



Women holding smartphones pose for photograph on the bank of the Teesta River at Dakkhin Kharibari Char in Dimla upazila of Nilphamari. Inset, Fazila Begum of the area listens to weather forecast through a smartphone, which prompted her to reap onion earlier than the usual harvesting time to save the crop from damage by imminent rain. The photos were taken on March 3.

PHOTO: EAM ASADUZZAMAN

30 injured in Habiganj clash over land

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A clash over land dispute on Saturday night left at least 30 people of two feuding groups injured in Kagapasa area of Baniachong upazila in Habiganj.

Out of the injured, 10 were admitted to Habiganj Sadar Hospital, while 15 were admitted to Baniachong Health Complex and other health facilities in surrounding areas. At least five others were given first aid treatment.

According to eyewitness and sources at police, an altercation broke out on Saturday evening between a group led by Mahmud Mia, son of Geda Ullah, and another group led by Sabbir Mia, son of Nur Islam, of the same area over possession of a paddy field in the area.

Around 7:00pm, both the groups started chasing each other with sticks and sharp weapons. The clash soon spread in the entire village and adjacent areas.

Police from Baniachong Police Station soon arrived at the scene and fired rubber bullets and tear gas shells to break up the feuding groups.

But the two groups continued the chase and counter chase for nearly a couple more hours.

Rashed Mobarak, officer-in-charge (OC) of the police station, confirmed that around 30 people from both sides were injured in the clashes.

No case was filed in this connection as of filing of this report at 3:30pm yesterday and riot police remained deployed at the scene, the OC added.

'Magic' of smartphone changes life of Teesta char women

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Merina Begum was having a video phone call with an agriculture officer when this reporter approached her maize field at Dakkhin Kharibari Char, a sandy area of the Teesta River basin in Nilphamari's Dimla upazila.

"Hello Sir, please see my maize field in the video and suggest me what to do," the 36-year-old Merina was asking Upazila Agriculture Officer Sekendar Ali, at the other end.

Ali, after having a long look at the maize, advised her to put boron fertilizer as a remedy.

Merina appeared happy and told this reporter that the android phone she got as a gift three years ago has been an important tool for her to solve many farmer-related issues.

Merina is one of the 100 women farmers in Dakkhin Kharibari Char, who got the phones in 2016 under a research project called Protic (Participatory research and ownership with technology, information

and change). The project was funded by Monash University of Australia with the support of Oxfam Bangladesh.

Local NGO Polli Shree, which has been implementing the project, also provides each of them 500 megabyte data very month.

And this small yet smart device has been empowering poor women in the area, a home of 3000 families, in a big way.

"Every day I get at least 10-12 video calls from women farmers of the char and their phones come as blessing for all as I can solve the problem instantly sitting in my office," Ali told this reporter afterward.

Farida Begum, 32, another proud owner of the phone, was preparing to harvest lal shak (red amaranth). She made a call to a vegetable wholesaler to know the market price and got a very good response.

Another beneficiary Saleha Begum, 30, said, "After giving mobile sets, project officials taught us how to use it. Besides, useful apps on agriculture like Krishoker Janala and Digital Thikana, dialing to government offices and call centre of pro-

ject Protic, weather forecast and even entertainment were installed when we got the phones."

This reporter talked with ten users and all of them said they are getting benefits after using those apps. They also said it allowed their husbands to go to the big cities and work there to earn some additional money for the family.

The women of this disaster-prone char area also said that they could get message in advance on natural calamities and convey it to villagers to take shelter to safer places.

Many of them impoverished families have now built half pucca tin-roofed houses, purchased farm land, have source of pure water, sanitary latrine and can send the children to school, said Rabbiul Islam Shahin, the Dimla UP chairman.

Moreover, they are also helping their neighbours to get the benefit of digitalization, Shahin added.

MA Makim Chowdhury, project officer of Protic, said, "Last year, a research team from Dhaka University, comprising a group of students led by Associate

Professor Shakhawat Hossain of disaster management department visited the area. They were overwhelmed to see the impact of the cellphones while conducting a survey here."

Contacted, Shakhawat Hossain said, "Touch of digitalisation with the help of smartphones has brought about basic changes in the lives of the poor, marginal and deprived women in the remote area. It happened not only in agriculture but also in disaster management and entertainment. More importantly, it empowered the women."

Nazmunnahar, the UNO of Dimla, said she was amazed to see how quickly the women in the char area were learning about and applying those devices in their daily life.

"I have asked several of them to solve a few riddles and they did it using the google search engine with amazing efficiency," said Nazmunnahar.

OC transferred over complaint by Kulaura UZ AL candidate

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

After receiving a written complaint from Awami League (AL)-nominated candidate in Moulvibazar's Kulaura Upazila Parishad election, the Election Commission (EC) on Saturday night transferred Kulaura Police Station's officer-in-charge (OC).

Mohammad Shah Jalal, superintendent of police (SP) in Moulvibazar, said upon receiving the transfer order from the EC, he has transferred the OC, Shamim Musha, to the headquarters of Criminal Investigation Department in Dhaka.

On March 7, AL candidate ASM Kamrul Islam in the complaint filed with the office of chief election commissioner alleged that OC Shamim had campaigned and sought vote for a candidate, Shafi Ahmed Solman, who is a dissident leader of the same party.

Contacted, Shafi Ahmed Solman claimed that his adversary ASM Kamrul has deliberately complained against a good officer who had refused to comply with ASM Kamrul's "unlawful demands".

OC Shamim served at the police station since July 7, 2017, before being transferred from Lakhai Police Station in Habiganj. He was promoted to the post of OC in 2005. He joined police as a sub inspector in 1991.

Kurigram Chest Disease Clinic without consultant for 3 years

ABDUL WAHED, Kurigram

Patients suffering from chest diseases are being deprived of proper treatment at Kurigram Chest Disease Clinic as there is no doctor for chest disease for nearly three years.

Sources at the hospital said there are two posts of physicians in the clinic—one junior consultant (chest disease) and one medical officer (MO).

The post of junior consultant is lying vacant for nearly three years.

Meanwhile, the post of MO, which was lying vacant for nearly two years, has been recently filled with the joining of Dr Rafiqul Islam Sardar on February 27.

Besides, there are no radiologist and pharmacist in the clinic for three years, even though there is an X-ray machine functional.

"Some patients from adjoining

Lalmoinihat come here for Tuberculosis (TB) test as there is no machine for detection of TB in Lalmoinihat, said Ashok Kumar, laboratory attendant of the clinic.

"Now seven or eight patients come here on an average every day," Office Assistant Shajeda Khatun said, adding that over 20 patients used to visit the clinic when a junior consultant was posted there.

"We advise chest disease patients to go to Kurigram General Hospital, if anyone comes here for treatment," Shajeda said.

"We only prepare laboratory tests and provide medicines for the patients," she said.

Nargis Begum, 25, wife of Rafiqul Islam of Harikesh village in Kurigram Sadar, said, "I have been taking treatment under Gynaecologist Dr Mahabuba

Khatun at Kurigram General Hospital as there is no doctor at Kurigram Chest Disease Clinic."

Kurigram Civil Surgeon Dr Aminul Islam said, "The posts of junior consultant and medical officer at Kurigram Chest Disease Clinic have remained vacant for long, although a number of poor patients from nine upazilas of the district come here for treatment."

"I have informed the higher authorities about the matter and requested them to send at least one doctor [chest disease], but to no result yet," the civil surgeon said.

"In absence of a specialist doctor, I give treatment to some male patients while Dr Mahabuba provides treatment to female patients," he said, adding that the authorities concerned should fill the vacant posts soon, considering the interest of the poor patients.



Kurigram Chest Disease Clinic sees only a few treatment seekers as the post of consultant for treatment of chest diseases at the government-run clinic has remained vacant for three years.

PHOTO: STAR



A file photo of the female nilgai that died from injuries at Ramsagar National Park in Dinajpur on Saturday night.

PHOTO: STAR

Lone female nilgai dies from injury

Three-member probe body formed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

The country's lone female nilgai -- the largest antelope in Asia -- died from critical injuries on Saturday night at Ramsagar National Park in Dinajpur.

Previously thought to be extinct in Bangladesh, the female nilgai, also known as blue bull, was rescued by forest department from Ranishankoil upazila of Thakurgaon on September 4 last year.

Abdus Salam Tuhin, a curator at the national park and also a forest official in Dinajpur, said the animal died around 7:00pm, soon after it tried to gallop away and slammed into a boundary fence of the park's enclosure where it was kept.

Nilgais are timid and afraid of humans. The creature was startled and leapt up when a staff member entered the enclosure around 6:40pm with its feed.

After hitting the fence, she fell on the ground and succumbed to her injuries

within a few minutes. "We didn't get any chance to give treatment to the injured nilgai, which was also pregnant," the curator added.

She became pregnant after a male nilgai, rescued from Naogaon's Manda upazila on January 22 this year, was brought to the park on February 9.

Veterinary experts from Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University (HSTU) in Dinajpur and livestock officials of Dinajpur conducted an autopsy of the nilgai.

Abdur Rahman, divisional forest officer in Dinajpur, said the cause of the nilgai's death would be ascertained after the autopsy report is available.

A three-member probe committee was formed to investigate into the incident. The committee -- led by Dr SM Harun-ur-Rashid, head of Faculty of Veterinary and Animal Sciences at HSTU -- was asked to submit its report within the shortest possible time.

2 'hundi traders' arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) arrested two alleged hundi traders with Tk 7.5 lakh from Uttarpara at bordering Putkhali village under Benapole Port Police Station yesterday.

The arrestees are Jakir Hossain, 35, son of Arsaf Ali, and Salina Khatun, 19, wife of Ashanur Rahman, of the village.

Tipped off, a BGB team conducted a drive in the area in the afternoon, arrested Jakir Hossain and Salina Khatun and seized the money, said Lt Col Imran Ullah Sarker, commanding officer of BGB-21.

"The arrestees and the money were handed over to Benapole Port Police Station.