

Decaying community clinics

Health service shifted to school, UP office in Barguna

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, *Patuakhali*

Isn't it astonishing, when it is found patients of a community clinic are receiving treatment in the corridor of a primary school? Not only this, a portion of a union parishad (UP) office is now being used as a clinic.

All these are happening due to dilapidated condition of the buildings of the clinics, said a doctor.

At least 25 community clinics out of 44 in Barguna's Amtali and Taltali upazilas have been in a very bad state for long due to lack of renovation, said Dr MA Matin, Amtali upazila health and family planning officer.

Community health service providers (CHSPs) are giving treatment to patients amid risk of accidents as plasters of walls and ceilings of the clinics continue falling off, he said, adding that over 100 patients visit each clinic every day.

A local NGO repaired three community clinics to ensure health service to people of rural areas, said Matin.

They are Gotipara Community Clinic, Sakhina Community Clinic and Kazirkhali Community Clinic, said Md Shahabuddin Panna, executive director of Nazrul Smritee Sangsad, an NGO.

"During monsoon, we have to use umbrella when we are on-duty as rainwater seeps through the dilapidated roof of the hospital," said Sujon Payda, CHSP of a community clinic in Joyanlabhanga area of Taltali.

In 1999, the then Awami League-led government set up 44 community clinics in the upazilas to provide health service to the rural people but BNP-led alliance government stopped activities of the clinics when it assumed power in 2001, said Amtali upazila health office sources.

AL reopened the clinics in 2009

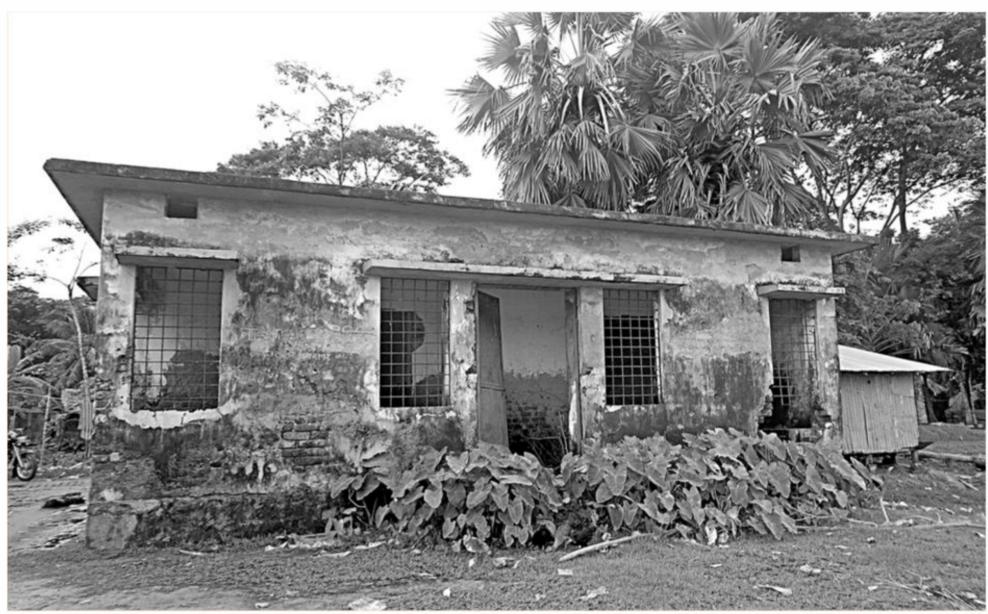
when they came to power again, but the buildings became unfit for use due to lack of renovation, it said.

During a recent visit to the community clinic in Lawapara area of Taltali, this correspondent found its doors and windows missing and plaster falling from the walls and ceiling.

"Finding no other alternative, we are now seeing patients in the corridor of Lawapara Government Primary School," said Afroja Akhter, CHSP of the clinic.

Baithakata Community Clinic in Taltali was locked for three years due to bad condition of the building. As a result, they are now providing health service at the local UP office, about one kilometre away, said Al Imran, CHSP of the clinic.

Civil Surgeon Dr Jasim Uddin said most community clinics in the two upazilas have been in a bad shape and they have written to the higher authorities for fund for their renovation.



Lawapara Community Clinic in Barguna's Taltali upazila has been in a bad state for long due to lack of renovation.

PHOTO: STAR

Tourist lost in Bay at Kuakata

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Patuakhali*

A youth was reported lost in the Bay at Kuakata beach on Friday while the body of a teenage boy was recovered from a river in Rangabali upazila of the district yesterday.

Hasan Sikder, 23, son of Delwar Hossain of Badurtali village in Kalapara upazila, went missing while he was bathing at Kuakata beach on Friday noon, said the victim's wife Nurunnahar Begum.

A search and rescue operation is underway to find Hasan, said Kuakata Tourist Police's Assistant Superintendent of Police Abdul Karim.

Nurunnahar said they came to visit Kuakata beach on Friday and her husband got washed offshore while bathing in the Bay.

Meanwhile, the body of a 15-year-old boy was recovered from Darchira river in Rangabali upazila yesterday morning, two days after he went missing on Thursday.

The deceased was Sagor, son of Ohidul Islam of Fulkhali village.

Poor's card for the rich!

Nepotism deprives the underprivileged of social safety net programme

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, *Nilphamari*

Afiton Bewa, a 48-year-old woman, lives with her ailing husband in a broken hut on other's land in Chandkhana union of Kishoreganj upazila.

She somehow maintains her family as a part-time day labourer or domestic help but when there is no work the landless woman remains unfed.

"At the beginning of the year, I went to the local union parishad (UP) chairman to get a vulnerable group development (VGD) card meant for the poor so that I can get monthly government support but I was told that there is no card for me," said Afiton.

However, Roksana Akhtar, 30, daughter of late wealthy farmer Abdul Khaleque of the union, living in a brick house and owning property, has got a VGD card as she is niece of UP Chairman Hafizur Rahman, said locals.

In reply to a query, Roksana said the local UP chairman is her maternal uncle and so it is no wrong if she avails some privileges.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mehedi Hasan said the government has initiated VGD programme to support extreme poor women by providing

each cardholders 30 kg of rice per month, and 3,447 beneficiaries have been selected in the upazila in two years tenure.

Extreme poor women having no land or home, river erosion victims, those abandoned by husband or having an ailing or physically disabled husband etc are eligible to get VGD card, he said.

Resident of ward No-6 Shawkat Ali and others said VGD card holder Roksana inherited one bigha of land and part of brick built house of her father who died two years ago.

From the land, she gets 40 maunds of Aman and Boro paddy yearly and 50 maunds of potato on average, they said.

Admitting that Roksana is his niece, the UP chairman said, "she deserves to get a VGD card as she is a widow and requested this correspondent not to file report regarding the matter."

Acting upazila women affair's officer Shapla Begum said first condition to get VGD card is that the selected woman must be extreme poor and doesn't own property."

"We will investigate whether VGD card holder Roksana owns property and lives in brick build house and if it is true, we'll surely cancel her card," she said.

Hilsa netting on amid ban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Jhalakathi*

Netting of mother hilsa continues in the Bishkhali River every night despite the ongoing ban.

Many fishermen continue the illegal act with the help of some local musclemen, said residents of Rajaur, Kathalia and Nalchity upazilas.

On October 1, the Department of Fisheries enforced the 22-day ban on netting, selling and transporting hilsa to protect the mother fish till spawning.

During the period, no fisherman is allowed to throw nets in the waters where there is movement of hilsa, say fisheries officials.

Visiting the river on Friday night, this correspondent found hundreds of fishermen netting the hilsa.

Some fishermen are also noticed fishing in the river at different spots in daylight, said Saiful Islam, a college student of Rajapur.

Pritish Kumar Mallik, deputy director of fisheries department of the district, said they cannot check due to the rivers all the time due to shortage of manpower.

Man beaten dead

Family blames BGB, latter denies allegation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Thakurgaon*

Family members of a deceased and locals have alleged that Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) tortured a man to death near Barashashi border outpost in Boda upazila of Panchagarh Friday night.

BGB officials, on the other hand, claimed that he died of a cardiac arrest after BGB men chased him when he was entering Bangladesh with Indian cattle.

The victim was Majom Ali, 40, son of Mansur Ali of Nurpara village in the upazila.

"BGB men picked up my brother from home and took him to Barashashi camp on Friday evening, following false information of bringing five Indian cows through the border," Majom's younger brother Soleman Ali told the reporters.

"At the camp they beat my brother, demanding a cow. Four to five BGB men including Md Lutfar Rahman continued the brutal torture as my brother at first declined to meet the demand.

"On information, I brought a cow from my house to the camp and got my injured brother released from there. But he died on the way to house," Soleman said.

Local union parishad member Robiul Islam said, "BGB men picked up Majom before my eyes on the evening. As I went to their camp and requested them not to torture him, they asked me to leave the place."

Soleman filed a complaint with Boda Police Station the same night in this connection.

"We brought the victim's body to the police station and sent it to Panchagarh Sadar Hospital this [Saturday] morning for autopsy to ascertain whether he was tortured to death," AKM Nurul Islam, OC of Boda Police Station, told this correspondent over mobile phone.

Maj Mizanur Rahman Khan, acting commanding officer of BGB 56 Battalion, Nilphamari, said, "BGB men chased him while he was entering Bangladesh with Indian cattle. Later we heard that he died at his village. BGB men didn't detain or torture him."

RAPED BY UP CHAIRMAN

Victim fears destruction of evidence

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Noakhali*

A woman, who was raped allegedly by a union parishad (UP) chairman in Noakhali's Subornachar upazila, and her family members fear destruction of evidence as her medical test has not been conducted, three days after the incident.

Medical test of the victim, who was admitted to Noakhali 250-bed Hospital on Thursday afternoon, could not be done as her period started yesterday while it was public holiday on Friday.

Doctor Akifa Jahan, gynaecologist of the hospital, said she is not sure whether the evidence of rape would be found after the period ends.

Superintendent of the hospital Dr ANM Shamsul Karim, however, differed with Dr Akifa and said there is little chance of destruction of rape evidence.

Charbata UP Chairman Mozammel Hossain allegedly raped the woman when she came to his office seeking justice on Wednesday night.



Abdul Karim taking care of his malta garden in Manirampur upazila of Jessore.

PHOTO: STAR

Malta makes Karim smile

AZIBOR RAHMAN, *Jhenidah*

Malta farming has brought solace and happiness to an enterprising entrepreneur who started cultivating the fruit at his village Mujgummi in Manirampur upazila of Jessore in 2014.

Abdul Karim told this correspondent that he went to Singapore in 1997, but he was cheated by the broker and incurred a loss of Tk 3 lakh. Being disheartened, he came back to Bangladesh. Later, he met Manirampur Upazila Agriculture Officer Dr Mrityunjoy and took an initiative to cultivate malta as per his advice.

At first, Karim planted 100 plants of Bari-malta-01 on 30 decimals of land at a cost of Tk 50,000 in November, 2014. He gave the fruit to relatives and villagers. Later, he planted 45 more plants on 15 decimals of land in 2015. He started harvesting the fruit after one and a half years. He has sold maltas worth Tk 40,000 to Tk 45,000 since September 20. Now, each plant bears around 170 maltas, which he sells for

Cheated by man-power agents, Abdul Karim started malta farming in 2014 at the advice of Manirampur agriculture officer on 30 decimals of land.

Tk 140 per kg.

He said he will sell maltas worth Tk 1.20 lakh during this season if the weather remains favourable, and will get profit of around Tk 65 thousand,

adding that he will harvest the fruit up to November.

He has prepared 5,000 grafts and sells them for Tk 100 to Tk120 per piece. He sells grafts worth Tk 4,000 to Tk 5,000 per day during the rainy season. He uses vermi compost fertilizer and bio-pesticide on his plot instead of chemical fertilizers or insecticides.

"I have purchased 175 grafts from Karim. This species of malta is very delicious and tasty," said Humayun Kabir of Keshobpur upazila.

"I have purchased 425 grafts from Karim. Neighbouring farmers are thronging his farm to have a look at it," said Aktaruzzaman of Helatala village in Kularua upazila.

Senior Scientific Officer of Agriculture Research Institute Khulna Dr Prashanta Kumar Sarkar said malta farming is profitable in the country. Abdul Karim is one of the big malta farmers in Khulna division and it will bring about a revolutionary change in the economy of the country if they are

Two arrested with 10,000 Yaba tablets

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Benapole*

Two drug peddlers with Yaba tablets were arrested from Laujani rail crossing area in Jhikorgachha upazila of Jessore yesterday.

Officer-in-Charge of Jessore Detective Branch of Police Md Moniruzaman said, tipped-off, the law enforcers conducted a drive in the area and arrested the duo along with 10,000 Yaba tablets.

The arrestees were identified as Sheikh Sumon, 35 son of Sheikh Wadud, a resident of Ponchonagar village in Jhikorgacha upazila, and Kamrul Islam, son of Abdul Jalil, a resident of Kagojpur village under Benapole Port Police Station of Jessore.

Bid to recoup losses

Betel-leaf growers pass busy day to overcome damage caused by flood

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

Betel leaf growers in Hakimpur upazila of the district and neighbouring Panchbibi upazila of Joypurhat, whose crops suffered massive damage in the flood a month ago, are passing a busy time at their croplands to overcome the losses.

According to Mahbubur Rahman of the Department of Agriculture Extension in the district, betel leaf is grown on around 45 hectares of land.

Growers said that most betel leaf plants planted on lowland areas were damaged badly in the flood following three days of rain in August, but there was less damage in highland areas.

"Betel leaf plants usually can't survive if they remain under water for two or three days," said Sachin Chandra Roy of Shalua village in Panchbibi upazila. Besides, the leaves inside the borj (a structure to grow betel leaves on) were also damaged badly, he added.

He planted betel leaf on 50 decimals of land this year, but most of the plants died in the floodwater.

The structures in almost all the betel leaf enclosures were badly damaged, said Sultan Mahmud of Basudevpur village under Hakimpur upazila.

During a visit to the affected places recently, this correspondent found that the growers were busy trying to recover from the losses caused by the flood. Anisur Rahman of Chechra village in Panchbibi upazila of Joypurhat said he has been growing betel leaf for around 25 years, but he never saw such massive damage in his life.

"I spent around Tk 10,000 extra for repairing the borj," he said.

Many farmers in these areas said they could not repair their borj as they do not have enough money. They appealed to the government for monetary help so that they can overcome the losses.

This correspondent saw that betel leaf growers were engaging all their family members for taking care of the plants to save labour cost. "If you hire a labourer you will need Tk 300 more every day," said Anis of Chechra village.



Sachin Chandra Roy and his daughter working at his betel field in Shalua village under Panchbibi upazila of Joypurhat to repair the damage caused by the flood.

PHOTO: STAR