



Anti-clockwise from left, an overcrowded train leaves Tongi, the venue of Biswa Ijtima, after the end of the final prayers of the Islamic congregation's first phase yesterday. President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina join the prayers from their respective official residences Bangabhaban and Gono Bhaban.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN, PMO, PID

### Why 388 pool teachers should not be made permanent: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued a rule asking the government to explain in 10 days as to why it should not be directed to give appointment to 388 pool teachers of primary schools as permanent assistant teachers.

The court came up with the rule following four petitions collectively filed by the 388 teachers, who were appointed for a temporary period although they passed the written and viva voce tests in 2012 in the recruitment examinations.

Petitioners' lawyer Advocate Siddique Ullah Miah told reporters that the government has issued an advertisement for recruiting primary school teachers and then 11 lakh candidates applied for the posts.

A total of 27,720 candidates passed the written and oral tests and the government appointment to only 12,701 of the qualifying candidates

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# 40 Ctg Hindu families in fear of eviction

RHD asks them to leave their land to build road in Patiya

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

Around 40 Hindu families in Chittagong's Patiya upazila are passing their days in fear of eviction from ancestral land as the Roads and Highway Department (RHD) has asked them to leave the land for giving way to a road project.

RHD threatened that their houses would be "demolished" if they did not leave the land, in Nathpara of Karal village.

The land was "acquired" to build a bypass road from Indrapol to Chakrashala in Patiya on Chittagong-Cox's Bazar Highway. The 5.1km road would pass thorough Patiya, Karal, Bhatikhine, and Kachuai of the upazila.

This correspondent recently visited the locality and found that most families of Nathpara were poor, with women weaving mats and the men selling those in the market to make a living. Some pull rickshaws and some are day-labourers. They dwell in either thatched or clay houses. Once displaced, they fear, they would become homeless.

Day-labourer Putul Nath said the government offered Tk 35,000 for a gonda (864 square feet) of land in 2012 as compensation while the market price was Tk 2.4 lakh. "How would we purchase a land to build a house?"

Another resident, Monoranjan Nath, said they were passing their days in fear since RHD officials asked them to leave their houses through the loud-speaker on December 2.

Locals said if the design of the project was slightly changed, their houses would be saved.

Subhashananda Abodhut, principal of Mohananda Sebashram in the area, said the design was changed once in 2008 following instruction of the deputy commissioner of Chittagong to save the ashram and the houses after locals requested him.

However, defying his instruction, the new design was drawn over the 40 houses, he said. "If the road is shifted just 250 yards in the design, the houses would be saved."

Contacted, Shamsul Arefin, DC of Chittagong, said he did not know the



Residents of Nathpara in Chittagong's Patiya upazila wait for a future of uncertainty as the government plans to build a road over this small settlement of 40 Hindu families, mostly poor, leading to their displacement. The photo was taken last month.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

matter clearly. "I would see the papers and discuss the matter with the officials concerned and locals."

Nathpara residents said local Awami League lawmaker Shamsul Haque Chowdhury in a letter to the project director on March 13, 2009 opined that it would be better if the design was changed keeping the crematorium and houses safe. He also suggested that the bypass should go through the open land on the northern side of the crematorium.

Contacted, Shamsul said if the demand of Nathpara people was accepted, the project would have to be deferred for "two more years"; moreover, the project was approved by Ecneec and so there was "no scope" for changing the design right now.

Asked why he wrote to the project director, Shamsul said he "tried" his best but the design could not be changed. "We will rehabilitate them on government khas land."

Additional Chief Engineer of RHD, Chittagong zone, Bidhan Chandra Dhar, said, "We cannot change an alignment whimsically."

"There are some rules for setting curves... it's a four-lane road project... the degree of the road's curve is

dependent on the speed of vehicles."

"It's the third design. The first two were cancelled following the demand of locals to save the ashram," he said. "If we change the present design, it'll need fresh land acquisition and the cost of the project would go up."

Contacted, Rana Das Gupta, general secretary of Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council, said the project was taken to "straighten the curve of the road" but the road would get "curvier" if the present design was implemented.

He said the local lawmaker wrote to the project director to save the houses when he was newly elected in 2009 but now he had "changed" his voice, which was "mysterious".

"Why would the road have to go over the houses whereas there is an abundance of open land in the area?" he asked, alleging, "It was done to save the lands of some influential quarters."

If changing the design takes time, it has to be done, he said. "No project should harm people."

Meanwhile, a team of representatives of the Nathpara residents is now in Dhaka to meet Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader and convey their fears, said team leader Subhashananda Abodhut.

### Police clearance certificate now available online

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Issuing a police clearance certificate (PCC) would not require going to the police station anymore, thanks to a new initiative of "digitising" the service.

Expatriates and those seeking to go abroad will be able to apply for the certificate online through a website launched yesterday.

The site pcc.police.gov.bd was formally launched by Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal at a ceremony in the capital's Rajarbagh Police Lines.

The mobile-friendly site, which opened for Comilla on November 20, last year, and for Sylhet Metropolitan

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# Textbook protesters want minister, NCTB chief to quit

Announce they will besiege education ministry Jan 31

STAR REPORT

Five socio-political organisations yesterday demonstrated in front of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) Bhaban in the capital, protesting "errors" and "communal contents" in the new school textbooks.

They held a sit-in for more than two hours chanting slogans and carrying placards reading "Stop using the textbook cover as the party's leaflet", "Why low quality paper for textbooks", "Stop communalisation and gender disparity".

Earlier, Bangladesh Chhatra Union brought out a procession from Modhur Canteen at Dhaka University and headed towards NCTB and joined the protesters there.

BCU President Lucky Akhter demanded resignation of the education minister and NCTB chairman.

She also announced that the five organisations would besiege the education ministry on January 31 if the new textbooks were not corrected and redistributed.

"Printing the textbooks on standard paper will keep the children away from reading, and communal and sexist content is against the spirit of liberation," she said.

Bangladesh Udichi Shilpigoshthi President Prof Shafiuddin Ahmed and Jubo Union General Secretary Hafiz Adnan also spoke, among others, at the programme.

Kendriyo Khelaghar Asar and Progati Lekhak Sangha were among the five organisations which organised the demonstration under the banner of "Progressive Organisations".

Demanding the same, the Chittagong chapters of four of the five organisations held a protest rally in front of Chittagong

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Dhaka North City Corporation has beautified a portion of the footpath with flower pots on Airport Road in the capital recently. The photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



A visibly distressed Sushil Kumar Mondol following the death of his mother Srimoti Labonno Prova, 85, in a fire that torched her tin-roofed clay house in Rajshahi's Durgapur upazila early yesterday.

PHOTO: ANWAR ALI

# Woman dies in mysterious house fire in Rajshahi

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

An elderly woman was allegedly burnt alive in a fire that torched her tin-roofed mud house in Rajshahi's Durgapur upazila early yesterday.

Durgapur police said gold ornaments had nearly melted into the bones of Srimoti Labonno Prova, 85. They recovered the body around 2:30am from Koyamajampur Mondolpara village and sent it to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital for an autopsy.

Officer-in-charge Ruhul Amin said they were yet to ascertain the cause of the fire.

Labonno was crying for help, said her granddaughter Poppy Rani. "I could not come out...I am dying," she quoted her as saying in the final moments.

Two of her three sons, Sanjib Kumar Mondol and Sushil Kumar Mondol, suffered burns trying to put out the fire.

Sushil said they went to sleep around midnight ending celebrations marking winter's end, known as Poush Sasngkranti. A neighbour, waking to relieve himself, first sounded the alarm around 12:30am.

"The fire was running speedily across the tin roofs of the eight-tin-roofed house. Blue

flames of the fire were so huge. I never saw such a dreadful fire in my life. It cannot originate accidentally," he said.

Villagers, irrespective of their faiths, joined hands to put out the fire within around two hours.

The youngest son, Subas Kumar Mondol, a pharmacist at Rajshahi TB Hospital, said all their land documents, some domestic animals, Tk 50,000 and five maunds of rice were also gutted.

"It was a pre-planned attack to destroy our family...Who knows who would want to evict us from our land?" he said.

He claimed that six months ago, unidentified persons set fire to a stack of straw in their courtyard.

Some of the 22 Hindu families living at the village also claimed to have fallen victim to arson in the past few years. However, no villager of other faiths suffered fire damage.

A stack of straw of Arun Kumar Mondol burnt down two years ago, followed by the kitchen of Rabi Das last September and another straw pile of Bimol Pramanik in October. The last fire on January 7 burnt down Nripen Kumar Mondol's kitchen.

# MONEY LAUNDERING SC orders to unfreeze 10 bank accounts of Unigateway

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday ordered the authorities concerned to unfreeze 10 frozen bank accounts of Unigateway to You Trading Private Ltd, a multilevel marketing company.

After hearing an appeal filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission challenging a High Court order, it also asked the trial court concerned to quickly finish the trial proceedings of a money laundering case against the company.

Unigateway's lawyer Barrister ABM Altaf Hossain said the ACC filed a case with Gulshan Police Station against his client on September 18, 2010 on charge of laundering Tk 36.70 crore.