

## THE WEEK THAT WAS

**Elephants kill two:** With the advent of dry season, the fear for loss of life and property in wild elephants' stampedes once again grips the people at different remote and forest areas of this region. Several incidents of stampedes by wild elephants killing two people and damaging houses and properties were reported in Chittagong and Bandarban in the last few days.

One Bachha Mia, 30, was stampeded by a herd of wild elephants at Shukhabilash in Rangunia upazila on Thursday. The elephants stampeded Bachha Mia when guards and employees of Kurushia forest bit were trying to scare them away.

In another incident, wild elephants damaged three houses at Banskhali upazila in the district on December 7. The elephants came Villagerpara of Jangal Jalodi, one kilometer east of the upazila headquarters, at around 10pm.

The wild elephants killed one elderly man and damaged at least 20 houses of four villages under Fasiyakhali union under Lama in Bandarban district since December 5. The victim was identified as Entefzur Rahman of Kakara village.

The herd of wild elephants very often comes in the remote forest areas of Rangunia, Fatikchhari, Banskhali upazila.

Last year wild elephants killed at least 7 people and damaged huge properties including houses at different areas of Rangunia upazila. Local people blame wide-range of destruction of forest for crisis of fodder for the animals in those areas for such attacks by wild animals.

**Sea-truck service introduced:** A sea-truck service has been introduced in Teknaf Saint Martin sea route on December 11. The long cherished demand of the people of Cox's Bazar as well as the intended travellers of Saint Martin, the lone coral island of the country, was met following the introduction of the service.

A sea-truck with 250 passengers on board left Teknaf opening the route that linked the coral island with the main land of the country. Local people of Teknaf said the route opened up a new era in making safe and economic journey to and from Saint Martin. The newly introduced sea-truck has sufficient accommodation and dining facilities for the passengers.

So far the old fashioned engine-boats were the lone mode of transport for travelling the island of Saint Martin some 15 km off Teknaf. However, the coral island is yet to have any jetty suitable for anchorage or beaching of Sea-truck, steamers or other modern water transport.

Local people demanded of the authorities concerned for setting up a jetty there.

**Sand collection spree:** The people of Lohagara upazila expressed resentment over indiscriminate sand collection from different areas there causing geographical degradation. Some vested quarters were reportedly on a spree for collecting sand from rivers Dalu, Kankabati, Hatiya, Hangar and Jongchhari at different areas of the upazila defying its geographical impacts and depriving the country of revenue as well.

Local people said plying of the sand-loaded vehicles were also damaging the roads severely and pushing them into immeasurable suffering during rainy season.

They called upon the district administration and authorities concerned for legal steps and strict measures to check illegal and inconsiderate collection of sand from there.

**Birth anniversary:** The 50th birth anniversary of Mohit Ul Alam, a poet, author and a regular contributor to the Star Chittagong page of The Daily Star, was observed here on December 14.

Mohit Ul Alam, the fifth son of litterateur Mahubul Ul Alam, was born in the renowned Alam Family of the port city in 1952.

He is a professor of the Department of English of Chittagong University and at present discharging his job as the chairman of English Department of Premier University in the city on deputation.

Prof Mohit Ul Alam is the author of good number of books including *Nigharh*, *Sona Aar Ghamer Bonibana*, *Mousamer Duray Kachhey*, *Ek Sakaler Kobita*, *E Pare Aupar Tann*, and *The Tantalised Heartlan*.



**Cooperative movement:** The speakers at the 85th annual general meeting of The Chittagong Urban Cooperative Society Ltd (CUCSL) here on Friday called for initiative to bring in dynamism in cooperative movement to improve lot of poor people in the country.

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) president Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury said members of cooperatives could accumulate their small savings to go for larger investment in different enterprises. Thus, through the united efforts of members of cooperatives could make a significant contribution to the service of mankind and the betterment of themselves as well, he said.

CCCI president assured the CUCSL members of all out supports and cooperation in Society's initiative for construction of two modern markets at its century-old and wretched office building.

Elderly revolutionist Binod Behari Chowdhury inaugurated the meeting at Chittagong District Council auditorium where the deputy-registrar of Chittagong divisional Cooperative Department Pratul Kumar Saha was present as the main speaker while Chittagong District Cooperative Officer Bahul Ahmad Chowdhury and thana Cooperative Officer Shahidul Islam also took part in the discussion.

Binod Behari in his speech resented over the government for renaming the organisation as Chittagong Urban Cooperative Society Ltd instead of Chittagong Urban Cooperative Bank Ltd.

Prof Narayan Chowdhury presented the annual report in the meeting. Engineer Kazol Chowdhury, Advocate Rana Dasgupta, Advocate SK Majumder, Dheelon Dhar, Shymol Palit, Advocate Ashish Kiron Dash, Rama Mitra and Prof Bijoy Laxmi Devi also spoke. The Society president Indu Nandan Datt presided.

**Three forest staff suspended:** Three forest officials and employees of Fanshiyakhali range of Department of Forest, Cox's Bazar (north), were suspended for reported illegal release of huge quantity of timbers seized by the divisional forest officer recently.

Sources said, the Divisional Forest Officer Kartik Chandra Sarker led a drive at Manikpur forest bit to recover 150 Cft of illegally extracted timber and left those under the custody of bit authority on December 7. But three employees indulged in corrupt means and released the seized timbers illegally.

The suspended were identified as Forester Atiqur Rahman, guard Hasanuzzaman and gardener Salim Ullah. Due to unabated indulgence in corruption and illegal felling of trees by the officials and employees concerned, the government forest of Manikpur bit was becoming barren at an alarming rate.

**Car trader killed:** Habib Moula, 43, a car trader from Mirpur in Dhaka, was caught in quicksand and met a tragic death on Cox's Bazar Sea beach on December 12.

Habib fell victim to the incident when he went for bathing in the sea. He along with his family members went to the sea-beach at around noon on the day.

**Call for withdrawal of LC margin:** Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) recommended for withdrawal of the newly imposed 100 per cent LC margin for import of rice, wheat and sugar.

CCCI made this recommendation in a fax message to the Minister for Finance and Planning M Saifur Rahman on December 11.

The message signed by CCCI president Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury said new LC margin would have fallen many importers in difficulties and might discourage import of the three commodities resulting in their price hike.



Thai girls perform at a colourful ceremony at Shah Amanat International Airport, Chittagong marking inauguration of Chittagong-Chiang Mai-Bangkok air route on December 12.

## A new dimension to Ctg Int'l airport

NURUL ALAM

Shah Amanat International airport in Chittagong gained more importance as a new dimension was created in international flight operation with the launching of Thai Airways flight service on Chittagong-Chiang Mai-Bangkok route.

Thai Airways flight on this route was launched on December 12 through a rare and colourful event while the prime ministers of Thailand and Bangladesh jointly inaugurated it amid beating of sabud-chai drum and cheers and fanfare at Shah Amanat International airport in the port city of Chittagong.

Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Sinawatra was accorded a red carpet reception after his arrival here.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia accompanied by some cabinet members welcomed her Thai counterpart at the airport tarmac.

Gun salutes heralded arrival of the Thai prime minister and a smartly turned out contingent drawn from the three services gave him a guard of honour as he disembarked from a special flight.

The colourful ceremony was also marked by cultural programmes presented by Thai professional dancers.

In a brief speech at the inaugural function Sinawatra said the existing relation between the two countries would be strengthened with the launching of this flight operation on Chittagong-Chiang Mai-Bangkok route.

"The peoples of the two countries will foster relationship for mutual prosperity and boosting trade," Sinawatra said adding that the airliner would facilitate export of Bangladeshi products.

He said both the countries would be able to utilise the potentialities in the field of commerce, tourism and other sectors.

"Such an airliner also carries significance in developing better communication in the whole region," Sinawatra said adding "it would create a link between Chittagong and other cities of the regional countries through Chiang Mai".

Introduction of this flight service was a follow up of the proposal made during his visit to Chittagong on July last year, he added.

"The aspiration has come into reality with the opening of flight service on this route with full cooperation of Bangladesh," Sinawatra said.

Minister for Transport of Thailand Suriya Junggrongroengkit also spoke at the function.

The transport minister in his speech said the air link set up between the two countries would not only foster friendly ties but would also help promote trade relations.

"The introduction of flight service on this route will be a milestone in the history of the two countries," he said.

The ceremonial formalities over, the two prime ministers inspected the Thai exhibition organised on the airport premises.

His flight was escorted by four jets as it entered the Bangladesh air space.

The arrival of Thai prime minister was also important as he, in a rare instance, came with a big delegation to accompany Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to Thailand the same day on a three-day visit.

The whole airport premises on that day wore a festive look as it was tastefully decorated for the occasion.

At the approach road of the airport, schoolboys and girls welcomed the Thai PM waving ribbons.

Earlier, the private Thai airline Phuket Air introduced its direct flight between Bangkok and Chittagong amid a colourful inaugural function at the Shah Amanat International airport on November 24 this year.

Silk Air, a sister concern of

Singapore Airlines, inaugurated its direct flight between Chittagong and Singapore in March this year. The inauguration was marked by a grand ceremony amid cultural programmes at the airport here. The national flag carrier Bangladesh Biman introduced its direct flights between Chittagong and Middle East countries including Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi, Doha and Muskat as most passengers to Gulf countries are from Chittagong region.

Gulf Air, KLM, Saudi Airline and Emirate Airline also reportedly shown keen interests to introduce their respective flights from Chittagong on different international routes.

But it is still not clear whether those airlines would be allowed to operate from Chittagong as it might be a threat to Bangladesh Biman which now enjoys the major share of passengers from Chittagong to Middle East countries, sources said.

## South Korea keen to reduce trade gap

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD

"The access of Bangladeshi goods to South Korea would be made easier and simplified to lessen the trade gap between the two countries". The South Korean ambassador in Bangladesh, Kyu Hyung Lee said this while he was exchanging views with the members of board of directors of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) here on Wednesday.

The ambassador said a good number of Korean industries were set up in Chittagong and other parts of Bangladesh due to cheap labour, port and infrastructural facilities and

favourable weather condition prevailing here.

He underscored the need for taking different short and long-term plans in government and private levels of both the countries to enhance bilateral trade and investment.

Lee said Korean investment for the construction of World Trade Centre proposed by the Chittagong Chamber would remain under active consideration.

The Korean Ambassador said some important decision on trade and investment between the two countries would be finalised during the Bangladesh Prime Minister's visit

to Korea soon.

Earlier, CCCI president Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury in his address of welcome said Bangladesh made an export of 21.943 million US dollar to Korea as against an import of 386.637 million US dollar from there.

The CCCI president urged for duty free access of Bangladeshi goods such as garments, leather and leather goods, jute products and foot and nit wears to Korea to bring down the trade gap.

The CCCI senior Vice-president Ershad Ullah, Vice-president Manjurul Amin Chowdhury, CCCI directors Dr. Monjurul Islam

Mahmud, Syed Ahmed, Asfer Ahmed Chowdhury, MA Bakar, Hasanuzzaman Chowdhury, Kamal Mostafa Chowdhury, Anisuzzaman Chowdhury, Shahidul Alam Quaderi, Md. Anwar Shawkat Asfer, Pana Ullah Ahmed, Nasiruddin Chowdhury, Mahfuzul Haq Shah, Mahabub Alam, Rashed Murad Ibrahim, Rafiqur Rahman, Zahurul Islam Chowdhury, CCCI President's wife Mrs Rahima Chowdhury, defence attaché of Korean embassy Captain (N) Jae-Yaung Jung, Counsellor Se Eung Cheon, Vice-counsellor Jong Pili Kim, Ambassador's wife Lee and Jae-Yaung Jung were present in the meeting.

## CU heroes of '71 remain unsung

ATAUL GANI SUMON

The Chittagong University authorities are yet to take any initiative to build monument in memory of its martyred freedom fighters even after 30 years of independence of Bangladesh. The authorities even had not observed their martyrdom with special programmes to pay rich tributes to them.

The CU freedom fighters left a unique contribution during the War of Liberation, but the authorities have done a little to commemorate their sacrifice.

At least six gallant sons of CU family sacrificed their lives to liberate the country.

The martyred freedom fighters of CU are Shaheed Abdur Rob, a masters student of History Department, Shaheed Mohammad Hossain Bir Pratik, an employee of the engineering section, Shaheed Farhad Uddin, a masters student of History Department, Shaheed Ehsanul Haq, a masters student of Accounting Department, Shaheed Prof Aboni Mohan Dutta, teacher of the Philosophy Department and Shaheed Engineer Probash Kumar.

Shaheed Abdur Rab, since his school life, was a courageous and selfless student leader and always fought against the injustice. He was the front line student leader of the movement in 1962 to depose the military ruler from power. He was one of the organisers who led movement against the Hamidur Rahman Education Commission Report at school level. He was the general secretary of the 'School Students Action Committee'

## Fatikchhari breathes a sigh of relief

SHAHIDUL ISLAM

This year's Eid-ul-Fitr, by and large, happened to be something truly different and special for the people of Fatikchhari upazila.

The Eid of 2002 that just passed by has brought untold jubilation as well as overwhelming respite for them after 17 long years!

And this could only possibly as the infamous ringleaders and their gangs had gone into hiding much ahead of the start of the holy month of Ramadan thanks to the on-going 'Operation Clean Heart,' the army-led 'criminal-cleansing' drive across the country.

The drive has made an immense impact on the overall socio-political and economic scenario of different crime-prone areas in Chittagong, especially in Fatikchhari.

Can anyone imagine that the people of a particular region like Fatikchhari in an independent Bangladesh were compelled to live a life for so many years with the feel of an expatriate in their own homeland? Many of them had been forced either to live abroad against their will or at far-flung places away from Fatikchhari. They even in the past could not join the Eid parties or Eid celebrations with their near and dear ones.

This is true no matter you believe it or not. Thousands of people of expatriate-dominant Fatikchhari upazila of Chittagong had long been subjected to and fallen haplessly prey either to manifold criminality or to the long arm of the criminal and terrorist gangsters.

Rampant and unabated criminal activities of those crime lords as well as their grouping and in-fighting since 1985 had almost eaten out the right of the common pacific Fatikchhari people to live and lead a normal peaceful life for what each and every rational being wished most.

"One of my cousins has been in the Middle East since 1990. Although he had no enemy or any sort of problem with anybody, yet he dared not to visit his home at Nanupur of Fatikchhari every year only to escape the 'merciless' paws of the criminals who rarely spare any people, even the innocent ones," fumed Mohammad Yousuf, who also hails from the area and resides in Chittagong city.

A businessman from Fatikchhari requesting anonymity said 'I went only thrice to my village home in last 10 years till 2000 to get rid of the unwanted demand of extortion by the criminals. I was compelled to bring my family members in Chittagong city to live together from that year,' he added.

"My son who was a student leader during his university days have been staying in the US since

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Chittagong District Administration organised a cultural programme on the occasion of victory day at Shilpakala Academy in the city.

PHOTO: STAR

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