

People of 4 dists suffer as two ferries lie idle

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

Thousands of passengers of Jhenidah, Magura, Rajbari and Kushtia districts cross the mighty Gorai River on country boats amid risk as two ferries have been lying idle at Langalbandh ghat at Shaikupa upazila under Jhenidah district for the last six years.

The Roads and Highways Department (RHD) sent two ferries with two ferry bridges and two pontoons for plying from Langalbandh Bazar to the other side of the Gorai River in Sripur upazila under Magura district and posted a driver and a khalasi there about six years ago but they are yet to see any regular

service across the river, locals said. The ferries, supposed to carry vehicles including buses and trucks and people from and to Jhenidah, Magura, Rajbari, Faridpur, Kushtia and Dhaka would greatly ease road communications in the areas, said businessmen and public representatives.

"Five to six thousand people daily cross the river on boats with life risk. The number of passengers rises to 15 thousand to 20 thousand on weekly market days Sunday and Thursday," said local trader Bikash Mondol. "We have to cross the river regularly amid risk to attend our classes while two ferries are lying idle at the terminal for years," said Bithika Rani, a student of Langalbandh Degree College.

Around three months ago, one of the ferries functioned for three days, carrying thousands of people and a good number of vehicles across the river, but suddenly the service was stopped due to unknown reasons, said a few locals.

Contacted, Subrata Datta, executive engineer of RHD in Magura, said they could not start the ferry service as the ministry concerned did not approve plying of the two ferries and fix toll rates for the purpose.

The ferries, ferry bridges and pontoons worth Tk 60 to 65 crore are getting damaged as they are lying without maintenance for years, sources said, adding that some vested quarters are responsible for the situation.



PHOTO: STAR

Thousands of passengers cross the Gorai River by boat risking their lives at Langalbandh ghat of Shaikupa upazila in Jhenidah as two ferries lie idle for the last six years. Inset: one of the ferries.

SNIPPETS

"Punish killers of Chhobi Marma"

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

A human chain was formed in front of the district press club yesterday, demanding exemplary punishment to the killers and rapists of U Mra Ching Marma alias Chhobi Marma. Bangladesh Marma Students Council (BMSC) along with local indigenous people organised the programme. On December 15, Chhobi, 14, who recently appeared at her Junior School Certificate (JSC) examination from Chitmorom High School in Kaptai upazila of Rangamati district, was killed after rape allegedly by some settlers in Muslim Ghat area of the upazila when she went to their jhum field in Bengghari area. Contacted, Harun-or-Rashid, officer in-charge of Kaptai Police Station, said the law enforcers have already detained two youths— Nizam Uddin, 22, and Mohammad Rana, 21, of the same area.

Fake doc, 7 aides arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

A mobile court during a joint drive in Shahibag area in the district town yesterday arrested eight people including a fake doctor for illegally running a healthcare centre. The mobile court sentenced the eight to jail on various terms. The convicted persons were identified as fake doctor S.K. Murshed of Malipara village under Behramara upazila in Kushtia, his seven aides Ashrafur Islam of Bagmara upazila in Rajshahi, Abul Kashem, Abul Kalam, Mithun Ahmed, Munirul Islam, Shariful Islam and Abul Kalam-2 of the district.

Criminals fell mango plants

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Criminals cut down around 600 mango plants in three orchards at Takinagar village in Bagatipara upazila on Tuesday night. Locals said, local miscreants felled 510 mango plants in an orchard covering 20 bighas of land, owned by one Mohabbat Ali, at the village and 75 more mango trees at another adjoining orchard owned by Arshad Ali and Anwar Ali at midnight. OC Aminur Rahman of Bagatipara PS said police went to the spot. Rivals cut down the plants out of previous enmity, he said.

Prisoner dies at hospital

UNB, Magura

A prisoner, who was sentenced to two years' imprisonment in a case under Narcotics Control Act, died at Sadar Hospital on Tuesday evening. The deceased was identified as Khalil Fakir, 48, son of Chand Ali Fakir of Jatrabari area of the capital Dhaka. Sources at Magura Jail said, Khalil suddenly fell sick at a prison cell in the jail in the evening and was rushed to Sadar Hospital.

Sit-in demanding Jamalpur Medical College campus in local hospital

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

People of Palthalia area of the town staged a sit-in programme yesterday morning, demanding a permanent campus of newly established Jamalpur Medical College in Jamalpur General Hospital compound.

Participants of the programme occupied the main road from General Hospital to Fouzdari intersection of the town from 10:00am disrupting traffic movement for over two hours.

The programme was organised by "Medical College Bastabayan Committee" a platform headed by its convener Hobibur Rahman Hobi, former councillor of Jamalpur municipality and member of Awami League district unit. Among others Masum Reza Rahim, member secretary of the platform and president of Jamalpur town Awami League spoke at the venue.

The speakers said that a campus should be built in Jamalpur General Hospital compound so that most of the hospital structures can be used for the college purpose.

Some people involved in land business have been trying to set up a permanent campus of the college at Monirajpur where they own a vast tract of land, the speakers alleged.

Following the programme, the participants submitted a memorandum to the prime minister through Deputy Commissioner.

Meanwhile, site selection for setting up the main campus of the medical college is yet to be finalised, although the institution is due to be shifted to the campus three years after the start of the college.

In the meantime, admission and other activities of the medical college, which began in November, continued at the hospital.

Earlier, three proposals were submitted to the health ministry by the district administration recommending three sites in the town—one at bypass intersection, the other at Monirajpur and the third at Kompopur, for setting up a permanent campus, sources said.

A three-member team, led by Aiyubur Rahman, additional secretary at the health ministry, visited the spots recently. However, the final decision on the site of the main campus is yet to be reached, sources said.

Meanwhile, classes of first year MBBS students of the medical college are scheduled to start on 10 January, 2015.

MONTHS AFTER TANGAIL BROTHEL EVICTION

Sex workers back again, this time with court order

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Sex workers, earlier ousted from Kandapara brothel in the town, have started returning there, following a High Court order.

They started entering the 200-year-old brothel around 8:00pm on Monday and the number of the returnees, including house owners and sex workers, rose to around 150 by yesterday afternoon.

Earlier on July 11, religious zealots under the banner of Asamajik Karjokolap Protirodh Committee forced around 1500 inmates of the brothel, including some 700 sex workers, leave the place.

On December 9, Fawzia Karim Feroze, president of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association, filed a writ petition to the High Court (HC) on behalf of the sex workers, seeking directions for their safe living at the brothel.

An HC bench comprising Justice Dr Quazi Reza-ul-Haque and Justice Abu Taher Mohammad Saifur Rahman issued a rule nisi directing the secretaries of home and local government ministries, deputy commissioner and superintendent of police of Tangail, and president and general secretaries of Asamajik Karjokolap Protirodh Committee to

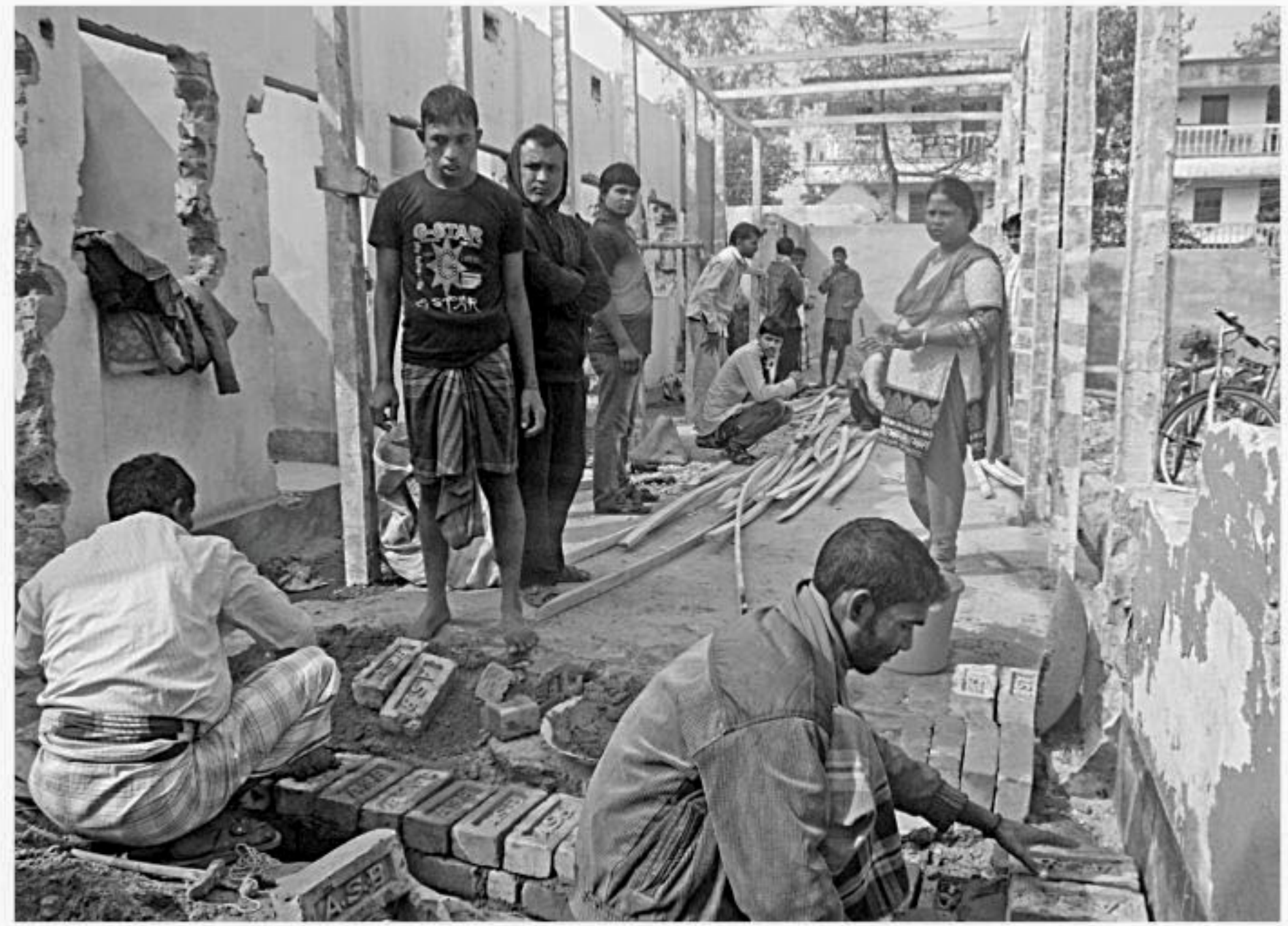


PHOTO: STAR

The ousted sex workers have started returning to the 200-year-old Kandapara brothel in Tangail town again following a court order. The picture shows a sex worker rebuilding her demolished house at the brothel yesterday.

provide protection for the sex workers' safe staying at the place.

Visiting the area yesterday, this correspondent saw the sex workers reconstructing their houses that had been demolished by the ousters.

"As citizens of the country, we have right to stay on our land. This time we have come back with a court order," said sex worker Morzina Begum, also a house owner at the brothel.

The ousted sex workers who had taken shelter at different places are now returning, said another house owner Aklima Begum Akhi, also president of sex workers' organisation Nari Mukti Sangha.

"The High Court has issued an order, directing us to provide security to the returnee brothel inmates. The process is on to hand over the land of the brothel to its owners," said Mahbub Hossain, deputy commissioner of Tangail.

Meanwhile, Asamajik Karjokolap Protirodh Committee in a meeting at Tangail Central Mosque yesterday announced that they would hold a press conference today and procession and rally in the town tomorrow.

"As Muslims it is our religious duty to move against the sex trade. We will fight legal battle regarding the matter," said Maulana Abdul Aziz, president of the committee.



PHOTO: STAR

Aggrieved growers of Jhenidah scattered cotton and then set it on fire on Dhaka-Khulna highway in Barobazar area of the district yesterday.

Cotton growers unhappy

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Cotton growers of Barobazar unit in Kaliganj upazila under Jessore Cotton Development Board formed a human chain and brought out a procession in the upazila yesterday, demanding reasonable price of cottons.

They also scattered cotton and set fire to it on Dhaka-Khulna highway as a mark of protest.

Officials said, over 900 farmers at 23 villages of the unit engaged in cotton farming. About 230 hectares of land were brought under cotton cultivation this year.

Last year, the price of cotton was fixed at Tk 2,520 per maund. In the hope of getting better prices, we cultivated more than the previous year.

But this time the rate of cotton has been fixed at Tk 1,900 per maund, much to the worry of the farmers, said an affected grower.

Expressing grave concern, grower Abdul Goni of Nardohi village in the upazila said, he spent Tk 23,000 by cultivating cotton on his two bighas of land. "But I don't see any hope to recover even my investment".

Barobazar cotton unit association president Shariful Islam said he would incur a huge loss this year as he cultivated cotton on his three bighas of land at a cost of Tk 70,000.

Contacted, Barobazar cotton unit officer Shafiul Alam Tipu said the fixing price of cotton at Tk 1900 per maund this year would affect the growers.

Policeman injured in robbers' attack dies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A police official who was battling for life at hospital, died on Tuesday, nine days after he was critically injured in an attack by robbers at Teesta village under Sadar upazila.

The deceased is Sub-inspector Asaduzzaman Asad of Sadar police station and a resident of Kharibari village under Dimla upazila in Nilphamari district.

On December 8, the SI intercepted a gang beside the Teesta Road Bridge in the area when they were returning after looting a garments shop at Puran Bazar in Lalmonirhat town.

There, he came under the attack by the robbers and sustained severe injuries in head, hands, legs and stomach, said officer in-charge Mansur Ali of the police station.

The injured SI was rushed to Rangpur Medical College Hospital where he died on Tuesday night, he said.

A case was filed with the PS in connection with the incident yesterday, said the OC.

Pabna was freed 2 days after country's victory

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Although the country achieved its victory on Pakistan occupation forces on December 16, Pabna was freed on this day in 1971.

The freedom fighters on December 18 hoisted the national flag on Pabna deputy commissioner office.

The freedom fighters fought against the occupation army till December 15. The Pakistan troops took shelter in different areas till December 17.

They also put up barricades so that the freedom fighters cannot enter the district headquarters, said local freedom fighters.

"The Pakistan occupation army remained holed up at Wapda offices in Pabna Sadar and Ishwardi

upazilas on December 16. When the freedom fighters tried to enter the district headquarters on December 16, the Pak army barricaded the Pabna-Ishwardi highway," said Baby Islam, a valiant freedom fighter.

The Pakistan army surrendered on December 18 to the joint forces and started leaving Pabna. Then freedom fighters from different areas entered the district town and hoisted the flag, he said.

Gruesome mass killings took place at Sagarkandi, Demra, Gopalnagar, Hadal and Handial areas.

"Durjoy Pabna", a liberation war memorial was later built on the premises of Pabna deputy commissioner office to pay tribute to the martyrs of the district.



PHOTO: STAR

The gate built in memory of martyr Captain Khairul Bashar at the entrance to Nilphamari town often remains unclean or covered with different posters.

Road pillar with martyr's name disappears, nobody concerned

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

A concrete pillar on a road inscribed with the name of Shaheed (martyr) Capt Bashar, stretching from Bata intersection in Sabuj para area to primary teachers training institute (PTI) at Ukil Para in the town disappeared over a year ago, but the authorities here turned a blind eye to the matter despite repeated pleas.

Shaheed Capt Bashar Road was named after Captain RAM Khairul Bashar, ASC of Bangladesh Army, who sacrificed his life for the country's independence in 1971.

It is a matter of shame that the authorities are yet to take any steps in this regard, said locals and family members of the martyred war hero.

Meanwhile, Shaheed Captain Bashar Gate, which was built by Nilphamari Zila Parishad at the main entrance to Nilphamari town over a decade ago, is also lying uncared for due to unknown reasons.

tarnished the image and look of the gate.

Even the name of the martyr, inscribed artistically on two points of the gate, can now hardly be seen due to the posters.

Despite repeated pleas, the municipality and district authorities are yet to take any steps to preserve and renovate the memorials, alleged Shafiqul Islam, younger brother of the martyr.

Abdul Gaffar, district organiser of Muktiyuddho Smriti Sangrakkhan Kendra, said it is our misfortune that even after 43 years of independence we cannot show proper respect to the martyred freedom fighters.

Contacted, Mayor Dewan Kamal Ahmed said the municipality would take up a project soon to reconstruct all the freedom fighters' memorials.

Captain Bashar was killed on May 29, 1971 during the Liberation War. A road has been named after him in Dhaka Cantonment while the main entrance to Jahanabad Cantonment in Khulna also bears the memory of the valiant freedom fighter.