

# Interim councils take over in three hill dists

SHANTIMOY CHAKMA, Rangamati

Chairmen and members of three interim hill district councils in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), selected by the caretaker government, took over yesterday in Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachhari districts.

In Rangamati, Jagat Jyoti Chakma took over as chairman of Rangamati Hill District Council (RHDC) from Manik Lal Dewan. Four members of RHDC also took charge.

They are Union Parishad Chairman Bihari Ranjan Chakma, Rangamati Charukola Academy principal Rotikanta Tangchangya, Augususain Chowdhury and Moniruzzaman Mohsin. Officials and local journalists were present at the simple function.

Augususain Chowdhury and Moniruzzaman Mohsin are Awami League leaders. The two

other members have no political affiliation, the sources said.

Thanjama Lusai took over as new chairman of Bandarban Hill District Council, replacing Mayma Ching. The four members of the council are TS Bom, advocate Aminur Rashid, Chingsa Prus and Usaini Marma.

In Khagrachhari, incumbent chairman Moinindra Lal Tripura retained his post. The four new members of the district council are Animesh Dewan, Ruibi Karbari, Abubakar Siddique and Sanuamong Marma.

The system of appointing interim council was first started during Awami League rule, which was continued by the immediate past four-party alliance government which came to power in 2001.

After creation of HDCs, elections were held to the councils for first time on June 25, 1989. Since

then no election was held.

In an immediate reaction, Rangamati civil society leader Sukumar Dewan told The Daily Star, "I hope neutrality will be maintained by the new council as its chairman has no political background".

Civil society leader Sadhuran

Tripara in Bandarban said the newly appointed chairman and members of Bandarban Hill District Council are neutral persons. He thanked the caretaker government for this and hoped they would be able to solve many problems which could not be addressed earlier by political governments.

The HDC Act provides that a full-fledged district council will be elected in each of the three hill districts to ensure participation of all indigenous and Bangalee communities in development activities.

On contact, Major Kamrul Hasan, Operations Officer of 41 Rifles Battalion confirmed death of the Indian by BSF. He also said BSF personnel fired three gunshots at BSF members.

UNB reports: BSF men along with their dog squad entered the Bangladesh territory in Sunamganj by speedboats at about 8am and forcibly took three labourers to India, locals said.

They also took away four stone-laden boats. About 200 labourers were collecting stone at the quarry when the BSF men attacked them, they said.

## BSF kills cattle smuggler, abducts three

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) yesterday gunned down an Indian cattle smuggler near Sathkhira border and abducted three Bangladeshi stone lifters from Lauergarh border in Sunamganj.

Our Sathkhira Correspondent reports: Alangir Hossain, 26, son of Lulu Mia of Paikardanga village in Basirhat Police Station, India, was killed on the spot when BSF opened fire at Indian cattle smugglers at Panitor under 24 Parganas, West Bengal.

The smugglers were crossing the border with cattle, according to reports received in Sathkhira.

After the incident, BSF and BDR traded gunfire on Padmashakha border in Sadar upazila. BSF reinforced strength and increased patrol while BDR was put on alert to avert any untoward incident, BDR said.

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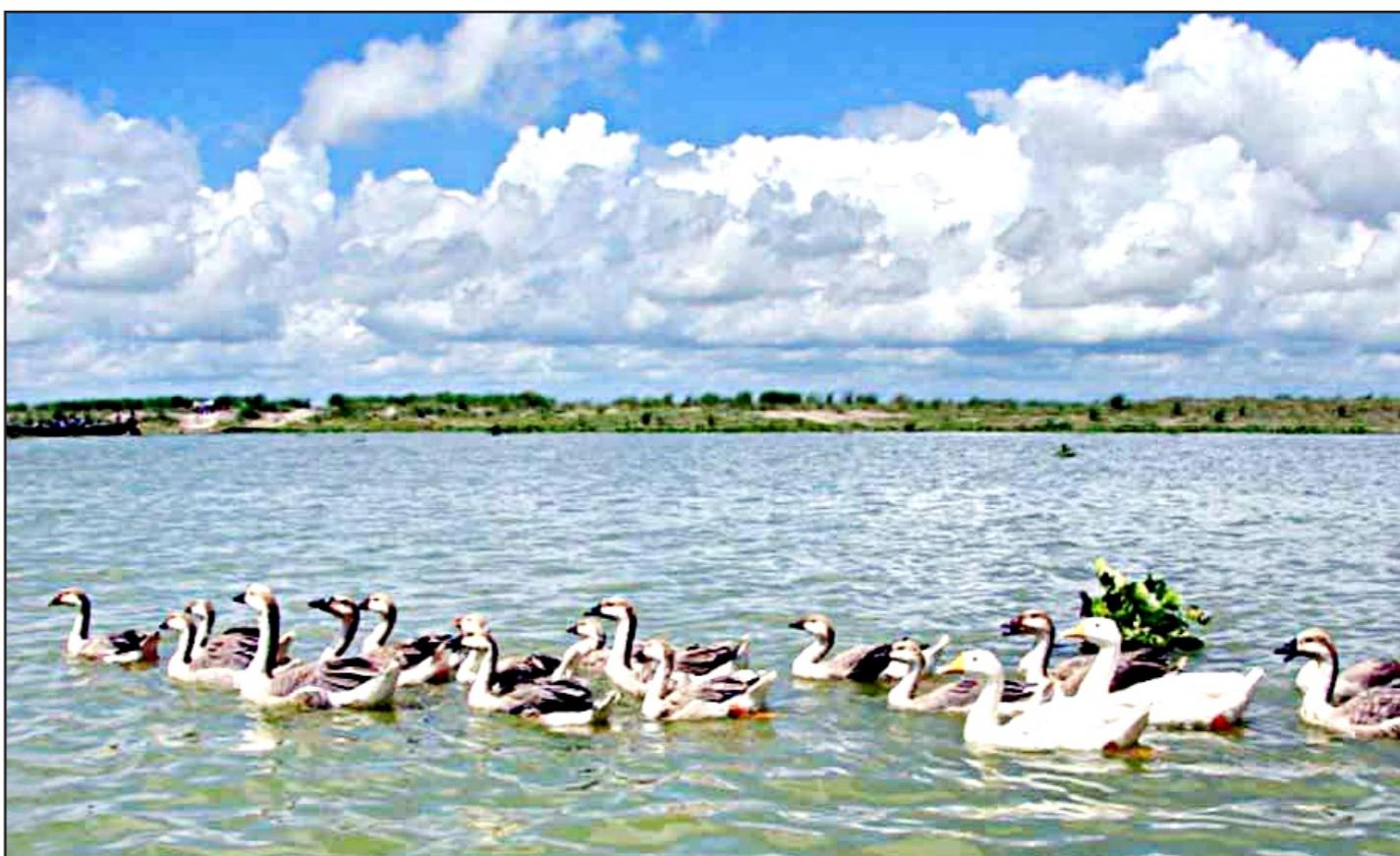


PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

A picturesqure scene on the Padma with white clouds hovering in the blue sky and geese swimming on gentle waters. The photo was taken from Rajshahi.

# Mindless sand lifting threatens Hardinge Bridge Guide Dump

Protests by locals, environmentalists go unheeded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Indiscriminate sand lifting from mighty Padma at Paksey in Ishwardi upazilla is threatening the guide embankment of Hardinge Bridge and the railway station.

A group of people linked with bigwigs in the immediate past ruling party is engaged in the illegal work for the last four years, sources said.

The ongoing sand lifting will soon threaten the Lalon Shah Bridge, they claimed. The sand lifting continues despite protests by local people and environmentalists.

Railway officials in Paksey said they urged the authorities to take steps to stop the illegal sand lifting, but to no effect.

"We urged Ishwardi Upazila Nirbahi Officer, police superintendents of Pabna and Kushtia several times to stop sand lifting from (Padma) river beds at strategic points near railway installations and bridges but it all went unheeded", Regional Manager Md. Amjad Hossain of Bangladesh Railway told this correspondent over phone on Saturday.

Written complaints were also submitted to Ishwardi Upazila Nirbahi Office, he added.

Talking to this correspondent, some local people alleged that a syndicate led by an influential local BNP leader is engaged in sand lifting from the river bed in Jhawdia, Diar Ruppur, he said.



PHOTO: STAR

Illegal sand lifting going on from the shoreline of the Padma in Paksey.

Bamogram and Shara areas, only two to five kilometers from the Paksey Hardinge Bridge.

The river bank has collapsed at several points in the area due to indiscriminate sand lifting, they claimed.

They said cracks have appeared on the railway guide dump at some points and it will be vulnerable during flood.

Md. Nazir Uddin, a contractor lifting sand said they took permission

from the mineral resources ministry in 2003.

When contacted, Paksey UNO Abu Bakr Siddique said he received an application from railway officials and sent it to higher authorities for action.

Over 200 mechanised boats also carry sand to different areas of the Pabna and adjoining districts.

Dredgers are also used to lift sand, they said.

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appeared on the railway guide dump at some points and it will be

vulnerable during flood.

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## 3 front ranking Bagerhat BNP leaders sued for extortion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Three top Bagerhat BNP leaders have been named as accused in an FIR of extortion case filed by a front ranking leader of the party's woman's front.

The FIR was lodged with Bagerhat Sadar police Station Saturday afternoon by Toufique Kalam, president of Bagerhat district Jatiyatabadi Mahila Dal.

The accused are senior vice-president of Bagerhat district BNP Ali Reza Babu, organising secretary Sheikh Nazrul Islam, president of Bagerhat district Sramik Dal Liaquat Ali Sarder.

Another person has also been accused in the case. He is clerk Saeed Hasan of Bagerhat Deputy Commissioner's office.

Complainant Trufika Kalam stated in her FIR that she was forced to pay Tk one lakh as toll by the accused on December 3, 2003.

She further stated in the FIR that the accused damaged her shop on that day and gave her death threat for not paying more Tk two lakh demanded by them earlier.

Ali Reza Babu and Sheikh Nazrul Islam are in Bagerhat Jail in connection with another case.

## Expatriate's wife killed, farmer injured in bomb attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

An expatriate's housewife was killed allegedly after rape in Kushtia and a farmer was injured when fleeing 'abductors' threw bombs at him in Meherpur Friday night, police said.

Shamima Akter Baby, 27, wife of Baki Billah was raped and killed by unidentified criminals at Char Cholodag village in Daulatpur upazila.

Police said, criminals abducted Baby by breaking open the door of her house. They took her to a nearby field where they slaughtered her after rape.

During the incident, a domestic help named Johnny, 30, was present at the house, police said. Police arrested him for interrogation. Baki Billah was living in Dubai for the last five years, they said.

In Meherpur Sadar, Farid Hossain 25, son of Aroz Ali of Belalta was injured seriously when criminals hurled bombs at him at about 11:30pm. Criminals attacked him as they failed to abduct him at gunpoint.

Farmer Farid was returning home from the adjacent Salikhia village. Hearing his cries, people rushed to the spot and took him to Meherpur General Hospital for treatment.

## ZIA FERTILISER TO UNDERGO REPAIR AGAIN BMRE plan overturned for unknown reasons

SHEIKH SHAHIDUL ISLAM, B'baria

Deviating from an earlier plan for BMRE (Balancing Modernisation Rehabilitation and Expansion) of Ashuganj Zia Fertiliser Company Limited (ZFCL), its authorities are going ahead with plan for repairing it, which will be of little use for keeping the 26 year-old machines operational.

The authorities are processing a 'development project proposal' (DPP) involving Tk 190 crore to repair the urea factory, the Managing Director of ZFCL said.

Sources said a BMRE decision was made earlier involving Tk 400 crore, of which Tk 190 crore was supposed to be given by the government and the rest from other sources as loan.

The factory falls silent off and on due to mechanical problems in different sections. It was kept shut for 82 days from July 10 last year till July 10 this year, incurring a production loss of 1,2,500 tonnes.

ZFCL was inaugurated in 1982 with a daily production of 1600 tonnes of urea fertiliser. It is now producing 1250 to 1350 tonnes a day, incurring heavy losses. It is also failing to achieve the annual production target given by

Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC).

An engineer seeking anonymity told this correspondent that repair again with Tk 190 crore will be of no use for the factory. BMRE is the only way to keep the old factory running for some years more, he said.

When contacted, ZFCL Managing Director Md. Osman Goni however observed that BMRE will take time. "We are supplying documents and relevant papers to the respective company gradually".

He said they are now busy with DPP which was approved by the government earlier.

"If the factory runs smoothly after DPP, why should we go for BMRE?", he said.

A factory cannot be termed old or dilapidated as because its faulty parts are changed regularly, MD said.

Production cost of urea at ZFCL has also increased because of huge production loss due to frequent technical problems, the sources said.

Production cost of urea at the factory is now Tk 6000 but the government sells it at Tk 4800.

## Election goes, pre-poll pledge goes with it

### A bridge at Khodra remains a dream

ABU AHMED, Sathkhira

An election pledge to construct a bridge on Kabodak river at Khodra made by political leaders on several occasions is yet to be fulfilled.

As polls pledges were flouted, local people staged agitation and submitted memorandum to authorities, but to no result.

BNP lawmaker Habibul Islam Habib elected from Tala-Kalaroa constituency pledged to construct a bridge there in his polls campaign in 2001. He was but he did not fulfil the pledge.

A bridge on the river at Khodra is a long cherished desire of over five lakh people of Kalaroa upazila in Sathkhira district and Keshabpur, Manirampur, Sharsha and Jhikargachha upazilas in Jessor district.

The bridge will also reduce the

distance between Jessor and Sathkhira by 16 kilometres and make road communication easier with Khulna.

The Khodra Setu (bridge) Implementation Committee staged demonstrations on several occasions at Kalaroa and submitted a memorandum to the then lawmaker Habib on November 12 in 2004 to press the demand.

Over 5000 people brought out a procession, formed human chain and held a rally at Kalaroa upazila headquarters on April 3 last year protesting 'inaction' of the then lawmaker Habibul Islam in this regard, convener of the committee Raju Ahmed said.

Talking to local journalists at Sathkhira Reporters Club recently, Raju urged the caretaker government to fulfil the long felt demand of over five lakh people of the area by taking up a project to construct

End of sufferings not in sight... People have to cross the Kobadar river every day with great trouble due to lack of a bridge at Khodra. Construction of a bridge there is a demand of over five lakh people of Kalaroa upazila in Sathkhira for long.



## MEDICINE 'SCAM' IN MAGURA DG health unhappy, warns of action

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

Director General (DG) of Health Directorate (HD) Dr Md Shahjahan Biswas paid a surprise visit to Magura civil surgeon's office, district reserve store (DRS) and the Sadar Hospital Saturday afternoon.

The visit followed a report on alleged medicine scam at the DRS medicine store published in The Daily Star earlier.

The DG held several meetings with health officials including the civil surgeon and expressed displeasure over the medicine scam, alleged lax health administration in the district and pitiable condition of the Sadar Hospital, sources said.

Dr. Shahjahan at a meeting with health officials expressed his surprise why the CS did not form a body to probe the medicine scam. He warned that action would be taken for such lapses.

The alleged medicine scam took place on the night of May 25 when police intercepted an ambulance and arrested its driver Zafar for carrying date-expired medi-

## KAILASHTILA WELL 6 Gas production to start shortly

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Production will begin in the newly drilled sixth well in Kailashtila gas field in a day or two.

It will add 20 MMCFD gas to the National Grid, sources in Sylhet Gas Field Limited (SGFL) told this correspondent yesterday.

Flow test of gas of the well at Golapganj upazila began Saturday afternoon in presence of Petrobangla Chairman Dr Sheikh Abdul Rashid. Bapex Managing Director Jamal Uddin, managing Director of SGFL Jahangir Kabir and Project-in Charge Khaza Ahmed.

Again, at 6 am yesterday, the flow test was started for 12 hours. The test may continue two-three days more with gaps, the sources said.

"We are satisfied with the preliminary test findings", the official said.

"Such technical tests are done to ascertain the well condition as well as to flare out the waste to make the well totally fit for gas production", he added.

Gas field officials on Saturday warned locals not to be worried or panicky as there is possibility of