



# Struggle for education

## Guardians worry as children wade through Ichhamati to attend classes

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra**

Over 150 students of two remote primary schools in Dhunat upazila are to wade through the Ichhamati river every day to attend their classes.

The children of Madarvita Government Primary School and Pardhunat Government Primary School are to cross the river this way for lack of a bridge over the river.

This correspondent saw Ali Baba, a five-year-old student of Class I at Madarvita School, crossing the river on the shoulder of his uncle Amjad Hossain, holding his books in one hand and his uncle's head with the other. This is a daily scenario in his school life.

The Ichhamati river divides Madarvita village, with the people of the eastern side having no land connection with the upazila headquarters, so they are to wade through the river to go to the western side for daily work.

Sadia Khatun, a student of Class V, and Rajibul Islam and Riyad Hossain of Class IV wade through the river every day to get to school. They said their parents are always worried about their safety.

Guardian Hasan Ali of Madarvita village said public representatives repeatedly promise to build a bridge over the river when they come to seek votes during the election, but the villagers are yet to see any result. He said the people of 10 villages of Kalerpara union will be benefited if the bridge is built.

Madarvita Government Primary School Headmaster Jamal Hossain said teachers, guardians and locals have to help at least 100 students of two schools on the other side of the river to cross safely.

Dhunat Upazila Primary Education Officer Kamrul Islam said a bridge is essential for removing the problems of the people, especially the school going children.

Dhunat LGED Sub-Assistant Engineer Abu Talim Hossain said his office has sent a project proposal for a bridge to the higher authorities.

Students of Pardhunat Government Primary School wade across the Ichhamati river at Madarvita village in Bogra's Dhunat upazila to attend their classes in absence of a bridge there.

PHOTO: MAMUN-UR-RASHID

## Bhasani univ teachers want appointment of VC

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail**

Teachers of Maulana Bhasani Science and Technology University on Monday appealed to the chancellor of the university for appointing a new vice-chancellor as early as possible.

Proctor Dr Mohammad Sirajul Islam in his written speech on behalf of the teachers made the demand at a press conference at Tangail Press Club.

Dr Sirajul said the post of VC has remained vacant for the last 39 days as the tenure of former vice-chancellor Dr Mohammad Alauddin ended on May 3.

Holding of examinations, publication of results, going abroad for higher education of students as well as teachers and development activities have also remained suspended, Dr Sirajul said.

## Journos for release of Habiganj editor

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar**

Journalists in Habiganj yesterday demanded release of Golam Mostofa Rafiq, editor of the daily Habiganj Samachar and president of Habiganj Press Club.

They made the demand under the banner of Habiganj Press Club journalists at a human chain in front of the deputy commissioner's office. The programme was presided over by journalist Shamim Ahmed, former president of Habiganj Press Club.

Afroz Mia, president of Pukra union unit Jubo League, lodged the case on Sunday against Mostofa and two others with Baniachong Police Station for allegedly running a false report on Abdul Majid Khan, ruling Awami League lawmaker of Habiganj-2, on June 8.

The other accused are acting Editor Rasel Chowdhury and Managing Editor Niharanjon Saha Niru.

Citing a report of a Dhaka-based online newspaper that around 80 ruling AL lawmakers would not get the party nomination in the next general elections, Habiganj Samachar published a report and mentioned the names of the lawmakers, including Abdul Majid, in the report.

Police arrested Mostofa, also a freedom fighter, from the office of the newspaper on Monday, said Mozammel Haque, officer-in-charge of Baniachong Police Station. He was arrested in a case filed under the ICT Act.

Mostofa was later produced before Habiganj Judicial Magistrate's Court that sent him to jail, said Kazi Kamal Uddin, Habiganj court inspector.

## Elderly man takes own life to end pain of asthma

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur**

An ailing elderly man allegedly committed suicide by jumping under a train in Sarishabari municipality of the district early yesterday.

The deceased, Abul Mandol, 65, of Aramnagar area of the municipality, was a rickshaw-van puller and had been suffering from severe respiratory problems for long.

Unable to bear the suffering, Abul took his life by jumping under the Chittagong-bound Nasirabad Express near Jamtoli level crossing in the municipality around 3:30am, Officer-in-Charge of Jamalpur Railway Police Station Nasirul Islam Mazumdar quoted the victim's family members as saying.

Police recovered the crushed body and sent it to Jamalpur General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

## Magurchhara 'blowout day' today

**MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar**

Twenty years into Magurchhara gas field explosion, compensation for huge damage to Lawacherra forest worth crores of taka is yet to be realised.

On the night of June 14 in 1997, a massive explosion took place at Magurchhara gas field in Kamalganj upazila of Moulvibazar while US energy company Occidental was drilling a well there.

The inferno that the blowout triggered wiped out property worth crores of taka. The US energy company, which was widely blamed for the devastation, is yet to pay compensation for the damage, said MA Wahid Dulu, president of Kamalganj Unnayan Parishad.

Jabed Bhuiyan, joint convener of Lawacherra Bon O Jibo Boichitro Rokkha Andolon, said Magurchhara blowout had huge impact on the nearby rare rainforest Lawacherra.

Nurul Muhaimin Milton, general secretary of Moulvibazar Paribesh Sangbadik Forum, said they wanted to know the reason behind the long silence of the leaders and the government regarding settlement of compensation claims.

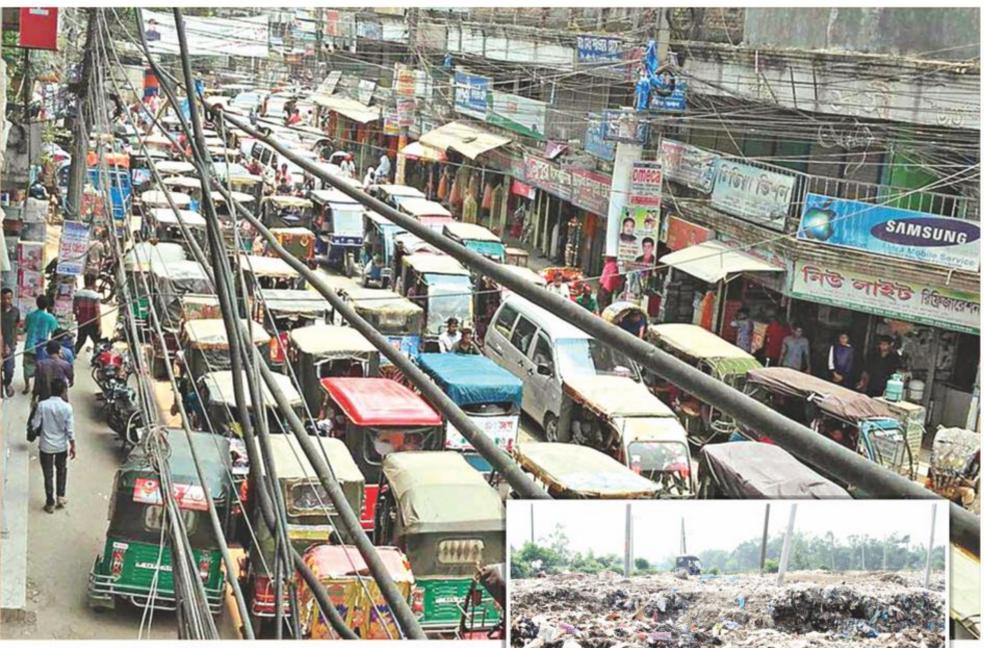
Mihir Kumar Doe, divisional forest officer (wildlife) of Moulvibazar, said they did not get any compensation following the gas well explosion.

Lawacherra Reserve Forest adjacent to the exploded gas well was massively damaged. A segun timber garden, established in the years between 1944 to 1950, a bamboo garden, established in the years 1993 to 1995, and a strip of plantation, which was established in 1994, were also extensively damaged by the fire.



According to forest department, about 96 acres of Lawacherra forest were completely burnt. Fifty percent of forest resources on 111.15 acres of land and 30 percent resources on 106.21 acres of land of the reserve forest were also damaged.

STAR: FILE PHOTO



Victoria Road in Tangail town sees serious traffic congestion, thanks to the inconsiderate construction of the market that narrowed down the important thoroughfare. Inset, callous garbage dumping continues at several places of the municipality area including this ground near PDB office at Bailla.

PHOTO: STAR

## Tangail: A town of garbage, traffic jam

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail**

Tangail has turned into a town of traffic jam and garbage due to negligence of the authorities concerned.

Increased population, encroachment on roads and footpaths, markets and establishments without parking spaces and plying of a large number of auto-rickshaws are reasons behind the traffic jams. Several illegal auto-rickshaw stands at different spots make the situation worse, causing sufferings to the people.

Most of the ponds, water bodies, playgrounds and open spaces in the town have been taken up for construction of different structures in the name of development.

Conscious residents fear that the town will become unlivable within a few years.

There are around 3,000 legal battery-run auto-rickshaws and as many illegal ones in the town, creating traffic jams on New Bus Terminal-Mymensingh Road, Old Bus Stand to Baby Stand Road and Nirala Intersection to Zila Sadar Road.

The traffic system was first hampered when the municipality constructed Poura Super Market on place of the Old Bus Stand during the '80s, narrowing the Zero Point and Mymensingh Road, several senior citizens said.

In 2003, the municipality constructed several markets in the middle of the town from Old Bus Stand to Nirala Intersection, making the main road narrower.

Construction of the markets not only killed the Victoria Canal, the main water drainage system in the town, but also disrupted the overall traffic system, they said.

The town has no waste management system. As a result, garbage is dumped at different points under the open sky. Private hospitals and clinics also dump their medical wastes besides the roads, polluting the environment and spreading diseases.

"The municipality was established in 1887. A municipality should have a master plan comprising proper traffic and waste management systems," said Zafar Ahmed, former panel mayor of the municipality, adding that freeing roads and footpaths from the grabbers and also barring heavy vehicles from entering the town during daytime can ease the traffic situation.

Deputy Commissioner Khan Mohammad Nurul Amin said traffic jam and lack of waste management are the main problems. "I am talking with the authorities concerned to solve the problems. The help of public representatives will also be required for that," he added.

## Man jailed in cheque bounce case

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon**

A Panchagarh court yesterday sent a complainant to jail in a cheque bounce case as the court primarily found that the man distorted the figure of the amount on the cheque through overwriting.

The detainee is Md Palash Hossain, 28, son of Abdul Gani of Buraburi village in Tentulia upazila.

Court sources said Palash stated in his complaint that a trader, Md Shajahan of Rangpur, gave him a cheque of Tk 13 lakh of Gangachara branch of Sonali Bank several months ago.

He submitted the cheque in his bank account but it was bounced three times as the amount was not available in Shajahan's account.

Judicial Magistrate Md Humayun Kabir rejected the complaint as he found the amount Tk 3 lakh was turned to Tk 13 lakh through overwriting.

## A sweet life of Thai guavas

**S DILIP ROY with ANDREW EAGLE**

In the quiet of his orchard Mominul Islam, 32, from Baninagar village in Lalmonirhat's Kaliganj upazila finds the serenity to reflect upon his life. "I never spent valuable time hunting an elusive government job," he says. "I used my time well, growing fruit, putting into practice all that I learnt from my father." Mominul has reason to feel satisfied. The locally renowned orchardist committed to organic farming enjoys a good life, underpinned by the sweetness of Thai guavas.

"With a net profit of around Tk 30 lakhs per annum," he says, "my lifestyle is better than that of a government employee."

Mominul graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from a local college in 2005. The family had little land, but determined Mominul dedicated himself to fruit growing and leased 26 bighas of land at a cost of 12 maunds of paddy per bigha per annum to pursue his purpose. Initially he farmed various fruit crops including strawberries. It was four years ago, when he established a Thai guava orchard of 4,200 trees on leased land, that he found the road leading to his version of 'la dolce vita'.

"The guavas bear fruit twice a year, in summer and winter," he says. "Each tree yields up to 35 kilograms of fruit per season, which means sales reach around Tk 60 lakh per year. I also earn up to Tk 7 lakh from selling guava seedlings from the nursery established on three bighas beside the orchard." To sell the harvest is never a problem. Traders travel from Dhaka to buy his fruit, he adds.

Mominul employs twenty permanent labourers to tend his orchard at a yearly cost of around Tk 15 lakh. He spends Tk 6 lakhs producing organic fertiliser and a further Tk 3 lakh on leasing the land.

"We are kept busy in Mominul's orchard producing organic fertiliser and tending the guava trees," says one employee Abdus Salam, 42. "His guava orchard provides round-the-year work for us."

"I've never used chemical fertiliser and pesticide in the orchard," explains Mominul. "I know that such products damage the soil's fertility and ultimately reduce production. Instead, I use bags to keep the ripening fruit safe from insects and other pests."

Many locals have visited Mominul's orchard in search of the secret of his success. "Mominul gives useful advice on how to grow guavas," says neighbouring farmer Madhuram Chandra Das, 52.

Mominul's family is understandably proud of his achievements. "My son is the district's best farmer," says his father Mominul Haque. "He understands the soil. From his farming experience during his student life he has learnt a lot. Along with vegetables I also farm fruit on our six acres, inspired by my son's success."



Mominul Islam takes care of Thai guava at his orchard at Baninagar village in Kaliganj upazila of Lalmonirhat.

PHOTO: STAR