily Star that adequate steps have already been taken to combat the disease by sending medical teams to the affected areas, supplying sufficient medicine to the field workers, appointing the conscious local leaders as depot-holders and supplying of preventive medicine to them and training them.

Malaria and diarrhoea that broke out in Bandarban hill district in an epidemic form where at least 100 people died of these two diseases and attacked about 40 thousand people. According to an official source, malaria alone claimed 417 and attacked 2,17,247 in Bandarban district in last four years.

Hundreds of people die of malaria every year in the three hill districts of Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban as the people of this region are not concerned with the prevention and control programme of malaria, shortage of doctors and medicine and the field workers do not discharge their duties properly, the speakers said in the inaugural session of the workshop on 'the management of the treatment of complicated and deadly diseases' held in Bandarban from May 2-6, this year.

Dr A M Zakir Hussain, Director of Health