

PM's pledge remains unfulfilled Banglabandha needs to be upgraded

PANCHAGARH, Dec 15: Banglabandha, a strategically important land customs (LC) station, needs to be upgraded to a full-fledged port to exploit its potentials, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, while visiting the district three years ago had committed to upgrade Banglabandha to a port. But the government has failed to come up with follow-up action to fulfill her commitment.

The LC station was at issue when Bangladesh Nepal transit route at Banglabandha in Tentulia was inaugurated on September 1, 1997.

Several ministers, including Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria, visited the spot and echoed the sentiment of the Prime Minister.

Official sources said former President Ziaur Rahman completed all preparations to set up a land port at Banglabandha after an agreement with Nepal in 1976.

The present government inaugurated the transit route on September 1, 1997 after 21 years of signing the agreement with Nepal.

After an inter-ministerial meeting, three ministries Home, Communications and Shipping had filed three reports in favour of setting up a land port and a transit route there. Local administration too filed a positive report in this regard. But these reports did not see the light.

Officials said Nepalese vehicles now have to unload goods outside

Bangladesh border, as they cannot enter Bangladesh territory in absence of an agreement on vehicle crossing.

Located on the foothill of Himalaya Mountain, Banglabandha can also be developed as an attractive tourist resort.

Officials said Bangladesh imports lentil, spare parts and remanufacture from Nepal and exports automatic battery, mango juice, orange emulsion, zinc slab and sun cap to Nepal.

Local businessman said that activities at the LC station or the transit route at Banglabandha would not gain momentum unless a transit with India could be introduced.

They said it has become essential to set up offices for the officials of BDR, police, customs, quarantine and fire brigade at Banglabandha as those were damaged in cyclone.

While visiting the LC station, no customs, police and immigration offices, were found there.

President of local Chamber of Commerce and Industries M Delwar Hossain said, "On several occasions we had demanded of the Commerce Minister and the Prime Minister to make it a full-fledged port to export goods to India, Nepal and Bhutan. But our appeals fell into the deaf ears."



The government is being deprived of a good amount of revenue due to illegal logging. Photo shows unscrupulous people destroying sissoo trees on Sirajganj-Kazipur Road in broad day light. But who cares?
--Star photo by Akhteruzzaman Bablu

Rajshahi Hardware Merchants' Assoc executives

From Our Correspondent
RAJSHAH, Dec 15: Abdullah Mamun Chowdhury, Mohammad Yusufuddin and Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Nipon have been elected president, vice president and treasurer of Bangladesh Hardware and Machinery Merchants' Association, Rajshahi unit for the tenure of 2000-2002 term.

Earlier, they were elected members of the 10-member executive committee along with Mohammad Akhteruzzaman Khokon, Obaidul Wajid Tuhin, Wasiur Rahman Dolon, Zamiul Karim, Rokanuzzaman Rakan, Chowdhury Mahmudur Rahman and Salahuddin Rana.

Besides, Abdul Aziz, Golam Mostofa, Asaduzzaman Ratan, Anisur Rahman Babu, Mahmudus Sobhan Minu, Nurul Islam, S M Basharuzzaman Hira, Asraf Hossain Farid, S M Ahsran Light and Shahjahan Ali were elected governing council members of the organisation.

Disabled people on rise in a Magura village

From Hossain Seraj



Ershad, 20, and Shujon Ali, 10, two disabled persons of village Amalsar under Sreepur upazila in Magura district. --Star photo

MAGURA, Dec 15: Here is the tale of a village where at least 40 people of various age groups are physically handicapped among 8,000 people.

Amalsar, a village under Sreepur upazila is situated about 15 kilometres away from the upazila headquarter. According to the upazila Statistical Department, 7,976 people live in this village. Among the total population 16.9 per cent are illiterate. But most of the people have not aware about health. As a result, one person among 200 people is disabled, physically or mentally.

During his recent visit this correspondent came to know that a good number of people in this village have been suffering from various types of ailments causing physical and mental disability. There is also a government family welfare centre (FWC). Besides, a project for uplift of nutritional status is also going on here which is organised by Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC).

Johura Khatun, wife of David Ali Sarder told this correspondent that her two sons Motabbar, 16, and Ershad, 20, turned disabled. She informed that as her husband is a day labourer, health care facilities were beyond their capacity.

Salma, a girl of Class VII is another victim. Sohrab Hossain, the unfortunate father of Salma informed this correspondent that her child is physically disabled.

Rina 16, a mentally handicapped in the same village, is the daughter of Abdul Zabbar. She is a disabled person.

Md Shujon Ali, a student of Class III is another victim. Talking to this correspondent his father Jahan Sheikh said that the leg of his child became defective at tender age.

Besides, some others including Atiar, 35, a housewife, Hemela, 28, Saiful, 14, and Afsaruddin are mentally disabled.

When contacted with the to Civil Surgeon of Magura, Fozlul Karim, he expressed his ignorance about the matter.

News snaps

Diarrhoea claims boy

COMILLA, Dec 15: A boy died and nine more people were affected following the outbreak of diarrhoea at village Monoharpur in Laksam upazila, reports UNB.

Locals said Kawsar Mia, 6, son of Abdul Majid of the village, died last week. The disease that broke out on November 28 and is spreading the nearby areas day by day. The villagers urged the authorities concerned to send medical teams to the affected areas without further delay.

Fake police officer held

BAGERHAT, Dec 15: Police arrested a government officer and his two associates from a hotel in the town Tuesday night on charge of collecting toll from a couple introducing himself as a police inspector, reports UNB.

The fake inspector was identified as Moshir Rahman, a trainer of the fisheries section of the Youth Development Department. Police said Moshir, a boarder of Hotel Mumtaz, took Tk 1,000 from another boarder Mofazzal Hossain, at midnight. Hotel employees Jahangir Hossain and Moniruzzaman assisted him to take the toll. On information, police rushed to the hotel and arrested Moshir and his two accomplices.

Students torch teachers' room

BANDARBAN, Dec 15: Having failed to come out successful in SSC test examination, a group of students of Balaghata Bilkis Begum High School in the town torched the room of their two teachers, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the unruly students locked the room of their teachers, including headmaster, and set fire to it Monday midnight. Seeing the flame, passers-by broke the lock and rescued the two teachers. Teachers of the High School are now suffering from a sense of insecurity after the incident. A case was filed.

3rd bridge over Surma to be built

SYLHET, Dec 15: The government has taken up a project to construct the third Shahjalal Bridge over river Surma on Sylhet-Sunamganj highway at a cost of Tk 50 crore, reports UNB.

Executive Committee of National Economic Council has already approved the project. According to officials of Roads and Highways Department, after the completion of the bridge, the traffic congestion in the town will be eased to a great extent. Work on the construction of the bridge will begin soon, the sources added.

Training for youths

LAXMIPUR, Dec 15: A four-day training course for youths and students concluded at Shaheed Waliullah Islamic Centre here recently, reports BSS.

The course was sponsored by the Muslim Aid, London and was conducted by Chief Executive of the centre Hafez Moulana Nasaruddin. The centre provided the food and lodging of about 150 trainees from various schools, colleges and madrasahs of the district. Scholars and teachers of international repute delivered lectures on work-oriented religious cultural aspects. Prizes were also distributed among the trainees on the concluding day.

Law and order reviewed

LAXMIPUR, Dec 15: The monthly meeting of the district Law and Order Committee was held in the Deputy Commissioner's Conference Hall on December 10, reports BSS.

Presided over by Deputy Commissioner A K M Mahub-ul-Alam, the meeting was attended by UNOs, police officials, lawyers, newsmen and officials of Women Affairs Department. The meeting expressed satisfaction over the prevailing law and order situation in the district as compared to that of the previous months. A total of 50 crimes were committed in four upazilas of the district in November this year. The meeting also discussed the measures to check the offences.

Rokeya Day observed

LAXMIPUR, Dec 15: Rokeya Day, commemorating the birth and death anniversaries of Begum Rokeya Shakhawat, was observed in the district on December 9, reports BSS.

Essay writing and extempore speech competition followed by a discussion was held under the auspices of the District Office of Women Affairs Directorate. The discussion was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Mustafizur Rahman as the chief guest. A large number of elite including teachers, newsmen and government officials took part in the discussion. The speakers recalled the literary and social works of Rokeya in awakening the deprived and neglected women folk, especially the Muslim community in the sub-continent.

Raids against dishonest traders

KHULNA, Dec 15: Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institution (BSTI) Khulna conducted at least twelve drives against dishonest traders and hold mobile courts in different markets of Khulna division during the month of November who are violating the BSTI rules, reports BSS.

The raids were made in Khulna, Bagerhat, Narail and Kushtia districts in cooperation with administration by holding mobile courts. During the raids, 97 cases were filed against defaulting traders and Taka 16 thousand 9 hundred was realised as fine.

Course for journalists

KURIGRAM, Dec 15: A day-long orientation course for journalists on "Public Health Information" organised by the Civil Surgeon Office of Rangpur was held at its auditorium recently, reports BSS.

A total of 65 journalists from Kurigram, Rangpur and Lalmonirhat participated in it. Civil Surgeon of Rangpur Dr Tariqul Islam presided over the orientation course. The course was addressed, among others, by Deputy Director of the Family Planning Department of Rangpur Dr Kabir Uddin, UNICEF representative Nurul Islam, Deputy Civil Surgeon of Rangpur Dr Mujibur Rahman, Medical Officer Dr Mahmudun Bari, Secretary of Rangpur Press Club Rashid Babu, Secretary of Kurigram Press Club Shaif Khan, and Lalmonirhat district correspondent of The Daily Ittefaq and the BTv's Shaifiqu Islam Kanu.

Allowance for freedom fighters

PIROJPUR, Dec 15: The government has sanctioned Tk 10.17 lakh as allowance for the helpless freedom fighters of the district, reports UNB.

According to official sources, some 565 distressed freedom fighters will receive a total of Tk 1,800 each as allowance. Of the enlisted freedom fighters, 107 are in Sadar, 89 in Najirpur, 56 in Kaulkhal, 110 in Bhandaria, 131 in Mathbaria and 72 in Sharupkati upazilas.

160 uplift schemes progressing

BAGERHAT, Dec 15: Work on 160 uplift schemes under Food for Works Programme is progressing fast in nine upazilas of the district, reports UNB.

Relief Ministry has allocated 1,692 mts of wheat for implementing the schemes, which include repair of 'kutch' roads, earth filling, re-excavation of canals and ponds. Besides, Relief Ministry has also allocated 774 mts of wheat for implementing 454 schemes under Rural Infrastructure Maintenance Programme in nine upazilas of the district. The schemes include renovation of school, college, mosque, 'madrasa', roads and cyclone centres and cleanliness of bush and water hyacinths.

Meeting on TLM

PIROJPUR, Dec 15: A meeting in connection with the Total Literacy Movement (TLM) was held at Deputy Commissioner's Conference Room here recently, reports BSS.

Directorate of Non-Formal and Mass Education organised the meeting in collaboration with district administration.

District level officers, local public representatives, Upazila Nirbahi Officers, religious leaders, women leaders, social workers and teachers attended the meeting. Official sources said, TLM will be in the district on January 1, 2001. Deputy Commissioner SM Zafrul Islam presided over the meeting.

Computer training begins

LAXMIPUR, Dec 15: A four-month long computer training course began here recently aiming at making the educated unemployed youths self-reliant, reports UNB.

Some 30 unemployed male and female are participating in the training course organised by the Department of Youth Development, sources said.

Kullapathar: A burial ground of freedom fighters

BRAHMANBARIA, Dec 15: Kullapathar the burial ground of the martyred freedom fighters is in fact a permanent source of lamentation and grief for the near and dear ones of those who have been buried on the top of a tiny hill.

It looked like a graveyard of the members of a single family, as they fought in unison during their lifetime and shed their bloods for a common goal of liberating their motherland.

Kullapathar is located at Kasba upazila under Brahmanbaria district. Remote mountain range of India is visible from this border village, surrounded by tiny hills. Around this location, there were no such homesteads.

Fifty valiant freedom fighters are resting in this burial ground on the small hill. Stairs are there to go up to the graveyard on whose gate's top reads 'Kullapathar' 'Banglar Muktyoddhader Kabarthan 1378 Bangla' (the graveyard of the Freedom Fighters: Bangla, 1378 BS).

Two large white stones were placed adjacent to the burial ground. One of the stones contains list of martyred freedom fighters of 1971 War of Liberation. There is the list of 49 freedom fighters, the last two names were mentioned as unidentified.

The name of martyred Engineer Nazrul Islam, his dates of birth and death, were carved on another stone. A six-line verse in memory of Nazrul Islam was written on the stone plaque, installed by Hazera Nazrul, widow of the martyred engineer on January 1, 1972. Though there stands the list of 49 freedom fighters, in fact 50 freedom fighters lay buried here.

A strange feeling gripped this correspondent when he stood on the graveyard. At the first sight, it looks like an ordinary burial ground, but a sense of affection and feeling of kinship pervades the whole graveyard.

In each row, there are graves of six freedom fighters. In fact, at the beginning of each row, there are five graves and after eight such rows, there are graves of three unidentified freedom fighters.

Wild grasses, bushes and different types of trees surround the hill, but marks of care and cleanliness prevailed in and around the burial ground. There is no human habitation, but only greenery.

The identity of the freedom fighters, which can be seen from the plaque, can make one astonished. There lay people hailing from different places of the country.

To name some: young fighter Zakir Hossain of Gopibagh of Dhaka, Musharraf of Chandina, Taib Ali of Sylhet and Noab Ali of Kushtia. Religions did not stand in the way of burial of Muslims and Hindus at the same place. The same thing happened in various mass graves of 1971 Liberation War and the Kullapathar speaks of this great truth. Nobody asked those buried here are Hindus or Muslims. There was no difference of religions among the freedom fighters of 1971.

While going around the graves, this correspondent came across a gentleman. His name is Abdul Karim, a strong-bodied man. During the discourse with M Karim, the correspondent came to know the story of this burial ground. Karim himself was a freedom fighter. He was 22 or 23 years in 1971. Karim had just entered in his career as a school-teacher. As the Liberation War broke out, he joined the war.

Karim crossed the border and joined the Konaban Camp in India. Fierce fighting was then continuing between the freedom fighters and the Pakistani forces along the whole frontiers from Akhaura to Comilla.

After March 25, 1971, the Fourth Bengal Regi-

ment, which revolted and defected from the Pakistani army, and the border security force. EPR jointly built up main resistance at the call of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. They were assisted by police, Ansars and local people.

A faction of the Fourth Bengal Regiment set up camp at Konaban and started fighting under the command of Captain Gafar. Adjacent to this camp is situated the Shalda River Sector, which was under the command of Captain Abdus Salek Chowdhury.

Karim is the only son of Abdul Mannan, who built the graveyard of the freedom fighters.

In Shalda river sector, the Pakistani occupation forces suffered heavy losses during their frontal fight with freedom fighters.

In many cases, bodies of the martyred freedom fighters could not be recovered while in some cases bodies were buried inside the Indian territory. Under such circumstances, the idea of burying the Shaheed freedom fighters on the soil of the country cropped up in many minds.

This idea had a psychological back-up that the burial of those, who had sacrificed their lives for the independence of the country, inside Bangladesh territory would provide some sort of mental peace.

This thought led to the start of burial of freedom fighters at Kullapathar and the first freedom fighter, buried in Kullapathar, was Havilder Taib Ali. This was an ideal place for burial as the Pakistani forces could never enter this bordering area. Hence, this area remained a free zone all along.

Though Karim could not remember the exact date of death of Havilder Taib Ali, he recalled it was the rainy season.

Shaheed Taib Ali fought unto death under the group of Subedar Golam Ambia. Karim clearly recalled that Taib Ali wore a sky blue half shirt. He died after sustaining serious injuries in his neck and leg from Pakistani artillery attack.

Several thousand people attended the janaza of Taib Ali as the place was a free zone. This was how the martyred Taib Ali was buried at the beginning of our Liberation War. And this was the beginning of this extraordinary burial ground. The tin board containing his name, address and date of death was placed at the front of the grave.

Immediately after independence, the then SDO of Brahmanbaria and some other people took the initiative and covered each of the graves with brick-work. White stones were also installed to write names and addresses of the martyred freedom fighters. But, inadvertently the dates of the death were not written. More regrettably, the book, which contained the details of the martyred freedom fighters, could not be traced.

According to Subedar Golam Ambia, the date of death of Shaheed Taib Ali was July 16, 1971. The following day died Naik Sattar and Naik Akram by mortar attacks. And then corpses started arriving one after another. A few days later, eight freedom fighters died in a single day. Four of them were Subedar Salam, Darsan Ali, Mozammel and Nur Mia. All the eight were buried at Kullapathar.

The Mukti Bahini freedom fighters had launched an offensive against the Pakistani occupation forces in July in the area. This war is still a talked-about story in the locality. The platoon, commanded by Subedar Wahab, had launched a sudden attack on the advancing Pakistani convoy of speedboats on the Shalda river, carrying high-level officers of the Pakistani army.

-BSS Feature

Work on 9-km Jessore Mukti Sarak begins Steps to preserve history, improve communication network

From Atiur Rahman

JESSORE, Dec 15: State Minister for Planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir recently inaugurated the construction work of nine-kilometre Mukti Sarak (Liberation Road) from Moshir Nagar point of Chowgacha-Jessore road to Shahajudpur BDR Camp point on Chowgacha-Benapole road via Muktinagar battlefield, Goribpur Huda Fatepur, Fatepur, Ramvadrapur and Ajmatpur.

State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Alhaj Professor Rafiqul Islam and local woman MP Aleya Afroz and Deputy Commissioner, Jessore Aminur Rosul were present on the occasion.

While inaugurating it Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir said that the road would be completed within the current fiscal. Narrating the reason of construction of the road on priority basis, he said that our valiant freedom fighters (FFs) and Allied Forces used this road in their battle at Muktinagar during the Liberation War in 1971.

Hence the event is very important in our national history.

According to a section of people, after its construction the road will certainly change the whole topography of the area. It will provide the people with better communication and transport facilities and also ensure marketing facility of their agricultural produces.

They also claimed that it would



Partial view of Muktinagar battlefield in Jessore. --Star photo

be a milestone in the pursuit of uniform development of rural Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, three kilometres of the road has already been constructed.

Six years after the liberation war, Dr Mohiuddin joined as Deputy Commissioner of Jessore. He was the first person who searched for the battlefield where the most fiercest fight took place during the Liberation War in 1971 and the enemies were completely destroyed by our FFs and the allied forces.

He discovered the place and drew up a package plan for development of the historic place in a befitting manner.

Pakistani Occupation Forces during the Liberation War was fought at Muktinagar situated along Jessore western front on November 21, 1971. It was only a one day's fight. In this battle, Pakistani forces were completely destroyed and this area was liberated on November 22, 1971. It is a red-letter day in our national history.

To immortalise and uphold the spirit and values of Liberation War and to present the real history to our posterity, Dr Mohiuddin has started construction of Muktinagar besides the high school which is one part of the package plan. Other plans include a hostel, a library, an auditorium and a bungalow for visitors, a health clinic and a victory monument at the battle field. In a bid to identify the place in the record by administration, he was very sincere to create a new upazila at Chowgacha.

He did it with 11 unions including Sukpukuria, Narayanpur and Sharupdah unions of Moheshpur, Patubila, Hakimpur, and Jogodishpur unions of Kaliganj and Chowgacha, Shinghajhully, Dhuliam, Fulshara and Pashapale unions of Jhikergacha upazilas in greater Jessore.

Chowgacha upazila was declared in Bangladesh Gazette on June 23, 1977 under direct initiative of the then Deputy Commissioner, Jessore.

To mark it as upazila (then

thana), he ordered for opening the SSC examination centre at Chowgacha Shahadat Pilot High School from 1978 and it took effect immediately.

He also began to construct the Chowgacha Jhikergacha Chowgacha-Moheshpur and Chowgacha-Korhandpur roads to connect the new upazila headquarters. But he went on transfer before completion of work.

Dr Mohiuddin is the architect of Chowgacha and the creator of the upazila. He is very popular not only in Chowgacha, but also in greater Jessore for the massive development done during his period as Deputy Commissioner.

Muktinagar now is a tourist spot.

Distinguished personalities, political leaders, intellectuals, journalists, students and foreign dignitaries gather here in December every year.

They are very interested for more information on Muktinagar battle. But they are depriving due to lack of guidance.

It is high time for the Tourism Department to take up the place and develop it like a tourist spot as soon as possible.



Front view of Muktinagar Shaheed Sarani High School at Muktinagar battlefield in Jessore. --Star photo