

# Gone with the winds of change

Once 'blessed' visually impaired Nazrul and his three children today seek 'a little favour' to continue their treatment

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Four members of an ultra poor family of Peerpara village in Bangalipur union under Saidpur upazila of Nilphamari district are heading towards permanent blindness as they are deprived of the special treatment facility that they had started getting under the directive of the then chief advisor of last caretaker government.

Following a newspaper report in June 2008 that the father and three minor children of the family were becoming blind for want of proper treatment and nutrition, Fakhruddin Ahmed, the then chief advisor of former caretaker government directed the district administration to arrange better treatment for them.

The district administration promptly arranged taking the patients -- Nazrul Islam, 45, and his three children Mahbul, 12, Mohsin, 9, and Nadira, 5 -- to Dhaka and they were admitted to National Institute of Ophthalmology in Dhaka.

"They got treatment in that hospital under famous eye specialist Ibrahim Khalil. They were released from the hospital next month. In the



Faced with poverty, malnutrition and lack of treatment, Nazrul Islam and his three children are on the verge of complete blindness while his wife Mohsena Begum, who works as a domestic help, struggles to feed the family.

prescription, the physician concerned advised them to report to that hospital and take treatment after every three months," Mohsena Begum, wife of victim Nazrul Islam, told this correspondent.

Meantime, the caretaker government handed over power to the elected government after the national elections of December 29 in 2008.

"We waited for months to get a message from the

upazila or district administration to go to Dhaka for routine treatment as directed by physician but in vain," Mohsena Begum said.

After a few months, Mohsena along with her husband and three children met Saidpur upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) and requested her to take steps as per advice of the physician in Dhaka.

But the UNO told her that she had nothing to do in this regard.

As this correspondent recently visited the hapless family's hut that was built on others' land, he learnt that the three children had stopped going to school as their eyesight problem worsened.

Nobody gives Nazrul any work due to his serious visual problem while his wife, working as domestic help in neighbours' houses, struggles hard to maintain the family.

Contacted, Saidpur UNO Sabina Alam told this corre-

spondent that she did not get any fund from the government for helping Nazrul and his three children after arranging their treatment in Dhaka.

"I had contacted with several NGOs to find a way to rehabilitate them. I also directed the union parishad chairman concerned to include the family in any government programme for helping the poor. It would be unwise to say that former

chief advisor's directive was ignored after the political government came to power."

Musauddin Pramanik, chairman of Bangalipur union parishad, said, "Nazrul's Family was given a card under the government's vulnerable group development programme. But the help given against the card is not sufficient even to sustain the family, let alone their eye treatment."



PHOTO: STAR

## SNAPS AND SNIPPETS

### Schoolgirl murdered

UNB, Jhalakati

A schoolgirl was murdered by a teenage boy at West Chechri village in Kathalia upazila on Sunday. Police recovered the body of Tuli Hawlader, 8, student of class three and daughter of Swapan Hawlader of the village from a drain at midnight. Police arrested Polash Mridha in connection with the murder and with his help retrieved the body from the drain. Police said Polash, 14, is a neighbour of the victim. Polash said he threw a brickbat on Tuli while she was sitting in a garden Sunday afternoon. Tuli became senseless and presuming her dead, he said he tried to hide the body.

### Two to die for murder

UNB, Sherpur

A court here yesterday sentenced a man and his second wife to death in absentia for killing his first wife five years ago. The convicts are Nurul Amin Boitha, 59, a farmer of Basor Alga village in Nakla upazila and his second wife Anjuman Ara Begum. According to the prosecution, Nurul Amin aided by his second wife beat up his first wife Hasna Banu over promised dowry leaving her injured on February 18, 2005. The injured was at first taken to Sadar hospital and later shifted to Mymensingh Medical College and Hospital where she died the following day. Victim's brother Abdul Mannan later filed a case.

### 4 BNP men arrested

UNB, Sirajganj

Police in separate raids yesterday arrested four BNP activists from different areas in Belkuchi upazila in a case filed following a clash between Awami League and BNP activists. The arrestees are Abdur Razzak, 55, Kamrul Islam, 38, Abdul Momin, 28, of Somespur village and Moteleb Hossain, 60, of Bourabari village. AL and BNP activists clashed in the upazila Saturday leaving about 15 people injured. Faruk Hossain, a BCL worker injured in the clash, filed the case accusing 57 people.



PHOTO: STAR

Non-governmental organisation Eco Social Development Organisation (ESDO) brings out a large procession in Thakurgaon town yesterday marking 22nd founding anniversary of the organisation.

### 10 shops gutted

UNB, Bhola

At least 10 shops were gutted in a fire at Ghoshpatti in the town early yesterday. The cause of the fire could not be known immediately. Locals, however, assumed that the fire originated from an electric short circuit at a shop at 5:00am and soon engulfed nearby shops. On information, local fire service personnel rushed in and doused the blaze after three hours of hectic efforts at 8:00am. Locals estimated the extent of loss from the fire at about Tk 70 lakh.

### AL leader remanded

UNB, Natore

Police on Sunday took local Awami League (AL) leader principal Mahbulul Haque Bachchu on a two-day remand in a case filed following the AL factional clash at Rayna crossing in Boraigram upazila. On April 6, two groups, one led by Boraigram AL thana unit secretary Yakub Ali Hira and another by AL leader and principal of Boraigram Mohila Degree College Mahbulul Haque Bachchu, locked in a clash that left 10 people injured from the both sides. Gunshots and vandalism marked the clash which followed filing of cases against each other. Police later held Mahbulul on April 9 in this connection and produced him before the court on Sunday seeking five-day remand for interrogation. However, the court granted two days' remand.

### 50 injured in clash

UNB, Sylhet

At least 50 people, including policemen, were injured in a clash between two groups of villagers over a cricket match in Chhatak upazila of Sunamganj on Saturday. Locals said supporters of two teams - Muktiagaan Cricket Club and Bagbari Cricket Club - locked in a clash following altercation between the players of the two teams during a match at Chhatak Degree College ground at about 6:00pm. The clash soon spread among the villagers, who during the hour-long melee attacked each other leaving 50 people injured. The wounded were admitted to local health complex and Sylhet Osmani Medical College and Hospital.

### Youth electrocuted

UNB, Magura

A young man was electrocuted at Babukhali village in Mohammadpur upazila on Sunday morning. The deceased was identified as Prodig Biswas, 30, son of Akhil Biswas of the village. Family sources said Prodig came in contact with a live electric wire while he was repairing his house at about 10:00am leaving him critically injured. He was rushed to Sadar hospital where the attending doctors declared him dead.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Robi, a mobil service provider, arranged electricity supply in ten remote villages across the country with solar power on Pahela Baishakh, the first day of Bangla new year. Chief Marketing Officer Bidyut Kumar Basu and Head of Marketing Sonia Mahmood are seen at the opening of solar power supply at a house in remote Amtoli village under Manikganj district.

# Fate of Aila victims unchanged

Fresh areas flooded as breach of dike yet to be repaired

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Flood situation in eight Aila affected villages in Pratapnagar union under Assassuni upazila has deteriorated further as water continued to enter through the breaches of the embankment.

Water Development Board (WDB) authorities failed to repair about 200 feet of the dike that was devoured by the river.

Now fresh water from the Kholpetua River is flooding new areas during high tide.

Vast areas in the Aila affected villages in the union were flooded following collapse of embankment at Harishkhali point of the river due to violent tide on April 15.

The affected villages are Kurikaunia, Pratapnagar, Kalyanpur, Harishkhali, Moderbaria, Rayerbeel, Gar Komorpur and Banyatala.

Over 6,000 people of more than 125 families were

marooned forcing most of the victims to take shelter on high lands.

At least 356 shrimp enclosures in the area have been inundated and shrimp and other fishes worth Tk 20 lakh washed away, sources said.

Scarcity of safe drinking water is also prevailing there as almost all the tubewells have gone under knee-deep floodwater, Pratapnagar union parishad (UP) Chairman Abdul Mannan said.

He said the situation is deteriorating as no action has yet been taken to repair the embankment.

An official of Satkhira Water Development Board (WDB) said they tried to repair the breaches of the embankment but failed due to heavy current in the river.

Assassuni upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) Gias Uddin said the situation worsened as efforts of the locals to repair the collapsed embankment also ended in failure.



PHOTO: STAR

Water from Kholpetua River streaming in through the breached portion of the embankment at Harishkhali in Pratappur union under Assassuni upazila of Satkhira district.

# Safe drinking water remains elusive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Serious crisis of safe drinking water grips the people in all the 16 unions under Morelganj upazila of Bagerhat district.

Most of the deep and shallow tube-wells installed by Public Health Engineering Department have been lying inoperative since they were damaged by cyclonic storms Sidr and Aila accompanied by furious tidal surges in 2007

and 2009.

Water of the still functional tube-wells is not worth drinking due to salinity and arsenic contamination.

Excessive salinity also makes water of the local ponds undrinkable.

People have to walk for long under the scorching heat of the sun to fetch 'relatively safe' water from a few ponds and canals at far off places.

Due to the situation, water-borne diseases have

broken out in an epidemic form at Jiudhara, Nishanbaria, Khaulia and Baroikhali villages under Morelganj upazila.

Engineer Moniruzzaman Mian of Morelganj Public Health Engineering office said 2,539 of the 4,069 tube-wells are now out of order while water of rest 1,530 tube-wells are affected with salinity and arsenic contamination.

Crisis of safe drinking water has also taken an

alarming turn in a large coastal area of the Sundarbans as a pond named 'Birshreshtha Sipahi Mostafa Kamal Dighi' situated at Harbaria under East Wing of the Sundarbans Forest Division is the only source of safe drinking water there.

Thousands of people of coastal areas go to this pond by boat to fetch safe drinking water from the pond that was excavated in 1998 to meet requirement of drinking

water for forest staff, fishermen, bawalis as well as animals.

"This pond excavated under the supervision of Sundarbans Forest Division seems to be a wonder to us as its water is free from salinity and arsenic contamination. It meets the crying need of safe drinking water not only of people but also of animals in the forest," said Harbaria forest camp officer-in-charge Nayan Mistry.



PHOTO: STAR

People wait with containers at a water source, and a man carrying empty pitchers on a rickshaw van starts for a distant place to fetch drinking water in Morelganj upazila of Bagerhat district as people of the area, ravaged by cyclone Sidr and Aila, are still facing serious water crisis.