

## Kathin Chibor Dan festival begins today in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Danuttam Kathin Chibor Dan, the biggest religious festival of Buddhists in the region, will begin today at Rajbonbhar (a temple) in the town amid tight security.

Over 300 policemen will be deployed on the campus, some of them with metal detectors at the four entry points, said Muroti Sen Chakma, secretary of the temple's governing body.

Army teams will be on patrol during the festival, likely to draw over one lakh people from different areas of the Chittagong Hills Tracts and other districts.

The two-day festival begins with weaving a piece colored dress by traditional handloom weavers for monks in the hope of Punyo (virtue).

The festival turns into a cultural reunion of Buddha devotees. Dramas with religious themes are staged and Jatra and processions held on the occasion.

## UP Chairman sent to jail for rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

A Union Parishad chairman was sent to jail custody yesterday for allegedly raping a school teacher of a minority family.

The judge of Women and Children Repression Prevention Court in Magura rejected the bail prayer of Mahidul Islam and sent him to jail for three days and fined him Tk 10,000. Mahidul is chairman of Dariapur Union Parishad in Sreepur upazila.

Court sources and locals said, Mahidul and his accomplice Suman kidnapped the school teacher on October 13, confined her for three days and raped her. Her brother filed a case. The victim gave a statement before the magistrate under Section 64.



A procession in Barisal city yesterday protesting suspension of Biman flights (left) and police guarding the airlines' office.

PHOTO: STAR

# Biman's flight suspension sparks protest in Barisal

## Rally held, hartal on Nov 27: Minister's resignation demanded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Bangladesh Biman's suspension of Barisal-Dhaka flights during the coming winter season triggered protests in the town.

A large number of people held a rally and laid a siege to the local Biman office yesterday, demanding resignation of Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Mir Mohammed Nasiruddin.

The rally also declared him unwanted in Barisal and announced tougher agitation programmes including hartal if the suspension is not withdrawn immediately.

The agitation programmes were called by the Committee for Development and Protection of Barisal's Interest (Barisal Unnayan O Swartha Sangrakkhon Committee).

National flag carrier Biman excluded Barisal from its winter schedules, effective from November 8.

The rally preceded a procession in the town, joined by all classes of people. The processionists after parading city streets gathered in front of the Biman where the rally was held. They laid a siege to the Biman office from 11-30 am to 12-30 pm.

The rally was presided over by Golam Mawla, convener of the Committee and addressed by, among others, district BNP Secretary Nazrul Islam Rajon, Barisal Reporters Unity President Mir Maruzzaman, journalist Akter Faruk Shahin, Nagorik Samaj Secretary Dr. Mizanur Rahman, cultural activist Saifur Rahman Miron, Barisal City Corporation ward commissioners Atikur Rahman and Habibur Rahman Tipu, Aminur Rahman Khokan, Mohsinul Islam Habul, Maksudur Rahman, Manirul Hassan Manir, Mainul Islam Manik and Fayeze Ahmed Khan.

The speakers demanded daily flight on the Dhaka-Barisal-Dhaka route.

The agitation programme includes formation of a human chain in the city on November 20, hartal on November 27 and public awareness campaign from November 10 to 26 in district headquarters in Barisal division.

They demanded resignation of minister Mir Nasiruddin and declared him unwanted in Barisal for what they called Biman's discriminatory treatment towards the division.

The speakers said Biman stopped its flights to the divisional headquarters on the plea of loss. This is not a valid reason because a private airlines is running its services well even after charging more fare than that of Biman.

They alleged that Biman flights have been stopped at the behest of a vested quarter. Private airline GMG charges Tk 2400 for a Barisal-Dhaka ticket against Tk 1600 of Biman.

Biman had started Barisal-Dhaka flights on December 3, 1995 but soon stopped it.

It resumed flights in April 2003 and also started selling tickets for international routes from its local office from June this year. This had increased sale of Biman tickets.

## Declare Monga-hit northern dists as distressed area

### Two left parties demand

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Two left parties have urged the government to declare the Monga-affected northern districts as distressed area and to increase food allocations under VGF programme and food sale at subsidised rates.

Leaders of Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) and Bangladesher Workers Party (BWP) at a press conference here Tuesday evening alleged that the government has failed to tackle the Monga (pre-harvest jobless period). It is a recurring phenomenon but the government in its four-year rule did not take any effective programme for its solution.

They also urged the government and NGOs to suspend realisation of loan at least for three months.

BSD Convener Khalequzzaman and Bangladesher Workers Party Convener Saiful Huq addressed the press conference at Gaibandha Press Club after visiting some Monga-

affected areas in Gaibandha and Rangpur.

Khalequzzaman alleged that no government so far took any step for a permanent solution of monga.

He said around 30 lakh people in greater Rangpur and Dinajpur are passing days virtually unfed. Government's VGF programme covers a small faction of the vast multitude of starving people.

Moreover there is anomaly and nepotism in distribution of VGF cards, he alleged. The destitute people are deprived of cards and at places people are to 'purchase' those, he said. He also demanded monitoring of the programme. The price spiral has aggravated the situation, he said.

The government can promote setting up of agro-based industries in northern districts by utilising cheap labour but there is no such plan, the speakers said. Out of the country's total population, 54 percent are farm labourers, they noted.

## 'Media role needed to save Kobadak'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Speakers at a seminar held here on Tuesday stressed on greater media role to raise awareness among people for protection of the Kobadak.

The seminar on Siltation in the Kobadak and its Consequences was jointly organised by Bangladesh Water Partnership and Uttaran, a local NGO with assistance from Global Water Partnership South Asia.

Held at Uttaran training centre at Mobarakpur in Tala upazila, the seminar was presided over by Principal ABM Safiqul Islam.

Speakers said although media coverage on the Kobadak has increased, yet it is not adequate as the Kobadak is the lifeline of over 47 lakh people in the southwestern zone of the country.

Satkhira Deputy Commissioner (DC) Md Elias was the chief guest while it was addressed, among others, by Tala Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Mostafizur Rahman, Reba Pal of Bangladesh Water Partnership, The Daily Star correspondent Prof Abu Ahmed, Dr Kazi Rabiul Haq

Khondakar, Azizul Islam, Rashedur Rahman Rashid, Obaidus Sultan Bablu Biswajit Sadhu, former lawmaker Maulana Sakhawat Hossain, Safiqul Islam and Anisur Rahim.

In his keynote address, Uttaran director Shahidul Islam said the water bearing capacity of the Kobadak decreased due to siltation in the riverbed. As a result, the river overflows its bank frequently causing permanent water logging in the adjacent areas.

Because of this, livelihood of over 47 lakh people in Jessore, Satkhira and Khulna districts has been affected adversely, he said. Economy and agriculture in the region also face a setback, he said. He disclosed that over 2,000 acres of lands in the three districts have become fallow due to siltation in the Kobadak and its tributaries Shaidmari, Bhadra, Hamku Harihar and Sreenadi. There is no alternative but to re-excavate the Kobadak at Mathabhanga to increase its flow of water which will help reestablish links with the Padma, he said.

PAPIYA'S BODY EXHUMED FOR AUTOPSY

## Several marks of injury, sister-in-law arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

The body of human rights activist and former employee of Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) Dilruba Huq Papiya, 29, was exhumed from Barisal Muslim Graveyard in presence of Magistrate Munim Hassan, representatives of human rights organisations and victim's family on Tuesday.

The autopsy was done at Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMCH) morgue on the same day.

Sources at SBMCH forensic department said the autopsy report will be submitted to authorities concerned within next few days.

Those who were present when the body was exhumed said the body bore marks of injury on the face, eyes and neck.

Police arrested Papiya's sister-in-law Swapna Tuesday night after her elder sister Mahbuba Huq Kumkum filed a case.

In the case, the complainant said



Dilruba Huq Papiya

Papiya married her cousin Mahbub Morshed Tuhin on November 4, 1994. They had a nine year-old daughter, Saptarshi.

Kumkum alleged that Papiya started living with her mother in Dhaka as she was often tortured by her husband.

On November 1, Tuhin went to the house of Papiya's mother in Dhaka and brought Papiya and Saptarshi to Barisal to celebrate Eid. She alleged

that she was tortured and strangled on November 3 evening.

Brothers and sisters of Papiya came to Barisal from Dhaka to see the body but they were not allowed to enter the house.

The body was buried next morning without autopsy, she alleged.

Those who came from Dhaka were also barred from going to police and forced to leave Barisal by Tuhin's men, she further said.

Police was informed but they were silent as Tuhin had links with ruling party leaders, Kumkum alleged.

Police arrested Swapna from Tuhin's College Road residence following pressure from local human rights organisations and publication of reports in newspapers, she claimed.

Local press reports claimed that Tuhin was also present in the house when Swapna was arrested but police let him flee.

However, Md. Habib, sub-inspector of Barisal Kotwali police station and investigation officer of the case, refuted the allegation.

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