

Coolie looks after railway station, vendor sells ticket!

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Six of the 10 railway stations in Parbotipur-Chilahati railway section under Western Zone of Bangladesh Railway (BR) have remained virtually closed for long due to manpower crisis.

A coolie and an attendant now 'look after' two of the practically abandoned railway stations while a tea stall owner sells ticket at another station.

Due to the situation, valuable rail equipment is being stolen while the government is deprived of revenue.

The closed stations are Belaichondi, Khairat Nagar, Darwani, Nilphamari College, Taranibari and Mirzaganj on 61 kilometre railway line in this section.

Only four station Saidpur, Nilphamari, Domar and Chilahati are still operational in the important railway line that can connect Saidpur Railway Workshop, Saidpur Airport, Uttara EPZ in Nilphamari Sadar and proposed Chilahati land port in Domar.

Once crowded Nilphamari College station is almost abandoned now.

"I have been working as a coolie at the station since 1988. I have also a betel leaf shop nearby. The only booking clerk posted here is working at Nilphamari station on deputa- tion. In his absence I look after the station as he gives me some money for the work," said Shaiful Islam, 40.

Sartaj Ali, an attendant at Taroni Bari station, told this correspondent that he looks after the station as none is posted there for long.

A big station in this section is Darwani Railway station. The children of surrounding villages usually play cricket on the rail tracks in front of the station. The windows, doors, sitting arrangements of its big



PHOTO: STAR

Earlier working as a coolie of Bangladesh Railway (BR), Saiful Islam has been 'looking after' virtually closed Nilphamari College station for a few years as the BR is too understaffed to set any stationmaster or clerk there.

waiting room went missing long ago.

As locals called in a man named Majjar Rahman from a nearby tea stall, he told this correspondent that he sells for commission tickets of a local train operated by a private company on contact with BR.

"The only stationmaster posted here is also working at Mirzaganj and Belaichondi stations. He sometimes comes here by a train and leaves the station after a short time. In his absence I look after the station," said Majjar.

Mizanur Rahman, a local resident said some people introducing themselves as railway men unscrewed rail signals, points and other valuables and took those away a few years ago. They also tried to uproot portions of the double line railway near the station but locals prevented it.

The big rail godown and its shade were sold in auction during the last BNP-led government, he added.

Khairat Nagar station to the south of Darwani station is under lock and key and no

railway man of any category paid a visit there in several years, locals said.

Belaichondi and Mirzaganj stations are two other closed down stations in this section.

Abdul Wahed Sarker, president of Nilphamari Chamber of Commerce and Industries, said, "Passengers including the business community in this region like to use railway as it is still regarded as cheap and safe mode of transport. We have repeatedly urged the higher authorities to renovate the closed down rail stations

and make them functional but to no effect."

"Forty railway stations including six of Parbotipur-Chilahati section under Western Zone of Bangladesh Railway are not in operation due to manpower shortage. The authorities recently started a recruitment process to appoint new employees to make the stations operational. A project is also under way to renovate the rail lines in this section," said AKM Mahbubul Alam, divisional manager of BR at Pakshi.

Joint survey of disputed Sylhet-Meghalaya borders begins Dec 7

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Joint survey of the disputed borders along Sylhet-Meghalaya will begin 7 December.

Land records officials of Bangladesh and India set the programme at a joint preparatory meeting on Wednesday at Tamabil check post.

The decision came with a view to resolving the nagging disputes over the borders like Dibir haor, Sripur, Tamabil, Sonarhat, Bichnakandi, Protappur and Lalakhal in Sylhet with the Indian state of Meghalaya.

Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet Abu Syed Mohammad Hashim told this correspon-

dent that the joint survey would initially cover 13 points on the border from Lobbachhara in Kanaighat upazila to Lalakhal and Dibir haor in Jaintapur upazila and Sonarhat in Kanaighat upazila. It will be held in presence of land officials and BDR, he added.

Sources said, border guards of both the countries locked in gun battles time and again on those frontiers as the Indian border guards and tribesmen attempted to forcibly occupy water bodies and farmlands there in the recent months.

Over a hundred people of the neighbouring areas sustained injuries while many had to keep away from their homesteads for days and

weeks even for months this year.

Even the BSF picked up a BDR man to the Indian territory and returned him after long hours, sources said.

The BDR chief and the BSF Inspector General visited the borders to calm the situation and agreed for a joint survey. The matter was also discussed at the regional border conferences and in the joint border working group meeting in Delhi and in Dhaka.

Deputy Director of Land Records Nilmoni Sinha led the Bangladesh side while Joint Director of Meghalaya and Land Survey Commission TS Sangma and Deputy Director Marwin took part in the preparatory meeting.

Ticket counter torched, bus vandalised as it hits lawmaker's car

UNB, Gazipur

Jubo League activists went berserk at Boronagar on Kaliganj bypass road as a bus hit the car of a lawmaker at Taltia in Kaliganj upazila yesterday morning.

They vandalised the bus of Chalanbeel Paribahan and also set fire to a bus counter at Boronagar at around 10:00 am.

Sources said a Dhaka-bound bus of Chalanbeel Paribahan from Bhairab hit the car carrying MP Meher Afroz Chumki of Gazipur-5 constituency while she was going to attend a programme in her constituency.

Although her car was damaged in the accident the MP escaped unhurt.

Agitated activists of Jubo League blocked the Tongi-Ghorashal regional highway for an hour soon after the incident.

According to a report from Narayanganj, Dhaka-Chittagong highway was blocked for two hours yesterday following death of a local in road accident at Lolati in Sonargaon.

The deceased was identified as Mojibur Rahman, 55, son of Abbas Ali of Lolati village at Kanchpur.

Police said an autorickshaw hit and seri-

ously injured Mojibur when he was crossing highway at Lolati on Friday afternoon.

He died at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital early yesterday after admission.

Angered at his death, local people blocked the highway for two hours, putting barricades at several points from Madanpur to Arahazar creating heavy traffic jam on both sides of the highway.

The blockade was withdrawn at 11:00am following assurance by the deputy commissioner that a footbridge would be built on the highway at Lolati soon.

Kids attend classes amid risk of life

PONUEL S BOSE, Narail

Students of Mirzapur Munshi Shahidur Rahman non-government registered primary school in Narail Sadar upazila attend their classes amid risk of life as cracks have developed in the roof and walls of the school building.

The school was built in 1994 on a 40 decimal land donated by Munshi Shahidur Rahman, former chairman of Jessore Zila Board. Narail local government engineering department spent Tk. 4.2 lakh on its construction.

Some big cracks have developed in the roof and plaster is falling off the ceilings in four classrooms.

Of the four teachers, headmaster Md Golam Taha and assistant teacher Md Sadek Ahmed went into retirement in February and July last year. Now the school is run by only two teachers--headmaster in-charge Md Ahadat Hossain Sardar and assistant teacher Sanjida Rahman.

Ahadat Hossain is always busy with office work while Sanjida has to maintain all the classes alone.

Last year, the number of students was over 200 and



PHOTO: STAR

Students attending class amid risk of life at the dilapidated Munshi Shahidur Rahman Primary School at Mirzapur in Narail Sadar upazila.

now it has reduced to 103 due to lack of teachers and the dilapidated condition of the school building.

Raju, a class three student,

said, "My parents don't allow me to go to the school for fear of incident." Headmaster in-charge Ahadat Hossain said he had sent a report to the

authorities concerned, but to no effect.

M Obaidur Rahman Rabi, chairman of the school managing committee, said the

students are attending their classes amid risk of life. He urged the authorities concerned to repair the school building as early as possible.

Burglary in Bagerhat

UNB, Bagerhat

Thieves took away cash and valuables from a house at Patilakhali village in Sadar upazila making the members of the house unconscious early Friday.

Locals said a gang entered the house of Bhagpati Prashanna Roy by a hole they made in the wall late at night.

They made Prashanna Roy, his wife Smriti Rani Roy, 38 and son Prabir Roy, 12 unconscious by spraying toxic gas on them and looted Tk 55,000 in cash and 10 tolas of gold ornaments.

Locals rescued the victims in the morning and rushed them to Bagerhat General Hospital.

In Pabna, a gang of robbers stormed into a house and looted valuables injuring four inmates at Islampur village in Sathia upazila on Thursday night.

Police said, the gang numbering 15/20 entered the house of Haji Kalu Bepari breaking the door open at midnight and looted cash, 40 tolas of gold ornaments, five mobile phone sets and other valuables worth Tk 16 lakh.

The muggers beat house owner Kalu, 80, his sons Bachchu, 55, Ibrahim, and Hazrat Ali, 45, mercilessly when they tried to resist them. They were admitted to a local hospital.

SNIPPETS

JMB man arrested

A CORRESPONDENT, Gopalganj

Police on Wednesday night arrested Obaidur Rahman Ibne Abdullah, brother of Sheikh Abdur Rahman, the executed kingpin of JMB from Islampara area of the city. He was placed before the District Chief Judicial Magistrate court Justice Dilip Kumar Bhoumik Thursday afternoon and the court sent him to jail. Office-in-charge Borhan Uddin of Sadar police station said a team of patrol police arrested him while he was moving suspiciously in Islampara area in the evening. Obaidur is the main accused in a case filed against him for bomb attack on a catholic church in Baniarchar which left 10 killed and 50 injured.

Murder in Chuadanga

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Criminals murdered a man in Bademazu village in Alamdanga upazila in Chuadanga. The victim was identified as Zafar Ali, 25, son of Ahad Ali of the same village. Police recovered his slaughtered body on Wednesday. Zafar was a carpenter. Police said Zafar left for his workplace in Housepur area in Alamdanga upazila on Tuesday morning. Police said Zafar left the work place at about 6:30 pm for home on Tuesday and since then he was missing. Locals found Zafar's body at Khasbhui field on Wednesday afternoon. Police sent the body to Chuadanga Sadar Hospital for autopsy. A case has been filed in this regard.

Cattle drown in Jamuna

A CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

At least 28 cattle drowned and four cattle traders injured when an engine boat capsized in the Jamuna river in Sadar upazila of the district Thursday morning. Police and local sources said seven cattle traders along with 33 cattle on board an engine boat were going to Gopindashi market from Motishaheb terminal of Sadar upazila. At around 7:00am a sand laden trawler collided head on with the boat. All the passengers of the boat swam ashore but 28 out of 33 cattle drowned.

280 saplings destroyed in Natore

A CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Criminals destroyed around 280 mango and mahogany saplings at Shukulapati area under Sadar upazila of the district on Wednesday night.

Shamsul Islam Jewel, brother of Sirajul Islam said, his brother Sirajul bought 80 decimal of land at a point between Shibdur village and Islamibari village and planted 200 mango and 80 mahogany saplings.

On Wednesday night, a gang of criminals entered his garden and destroyed all the saplings with sharp weapons causing an estimated loss of Tk 2 lakh.

36 houses gutted in Khulna, hostel rooms in Barisal

UNB, Barisal

Four rooms of Debendranath Ghosh Student Hostel adjacent to city's BM College were gutted in a fire on Friday evening.

Fire service sources said the fire originated from an electric short circuit at a room of the hostel and soon engulfed three other rooms at about 5:20pm while none was inside the room.

On information, fire fighters rushed to the spot and extinguished the blaze with the help of local people.

Some 14 students of BM College were residing in those four rooms of the hostel located in Natun

Bazaar area.

The belongings of the all 14 resident students of the hostel including, clothes, books, academic papers and documents were gutted in the fire.

In Khulna, a devastating fire gutted 36 dwelling houses and valuables at the workers colony of an auto-rice mill in Labanchara area of the city Friday afternoon.

City's Tutpara Fire Station officer Ariful Haque said the fire originated from the kitchen room of a worker and soon engulfed the other houses of the colony of rice mill of Kazi Sobhan Hossain at about 1:30pm.

Three fire fighting units from Tutpara Fire Station rushed to the spot and doused the fire with the help of local people.

Ariful Haque said some 33 houses of the colony and three neighboring area houses were gutted by the fire.

He said two workers sustained burn injuries while trying to put out the blaze. The extent of loss from the fire was estimated at Tk 12 lakh.

Local MP and BNP city unit president Nazrul Islam Manju visited the spot and distributed food and clothes among the fire victims.

Outlaw held in Meherpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Police arrested a member of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-ML) faction Janajuddho from Nawdapara village in Gangni upazila of Meherpur early Thursday. The arrestee was identified as Badar Uddin alias Bodu, 29, of Nawdapara, a bomb-maker of the party.

Acting on a tip off, a team led by officer-in-charge (OC) of Gangni police station raided the village and arrested Bodu from a road at about 5:00am. Police said Bodu was one of the culprits who were making bombs at a house in the village on November 13.

One of his accomplices, Lulu Mia, was injured as a bomb suddenly went off, they said adding that police later arrested Lulu with his right hand blown away and recovered 13 bombs from a field at Nawdapara.



PHOTO: STAR

Poets from home and abroad pledge for peace, love, humanity, aestheticism and creativity during the inaugural session of the three-day poetry festival at Central Shaheed Minar in Cox's Bazar town yesterday.