

# Over 300 people sick after taking biryani

*The contaminated food was provided at separate rallies of a former AL lawmaker*

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Over 300 Awami League (AL) activists fell sick after taking contaminated biryani provided at separate rallies in Moheshpur and Kotchandpur upazilas arranged by a former female AL lawmaker.

Former AL MP from Jhenidah-3 constituency Parvin Talukdar Maya, also one of the nomination seekers in the upcoming National Parliamentary Election, arranged the rallies on Tuesday and Wednesday where hundreds of ruling party activists took part.

At least 70 AL men fell sick after taking contaminated biryani, following a rally of the female AL leader at Moheshpur Secondary School ground on Tuesday.

The victims were admitted to Moheshpur, Kotchandpur and Jibonnagar Upazila Health Complexes with severe pain in their abdomen.

Similarly, nearly 250 AL leaders and activists fell sick after taking biryani at a rally arranged by the former lawmaker at Kotchandpur Main Stand around 5:00pm on Wednesday.

Dr Shahabuddin, on duty doctor at Kotchandpur Upazila Health Complex said about 250 patients, suffering from vomiting and abdomen pain, took admission at the hospital due to food poisoning till 12:00noon yesterday.

While talking to this correspondent Ex-MP Maya said she and her husband also fell sick after taking the biryani.

Envious at her popularity some dishonest people might have mixed toxic elements with the biryani, she alleged, adding that it is surely a conspiracy against her as such similar incidents cannot happen on consecutive occasions at two different venues.

Ruling AL lawmaker from Jhenidah-3 constituency Nabi Newaj said many AL leaders and activist fell sick after taking contaminated biryani provided by Parvin Talukdar Maya on Wednesday and the day before.

Legal action should be taken against the female AL leader for arranging such controversial conference under the banner of ruling AL.

Meanwhile, district administration formed a five-member probe committee led by Assistant Superintendent of Police Kanak Kumar Biswas to investigate the incident.



Kotchandpur Upazila Health Complex in Jhenidah sees unusual thronging of patients as a good number of people affected by food poisoning went there for treatment. PHOTO: STAR



A scene of Bondhu Mela in Kuakata sea beach area of Kalapara upazila under Patuakhali.

PHOTO: STAR

## Bondhu mela held at Kuakata

*Tourist centre arranges the unique programme to promote tourism*

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The picturesque Kuakata sea beach assumed a festive look as Kuakata Tourist Centre, a local tourist guide service centre, arranged a programme titled Modhu Mashe Bondhu Mela (friends' fair in the month of honey) there on Wednesday.

On the occasion, various events, including display of fruits, sports competitions and cultural functions, continued till night.

Different seasonal fruits, including mango, jackfruit, litchi, watermelon, papaw, guava, groundnut, date palm, banana and green coconut, were displayed on a temporary stage set up on a boat at the beach.

Around 50 tourists from across the country took part in the function.

Abul Hossain Raju, a tourist who took part in the programme, said they enjoyed themselves in festive mood.

Arrangement of different seasonal fruits made the programme all the more enjoyable, he said.

Tofael Ahmed Topu, also councillor of Kuakata municipality, said they call the Bangla month of Jaistha modhu mas (month of honey) as a lot of juicy fruits are available in this month.

Ruman Imtiaz Tushar, managing director of Kuakata Tourist Centre, said around 50 Bangladeshi tourists from around the country took part in the function as the invitation was sent through Facebook.

"We first arranged the function last year, and we will continue it in future," he added.

## Barapukuria miners', villagers' strike continues

*Food shortage feared as agitators block main entrance of compound*

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Hundreds of employees, including 150 officials and 300 foreign nationals, living at Barapukuria Coal Mining Company Limited (BCMCL) compound have been facing food crisis and insecurity as the joint indefinite strike called by the miners and villagers to press home their demands is turning out to be a bit cruel.

Earlier on Sunday, about 1,000 miners of BCMCL and villagers affected by land subsidence started an indefinite strike which entered its fifth consecutive day yesterday.

BCMCL employees said many officials, their family members and foreign nationals have remained confined inside the coalmine compound as the agitators kept its main entrance blocked since Sunday.

"We will have to starve if the situation continues for two more days," BCMCL Secretary Abdul Kashem Prodhania said, adding that the agitators are not even allowing medicines and foods for the children inside the compound.

Deputy General Manager Zafar Sadique said they bought some food and groceries under police protection on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, at least 15 people were injured during a clash in front of the coalmine compound.

## Orders on Khaleda

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Apart from the two cases, there was no development in the other five cases yesterday.

In another development, lawyers for the BNP chief yesterday submitted four petitions with four Dhaka courts seeking withdrawal of production warrants issued earlier against Khaleda in Gatco, Niko, Barapukuria coal mine and Zia Charitable Trust graft cases.

Of them, production warrant of the Niko graft case was withdrawn, while judges of Gatco and Barapukuria coal mine graft cases will pass orders subject to submission of Khaleda's SC bail order in Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case.

And judge of the Zia Charitable Trust corruption case fixed June 4 for passing an order on the petition filed for withdrawal of the production warrant, said Sanaullah Miah, lawyer for the BNP chief.

So, Khaleda cannot walk out of prison right now even after winning a hard-fought legal battle for bail in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case at the SC on Wednesday, as she didn't get bail in seven other cases in which she was shown arrested.

LAWYERS MEET KHALEDA

Khaleda yesterday alleged that the government was trying to keep her in jail for a long time so that it could hold a one-sided election like that of 2014.

She made the comment while four lawyers met her at the old Central Jail on Nazimuddin Road in Dhaka yesterday afternoon.

"Khaleda Zia said the lower courts were not granting her bail and withdrawing production warrants issued earlier against her, even though the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court upheld her High Court bail in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case," said Masud Ahmed Talukder, one of the lawyers who met her, told The Daily Star.

He said the BNP chief also instructed the party leaders and activists to continue the peaceful movement for her release.

Khaleda is seriously ill and she cannot move normally, the lawyer said, adding that she felt that if she was treated at United Hospital, she would get well.

She also conveyed Ramadan greetings in advance to the people and her party leaders and activists, Masud said.

Three other lawyers who met Khaleda from 4:00pm to 5:15pm were Khandker Mahbub Hossain, AJ Mohammad Ali and Sanaullah Miah.

## Think about

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"That means had there been no conspiracy, Bangladesh would have been established as an independent country. The conspirators wanted to make Bangladesh a failed state."

Briefly describing the horrible days of Ziaur Rahman's rule, she said all the institutions of an independent country were destroyed. "They didn't want Bangladesh to stand up holding its head high as an independent country."

She said this attitude had been there until 1996 when the AL returned to power after 21 years.

Mentioning that the AL government was working hard to fulfil the desire of Bangabandhu to make Bangladesh free from poverty and hunger, she said his soul would find peace once it is achieved.

## Groundnut farming increases in Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Groundnut cultivation in the riverside areas in the district has added a new dimension to local agriculture and is gaining popularity as production cost is low and the profit is good.

District Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) Deputy Director (DD) Altaf Hossain said 2,021 tonnes of groundnut were produced on 971 hectares of land under the seven upazilas this year, while it was 1,986 tonnes on 869 hectares last year.

Groundnut is one of the most profitable among all crops cultivated on the sandy lands in the riverside areas of the Sangu, Mathamuhuri and Banshkhali rivers.

"I have been cultivating groundnut for

the last three years and earned profit of around Tk 20,000 per season. I expect to get more this season," said Hla Mya Prue Marma of Ruma area.

"There are huge opportunities for groundnut farming as the soil and weather in the district are favourable for its cultivation," the DD said.

The DD said more and more farmers in the district are opting for groundnut farming as it is profitable and production cost is low.

Zinga, Tridana, and Bina-6 varieties of groundnut are cultivated in the district, the DD said.

DAE field workers are raising awareness among the farmers about cultivating new and high yielding varieties of groundnut instead of tobacco for gaining more profit, he added.



A farmer with groundnuts reaped from a field beside the Sangu river in Ruma upazila of Bandarban. PHOTO: STAR

## Child in Habiganj suffering rare genetic condition

MINTU DESHWARA with ANDREW EAGLE

Eleven-year-old Nitu from Shayestanagor in Habiganj doesn't get to play outside and socialise like other children. Mostly she stays at home. Nitu suffers from a rare genetic disorder called progeria, which causes rapid aging in children. The diagnosis is grim: Most children with progeria do not live for more than thirteen years.

"Three months after her birth, Nitu suddenly fell ill," explains her father Kamrul Hasan, an employee at a local workshop. "Her hands, feet, face and the skin all over her body became dry. Her feet started to look like an old person's feet. We sought treatment for her at different places in Habiganj. She underwent two years of treatment in Sylhet, without any good result."

Nitu was also admitted at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital in Dhaka where she was treated intermittently until 2016. But not much could be done.

Progeria is not an inherited condition. It is caused by a single mistake in the coding of a certain gene, which causes the body to produce an abnormal protein. The protein causes the rapid aging.

"It is a very rare condition," says Dr Md Abu Sufian, the principal of Sheikh Hasina Medical College in Habiganj. "A study found that progeria affects one child in 40 lakhs. No cure for the disease has been discovered. Only we can try to support Nitu in managing the symptoms."

Drugs designed to lower cholesterol and prevent blood clots can help a progeria patient. A low daily dose of aspirin can work to prevent heart attack and stroke. Growth hor-



Affected by progeria, 11-year-old Nitu appears like an old woman. The photo shows her mother holding her beside their house at Shayestanagor village in Habiganj Sadar upazila. PHOTO: COLLECTED

mone can stimulate improvement in height and weight, and there is a cancer drug that may fix damaged cells.

At home, a child with progeria needs to drink

plenty of water since they are easily dehydrated. It is advisable for them to eat small meals more frequently for better sustenance. Shoes with padded inserts can help a child to stay active for longer. Physiotherapy is also worthwhile.

"Mostly Nitu stays at home," says her mother Jusna Begum. "We have done everything we could do. Her medical costs are expensive and we have spent nearly all our savings."

Local social worker Chowdhury Jannat Rakhi has helped the family. "Many people were saying bad things about Nitu so I brought her to my home, and I was able to have her admitted at the nearby school for children with disabilities."

"We stand with Nitu," says the deputy commissioner in Habiganj, Mahmudul Kabir Murad. "The district administration will support her and her family in any way that we can. I would also urge wealthy citizens to stand beside her."

"When I heard about her condition I went to her home," says the parliamentary representative for Habiganj-3, Abu Jahir MP. "The government will spend Tk 4 lakh on a new home for her family. In my personal capacity I will also do whatever I can."

Nitu's parents also appeal to the well-to-do in society to help in whatever way they can. The hope is that Nitu can live a longer life; and that whatever time she does have left, is lived with as much dignity and as little discomfort as possible.