

# Six years on, river fire station still has no equipment

*A three-storey building was constructed at a cost around Tk 5 crore*

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

River communications are much easier than communications by road in the town of Patuakhali as well as in the riverine district. For apparent reasons, the Fire Service and Civil Defence decided to set up a river station by the Laukathi river in the town.

However, six years after a three-storey building for the river station was built at a cost around Tk 5 crore, thousands of locals are yet to reap its benefits as the fire station still does not have any fire boat, water ambulance or any other necessary firefighting equipment.

It is an irony that a water ambulance -- went out of order within a few years after it was purchased in the '80s -- of the town fire station is left to rot by the newly built pontoon of the river station.

While the new building of the river station was inaugurated on September 25, 2013 by then local lawmaker Advocate Shahjahan Mia, the construction of the pontoon for the station was completed only around eight months ago, in March this year.

Appointments in almost all posts, 12 out of 14, for the river station were completed in April this year, but even

the topmost official of the service in Patuakhali town is still unsure of when the station will receive its firefighting equipment.

Confirming that 12 of the new recruits joined the river station on April 4, Station Officer Sohail Ahmed said the personnel have been sitting idle without necessary equipment including fire boats and water ambulances.

Businessman Khairul Mridha from Badrua Bazar in Galachipa upazila said people are not getting any benefit from the new river station for years.

As many as 15 shops and three houses in the area burned down in fire on Monday, he said, adding that the amount of damage could have been reduced if the river station was in operation as it would take less time for fire boats to reach the spot as opposed to fire trucks driving on narrow roads.

Assistant Director Nazrul Islam of the fire service in Patuakhali town said the river station could not go in operation although it has its pontoon, a building and manpower.

All decisions regarding the setting up of the river station is made at the fire service headquarters in Dhaka and "I have no information on the matter," he added.



The water ambulance -- went out of order within a few years of purchase in the '80s -- of Patuakhali town fire station is left to rot beside the newly built fire service pontoon by the Laukathi river. Now the new river station awaits new firefighting equipment.

PHOTO: SOHRABHOSSAIN

# Jashore bitter gourd farmers all smiles

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Bumper yield and fair price have brought smile to bitter gourd farmers in Jashore district.

The vegetable is now being sent to different wholesale kitchen markets in Dhaka, Chattogram, Bogura, Khulna and Barishal due to its good prices, said the growers.

Sources at Jashore district agriculture office said around 850 hectares of land have been brought under bitter gourd cultivation in eight upazilas of the district this year.

Md Bablur Rahman, a grower of Hashempur village in Sadar upazila, said he cultivated bitter gourd on two bighas of land spending Tk 12,500 this season. He is expecting 50 to 55 maunds of bitter gourd from each bigha.

He is now selling at Tk 700 to Tk 800 per maund of bitter gourd to the local wholesale traders, said Bablur.

Another farmer Abdula Hamid of Rupdia village in the same upazila said bitter gourd is more profitable than paddy and jute and due to this, growers are interested in cultivating the vegetable.

Sautom Kumar Shil, agriculture officer in Sharsa upazila, said production cost of bitter gourd on per bigha of land is Tk 14,000 and the farmers are getting about 60 maund of bitter gourd from each bigha.

Now the Bitter gourd cultivation is very



A bitter gourd field in Jashore Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

profitable, so the farmers are showing interest in the vegetable cultivation, said the agriculture officer.

Deputy Director (DD) of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Jashore Emdad Hossain said farmers are making

handsome profit from bitter gourd cultivation as the pest attack on the farmland is not severe this year.

Apart from this, the growers are getting fair prices due to low production costs and easy farming, said the DD.

# Kathin Chibar Dan begins at Rangamati

*Thousands of Buddhist devotees throng Rajban Bihar to join the festival*

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Kathin Chibar Dan, the biggest religious festival of the Buddhist community in Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT) region, began yesterday at Rajban Bihar in Rangamati town.

Chakma Raja Devashish Roy inaugurated the two-day programme through opening the bain ghar (sewing room) and spinning wheel at Rajban Bihar at 3:00pm.

Kathin Chibar Dan (offering of robe woven with hard work) is an annual religious festival during which Buddhist devotees offer manually woven robes to monks.

"Every year we arrange Kathin Chibar Dan with religious fervour. In line with our tradition, we follow this bain (manual weaving and sewing) method," said Raja Devashish Roy.

Such festivals help Buddhist devotees to learn reverence, patience and tolerance, he added.

Bishakha, a nurse of Gautama Buddha, introduced the event about 2500 years ago, by offering him a kathin chibar (robe woven with hard work).

Thousands of Buddhists from three hill districts of CHT region have started arriving in Rangamati town to join the festival.

"Like every year, the district administration has arranged adequate security measures on the occasion. We hope that our programme will be end peacefully," said Goutam Dewan, president of Upasok-Upasika Karjonirbahi Parishad, at Rajban Bihar.

Amiyo Khisa, secretary of the Parishad, and Susmita Chakma, its information and publicity secretary, were present at the inaugural function, among others.



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A team of Wildlife Crime Control Unit led by Inspector Ashim Mollik rescued this grey langur (hanuman) from Arulia Bazar in Kahaloo upazila of Bogura and later sent it to Rajshahi forest department yesterday to release it to nature.

PHOTO: COLLECTED