

## Ferry service resumes after 15 hrs

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Ferry service on two routes resumed yesterday after 15 hours of disruption triggered by dense fog.

The service on Paturia-Daulatdia route resumed around 12:00 noon after seven hours of suspension due to thick fog, reports our Manikganj correspondent.

They stopped plying of three ferries on the route around 12:00am to avoid any accident, said Nasir Uddin, manager of BIWTC, Paturia office.

Around 500 vehicles were lined up at Paturia and Daulatdia ferry ghats due to the stoppage, he said.

The ferry service resumed around noon when the fog cleared, he said.

In Munshiganj, ferry service on Shimulia-Kawrakandi route resumed around 8:30am after a halt for three and half hours, reports our correspondent.

Over 800 passengers on seven ferries suffered due to the situation.



The Khowai river beside Habiganj town has become narrow and polluted due to encroachment and mindless dumping of garbage on its banks.

PHOTO: STAR

## Girl rescued 19-day after abduction

Stalker arrested in Bogra

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Nineteen days into her abduction, police rescued a schoolgirl from Dhunat upazila in the district on Saturday.

They also arrested the alleged stalker of the girl, aged about 13, in this connection.

Police said Wafizur Rahman, 22, son of Abdul Jall of Nimgachi village, used to stalk the girl of the same area.

On December 12, Wafizur along with his cohorts abducted the eighth grader of Nimgachi High School from her house on December 12.

The following day, the victim's father filed an abduction case with Dhunat Police Station, accusing five people including Wafizur, said Officer-in-Charge Mizanur Rahman.

The girl was sent to Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital in Bogra for medical test, the OC said.

## 3 Jubo League men held with arms

A CORRESPONDENT, Feni

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested three Jubo League leaders with 12 firearms and 104 bullets from Sharshordi village in Sadar upazila of the district on Saturday.

The arrestees are Sharshadi Union Jubo League general secretary candidate Morshed Alam, 27, a local member of a union parishad, his brother Golam Hossain alias Bappi, 24, former general secretary of the party in the union, and activist Sheikh Bahadur alias Bakka.

On secret information, the elite force raided the area around 8:00pm and arrested the trio with the firearms and bullets, said police.

# Garbage pollutes Khowai

### Habiganj municipality selects four busy spots to dump rubbish

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Habiganj

The indiscriminate dumping of garbage in the river Khowai is not only causing environmental pollution but also creating water-logging in Habiganj town.

Habiganj municipality has selected four busy places to dump garbage, causing problems for the people due to the foul smell and also creating environmental pollution.

The places are Habiganj stadium, Habiganj Bypass Road, a spot near Brindaban Government College and Khowai river.

The people of the town dump their waste in and around the dustbin. As a result, the road is littered with garbage, which is polluting the town and emitting an awful odour, making it difficult to breathe.

Locals said dumping of garbage in the Khowai river causes water-logging in the town.

A people's movement was started to protect the river, and the administration and public representatives promised to take up a restoration project. But everything is still the same as before.

General Secretary of Habiganj District Krira

Sangtha Farhad Hossain Koli said, "Sports loving people of the district do not come to the stadium to watch games due to the bad smells coming from the dustbin."

He said sportsmen of the district along with local people are going to organise a demonstration against the municipality to get relief from this suffering.

Farhad said they have requested the authorities concerned to clear the garbage from the road. "If the municipality authorities do not solve this problem very soon, we will call a strike."

Locals said the municipality has been dumping household waste in a dustbin on Bypass Road of the town for a long time, though thousands of people use the road every day.

General Secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) Tofazzel Sohel said, "People cannot move along the Bypass Road due to decomposed organic materials on the road."

Blaming the municipality authorities for their failure to build fixed dustbins, Sohel said, "The dumped waste also causes water-logging in the town."

Old Khowai river should be demarcated properly, all encroachments and pollution need to be stopped immediately and it should be developed as a beautiful wetland, he added.

Expressing his concern over the unscientific and improper management of the municipality's solid waste and describing it as hazardous to human health, photographer Masuk Ahmed of the town said bad smells coming from the garbage makes it difficult to breathe.

Usman Goni Rumi, a student of Brindaban Government College, urged the municipality authorities to clean the road to ease their suffering caused by dumped garbage.

Joint Secretary of Bapa Sharif Jamil said the bypass was built along the Balla-Habiganj railway. The rail line had a canal parallel to the track that would carry water from the retention ponds to the river and wetlands at Lakhai and Baniachong. When the bypass was built, that area of the railway land was leased out and the passages to pass storm water were mostly filled up.

Acting Mayor of Habiganj municipality Dilip Dash said, "We are trying to shift the dustbin to another place to ease people's sufferings."

## Missing elderly man found dead

### Handloom worker's body recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

An elderly Hindu man was found dead at Mongolgram village in Faridpur upazila of Pabna on Saturday, three days after he went missing on December 28.

The deceased, Anil Kumar, 60, a money lender and son of late Mrinmoy Kumar of the village, was also owner of vast inherited cultivable land.

Quoting deceased's family members, police said Anil, who used to live in Pabna town, went out of his house on December 28, and did not return home.

Local people spotted Anil's decomposed body dumped in an abandoned field on Saturday evening and informed the police, Officer-in-Charge Shariful Islam of Faridpur Police Station, said. The OC said criminals might have killed him over previous enmity.

Away in Tangail, a handloom worker was found dead at his room in Delduar upazila yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Sukumar Bosak, 45, of Dulla village in the upazila.

Mosharraf Hossain, officer-in-charge of Delduar Police Station, said neighbours found Sukumar lying in an unconscious state in his room in the morning and informed the police.

# Free books made conditional

BULBUL AHMED, Natore

The joy of the government-sponsored textbook festival eluded many young learners in the district town on the New Year yesterday as several schools made it virtually obligatory to pay the school fees during distribution of free textbooks among students.

Visiting different areas of the district town, this correspondent found that different high schools were taking Tk 300 to Tk 600 under different heads including session charge, sports fee and milad mahfil fee from students during the distribution of new textbooks.

Although schooling at government primary schools is totally free, different government schools in the town are taking Tk 50 to 70 as fees from students during textbook distribution.

Sumaiya Khatun, Monisha Sarker and Hasibur Rashid, Class IX students of Dighapatia PN School, said they had to pay Tk 520 each as fees at the time of receiving new textbooks.

Nayon Sarker, another Class IX student, said he got only three books as he failed to pay the whole amount of Tk 520.

"It was not possible for my poor father to manage Tk 520 on the first day of the year. My friend Hridoy Hossain of the same class did not come to school to take new books as he failed to manage Tk 520," he said.

Sumitra Rani, a Class VI student of Dighapatia PN School said she got new books after paying Tk

580 as school fees.

"The teachers are collecting Tk 580 during distribution of new textbooks.

I am a poor day labourer and I had to take loan to manage the money for my daughter's admission," said Rahima Begum, mother of a Class VI student.

Alim Uddin, headmaster of Dighapatia PN High School, said they are taking Tk 520 to 610 as session fee, sports fee, milad mahfil fee and rover scout fee.

"But students do not have to pay any money for textbooks," he added.

Sentu Pramanik, 35, a day labourer of Ishlabari village, said he could not get her daughter admitted to the play group as the teachers of Islabari Government Primary School demanded Tk 50 for the purpose.

Many other guardians faced the same situation, he said. Asked about the matter, Rabindranath Sing, headmaster of the school, said, "We are taking the small amount for different programmes like annual sports and milad mahfil."

Contacted, District Primary Education Officer Nafisha Begum said, "The government is providing new textbooks for free to promote schooling of children from all sections of the society. It is illegal to collect money from the children during disbursement of textbooks. We will investigate the allegations."

Shahina Khatun, deputy commissioner of Natore, said, "There is no scope to take money under any pretext during the distribution of free textbooks among students. Stern action will be taken if such corruption is found."



Vehicles cross this bridge at Kochua point on Nilphamari-Panchagarh road at great risk as its pillars have developed big cracks and the railings are breaking up.

PHOTO: STAR

# Risky trip on bridge

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

The vulnerable concrete bridge over Buri Khora river has almost become a death trap as various types of vehicles ply on it at great risk due to lack of an alternative route.

Long and deep cracks have developed on the pillars under the platform, and chunks of concrete from a number of places of the platform have fallen off. The RHD has laid steel plates in those places as a temporary measure to keep the road open.

The railings on the east side of the bridge at Kochua point of Nilphamari-Panchagarh road had fallen into the river long ago, and bamboos railings have been placed along the edges of the bridge.

Whenever any heavy bus or truck moved over the bridge, even very slowly, it jerked violently. The authorities made speed breakers on each end and hung signboards warning that movement of heavy vehicles is strictly prohibited, but heavy vehicles drive over it, though accidents are happening regularly.

Nittyto Gopal Roy of Kochua village said a night coach fell into the river only 15 days ago as the bridge was trembling violently

and the driver lost control of his vehicle. Thirty passengers were injured and of them one succumbed to his injuries in Rangpur Medical Hospital.

Laxmichap Union Parishad Chairman Aminur Rahman said the bridge was constructed 50 years ago and since then no major repairing work has been done, so it has become unfit for vehicular movement.

Truck driver Moutazul Islam said he usually carried rocks from Tetulia upazila of Panchagarh to other districts over the bridge as it is the shortest route, but the condition of the bridge worries him.

Bus driver Ataur Rahman said hundreds of buses and night coaches are compelled to drive over the vulnerable bridge to and from Dhaka, Nilphamari, Panchagarh and Thakurgaon, as there is no alternate road.

Executive Engineer of RHD in Nilphamari AKM Hamidur Rahman said the bridge is irreparable and needs to be reconstructed anew, which might cost Tk 4 crore.

"Regarding this, a project proposal was sent to the higher authorities six months ago and we are waiting for the approval," Hamidur added.

## Indian sares, cloths worth Tk 8cr seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) seized a huge quantity of Indian sares and other cloths worth over Tk 8 crore from Amrakhali area under Benapole Port Police Station early yesterday.

A team of the border guards, acting on a tip-off, raided the area beside Jessore-Benapole road and seized a large quantity of Indian sares, three-pieces and other cloths from an abandoned truck, said Lt Col Jahangir Hossain, commanding officer of BGB 26 Battalion.

The seized smuggled goods were later deposited to Jessore Custom warehouse, the CO added.



Students of Ati Bhawal Uchcha Madhyamik Bidyalaya and Bhawal Monoharia Primary School in Keraniganj pose for photograph with chief guest Dhaka Divisional Commissioner Helaluddin Ahmed, standing fourth from left, at the textbook distribution ceremony on the school premises yesterday. Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Salahuddin, standing third from left, attended the function as special guest with Keraniganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer Abul Bashar Mohammad Fakhruzzaman in the chair.

PHOTO: STAR