

No end to woes of river route passengers

From Abdul Monayam Khan

COX'S BAZAR, Jan 26: Thousands of passengers of river vessels are moving on various routes of Cox's Bazar everyday taking risk of their lives as the authorities concerned are indifferent to provide them minimum safety measures, even during odd weather.

Official sources said more than 40 passenger boats are plying on 10 routes in the district, but these are carrying more than 10 thousand passengers.

These vessels are to cross big rivers including Bakkhali, Matamuhuri, Naaf, Kutubdia channel and Moheshkhali channel without any safety measures like buoys, fire extinguishing equipment and fitness certificates.

Owners of these vessels and BIWTA do not pay heed to the matter of passengers' safety violating marine vessels rules.

According to rule, BIWTA sources said, all the passenger carrier vessels should have all sorts of safety measures and overloading is strictly prohibited.

But the fact is that, there is no buoys in the passenger boats and they do not fulfill the requirement of daily passengers.

Apart from this, marine vessels, particularly passenger boats have no medical equipment, medicine for emergency, even a first aid kit.

There is also no SOS sending wireless system for emergency, no echo sounder device to detect and locate under water shoals or water depth measuring equipment.

It is also found that presently all the passenger boats are plying with manual driving wheel instead of modern hydraulic ones. There is none to check plying of vessels with overloaded passengers.

It is alleged that fitness of these vehicles are not also checked regularly resulting in plying of vessels with bad condition of body structure, machinery faults, lack of life saving equipment and emergency light.

The boat drivers and their helpers do not have training to perform their respective duties properly. There is no Ansars appointed in boats to avert the piracies.



BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Jatiyo Party Secretary General Nazir Rahman Manzoor visited the ailing Jatiyo Party central leader Advocate Hasan Seraj (Suja) at Shamrita Hospital in Dhaka on Tuesday. Advocate Suja sustained stab injuries by the terrorists in Magura Collectorate Office premises on January 15.

Yellow panel sweeps RUTA polls

From RU Correspondent

RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY, Jan 26: Pro-government Yellow panel swept the Rajshahi University Teachers' Association (RUTA) election held on Thursday, capturing 14 posts out of 15.

Prof Muhammad Mijanuddin of Sociology Department and Shafiqunnabi Samadi of Music and Dramatics Department both from the Yellow have been elected president and general secretary respectively of the teachers' organisation.

White Panel only managed a post of member. Professor Nurul Amin of the panel has been elected member.

Other office bearers are Prof Md Shah Nawaz Ali (Vice President), Sushanta Kumar Bhattacharya (Treasurer), Dr Rostom Ali (Joint Secretary), Prof Md Atar Ali, Prof AHM Mostafizur Rahman, Md Rezaul Karim, Dr M Julfikar Ali, Abu Bakar Md Ishanail, Dr Mozibor Rahman, Md Waliul Hasnat, Prof Mushfique Ahmed, and Prof Shahidul Islam (Members).

In Dean, Syndicate, Academic Council (AC), and Planning and Development (P&D) Committee elections held on the same day, the Yellow bagged most of the posts.

In Dean polls, yellow bagged three posts. Deans from the panel are Prof Khanam Mamtaz Ahmad (Arts), Prof Abdur Rahman (Social Sciences), and Prof AKM Abdul Mazid (Business Studies).

Two deans elected from the pro-opposition White Panel are Faisal Islam Faruki (Science) and Abdus Salam (Life and Earth). Earlier Prof Md Haibur Rahman and Prof Md Abul Khaleque, who belong to the Yellow, had been elected deans unopposed of Law Faculty and Agriculture Faculty respectively.

In the Syndicate polls, the Yellow captured four posts while the White one. In Academic Council and Planning and Development (P&D) Committee elections, the Yellow bagged all the posts.

Bamboo-based cottage industry faces closure threat in Satkhira district

From Our Correspondent

SATKHIRA Jan 26 : Production of bamboo in seven upazilas of Satkhira district is declining fast due to lack of proper maintenance of bamboo cluster and absence of planned plantation.

Many bamboo-clusters here are now decaying mainly due to lack of maintenance, creating acute scarcity of bamboo.

Farmers of the clusters are not aware of modern method of cultivation, causing gradual decline in production. Roots which remain underground after cutting bamboo, are uprooted indiscriminately to use as firewood. Even bamboo saplings are not spared.

At least 20 tenders may sprout from an adult bamboo if it is nursed properly. But now only two to three tender plants grow in a year from an adult one.

The decline in the production has kept an adverse effect on bamboo-based cottage industry. Many people employed in the industry face acute shortage of raw materials.

Meanwhile, cost of repair and construction of houses which were damaged by the recent devastating flood that swept over five upazilas in the district, have shot up due to shortage of bamboo. Bamboo is the main component of constructing houses in rural areas in the country.

The price of a piece of bamboo now ranges between Taka75 and Taka 100 in local markets. The cottage industry based on bamboo is on verge of extinction due to price-hike of bamboo.

Most vehicles in Netrakona ply sans fitness certificate

From Jahangir Alam

NETRAKONA Jan 26 : The government is being deprived of huge revenue every year as most of the vehicles ply in here without renewing registration or fitness certificates.

About 250 vehicles, including minibuses, micro bus, pick-ups, are plying throughout the district without any fitness certificate.

Besides, about 300 tempos, which lost their longevity long ago, are also plying on Netrakona-Madan, Netrakona-Kendua, Netrakona-Kolmakanda, Netrakona-Mohongonj, Netrakona-Purbadhala, Netrakona-Kishoregonj routes without having any fitness certificates.

The number of updated registered cars, microbus, and pickups, apart from a good number of government transports and private ambulances, is very poor against the plying ones.

The unregistered vehicles ply under the very nose of authorities concerned and traffic police, but due to unknown reasons they do not take legal action against the owners of these vehicles.

In some cases it was found that the vehicles owners collect fitness certificate for their vehicles, which already lost longevity, with the help of a section of dishonest officials of roads and highways department and traffic police.

As a result, road mishap has become a common phenomenon in the district.

Non renewal of registration of vehicles, is another common problem in the transport sector. The vehicle owners generally show less interest to renew certificate and registration due to high charges.

A 1,000 cc vehicle is to pay Tk 10,000 for every year as registration fee while Tk 15,000 cc for 1300cc, Tk 2,000 for 1500 cc and Tk 35,000 for above 1500 cc vehicles.



Flood affected farmers of Jhenidah district are determined to recoup the loss of last year's flood. (L) Now they are busy preparing field and (R) transplanting Boro saplings in their fields. ---Star photo

Chandpur-Shariatpur ferry service begins soon

From Our Correspondent

CHANDPUR, Jan 26: The long-desired ferry service between Chandpur and Shariatpur is expected to be inaugurated very soon.

The Ministry of Communications has already directed the authorities concerned to expedite necessary works.

According to Roads and Highways Department sources, Alurbazar under Haimchar upazila has been selected as the site of the ferry ghat in Chandpur district. Bhederganj under Shariatpur district is the opposite ferry ghat. The width of the ferry through the river Meghna will be about eight kilometres.

The construction work of nine kilometres long connecting road between Alurbazar and Bhederganj has already been started. A sum of Tk 20 crore will be utilised to complete the project. When the project is implemented, the ferry service will usher a new era in the economic development of the country. It will reduce the distance of Khulna from Chittagong port by 130-km. At present vehicles from the eastern parts of the country are to cover a long way through Dhaka city to reach Khulna and other districts of southern parts of the country. This creates a serious traffic jam in Dhaka city. The proposed ferry service will greatly ease the present traffic congestion in Dhaka. The ferry service will again reduce the fuel consumption. The ferry service will greatly improve the economic activities of the districts of Chandpur and Shariatpur. Besides, new mills and factories will be set up which will create new job opportunities. It has been decided that about 24-km existing road between Alurbazar and Bhederganj will be developed to connect the ferry ghat.

According to BIWTC sources, the idle ferries of Aricha ghat will be placed in these ferry ghats. It is further learnt that necessary steps have already been taken up to acquire five acres of land for each of the terminal on the east and west bank of the River Meghna.

A safe haven for smugglers

From Jahangir Alam

NETRAKONA, Jan 26: Smuggling is an open secret bordering area of Netrakona.

Anybody will get Indian goods from the smugglers. Members of the law enforcing agencies are not afraid of involving in this practice. They indirectly help smugglers carry goods. Anyone goes to Hatgobindapur, a frontier village of the bordering upazila Kalmakanda he will have a first hand Knowledge of smuggling.

Smugglers have been doing their 'business' in broad daylight allegedly with the help of police and BDR personnel. Hatgobindapur seems to be the kingdom of smugglers. Smuggled goods are coming by trolley in broad daylight. In different tea stalls anyone can see BDR personnel sitting in plain-clothes.

Political leaders, local elite, public representatives all are engaged in smuggling. There is none to resist them. If any one tries to resist them, he will be insulted by the smugglers. The members of law enforcing agencies have appointed brokers to control all smuggling activities.

Sugar, salt, fertiliser, phensidyl syrup, a popular item for drug addicts, electronic goods liquor, saree and cattlehead are being smuggled in the country from India with the help of the members of law enforcing agencies.

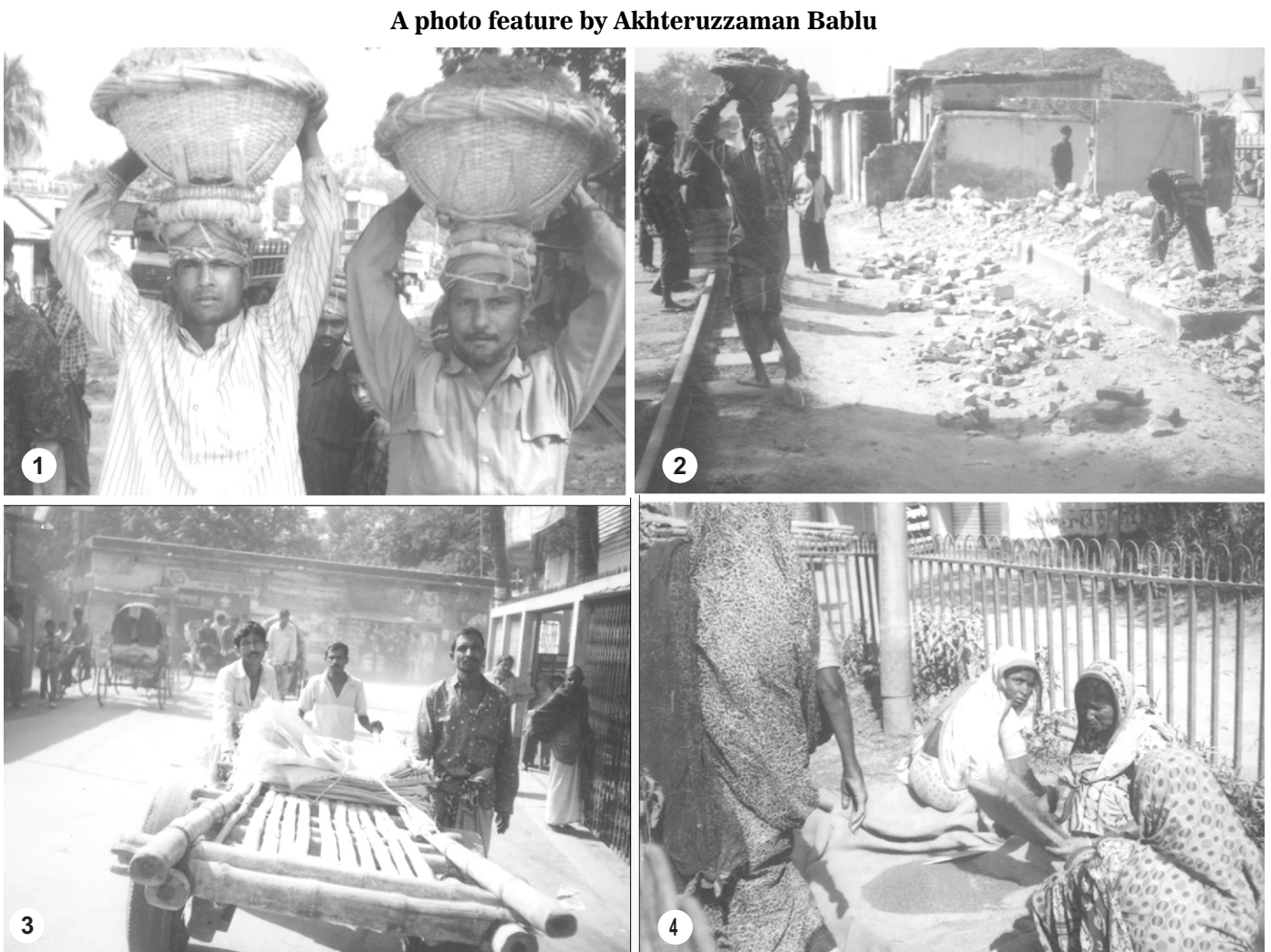
Not only Hatgobindapur, but Langura, Pasgong, Baruakona and Moheshkhola under Kalmakanda upazila, Gopalpur, Bijoypur, Ranikong and Barmari under Durgapur upazila are also safe haven for smugglers.

Local administration some times try to intercept the smugglers, but due to political pressure ultimately they fail to curb smuggling.

Phensidyl seized

KISHOREGANJ, Jan 26: A drug trader along with 16 bottles of Indian phensidyl was arrested from Chandiber village of Bhairab Municipality area recently, reports agency.

Earning-a-living by selling cheap labour



Most poor people of rural areas in Sirajganj district earn a-living by selling cheap labour. After a day's hard toil each labourer receives not more than 40 taka a day. The condition of female labourers is more miserable. Because they are usually deprived of fair price of their labour. After their work each of them receives less than Taka 40. But still all of them are engaged in a grim battle for survival. Top pictures (L-R) show (1) on New Dhaka Road these labourers carry sand at the rate of Taka 40 per day, (2) some labourers are engaged in shifting the rubbles of an office building. Bottom pictures (L-R) show (3) some push cart labourers near Moushumi Cinema Hall in Sirajganj town waiting for a contract to carry goods, and (4) some woman labourers have come near a godown of mustard situated on Mujib Road in the district town to dry mustard and to separate dust from the crop by winnowing fan.

News snaps

Digital phone exchange opens

COMILLA, Jan 26: A 10,000-line new digital telephone exchange was commissioned here on Friday midnight without any formal inauguration, reports UNB.

Official sources said under the new exchange a total of 4,200 analogue telephone lines have been converted into digital ones and another 5800 new connections would be given soon. T&T Board sources said that after the completion of underground cable network new connections would be provided to the subscribers in June-July this year. Home, Post and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim inaugurated another 1600-line digital exchange here on January 2000.

PDB realises Tk 24.66 lakh fine

BOGRA, Jan 26: Local Power Development Board (PDB) has realised Tk 24.66 lakh fine from illegal power consumers in last one year, reports UNB.

During the period PDB also realised Tk 41,594 as outstanding bills. The unauthorised consumers were also convicted in 15 cases. The sources said during the period they also disposed of 580 cases and disconnected 690 illegal lines. Despite taking legal action, locals alleged that the number of illegal power consumers is increasing day by day in the district. They also alleged that a section of people in connivance with a section of officials and line operators are consuming power illegally, depriving the government of huge amount of revenue.

Rapist gets life term

NILPHAMARI, Jan 26: A court here recently sentenced a man to life term imprisonment for violating a housewife, reports UNB.

According to the prosecution, Sabuluddin, son of late Kasaruddin of village Kakina Chapani in Dimla upazila abducted a housewife of the same village on July 22, 1999 from her house. He took her to a nearby bush and violated her. The victim filed a case with a magistrate court and police after investigation submitted charge sheet against the culprit. After examining the witnesses and records the Judge of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Court-1 ATM Golam Kibria found him guilty and awarded the punishment.

Man killed during robbery

BOGRA, Jan 26: One person was killed and valuables were looted after a robbery was committed at village Gour in Amdighi upazila last week, reports UNB.

Police and witnesses said a gang of 7 to 8 robbers stormed the house of deed writer Moklesur Rahman, 75, and stabbed him to death while he tried to resist them. Later they tied up other inmates of the house and decamped with cash and other valuables worth over Tk 20,000. A case was filed and police officials visited the spot.

Tk 3 lakh hemp seized

JAMALPUR, Jan 26: A task force of the narcotics control department raided eight houses at village Paschchimpa in Islampur upazila and seized raw hemp worth about Tk 3 lakh last week, reports UNB.

Acting on a tip, the team raided the houses of Jamal Hazra, Hurmuz, Eshar Ali, Emarat, Shoharab and Shamsul Sheikh and cut the ganja (hemp) plants from their courtyards. Locals alleged that the cultivation of 'ganja' plants is going on in different areas of the upazila by giving bribe to the police. They said police earn a lot per month from the planters. The wives of the ganja planters complained to the task force that two local union parishad members took Tk 300 against per plant in the name of giving bribe to the police. Separate cases were filed against the planters and their mentors.

Tk 8.70 lakh road dev scheme

MAGURA, Jan 26: Magura municipality under its annual development programme has allocated Tk 8.70 lakh for renovation of roads during the current fiscal year, reports UNB.

The renovation work will be done on Abalpur, Kashinathpur, Darimagura, Bhaina College Para, Bhitasayir, Christian Para and PTI Para roads. The work is expected to be completed by June next. With the completion of work road communication in the municipality will be improved to a great extent, said officials.

Body of youth found

COMILLA, Jan 26: Body of a young man was recovered from the Indian side of the border near Kalikapur in Chouddagram upazila on Sunday, Reports UNB.

Police and family sources said the victim Abdul Ahad, 35, son of Solaiman of Basantapur village in the same upazila was intercepted by a gang of terrorists while he was returning home from the local Batisha bazaar with Tk 20,000. They took him to the border area forcibly and took away his money after stabbing him to death. The local people later found the body and informed the local BDR camp. Later they sent the body to the local police station after holding a flag meeting with the BSF. A case was filed with the police.

Youth gets 14-yr RI

COMILLA, Jan 26: A court here has convicted a youth and sentenced him to 14 years rigorous imprisonment in an arms case, reports UNB.

According to the prosecution, in brief, accused Masud, son of Jahir Mia of Mandora village in Daudkandi upazila threw his pistol into a pond when the additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) challenged him on December 22, 1997 at Iliatganj of the upazila. Masud managed to escape. Later the pistol was recovered from the pond. A case was filed and police after investigation submitted charge sheet. After examining the witnesses and records Sessions Judge M Jashimuddin handed down the punishment.

15 houses, poultry farm gutted

COMILLA, Jan 26: Some 15 dwelling houses and a poultry farm were burnt to ashes in two devastating fire incidents in the district, reports UNB.

The loss has estimated at Tk 15 lakh. The houses were totally burnt in fire at sweeper slums on Saturday night. The fire originating from electric short circuit soon engulfed the adjacent areas. Valuables worth Tk 10 lakh were destroyed in the fire. The fire fighters with the help of the local people brought the blaze under control after an hour of efforts. Over 3,000 poultry birds worth over Tk 5 lakh were roasted alive in another fire incident at a poultry farm at Shripur in Chouddagram upazila on Sunday evening.

Three killed in road mishap

LAXMIPUR, Jan 26: Three people were killed in a road mishap near Karunagara crossing in Ramgati upazila on Ragmati-Laxmipur road Tuesday, reports UNB.

The accident occurred when the driver of a Chittagong bound speeding night coach from Ramgati lost its control and the vehicle ran over the three passengers waiting to board the bus. Passengers said the over crowded bus was driving by a helper in absence of the driver. The identities of the deceased could not be known immediately. A case was filed with the police.

Trader's tendon severed

BARISAL, Jan 26: Rivals cut tendon of a small trader and stabbed his brother in Agoiljhara upazila here last week, reports UNB.

Police said rivals swooped on and cut the right-leg tendon of Fojar Ali Mridha, 30, in Bagda union following a dispute over a plot of land. When his younger brother came to his rescue, the criminals also stabbed him indiscriminately. Both the critically injured were admitted to local Upazila Health Complex. A case was filed.

Arms factory unearthed

RAJBARI, Jan 26: Police unearthed an arms factory near Belgachhi Railway Station, 12 km from the district town, early Sunday, reports UNB.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of police raided a furniture shop in the area at about 4:30 am and arrested its owner, Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain with 18 guns, four rounds of bullet and arms-making equipment. The shop was used in making arms since long. Khandaker Hossain has long been making arms and selling those to the terrorists in different parts of the district in the name of dealing in furniture, police said. A case was filed.