

Direct bus communication with Darjeeling demanded

PANCHAGARH, Sept 10: When the Bangladesh transit point was opened three years ago, the government was very enthusiastic. But now officials here say the transit point has contributed little to promoting bilateral trade between Nepal and Bangladesh, reports UNB.

Local people, particularly patients and students, are now demanding of the government for taking steps to introduce direct bus communication between North Bengal and Darjeeling.

It was September 1, 1997 when the commerce ministers of Bangladesh and Nepal inaugurated the transit point at Bangladesh in Tetulia upazila with much enthusiasm to bolster bilateral trade between the two countries. But the enthusiasm did not last long.

"The benefit has so far been achieved from the transit point is minimal and there is no plausible reason to believe that things will take a positive turn in the near future," said an official wishing anonymity.

He said three years have already elapsed since the inauguration of the transit point, but no step has been taken yet for its infrastructure development. The transit agreement signed between Nepal and Bangladesh seems to have been shelved.

As there is no immigration facility in the Bangladesh check-post, many Darjeeling-bound tourists now have to take up circular trips only to waste money.

Bangladesh signed a transit agreement with Nepal in 1976. So did seven SAARC countries during the SAARC summit in 1985.

The SAARC countries also signed SAPTA in 1993 agreeing to take appropriate measures to give transit facilities to each other for bolstering bilateral trade and overall economic development in the South Asian region.

As part of the agreement, a transit route between Bangladesh-Nepal from Bangladesh via Fulbari of India to Kakarbhita of Nepal was inaugurated on September 1, 1997. But it could not be made effective due to non-cooperation of the Indian

government and the absence of wider roads in Bangladesh.

Highlighting the importance of the land route, FBCCI president Abdul Awal Minto once in a letter to Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria had said some 2 million Bangladeshis visit Darjeeling while 10 million visit Nepal every year through different long routes.

He said a large number of tourists would use the Bangladesh transit point if the land route could be commissioned, sending huge revenues into the government exchequer. "It will also brighten the prospect of reopening Thakurgaon airport apart from gearing up development activities in the region."

According to local businessmen, bilateral trade with Shilliguri and Jalpaiguri would be boosted after the commissioning of the transit route in addition to accelerating industrialisation in the region.

They demanded of the government to take necessary steps to reactivate Bangladesh as a full-fledged land port.

Anti-socials are safe here

From Abdul Monayem Khan

COX'S BAZAR, Sept 10: The number of gay girls and drug addicts is increasing alarmingly throughout Cox's Bazar district causing grave concern for the guardians specially and the people in general.

According to police and local sources, the number of gay girls is increasing day by day in the Cox's Bazar town and other parts of the district, giving rise to anti-social activities. According to local people, the gay girls are found alluring men in court building area, Lal Dighi area, launch ghats, main road, motel road and in some parts of the town.

The gay girls are seen moving freely at different places in the town causing concern among the dwellers. These girls are engaged in immoral activities and spreading venereal diseases among the youths.

The gay girls mostly from poor families are found thronging near cinema halls, bus stand and road sides in search of clients.

Some gay girls said due to acute poverty and finding no other alternative to earn their livelihood they were forced to take up the shameful path.

Meanwhile, venereal diseases among the teenagers and the young people have increased in recent days with the influx of gay girls.

According to physicians, most of the venereal disease patients have got a tendency to conceal the disease as they are illiterate and consequently suffer without undergoing any treatment.

After sun down, the gay come out to the streets to look for the clients. A middle-aged woman at Lal Dighi area in the town is said to be acting as pimp. She is involved in collecting the young girls from different villages on the plea of giving good jobs and later compel them to resort to immoral activities for earning money, it is alleged.

Cox's Bazar thana police arrested about 40 gay girls and prostitutes from some residential hotels in last two months.

The guardian community expressing their grave concern said their young wards are getting spoiled due to the influence of the gays in the town.

Local elite urged the concerned authorities to check the growing menace and take immediate steps to rehabilitate the floating prostitutes and gay girls so that they can lead a decent life.

On the other hand, the number of drug addicts and liquor traders are increasing alarmingly, throughout the district. It is observed that most of the drug addicts are young and only 10 per cent of them are not the teenagers, in both the urban and rural areas.

These young men are addicted to intoxicants and drugs like liquor,

opium, morphine, heroin, tablets, locally made wine, mirta sanjibani sara and some other kinds of liquid containing alcoholic ingredients, the source informed.

It is reported that, most of the addicts visit pharmacies and medicine stores after the sunset for collecting these intoxicants on payment.

Local people have alleged that, Cox's Bazar town and other important places including the upazila headquarters and commercial points in both the rural and urban areas have turned into the open markets of the drugs.

A good number of the drug materials are allegedly smuggled from the Myanmar borders.

These are even sold at comparatively cheaper rates, informed a number of leading people of different areas. Some organised gangs are engaged in transporting all these drugs cheating eyes of the members of the law-enforcing agencies, it is alleged.

Sometimes, some members of the law-enforcing agencies are also found helping the drug traders for reasons better known to them.

Town-dwellers complained that, hemp and liquor are being openly sold in the town and in the adjoining areas with impunity. Besides the school and college-going students, drug users include rickshawpullers, bus, truck and minibus drivers and unemployed persons.

The residents alleged that the addicted persons and others connected with trading, smuggling and storing of drugs have been doing their business under the very nose of the law-enforcing agencies. At sundown drug addicts are seen assembling near different medicine shops which sell intoxicant freely.

According to a recent private survey here, anti-social activities have registered a sharp rise in the areas following increase in drug addiction. Looting, hijacking, thefts and robberies and prostitution have increased causing concern among the local people.

Gamblings are also rampant in the public places. Some organised gangs of miscreants in collaboration with some youths have been committing crimes and anti-social activities.

Women can hardly move out after sunset for fear of being attacked by the hijackers. It is alleged that the situation worsened further due to indifference of the law-enforcing agencies.

criminals can not be arrested and crimes not reported due to the intervention of a section of local influential people, police said.

Two more police stations in Sylhet town soon

SYLHET, Sept 10: In the wake of deteriorating law and order situation, the government has taken up steps to set up two more police stations in the town, reports UNB.

Official sources said the Ministry of Home Affairs has in principle approved the proposal of establishing the two police stations to be known as Shah Jalal and Shah Poran thanas.

They said 10 police camps would also be set up alongside the two new police stations to put a lid on terrorism.

A top police official said the only police station, Kotwali thana, here can hardly maintain law and order in the 54-sq km divisional town of 5 lakh people.

He said the Kotwali thana, staffed with only an OC, eight SIs, four ASIs and 25 constables, cannot even properly maintain its routine works and in case of emergency the police administration just becomes helpless.

In most cases, the police administration has to deploy reserves police for routine duties although they are supposed to work only in emergency situation. Apart from the town, the police station has to keep vigil on

the entire Sadar upazila.

Six of its constables, out of 25, remain engaged in carrying the accused to the court from the district jail while six have to perform postal duty and the remaining ones are engaged in emergency, patrol and VIP duties.

Their duties also include guarding the examination and community centers.

"The police station is understaffed, but people never try to understand our position. They rebuke us if we fail to tackle unlawful incidents like clash, murder or snatching," regretted a police official.

Inadequate staff also causes delay in disposal of cases.

Yet worse, the thana has little logistic support. It has only two vans, which are too inadequate for rapid movement of police.

The condition of traffic police is also equally grim.

The town is expanding day by day, particularly after it became a divisional town. The volume of traffic is also on the rise but its roads are not expanding accordingly. So, traffic police are now in trouble in maintaining traffic with only one OC, four SIs and 50 constables.

News snaps

Transport strike called off

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, Sept 10: The inter-district indefinite transport strike was called off on Thursday following a fruitful discussion between the members of coordination council consisting of owners and workers of buses, trucks, minibuses and auto-rickshaws and the district administration at the district collectorate building.

The meeting was chaired by the Deputy Commissioner of Sirajganj. The transport strike was called off following the district administration's assurance given to the coordination council members regarding immediate steps in stopping plying of shallow engine driven vehicles locally called 'Vutvuti' in all the routes of the district. The coordination council resorted to wildcat strike from Tuesday night demanding stoppage of plying of 'Vutvuti' immediately. Normal life was paralysed following the strike. One police constable and 10 others were injured in a clash between police and workers at 8 am on Wednesday at the bazaar station intersection point. Seriously injured constable Jahidul and workers Firoz and Shah Alam were undergoing treatment at the local hospital till filling of the report on Thursday. Police seized eight 'Vutvutis' from Fakiratala on Sirajganj-Kazipur Road. No vehicles plied along any route throughout the district and transport workers brought out big processions during the strike period.

Gopalpur Municipality poll Sept 26

NATORE, Sept 10: A total of 56 candidates are vying for one chairman post and nine ward commissioners and three female ward commissioners in the election to the newly formed Gopalpur Municipality, reports UNB.

The first ever election to the municipality is scheduled for Sept 26. Five candidates, including a female, have been in the race for the post of chairman while 39 for nine ward commissioners and 12 women for the three posts reserved for women. Three of the chairman candidates belong to ruling Awami League one to BNP and the remaining one is an independent candidate.

Seminar on adult edn

COMILLA, Sept 10: A seminar on adult education was held here on the occasion of Adult Education Week on Tuesday, reports UNB.

UNO of Brahmanpara upazila presented the keynote paper in the seminar. A large number of teachers, newsmen, government officials and NGO workers took part in the seminar.

Former ADC (rev) sued

KISHOREGANJ, Sept 10: A former ADC (revenue) of the district and two people have been sued for irregularities in leasing out a water body, reports UNB.

Bureau of Anti-corruption filed the case against former ADC (revenue) Mohammad Abdur Rouf and Helal Chowdhury and Baset Chowdhury. According to the case filed on Aug 28, the former ADC, who was member secretary of the tender committee of Laukura Gollasala Bagna Beel, technically canceled the first tender depriving the highest bidder. The water body was later leased out at Tk 29,000 to highest bidder of the second tender Helal Chowdhury without taking the required 50 per cent advance. Even he did not take the rest 50 per cent cash within a week as required by rule. After two months, the beel was fraudulently leased out to Baset Chowdhury at a nominal rate.

Fratricide

BOGRA, Sept 10: Abdur Razzak, 30, of village Palpara under Dupchanchia upazila was killed by his elder brother Mizanur Rahman, reports BSS.

While Abdur Razzak was planting a tree at the extreme end of his homestead his elder brother resisted and locked in an altercation. At one stage Mizanur Rahman hit Razzak with a stick, his wife Shahera and daughter Hanna also beat him. Razzak died on the spot, according to family sources. Police rushed to the spot and arrested Mizanur Rahman from his house. A murder case has been registered with Dupchanchia Police Station.



President of Ladies Club of Bangladesh Agriculture University (BAU) Rowshan Ara Chowdhury, wife of Vice-Chancellor Prof Md Anwarul Islam, delivering her speech recently at the installation ceremony of the newly elected office-bearers of BAU Ladies Club at the university.

Separate incidents kill 5

MADARIPUR, Sept 10: Five people, including two kids, were killed in separate incidents in the district during the last week, reports UNB.

Police said Ataur Rahman, 8, of Chargobindapur village in Sadar upazila, was run over by a running truck on Madaripur-Shariatpur road on Aug 28. In another incident, Achiha, 8, daughter of Dabiruddin of Kawad village in the upazila, drowned in a nearby beel as a boat capsized on Aug 26. On August 31, the body of an unidentified man was recovered from North Brahmandi village in Sadar upazila, while the body of a woman, aged about 30, was found floating in the Aralkhan River at Charkamarkandi in Shibchar upazila on Aug 27. Yet in another incident, police recovered the body of a youth from a rice godown in the town on Aug 27. The deceased was identified as Saidul Islam, 22, son of Badsha Hawlader of Kalkini upazila and helper of a flourmill adjacent to the rice godown. Separate cases were filed.

Two with forged notes held

JOYPURHAT, Sept 10: Police arrested two people along with 55 forged notes of Tk 500 denomination from Panchbibi upazila on Monday, reports UNB.

The arrested were identified as Nurul Islam, 40, and Yusuf Ali, 45. On information, police arrested Nurul Islam from Station Road in Panchbibi town with 35 fake notes and acting on his confessional statement they arrested Yusuf Ali from Dargapara village of the upazila with 20 more forged notes. A case was filed.

Unabated 'Jhum' cultivation

RANGAMATI, Sept 10: Many hills here have become vulnerable to slide due to unabated Jhum cultivation, reports UNB.

According to an estimate, some 20,000 hectares of hillside lands are brought under Jhum farming every year, causing a loss of 250 mts of soil per hectare. In 1997, at least 20 people were killed in landslides here while 12 in the first eight months of 1999. Environmentalists say that the ecosystems of 5,089 square kilometer hills of the three hill districts are being destroyed due to Jhum cultivation. They demanded of the government to take necessary steps for rehabilitation of the Jhum farmers.

Youth organisation formed

MANIKGANJ, Sept 10: A new organisation comprising the trainees of Sheikh Hasina National Youth Centre at Savar, named 'Tra End Youth Association' was formed here at Victoria Club auditorium recently, reports BSS.

A nine-member executive committee of the newly formed organisation has been formed. M Firoz Alam and Kamruddin Ahmed are selected as convenor and member secretary respectively. Other members are: Matuur Rahman, Lutfia Yeasmin, Shaiful Islam Ratan, Kamrul Hassan, Manjur Kabir, Masuda Akter and Marjina Yeasmin.

Training course

FARIDPUR, Sept 10: A daylong training course for the scouts and cub leaders of Sadar upazila concluded here on Wednesday, reports UNB.

Some 137 scouts and cub leaders attended the programme held at the Upazila Parishad auditorium. Chaired by UNO F Kamaluddin, also the president of Sadar Upazila scouts, the programme was attended, among others, by Deputy Commissioner Atiqul Islam Chowdhury.

Erosion continues unabated

120 Sirajganj villages devoured in 15 yrs

From Akhteruzzaman Bablu

SIRAJGANJ, Sept 10: Hundreds of people residing along riverbanks are being rendered homeless and landless every year as onslaught by erosions goes unabated. But, in fact, no effective measure has been taken up to find a permanent solution to the recurrent problem. According to unofficial sources, the Jamuna devoured at least 120 villages in the district in the last 15 years.

The erosion-victim people pass hard days after they are rendered homeless. "Neither the government nor the non-government organisations (NGOs) think of us," said Ayezuiddin of Gupiakhal village under Shahjapur upazila. They distribute some relief materials and conduct some rehabilitation works for the flood-hit people victims of fire, storm and other natural calamities, but they keep almost mum in case of erosion victims, he continued.

"We are really unfortunate. We can draw attention of none. Nobody feels for us," said Abdul Motin, who hails from Kawakhola in Sadar upazila, resides in a slum in Railway Colony area in Sirajganj town. Soliman Ali of Musra in Sadar upazila along with his family takes shelter on embankment. He said no body takes care of us.

The Jamuna, Korotoa, Fulzore and Boral flow through the district. The Jamuna and the Korotoa erode lands along banks throughout the year, but become very furious during the rainy season. On the other hand, the



Ichhamati, the international river, is continuously devouring lands along the Bangladesh territory in Satkhira district. As a result, Bangladesh territory is shrinking continuously. The international border was originally situated along the brickfields, which are now on the Indian territory. This is due to unabated erosion by the river.

Fulzore and Boral take toll on banks only in the rainy season.

Sadar, Kazipur, Belkuchi, Chowhall, Shajadpur and Raiganj are worst affected upazilas. However, the district administration does not have statistics regarding rehabilitation activities or the number of ero-

sion affected people.

Water Development Board (WDB) Executive Engineer Abul Hashem said the office is doing every thing possible to check erosion.

Crises of taka are spent every year to check the erosion. But the permanent solution to the prob-

lem is needed. Local people said long-term measure should be taken up to stop the menace.

The erosion victims migrate to towns in search of works. They usually pull rickshaw or work as day labourer. Some of them also engage themselves in smuggling,

Reasons behind collapse of cement factory silo-roof

CHITTAGONG, Sept 10: Faulty design and low quality of construction materials caused the collapse of silo-roof of Diamond Cement Factory at Isanagar on the south bank of the river Karnaphuli here on August 27 last, reports BSS.

An expert team comprising engineers and architects in their instant reaction told Chittagong City Corporation Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury and journalists during their visit to the cement factory on Thursday.

"There was serious fault in architectural design and quality of materials used in centering and shuttering was not capable of taking load of about 167 tons of construction materials," a member of the team and Chief Engineer of CCC Rezaul Amin Khan said.

Besides, the consultant did not supervise the construction works for full time, which was incorporated in the agreement between diamond cement factory and the consulting firm, Khan added.

Executive engineer of Public Works Department and member of the inquiry committee constituted by the district administration to probe the incident also made similar comment earlier. However, final report of the inquiry committee is yet to be submitted, an official said.

City Mayor Mohiuddin Chowdhury and members of the experts team climbed up to the first floor of the silo with a 20 feet high ladder on

which the construction materials of the 60 square feet width silo-roof along with labours collapsed killing 14 persons including two engineers and injuring 30 others.

After visiting the spot CCC mayor directed the concerned authorities to complete inquiry into the incident immediately and take punitive action against the persons responsible for the mishap.

He urged the owner of construction firm and the consultant now absconding to surrender to inquiry committee for the sake of impartial and fair probe into the incident.

The mayor also urged the inquiry committee to complete its work immediately so that construction works of the silo of the cement manufacturing company can be resumed.

CCC mayor asked the authorities of the diamond cement factory to give adequate compensation to the members of the victims' family at the shortest possible time.

Meanwhile, director of the Diamond Cement Factory Mahabub Ali refused the report published in a section of the press that construction works were undertaken without the approval of Chittagong Development Authority (CDA).

Executive director of the factory Azim Ali, other directors, local Ward Commissioners and chairman of local Union Parishad were also present on the occasion.



A joint mourning procession led by the leaders of Awami League, BNP, Jatiyo Party and freedom fighters was brought out in Sirajganj town on September 3 in memory of four persons including 3 JSD leaders who were killed in a road accident on September 1 at Jhophari on Dhaka-Bogra highway under Bogra Sadar upazila.

--Star photo