

## Bridge links Moheshkhali with mainland this month

A CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

At last Moheshkhali coastal island is being connected with the mainland, fulfilling a long cherished desire of its four lakh people and opening up great prospects for development.

The Badorkhali-Janata Bazar bridge over Kuhelia river is going to be inaugurated this month, setting up direct road link.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is likely to open the bridge but the date is yet to be fixed, administra-

tion sources said yesterday. Moheshkhali island is known for its dry fish and other sea resources.

The 34.7 meter long bridge has been built by the Roads and Highways Department at a cost of Tk Tk 27.3 crore. The cost was initially estimated at Tk 17.85 crore.

The cost escalated because the bridge construction took five years instead of three years as was planned, RHD sources said.

Several governments in the past committed to construct a bridge on the Kuhelia river to connect

Moheshkhali with the mainland.

In 1994, the then BNP government introduced a ferry service on the river. That was the first step to link Moheshkhali with mainland. The government later planned a bridge and the then communications minister Col. Oli Ahmed laid the foundation of the proposed bridge.

The construction work began in 2000 during the tenure of Awami League government but was interrupted due to fund shortage, the sources said.

## Flag meet on a runaway mare

AMANUR AMAN, Kushtia

It was amusing for border guards of Bangladesh and India and the people of border villages as well. Unlike on other occasions when they sit to resolve serious matters, BDR and BSF held a flag meeting yesterday to talk on a mare of a Bangladeshi that crossed into Indian territory.

Bemused villagers on both sides waited anxiously to see the result.

According to BDR source, a 'mad' mare owned by one Mohosin Mondol of Pakuriabhangpara village in Daulatpur upazila in Kushtia, crossed the border through Karimpur border point. It reached Nasirpara area in Karimpur thana in Nadia district in India. Karimpur police caught it and confined her at thana compound.

Mohosin Mondol informed BDR about the matter. BDR contacted BSF personnel at Meghna outpost, who confirmed later that a mare was confined at Karimpur thana. The BDR of Mahiskudi 9/E BOP then proposed a flag to BSF, seeking return the mare.

BSF came to the flag meeting taking the mare along and after ascertaining its owner, returned the animal.

This was for the first time that people from both sides of the border were allowed to observe a flag meeting from a distance.

## Govt out to foil 'long march', Khulna AL says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna city Awami League President Talukder Abdul Khaleque MP has alleged that the government was trying to foil the 14-party alliance's February 5 'long march' towards Dhaka from Khulna.

Khaleque warned of tougher agitation if the government does not stop alleged 'repressive measures' to foil the opposition programme.

Addressing a press conference at Khulna Press Club yesterday, Khaleque said Jubo League president of Amadi union in Koira upazila; Nirmol Chandra Mandol, general secretary of Bhandarkot union Awami League and party activist Abu Kalam Azad of Batiaghata in the district are among many opposition leaders and activities arrested by police Tuesday night without any charge.

He demanded release of all the arrested party leaders and activists before the long march starts.

The city AL president informed that the 'long march' from the Khulna will start at 10 am today from Mongla under the leadership of former Home Minister Mohammad Nasim MP. "We are fully prepared to make our programme a grand success despite repressive measures", he said.

## Rangamati sees lowest ever tourist turnout in peak time

Countrywide bombings, hassle by law enforcers blamed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Despite peak season, the picturesque lake district of Rangamati witnessed the lowest ever tourists this year.

This is a fallout of the August 17 serial bombing across the country, followed by similar stray incidents and serious security check by law enforcers, sources in Bangladesh Parjaton Corporation's (BPC) Holiday Complex and frustrated hotel and resort owners told this correspondent yesterday.

Law enforcers' often annoy the

tourists ad their attitude towards them is not always cordial, they alleged.

"Last Thursday, a businessman phoned from Dhaka requesting for two double-bed rooms but on the following night he cancelled the booking, saying the country's present situation is not favorable for recreation", said Chandan, manager of Hotel Green Castle.

Sumon Choudhury, manager of the Hotel Sophia, said the number of foreign tourists is very poor due to 'unnecessary hassle by law enforcers at different checkpoints and even in the town'.

"Sometimes, foreign guests do not agree to take any security guard, but police force them to take three to four policemen with them on the plea of insecurity. The tourists express annoyance, but we have nothing to do", he said.

Sources at the Holiday resort said they entertained over 5000 tourists last year. The figure is around half of it this year.

Sources at Hotel Sophia and Greencastle also lamented poor arrival of tourists, saying the number is far less than that of last year.

They said that the atmosphere at

Rangamati and Kaptai is not tourist-friendly now. Tourists, particularly from abroad, like to enjoy amid free atmosphere and want to move freely. Besides, the spots also lack recreation facilities, they said.

Sources at Holiday Complex said people still come from nearby Chittagong and Feni districts on a day's package tour on Fridays. But such package tour from distant districts is virtually nil during the ongoing peak season, they said. If the situation continues, BPC will have to count huge loss, they said.

## Agitation for better education

Dinajpur Veterinary College students barricade highway

A CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Students of Dinajpur Government Veterinary College (DGVC) barricaded the Dinajpur-Dhaka highway near the institution yesterday, snapping the road link for several hours, demanding transfer of the college under the government's revenue department and creation of more academic facilities.

The college has been set up under a development project, which ended on June last year. Since then, the teachers and other staff are not getting salary, which is disrupting the academic atmosphere.

Many of the teachers left the college by this time, students told this correspondent during the agitation.

During the angry demonstration, the students placed trees on the road and burnt tires and squatted, chanting anti-government slogans. The road barricade created traffic jam on both sides.

Being informed police rushed to the scene and tried to clear the road barricade but failed.

Later State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Khurshid Jahan Haque went there. The students withdrew the barricade as she promised to take steps to transfer the college under the government's revenue head and turn it into a full pledged veterinary college.

The Dinajpur Government Veterinary College

The students, along with teachers and other staff have been agitating since July last year to press their demand. Yesterday's demonstration was however not participated

by teachers.

The college was set up at a cost of Tk 30 crore. The administrative building, hostels for students, training facilities, staff quarters have been completed since the work began in 1997.

The DGVC authorities at different phases appointed 112 employ-

ees including 35 teachers.

But there are only 35 teachers and 78 employees in the college, having about 150 students on roll now. The academic activities began in 2003.

The fate of the students is now uncertain due to lack of teachers and other facilities, they said.

When contacted, the principal of the college said they do not know whether they are still in service because the development project under the education ministry expired one year ago but the institution has not been transferred under the revenue department.



PHOTO: STAR

The Badorkhali-Janata Bazar bridge on Kuhelia river linking Moheshkhali with the mainland awaits inauguration.



PHOTO: STAR

Students of Dinajpur Government Veterinary College squatting and chanting anti-government slogans after barricading the Dinajpur-Dhaka highway yesterday.

## Criminal grabs KDA land in the name of ruling BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna city unit of Jatiyatabadi Sechhasebak Dal, a front organisation of the ruling BNP, is constructing its new office at Sonadanga after illegally occupying a plot of land belonging to Khulna Development Authority (KDA).

The construction work is being supervised by Ashraf Chowdhury Bulu, organising secretary of Sonadanga thana unit of Sechhasebak Dal.

According to city special Branch of Khulna Metropolitan police (KMP), Ashraf Chowdhury alias Hath Kata Bulu is a listed criminal (no 80) and bomber (no 163). His right hand was blown up from elbow in explosion while making a bomb on the night of July 23, 1999 in his hideout at Nirala residential area under Khulna thana.

According to local people, the listed criminal-cum-bomber and his associates occupied the plot of land on January 27 this year in the name of Sechhasebak Dal and using influence of convener of Khulna City BNP Ali Asgar Lobi MP. Neither local people nor anyone of KDA

dared to protest illegal work of the top criminal. Sonadanga thana police pretended to be unaware of the incident although the plot of land is not far from the police station.

Expressing his ignorance about the incident the convener of city BNP Ali Asgar Lobi MP told this correspondent that his party does not give shelter to any terrorist or land grabber. "Anyone of my party involved in grabbing land or criminal activities must be punished as per law of the land," Lobi said.

When contacted, Bulu emphatically said that construction work of the Sonadanga unit of Sechhasebak Dal office was started with consent of 'my leader Lobi Shaheb.' But Bulu avoided reply to a question whether the BNP lawmaker told him to break the law for occupying KDA land.

Bulu was the first to garland Ali Asgar Lobi in October last year in front of BNP office on his (Lobi) becoming the convener of the city committee.

A senior officer of KMP declined to comment when asked how a wanted listed criminal-cum-bomber moves at large.

12X3

8X3



PHOTO: STAR

A huge quantity of smuggled power milk recovered by people in Barisal city yesterday were handed over to police.