

SNAPS

Better late than never

A CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali
Hand bill on Phenomenia
The Patuakhali Health Department yesterday launched a campaign in the district to create public awareness about pneumonia and other cold-related diseases.

At least 72 children died from Phumonia in the current winter till December, official sources said earlier.

Health officials and workers are distributing leaflets and advising people on symptoms of the diseases and to report to doctors as early as possible in case of any attack.

This has raised curiosity among people, who often make complaint of lack of facilities at government hospitals.

Journalists' training workshop begins.

A CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali
A 5-day training workshop for journalists began at the LGED auditorium in the town yesterday.

Twenty-one journalist from six districts of Barisal division are taking part in the workshop, organised by Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) with assistance from UNICEF.

The theme of the training is 'Communication Activities for Development of Children and Women'.

Amanullah, former director general of PIB, inaugurated the workshop. PIB Trainer M Aliur Rahman, ADM Sad Bin Rabi, Barishal Radio center regional director Shah Alam also addressed the inaugural function.

Patuakhali Press Club President Golam Kibria presided over the opening season.

Child crushed by truck

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria
A three year-old girl- Bristy-- was crushed under the wheels of a truck while she along with her mother was crossing the Brahmanbaria-Dhaka highway at Shuhilpur in the Sadar upazila Tuesday afternoon.

On information, police rushed to the spot and seized the killer truck but the driver escaped.

New MCCI committee formed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A seven-member executive committee of Moulvibazar Chamber of Commerce and Industries (MCCI) led by Md Abdul Wadud as President was formed at its annual general meeting (AGM) at a community centre here recently.

Outgoing MCCI President Syed Mohsin Ali presided over the meeting.

All directors were elected unopposed while Muhibur Rahman Tarafder became the first Vice-President and Md Samsul Alam became the second Vice President. Elected members are Anker Ahmed, Dr M A Ahad, Md Tara Miaah, Syed Mofassil Ali, Mahmudul Haque Tarafder, Syed Muzammel Ali, Bakshi Mishbahur Rahman, Abdur Rakib, Rashid Uddin Ahmed, Syed Liakat Ali, Syed Abdur Rouf, Md Ansar Ahmed, Md Abu Taher, Sajal Kanti Ghose and Abu Sufian.

Disabled rape victim under threat to withdraw case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

A disabled rape victim and her mother are being threatened by alleged rapist at Bhabonpara village in Mohammadpur upazila to withdraw case or face eviction.

The alleged rapist, Osman Molla, son of Adiluddin Molla of the same village is now moving freely. Police did not arrest him even after about a month of the incident. The incident sparks widespread protest from local people and NGOs. Three hundred disabled formed a human chain in Magura on December 17 protesting the incident. They demanded culprit's immediate arrest. They submitted memoranda to the Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police of Magura.

Meanwhile, the victim came to this correspondent's house on Sunday. She informed him about police inaction and rapist's threats who is allegedly protected by an influential quarter.

The 22 years old physically handicapped was returning home from a nearby bazaar at around 7 pm on December 15 when Osman caught her and raped her behind a mosque.

The victim filed a case with Mohammadpur thana on the next day.

The correspondent tried many times to contact the Investigation Officer (IO) of the case, Si Yakul Hossain for his comments, but failed.

Agitation for Chilahati land port gaining momentum

Rallies, processions tomorrow, tougher programmes to follow

E A M ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

The demand for upgrading the Chilahati land customs station to a land port is gaining momentum because of the authorities' 'mysterious backtrack' though the station has better facilities than other spots in the region for trade with India, Nepal and Bhutan.

The Chilahati Land Port Implementation Committee, a people's forum backed by all political parties, will hold rallies and processions at Chilahati on Friday.

"We will announce tougher programmes at Friday's rally for a full-fledged land port", its Joint Convenor Alamgir Sarkar told this correspondent yesterday. It also held a rally on Sunday.

Ruling BNP's Nilphamari district secretary advocate Anisul Arefin Chowdhury expressed his all out support to the committee's programme. Talking to this correspondent, he said Chilahati in Domar upazila is 'most suited' for a land port in the area. It will not only benefit Bangladesh but also carry forward the spirit of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation) by increasing economic co-operation.

Opposition Awami League's district joint convenor advocate

Jonab Ali said former prime minister Sheikh Hasina had given directives for taking 'proper steps' in this regard after he and AL Publicity Secretary Asaduzzaman Noor (now a lawmaker) placed the demand before her.

He demanded immediate steps in this regard and said an all-party body will be formed to realise the demand.

District CPB (Communist Party of Bangladesh) President Sreedam Das and former lawmaker from Jatio Party Ahsan Ahamed also demanded implementation of Chilahati landport.

Alamgir said there had been some progress in the official process for setting up of a land port at Chilahati following suggestions by the then FBCCI (Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industries) President Abdul Awal Mintoo in March 2000 and Bangladesh Land Port Authority Chairman Sharif Atiqur Rahman in May last year. But these were stalled.

Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Mr Satial during a visit on August 5, 2000 also favoured Chilahati for a land port because of his country's interest to use Mongla port facilities and its (Chilahati) proximity to

Saidpur airport, only 65 kms away, he said.

Chilahati has more geographical and infrastructural facilities than any other spot in the region to promote trade with India Nepal and Bhutan.

Chilahati is only 11 kms from Holdibari in West Bengal, a flourishing business centre with a big railway station and having good rail and road links with rest of India.

Chilahati and Holdibari had a railway link till 1965 (Indo-Pak war). Darjeling mail used to go to Calcutta using this track since the British period. Only laying of 8 kms railway line in Bangladesh territory and 3.14 kms in India may revive the traditional railway link.

Other sources said Bangladesh government had prepared a four and a half corore taka budget for this purpose, but the project is not implemented for reasons unknown.

Chilahati land port will reduce carrying cost and time, increase Bangladesh Railway's income and provide employment to a large number of people.

On the other hand, import through Burimari and Hill customs takes 5-6 days due to lack of facilities,

thereby increasing the cost and often damaging imports.

Moreover, Rangpur is only 64 kms from Chilahati and 160 kms from Burimari. Bogra is 200 kms from Chilahati and 270 kms from Burimari. Nilphamari is 45 kms from Chilahati and 90 kms from Burimari.

Indian exporters also prefer Chilahati to Burimari and Hill as Jalpaiguri district town in India is only 22 kms from Chilahati and 50 kms from Burimari.

Business leaders in Nilphamari claimed that transportation of goods by truck from Delhi, Panjab, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Hariana costs Tk 1500-1600 per ton up to Hill and Tk 1300-1400 up to Burimari.

It will be around Tk 1200 up to Chilahati by truck and Tk 700 by train, they claimed.

Being an old business centre, there are big godowns, an automatic telephone exchange, customs office, two commercial banks, a BDR camp, a police station, roads towards all districts of Bangladesh, a vast space for loading and unloading there.

Products of Uttara EPZ (export processing zone) in Nilphamari may be exported through

Chilahati land port.

The Nilphamari Chamber of Commerce and Industries (NCCI) had appealed to the then prime minister on March 5, 2000 to set up a land port here.

Considering these facilities and FBCCI suggestion (in a letter to the then communications minister on March 13, 2000), the then communication minister suggested laying of a rail track between Chilahati and Holdibari to pave the way for setting up of a land port at Chilahati.

Advised by State Minister for Education and Minister-in-Charge for Nilphamari district ANM Ehsanul Haq Milan, chairman of Bangladesh Land Port Authority Sharif Atiqur Rahman on May 27 last year wrote a letter to the authorities concerned to turn Chilahati land customs station into a land port, Alamgir claimed.

The authorities, after getting a report from the district administration sought by it, issued a letter on June 24 last year.

But only four days later, the authorities turned back. In an order on June 28, activities of the land customs station (check post, customs, immigration office) were stopped.

Paharika Express derails at Kashba, 10 hurt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Five compartments Sylhet-bound inter-city train Paharika Express from Chittagong derailed at Kasba railway station at about noon yesterday, leaving 10 people hurt.

According to police and railway sources, the compartments derailed when the train was entering the station.

Chittagong-bound inter-city train Mohanagor Probhathi from Dhaka was crossing the station at that time.

A relief train from Akawara junction rushed there and placed the five compartments on the track by 2 pm.

The Paharika was delayed but normal movement of trains through the station was not affected, the sources said.

The injured people were treated for cuts and bruises. None was admitted to hospital, Police Superintendent ATM Tarek who visited the spot immediately after the incident said.

Paramedical instt to be set up in Rangamati

Health minister at CHT DAB council

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Minister for Health and Family Welfare Dr. Musharaf Hussain has said a paramedical institute will be set up in Rangamati to improve healthcare services in malaria-prone Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

He was addressing a biennial conference of CHT regional unit of Doctors Association of Bangladesh (DAB), held at local RHDC auditorium on Monday.

The 4-party alliance government has taken a massive programme to improve healthcare services, he said.

He said government doctors will have to begin their career with at least a two-year service in the CHT. After two years, they will be given 'good posting' as a reward.

The minister urged doctors to provide health care service to the poor and backward CHT people with cordiality.

DAB leaders, while speaking,

placed several demands before the minister. These include raising the 'tribal quota' in medical colleges, setting up of a specialised malaria hospital and a malarial research institute and reopening of the Rangamati medical training school, closed for about five years.

Rangamati BNP President Alhaj Nazimuddin Ahmed also spoke.

Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council (CHTRC) Chairman Jiotirindra Bodhipriyo alias Santu Lama drew the minister's attention for eviction of illegal occupiers from lands around Rangamati hospital and the Civil Surgeon's office.

Deputy Minister for CHT Affairs Moniswapan Dewan, Rangamati Hill District Council Chairman Dr Maniklal Dewan and Ma Ma Ching attended the conference, presided over by DAB central president Dr. A K M Azizul Huq.

Corruption: Bogra literacy movement closed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

All the activities of Total Literacy Movement (TLM) were suspended here due to massive corruption.

Sources in the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC Education and Development) office told this correspondent that the government suspended the activities of second phase of TLM due to misappropriation of Tk 7 cr of the project.

A government official revealed that the government started TLM project at a cost of seven crore 26 lakh taka in Bogra Sadar, Khalol, Gabtali, Nandigram and Shibgonj on October 15 in 2000 to eradicate illiteracy. Three lakh 38 thousand and 698 illiterates of 11-45 age group were selected for the purpose on the basis of a survey report submitted in 1997.

The progress report of the first phase of TLM was not satisfactory as 45,000 people failed to attend classes.

Vessel looted, crew abducted near Barisal port in daylight

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal,

Armed miscreants looted about 1,000 bags of salt from a cargo vessel and abducted two crew at Char Abdani on the Kirtokhola Channel near Barisal port during daytime Monday.

MV Darbar Sharif was going to Jhalakati from Chittagong with about 4,000 bags of salt.

As it reached the channel at a short distance from Barisal port at about 10 am, a speed boat came. Some miscreants jumped into the vessel and forced the crew to anchor it. They then tied the crew.

Another vessel came with some people on board. They took about one thousand bags of salt onto their vessel. The loading and unloading continued for a long

time. The miscreants kept the crew hostage at gunpoint and threatened not to shout.

As the sun set, they fled away safely with the speedboat, their vessel loaded with salt worth about Tk three lakh and two of the crew.

As the dacoits left, other crew of the vessel informed local people, who informed police.

Kotwali police said they seized the abandoned vessel with the rest about 3,000 bags of salt at 10 PM Monday.

Police could neither arrest the miscreants nor rescue the abducted crew till filing of the report on Tuesday.

They said they have contacted police in Chittagong and Jhalakati to trace the owners of the cargo and the goods.

Polashbari Test Relief foodgrains scam

19 face case, property attachment ordered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

The General Certificate Officer, Gaibandha has filed cases against 19 chairmen of test relief projects in Palashbari upazila to realise Tk 29,46,518, the price of food grains they lifted from government godowns in 2001 showing forged orders of the relief ministry.

The general certificate court also issued directives for attachment of their property for non-payment of the money.

Official investigations revealed earlier that the 19, in connivance with some people in the ministry, had forged 28 delivery orders and lifted food grains against 356 fake test relief projects in Polashbari.

The fake delivery orders were faxed to the Gaibandha Deputy Commissioner between May 5 and June 28 in 2001.

The authorities in Gaibandha ordered release of the food grains without confirmation from the ministry or any other relevant authorities. The lifted food grains were sold in the black market.

The ministry later denied issuing the 28 orders.

District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer Sirajul Islam Sikder and Palashbari Upazila Project Implementation Officer Shamsul Huq were suspended for "gross negligence in duty" after a three-member probe committee headed by relief ministry secretary Fazlur Rahman detected the scam.

The matter was referred to the Bureau of Anti-corruption, which submitted a report to higher authorities suggesting filing of case.

But others involved in the scam are yet to be brought to book.

Land dispute with Pourasabha Court showcauses Gaibandha DC

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A court here has issued a show cause notice on the Deputy Commissioner and the Assistant Commissioner, Land, Gaibandha to explain within seven days why an official order on Gaibandha municipal chairman for stopping construction work on a land at V-Aid road in the town would not be declared illegal.

The order issued from the Senior Assistant Judge's court on January 11 followed filing of a case by Municipal Chairman Anowarul Hasan Sabur.

The municipal office claimed

that as per CS record 1940, the land (02 decimal plot, No. 6044) was donated to the then Gaibandha Poursabha by its owner Jodhu Nath Chakravarti.

As the municipal office started constructions for raising shops on the land, Assistant Commissioner, Land on December 7 last year issued an order on the municipal chairman to stop the work, saying the plot is a khas land (government land) according to RS record of 1962.

On December 24 last year, the DC opened an office of Gaibandha Diabetics Samity, erected on the land.

Lalmonirhat AL men fleeing homes

48 facing 'false' cases, AL leaders say

A CORRESPONDENT, Lalamonirhat

Local leaders of Awami League (AL) and its front organisations Chhatra League and Jubo league are fleeing homes in the town to avoid arrest following filing of cases by ruling BNP men for alleged violence during the AL-called countrywide hartal on January 3.

At least 48 activists of the parties are facing "false" cases, some AL leaders told journalists here on Tuesday.

Chhatra Dal leader Nabin filed a case against 29 people including

the district AL joint secretary advocate Matiur Rahman, Chhatra League President Zahurul Haq Mamun and secretary Ershad Hossain Jahangir, they said.

The case was filed with the Sadar thana under the Speedy Trial Act.

Nineteen others have been accused in another case filed by Chhatra Dal leader Saju.

They alleged that police did not accept any case by AL men against BNP men for creating violence and attacking AL men during the hartal.



Paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) personnel guarding the shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal (RA) at Sylhet following a bomb explosion on Monday night.

Eco Park at Modhupur Punishment to tribal youth's killers demanded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Oikyabaddha Nagarik Andolon, a citizens' movement, has demanded exemplary punishment to culprits involved in killing of tribal youth Peren Snal in a police firing at Modhupur, Tangail.

The leaders of Mymensingh and Tangail units of the movement visited Joy nagacha in Modhupur recently and expressed their solidarity with the five-point demands of indigenous people at a press conference at local press club. The demands of Garo and Coach people included scrapping of Eco Park

project, punishment to Peren's killers, compensation to victim's family and long-term lease of forest land to indigenous people. They also demanded judicial probe into the killing instead of administrative investigation.

Earlier, a big protest procession paraded the streets of Joy nagacha.

The Andolon leaders placed floral wreaths at the grave of the deceased and prayed for eternal peace. They also visited Peren's house and expressed sympathy to his family members. They handed over Tk 20,000 to Peren's widow for the family's rehabilitation.

They visited the site of Eco-park where it is being constructed ignoring the aspirations of Garo and Coach people.

The team consisted of Sheikh Sultan Ahmed and Sohrab Hossain, general secretaries of Mymensingh and Tangail units of the movement, Mahbubul Alam, Shahadat Hossain, Foyzur Rahman, Nazirul Islam Moni, eminent journalist Zia Uddin, Tofazzol Hossain, M A Sattar, Shahena Begum, Srimoti Shaha and Kanai Lal Das.



People from all walks of life staged a sit-in on Barisal-Dhaka highway at Gournadi on Tuesday demanding mobile phone facilities in the area.