

# Ensure transparency in local govt bodies

## UP leaders in Satkhira urged

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Speakers yesterday at a unique budget session held at Sonakhali High School ground in Romjannagar, a remote union in Shyamnagar upazila, urged the Union Parishad (UP) leaders to ensure transparency and accountability in local government bodies.

The programme, first of its kind in the area, was jointly organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation, a national NGO and Agragati Sangstha, a local NGO.

Over 1,500 people took part in the day long 'open budget session' which was presided by local UP chairman Alhaj Sheikh Alamgir Haidar while Agragati Sangstha director Abdus Sabur was present as chief guest

Chairman Alhaj Sheikh

Alamgir Haidar presented a budget of over Taka 52, 95,100 and urged the people to cooperate with local government leaders to implement development programmes.

It was a different day for people in the area as the UP leaders faced local people who for the first time wanted to know from them about their agendas to develop their union adjacent to the Sundarbans.

The UP chairman replied to various questions at the session.

Lauding the initiative of local government body leaders for holding the open budget session, the chief guest said it would help greatly to ensure accountability of local government bodies.

Speakers said transparency and accountability is vital for good governance at the grass

roots level.

Local government leaders also urged the government to allocate more fund for local government institutions from the national budget so that UP can undertake more development projects independently.

The UP chairman urged local people to work unitedly to make their union a 'model' for the country.

Among others, Zulekha Zaman, Mazed Gazi, Surat Ali, Rahima Parvin, Samsuddin Ahmed, Abdul Gaffar, Aklima Khatun, Sunnat Ali, Anwarul Hasan and Nuruzzaman addressed.

Teachers, farmers, journalists, businessmen, students and elite including women attended.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

A lorry was damaged by a crane during handling of goods at Chittagong port yesterday.

# Money distributed among laid off jute mill workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Leaders of Jatiya Tran Committee (National Relief Committee) yesterday distributed Tk 1,36,000 to 68 families of four laid off jute mill of Khulna industrial belt.

Each family has got Tk 2,000 for buying food and medicines, said professor Dr Shamim Mahbubul Huq of Khulna University who is also a executive committee member of Jatiya Tran Committee.

Khulna Press Club president Makbul Hossain Mintoo and CPB leader Advocate Feroze Ahmed were present during distribution of

money.

Jatiya Tran Committee will also provide financial assistance to ten students who have achieved A+ in this year's SSC examination and this assistance will continue till their HSC final examination, said Prof Dr Mahbubul Huq.

Besides, 21 poor and meritorious students studying in different schools and colleges will get financial help, He added.

## 2 criminals arrested in Khagrachhari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Khagrachhari*

Joint forces yesterday arrested 2 criminals from Kalabagan under Sadar upazila and Matiranga Bazar under Matiranga upazila in Khagrachhari.

Those arrested are Md Abdul Mannan, 29 and Khorshed Alam, 25.

Acting on a tiff-off, joint forces arrested Mannan from Matiranga Bazar area for carrying fake 500-taka note. But Mannan's brother Joynal claims that his brother is honest and innocent.

And Mohammad Khorshed Alam was arrested for his alleged involvement in crimes and anti-social activities. He was handed over to police.

# Erosion makes 2,000 families homeless

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Sirajganj*

Jamuna erosion has taken a serious turn rendering 2,000 families homeless in Kazipur, Sirajganj Sadar, Belkuchi, Shahzadpur and Chowhali upazilas.

About 20-metre of the main structure of a solid spur at Meghai in Kazipur collapsed yesterday morning, according to Water Development Board (WDB) officials.

Because of the erosion, about 200-metre area of the flood control embankment at Khokshabari collapsed, they said.

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Sirajganj Ibrahim Khalil and army officials visited the spot.

Although, water of the Jamuna started receding in different places including Sirajganj point, but erosion has taken a serious turn along the western bank of the river.

Erosion affected families are

now living under open sky.

Almost 35 villages in the five upazilas are now under threat of extinction. Construction materials and buildings of Shimla Degree College which was established on the western bank of the Jamuna at Shimla village was sold on auction five days ago due to threat of erosion. Sirajganj Polytechnic Institution and Khokshabari Union Parishad building in Sirajganj Sadar upazila are now threatened by erosion.

Locals said, WDB undertook a dam construction project at a cost of Tk 10.5 crore on the western bank of the Jamuna, but it came to no help of locals due to its delayed work, locals said.

During a visit to Khokshabari village yesterday, this correspondent saw that many families had been shifting their homesteads to other places for safety.

# Party in power came as a magic lamp for BNP man

## Outlaw-turned BNP leader Mihir arrested

HOSSAIN SERAJ, *Magura*

Joint-forces arrested an outlaw-turned-BNP leader of Magura Sadar thana from his hideout in Jhenidah town.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of joint-forces arrested Magura Sadar thana BNP general secretary Mihir Kanti Biswas from his brother-in-law's residence near Chhabighar Cinema Hall.

Party insiders and locals said, only seven years ago Mihir Kanti Biswas was an armed cadre of the outlawed Biplobi Communist Party (BCP) and faced at least seven criminal cases including those of toll collection and murder, according to police.

Mihir, now general secretary of Magura Sadar thana unit BNP was forced to work as a bicycle-mechanic in nhis boyhood as his poor father late Gour Pada Biswas owned no property but a thatched house in Rawtara village under Hazrapur union in Magura sadar upazila, local people said. He left studies when he was a student of Class Seven, they said.

During the 4-party Alliance rule, his economic condition improved overnight. His turned into a wealthy person in the area. He bought a house at a cost of Tk 12 lakh and land worth Tk 28 lakh in Rawtara, Dariapur and adjoining villages, according to his neighbours.

'Not only land property, Mihir now owned Tk 55 lakh in cash. His brother Mrinal is doing business utilising the amassed money', a resident of adjoining village Gouricharanpur said requesting anonymity.

'Mihir now owns over TK one

crore in cash and huge property which he amassed through illegal toll collection and tender manipulation', complained a former chairman of Hazrapur Union Parishad (UP) on request of anonymity.

'Local people was astonished to see that once extreme poor, Mihir spent at least 8 lakh in the funeral of his father and on the occasion of his sister's marriage', the chairman informed.

'As a BCP cadre, he forcibly collected toll from local rich people at night. When 4-party Alliance came to power, he started collecting toll in a 'novel' way.

During clash or conflict among general people in villages of Hazrapur union, he called arbitration meeting and fined both the group and snatched a good amount of money from them in a subtle manner', a school teacher in the area alleged. In reply to a question, the teacher claimed that peace-loving people had no other option, but to follow his order.

Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) officials in Magura is also investigating the allegations of amassing money and his family's unusual rise during last five years, officials said.

'We have got some allegations against him and sent those to the higher authorities for action', an official informed.

It is widely alleged that Mihir amassed wealth through toll collection with shelter and blessings of former lawmaker of Magura-2 constituency Quazi Salemul (Salemul) Huq Kamal.

# Once slow learners now meritorious pupils

## Dhaka Ahsania Mission's innovative programme makes learning joyful

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tumpa Akhter, Shahnaj Parveen, Muneera Khatun, Sharmeen Khatun, Zannatul Ferdous and Urmia Rahman, six second graders at Belkati Non-Government Primary School in Panjia union of Keshabpur upazila in Jessore district couldn't read their text books.

Many said the children would never learn. For a long time, their parents believed it too. Their teachers said the kids shouldn't be in first grade. All of them have failed these girls who have slumped here in self-disgust.

In such a situation, Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), a major NGO, came to their rescue. In a survey conducted in Panjia union, DAM workers detected them as slow learners. They met their parents and said their daughters are not the problem. They asked them to send their daughters to attend 'Sopan' tutorial course where additional teaching support is provided to slow learners under the Community Learning Action Project (CLAP) or Bikash, an innovative programme developed by DAM. It

was aimed at ensuring quality education in primary schools through joyful learning.

The six children attended a Sopan centre for 10 months where trained tutors taught them for two hours daily before or after school hours for six days a week. This resulted in strengthening of their basic foundation. 'The girls excel today at their school', said Belkati Non-Government Primary School headmaster Md Belal Hossain.

Kumud Ranjan Mondol, headmaster of Dongaghata Non-Government Primary School and Achinta Kumar Mondol, headmaster of 38 No Ghagha Government Primary School also echoed similar views.

DAM has been implementing the CLAP or Bikash project in 11 unions of three upazilas in three districts since 2005, said DAM deputy executive director M Ehsanur Rahman. The unions, upazilas and districts are Panjia, Keshabpur Sadar, Mongalkot, Trimohini, Majidpur Sufalkathi, Bidyanandakathi, Sagordari and Giuri Ghona unions in Jessore, Olipura union of Raipura in Narsingdi and Alipur union of Satkhira Sadar in Satkhira, Rahman

said.

As many as 20, 778 children have been brought under the fold of the programme, he said.

Other activities of the project are organising Camp, Parenting, Child Development Centre or Shishu Bikash Kendra-SBK and Pre-school intervention, said Dipak Roy, senior field manager of DAM Regional Office at Keshabpur in Jessore.

Camp is a community based learning programme designed to meet special learning needs of third graders to fifth graders while Parenting is a child rearing practice for mothers and would be mothers. SBK is organised to create home based early learning opportunity for children of 3 to 5 years and Pre-School is an intervention for children's school preparedness, he said.

DAM approach to primary education is new and innovative in the Bangladesh context. Generally schools in remote areas are selected where institutions for educating children are scarce.

DAM programme generates congenial and creative environments and co-operative attitudes among the learn-ers. Even the remotest school



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Life came to a standstill in Patuakhali town as most areas went under 3-4 feet water yesterday during high tide. Lack of town protection embankment has aggravated the situation.

# 'Enact law to ensure rights of lower caste community'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Members of lower caste community yesterday at a meeting held at village Khamria in Dumuria upazila called upon the government to enact laws to ensure their basic rights.

Organised by Bhumiya Foundation, a Tala based NGO working for elimination of racial discrimination of the lower community, the meeting was presided by Asima Rani Das.

Speakers have taken a vow to establish their rights, otherwise they threatened a tougher agitation in near future.

They called upon people of all strata of life to come forward to guarantee their equal rights in society.

They lamented that the outcasts are facing all sorts of racial discrimi-

nation in the country and are being deprived of basic rights ensured in the Constitution as a human being.

The put forward various demands in the meeting. The demands include implementation of Section 27 and 28 of the Constitution, equal treatment with other communities, quota in government service, their inclusion in development activities, representation in local government bodies, bank loan on easy terms, separate ministry, their rights to get Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) card, allotment of government khas lands, birth registration rights and punishment to those violating their rights.

They demanded separate ministry and separate allocation from national budget for development of the community.

They said that they are fighting to

ensure basic rights for more than a century but they are yet to win in their fight.

They said that they want education for children. Now-a-days, more and more their children are being educated although the facilities are very limited, they said.

Speakers said they want to change in their fate. So, they wanted cooperation of people of all communities to achieve their goal.

They also wanted khas lands for their rehabilitation.

Among others, Mallika Malik, Abdul Jabbar, Goutam Das, Madhuri Rani Das, Rabin Das, Molina Das, Bipul Das, Namita Rani Das, Kalpana Rani Das, Uttam Kumar Das addressed.

# 'Protect child rights'

## Seminar at Netrakona told

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Netrakona*

Speakers at a seminar here yesterday stressed on protection of child rights.

The seminar titled, 'Protection of Child Rights and Safeguarding Juvenile Delinquency' was jointly organised by Bangladesh Retired Police Officers' Welfare Association (BRPOWA), World Vision Bangladesh, Purbadhala ADP, Netrakona and Netrakona Police Magistracy.

Held at Purbadhala Degree College in Purbadhala upazila town, the seminar was presided by Netrakona Superintendent of Police (SP) Mohammad Sakawat Hossain while Netrakona Deputy Commissioner (DC) Md Ayet Ulla

Mjumder attended it as chief guest.

Retired secretary of Defence Ministry Salauddin Ahmed was present as the main speaker.

Terming the children as silent majority in the country, speakers said that it is high time to protect their rights. They urged the guardians of society to work for protection of child rights. They said that children should be given an opportunity to rectify their faults. They said that child criminals should be treated with love and care.

Among others, Md Haider Ali, Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), Purbadhala, Rafiqul Alam, retired Superintendent of Police (SP) and

General Secretary of BRPOWA, Mrigan Hagidag, Jonal Operations Co-ordinator, World Vision Bangladesh and Principal of Purbadhala Degree College Abdul Jabbar addressed.

All the officers-in-charge (OC) of 10 police stations in the district, lawyers, officials of World Vision, teachers of different colleges and journalists of different national dailies and electronic media attended the seminar.



PHOTO: STAR



A facilitator guiding children at a Shishu Bikash Kendra (SBK) at Sagar Gano Kendra at Belkati in Panjia union of Keshabpur upazila, Jessore.