

Majher char in Pirojpur with no healthcare

HABIBUR RAHMAN with ANDREW EAGLE

"I don't recall the exact date," says Md Moharaz, 35. "It was two years ago, an afternoon in the Bangla month of Chaitra when my sister first complained of diarrhoea. It didn't seem serious at first and, as there aren't any doctors or a hospital nearby, we decided to wait." That night, Shilpi Begum's condition worsened. Some minutes after 9:00am on the following morning, the 25-year-old wife of Md Nobil Hossain and mother of two, was dead.

Begum's demise is less a case of negligence or lack of will on the part of her family to seek her treatment. It was a consequence of geography, a death caused by address.

The family lives on Majher Char, in Betmore Rajpara union of Pirojpur's Mathbaria upazila. Majher Char is an island in the Baleswar River around 15 kilometres from Mathbaria headquarters.

"Majher Char was created by river currents around 1950," says Md Shahidul Islam, a local council member. "Settlement of the island of about 750 acres was organised in 1965 by the then Pakistan government, who distributed the land among homeless people." Majher Char's current population is about 1,100.

To reach Mathbaria's

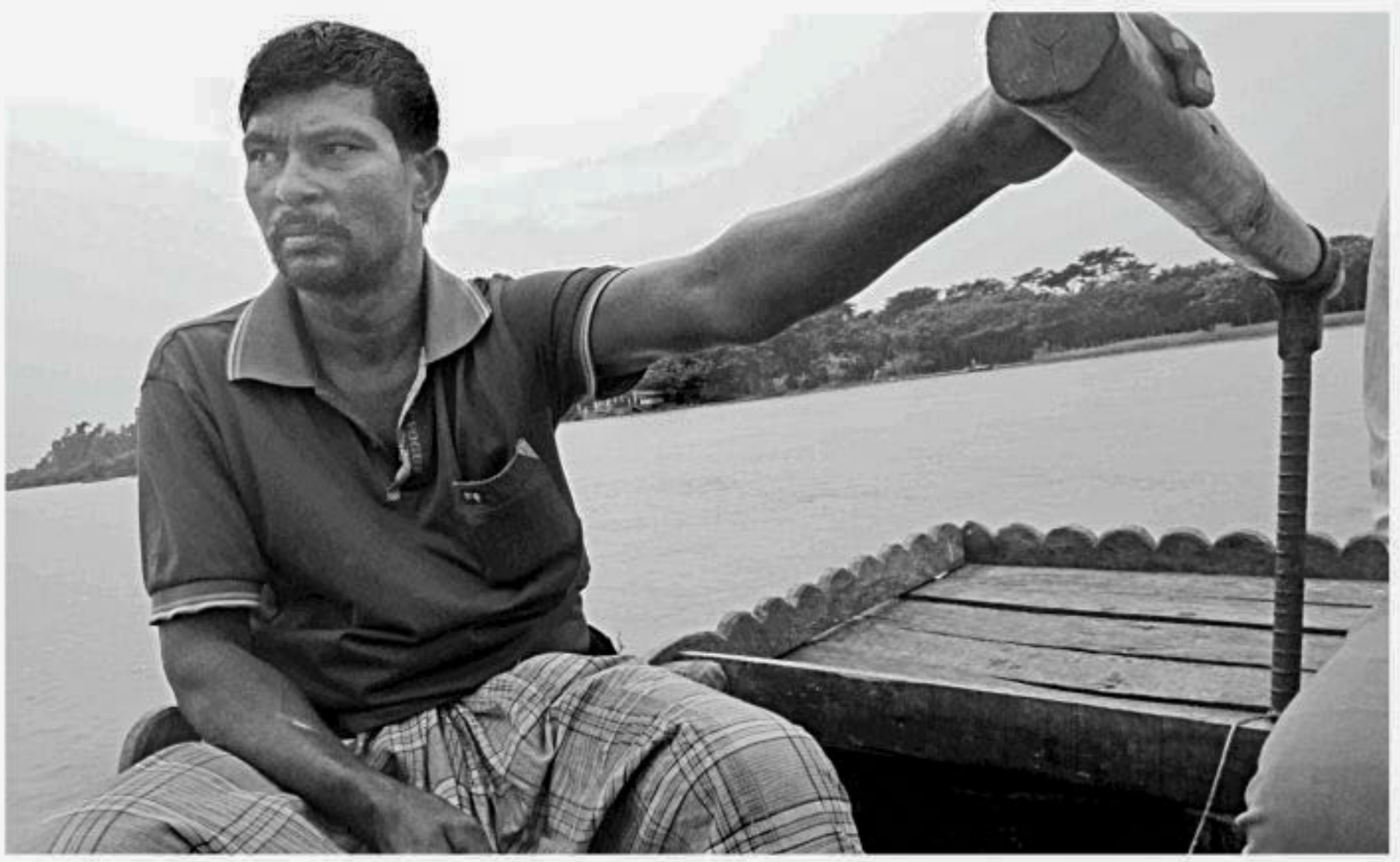


PHOTO: STAR

Hazrat Ali, 45, a boatman at Majher Char ferry ghat in Mathbaria upazila of Pirojpur, provides the only means of transport for patients going to Mathbaria or Sharonkhola health complexes at night.

health complex from the island takes two hours by boat. In the other direction is Sharonkhola upazila health complex in Bagerhat district, which is a 90 minute journey. Neither destination is easy to reach at night.

"In the daytime, people can use fishing boats," says boatman Hazrat Ali, "but if the current is unfavourable it will take double the time and besides, if a boat gets stuck in water hyacinth it's not possible to move at all."

Ali is the man people turn to for any night time emergency. "I try my best to support people with my engine-run boat," he says, admitting that negotiating the

river after dark is a challenge.

"Shilpi's diarrhoea became really bad around midnight," recalls Moharaz. "We went to the other side of the island to find a local medic but he said there was nothing he could do, suggesting we take her to the hospital."

"At dawn we started for Sharonkhola by boat, arriving at about 9:00am," he continues, "but the duty doctor said it was too late for my sister. She died a few minutes later."

"I've seen many die without treatment," says Abdus Salam Jomadder, 75, who has lived on the island since childhood. "If there was a health centre here not only

would lives be saved but we could learn more about healthcare."

"Almost all the islanders are fishers," says Halim Mollah, 35, the wireless operator of a local cyclone shelter. "They don't know well how to look after their health, and they rarely seek medical help until a patient's condition is serious. It's often too late by then."

Still today, lifestyles and livelihoods on Majher Char are basic. Still today, the most common healthcare practices involve either herbal treatment or simply waiting for recovery without any treatment at all.

Rival BCL groups clash over tender at IU, 15 injured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

At least 15 people were injured in a clash between two factions of Bangladesh Chhatra League at Islamic University (IU) in the district yesterday.

The clash took place over tenders of several construction works of the university.

Mizanur Rahman Mizu, vice president of BCL IU unit, along with a group of outsiders entered Vice Chancellor Abdul Hakim's room where president of the unit Saiful Islam and general secretary Amit Kumar

were present, said campus sources.

Mizu allegedly hurled abusive words at the BCL president and secretary over their demand of percentage from upcoming tenders of several construction works.

Mizu engaged in an altercation with Saiful and Amit when they protested his behaviour.

At one stage, he tried to confine the BCL president-secretary to an adjacent room of the VC at gunpoint around 12:30pm.

As the news spread, the supporters of Saiful-Amit rushed to the spot and

clashed with the men of Mizu. Later, both groups chased each other and hurled brick chips.

Cadres belonging to Mizu group fired several bullets, triggering the clash that left at least 15 people from both sides injured, said the sources.

Shishir Islam Babu, organising secretary of Bangabandhu Hall unit of BCL, and activist Kamruzzaman Sagar, loyal to Saiful-Amit group, sustained bullet injuries during the incident.

On information, police rushed in and brought the situation under control,

said Safiqul Islam Choudhury, officer-in-charge of Islamic University Police Station.

The injured were admitted to the university medical center. Of them, Shishir was sent to Kushtia Medical College Hospital.

Dr Mahabur Rahman, proctor of the university, said punitive action will be taken against those responsible for the incident after proper investigation.

They are trying to pacify both groups so that the on-going peaceful academic atmosphere is not harmed, said the VC.

Two Joypurhat Shibir leaders arrested with pistols, bombs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Member of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested two leaders of Islami Chhatra Shibir with two pistols, four bullets, 21 crude bombs and six hand bombs in Panchbibi upazila of Joypurhat district early yesterday.

The arrestees are Abujar Gifari, 28, president of Panchbibi upazila unit of

Chhatra Shibir, and Omar Ali, 22 general secretary of the unit.

Abujar Gifari hails from Tulat village under Jaldhaka upazila of Nilphamari district while Omar Ali from Tegharbisa village under Joypurhat municipality.

Lt Col Mahbub Alam, commander of Rab-5 in Joypurhat, said the Shibir leaders were planning to carry out subver-

sive activities in the upazila.

Acting on a tip-off, Rab men raided Kadamtoli village in the upazila at around 2:30am and arrested the two with pistols, bullets, and bombs, the Rab official added.

Rab personnel were quizzing the Shibir leaders at their camp as of filing of this report at 5:00pm yesterday.

Police said the two Shibir

leaders were wanted in the cases for torching polling centres during the parliamentary elections in January 2014 in Joypurhat town, Panchbibi and Khetlal upazila.

Meanwhile, A team of joint forces in separate drives arrested 45 people, including two Jamaat men indifferent parts of Jessore district early yesterday, reports our Benapole correspondent.

Kaliganj health complex in Jhenidah in poor health

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Patients do not get proper treatment and medicines due to lack of doctors and hospital staff at Kaliganj Health Complex, alleged the deprived patients.

Patients have to go to a private pathology for getting an X-ray done, they added.

The modern building of the hospital was established at a cost of Tk 4 crore during the tenure of the past BNP government. Though the hospital was developed to a 50-bed from 31-bed and opened by a former state minister for health on September 2, 2006, it has not started functioning properly as yet.

The lone X-ray machine is lying unused because it has not been repaired for long. Its quality is not so good, office sources said.

The health complex takes only Tk 55 for a small X-ray while a pathology centre charges Tk 150. Similarly, a full size X-ray costs Tk 70 in the hospital while it costs Tk 500/700 in the private pathology centres, patients alleged.

Besides, some employees and doctors of Kaliganj local

health complex have been shifted to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital on deputation, ignoring the needs of the upazila hospital.

Hospital sources said there are 14 doctors against 21 posts, of whom three have been to Kushtia on deputation and two to Jhenidah.

Besides, one doctor is on maternity leave while the ENT doctor has been on leave abroad for two years. The surgeon hardly comes to the hospital, said an official of the hospital.

Obaidul Islam, a compounder, has been sent on deputation to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital. Night guard Akkaj Ali does the work of the compounder.

Night guard Biplob Hossain, sweeper Nayan Hossain, ward boy Rawshan Ali have been sent to Jhenidah on deputation.

The patients stand in a long line for medicine as there is only one pharmacist in the hospital.

Though there is an ultrasonography machine in the hospital, the only operator has been sent to Kushtia on deputation.

There is no ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialist, eye

specialist or skin specialist in the hospital, office sources said.

Asma Khatun told this correspondent that she came to the hospital for getting an X-ray done, but the lone X-ray machine is out of order.

Another patient, Roksana Parveen, said she came to the hospital for her ear ache but the doctor concerned ENT is out of the country. The authority is nonchalant in this regard, she added.

Thana Health Administrator Abdur Rahman of Kaliganj Health Complex said it is tough for them to run the hospital with a small number of doctors. "Most of the doctors and employees have been posted on deputation in Jhenidah Sadar Hospital and Kushtia Sadar Hospital. We are trying to render service but shortage of doctors, staff and equipment is hampering proper treatment," he added.

Civil surgeon Dr Abdus Salam of Jhenidah said he is trying to appoint doctors at Kaliganj Health complex as soon as possible. The X-ray machine will be repaired soon, he added.

Week-long Bijoy Mela begins in Thakurgaon

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A week-long Bijoy Mela began on Thakurgaon Public Library premises on Wednesday afternoon.

Lawmaker of Thakurgaon-1 constituency, Ramesh Chandra Sen, formally inaugurated the fair at 6:00pm as chief guest.

Bijoy Mela takes place every year on December-16 on the occasion of Victory Day and runs for six days.

Kornet Sangskritik Sangsad of Thakurgaon organised the fair.

Photo exhibition, documentary on the Liberation War, discussions and cultural functions are some of the features of the fair.

At least 70 stalls have been set up at the fair venue. Handicraft and pottery items also attract the women and children.

A good number of people of all ages visited the fair on the inaugural day. The fair will remain open from 6:00am to midnight every day through December 22.

Bangladeshi youth's body found in India

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A Bangladesh youth was found dead on Indian territory yesterday, a Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) official said.

The youth was identified as Sadekul Islam, 20, son of Mokhsedul Islam of Bontara Laxmitala under Dinajpur Sadar upazila.

The BGB official said members of India's Border Security Force (BSF) of Bongaon saw a body floating on the Atrai River. Later, Indian police recovered the body and sent it to a local hospital for autopsy.

BSF later informed BGB about the matter. Following an extensive search, BGB came to know the identity of the youth.

BGB officials asked for a flag meeting to get back the body of the youth, said Lt Col Kurban Ali of BGB-29 Battalion.

Family members of the youth said he went out of the house on Wednesday morning and did not return.



PHOTO: STAR

Patients have to stand in a long line for medicines at Kaliganj Upazila Health Complex in Jhenidah as there is only one pharmacist at the hospital, inset, the lone X-ray machine at the hospital lies idle as it has not been repaired for long.



PHOTO: STAR

The traditional horse race of Dinajpur district was held on the ground of Nunshahar Government Primary School in Ukharail union under Dinajpur Sadar upazila yesterday.

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