



(L) A partial view of Sadipur Bridge on Dhaka-Sylhet highway. Just before commissioning of the bridge some faults have been detected, much to the chagrin of local people. (R) A truck crosses the dilapidated pontoon bridge. This narrow bridge is also a source of traffic jam on the highway.

'New' bridge awaits repair

From Iqbal Siddiquee

SYLHET, Sept 25: Despite Prime Minister's directives, the recently completed Sadipur Bridge on the Dhaka-Sylhet highway is yet to be repaired.

The bridge could not be opened yet for vehicular traffic, causing sufferings to passengers. However, a very few number of lighter vehicles are allowed to cross the bridge and the old pontoon bridge is being used for all other modes of transports.

Condition of the narrow and old pontoon bridge is also not satisfactory. One way traffic is being followed in the pontoon bridge, causing traffic jam on the highway. Some times, sufferings of passengers go extreme when some vehicles go out of order on the bridge.

Although the authorities announced that the bridge would be opened within few months, it now seems that there is no possibility of commissioning the bridge within the 21st century.

Pradeep Kumar Hall, the supplier of some important components of the bridge, has already informed that it is not possible to replace some faulty components before the winter. So, it would not be possible to make the bridge ready before February-March 2001, the source said.

The bridge constructed at a cost of Taka 17 crore could not be opened for vehicular traffic following the detection of some serious faults caused by faulty design and low quality steel used in the construction.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was scheduled to inaugurate formally the bridge on June 3. She reached the bridge site and addressed a big gathering near the bridge, but refused to formally open the same as she was informed of the faulty design just

on her arrival at the site. Accordingly, she asked the Roads & Highways Department officials for taking immediate measures to repair the faults.

Locals at that time demanded punitive measures against the R&H officials who were 'held responsible' for faulty construction of the bridge.

Later, a four-member team of the company from the UK also made a spot visit in July. The team also assured of replacing the truss, an important component in building bridge, the whole 120-metre truss should be replaced.

However, the company said replacing should be done in the ensuing winter season. So, the officials of the R&H officials can only hope to open the bridge for vehicular traffic in February-March, 2001.

Farewell to slums

JAMALPUR, Sept 25: Hamida Banu, 40, is now back home at village Pathalia, close to Jamalpur town, taking all her family members with smiles on their faces bidding bye to the slum life she lived for long eight years.

Her home-coming has become possible for Ghare Fera (Return to Home), an ambitious credit programme of the government, to slum people return villages.

"I am really happy with my seven-member family in my tiny house on the bank of the mighty Brahmaputra river," said Hamida looking back to the horrendous life in Dhaka's Khilgaon slum.

Driven by poverty, Hamida had to leave her village home with her crippled husband, Abdul Gafur, and kids in search for a better life but landed at the slum.

Hamida along with her 22-year-old son Rubel relentlessly fought poverty, but failed to tame it. Her son did not yield to the threat to his life from terrorists for denial to be involved in illegal trade with them.

Defeated in the fight, Hamida

heard about the government's Ghare Fera programme for rehabilitation of the rootless slum people and decided to try her luck again. She approached the Bangladesh Krishi Bank, the implementing agency of the programme, for Taka 20,000 and got the money.

Hamida bought two rickshaws, three goats and invested Taka 7,000 in her cloth trade. She is now earning on an average Taka 6,000 a month and repaying the credit. She has already repaid Taka 7,000 of the credit.

"Now I am living a better life here. I won't leave my house for a slum again," she said.

Hundreds of other slum dwellers who got the credit from BKB are Hamida are benefiting from the programme and living better life.

Anjura Begum of Dhakhan Koidula village of Jamalpur district, who also returned to her village, narrated similar story.

Since the programme was launched, over 11,000 slum people were rehabilitated till June last under the credit programme, BKB officials said.

Massive socio-economic uplift programme

BANDARBAN, Sept 25: A non-governmental organisation has undertaken a massive programme for socio-economic uplift of the farmers of the district, reports UNB.

The officials of the organisation 'Mother' said they have been imparting training to the farmers on modern farming system, supplying high yielding variety seeds and extending financial assistance to make them self-reliant.

They said some 20 farmers have achieved self-sufficiency through farming bean, lady's finger and summer tomato at Surakor and Prantik Lake in Sadar upazila this season under the guidance of the NGO.

They said steps have been taken to supervise and monitor the field level activities of the farmers.

Under its special programme, 500 families have been given financial assistance in addition to providing seeds, polythene bags

Luxury buses carrying smuggled goods

CHAPAINAWABGANJ, Sept 25: The luxury buses, in Dhaka-Chapainawabganj route, are the safe carriers of smuggled Indian goods including arms, gold and narcotics across the country, reports UNB.

Commuters alleged that the transport workers disregarding their objections pick up smugglers along with the smuggled goods halting the buses indiscriminately.

An investigation report revealed that the owner, driver, helper and ticket sellers are involved in the smuggling and using their own vehicles labeling a signboard of luxury coaches on

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had launched to programme in May last year to improve the quality of life and ease the over-crowding in the capital and other cities and towns.

The BKB so far has disbursed Taka 3,11,25,000 as loan at 10 per cent interest among 10,450 slum families. The recipients of the credit are reaping benefits and improving the quality of life through investment, the officials said.

Under the programme, the BKB provides credit to those slum dwellers who have at least a piece of land at their villages. A high-profile team headed by the managing director of the bank is overseeing the implementation of the programme.

According to sources, nearly 18,00,000 people live in shanties in Dhaka alone and it is nearly 20 per cent of the total population in the capital.

The growth of slum people during 1981-1990 period was launched, over 11,000 slum people were rehabilitated till June last under the credit programme, BKB officials said.

Sugar is sour

BANDARBAN, Sept 25: Sugar is selling at Tk 36 in the town and Tk 48-50 in remote villages of the district despite adequate allotment was given to the dealers, reports UNB.

Ten dealers appointed in the district by the state owned Bangladesh Sugar & Food Corporation were allotted 165 metric tons of sugar during the last three months.

Each of the dealers was allotted 6 metric tons in June, 4 tons in July and 6 tons in August. But none of the allotted sugar was brought to Bandarban, officials said.

Traders said the entire quantity was sold at Chittagong resulting in scarcity of sugar in the district. Thus, the dealers made windfall profit of Tk 10 lakh out of the allotment.

Demanding cancellation of dealership and fine to the dealers for flouting the government decision, traders in the town said sugar would have been available at Tk 31-32 kg to the consumers if the sugar was brought and sold in the district. The dealers got the

sugar at the rate of Tk 28 kg from the Corporation.

Admitting the situation the dealers said carrying sugar from Chittagong to Bandarban and selling here at the government rate is unprofitable. They sold the allotted sugar to condensed milk, sweetmeat and soft drink manufacturers in Chittagong.

Dealers were not inclined to draw the sugar from the Chittagong godowns for short weight, transport cost and many harassment and hassles in the process. They preferred to sell the allotment and take away the profit.

The Sugar & Food Corporation under its memo 3/99-2000 appointed ten sugar dealers for Bandarban district. They are M/s Hillside Enterprise, M/s Janata Trading Corporation, M/s Nurul Alam Sawdagar, M/s MM Traders, M/s Makking Traders, M/s Bandarban Agency, M/s RP Traders, M/s Matamuhuru Contraction, M/s Madhuri Enterprise and M/s Shafiqul Islam.



People cross a stream through a traditional makeshift bridge at a village in Mymensingh district. A concrete bridge is under construction at the site. But only few pillars have been erected over the last two years. Locals urge the authorities concerned to complete the construction of the bridge over the Olukali River on Dubaura-Purakandulia road in Dubaura upazila.

- Star photo

Eleven unnatural deaths

MUNSHIGANJ, Sept 25: Eleven unnatural deaths were reported in the district in the last three days, reports UNB.

Police said six people were killed and 15 others injured when a passenger bus collided head-on with a truck at Bhitikandi area of Gozaria on Chittagong highway on Wednesday.

Five of the deceased were identified as Aziz, 55, Halima, 18, Dalia, 18, Babu, 3, and Kairunnesa, 25.

On the same day, Sada Miah, 70, died on the spot when he was run over by a speeding motorcycle at Tatola bus stand in Sirajdikan upazila.

On Thursday, two twin brothers Hassan, 35, and Hossain, 35, sons of Saizuddin Bhander were

electrocuted at Baherghata village in the same upazila.

Family sources Hossain was electrocuted while he was hanging his wet clothes on a live electric wire and Hassan met the same fate when he tried to rescue his brother.

Ershad, 40, and Shimul, 30, drowned in the river Meghna in Gozaria upazila when their engine boat was dashed by a barge and capsized on Friday.

Separate cases were filed with the police.

Another report from Kishoreganj says: A youth allegedly committed suicide by taking poison at Rajendrapur village in Tarail upazila recently.

Family sources said the victim

Abu Taher, 20, son of Asiruddin, has been suffering from abdominal pain for a long time.

On the fatal day failing to bear the acute pain he allegedly killed himself, they added. A UD case was filed with the police.

Another report from Laxmipur adds: Renu Begum, 34, of Kamrath village in Ramganj upazila allegedly killed herself by hanging from a tree on Friday when her husband Abdul Hashem rebuked her on her refusal to go to the nearby literacy centre set up for the aged people.

In another incident a youth identified as Jewel, 18, of Dumuria village in the same upazila allegedly hanged himself following a family feud.

Voters rise in Sirajganj

From Our Correspondent SIRAJGANJ, Sept 25: In the new voter list, number of voters in the district increased.

In the 1995 list the number of voters was 13 lakh 8 thousand and 667. Now the number stands at 19 lakh 21 thousand and 301. A total of 5 lakh 21 thousand and 634 new voters were included in the list.

The Upazila-wise break-up of the voters in 1995 was: Kazipur 1,57,968, Sadar 2,53,358, Raiganj 1,38,328, Tarash 85,835, Shahjadpur 2,45,232, Ullapara 2,28,637, Kamerkhand 62,182, Chowdhury 72,915 and Beluchi 1,36,112.

The figure in current year increased to 21,802 in Kazipur, 3,96,998 in Sadar, 1,68,084 in Raiganj, 1,10,140 in Tarash, 3,30,325 in Shahjadpur, 21,93,954 in Ullapara, 77,812 in Kamerkhand, 1,13,270 in Chowdhury and 1,93,636 in Beluchi.

Over 30 per cent new voters were enlisted to exercise their franchise in the coming election. Official sources said some irregularities were addressed.

However, opposition 4-party alliance leaders alleged irregularities were not addressed properly.

Forest resources dwindling in Rangamati

RANGAMATI, Sept 25: Forest resources are dwindling fast as smuggling of valuable timbers from various forests of the district is on the rise, reports UNB.

There have been reports that smugglers in connivance with a section of dishonest forest officials and employees are smuggling timber from the district.

As per the forest law, forest resources cannot be taken out of any forests after the sunset. But the dishonest forest officials have made the law a farce.

Witnesses said a huge quantity of timber is being smuggled out in trucks at night through Rangamati-Chittagong, Kapta-Chittagong roads.

On information, law-enforcement seized a number of trucks in different parts of the region recently, but locals said that is not enough to put a lid on smuggling of the country's forest resources.

Death anniversary

From Our Correspondent

MOULVIBAZAR, Sept 25: A meeting to mark the 4th death anniversary of actor Salman Shah was held here recently.

Organised by Salman Shah Memorial Council, the memorial meeting was presided over by Begum Nilufar Zaman Nila Chowdhury, mother of the late actor and Jatiya Party leader. It was addressed, among others, by president of Moulvibazar district Awami League Syed Mohsin Ali, former MP and BNP leader Begum Khaleda Robbani and Principal Qureshi Khan.

News snaps

Two siblings arrested

BARGUNA, Sept 25: Police arrested two siblings for looting meat of sacrificed animals received from Saudi Arabia while being distributed at Amtoli in Sadar upazila on Friday, reports UNB.

They arrested were Bashir, 20, Kabir, 22. They snatched one gunny bag of meat while local Relief and Rehabilitation Department was distributing the same.

Body of youth recovered

MUNSHIGANJ, Sept 25: Police recently recovered a body of an unidentified young man from a canal near Harpara Bridge on Dhaka-Mawa highway, reports BSS.

According to police sources the assailants killed the young man by strangulation elsewhere before dumping the body into the canal. The body was sent to Narayanganj Hospital morgue for autopsy. A case was filed with Sreenagar police station.

Alleged terrorist held

BARISHAL, Sept 25: An alleged terrorist of the town was arrested from BM School on Wednesday, reports UNB.

Being tipped off by locals, police raided the school and caught Tippob at about 1pm. He was wanted by police in a number of cases, including that of extortion and terrorism.

Discussion on Rabidasji Maharaj

A bi-annual discussion on Guru Rabidasji Maharaj, the religious leader of Rabidas community, was held recently at Jorkaran in Comilla district on the occasion of Madhupurnima recently, says a press release.

The congregation organised by Comilla Guru Rabidas (Dham) Mission was presided over by Khir Mohan Rabidas Mahanta and attended, among others, by Local UP chairman Hashmatullah and Master Kanailal Rabidas Mahanta. Director General of Bangladesh Guru Rabidas (Dham) Mission, Guru Rabidasji Maharaj was a propagator of equality of all men and women in a society ridden by caste system. On the occasion of a Madhupurnima, he first declared his mission for emancipation of the lower castes from the oppression of the upper castes in Hindu society.



Master Kanailal Rabidas Mahanta, Director General of Bangladesh Guru Rabidas (Dham) Mission, addressing a discussion on Guru Rabidasji Maharaj, the religious leader of Rabidas community, recently at Jorkaran in Comilla on the occasion of Madhupurnima.



Mujib Rahman Khan, general manager of Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB), Sylhet division, addressing the conference of managers and field officers of BKB's Sunamganj region at Sunamganj recently. Haran Banarjee, regional manager of Sunamganj, MG Mohiuddin Ahmed, deputy general manager, and Khurshed Ali, divisional audit officer (in-charge) are also seen in the picture.

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