

## Cold wave to continue

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already sent a fresh requisition for 20,000 blankets.

Our Rangpur correspondent reported that three newborn babies and an elderly died at Rangpur Medical College Hospital in the last two days.

The babies were aged between one and five days. Another, Ashraf Alami of Guptapara in Rangpur town died at 55.

Toufiqul Islam, director at the hospital, said the cold weather caused their deaths. "The babies could have been saved if the incubators of the hospitals were functional," he added.

In Kurigram, eight people died in cold-related diseases within the last 48 hours. Civil Surgeon Dr Reazul Islam, however, said none died from cold-related ailments in the district within the last 48 hours.

The Met Office said 7.8 degrees Celsius was recorded as minimum temperature here yesterday. The dead are Babar Ali, 72, and Anjuara Begum, 40, of Nageswari upazila, Khaibor Ali, 65, Nural Haque, 90, Rashedul Islam, 25, of Kurigram Sadar upazila, Aigar Ali, 70, and Fulbabu, 28, of Ulipur upazila, and Abed Ali, 70, of Rajarhat upazila, our Kurigram correspondent reported.

Residential Medical Officer at Kurigram Sadar Hospital Dr Nazrul Islam said, "A total of 168 patients including 27 children have been admitted in the hospital. The children and the diarrhoea units of the hospital have been covered with polythene paper to protect patients from cold winds."

## Chinese activist jailed for nine years

AFP, Beijing

Veteran Chinese rights activist Chen Wei was sentenced yesterday to nine years in jail for "subversion", his lawyers said, in one of the harshest penalties handed down in a crackdown launched this year.

Chen, who was a leader of the 1989 Tiananmen democracy protests, was among dozens of activists detained in February in the wake of political upheaval in the Arab world that sparked calls for anti-government demonstrations in China.

The court in Suining city in southwest Sichuan province convicted the 42-year-old after a trial lasting less than three hours over essays he had written that were critical of the Communist Party, China Human Rights Defenders said.

The sentence, for "inciting subversion of state power" was one of the toughest handed down so far to an activist detained in this year's crackdown, the group said.

After it was read out in court, Chen shouted out that he was innocent and declared "democracy will definitely prevail and dictators will definitely fall", his lawyer Liang Xiaoju told AFP.

Chen does not plan to appeal the sentence "because he feels this is a political sabotage and he does not want to perform any more pantomimes," Liang added.

Dacop UNO Abdul Halim said elderly people might have died of cold-related diseases.

Khulna District Administrator Jamshed Ahmad Kandakar said 2,000 blankets were distributed among the cold-hit people in nine upazilas of the district.

He said several thousand more blankets would be distributed among the people.

## Checking dropouts

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bad condition of the road to herschool.

But she has not missed any classes this year after the road got repaired.

Atiqur Rahman, headmaster of the school, said most students now come to school in the rainy season but the attendance hovered around 70-75 percent during the same period before the road was repaired.

The children's park in the school is an additional attraction for students, he added.

Several students were found waiting for their turn to get on a swing at Hosnabad Government Primary School. Many of them come to school early to play on the swings.

Rafiqul Islam, a student of class-IV of Naijirpur Government Primary School, said their playground used to go under water in the rainy season. It was developed last year, and now they can use it all year round.

Rezaul Karim, headmaster of Madanpura Government Primary School, said the parishad's initiative helped increase attendance rate in his school. Now about 93 to 97 percent students attend classes, while it was 80 to 85 percent a year ago.

Sher-E-Gulkhan, headmaster of Nurainpur Government Primary School, said the children's park of the school has brought a big change. The attendance rate went up to more than 90 percent from below 80 percent.

Upazila Chairman Engineer Mojibur Rahman

said they are setting up children's park on school playgrounds to provide students with leisure facilities on instructions from Patuakhali-2 lawmaker ASM Feroz, also whip of the Jatiya Sangsad.

The parishad is spending about Tk 50,000 on each children park from its own fund. The project started in January 2010 and will end by December next year.

"We have already re-excavated 36 school ponds. Of them, 10 have been brought under fish cultivation with fisheries department's help. Another 63 will be re-excavated by next year," said Mojibur, who last year received an award from the prime minister for his role in promoting primary education in his area.

"We will take another programme to grow seasonal vegetables on unutilised school land. The profits from the sale would go to poor and helpless students for buying books and stationery," he said.

The parishad published a 472-page book Tathyakanika. It contains names of all educational institutions in the upazila and information on students and teachers.

"We have already distributed the book to all educational institutions in the area. It will help students get in touch with each other. Upazila officials will also be able to communicate with any teachers or institutions by using the information provided in the book," said Mojibur.

Md Ibrahim, upazila primary education officer, said "We are getting good results from these steps." Now most students go to school that has become a more interesting place for them, he added.

## ACC quizzes Abul

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the experts involved in the project's tender evaluation process and are expected to submit their reports soon.

"We are also going through various documents of the project and asked participating companies to show evidence if there were any irregularities in the bidding procedures," said one of the officials involved in questioning Abul.

"We quizzed Abul Hossain to know what he has to say in self-defence as the allegations involve his name," the official said before mentioning the minister's denial of the allegation.

This is for the first time an incumbent minister in Bangladesh has been quizzed by the ACC on corruption charges. His party, the Awami League, is ruling the country with absolute majority.

Abul was removed from the communications ministry earlier this month and was given the ICT ministry.

The anti-graft body officials claimed that it was their own decision to quiz Abul in the investigation initiated following weeks of media outcry and a World Bank letter to the finance ministry regarding the corruption allegation.

Abul had told the ACC officials that no individual or organisation in the world would be able to prove corruption in the Padma bridge project.

"I maintained the highest level of transparency and honesty in my work during my time as the communications minister. None can prove irregularities in my activities," he told The Daily

Star over the telephone yesterday.

He said the government can release all documents of his work on the internet so that everyone can judge. "Inshallah, truth will be revealed in future and you will see how transparent and honest I am."

The WB in November this year, in an official reply to the ACC, hinted that officials of Canadian SNC-Lavalin, a bidder for the main bridge's construction supervision job, agreed with government officials on paying money to obtain the job.

Following the WB's request, Canadian police is investigating the allegation against Lavalin.

Earlier, the WB, the lead financier of the project, suspended its funding in the project bringing allegation of corruption against Abul, stalling construction of the much-cherished bridge.

The WB is providing \$1.2 billion, Asian Development Bank \$615 million, Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) \$400 million and Islamic Development Bank \$140 million for construction of the bridge.

An investigation report by the Integrity Vice-Presidency (INT) of WB Group revealed that Abul and senior representatives of his family-owned company SAHCO tried to coerce multiple companies into using SAHCO as a paid "silent agent" for getting permission to bid for the main bridge contract.

Companies failing to cooperate were threatened with retaliation, said the report. As these witnesses feared physical and economic reprisal, they only

spoke to INT with the promise of confidentiality. INT interviewed representatives of multiple companies.

WB's Integrity Vice-President Leonard F McCarthy, on September 21, handed over a highly confidential letter and the INT report to Finance Minister AMA Muhih in Washington.

In vehement rejection of the report Abul then said some foreign companies and their local agents, who had been rejected by the technical evaluation committee, made up stories and fed the WB so that the project is delayed and a scope for re-tender is created.

On SAHCO, he said, "The company is not new, it has been around for a while and has been involved in business with reputation. Since my resignation from the post of the managing director of the company following my appointment as a minister, SAHCO has been run by a competent Board of Directors and officials."

The 6.15km-long bridge over the Padma and 3.68km approach roads on both the sides will connect the country's 19 south-western districts with the capital. The bridge will have road traffic on the upper level and rail on the lower.

The feasibility study and design of the Padma bridge were completed in 2010 and the construction work was supposed to begin this year with a target of finishing it by 2014.

The government by this time has spent over Tk 1,000 crore for the design, land acquisition, compensation and rehabilitation of the affected people.

## Eastern Bank Ltd.

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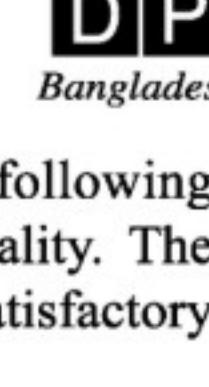
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### Promotion of Development and Confidence Building in the Chittagong Hill Tracts



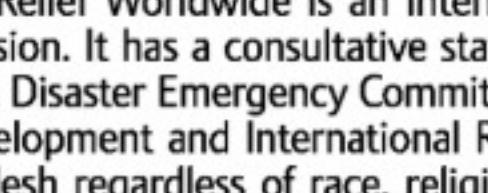
**United Nations Development Programme** in Bangladesh announces vacancy for the following position for "Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility" under "Service Contract" modality. The duration of the contract is one year initially and subject to renewal on an annual basis upon satisfactory performance and availability of Funds.

#### Advocacy Officer - 1 position

For details of the Terms of Reference and instructions to apply, please visit our website: <http://www.undp.org.bd/jobs>. Hard copy of the TOR can be collected from UNDP-CHTDF Offices of Dhaka, Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban. Applications should be submitted no later **January 9, 2012**

**"Only short-listed candidates will be contacted. Submitted documents will not be returned to the applicants"**

**"Qualified female candidates are strongly encouraged to apply"**



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Islamic Relief Worldwide is an International Development Organization established in 1984 and registered with the UK government charity commission. It has a consultative status with UN Economic and Social Council. It is a member of Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies (CBHA), Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC), European Confederation of Development and Relief NGOs (CONCORD), British Overseas NGOs for Development and International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement. Islamic Relief Worldwide-Bangladesh (IRW-B) started its works in Bangladesh regardless of race, religion and gender and is involved in nation-building since 1991. Islamic Relief seeks to promote sustainable economic and social empowerment by working with local communities in times of disasters as well as through development programs in the sectors of child rights, gender, water and sanitation, education, sustainable livelihoods and disaster risk reduction.

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