

AWFULLY SLOW, IRREGULAR SERVICE

Trains do not attract people of Kurigram anymore

ABDUL WAHED, Kurigram

Once popular among common people, train journey now repulses most of the passengers in Kurigram district as the cheap mode of transport has become awfully slow and irregular due to ramshackle rail lines.

More than one hundred shopkeepers and restaurant owners at eight railway stations in Kurigram district have changed their business during the last few years as their customers, mostly trains passengers, are much less due to irregular train service.

There are eight railway stations on 53-km railway line in the district. The stations are Singerdabri, Rajarhat, Tagraihat, Kurigram, Pachpir, Ulipur, Balabari and Ramna.

About 15 years ago, one mail train from Parbatipur Railway Junction in Dinajpur district and another local

train from Lalmonirhat Railway Junction plied the railway route two times everyday.

Then the railway stations remained busy as a large number of local passengers used train for movement while a good number of people ran restaurants, tea-stalls, groceries and dispensaries in the station areas.

About seven years ago, the earth under the railway lines got loose due to heavy rainfall and lack of proper care. Consequently, the train service on the route became irregular, prompting local passengers to opt for movement by bus, despite its much higher fares.

As the shopkeepers' sale drastically fell for want of customers, they changed their business. About 35 traders in Kurigram station area, seven at Singerdabri station, 12 at Rajarhat station, five at Tagraihat station, six at Pachpir station,

15 at Ulipur station, eight at Balabari station and 25 at Ramna station stopped their business during the last few years.

"I sold my hotel here eight years ago as I had to incur losses in absence of customers, who were mainly train passengers. Due to irregular train service, the number of passengers has seriously fallen at the station," said Md Tamir Uddin, 57, who earlier ran a hotel at Kurigram Railway Station area.

Md Mojibur Rahman, 53, also closed his hotel business at Kurigram station seven years ago. He now works as an electric mechanic.

"Tk 6 is taken as fare for Ramna-Kurigram route, Tk 10 for Kurigram-Rangpur and Tk 15 for Ramna-Rangpur route from a train passenger whereas a bus passenger has to count Tk 35, Tk 65 and Tk 100 cover

the distances. But most passengers avoid train journey," said Kurigram Railway Station Master (in-charge) Md Kabir Hossain.

"About 20-km rail line from Pachpir station to Ramna station is not fit for proper movement of trains. And so, the schedule for train cannot be maintained. Besides, train service in Kurigram district is being hampered due to shortage of railway engines and drivers," he added.

Railway Divisional Traffic Superintendent in Lalmonirhat Division Md Mostafijur Rahman told this correspondent through cell phone, "Arrival of train is delayed as it has to run only 10km per hour on Pachpir-Ramna line. Repair work of the line is going on. The work is likely to be complete this year. Process is also on to appoint necessary staff."



PHOTO: STAR

Kurigram Railway Station gives a deserted look as the cheap and once popular train journey has become awfully slow and irregular due to rundown rail lines in the district, making the passengers opt for alternative mode of transport.

Barisal University announces its first admission schedule

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Barisal University (BU), the only general public university of the division and 33rd public university in the country, Sunday evening announced its admission schedule for the first batch under 2011-12 academic session.

The schedule was announced after the meeting of the admission committee presided by vice chancellor of the university Prof Dr Harunor Rashid Khan.

According to the decision, 65 students in Mathematics department under Science faculty, 65 in English department under Humanities, 65 each in Economics and Sociology

under Social Science, 70 each in Marketing and Business Management of Business Studies faculty, would be admitted.

Application forms would be available from the website and office of the university from September 21. Those would be accepted till October 20 with Tk 300 for each form to appear at the admission test.

GPA-7.5 in SSC and HSC results without fourth subject for science (Ka-unit), GPA-6.5 for humanities and social science (Kha-unit) and GPA-7 for business (Ga-unit) faculty subjects would be required to qualify for admission test while 80 marks would be counted for HSC and SSC results.

Those who passed SSC

and HSC examinations not before 2007 and 2009 are eligible to apply.

A 100-mark written admission test in MCQ system would be held on December 2 and selected candidates qualifying in written test would appear for a 20-mark viva.

The university authority also decided to take steps for appointing teachers as per BU Act and starting classes as per schedule of other public universities.

At least 24 teachers would be appointed in first phase following the BU Act and advertisement for appointing them would be published within this month, sources at BU said.

Classes would start on the temporary campus of the university at Barisal Zila

School, till completion of the permanent campus at Karnakathi on the eastern bank of the River Kirtonkhola in Sadar upazila of the district, the BU VC said.

All students would be awarded scholarship and a trust would be formed to collect scholarship fund for attracting admission of meritorious students at BU, he added.

It will take 3-5 years to complete the construction of infrastructure of the BU on 50 acres of land at Karnakathi village at a cost of Tk 95 crore, the VC further said.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina laid the foundation there on February 22 this year.

Eight kids drown in four districts

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Eight children including two siblings drowned in ponds and rivers in Gazipur, Chuadanga, Kushtia and Moulvibazar districts yesterday, Sunday and the day before.

In Gazipur, three school children including two siblings drowned at Korihata village under Kapasia upazila yesterday, reports our correspondent.

The deceased are Roktim, 11, son of Momen Master and his younger sister Aysha Siddika, 9, and their cousin Ashik, 10, who came to visit their family recently. They were studying in classes six, four and five.

Abul Mohsin, uncle of the deceased said four children went missing around 12:30pm yesterday. After a hectic search for an hour, locals found Jishan, one of the missing four.

Later, as per Jishan's statement, locals started searching a ditch near Momen Master's house

where they found the other missing children and took them to Kapasia health complex. However, the on-duty doctor declared them dead.

In Chuadanga, Class-III student Nayem and Class-I student Rizvi drowned. They were cousins. In another incident, Class-III student Ashik drowned in Kushtia.

Nayem, 11, son of Anwarul Islam and Rizvi, 7, son of Abdur Rashid of Sadar upazila in Chuadanga went to the Mathabhanga river with their uncle Zinarul at about 12:30pm. Zinarul went there to bathe his cows, reports our Kushtia correspondent.

After bathing the cattle, Zinarul could not find his nephews and thought that they had returned home.

When Zinarul told the matter to the family members, they launched a search in the area but failed to trace them.

Locals later found their bodies floating in the

river around 5:30pm.

In Kushtia, Ashik, 8, son of Fitar Ali of Muslimnagar in Daulatpur upazila, went for a walk on the bank of Padma river at about 3:00pm and suddenly fell into the turbulent water.

Ashik's body was found at about 5:30pm at a shoal of the river.

In Moulvibazar, two girls drowned in a pond at Kalapur village under Srimongal upazila on Saturday afternoon.

They victims were identified as Nasrin Akther, 8, daughter of Sufian Miah of Kalapur village and Bilkis Begum, 10, daughter of Abdul Jalil of the same village, reports our correspondent.

According to local people and family sources, the two girls went out of homes in the afternoon. As they did not return after a long time, family members started searching here and there.

At about 6pm, locals saw their bodies floating in the pond of local Kalapur Hafiziya Madrasa.



PHOTO: STAR

Residents of 12 Indian enclaves inside Panchagarh district bring out a procession in Panchagarh town yesterday demanding early solution to their problem through India-Bangladesh enclave exchange deal to be signed during Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Sing's two-day visit to Bangladesh beginning today.

Enclave people upbeat as two neighbours ink deal today

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Thousands of people living in enclaves inside Bangladesh and India are eyeing a new life as the two countries are set to sign a bilateral deal to exchange the adversely possessed lands during Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Sing's two-day visit to Bangladesh starting today.

The enclave people expressed hope that the bilateral deal to be signed in line with the India-Bangladesh land boundary agreement of 1974, popularly known as Indira-Mujib Pact, will enable them to get all the rights and facilities as lawful citizens, reports our Thakurgaon correspondent.

During this correspondent's visit to Garati enclave adjacent to Hafizabad and Haribhasha union parishads under Panchagarh Sadar upazila on Sunday, the residents described their miserable life in absence of basic rights for decades.

"The enclave people live in awful conditions amid lack of adequate employment opportunity, infrastructure, educational institutions, electricity and medical facilities. Most of the people are living below poverty level," said Abdul Latif Sarkar, chairman of Garati Enclave Sarbamongal Committee.

Freedom fighter Md Ayub Ali, Ansar Ali and others said they are hopeful of living a healthy life with basic amenities as citizens after exchange of the enclaves between two countries.

According to a recently conducted joint survey of the two countries, Bangladesh has 51 enclaves comprising around 3,000 acres of adversely possessed land inside India while India has 111 enclaves comprising 3,500 acres of such land inside Bangladesh.

Indian enclaves inside Bangladesh are situated in Panchagarh, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram and Nilphamari four districts while all of the Bangladeshi enclaves are in Indian Cooch Behar district.

Around a thousand people living in Indian enclaves

inside Panchagarh district brought out a procession in Panchagarh town and placed a memorandum to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina through the deputy commissioner of Panchagarh yesterday demanding immediate solution of the enclave issue.

Our Lalmonirhat correspondent reports: Enclave people are in all smiles with the prospect of ending their misery as India and Bangladesh are going to sign a deal to exchange the adversely possessed lands during the Indian prime minister's visit.

"With signing of the bilateral deal to exchange the enclaves, we will get all the facilities as Bangladeshi citizens," said Johir Ali, a

resident of Sreerampur enclave in Burimari union under Patgram upazila.

"Becoming free from a restricted life so far remained a dream for me. Now I hope to see its materialisation," Amzad Hossain, 70, a resident at enclave Bhitorkuti of Kulaghat union in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, said.

Our Kurigram correspondent adds: Indian enclave people in Bangladesh territory yesterday held a rally and placed a memorandum to the deputy commissioner (DC) of Kurigram demanding implementation of the Indira-Mujib Pact of 1974 during Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Sing's two-day visit to

Bangladesh.

The people from 11 Indian enclaves in Kurigram district came to the ground of Majida Adarsha Degree College in Kurigram town at 11:30am. Around one hundred people in a procession paraded to the DC office premises, held a rally there and submitted a memorandum to the DC.

They demanded early exchange of the enclaves and ensuring citizens' rights for all the residents there.

The people of Bangladeshi enclaves inside India also observed similar programmes there on the same issue, said Phulbari Sadar union parishad Chairman Md Moynul Haque.



PHOTO: STAR

The gate at Tin Bigha Corridor, the doorway to Dahagram-Angorpota, will now remain open round the clock, much to the relief of the residents of the Bangladeshi enclave inside Indian territory. Bangladesh and India are set to sign a deal on the matter along with quite a few other bilateral issues during Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Sing's two-day visit beginning today.

Kishoreganj BNP factional fight leaves 50 injured

UNB, Kishoreganj

At least 50 people were injured in an infighting of the local unit BNP over formation of Karimganj upazila unit convening committee at Patmahal in Karimganj Bazar yesterday.

One faction, led by Rafiqur Rahman, former president of Karimganj BNP, declared former education minister and BNP chairperson Khaleida Zia's advisor Dr Osman Faruk persona non

grata in Karimganj after the two-hour-long clash.

Party sources said a 71-member Karimganj upazila unit convening committee, backed by central leader Osman Faruk, was announced by the district convening committee chief advocate Fazlur Rahman on Sunday which angered Rafiqur Rahman.

Rafique and his supporters, equipped with lethal weapons, attacked the new convening body members at

the party office at Patmahal at 4pm, triggering a series of clashes between two rival groups leaving 50 injured on both sides.

Being informed, police rushed in and brought the situation under control at 6 pm.

Angered at being discarded by central leaders, Rafique in a briefing declared former minister Dr Osman persona non grata in the upazila.

MP slaps principal, regrets

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Lawmaker of Thakurgaon-3 constituency and also central leader of Jatiya Party Hafizuddin Ahamed assaulted Ranishankoil Degree College Principal Md. Tofiluddin on Sunday afternoon for felling some trees of the college.

Principal Tofiluddin told this correspondent that the college governing body was scheduled to hold a meeting on Sunday afternoon at

3:00pm. As per the schedule, lawmaker Hafizuddin Ahmed came to the college at 3:40pm.

After reaching the college, he straight went to the backyard of the college where some trees were felled and later sold as per the decision of the managing committee.

Returning from there, the lawmaker slapped the principal and claimed that the felled trees were on his land.

The principal told this

correspondent that the trees actually belonged to the college, not the lawmaker.

After the incident, other members of governing body of the college tried to amicably settle the issue.

Contacted, lawmaker Hafizuddin Ahamed said that the incident occurred due to a 'misunderstanding'.

He however claimed some trees on his land were also cut down. He also regretted that assaulting the principal was not right.