

# Doctors, staff lock hospital demanding arrear salary

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Magura*

Eight doctors and 57 other staff of Magura Sadar Hospital locked the hospital yesterday for an indefinite strike demanding payment of 72 months' arrear salaries and placing their job under revenue budget.

They also demanded resignation of the health minister for his alleged

failure to start payment of arrear salaries even after six months of the High Court order. Following a writ petition (9705/2007) filed by the doctors and staff, the High Court on October 25, 2009 ordered the health ministry to pay their arrear salaries.

The agitating doctors and staff locked the civil

surgeon's (CS) office and chambers of other doctors in the morning and staged a sit-in-front of the CS office. They also held a rally on the premises of the outpatient department and vowed to continue their strike until the demands were met.

Patients had to suffer a lot yesterday and most of

them were shifted to private clinics and hospitals in the town.

Sharif Shahabur Rahman, one of the agitating doctors, told this correspondent that they were compelled to go on strike as authorities turned a deaf ear to their problems despite the High Court order to pay their arrear salaries.

When contacted, Civil Surgeon Humayan Kabir Molla said he urged the higher authorities several times to resolve the problems of the eight doctors and 57 other staff, but to no effect.

Civil surgeon office sources said 76 staffs, including 11 doctors, were appointed in June 1998 under a development project to upgrade the 50-bed Magura Sadar Hospital to a 100-bed one.

After completion of the project in 2000, the staff faced irregularities in receiving their salaries as the finance ministry stopped allocation of fund for this project.

Nine of them, including three doctors, resigned in 2004 as they had to work without salary for several months, while two others died later on, sources said.



PHOTO: STAR  
Staff of Magura Sadar Hospital demonstrate in front of the hospital gate yesterday as they started an indefinite strike demanding payment of 72 months' arrear salary. Inset, the locked door of the civil surgeon's office during the agitation.



# Fishing in Kaptai Lake banned from today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rangamati*

Rangamati district administration has imposed a ban on fishing in Kaptai Lake for three months from today.

A letter was issued yesterday, instructing Bangladesh Fisheries Development Corporation (BFDC) to strictly enforce the ban.

The ban is enforced to facilitate breeding of fish fries in the lake during the period, BFDC sources said.

A total of 2508 fishermen who depend on the lake for their livelihood have been brought under VGF (Vulnerable Group Feeding) Programme for three months from May 10 to August 10.

During the period, each of them will get 30kg of rice a month under the VGF programme, sources in the district administration said.

The district administration has also banned fishing in front of BFDC landing Ghat, DC Bungalow, UNO office at Longud and in Parjatan areas for an indefinite period.

Though the authorities impose a ban on fishing in the lake every year, a section of fishermen with connivance of some dishonest fisheries officials catch fish in the lake defying the ban, sources alleged.



PHOTO: STAR  
A mother greets her daughter with flowers as the latter comes out after end of her classes at Pabna Collegiate School on International Mother's day yesterday.

# Water crisis acute in Barkal of Rangamati Pipelines damaged 15 years ago, lone fountain also drying up

SHANTIMOY CHAKMA, *back from Barkal in Rangamati*

Like every year, crisis of drinking water has turned acute in Barkal upazila head-quarter area during the ongoing dry season.

Around five thousand people of the locality use water from a hill fountain or Kaptai Lake for drinking and household works in absence of any alternative source.

As the soil of this area is rocky, no tube-well or ring-well has been installed there.

About 24 years ago, the

then upazila parishad set up pipelines to reach water to the residents at upazila sadar, said sources at the Department of Public Health Engineering, Rangamati.

But those pipelines got damaged about 15 years ago and since then no water technology like GFS (gravity flow system) was installed from government or non-government initiative.

The people often suffer from water born diseases like diarrhoea, jaundice and dysentery as they drink water from the open fountain

without boiling.

During a recent visit to the area, this correspondent found that the people are dependent on the water from fountains or Kaptai Lake for drinking and household works.

Use of water purification tablets is rare.

Flow of the fountain that runs from a hill has drastically fallen in this current dry season, adding to the suffering of the residents of nearby areas.

If the ongoing drought-like situation continues for

long, the lone fountain in the area may dry up, said villagers.

"For an hour I am holding my jar in the fountain water but it is yet to be full. It is time to go to school but I came here to fetch water to help my mother," said Anupama Chakma, a class ten student.

Rina Dewan, a teacher of Barkal Model Primary School, and housewife Smriti Chakma said their family members are often attacked with water-borne diseases.

They blamed the government officials and local public representatives for this.

"Fountain water sources are rapidly drying up due to jhum cultivation that leads to clearing of green trees and jungle. This can be revived through plantation of trees at the upper hill areas of the fountain. But some families, which are dependent on jhum farming, must be rehabilitated first for this purpose," Md Nurunnabi, an official of upazila nirbahi officer's office, said.

Barkal Sadar union parishad chairman Pravat Kumar Chakma said a project will be taken to repair water pipes in next financial year.

"We will try to cover this upazila next fiscal year if we get fund from GoB-UNICEF project. A GFS (gravity flow system) can be installed to address the water crisis," said Ashiur Rahman, sub-assistant engineer of DPHE.



PHOTO: STAR  
Two women try to fill their jars with water dripping from the lone hill fountain near Barkal upazila headquarters in Rangamati district.

# 26 shops gutted in Barisal, Kishoreganj

STAR NATIONAL DESK

At least 26 shops were gutted in fire in Kishoreganj and Barisal districts yesterday and the day before.

Six shops were gutted in a devastating fire at Nansri Madirbaper bazaar in Karimganj upazila of Kishoreganj yesterday.

Locals said the fire originated from the stationary shop of Sulayman Mia due to electric short circuit and soon engulfed adjacent shops of Habibur Rahman, Abul Hossain, Hadis, Abdul Ahad and Helal Uddin.

The owners of the shop claimed the fire damaged around Tk 50 lakh property, reports a correspondent.

In Barisal, a devastating fire that broke out at Shyampur bazaar in Bakerganj upazila early Saturday burnt down 20 shops and injured three people, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the fire broke out from an electric short circuit at a shop at about 2:00 am and gutted 20 shops including grocery, medicine, cloth, restaurant, stationary and confectionary.

Fire service team from Barisal rushed to the spot and extinguished the blaze after two hours of frantic efforts with the help of local people.

Three employees - Zahidul, 18, Rinku, 26, Shuva, 13, - who were sleeping inside the shops, received burn injuries. They were admitted to Bakerganj upazila health complex.

The affected shop owners said the extent of loss caused from the fire could go up to Tk 50 lakh.

# SYLHET BUSINESSMEN GIVE DEADLINE Shift trade fair venue within 24 hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Sylhet*

Businessmen in the city yesterday kept their shutters down till 12 noon and formed a human chain protesting the move to hold the local trade fair on Government Alia Madrasa ground.

In the morning, the business people in separate processions from different markets and shopping malls gathered at the Central Shaheed Minar. The human chain was formed from the Modhubon Market to Chouhatta area. Later they took out a big procession which paraded the city.

Sylhet Zila Bayboshayee Oikya Kalyan Parishad called the programme. It gave a 24-hour ultimatum to the authorities to shift the fair venue from Alia ground. Otherwise, a tougher agitation would be launched, the leaders threatened at a rally yesterday.

Parishad's president Sheikh Md Mokom Miah, also a UP chairman, chaired the brief rally held after the human chain while president of city unit of the parishad Abdus Salam and leaders from other market committees

spoke.

They vowed to go for tougher agitation if their demand to shift the venue not met in 24 hours.

Sources said, the Sylhet Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCI) is preparing to hold a month-long trade fair in the city's Alia Madrasa ground within a few weeks.

The authorities first decided to hold the fair at Uposahar field from 7 May. But it was changed and a decision was taken to arrange the fair on the madrasa ground. But due to objection from different quarters, the fresh date is yet to be finalised, said an official of the SCCI yesterday.

In the past too, the city's businessmen raised protests against holding trade fair at Alia ground.

The authorities in the face of protest were compelled to shift the fair venue to the MC College field a few years ago.

Besides, about a hundred people were injured as the businessmen and others clashed with cops during a protest procession.

# Moulvibazar transport strike postponed for 72 hours

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Moulvibazar*

The indefinite transport strike here has been postponed for 72 hours.

The Sylhet Division Transport Owners and Workers Unity Council, an organisation headed by local AL leader Syed Mofassil Ali enforced the indefinite strike from Thursday morning to realise their three-point demand.

Though the strike was called in four districts of Sylhet division, the transport owners of Sunamganj and Sylhet districts ignored the call.

"The strike will resume after 72 hours if our demands are not met within the period," said a leader of the organisation.

Syed Mofassil Ali, convener of the unity council

and a local leader of Moulvibazar Awami League said, his organisation at a meeting held on Saturday night decided to postpone the transport strike for 72 hours from Sunday morning.

The demands of the unity council included withdrawal of extortion case filed against Syed Mofassil Ali and 30 others, arrest of accused in the case filed by Mufassil's men and removal of officer-in-charge (OC) of Moulvibazar Sadar police station.

Sources said, although the other transport owners are not supporting the strike called by the council, they are compelled to join the strike as Syed Mofassil is a powerful leader of local AL having more than 50 minibuses and other transport vehicles on local routes.

# 4 suspected Hizbut militants arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

Villagers yesterday captured four women, allegedly the members of outlawed 'Hizbut Tawhid,' at Shahapur of Ishwardi upazila.

The mob caught them on suspicion when they were selling 'Dazzal,' a book of their organisation. Later they handed the four over to Ishwardi police.

The four women are Rahima Khatun, Roma Khatun, Suborna Khatun and Joly Khatun of Lakhmikumunda village of Ishwardi upazila under the district, police said.

Officer-in-charge of

Ishwardi police station Md Samiul Alam said the four middle-aged women were selling 'Dozzal,' a book to the villagers.

People caught them and handed them over to police on suspicion that they belong to Hizbut Tawhid. Police is investigating the matter, the OC said.

Pabna police superintendent (SP) Jamil Ahmed told this correspondent that police are verifying the arrestees' claim that they are members of a registered organisation.

"We are now trying to know which organisation they belong to and whether it is a legal, our said the SP.

# Bogra hartal passes off peacefully

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Bogra*

An eight-hour hartal called by BNP in Bogra protesting the killing of its leader Zakir Hossain in Nature on his way to the Wednesday's grand rally in Rajshahi passed off peacefully yesterday.

BNP activists brought out processions and held rallies at different points of the district town in the morning.

Though the hartal passed off peacefully in Bogra town, the BNP activists damaged four vehicles in Shibganj and Tinmatha on the outskirts of the district town.

Vehicular movement on Dhaka-Bogra and Bogra-Rangpur highways remained

stopped, shops and educational institutions were closed and attendance in private offices was thin during the hartal that began at 6:00am.

Additional police were deployed in the town to maintain law and order during the hartal. Hartal supporters put up barricade on the road in Mohastangarh area, but law enforcers later removed it.

Zakir Hossain, joint convener of BNP Garidaha union under Bogra's Sherpur upazila, was killed and many others were injured when a BNP convoy came under attack at Singra in Nature on its way to party's grand rally in Rajshahi on Wednesday.



PHOTO: STAR  
Bamboo support is used to prevent the branches of mango trees bent with the fruits at many orchards in Rajshahi, famous for producing tasty varieties of the summer delicacy. The photo was taken recently from an orchard owned by Rajshahi University botany Professor Manjur Hossain at Bhadra in Rajshahi city.