

## National

# Fund shortage hampers Chuadanga jail work

From Our Correspondent

CHUADANGA, Jan 1: The construction work of Chuadanga District Jail comes to a stop for want of adequate funds.

So far only 20 per cent works of the new district jail has been completed at a total cost of Taka one crore 60 lakh. The rest work has been kept stopped for the last 10 months for want of necessary funds.

An amount of Taka 11 crore 66 lakh 63 thousand are required to complete the construction work of Chuadanga District Jail, but no fund has been sanctioned for the purpose. As a result there is no progress of work.

At present the prisoners are residing at the old sub-divisional jail. This jail has a capacity to accommodate only 40 prisoners whereas sometime over 300 to 400 prisoners are to stay at the time of emergency. The prisoners lead a miserable life for want of facilities as permitted in the jail code.

The present jail had been constructed during the British period. No major change excepting a few have been made in the present jail. It is constructed only on over two bighas of land.

Construction work of the new district jail was started during the financial year '98-99 with an allocation of Taka 1.60 crore. The construction of Chuadanga District Jail included nine barracks for the prisoners, construction of office cum gate,

residence of the jailor, staff-quarter, boundary walls, overhead water tank, drainage system, approach road, cooking room, warden's barrack, hospital inspection tower, gallows, electric substation, washer men's house, workshop, separate barrack for the female and children, store room, fuel house and a medium size field.

In the underconstruction jail there will have a provision to accommodate about 450 prisoners at a time. The accommodation capacity of prisoners was increased under the 12-district jail construction programme instead of accommodating 300 prisoners. But the fund was not placed accordingly. As a result after completion of only 20 per cent works of the district jail, the rest work has been kept stopped for the last 10 months.

The concerned authority has sanctioned only Taka 1.60 crore for the purpose.

The Chuadanga District Bar Association and other human rights bodies have expressed their concern over delaying of the construction work.

People of all walks of life including lawyers, businessmen, journalists, politicians, traders, writers and elite have urged the authorities concern to complete the rest work without further delay.

The enchanting Kuakata sea beach in Patuakhali district. Hundreds of tourists from home and abroad visit the beach throughout the year to enjoy its beauty. --Star photo by AK

## Kilns in Magura threaten environment

From Hossain Seraj

MAGURA, Jan 1: Mushroom growth of brick kilns in the district has been threatening the environment.

At least 43 brick kilns have been set up in different parts of the district without the permission from the Environment of Department.

A reliable source said at least 17,20,000 maunds of firewood will be burnt in these 43 kilns in violation of rules.

Khan Mazharul Huq, a teacher of Nakol College in Sreepur upazila here, said the kilns are threatening the ongoing campaign to protect the environment.

Another source said some brick kiln owners, who have applied for permission with the local authorities, have already started their business without taking any approval. As per Brick Burning Control Act 1992 one may be sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment or fined Tk 50,000 for violating the law.

Local people said brick field owners buy trees from the poor villagers and use those in connivance with a section of dishonest government officials, although there has been a taskforce for keeping vigilance on the illegal practice.

Experts said the Act allows maximum 1.5 acres of land for a brick field but many kiln owners use 4 to 5 acres of land for setting up of a kiln.

According to the law concerned, kiln owners are to install minimum 50-foot high chimney with filter in every kiln for emission of smokes, but most of kiln owners use lower chimneys, giving rise to the pollution. A circular from the Land Ministry in 1990 said Deputy Commissioners can only allow 'unfertile' and 'fallow' land for setting up of brick fields. But in the district many kilns have been set up on arable lands.

Some brick kiln owners, however, said crisis of coal has forced them to use firewood in kilns. Crisis of coal has been prevailing in the area for a long time, they added.

Local people have urged the authorities concerned to take steps to stop the illegal practice.

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## Navigation affected in all waterways in N region

KURIGRAM, Jan 1: Navigation has seriously been affected in all the waterways of the northern region due to abnormal fall in water levels and emergence of numerous shoals on the riverbeds, reports BSS.

According to reports reaching from different parts of the region, most of the major rivers have marked abnormal falls in water levels and thousands of shoals have been emerged endangering navigation. The Dharla at Kurigram ferrygat point has almost been dried up leaving only 50 to 60 yards breadth of water flow. Big shoals have emerged there also.

The biggest river Brahmaputra has also marked sharp falls in water levels at all points in Kurigram and Gaibandha districts. The river has been divided into several channels at many points due to emergence of numerous shoals on the bed, which has made navigation risky.

The Teesta has now only two channels under the Teesta Railway Bridge near Kawnia point with very lower water dept. Navigation has already been stopped here excepting the smallest size of country boats. Rather, local landless people are cultivating Rabi crops on the bigger shoals under the Teesta Railway Bridge and in the surrounding areas of the River Teesta. The condition with the Teesta is very serious due to unilateral withdrawal of its water through Gozaldoba Barrage in the upper stream of India.

The Padma has also been dried up at most points from Chapainawabganj to Pabna districts. The Dudhkumar in Kurigram, the Atrai in Naogaon and some other rivers have faint water flow in their beds. The Jamuna has been divided into 50 yards breadth of water flow. Big shoals have emerged there also.

On the other hand, about 30 minor rivers and tributaries have almost dried up. Some of them have no water flow at all. The situation is worsening day by day.

Local experts said that there was less rainfall in the year 2000 throughout the region than the previous years.

### A dream realised

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Jan 1: Mohammad Monwar Hossain of Jinnanagar in the city realised his dream after 40 years. He proved that nothing can hinder one if he is committed and sincere in doing his work.

Monwar first appeared in the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination in 1959-60 academic session but failed. Then he had to stop his study for some time due to shortage of money. He somehow could manage a job of peon in Sonali Bank. He appeared in the SSC examination several times but failed as he could not study well and did not adopt unfair means in the examination.

Lastly, he appeared in the SSC examination in 1999-2000 academic year under the Open University and this time he passed in second division at the age of 59 years.

### 'Irregularities in distribution of foodgrains'

KISHOREGANJ, Jan 1: Allegations of irregularities have been raised in the distribution of rice and wheat among the VGD and VGF card holders at Joyka Union in Karimganj upazila, reports UNB.

VGF cardholders complained that they are being distributed seven to eight kgs of rice instead of 10 kgs per month defying the official order. The VGD cardholders alleged that they are given 22 to 24 kgs of wheat instead of 30 kgs every month. The victims said that the concerned UP chairman and members are selling the government rice and wheat in the black market depriving them.

## Kurigram bazaars in miserable shape

From A Correspondent

KURIGRAM, Jan 1: Most of the hats and bazaars in Kurigram, Rowmari, Rajibpur, Chilmari, Bhurungamari, Fulbari, Nageswari, Ulipur and Rajarhat upazilas are now in a pitiful condition causing untold sufferings to both the buyers and sellers. Lack of proper care and maintenance by the authorities are said to be the causes of gradual deterioration of condition of bazaars.

Panchgachi Hat, Kumorpur Hat, Newashi Hat, Rajibpur Hat, Rowmari Hat, Jadurchar Hat, Shoumlari Hat, Pakhiura Hat, Joymoninhat, Bhurungamari

### Eid congregation foiled as Magura villagers clash

From Our Correspondent

MAGURA, Jan 1: An Eid congregation at village Shovasaddanga in Sreepur upazila was foiled on Thursday as villagers clashed.

Witnesses said villagers of Shovasaddanga and Goalpara clashed over erecting a gate at Eidgah (ground for holding the congregation). At least 30 people were injured in the clash. No case was lodged.

## A protest suicide

FENI Jan 1: The suicide of a 12-year-old schoolboy in protest against torture on his mother by their neighbours in Chagolnaiya upazila draws attention to the reality how uncivilised still we are, reports UNB.

Witnesses said Russel, a class six student, committed suicide as he was assaulted when he tried to rescue his mother from the clutches of Abu Taher and his wife who were beating her up mercilessly at village Debpur on Dec 12.

The boy had appealed to the people present there at that moment to rescue his mother, but none came up in aid of them.

Angered by the unsympathetic attitude of his neighbours and barbaric acts of Taher, the little boy killed himself by taking pesticides, leaving her mother Banu Begum completely dumb. According to the villagers, Banu, wife of Shahab Mia, who

lives in Pakistan, locked in a quarrel with Taher when his cow destroyed paddies on her cropland.

At one stage of altercation, Taher, a locally influential man, and his wife swooped on Banu and kept beating her with sticks.

Seeing her screaming in a pool of blood, the little boy tried to rescue his mother, but the cruel man assaulted him too. The bewildered boy then cried out for help, but none of the villagers came forward to rescue his mother. Having failed to endure the shock, the boy poured pesticide down his mouth and died on way to hospital.

More painful is that local police registered a simple UD case in this connection hushing up the entire episode.

Villagers alleged that police were siding with Taher as he is a rich and influential man.

## Unfit buses plying along Panchagarh-Dinajpur route

PANCHAGARH, Jan 1: The commuters of three northern districts Panchagarh, Thakurgaon and Dinajpur have to suffer a lot due to inadequate number of buses on the roads, reports UNB.

There are only 10 buses plying on Panchagarh-Thakurgaon-Dinajpur road in the name of gate-lock service.

Most of these buses are very old and have no fitness certificates. The majority of the passengers have to travel by standing. A passenger can hardly manage a seat if he gets in either from Panchagarh or Dinajpur.

In most of the cases, the people, who get in the buses from the bus-stands like Maidandighi, Boda, Bhulli, Thakurgaon, Kabirajhat, Birganj and Dashmial, have to travel by standing everyday.

In addition, the buses carry more than the double number of passengers compared to their seat capacity risking the lives of the people.

Although there is local bus service, but people do not generally get in those buses, as these take more time than that of stipulated period.

Local people alleged that Bus Owners Association has not been increasing the number of so-called 'gate lock' buses in order to earn a windfall profit.

They also urged the authorities concerned for taking proper steps to ease the passengers' traffic movement.

When contacted, General Secretary of Panchagarh Motor Owners Association Tazirul Islam said they have no immediate plan to increase the number of seating service buses.

## News snaps

### Jhenidah businessman killed

From Our Correspondent

JHENIDAH, Jan 1: Unidentified criminals killed a businessman and snatched away Tk 10,000 and a motor cycle at Baithapara under Horinakunda thana in the district on Friday night.

The dead was identified as Rafiqul Islam, 35, of Abdal Para in Kushtia district. According to police, the criminals intercepted his motor cycle and stabbed him to death before taking away his money and motor cycle. The body was sent to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital for autopsy. A case was filed with Horinakunda thana in this regard. None was arrested so far.

### 15 rescued from traffickers

SATKHIRA, Jan 1: BDR rescued 15 people including seven children while they were being trafficked to India through Taliugachha border in Sadar upazila early Saturday by an organised gang, reports UNB.

BDR sources said the traffickers brought them from different places in Barisal, Pirojpur, Barguna and Bagerhat districts and took Tk 10,000 per head assuring them of giving job in India. Alo and Jyotsna, who were among the five women of the 15 victims, said Monir hailing from Mongla took money from them. But he managed to flee before BDR had rescued them. All the rescued people were handed over to the police. A case was filed.

### Jaundice scare in Shariatpur

SHARIATPUR, Jan 1: Jaundice has broken out in an epidemic form in seven upazilas here creating panic among people, reports UNB.

About 5,000 people have been affected with the disease so far, according to unofficial sources. They said some of the affected people have been admitted at the hospitals and local clinics but most of them are being treated in their respective houses. Primary symptoms of the disease are yellowing of urine, eyes, nails and sometimes the whole body, a local physician said. The patients having jaundice show temperature, headache and feel weakness with vomiting tendency, he added. The doctors said as there is no curative medicine for the disease. The patients should have full rest. But taking advantage, local quacks have been earning a lot in the name of treatment of the disease. Local people urged the authorities concerned to look into the matter and take proper measures to combat the spread of the disease.

### Motorcyclist killed in road mishap

From Our Correspondent

MAGURA, Jan 1: A student of HSC class was killed when his motorcycle hit a roadside tree at Mohammadpur upazila headquarters here on Eid day on Thursday.

The victim was identified as Milan Rahman, 18, son of Saifur Rahman of village Mohammadpur. The accident occurred when the motorcyclist lost his control.