

CHAPAINAWABGANJ ADHUNIK SADAR HOSPITAL MEAL FOR TK 5 ONLY!



Patients and attendants collecting freshly cooked supper for just Tk 5 per head under the Mehman programme, initiated by a local voluntary group, at Chapainawabganj Adhunik Sadar Hospital.

PHOTO: STAR

RABIUL HASAN, Chapainawabganj

Mehman is a term commonly used for guests who come to visit a home.

But at Chapainawabganj Adhunik Sadar Hospital, patients and their attendants get treated as 'Mehman' by a local voluntary group.

The 100-bed government hospital, often running over capacity, can only provide meals to patients who get a bed in the hospital, according to hospital rules.

Attendants and invalids, who end up on the hospital floor, have to arrange their own food by either bringing it from home or purchasing it from outside.

The voluntary programme Mehman provides attendants and these unfortunate invalids freshly cooked supper at a cost of Tk 5 per head on every Saturday, Thursday and Monday night.

"I have to spend at least Tk 40 if I buy food from outside," said Merina Khatun, who admitted her teenage daughter Sathi at the hospital on Friday but failed to get a bed.

Merina's home in Johorpur village in Chapainawabganj Sadar upazila is

far away from the district town. So, it is not possible for her family to bring home-cooked meal to the hospital every night.

When this correspondent visited the Sadar Hospital on Saturday evening, he saw many patients and attendants like Merina waiting in queue for the meal after collecting the Tk 5 coupon. Among them were also poor people from around the neighbourhood.

One of the organisers of Mehman Johirul Islam, who lives in Masjidpara near the hospital, recounted how the programme was started by people who witnessed poor patients' trouble in getting food.

From March 19 this year, they started Mehman feeding about 150 to 175 people each day. Another around 50 people who cannot afford to pay the token money are also fed for free.

"During Ramadan, we provided food for free every night to the poor patients of the hospital," said Johirul.

Initially, only five people started the programme now about 35 people are on Mehman's roster, willing to feed the poor patients and their attendants, said the retired government officer.

If more people volunteer to provide food through Mehman, then the initiative can be continued all 365 days of a year, he hopes.

One person at a time takes the responsibility of buying the ingredients of a day's meal which costs about Tk 3,000, Johirul said.

The meal, often a simple hotchpotch cooked with vegetables and sometimes chicken, is prepared by the hospital cook using the health facility's kitchen, he said.

People wishing to obtain the meal purchase a token for Tk 5 and bring their own plates, Johirul added.

The proceeds are used to pay the cook and three other hospital staffs, who help with the food distribution and order maintenance, he explained.

Nesaruddin, a pharmacy owner and participant of the initiative, said, "It feels good to be a part of this programme. We spend a lot of money in many trivial stuffs. So why can't we spend just Tk 3,000 once in a while to feed the needy?"

Dr Jahid Nazrul Chowdhury, civil surgeon of Chapainawabganj, expressed his appreciation for the initiative.

Attack on Hindu family by UP member

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

A local land grabber attacked a Hindu family and took away Tk 7.10 lakh from the victims in Jhalakathi.

Prince Mondal, convener of Jhalakathi district Hindu Buddha Christian Chhatra Jubo Front, came up with the allegation at Barishal Reporters Unity yesterday.

On Tuesday, when he along with his son went to Jhalakathi to book a land, a gang led by Kirtipasha union parishad chairman and district Awami League member Sukkur Mollah and his son Rebel Mollah, a drug addict, attacked them with lethal weapons and took away Tk 7.10 lakh from them, said Prince.

"They also threatened us to leave the country immediately if we want to save our life," he said.

Prince also alleged that Jhalakathi police did not accept their complaint.

The UP chairman refuted the allegation of attacking the duo.

Abu Taher, officer-in-charge of Jhalakathi Sadar Police Station, said they did not come to lodge any complaint and he even did not hear about any such incident.

Arrest ex-ACC DD Ahsan Ali in 15 days

Alleging corruption and threat, Benapole land port users give ultimatum

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Seven organizations of Benapole land port users yesterday gave an ultimatum to arrest Ahsan Ali, former deputy director (DD) of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), within 15 days for what they said massive corruption and threat to custom officials.

"Former ACC DD Ahsan Ali threatened Customs Commissioner Belal Hossain Chowdhury and other officials after failing to dodge revenue of Tk 2 crore 2 lakh 5 thousand against 30 items imported in June and July in the name of Ritu International and Z H

Corporation. The two companies are managed by Ahsan," said Uttom Chakma, assistant commissioner of Benapole Customs House.

"On July 28, Ahsan tried to release a huge amount of Viagra, which was detained by the customs authority," he said.

Ahsan Ali was sent to forced retirement from his job at ACC in 2017, officials said.

Revenue officer Billal Hossain, also convener of Customs and VAT Association of Benapole Customs House, said, "On December 25 last year, a false allegation was submitted to the ACC against

Customs Commissioner Belal Hossain Chowdhury, using the name of advocate Shahadat Hossain, and Ahsan distributed its copies among officials and media. But investigations found that the so-called advocate did not exist."

"We urge the authorities concerned to take necessary measures against Ahsan Ali and arrest him within the next 15 days. Otherwise, strict programmes will be taken at every customs house across the country," said Nuruzzaman, senior vice president of Benapole C&F Agents Association.



Many roads, houses and vast tracts of croplands went under water due to erosion by the Katakali river at Ramnagar village in Gaibandha's Saghata upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Erosion renders 100 families homeless

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Many roads, houses and vast tracts of croplands have been washed away as the Katakali river in Saghata upazila continued swelling in the last two weeks.

Erosion by the river rendered around 100 families homeless at four villages in the upazila during the time while over 30 families are under threat in the areas, said Shajahan Ali, a member of Kachua union parishad.

The affected villages are Ramnagar, Kachua, Satitola and Chandanpat.

The riverside villagers are also passing their days in great panic as the river has continued swelling in the areas, said locals.

The erosion-hit people have already taken shelter on government roads and high lands, they said.

During a visit, this correspondent found many villagers shifting to safer places along with their belongings in fear of further erosion.

Erosion victim Fahimuddin of Kachua village in Saghata upazila said they have been driven away from their house by river erosion thrice in the last seven years.

"I have lost all of my belongings to the

river during the time," he said, adding that this time his house is also under threat of erosion by the river.

"My homestead on five decimals of land and two bighas of croplands went under water due to erosion by the river in the last two days," said Abdus Samad of Kachua village.

Abul Hossain of Ramnagar village said almost all the dwellings in the area went into the river.

Mohiuddin Akand, president Ramnagar union unit of Awami League, said the villages were affected badly due to erosion by the river this time.

The erosion victims need relief materials and rehabilitation this moment, he said.

Mahbubur Rahman, chairman of Kachua union parishad, said they informed the authorities concerned including Water Development Board to take immediate steps to check the widespread erosion.

He also sought help for the erosion-hit people, said the chairman.

Mithun Kundu, project implementation officer of Saghata upazila, said they have sent proposal to the higher authority to allocate relief for the erosion victims.

Fishers killing fish fries, aquatic life in Harinbaria canal

They are using unauthorised extra fine nets, blocking movement of all

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Huge quantities of fish fries, fingerlings and aquatic animals are being destroyed every day in Harinbaria canal of Barguna's Taltali upazila where unscrupulous fishers set up over a thousand fine fishing nets, locally known as 'bhasan jaal', across the canal.

Locals also alleged that they were being unable to use the waterway as the nets block their movement through the entire width of the 30-kilometre long canal all throughout the year.

Connecting the Payra river to the north and the Neelganj river to the south in Kalapara upazila, Harinbaria canal flows through Borobogi, Chhotobogi and Karaibaria unions in Taltali upazila.

The canal is the primary source of water for thousands of inhabitants of surrounding villages.

Several thousand people also make a living by fishing in the canal.

But, over the past few years, the fishers became too aggressive and inconsiderate of the fact that the biodiversity of the area cannot be destroyed for their financial gains and that people in the area have the right to move freely on the canal, said a number of locals requesting not to be named.

The extra fine nets or 'bhasan jaals' the fishers use catch anything that moves in the water, they said, adding that small fish fries and other aquatic animals die after the fishers lift up the catch and sort out larger fish for sale.

While speaking with this correspondent, Ishaq Ali Hawlader, a fisherman from Haribaria village, said he catches fish all year round by placing several 'bhasan jaals' on the canal near Haribaria bridge.

Depending on the time of the year, he makes between Tk 500 and Tk 1,000 daily, he also said.

When asked if causing obstruction of movement on a public waterway was an acceptable practice, Abul Kalam, another fisherman from the same village, said he had been fishing this way as others were doing it too.

Many villagers in the area this correspondent spoke to said they were highly concerned that unless the killing of fish fries and other aquatic animals are stopped immediately, the canal

will soon be entirely devoid of fish and the overall environment in surrounding areas will have an adverse effect.

Contacted, Taltali Upazila Fisheries Officer Shamim Reza said they do not allow the use of extra fine nets such as 'bhasan jaal' for fishing in public waterbodies and they often conduct drives to confiscate the fishing nets.

Regarding blocking of waterways, he said no one has the right to cause any hindrance to people's movement on public waterbodies.

Drives against the use of unauthorised fishing nets and obstruction of movement in Harinbaria canal will be conducted again soon, Shamim also said.



This recent photo shows only a few of over a thousand fishing nets placed across the entire width of Harinbaria canal in Taltali upazila of Barguna.

PHOTO: SOHRABHOSSAIN

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