

Saudi dumba meat found missing

Resentment among poor in Joypurhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

At least 1,830 kilograms of meat, a gift of sacrificial long tailed sheep (locally called dumba) from the Saudi Arabia government to Bangladeshi people was found missing in Joypurhat.

The incident triggered resentment among the poor people, said locals.

The district relief and rehabilitation office was expected to get 3,490kg meat as per papers.

According to the officials, a covered van carrying 349 cartons of meat reached the deputy commissioner's office complex on Wednesday evening from Mongla port. Each carton can hold 10kg meat.

But during unloading, they found that 183 cartons out of 349 were empty, said Mofakhkharul Islam, district relief and rehabilitation officer in Joypurhat.

Farid Hossain, officer-in-charge of Joypurhat Sadar Police Station, said they detained Md Shahid Hossain, driver of the covered van, in this connection.

During primary interrogation, the detainee informed the law enforcers that the cartons were loaded in his van on Tuesday. Later, the distributor sealed off the van's door.

He drove the van to straight Joypurhat, said the OC.

The meat was embezzled during loading, the police official said quoting Shahid.

Every year the Saudi government sends the meat of sacrificial dumba to the poor people of Bangladesh, said Alamgir Hossain, a resident of Joypurhat, adding that the incident of its missing triggered resentment among the poor and destitute people in the district.



With sudden rise of treatment seekers due to cold spell, the corridor of Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital shelters admitted child patients and their mothers on Thursday as the accommodations at the children's ward are too small. Inset, two or three women with their ailing kids share a single bed at the overcrowded hospital. PHOTO: STAR

Youth kills father for money to go abroad

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A youth allegedly killed his father in Ghatail upazila as the latter could not give him money to go abroad.

The deceased was farmer Shukur Mahmud, 70, of Kaligapur village.

Police and locals said Shukur's son Rana Miah, 25, had been pressuring him for giving money to go abroad to get a job for very long, but Shukur failed to manage the money due to poverty.

Rana locked in an altercation with his father over the issue on Wednesday evening.

At one stage, he hacked his father, leaving him critically injured.

Shukur later died on way to Dhaka Medical College Hospital around 10:00pm.

Rana went into hiding soon after the incident, police said.

Begging on rise in Lalmonirhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

The number of beggars in the district is increasing due to poverty and lack of jobs, except as farm labourers, for the landless people.

There is a government scheme for rehabilitating beggars under the Social Welfare Department, but it is yet to be started in the district.

"I used to be a vegetable vendor, but couldn't continue due to my poor vision," said Jamsher Ali, 62, a man with poor eyesight of Sharatpara village in Bhadai union under Aditumari upazila. He added that he earns Tk 200 to Tk 250 everyday with the help of his grandson Nahid Islam, 8, a student of Class II at Sharatpara Government Primary School.

Kafil Uddin, 62, of Fulgachh village in Lalmonirhat Sadar, said he has been begging for the last 15 years as he is physically unfit.

"I started begging eight months ago as my two sons don't take care of me," said Meher Bewa, 58, of Bishbari village. "At first I felt humiliated while begging, but now I'm used to it, and many women have started begging," she added.

Deputy Director of District Social Welfare Department Mosharaf Hossain said he will write to the ministry concerned to start the government scheme for rehabilitating beggars in the district.

Diarrhoea, pneumonia take toll on kids amid cold spell

137 children admitted to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital against 18 seats

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

The number of child patients sees sharp rise in Thakurgaon and Panchagarh Sadar Hospitals as diarrhoea and other cold related diseases including pneumonia spread during the ongoing cold spell in the northern districts.

With shortage of manpower and accommodation crisis, the two hospitals are struggling to cope with the situation.

In last two days, at least 137 child patients were admitted to the children's ward of Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital although there are only 18 seats.

Of them, 69 were affected with diarrhoea, 22 with pneumonia and 46 others with other cold related diseases, said Dr Shahajahan Nawaj, senior child consultant of the hospital.

In Panchagarh Sadar Hospital, 12 diarrhoea-affected children are undergoing treatment at the paediatric ward while 58 patients took treatment from outdoor of the hospital on Wednesday, Dr Rajiul Karim, resident medical officer of Panchagarh Sadar Hospital told this correspondent over cell phone.

During visits to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital on Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning, this correspondent saw that most of the admitted child patients and their mothers were lying on the floor and veranda, even after sharing of a single bed by two or three patients in the ward.

On Tuesday, 165 children, mostly with diarrhoea, pneumonia and respiratory problems, received treatment at the outdoor of Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital, hospital sources said.

"I admitted my two-year-old son to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital on Tuesday morning as he was affected with diarrhoea. We are staying on the floor due to shortage of space in the children's ward," said Sufia Khatun, wife of Azim Uddin of Shukanpukhuri village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila.

Sujata Begum, wife of Nazrul Islam of Radhanagar village in Panchagarh Sadar upazila, admitted her three-month-old pneumonia-affected son there on Tuesday evening. She is also staying at the hospital corridor.

Zarifa Begum, wife of Khademul Islam of Patiadangi village under the same upazila, admitted her three-month-old baby to the same hospital on Monday evening but she with the baby is staying beside the staircase.

"Two or three nurses, meant to

serve 18 patients at the children's ward of this hospital, are now attending over a hundred patients. Despite the pressure, we are trying our best to tackle the situation," Dr Shahajahan Nawaj of Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital said.

The hospital sees unusual rush of child patients as there is no child specialist at the upazila level and in Panchagarh Sadar Hospital in the adjacent district, he said.

"The ongoing low temperature coupled with cold wind causes diarrhoea, bronchitis, pneumonia and other respiratory illnesses. Children are more vulnerable to these infections because their immune system is weak. If the patients come to hospital in time it is easy to give treatment.

"The situation is likely to improve shortly after the weather becomes normal," he said.

College playground occupied

Shanties, shops are set up and municipality dumps garbage

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

A large portion of a college playground in the town has been occupied by shanties and shops for around four years, depriving the college students and local children of a place to play.

The college, Haji Kashem Ali College, in the town's Patgodam area was established in 2002 on 4.33 acres of land, including a 3.30-acre playground, college sources said.

The college, yet to be taken under Monthly Payment Order (MPO), has 200 students and a staff of 33, including 25 teachers.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found that there are about 250 shanties, shops and rickshaw garages around the college ground.

A portion of the ground is being used for dumping garbage of Ward No-18 of the municipality for four years, ignoring the repeated requests of the college authorities to stop the practice, locals said.

Principal AKM Rezaul Quibria

Akanda Hiru said they informed the mayor about the matter several times, but he did not take steps in this regard.

"We also informed the deputy commissioner and police on various occasions, but the ground is yet to be freed from occupation," the principal added.

The playground has become a spot for drug users, but the college authorities cannot do anything about it, Rezaul said.

Police conducted several drives in the area, but the menace remains as the drug addicts have not been evicted from the area, college sources said.

Officer-in-Charge of Kotwali Police Station Md Kamrul Islam said regular drives will be conducted against drug users in the college area.

"We sometimes dump garbage of Ward No-18 on the college ground when we cannot reach the dumping spot on the other side of the bridge due to traffic jam," said Azizul Islam, a trolley driver of the municipality.

Redoy Miah, a first year student of the college, said they cannot use the college playground as it has been occupied for years.

Hafiza Akhter, a student of the same year, said sports and games are co-curricular activities, but students are being deprived of such facilities.

Mayor Ekramul Haque Titu said he was informed about the matter. He suggested this correspondent to talk to local ward commissioner Jamal Hossain Rose in this regard.

Rose said garbage was dumped on the college ground for a few days to fill it up as it was damaged by rain two years ago, but that has totally stopped now.

"I also asked the college authorities to construct a wall to protect the ground from being grabbed, but no wall has yet been constructed," Rose said, adding that he will help the college authorities if they take initiative to remove the illegal structures on the college ground.



A portion of the playground of Haji Kashem Ali College gets occupied due to dumping of garbage by Mymensingh municipality. Inset, two workers are dumping rubbish. PHOTO: STAR



Schoolgirls prepare to play cricket at Parulia High School playground in Hatibandha upazila of Lalmonirhat. PHOTO: STAR

Crusaders against child marriage, dowry

DALA increases confidence level of schoolgirls

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

The girl students of 35 high schools in Hatibandha upazila of the district are now vocal against child marriage, dowry, and gender discrimination, thanks to the awareness building programmes of an NGO.

PLAN International Bangladesh takes a project titled 'Developing aspiration and livelihood for adolescent (DALA) that made 700 schoolgirls peer leaders who inspire others through sharing their experience. Around 300 dropped out schoolgirls have also been given training in garment trades in last three years.

"We have been working together to build up awareness among villagers to uproot child marriage, dowry and other social menaces," said Sumitra Roy, a Class IX student of Parulia High School.

"I was given training in garment trade and now I am earning to maintain liveli-

hood," said Nur Jahan Akhter, 17, a school dropout at Ketkibari village of the upazila.

Waheda Khatun, 42, mother of a schoolgirl at Tangbhanga village, said, "Now my daughter is more attentive to study. "A couple of years ago, schoolgirls in this village were backward. But after receiving training, they take part in games and sports, speak smartly, and fight against social crimes, alongside doing well in exams," said Marzina Begum, a teacher of Doikhowa Girls' High School.

DALA Project Director Rakibul Bahar said, "We have provided training to schoolgirls on life skills, sports, debate, and co-curricular activities. Dropped out girls have been given livelihood training."

"DALA increases confidence level of schoolgirls and the programme also benefits the boy students indirectly," said Hatibandha Upazila Education Officer Taiyub Ali.

Man found dead beside highway in Faridpur

A CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

An unidentified man, aged about 35, was found dead beside Dhaka-Khulna highway in Majkandi area under Madhukhali upazila of the district yesterday.

Informed by locals, police recovered the body from the spot around 9:00am and sent it to Faridpur Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Ashutos Kumar Biswas, office-in-charge of Madhukhali Police Station, confirmed the incident.

Local people suspected that the man was strangled.