

Schooling eludes 4,000 kids in 33 enclaves

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Over 4,000 children in 33 enclaves belonging to Lalmonirhat district are deprived of basic education as there is no primary school in these adversely possessed Bangladesh lands surrounded by Indian territories.

Bangladesh government provides free primary education along with textbooks and monthly stipend to check dropout of school-children.

In poverty-stricken areas of several northern districts including Lalmonirhat, the government in association

with World Food Programme distributes vitamin-enriched biscuits to primary school children during school hours.

But the enclave children are too unfortunate like their parents, being virtually deprived of the basic civic amenities as citizens of Bangladesh.

"I took my two sons to Sree Ramganj Primary School in Jolpaiguri district of India early January this year but the school authority declined to enrol them as they are Bangladeshi," said Sattar Miah, 35, an inhabitant of Kuchlibari enclave under Patgram

upazila of Lalmonirhat district.

Dabibar Rahman, 38, of Kismot Batrigachh enclave under Aditmari upazila, said, "As my daughter Fatema Khatun expressed desire to learn how to read and write, I took her to an Indian school named Gidaldah Primary School in Cooch Behar district for admission to Class one on January 1 this year but the school authority turned down the request. My daughter finally burst into crying."

Admitting the situation, Lalmonirhat District

Primary Education Officer Nabez Uddin Sarker said, "We do not have any plan to build primary schools in Bangladeshi enclave areas as the matter concerns high authorities of the two countries."

The enclave people have urged that the governments of Bangladesh and India reach an understanding to ensure their children's access to education.

The children should either be enrolled in Indian schools or allowed to travel freely to attend any nearby school in Bangladesh mainland, they said.



PHOTO: STAR

Like these cool kids, around four thousand children living in 33 adversely located Bangladeshi enclaves under Lalmonirhat district are deprived of schooling. The photo was taken from Bashpatal enclave in Kulaghat union under Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila a couple of days ago.

STONE LIFTING FROM RIVERS

Two jailed, 3 dredgers seized in Patgram

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A mobile court awarded one month's imprisonment to two persons for illegal stone lifting from the Dharla River at Islampur village of Patgram upazila under the district yesterday.

The Executive Magistrate of the mobile court Rafiqul Haque, also Patgram upazila nirbahi officer (UNO), delivered the verdict on the spot in presence

of police and local people, police said.

Three dredgers, locally called boma machines, were also seized there.

The convicts are Abdul Karim, 47, and Robbani Miah, 32, of Islampur village.

Ignoring a government ban, politically influential people are running a profitable business of stone lifting from three rivers in the upazila, badly affecting the environment, said

locals.

A major landslide may occur any time, as mechanical extractors like dredgers are extracting stones from the rivers and adjacent areas at depths of over 100 metres, creating a hollow space underground, they said.

Around 300 machines, each with an ability to extract 700 cubic feet of stones, are extracting stones illegally from the

three rivers, said local people.

"Although I have seized many stone extracting machines in several drives during the last few months, some unscrupulous people have continued the illegal act, especially at night. I will continue special drives against the illegal stone lifting from three rivers in the upazila," said Patgram UNO Rafiqul Haque.



PHOTO: STAR

Mindless stone lifting by using dredgers from the Dharla River goes on unabated at Islampur in Patgram upazila of Lalmonirhat.

Cargo vessel capsizes in Meghna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A sand-laden cargo vessel capsized in the Meghna following a head-on collision with another vessel on Wednesday night.

No casualty was, however, reported as all crew of both vessels managed to swim ashore with the help of local fishermen, said Shawkat Anwar, officer in-charge of Hizla Police Station.

Police said the incident occurred in Hizla upazila around 8:00pm when sand-laden MV Salma collided with coal-laden MV Mim Nisha-1, in the river near Babuganj launch terminal.

Within an hour into the collision, MV Salma sank into the river while MV Mim Nisha-1 was anchored near the spot for repair.

None has lodged any complaint with the police station in this connection till filing of this report as of 8:00pm yesterday, added the OC.

Contacted, Shahjalal Huq, joint director of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) in Barisal, said although the government imposed a ban on plying of vessels through the route at night, but nobody complies with the restriction.

The official said they will start the salvage operation if the owner of the sunken vessel applies to them.

Outlaw held with bombs in Chuadanga

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Police arrested a cadre of an outlawed party with four bombs at Marufdoha village in Jibonnagar upazila of Chuadanga district on Wednesday night.

The arrestee, Mizanur Rahman alias Mirza, 34, is a cadre of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-ML).

Law enforcers arrested Mirza from Marufdah intersection at around 11:30pm. They also recovered four bombs from his possession, said Humayun Kabir, officer-in-charge (OC) of Jibonnagar Police Station.

Police said Mirza is an accused in several cases filed with Jibonnagar Police Station.

The outlaw was yesterday produced in a court that sent him to jail.

Three Shibir men held in Sirajganj

UNB, Sirajganj

Police arrested three Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) activists from the municipality area on Wednesday.

The arrestees are Ariful Islam, finance secretary of the municipality unit of ICS, Hahurul Islam, education secretary of the unit, and Kabirul Islam, director of the school section of the unit.

Officer-in-charge Habibul Islam of Sadar Police Station said local people caught the Shibir, beat them up and handed them over to police.

Police also seized books on jihad and leaflets from their possession.

Day labourer found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

A day labourer was found dead in Hafezghona area under Sadar upazila on Tuesday.

The deceased was identified as Md Salman, 22, son of Harunur Rashid of the area.

Family sources said Salman left his house on Monday night over a family feud and since then he remained missing.

Locals found his body hanging from a tree in the area and informed the police.



PHOTO: STAR

People take a risky walk on this awfully dilapidated bridge to cross Bogi canal in Kalaiya union of Baufal upazila under Patuakhali district, thanks to the callousness of the authorities who did not bother to repair the structure for years.

Dilapidated bridge poses risk to users

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

An iron bridge on Bogi canal in Baufal upazila under the district remains in an awful condition for long, much to the sufferings of the people of five villages including school-going children.

The structure, with its one side subsided and most of the slippers broken, poses serious risk to the users.

Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) built the bridge in 1992-93 fiscal year to connect Shoula and Bogi Bazar

areas of Kalaiya union under Baufal upazila.

But it has become dilapidated due to lack of renovation for long.

There are three educational institutions and a bazaar to the west near the bridge, and a haat and an educational institution to its east, locals said.

Hundreds of people cross the bridge amid risk daily, said college teacher Md Mojibur Rahman, also a resident of nearby Corpurkathi village.

The bridge may collapse anytime as the structure has

become very weak and loose, he said.

Md Dulal Hossain, a businessman of Bogi Bazar, said several villagers got injured while crossing the bridge as most of its slippers are broken.

Md Faisal Ahmed, chairman for Kalaiya union parishad, said they sent several letters to the authorities concerned to take immediate step for renovation of the bridge but in vain.

Md Shahjahan Farazee, Baufal upazila LGED engineer, said they will take step to renovate the bridge soon.



PHOTO: STAR

People gather to see Dholapahar, a marsh crocodile, which floated dead in the tank beside the shrine of Khanjahan Ali (R) in Bagerhat Sadar upazila early yesterday. The local administration has taken initiative to preserve the skeleton and the skin of the giant reptile as it is possibly the last descendant of a couple the legendary animal raised by the fifteenth century saint in the tank, said the deputy commissioner of Bagerhat.

Kalihati UZ chairman, 4 others sued on extortion charge

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Kalihati Upazila Parishad chairman and four others have been sued on charge of demanding toll from a settlement officer.

Mahbub Anwar, assistant settlement officer of the upazila, filed the case with Kalihati Police Station on Wednesday night.

The accused are upazila parishad Chairman Mozaharul Islam Thandu, also president of the upazila unit of Awami League, party's Kalihati municipal-

ity unit leader Mohammad Jinnah, upazila BCL Convenor Monir Hossain, Jubo League municipality unit General Secretary Ujjal Miah, and upazila BCL acting General Secretary Sharif Ahmed Razu.

In the case statement, the settlement officer alleged that the ruling party men intercepted him while he was going to the local bus stand at around 5:30pm on February 2. They took him to the upazila AL office where Upazila Chairman Mozaharul Islam was present.

"The chairman tore a copy of the verdict in a land related case of Bhandeswar Mouja in the municipality and asked me to pronounce a fresh verdict in the case," the settlement officer said.

He further alleged that chairman Thandu and four others demanded Tk 2 lakh from him and also threatened to kill him as he refused to pay heed to the demand.

Contacted, Officer-in-Charge Aslam Iqbal of Kalihati Police Station said they are investigating the matter.



PHOTO: STAR

Progressive Teachers Forum of Hajee Danesh Science and Technology University forms a human chain on the road in front of the university in Dinajpur yesterday, protesting killing of innocent people by hurling petrol bombs on vehicles in the name of the ongoing blockade enforced by BNP-led 20 party alliance.