

Export-import hampered in Benapole Port

Loading-unloading instruments inoperative

BENAPOLE, Jan 13: Export-import activities in the country's lone international land port in Benapole are being hampered as most of its loading-unloading instruments remained inoperative, reports UNB.

At present there are four cranes, five forklifts and 30 measurement machines in the port to carry out its activities. But most of these instruments went out of order for long, said Customs and Port officials.

Three of the four cranes, the most important equipment for loading and unloading heavy goods, remained inoperative for long hampering port activities.

Besides, only four to five measurement machines, out of 30, are in operation at present.

Due to the situation, a congestion of goods has always been prevailing in the land port causing unprecedented delay in delivery of export-import items. Innumerable goods-laden trucks have to wait outside the port for long creating an impasse situation in the port area. Some have to wait even for months.

Local importers said they have been counting huge compensation as they by no means, could release the rented trucks in time. They have to pay the rent of the trucks until the goods are unloaded.

Port users and C&F agents expressed their apprehension that if the situation continues, the export-import activities may collapse anytime.

They said the present miserable situation has been created due to lack of coordination between port engineers and traffic division. "If any important instrument

remains inoperative even for a fortnight, the port authorities do not pay heed to it," importers association leaders alleged.

Due to their indifference and negligence, equipment worth millions of taka are being damaged, they said.

C&F Agent leaders said they informed the matter to the concerned authorities several times but they (authorities) did not take any steps to solve the problem.

Sometimes, the importer-exporters have to suffer for delayed administrative decisions, which are being given from Mongla.

Although Benapole Land Port has sufficient infrastructures, it is still not a full-fledged port. It has been functioning under the Mongla Port authorities. In case of any administrative decision, the land port authorities have to depend on Mongla Port authorities.

The government earns Tk 700 crore revenue per annum from the land port. But the government is yet to take any pragmatic initiatives for its development.

However, Deputy Manager of the port told that they were trying their best to activate all cranes, forklifts and other important instruments.

"We have already reminded the higher authority about the matter," the manager said.

Denudation of forests going on in Bandarban

From A Correspondent

BANDARBAN, Jan 13: Forests of Bandarban Hill District are being denuded gradually because of lust of timber traders and some dishonest forest officials. The local people also protested the practice of deforestation and timber trafficking by unscrupulous people.

A group of timber traders have been trafficking valuable timber from Matamuhuri Reserved Forest of Bandarban Hill District since long with the help of some dishonest forest officials. Timber traders under Lama Forest Division prepared a false transit pass and permit to carry on their illegal business. They opened their way by using log piles permit, issued in favour of private timber garden owners. The permits had been issued by the authorities concerned. By using those permits timber smuggling is being going on in this area.

Recently the Environment and Forest Resource Preservation Committee of Lama and Alikadam area demonstrated in protest against smuggling of valuable timbers from Matamuhuri Reserve Forest. They claimed that at least seven lakh cubic feet of timber amounting to Taka 35 crore is being smuggled out from the district regularly. The committee to meet with the DC of Bandarban and the local MP Bir Bahadur with a request to take necessary actions against timber smugglers.

After getting allegations, the Conservator of Chittagong Forest Circle suspended Yangcha Forest check-post officer Enamul Haq on charge of collaborating the timber smugglers through this check-post. The conservator seized transit books with Lama Forest Division and formed a departmental investigation committee comprising of DFO, Cox's Bazar and DFO, Bandarban.

Official sources said that 63 private property timber permits were issued under Lama Forest Division. In each permit 1,000 cubicfeet of timber, 550 cubicfeet of fire wood and 150 number of logs were permitted for carrying. In the year 1999, 96 private property timber permits containing 1,000 cubicfeet of timber for each owner were granted. Smugglers purchased those permits for carrying on their illegal business with the help of some dishonest forest officials. Government has been losing crores of taka as revenue.



Timber smugglers are active in Bandarban reserve forest. They are cutting trees in such a manner which ultimately hastens the denudation process of the forest. --Star photo

Besides timber smuggling, violation of forest act are going on in the brick fields of Bandarban. Timber and fire wood are being burnt instead of coal in the brick fields, valuable timber and fire wood amounting to Taka four crore are being burnt in the brick fields of the district in a year. Valuable and immature trees are also being used for burning bricks. Timber smugglers supply timber in the fields at night.

In this season 25 brick fields have been established in the district and the owners have collected a huge quantity of timbers and firewood. About 50 thousand maunds of firewood are needed in a brick field

to burn in a season. Some brick fields are also established near the Reserved Forest area resulting in quick deforestation. It has been reported that during tobacco processing season, agents of tobacco companies in Bandarban district burn lakhs of maunds of wood in tobacco processing oven. These acts hasten the deforestation process. All the destructive practices are being carried on by the unscrupulous people with the help of dishonest forest staffers. No preventive measures are found till now. Public awareness can improve the prevailing situation.

News snaps

Two killed in accident

From Our Correspondent
BRAHMANBARIA, Jan 13: At least two persons were killed and 30 others injured on Comilla-Sylhet highway at Urshitura under Sadar upazila in the district on Thursday.

According to police, the accident occurred when an Ashuganj-bound passenger bus fell into a roadside ditch after the driver lost his control, killing Uzzal Mia, 22, and Jutsna Begum Jhuma, 26, on the spot.

Ten critically injured Salim Mia, 24, Mon Mia, 12, Bilkis, 30, Nasima, 20, Asma, 13, Mansur Ahmed, 23, Dinesh, 21, Rahmat Ali, 22, Jasua, 32, and Jangir, 10, were admitted to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital.

The bodies were sent to hospital for autopsy. The driver and the helper of the bus managed to escape. A case was filed with Brahmanbaria police station in this connection.

Production suspended

From Staff Correspondent
KHULNA, Jan 13: Production at Bashundhara LP Gas Plant at Mongla has been suspended due to acute crisis of raw material.

The suspension of production has caused serious crisis of LP gas in the south-western districts. A refilled cylinder of LPG is being sold at Tk 550 to Tk 600 in the city. According to Khulna LP Gas Users' Association, cylinders of Bashundhara are not being accepted by dealers of BPC in Chhitagang, aggravating the crisis.

BCL's founding anniversary

From Our Correspondent
GOPALGANJ, Jan 13: The 53rd founding anniversary of ruling Bangladesh Awami League's student wing Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) was celebrated in the district on January 4.

Various programmes, including hoisting national and party flags, placing wreaths at the portrait and grave of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, bringing out colourful procession, holding 'milad mahfil' and discussion, were organised on the occasion. A colourful procession led by Rakibul Islam Rakib, president of district BCL, paraded main thoroughfares in the town. Among others, Mohammad Ali Khan Abu Mia, president of district AL and chairman of Gopalganj Municipality, Kamrul Islam Rais, former president of district AL, Advocate Kazi Abdur Rashid, former MP, Mahabub Ali Khan, organising secretary of district AL, Rakibul Islam Rakib, president of district BCL, and Mostafizur Rahman, general secretary of district BCL, spoke in the discussion.

JCD's founding anniversary

From Our Correspondent
GOPALGANJ, Jan 13: The 22nd founding anniversary of main opposition BNP's student wing Bangladesh Jatiyatobadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) was celebrated in the district on January 1.

Various programmes, including hoisting national and party flags, placing wreaths at the portrait of BNP founder former president Ziaur Rahman, bringing out colourful procession, holding 'milad mahfil' and discussion, were organised on the occasion. The colourful procession led by Ashrarul Haque Litu, general secretary of district unit JCD, paraded main thoroughfares in the district headquarters. The discussion was held at JCD district office at 4 pm. Among others, M Monism Ali, general secretary of district BNP, Chowdhury Munjurul Alam, former VP of Gopalganj Government Bangabandhu University College Student Union, Ashrarul Haque Litu, general secretary of district JCD, Badrul Alam Nishim, former president of district JCD and local BNP leaders Mosfiqur Rahman and Rentu spoke in the discussion.

Four districts lack fax services

From Our Correspondent
RANGPUR, Jan 13: Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha and Nilphamari districts lack fax facilities, causing great inconveniences to businessmen, journalists and common people as well.

In 1996, Post and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim assured local people of installing fax machines in public call offices (PCOs) of the district headquarters. But the districts are yet to have the facilities.

Local people have urged the authorities concerned to take immediate steps to install fax machines in the districts.

Ex-Jubo League leader sent to jail

From Our Correspondent
SIRAJGANJ, Jan 13: Former district Jubo League general secretary Kamal Hossain Mojnu was sent to jail after his bail petition was rejected on Sunday.

Kamal Hossain Mojnu was awarded with one month's detention. Monju allegedly snatched a motorbike of a man identified as Khokon, who is cousin of Home Minister Mohammad Nasim. Monju said he had quarrels over money with Khokon.

60 hurt in two separate clashes

From Our Correspondent
SIRAJGANJ, Jan 13: Sixty people were injured in two separate clashes over a land dispute in Shahjapur upazila on Tuesday morning. In Andharmanik village, two groups of people locked in a clash at around 7 am which left 35 persons injured. Seven of them were admitted to the Pabna Bera Health Complex in serious condition later. In a separate but similar incident in Chhoto Mohrajpur a clash over land dispute left 25 persons injured. Five of them were admitted to the Bera Health Complex in serious condition. Police went to the two villages and brought the situation under control. Two separate cases have been filed in these connections.

Modern cold storage in Bogra

BOGRA, Jan 13: A modern cold storage, the first of its kind in the district, was set up in Kakalu upazila at a cost of over Tk 1 crore with assistance from Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank, reports UNB. The cold storage with 50 metric tons of storing capacity was set up alongside Bogra-Shantahar Road at Dashai village, 12 kms off the town. Bogra Chamber president Amjad Hossain, also the proprietor of the cold storage, said fishermen and farmers of the district would now be able to store fish, meats, fruits and vegetables in off-seasons at reasonable prices. Finance Secretary Dr Akbar Ali Khan inaugurated the cold storage on Saturday. High officials of district administration and the Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank were present.

Potato farming on 400 hectares

MADARIPUR, Jan 13: A scheme has been taken up to bring some 400 hectares of land in four upazilas of the district under potato farming during the current season, reports UNB. The production target has been fixed at 4,000 metric tons. Department of Agriculture Extension said of the total, 20 hectares would be cultivated each in Sadar and Rajoir upazilas, 200 hectares in Kalkini and 160 hectares in Shibchar upazilas. Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation supplied necessary seeds and other agriculture inputs among the farmers at fair prices to make the programme a success.

One stabbed to death

KUSHTIA, Jan 13: An egg seller was stabbed to death by some drug addicts in Bheramara upazila on Friday, reports UNB. Police said the assailants killed Zakir Hossain, 18, son of Abdul Hannan of Kazipur village in Daulatpur upazila following a quarrel with him over the payment of eggs. Police recovered the body and sent it to hospital morgue for autopsy. Police also arrested a man in this connection.

Winter clothes distributed

MANIKGANJ, Jan 13: University Students Welfare Association, Manikganj District Unit has distributed winter clothes among the poor and distressed here last week, reports BSS. Under the leadership of its General Secretary Khan Mostafa Monwar, members of the unit distributed the clothes. The leaders and workers of the organisation collected the clothes from the rich and kind hearted people of the district earlier.

Memorial plaque unveiled

KHULNA, Jan 13: Environment and Forest Minister Syeda Sajeda on Sunday unveiled plaque at Khulna Forest Launch Chat (station) commemorating the martyrs of War of Liberation. The Pakistani Military junta and their allies Rajakars, Al-Badars and Al-Shams killed innumerable number of people at Khulna Forest Launch Chat known as the killing ground during the War of Liberation. Local politicians, journalists, freedom fighters and renowned persons were present at the function.

Cold wave cripples life in Comilla, Kushtia

By Staff Correspondent

Severe cold wave sweeping for the last few days has paralysed the normal life in Comilla and Kushtia districts.

A Comilla correspondent says: This winter's cold wave brings misery for poor people in the district. Marginal farmers, landless people, day labourers and rickshawpullers are the worst sufferers, as they cannot buy warm garments.

Dense fog, which starts from mid-night and continues up to mid-day, hampers day to day activities of local people and movement of vehicles.

Just after the sunset people are forced to remain indoors.

Smooth movement of night coaches is being disrupted, causing sufferings to hundreds of passengers. Even in the morning motor vehicles are forced to ply switching on headlights.

Biting cold starts even at 3 pm in the day. By the evening it gets worse.

Weather office sources said average temperature for the last few days is 9 degree Celsius.

A non-governmental organisation recently distributed warm clothes among destitute people. But no government agency came up to help the destitute people who are moving door to door seeking warm clothes.

UNB from Kushtia says: Poor people were the worst sufferers, as they do not have ability to manage warm clothes. Meanwhile, prices of warm clothes went beyond the purchasing capacity of the poor people.

Rickshawpullers and pushcart drivers are rarely seen on the roads before 11 am and after 6 pm while shop owners are compelled to close their shutters after sunset due to the biting of chill.

In the rural areas, people are seen sitting around fire to shield themselves against biting cold.

Patients at local hospital are suffering most, as many of them have to spend nights on the floor without rags for want of adequate number of beds.

People belonging to middle class are seen visiting warm clothes shops.

A large number of beggars coming from different parts of the district are begging for warm clothes for their children.

Suffering of those who have taken shelter on Raita Mohiskundi flood protection dam in Daulatpur after river erosion rendered them homeless knows no bound.

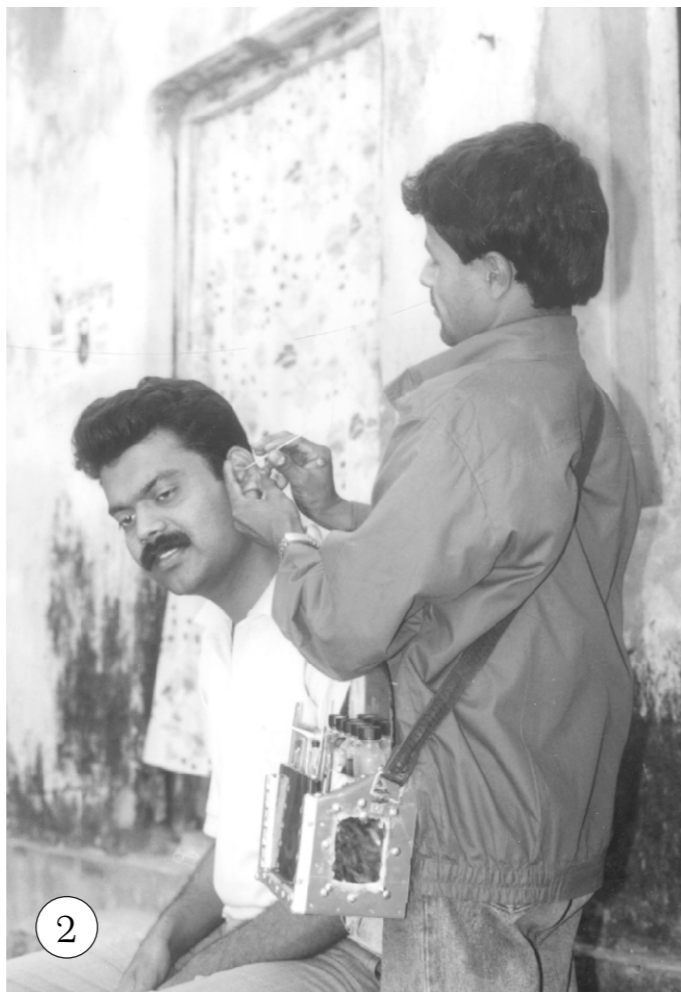
They are passing their days in makeshift structure. Most of their children are suffering from cold related diseases.

Earning-a-living gets going

A photo feature by Hossain Seraj



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Rural people adopt various ways for earning a living. Pictures on top show (1) a villager hangs a sign board in front of his bicycle which tells that he is an agent who works for others in exchange of commission for buying and selling lands, (2) a man earns money by removing dirt from the ears of his clients, (3) a rural quack standing under a sign board which says he is also engaged in match making for youngsters apart from rendering so-called healthcare service to poor people. Bottom pictures show (4) a man sitting beside a road temporarily cures rheumatoid arthritis of co-villagers by applying shock therapy, (5) a villager charming people by playing a flute, which he carries in large number inside a bag for sale and (6) the man with a trap traces out missing valuables from ponds or other water bodies. He gets one third of the valuable item as his reward of labour if he successfully finds the same. --Star photo