



Eid buying spree at Bangabazar, popularly known as shopping centre for the middle class, in the city yesterday. - Star photo

Health Minister opens nursing institute

SIRAJGANJ, Dec 26: A new three-storied Nursing Institute including a girls' hostel, built at a cost of Tk 3.55 crore, was inaugurated here Friday, reports APB.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Salahuddin Yusuf and Post and Telecommunications and Public Works Minister Mohammed Nasim formally inaugurated the institute that will have 20 seats every year for a four-year nursing course.

The Health Minister announced that the 200-bed capacity Sirajganj Sadar Hospital would also be upgraded into 250-bed one.

"The present government is committed to reach medicare facilities to door-steps of the poor," the Health Minister told a function on this occasion.

The government would also set up a health and family welfare centre in each union, he said.

Regional strategy to combat TB in S Asia sought

KATHMANDU, Dec 26: Health experts have asked for immediate and effective cooperation between South Asian countries to combat the region's greatest killer disease - tuberculosis (TB), reports IANS.

"TB is snowballing into a serious threat subsequent to the spread of HIV-AIDS," experts from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka, who are holding a five-day meet here to draft a regional strategic plan of cooperation to combat this deadly disease, said.

South Asian countries account for about 40 per cent of the global incidence of TB which kills about three million people worldwide and afflicts another eight million every year.

"Studies show that 2.96 million people in this region were found to have been infected with this deadly disease during last year alone. This includes 2.3 million new cases in India, 360,000 in Pakistan and 300,000 in Bangladesh."

Unless a concerted regional

strategy is launched, the deadly disease would create havoc in the region in a few years' time, officials of the governing board of TB centres in countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), warned.

While tuberculosis claims a life every minute in India, 40 people die of it in Nepal every day. About 15,000 people in the Himalayan country die of TB every year. According to the officials, what is more alarming is that TB mostly affects the young and productive section of the population in the age group of 15 to 45.

The TB menace was being further compounded by the spread of HIV-AIDS in the region, the experts said.

Warning that TB cases would sharply rise in the next few years due to the spread of HIV-AIDS, experts said that people carrying both the AIDS virus and TB bacillus were at a 25 times greater risk of developing tuberculosis.

150 migrants detained in Italy

LECCE, Italy, Dec 26: A hundred and fifty illegal immigrants, including 80 children, were detained over the Christmas period after coming ashore in southeastern Italy, police here said today, reports AFP.

The aliens, most of whom were Turkish, Iraqi or Kurdish, used inflatable boats to cross the 60-kilometer wide Strait of Otrante from Albania, they said.

The illegal aliens were taken to detention centres in the Puglia region where they will be held pending identification.

A new law allows Italian authorities to keep illegal immigrants for 30 days in 'temporary reception centres' while they examine individual cases.

Italy's 7,000 km of coastline are the main destination for immigrants trying to enter the European Union (EU) countries.

Rome recently passed legislation to ease procedures for legal aliens, while cracking down on illegals.

'Country's 400-bed Mental Hospital to be upgraded to 500-bed'

PABNA, Dec 26: The country's lone 400-bed Mental Hospital here will soon be upgraded to a 500-bed one. Health and Family Welfare Minister Salahuddin Yusuf said today, reports APB.

The capacity of Pabna General Hospital will also be increased from 100-bed to 120-bed, he said.

The minister was speaking at a reception at the General Hospital here.

Post, Telecommunications, Housing and Public Works Minister Mohammad Nasim, Wazuddin Khan MP, Prof Jannatul Ferdous MP, DC of Pabna Mahbubur Rahman, Advocate Amzad Hossain and local AL leaders also spoke at the function presided over by Pabna Civil Surgeon Shamsuddin Mondal.

Later, the minister visited Sunagar Health Complex and announced that the 20-bed hospital will be upgraded to a 30-bed one.

Cooperative members not getting fresh loan in Netrakona

NETRAKONA, Dec 26: The Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) has stopped disbursement of agricultural loans among members of its cooperative societies because of non-realisation of outstanding loans, reports APB.

Loan seekers say they cannot meet the conditions for getting fresh loans. As a result, some 50,000 members of ten thana cooperative societies in the district are in great trouble. The ten thanas are Netrakona, Kendua, Atpara, Madan, Khali-juri, Mohanganj, Barhatta, Kalmakanda, Durgapur and Purbodhala.

BRDB usually supervises these cooperatives and provides their members with credit facilities.

A total of Tk 2.25 crore has been made available for distribution among the members of these cooperatives during the current year, according to sources in the office of the Deputy Director of BRDB.

But most of the cooperative societies are not getting fresh loans because they failed to repay the outstanding loans.

BRDB usually gets money from Sonali Bank for distribution among the members of cooperative societies.

Sonali Bank sources said that the bank had Tk 11.09 crore crop loans and Tk 24.97 crore agri-equipment loans outstanding with members of the societies. The rate of recovery is 45 per cent and 8 per cent respectively.

Some 150 staffers of the cooperative societies are not getting their salaries for a long time, the sources said.

Arsenic contaminated tubewell waters causing health hazards

FENI, Dec 26: The people have been facing health hazards due to intake of arsenic contaminated tubewell waters as the quantum of arsenic has been found beyond the normal limit here, reports UNB.

At least five thanas have been identified as arsenic contaminated in the district. Of them, Sadar and Sonagaji thanas have been identified as the worst affected ones.

The extent of arsenic content has been recorded at 0.10 per cent in Sadar and Sonagaji thanas and 0.05 per cent in other three thanas against its normal limit of 0.01 per cent during the last January.

It was found in a sample test of waters of different tubewells in all unions and pourashava areas of the district coordinated by the Public Health and Engineering Department and a foreign expert team with the cooperation of ICDDR in Bangladesh.

District hospital and thana health complex sources said a number of arsenic affected patients received outdoor treatment with primary symptoms but no one has so far been admitted.

The local people alleged that there is no expert in the district to identify the arsenic contamination.

Moreover, the district Health Department has no any general list of the number of arsenic affected people in the district.

Local people urged the authority concerned to seal the arsenic contaminated tubewells after necessary test for the interest of public health.

Housewife commits suicide

JHALAKATI, Dec 26: A middle-aged housewife allegedly committed suicide by hanging herself from a tree at a village in Bhairabpasha union this morning, reports APB.

The body of Manjura Begum, 40, mother of four children, was found hanging from a mango tree adjacent to her house, family sources said.

Police quoted her relatives as saying that Manjura, wife of a day-labourer, had been behaving abnormally for quite some time.

Contaminated food leaves 63 paralysed in Nepal

KATHMANDU, Dec 26: At least 63 people were left paralysed after consuming contaminated food in the southwestern town of Nepalgunj, reports said today, says AFP.

The number of paralysis victims in the past several days in two neighbouring Tharu villages have been increasing as reports of more cases continue to pour in here," The Kathmandu Post said.

Health officials said a team of doctors and paramedics was sent to the affected villages on Saturday.

"So far no definite cause of the mysterious illness has been found, but doctors suspect the victims consumed adulterated food, probably contaminated oil," the health officials said.

25 hurt as rival bus owners group clash in Satkhira

SATKHIRA, Dec 26: Rival groups of the bus owners association engaged in a series of clashes in the town today violating Section 144 for domination over the bus stand, reports UNB.

The clashes continuing for about six hours to 3 pm left at least 25 people injured including five policemen.

The administration had imposed Section 144 in the town from 10 am to 5 pm today in view of calling rally by the rival groups at the same time same venue this afternoon.

Defying the restriction on assembly and gathering of crowd, the groups led by association president Abdur Rouf and general secretary Abdus Sobhan took to the streets and engaged in sporadic clashes.

Additional Police Super Habibur Rahman and four other police men were injured during the clashes when both sides used lethal weapons and bricks, used missiles said.

The feuding groups ransacked and set on fire to some 25 shops.

Commentary

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'chicken' you need in your cage before the mayoral election. What kind of politics, and what kind of politicians!

Our second question is, how could the Prime Minister allow himself to be associated with a person of such background, and with an event of this nature. Speculations are rife that Khaleque was promised a deputy ministership pending the yet-to-be-created post of a deputy mayor. When after the ceremonial joining the PM refused to confirm this, he decided to 'return' to the BNP's fold. Obviously none of this can be confirmed. But it is logical to assume that a person of Khaleque's political record could have had a change of heart out of any altruistic, ideological or loyalty factor. There must have been some promise. Given the fact that AL had already used ministerial positions as allurements in two previous cases how can we believe that it did not try the same trick in this instance?

We would like to clearly state that the PM has insulted himself and brought shame to her office by this action. If she did it at somebody else's advice, then he or she is definitely NOT her friend. But more likely it is her own decision, in which case we hope this acts as a warning for her that dishonesty can NEVER be a better policy than honesty. Please do not reduce to ashes whatever little of political ethics is still left in this country. Awami League does not need riff-raffs, nor does BNP. There are hundreds and thousands who work for you selflessly, and there are millions who support you. You insult both these groups when you take types like Khaleque under your wings.

Our third point relates to the DGFI. Khaleque claimed that it was DGFI men who had been in touch with him for months, and finally arranged his meeting with the PM on Thursday. The DGFI has denied any involvement. Without going into a debate as to who is telling the truth, we simply suggest to this intelligence body to find out how many people would believe its denial. Very few indeed. Why should it be so? Why should this vital part of our defence set-up suffer such a lack of credibility and low public esteem? Simply because of the way it was used in the past. It is a well-known fact that the DGFI was used by General Zia and General Ershad for political purposes. Such uses were also alleged during the tenure of Khaleda Zia. We know it from retired army high-ups and from people who either ran this body or were very close to running it. More than anybody else, the AL leaders know it. Why, then, should they now repeat the very aberration of which they had been continuous victims for so long? We had hoped that its use in politics would cease with the coming of democratic governments. It appears, unfortunately, that it has not. It is widely believed that every government uses DGFI for its own political ends. It is for this reason that when DGFI issues a denial today, it is received with widespread scepticism among the public.

We call upon the government to stop using the army intelligence for political ends. Unaccounted for funds, allegedly coming from DGFI sources, were used in the past to set up political parties and woo politicians to join these cannonment-born parties. It is surmised that use of such funds has now stopped. It is extremely important that all other uses of DGFI also be stopped, just as much for a healthy democracy as for a healthy defence forces intelligence service.



Filthy water overflowing from sewerage line submerged the Central Road in the city's Dhanmondi area, causing inconvenience to the passers-by. - Star photo

Two children die of diarrhoea in Natore

NATORE, Dec 26: At least two children died of diarrhoea and around 2000 people were attacked with the disease in Gurudaspur thana in the district in the last fifteen days, official sources said, reports APB.

The two children are Masuma and Fulmila of Beraganpur village. They died on December 16 last.

More than 100 diarrhoea patients from Nazirpur, Brikasho, Dudhgari, Beradanga, Roypur, Daulatpur, Biaghata, Gupinathpur, Jumaingar, Kumarkhali, Jhaupara Ubaria, Shikarpura, Shidhuli, Kachhikata, Narbari, Anandanagar and Palpara Patpara villages are now under treatment at thana health complexes.

Wheat cultivation target may not be achieved

MADARIPUR, Dec 26: The target of wheat cultivation in the district this year may not be achieved due to crisis of seeds, according to Agricultural Extension Department officials, reports APB.

The target was fixed at 6,764 hectares of land and at least 338 tonnes of seeds are needed for this. But BADC has supplied only 119 tons so far, which is less than 50 per cent of the demand.

Out of this quantity, 99 tons have been distributed among small and marginal farmers under the Agricultural Rehabilitation Programme. The rest was distributed among bigger and medium farmers.

Patients' sufferings mount for want of drugs

BHERAMARA, Dec 26: Most of the patients who come to the Bheramara Thana Health Complex for treatment have to return only with prescriptions because drugs and other facilities are seldom available there, patients alleged, reports APB.

Sources say at least 400 patients come to the health complex every day from distant places.

Patients complained that they have to buy their own medicines, plasters and bandage from the market at exorbitant prices. The lone ambulance of the health complex remains out of order most of the time.

Posts of surgical consultant, gynecologist, anaesthetist and child specialist have been lying vacant for years.

Workshop on eradication of leprosy

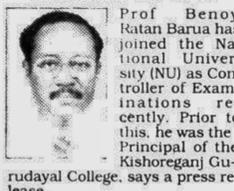
COMILLA, Dec 26: A day-long workshop on eradication of leprosy was held at the auditorium of Civil Surgeon's office here on Monday, reports UNB.

Health Director of Chittagong Division Dr Abdul Matin Bhuiyan was present as chief guest in the workshop with Civil Surgeon Dr Mokhesur Rahman in the chair.

All the civil surgeons and health officers of both the divisions of Chittagong and Sylhet took part in the workshop.

Among others, WHO Consultant Dr Lutfur Rahman, Deputy Director Dr Belayet Hossain, Assistant Director of Leprosy Department Dr Jalaluddin Ahmed addressed the occasion.

Prof Barua new Controller of Exams of NU



Prof Ratan Barua has joined the National University (NU) as Controller of Examinations recently. Prior to this, he was the Principal of the Kishoreganj Gurukul College, says a press release.

Prof Barua did his Masters in Accountancy in 1954 from the Dhaka University, in 1967 he joined the Carmichael Government College as lecturer and later continued to work as lecturer and Associate Professor in the Chittagong Government Commerce College and Comilla Victoria College.

He was also a Deputy Director in the Inspection and Audit Directorate of the Ministry of Education.

Prof Barua is the third son of late Munindra Lal Barua of village Satbaria under Chandanish Thana of Chittagong district.



Obituary

AMM Tabarak Hussain, former EPCS and former Secretary General of Red Crescent Society, died in the city on December 25, says a press release.

Born in 1917, Tabarak Hussain did his Masters in Economics from Presidency College, Calcutta in 1940 and joined the Bengal Civil Service in 1941. In 1945-46, Hussain was posted at Bakura, West Bengal as Assistant District Controller of Food on deputation from Bengal Civil Service. He also served as Director, University Grants Commission.

Eldest brother of HT Imam, former Cabinet Secretary, gov. of Bangladesh at Mujibnagar, Hussain left behind his wife, one daughter and four sons. His son H. Wahed Imam CPA is the Finance Director of Rhone Poulenc Rorer Bangladesh and Fisons Bangladesh Limited.

He will be buried at the Banani graveyard after Zohr prayers and second namaz-e-Janaza at Banani today.

Friends, relatives and admirers have been requested to attend the namaz-e-Janaza and pray for the eternal peace of the departed soul.

His qulqhwani will be held at House 225, Road 22 (old), Dhanmondi after Asr prayers on December 29.

Christmas Eve violence, accidents leave 143 dead in Colombia

BOGOTA, Dec 26: At least 143 people died and 500 were injured in violence and accidents in Colombia on Christmas Eve, police said, reports AFP.

The majority, 83, were killed in street brawls involving guns, 40 people died in road accidents and another 20 in other circumstances.

The most violent areas were Bogota, Cali in the southeast of the country and Medellin in the northeast. Bogota Police Chief General Argemiro Serna said.

In Cali, a young girl was killed at midnight by two men on a motorcycle who were trying to steal her Christmas present.

Another young girl in the coastal city of Cartagena died when her Christmas tree caught fire.

Dozens of adults and children suffered burns from fireworks, in spite of a government campaign highlighting the dangers.

Meanwhile, a skirmish between Marxist guerrillas of the National Liberation Army (ELN) and soldiers in the north-east of the country on Friday left one woman guerrilla dead and two soldiers injured.

AP adds from Hanoi: Christmas Eve traffic accidents caused a flood of 203 injuries, including five fatalities, to Ho Chi Minh City's largest hospital, the Youth newspaper reported Saturday.

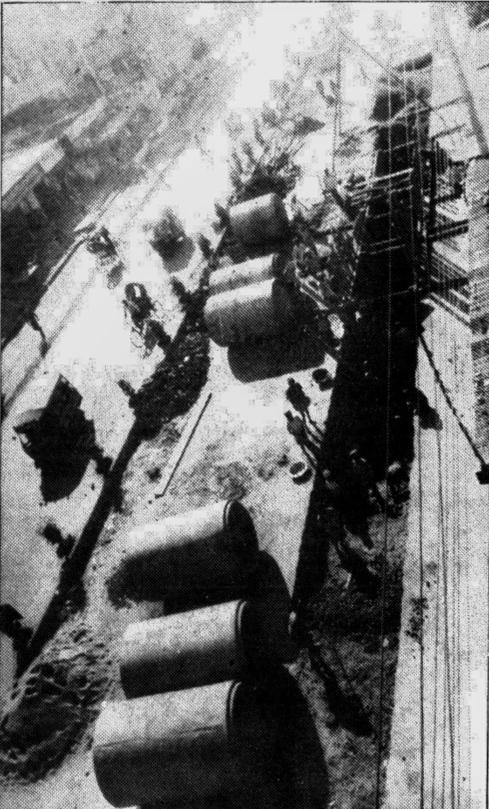
Cho Ray hospital officials said 163 of the cases involved head injuries.

All of the city's traffic police had to be deployed to clear traffic jams and disperse groups of youths gathering for illegal street races late at night. They made 74 arrests.

Although the night was quieter in Hanoi than last Christmas Eve, about 300 motorbikes were seen racing around several main streets in the capital, the paper reported.

While communist Vietnam is an officially atheistic society, celebrations of Christmas have steadily increased over the years.

About 95 per cent of Vietnam's traffic is on two wheels - either low-powered motorbikes or bicycles. Ho Chi Minh City, the former Saigon, has an estimated 1 million motorbikes among its population of 4 million.



Half the road remains blocked for a long time as sewerage pipe installation work is going on, causing trouble for the vehicles using this Bishwa Road in Maniknagar area of the city. - Star photo



Slum dwellers who lost everything in a fire at Kamalapur recently waiting in a long queue for relief in front of Kamalapur Railway School yesterday. - Star photo