

SNAPS

TIB will form citizens' body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) will form a committee of concerned citizens here on October 15.A preparatory meeting was held at Miapara Public Library auditorium on Thursday. Language Movement veteran Advocate Golam Arif Tipu was in the chair. Teachers, lawyers, politicians, journalists and activists of different socio-cultural and women's organisations attended the meeting. Speakers welcomed the TIB initiative to create awareness against corruption at the grassroots level and assured their cooperation. TIB senior programme officer Ekram Hossain said every citizen should make a commitment to fight corruption as it hinders development and destroys human values.Prof Saidur Rahman Khan, former vice-chancellor of Rajshahi University (RU), economist Sanat Kumar Saha, Workers' Party leader Fazle Hossain Badsha, university teachers Hasan Azizul Haque, Dr Mizan Uddin, ANM Saleh, Chowdhury Sarwar Zahan and Syed Md Ali Reza, ward commissioner Shariful Islam Babu, businessman Mosharraf Hossain and others.

Diarrhoea death toll 14 in two N districts

Acute accommodation problem in hospitals in Nilphamari; physicians' negligence in Gaibandha hospital alleged

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Eleven persons died of diarrhoea in Gaibandha in a week while three patients including two children died in last three days in Nilphamari. Over 3,000 new patients were attacked with the disease in the two districts in a week.

Our Gaibandha Correspondent reports: Seven diarrhoea patients died in Sundarganj, two in Gobindaganj and one each in Shaghata and Saduallapur upazilas within a week. According to Gaibandha Civil

Surgeon office, the dead victims are Marjina, 25, Shefali, 25, Balia, 70, Onda, 6, Hamida Khatun, 40, Kohinoor Begum, 35, Chandtara, 7, Sufia Begum, 55, Bhola Barman, 70, Shakhina, 35, Nilufa, 3. Sundarganj upazila is the worst affected area where the disease is spreading alarmingly. Every day diarrhoea patients are coming to the upazila health complex from distant areas. But they are being treated with utter negligence, alleged guardians of patients. Physicians are hardly available in the complex. Upazila Health and

Family Planning Officer Nur Kutubul Alam attends patients rarely because he stays at Rangpur, said an official preferring anonymity. Although sources in the Civil Surgeon Office told that there is adequate supply of saline and others preventive drugs, but patients complained they had to procure saline, especially IV and cholera saline from local markets in time of need.

Our Nilphamari Correspondent reports: Diarrhoea situation worsened in all the six upazilas.

Three persons including two children died in last three days. They are Momtaj Ali, 50, of Pochar Hat village in Dimla upazila, Ezina Khatun, 8, daughter of Habibur Rahman of Dakkhin Desi Bai village in Jaldhaka upazila and Dilruba Akhtar Dristi, 9, daughter of Dulu Miah of Chikon Mati village in Domar upazila.

However, sources in the district Health Control Room confirmed deaths of two persons.

About 1,500 people have been attacked with the disease anew last week.

Most diarrhoea patients come from Kishoreganj and Syedpur.

According to district Health Control Room about 850 diarrhoea patients took treatment in six upazila health complexes and two 50-bed hospitals last week ending October 10.

While visiting upazila health complexes in Kishoreganj and Jaldhaka on Sunday this correspondent found acute accommodation problem. He saw a good number of patients who were

flooring or lying on the corridors of diarrhoea wards were given treatment. Many serious patients were taken back to their houses due to accommodation problem.

Diarrhoea broke out in an alarming proportion due to intake of inedible food during famine like 'mongra' situation. The period falls during pre-harvest period of aman paddy commencing from mid-September to November. About five lakh agricultural workers become jobless during the period. At this time they have no purchasing capacity which lead them to either to starve with their family or to consume inedible food for the sake of survival.

While taking to The Daily Star on Sunday, the Civil Surgeon (CS) of Nilphamari told this correspondent the deadly disease broke out due to consumption of inedible food, lack of safe drinking water, poor sanitation system. However, he assured the situation is far better in comparison with last year's situation. He further informed there is no scarcity of IV saline though it was scarce during initial stage of its outbreak. Sufficient saline has been brought from Dhaka on emergency basis.

Meanwhile, prices of low quality rice jumped to Tk 16 per kg from Tk 12 per kg making the situation more worse, especially for poor people. Unscrupulous traders grabbed the situation of last few days' inclement weather and foul played with common people.



PHOTO: AKM MOHSIN
FURY OF JAMUNA: This is the last remnant of Jagtala which was once a village in Kojjuri union, Sirajganj. The Jamuna has devoured the village along with four other villages in the union. River erosion is a common phenomenon in the entire district.

Flood situation in Magura worsens

7 unions in Shalikha UZ submerged again; acute crisis of baby food in flood shelters

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Magura*

Flood situation further deteriorated in seven unions in Shalikha upazila (UZ). This is because of inundation of the unions again following incessant rains during last five days.

Surging waters of the Fatki and the Begobati swamped Dhane-wwargati, Shatakhal, Talkhari, Arpara, Gangarampur and Bunagati unions.

More than one lakh people are passing their days in misery due to waterlogging. Flood victims who took shelter in 30 shelters could not return to their homes following slow recession of floodwaters and further deterioration of flood situation, official said. They were staying there for 25 days.

Flood victims in Shalikha face a severe crisis of baby food, victims complained.

'We are getting something at least to eat, but there is nothing to feed my nine months' old daughter', Momena Begum told this correspondent at Arpara Girls School flood shelter.

Holding her sickly daughter Sumi in her lap, Momena said,

'Where do I get milk? All I can give her is rice powder mixed with water.'

The flood vicims received rice, flattened rice, puffed rice and biscuit, but not baby food as relief in the shelter.

At Thoipara Primary School shelter, Maloti said, diarrhoea has attacked her one-year-old Jhinu

has for the last six days. She administered her oral saline only.

Flood victims in other shelters and submerged areas in the upazila are also facing severe crisis of baby food. Mothers are feeding their babies puffed rice, 'suji' and biscuit mixing with water. As a result, they are suffering from diarrhoea and indigestion.

Thirty flood shelters in the upazila house 9,000 distressed people, 2,100 of them are children.

The flood affected people in the upazila have so far received 32 metric tons of rice, Tk 61,000 in cash and some sarees as government relief. Many persons also alleged they did not receive any sort of relief as yet.

Although medical teams at private initiatives are working in the area, hundreds of flood victims are yet to get medical aid.

While talking to The Daily Star, the chairman of Dhaneswargati union Ishak Hossain Mallik said, he had distributed relief among flood victims whatever he got

officially, adding the relief was inadequate.

'The main problem is scarcity of baby food and lack of adequate medical facilities,' Ishak said.

BM College students clash with transport workers: 20 injured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barisal*

At least 20 students of Barisal Government B M College were injured in a clash with transport workers at Nathullabad on Saturday.

Among the injured, Munir Hussein, a second year student of Accountancy Department and Md Nazmul, a third year student of Sociology Department were admitted to Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMCH) in a critical condition.

Jahangir Alam, a third year honours student of Sociology Department, climbed on a bus, going to Barisal from Madanipur. When he was 'harassed' by bus supervisor Rezaul over student's concession, he informed the matter to his fellow students over mobile phone. Agitated students rushed and started a clash with transport workers.

Hard days for jobless day-labourers in three dists

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rangpur*

Thousands of unemployed day labourers are coming to district towns in Rangpur, Lalmonirhat and Kurigram in search of job, but going back homes frustrated. This is due to lack of work in the ongoing lean period.

According to record of the Statistical Bureau, 95 per cent of poor people in the districts are agricultural labourers. They have become jobless because of delay in maturing transplanted aman and cultivation in rabi (winter) crops due to moister in the fields. They are passing their days unfed or half-fed.

During previous years these people used to become jobless since late October to early December, but this year the situation is quite different. They have become jobless from mid-September. This is because of shortage of cash due to effect of flood, according to a source in the Relief and Rehabilitation Office, Rangpur. Labourers were employed each year to uproot weeds, giving fertiliser and spreading pesticides, but this year no labourer could be employed.

Sharp price-hike of rice in the districts has aggravated the situation. Rice is now being sold between Tk 18 to 20 in the districts.

Meanwhile, several hundreds of landless people under the banner of Rangpur Bhumihin Samity led by the

President of the Bangladesh Samaitantrik Dal (BSD), Anwar Hossen Bablu brought out a procession in front of the office of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) on Tuesday. They also held a demonstration in the afternoon demanding official initiative for launching different programmes like Food for Work Programme, Money for Work Programme and Test Relief Programmes immediately.

About 10 lakh people in nine upazilas in Kurigram have become jobless, said Mukul, Chairman of Zorgachh union in Ulipur upazila. The situation is worse in Roumari and Rajibpur upazilas.

However, about 1,50,500 VGF cards were issued in Kurigram, 1,07,500 VGF cards were issued in Rangpur and 88,500 VGF cards were issued in Lalmonirhat in September. Cardholders got 10 kg of rice each in the month, but they are yet to get rice for the month of October.

It is alleged that two third ultra poor people in Kurigram district could not be brought under VGF programme.

A large number of poor people might have been saved from starvation by launching Test Relief Programme, Food for Work Programme and Money for Work Programme immediately, otherwise the situation might go beyond control.

Lack of resources hinders uplift activities in unions

Rakhalburuj UP chairperson Shahida Faraz is still optimistic of bringing smiles on people's face

Z A M KHAIRUZZAMAN

Rakhalburuj is a union situated on the Karatoa in Gobindaganj upazila, Gaibandha. People in this union are proud of their female UP (Union Parishad) chairperson, Shahida Faraz.

Widow of former chairman Farajuddin Sarker, Shahida entered into local government politics after death of her husband on an impulse to finish his unfinished task. Her husband was a visionary. But death snatched him away much before fulfillment of his cherished dreams. People in the area also wanted her to be their chairperson. So, he did not have to face any embarrassing situation, rather people see her as their able leader. Her male colleagues and common people always cooperated with her in accomplishment of her duties.

However, after her takeover as a chairperson, Shahida found she had nothing significant to do, but to spend most of her valuable time in signing certificates and doing arbitration 'although there are many things to do,' according to her. Construction of some new roads and culverts is the prime need. The union requires a college for education extension. A health complex is a must for increasing treatment facilities for people. As the union has no UP Bhaban (building), it should be built without delay. Moreover, government allotment is also mea-



Shahida Faraz

gre. So, in reality there is no work in the union worth mentioning.

Shahida feels it necessary to send allotment of annual development budget to the UP directly. This helps enable to do development work as per local requirement. VGD cards should also be increased. Test relief needs to be enhanced for creation of employment. Steps should be taken to increase sources of local resources along with utilisation of government resources.

Despite all the odds, Shahida still firmly believes she can bring smiles on people's faces if she gets govern-

ment assistance and cooperation properly.

Inhabited by 21,022 people, the condition of Rakhalburuj union is similar to scores of neglected unions in the country. Here exists 13 primary schools, three secondary schools, 15 other educational institutions run by NGOs. The NGOs are BRAC, CARE, Grameen Bank, Pallisree, Gano Unnayan Kendra, Palli Daridra Bimochon, ASHA and Chandpur Jano Kalyan. About 3,500 families are directly benefited from the activities of the NGOs. Only 10 out of 100 kilometre roads are pucca. Besides, 46 square kilometre area is under electrification programme. The economy is solely based on agriculture. Cent per cent permanent inhabitants are agriculturists. About 9, 178 metric tons of agricultural commodities are produced here annually. The commodities consist of paddy, jute, wheat, potato, sugar cane and aubergine.

Often the incidents of repression on women happen in the union. These are settled amicably through the UP. There are a few incidents which are beyond their capacity. In such cases the victims are asked to go to courts. The UP assists them otherwise. Efforts are made also to ensure fair justice. The UP has undertaken various programmes to make people aware about its ill-effect so that such incidents decrease.