

Sadipur Bridge opens Saturday

From Iqbal Siddiquee

SYLHET, May 31: At last, the Sadipur Bridge is going to be opened for vehicular traffic. The bridge is scheduled to be opened on Saturday (June 3), said an official. The Prime Minister is scheduled to open it ceremonially.

Though the bridge was scheduled to be completed by December 1996, it had been delayed by three and a half years, causing an increase in the total expenditure by four times. Originally, the expenditure was set at Taka 4 crore 60 lakh for the 112-metre long and 10-metre wide bridge. At last, it stood at over Taka 16 crore, said an official.

Sadipur bridge will be the first 'Quarter Half bridge' in the country. The mid-span of the bridge was brought from abroad under the 'Bridge Improvement and Maintenance Project-II' (BIM).

The official further informed that, the schedule was changed several times. The length was also increased to 162.12 metres from 112 metres, and with passing of time and other reasons compelled to raise the expenditure, he added.

Construction works on Sadipur bridge on Dhaka-Sylhet Highway was completed about three months ago, but it remained unused as the authority failed to open the bridge which plays a vital role in the road communication network of greater Sylhet region with rest of the country.

Before completion of the works, it was a great cause of misery for the people of the region. In 1983, a pontoon bridge was first installed at Sadipur,



Newly built Sadipur Bridge

— Star photo

providing a one-way traffic. During the monsoon, the bridge becomes risky in the face gushing waters. Almost every year, the bridge washed away or drifted away totally disrupting the traffic. Even sometimes, the bridge was overflown by flood waters due to the heavy onrush of waters from the upper stream.

Suspension of communication became a regular phenomenon almost every year. Even, such incidents took several times in a year. The communication remained sus-

pending for over a month at a stretch after July 28 of 1998 when all the five spans of the pontoon bridge were drifted away by the gushing waters.

A new floating bridge was installed there at a cost of Taka 30 lakh after a month, where as, the original bridge, was installed in 1983 at the cost of only Taka 5 lakh.

Communications through the bridge remained suspended for over 500 hours due to faults on parts of the bridge and faults of different vehicles on the bridge till August 30 in 1999.

Vehicles went out of order 35 times during the period.

People have to suffer a lot whenever, some minor problem or faults take place on the bridge as the one way traffic has to be kept suspended for hours. The pontoon bridge is of 480 feet length and of 11 feet width.

Finally works on the main bridge had been completed three months ago. Unwanted delay was caused by all the concerned quarters. However, the 541 feet by 33 feet bridge has 110 feet retaining wall, 35 feet wing wall, 285 feet drop wall and 600 guard points.

Water level in rivers rising in Kushtia

From Our Correspondent

KUSHTIA, May 31: With the advent of monsoon water level of the Padma and the Goral rivers is rising, inundating low-lying areas of Daulatpur, Bheramara and Kumarkhali upazilas.

Growing rise in water level is also causing erosion along the banks of the rivers. Residents in many areas are shifting their houses to other places.

The rivers have devoured a large number of dwelling houses, offices, educational institutions, business establishments and vast tract of arable land in recent years. At least 20 thousand families were also rendered homeless during the period.

Once the beds of the Padma and the Goral were deep and it could carry enough water. But due to heavy siltation caused by the low flow of water from the upper reaches the normal depth has decreased and river courses have changed threatening the existence of Kumarkhali, Bheramara and Daulatpur upazilas.

The surging current of the rivers directly hits the banks almost round the year. The erosion takes alarming turn during the rainy season.

In Kumarkhali, the Goral has devoured a vast tract of land including part of Poura Bazaar, Old MN High School and Kumarkhali Degree College over the years, besides threatening a large number of handloom factories and other establishments.

During Pakistan period, two dams were constructed to check erosion by the Goral to protect Kumarkhali, but due to the faulty selection of the site these

two dams did not work properly.

The erosion also affected the main canal of Ganges-Kobadakh Irrigation Project at Chapra, seven miles off the town. The authorities spend a huge amount of money every year to save the main canal of the GK project.

The erosion by the river Padma has devoured 19 villages in eight unions of Daulatpur upazila over the years. The affected unions are Adabaria, Prapur, Boalia, Aria, Philipnagar, Ramkrishnapur, Maricha and Chilmari.

The erosion has also affected a portion of the Raita Mohiskundi Flood Protection Embankment. The 12-long dam was constructed in 1972.

Sirajganj DIARY

Misappropriation of wheat: Inquiry demanded

SIRAJGANJ, May 31: Local people in Raiganj upazila have demanded immediate inquiry into an allegation of misappropriation of wheat sanctioned under a food for work project.

Eight metric tons of wheat was sanctioned for a road development work. Only 25 per cent work of the project was completed, although all the allocated wheat was spent.

Local people alleged that Aleya Begum, the project chairperson, is responsible for the misappropriation.

Musclemen attack shoal area farmers

Sugarcane and jute on a land of shoal area in the River Jamuna have taken away illegally on the plea of road construction.

The incident happened before the presence of police. Musclemen led by the project chairman kidnapped farmer Abdus Salam. The villagers recovered Salam two hours after his kidnap.

Seventy-five per cent area of the shoal area have been devoured by the Jamuna. By cultivating the rest 25 per cent area, the farmers earn their living. 15 M tone wheat has been sanctioned to construct a road from Kashiata Taher Master Bari to Bhadra Shimul Kheaghat of Gabsara union shoal area under Bhupur Upazila in recent time. Almost all parts of land under the project area is cultivable. About 50 families sent a petition to Bhupur Upazila Nirbahi Officer not to materialise the project a few days ago.

They argued that there had been another road up to Kheaghat within 150 yards. But the authorities did not meet their demand and made local ward member Kamala Begum its project chairman. Recently musclemen led by Kamala Begum kidnapped farmer Salam and cut away illegally the crops of land belonging to Salam. Most villagers already fled the villages.

Qaumi Jute Mills may close down

Sirajganj Electric Supply Authority served notice to Raipur Qaumi Jute Mills authority to repay five core taka outstanding electric bills within 10 days, in default the electric supply authority will disconnect the line and will take legal action against the mill authority.

Electric supply office sources said DGM of the mill have not cleared the monthly dues amounting to Tk 15 lac for the last three years. The electricity authority is served several notice to clear the outstanding bill earlier. But the mill authorities did not pay heed to the notice. When contacted the Mills Authorities admitted the fact. If the lines of the mills are disconnected, the Mill will be shut down and 5,000 employees and labourers will be jobless.

BCL intra-party clash

At least 10 people were injured, one seriously in a clash between ruling party backed student wing BCL workers at Kaziur thana area recently. Police and witnesses said supporters of BCL, newly elected VP of Monsur Ali Government College and the supporters of defeated VP candidate clashed injuring 10 people recently.

Scarcity of ARV

Scarcity of AR vaccine is prevailing here.

As a result, the affected victims bitten by dogs are facing serious problems.

Town dwellers have complained the number dogs bitten victims is increasing alarmingly but the local municipality authority are not taking the matter seriously.

News snaps

Pilot project

COMILLA, May 31: Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Abdul Matin Khasru on Tuesday said improvement in mothers' nutritional status was essential of build up effective manpower, reports BSS.

The minister said while inaugurating a pilot project on Essential Health Services in partnership of the Public and Private Sectors at Brahmanpara thana here. Dr John Lee, Joint Secretary of the Health and Family Welfare Ministry Sheikh Shafi Ahmed and Dr Moazzam Haque addressed the function, among others. The law minister, said the cause of malnutrition was not only poverty but also lack of consciousness.

Execution of verdict demanded

NABABGANJ, May 31: Commerce Minister Mohammad Abdul Jalil said on Tuesday that the execution of the verdict of the Bangabandhu Murder Trial can pave the way for establishing rule of law in the country, reports BSS.

He was speaking as the chief guest at a function which was organised to declare Dailimpur as an ideal village. He also distributed possession deeds among the distressed people under the government's khas land distribution programme. Criticising the four-party opposition alliance, Jalil said it was designed to protect the killers of the Bangabandhu, disturb tranquillity and halt the pace of development and progress.



Artistes of Brahmaputra Sangskritik Gosthi, a cultural organisation in Mymensingh town, rendering Nazrul songs on May 26, second day of the three-day Nazrul Joyanti programme at Darirampur in Trishal upazila of Mymensingh district.

— Star photo

Three alleged dacoits held

JHENIDAH, May 31: Kaliganj Thana Police arrested three alleged dacoits at Naldanga under Kaliganj upazila and recovered from them a gun, cartridges and a sword on Saturday last, reports BSS.

According to police sources, acting on a tip-off, Kaliganj Thana Police raided Naldanga area when the dacoits were taking preparation to commit dacoity. Police recovered one gun, cartridges and sword. The arrested persons are identified as Shajahan, Sukumar and Alim, were seriously injured when local people had beaten up them. They were admitted to local hospital for treatment.

Nor'wester kills man

GOPALGANJ, May 31: A man was killed and 20 people were injured during a nor'wester in five upazilas on Sunday, reports UNB.

The man whose name could not be known was killed in a lightning at Sadullah village during the storm. In another incident, goods worth about Tk 2 lakh were gutted in a fire at a shop in Jungi Bazar. The fire originated from a streak of lightning during the nor'wester that also toppled a large number of trees and damaged thatched houses in Rashidpur, Kotalipara and Uthitipara areas.

A noble venture

THAKURGAON, May 31: Thakurgaon district jail authority has started a noble venture by providing light of education to 1,200 inmates since the last two years, reports UNB.

Jailer Shafiqul Islam Khan undertook the noble step in 1998, which promptly got support from the district administration and local NGOs. RDRS, a non-government organization, provides educational equipment including books, papers, pencils and chalks in the jail. At present education is compulsory for all inmates. The inmates are upgraded to higher classes amid examination process. Shafiqul Islam Khan beamed with satisfaction said, "it is great pleasure for me that no inmates in the jail need to give thumb impression while leaving the jail." He said he becomes delighted when he sees some prisoners read newspapers. He hoped the initiative would help reduce crimes from the society.

Exam by lighting candles!

SHARIATPUR, May 31: Examinees under Madrasa Education Board had to appear their History examination by lighting candles on Monday morning due to power disruption and inclement weather, reports UNB.

The candidates in Sadar, Damudya and Bhederganj upazila Alim and Fazil examination centres were forced to use candle to write their answer scripts. A severe storm lashed the district on Monday disrupting telephone and power lines from 7 am to 3 pm.



A Netrakona blacksmith carrying on his trade facing hardship. Many other blacksmiths are also in misery.

— Star photo

'Safe Motherhood Day' observed

FARIDPUR, May 31: A discussion meeting, organized by Family Planning Department in observance of 'Safe Motherhood Day', was held on May 28 in the conference room of the Deputy Commissioner, reports BSS.

Speakers, in the meeting, discussed the various problems relating to maternity in our country. They stressed the need for trained midwives and institutional services rather than the services of Traditional Birth Attendant (TBA) that may cause increase of maternal mortality rate which is highest in our country. Among others, Prof M Shahjahan, Principal of Government Sarada Sundary Mahilla College, Dr Abul Khair Mia, Deputy Civil Surgeon, Dr Jalaluddin Ahmed, Sadar Thana Health Administrator, Dr Sohel Ali, Assistant Director of Family Planning took part in the discussion. It was presided over by Dr Matlur Rahman, Civil Surgeon of Faridpur while M Atiqul Islam Chowdhury, DC of Faridpur was the chief guest.

Man killed in road mishap

MANIKGANJ, May 31: A man was killed and 13 people were injured in separate traffic mishaps at Barbaria bus stand on Dhaka-Aricha highway on Sunday, reports UNB.

Police said a 38-year-old unidentified passer by was crushed under the wheels of a running minibus while he along with two others was crossing the road. The two other men, who also suffered injuries in the incident, were admitted to Dharmal Health Complex. While fleeing the scene, the killer bus hit another stationary minibus at the bus stand, leaving 11 passengers injured.

Charkhali bus plunge: A tragedy which has no consolation



The ill-fated passenger bus which was coming from Bhandaria and heading towards Pirojpur fell into the Kacha river from the ferry due to brake failure at Charkhali ferryghat under Bhandaria thana of Pirojpur district on Saturday. The tragedy left at least 30 passengers dead. Of them, 16 dead bodies were recovered till Monday while others remained still untraced. On Sunday BIWTA rescue vessel 'Hamza' salvaged the sunken bus from about one hundred feet deep riverbed. Many people are still searching their kith and kins and nearest relatives by boats and trawlers. They remained still untraced. Advocate Naosher, husband of a college teacher Suraiya Azad, 23, who was killed in the accident alleged that the unchecked motor vehicle which had no valid fitness certificates caused the disaster. Their three-year-old youngest son Sejan was playing when his mother's dead body was cremated at the graveyard as he could not understand till then that his beloved mother had left him forever. Local BNP leader and a former MP Gazi Nuruzzaman also alleged that the regular plying of unfit motor vehicles and negligence of the ferry staffers are the reasons of the accident. Photo shows: 1. Near ones and relatives waiting for untraced dear ones. 2. Five unidentified dead bodies lying on the ferry before shifting to the hospital morgue. 3. Salvaged bus being carried towards the ferry. — Star photo by Aroop Talukdar

Chunati sanctuary limping with problems

CHITTAGONG, May 31: The wildlife sanctuary at Chunati, about 70 km south of here, is limping with problems on account of negligence by authorities concerned and indiscriminate felling of trees, poaching of wildlife and encroachment of land by influential people.

Sources said the sanctuary spread over 1,91,777 acres of land was on the verge of extinction as poachers indiscriminately kill deer and birds, woodcutters fell trees while influential people go on with their foul play of land grabbing.

Brickfields have also been set up alongside the sanctuary,

Phensidyl syrup factory unearthed in Barisal

From Staff Correspondent BARISAL, May 31: Police unearthed a phensidyl syrup factory on Barisal Sadar Hospital campus in the town on Monday.

Acting on a tip-off, police seized 180 bottles of syrup, 201 labels, 150 corks, 15 empty bottles, chemical for producing the syrup and an account book from the roof of nurses' dormitory and pump house of the hospital.

Many employees of the hospital are engaged in the illegal trade for a long time, police suspect.

A case was filed in this connection, but none was arrested.

using axed off trees as fuel for the furnaces, although such use is banned by law. Besides, people in forest pockets regularly cut bamboos and varieties of vegetation, as a result of which adequately grown or mature trees have become almost non-existent.

The sources said elephants that roamed in the sanctuary just a few years back, can hardly be seen now. They have left the sanctuary as they do not find enough to eat there, the sources said.

The sources said the people who grabbed land of the sanctuary, have also set up brick fields and erected buildings.

The process of establishment of Chunati wildlife sanctuary began in 1982. A meeting of government officials and lovers of nature was held at the forest rest house at Padua under Lohagara upazila in mid-May.

The then Chief Conservator of Forest Matlur Rahman, conservator of the eastern circle Raushan Ali, DFO Ali Akbar Bhuiyan, wildlife enthusiast Lutfar Rahman and representatives of the timber traders attended the meeting, which took decision to establish a wildlife sanctuary in Chunati forest. In 1986 the government issued a gazette notification facilitating the creation of the wildlife sanctuary.

And it was in 1992, the Chunati wildlife sanctuary was inaugurated by the then Forest Minister Abdullah Al Noman.

Lutfar Rahman, a resident of

Chunati village and corresponding member of the WWF, was made the honorary warden of the sanctuary, the post he held till 1995.

The sanctuary was becoming livelier with animals like deer,

Nazrul Jayanti programme ends in Mymensingh

From Our Correspondent MYMENSINGH, May 31: A three-day long programme marking the 101st birth anniversary of national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam concluded at Darirampur Nazrul Academy premises in Trishal in the district on Saturday.

The concluding session was addressed, among others, by To-fail Ahmed, Minister for Industries, Syed Ashrafur Islam, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism, and Nurul Huda, Director General of Nazrul Institute.

Md Rafiqul Islam, Deputy Commissioner of Mymensingh, presided over the function.

The programme in Trishal began on May 25. The inaugural session was attended, among others, by Amir Hossain Anni, Minister for Food, Talukdar Abdul Khaleque, State Minister for Relief and Disaster Management, and Dr Anwarul Islam, Vice Chancellor of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU).

elephants, deer and varieties of birds and reptiles, but the sanctuary could not be protected from land hungry peasants, woodcutters and timber traders for lack of security measures, Rahman said.

As the forest department could not also give proper protection the sanctuary by appointing necessary manpower, it gradually lost its exclusiveness as local people multiplied the process of encroachment. Since the forest department could not protect the sanctuary due to the lack of funds to run a proper management set up, it failed to take care of its flora and fauna also.

Now woodcutters, poachers and land grabbers enjoy easy access to the sanctuary. The Forest Department, meanwhile built some infrastructure in the sanctuary for accommodation of officers and forest guards. Rest house, residential quarters and watch towers were built few years back at a cost of Taka six lakh.

Lutfar Rahman suggested that the forest department with a competent management set up should take care of the sanctuary or its should be handed over to some private organisations interested in developing the sanctuary.

He ardently called upon the authorities concerned to look into the whole affair of Chunati wildlife sanctuary and take concrete decisions for its preservation and development without delay.

— BSS Feature