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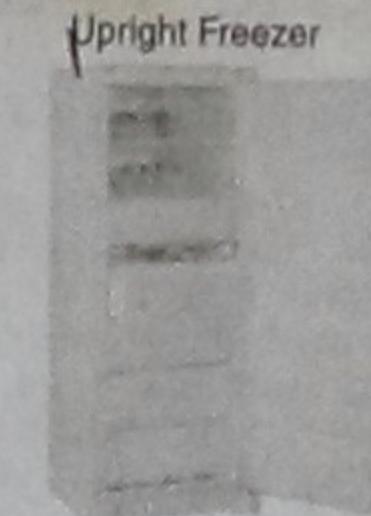
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## Down to Earth

## Public Woes at City Post Offices

By A S M Nurunnabi

Postal service like other mediums of communication has vastly expanded as part of the current revolution in information technology. Some of the factors contributing to it include spread of education, greater eagerness of the people to maintain contacts at home and abroad due to steady growth of private and public businesses, and increasing number of Bangladeshis living abroad. Our ordinary people remain satisfied if adequate infrastructural and manpower facilities are provided for taking care of their mails and expeditious disposal of other related functions. However, the standard and extent of postal services offered have failed to keep pace with its growth.

Nowadays, people take to franking facility as a measure against pilferage of postage stamps from their mails. This essential facility is available at most of the city post offices. At the GPO, such facilities are available at several counters. Yet during rush period, customers' suffering is aggravated as they are sometimes required to form two queues - one for weighing the letters/packets and the other for franking them. The whole procedure is extremely exasperating if the articles also require registration. The same practice is also

followed in other city post offices where franking facility is available. Even where franking is not available, the registration formalities for mails using postage stamps, the writing of receipts for registration takes sometime for the clerk which results in the lengthening of queues at the registration counter. Moreover, such registration is normally done only within fixed hours.

Lately there has been a discernible lack of faith in postal workers regarding delivery of mails to their proper addresses, giving rise to proliferation of courier services in many areas of the city under private management. The courier service system, by and large, ensures proper delivery of mails with their addresses at a little extra cost. The popularity of this private service is steadily growing as against postal service. The extension of this service to overseas destinations has been undertaken by a network of some other enterprises.

Departmental sources mention certain operational aspects that affect quick delivery of mails. First, some people forget to mention the postal code when addressing their letters resulting in delay in sorting and transmission to the appropriate zone for delivery. Secondly, in many of the high-rise buildings

which have at present greatly increased in number in the city, it poses a tremendous challenge to the postmen to deliver mails to different floors. In such situations, installation of a central mail box downstairs is advised, which is seldom followed.

With the rapid growth of the city, the needs of the city-dwellers for the services of the Postal Department are steadily increasing. The Department is said to be aware of the need for establishment/relocation of post offices at important growth centres that have lately come up in the city. In pre-independence days, mail boxes were located at important roadside points and these mail boxes were cleared at specific hours by postal workers employed specially for the purpose. Such mail boxes are conspicuous by their absence nowadays except as some isolated spots, that, many believe, are not cleared regularly as in the past.

The above-noted deficiencies in the operation of the Department are the reasons for many miseries suffered by the general public. The problems of this labour-oriented service Department merit attention of the authorities concerned on a priority basis.

## Acid thrown on mother, son in Chandpur

By Staff Correspondent

A mother and her minor son suffered burn injuries when a miscreant threw acid on them at their house in village Haripur under Haziganj thana in Chandpur on Wednesday, said sources at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday.

The victims are Jahanara Begum, 28, and Iman Ali, 5.

Kalu Matabbar, a union parishad member threw acid through a window while we were sleeping," Jahanara said, adding the incident took place in the early hours of Wednesday.

Earlier, Kalu had proposed sex with Jahanara, but she refused it. When the two were sleeping at that time Kalu threw acid on them through a window of their house.

Jahanara received injuries in her face while Iman allover his body. They were sent to thana complex and later shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

## Clash over cricket match in Sirajganj: 45 hurt, 5 houses torched

SIRAJGANJ, Sept 29: At least 45 people, including two UP members and three women, were injured as residents of two villages clashed over a cricket match at Khaga in sadar upazila today, reports UNB.

A dozen houses were ransacked and five set on fire during the clash between villagers of Khaga and Bhurburia.

Witnesses said the clash erupted following a decision of the umpire against a player. The supporters of Khaga became agitated and attacked the people and players of Bhurburia, they said.

The two sides used lethal weapons during the clash. Five houses were set ablaze - four at Bhurburia and one at Khaga during the clash.

Of the injured, 23 were admitted to Sirajganj General Hospital. Of them, condition of UP members Abdul Aziz and Yakub, and Abdul Barez, Rabela Khatun, Jatin and Monima Khatun were stated to be critical.

## Clarification

Dr Borhan Uddin Khan of Department of Law of Dhaka University yesterday refuted the allegation of plagiarism brought against him by his colleague Dr Farmin Islam as "totally unfounded".

He said that the publication referred to in the allegation was a draft version and was co-authored with a colleague as consultants for Centre for Development and Policy Research, a DU-based research centre.

The study titled 'Impact and Implications of Labour Laws' is an original work of the authors and contains all the references and sources consulted", Dr Borhan affirmed.

DU authorities on Thursday formed a probe body to investigate charges of plagiarism brought against Dr Borhan Uddin Khan by Dr Farmin Islam in a written complaint to the VC.

## EC will send observers during next polls

The European Commission (EC) has decided to send a 26-member election observer team to Bangladesh during the next general elections.

Talking to UNB leading MPs of EU parliament and bureaucrats at the EC Headquarters in Brussels hinted that they were keeping a close eye on the situation in South Asian nations, including Bangladesh.

"We are watching political situation and waiting to see the outcome of the upcoming general elections with much interest," said Thomas Mann, Member of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrat) in the EU Parliament.

While reshaping their trading relations with Bangladesh in a new context, the union of European nations would "like to see improved human-rights condition in the country."

"We're urging both the government and the opposition to

try to use more democratic tools to resolve their differences," said Sandro Serrato, an official at the EC Headquarters, who looks after Bangladesh affairs.

He said problems should be settled through dialogue, instead of hartal and other violent manifestations.

On May 22 this year, Bangladesh and EC signed a Cooperation Agreement in Brussels for broader interactions in political, economic, trade, environment, science and cultural sectors.

Commerce Minister Abdul Jalil and EC Commissioner Chris Patten initiated the agreement. The agreement, however, is yet to be enforced.

For proper implementation of the agreement, a joint Commission would be set up comprising senior officials from both sides. The EC proposed a meeting of the joint committee in Dhaka late January or early February. Dhaka is yet to confirm the date.

Police confirmed the death. No case was registered and none was arrested till writing of this report last night.



Residents make their way through a flooded street in south Calcutta yesterday. The capital of West Bengal has been flooded by a tidal swelling of the Hooghly river.

-AFP photo

## News Analysis

## Congress in a sticky pan

From Pallab Bhattacharya

NEW DELHI, Sept 29: The political battle between the ruling CPI (M) in West Bengal and Trinamool Congress on the issue of law and order in the state is also witnessing an intense battle of wits between India's ruling BJP and main opposition Congress led by Sonia Gandhi.

Responding to Trinamool Congress' demand for dismissal of the Left Front government in West Bengal, BJP says such an action by the federal government is possible only if Congress supports it. The BJP's contention is based on the fact the country's ruling alliance led

by it does not have the requisite majority in the upper house of Parliament which has to approve dismissal of a state government.

The Congress is caught in a sticky situation. While the party does express concern over alleged atrocities by CPI (M) against its political adversaries in West Bengal, it does not want to be seen doing anything against the Left Front which would make it (Congress) vulnerable to the charge of siding with the BJP-Trinamool, political analysts say.

Political quarters here were abuzz with speculations after a

meeting between Trinamool Congress leader Mamata Banerjee and senior Congress leader from West Bengal Pravaranjan Dasmunshi last Friday when they discussed the law and order in the state. What was noted with significance that after the meeting Dasmunshi told reporters that he personally was in favour of declaring the places, which were rocked by clashes between CPI (M) and Trinamool workers, as "disturbed areas". That is a step only the Vaipavee government can take.

The Left parties' leaders

admitted to the clash that continued for four hours.

Thirteen of the injured were admitted to the hospital. Nine of them were identified as Adam Ali, 40, Dalmi, 20, Jalal Mia, 25, Abdul Latif, 55, Shahabuddin, 25, Shamsur Mia, 25, Abdul Ali, 55, Ayub Ali, 30, and Bilal, 20.

See page 11 col 7

## 150 injured as villagers clash in Habiganj

HABIGANJ, Sept 29: At least 150 people were injured, 13 of them seriously, in a clash between two rival groups of villagers at Nizampur in sadar upazila today, reports UNB.

Witnesses said, two rival groups - one led by Siddique Ali and the other by Abdul Latif - clashed over possession of a land.

Several hundred people from seven villages, including Fakirabad, Darlapur, Chakrampur, Sukripara and Saidpur, took part in the clash that continued for four hours.

Thirteen of the injured were admitted to the hospital. Nine of them were identified as Adam Ali, 40, Dalmi, 20, Jalal Mia, 25, Abdul Latif, 55, Shahabuddin, 25, Shamsur Mia, 25, Abdul Ali, 55, Ayub Ali, 30, and Bilal, 20.

See page 11 col 7

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