

SNAPS

Licences of 2 C&F agents cancelled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Licences of the two clearing and forwarding (C&F) agents at Bhomra land port were cancelled on Saturday for foreign certificates. The agents are M/S Sabbir Enterprise owned by Shahanur Rahman and M/S Forhad International owned by Wahidul Islam. Their licences were cancelled as they had got those by submitting false certificates, sources at the land port said. Preparations are on to file criminal cases against them.

5 Rab-posers held in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Villagers caught five youths as they tried to collect toll by posing as members of Rapid Action Battaion (Rab). The incident took place at Joynagar village in Shyamnagar upazila. The villagers beat and handed them over to police. Police said the accused are Ujjal of Nakipur village and Chanchal, Mokbul Hossain, Kislu and Abdus Sabur of Badar Ghata village. They had gone to the house of Zahurul Islam Thursday night and demanded money, impersonating Rab members. When asked later, arrested Mokbul Hossain however told newsmen that Zahurul Islam is his brother-in-law and he along his accomplices had gone there only to threaten him as he took a second wife. But police said the youths went there to collect toll identifying themselves as Rab members. A case has been filed with Shyamnagar thana.

## Pneumonia, diarrhoea claim 5 in Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Pneumonia and diarrhoea have broken out in an alarming form in Gaibandha Sadar and Fulchhari upazilas due to the ongoing cold spell in the district.

Pneumonia has claimed three children in two days. They are Rabbi, 2, son of Raju Mia of Kholabari village in Gaibandha Sadar upazila, 15-day-old baby of Bablu Mia of Chandia village and Surobala, 2, daughter of Harinath of Balashi village in Fulchhari upazila.

Diarrhoea has claimed two children during the period. The victims are Tauheed, a nine-month-old baby son of Kushi Mia of Fakirpara in Gaibandha Pourasabha and Maksuda Begum, 7, daughter of Musa Mia of Bongram village in Sadullapur upazila.

Sixty other children were attacked with the two diseases.

Fifteen children were admitted to Gaibandha hospital with pneumonia and diarrhoea complaints in two days.

When contacted, the Civil Surgeon (CS) of Gaibandha told The Daily Star the situation is under control.

6x2

# Reopen Chilahati land port, rail link with India

### Shortest route to India, Nepal, Bhutan and China to boost trade and tourism, business circles say

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

The shortest rail communication from Bangladesh to India, Nepal, Bhutan and even China can be re-established by reopening the link from Chilahati in Nilphamari district to Holdibari just across the border in India, which would boost trade and tourism.

The distance between Chilahati rail station and Holdibari is only 11.3 km, of which 8.10 km rail track is in Bangladesh and 3.24 km in India. The route was closed on September 6, 1965, a day after the Indo-Pak war.

After opening of the Bangabandhu Jamuna Bridge, the then Awami League government had decided in 1997 to reopen the route from Chilahati to the border, but the decision is yet to be implemented.

Chilahati, with all business and transit facilities and infrastructures built during British period, can facilitate landlocked Nepal and Bhutan to use Mongla port in Khulna. The two countries are very much interested to use to the Mongla port for their export-import trade, business circles here said talking to this correspondent.

In 1953, a land customs office was set up near Chilahati railway station for transit of passengers and goods. The Chilahati Merchants Association was one of the big business organisations in northern districts.

President of Nilphamari Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sohel Parvez said ChilahatiHoldibari rail link can play an important role in boosting trade with these countries and promote tourism.

Unlike many important land ports in the country, Chilahati has rail link,



PHOTO: STAR

Once busy Chilahati railway station is now virtually a desolate place though there are all facilities and infrastructures for a land port.

which can considerably reduce transport cost in export-import trade. Chilahati has direct rail link with Khulna via Parbotipur, Shantahar, Iswardi, Chuadanga and Jessore. This can be extended up to Mongla port, he said.

Banglabandha in Panchagarh district and Burimari in Lalmonirhat are two important land ports but have no rail link. Road transport cost to the ports is higher, he said.

Local people, joined by businessmen organised demonstrations on several occasions last year for reopening of Chilahati land port and the rail link, but to no response

from the authorities, he said.

Abu Musa, general secretary of Chilahati Land Port Implementation Committee, said their reopening would be a boost to economic activities in northern districts, affected by monga every year. This would also promote intra-SAARC trade.

Across the border, Holdibar has good rail and road communications with rest of India and its neighbouring countries.

From British period till September 1965, the famous Darjeeling Mail used to run from Chilahati to Calcutta via Darsona.

Direct rail link can be established from Chilahati to Dhaka via Jamuna Bridge.

Using the Chilahati-Holdibari rail route, it would be easy to reach Kakorvita, a bordering business centre in Nepal, only 90 km away. Bhutan's bordering business town Funt Soling could be reached via Shiliguri and Joyga.

This would be the shortest rail link with China via Shiliguri in India and Nepal. The proposed India-China highway would open up greater trade prospects with China through Shiliguri and Gangtok, sources said.

## Sharp decline in wheat yield in Nilphamari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Wheat production in Nilphamari district has come down to one fourth in past several years.

Officials of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) said this is due to change in climate.

The DAE targeted production of 40,000 metric tons of wheat from 20,000 hectares of land this year. Though this is lesser than earlier production, the target is unlikely to be fulfilled. Farmers cultivated wheat only on 9,950 hectares this year and the production will not exceed 15,000 tonnes, they said.

Earlier, wheat was cultivated on more than 40,000 hectares of land production would rally around one lakh tonnes. The cultivation declined gradually.

Talking to this correspondent, some farmers said high price of seed, fertiliser and diesel for irrigation discouraged them in wheat cultivation.

Besides, change in climate is also a major factor. They said, earlier they used to sow wheat in late Agrabayan and early Poush (Bangla months). The winter used to last till the end of Magh. Now, winter ends by the middle of Magh, when plants start flowering. The crop does not grow if the winter ends, they said.

In the last few years, the winter season started earlier and ended earlier, they said.

## 3-day BDR-BSF meet begins tomorrow at Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

A three-day high level BDR-BSF meeting begins at Rangpur Porjaton Motel tomorrow.

A 13-member team of BSF officials will arrive here today. BDR sources said the meeting will discuss push-in by BSF, smuggling and cross-border crimes in Khulna-Kurigram border areas.

Deputy Director General of BDR Brigadier General Golam Rabbani will lead the Bangladesh side while Inspector General of 14 South Bengal Frontier of BSF Rajendra Shingh will lead the Indian side.

BDR has taken preparations to make the meeting a success. Adequate security measures have been taken in the town and a large number of law enforcers deployed around the motel. A BDR source preferring unanimity said this is a routine annual meeting between BDR and BSF, held in Bangladesh and India alternately.

## 7 get life in Habiganj triple murder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A court in Habiganj on Sunday gave life term to seven persons for a triple murder in the district in 2001.

Nine others were jailed for two years in the case.

Additional District and Sessions Judge Md Aminul Islam gave life term to former chairman of Kagapasha Union Parishad Abdus Shahid, Abdul Latif, Arfan Ali, Jarfan Ali, Abdus Sobhan, Ramjan Ali and Abdul Matin.

They had killed Zahed Ali, Dewan Ali and Taher Ali during a clash over fishing right in Kushiyara river at Chamakpur village in Baniachang upazila on December 17, 2001.

Sixty-three people were chargesheeted and 24 witnesses were examined in the case.

Five of those chargesheeted died during trial.

In a counter case for rioting over the same incident, the judge sentenced five persons including former Upazila Chairman of Baniachang Nurul Amin to one year imprisonment and fined them Tk 5,000 each.

## DAUGHTER'S ADMISSION TO SCHOOL Doctor in custody for 'forging' state minister's signature

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A government doctor has been handed over to police by Barisal Deputy Commissioner for submitting a forged recommendation of State Minister for Education AN M Ehsanul Haque Milon for admission of his daughter to a school.

The accused doctor, A K M Siddiqui Rahman, is Sub-Assistant Community Medical Officer at Charkawa.

When asked at Kotwali thana yesterday, he said he collected the recommendation letter through one of his relatives and knows nothing about forgery. But he declined to disclose the identity of that relative.

The physician had submitted an application on Saturday to Ajita Rani Samadder, headmistress of Barisal Government Girls' High School, with the forged recommendation for admission of his daughter Tanzin Akter Muna to Class VI.

After receiving the recommendation, the headmistress met with DCM Abdul Monaf Patwari and the chairman of the school governing body and discuss the matter.

It was proved that the fake letter was written on the State Minister letterhead and his signature was forged.

As the doctor came to the school on Sunday for admission of his daughter, the headmistress asked him to meet the DC, who handed him over to police.

Didarul Alam, duty officer at Barisal Kotwali thana said the physician was detained under Section 54 and would be sent to court after the school authorities file a case.

## BCL calls strike at JU Thursday

JU CORRESPONDENT

The Jahangirnagar University (JU) unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) has called a daylong strike on the campus on Thursday.

The strike will be observed in protest against attack on its convener Sohel Parvez by the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) President Parvez Mallik and Organising Secretary Robi on Sunday. He was leading a protest procession organised in support of the 60-hour hartal enforced by the Awami League.

The decision was taken at an emergency meeting held on Monday.

A memorandum was also submitted to Vice Chancellor Prof Khandaker Mustahidur Rahman demanding punishment to the culprits.

No classes or examinations were held on the campus for the third consecutive day on Monday.