



With water receding from canals, ponds and even rivers, children working their hardest to catch fish from muddy waters is a winter staple in Sylhet, as well as many other parts of the country. This photo was taken yesterday from Sylhet Sadar's Shimulkandi area.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Nighttime restrictions imposed in Rajshahi

Covid positivity rate 64.52pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Following a surge in Covid-19 cases, the local administration in Rajshahi imposed night-time restrictions on businesses in the city and nine upazilas of the district from yesterday evening.

"Under the restrictions, all shops, shopping malls, recreation centres, and restaurants must close by 8:00pm," said Muhammad Shariful Haque, Rajshahi additional deputy commissioner.

Four people have died from coronavirus infection and symptoms in 24 hours till yesterday morning, said Brig Gen Shamim Yazdani, director of Rajshahi Medical College Hospital. A total of 186 samples were tested in the RMCH laboratory during this period, with 120 people infected with the coronavirus. The current positivity rate is 64.52 percent, said the RMCH director.

"The 104-bed Covid unit is currently treating 51 people," he added.

Meanwhile, the additional deputy commissioner said, "Rajshahi DC Abdul Jalil issued a public notice imposing the restrictions when the Covid transmission rate reached 74.84 percent on Friday."

OMS halt worries Ctg residents



Port city residents queued up for the TCB trucks on Wednesday, the last day of the service, for now. This photo was taken from Anderkilla area.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

ARUN BIKASH DEY

The open market sale (OMS) service of Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) had brought much relief to the low- and lower-middle income groups in Chattogram district recently, as prices of daily essentials shot up in retail markets.

But with the service ending on Wednesday, residents are now worried about how they will manage their meals.

TCB started the OMS service in the port city on January 3. It continued till January 27, operating across 30 spots in the district – 17 in the city and 13 in upazilas.

Daily essentials including lentil, sugar and edible oil were sold from the popular "TCB trucks", at Tk 30 to Tk 60 cheaper per kg/litre compared to retail market price.

On Wednesday, rickshaw-van puller Abdul Halim was seen standing near the queue for a TCB truck at Dewan Bazar. He said he bought lentil, sugar and soybean oil from there.

"A kg of lentil is sold at Tk 110 in the market, while a kg of sugar is Tk 80. Here I get both the items at Tk 60 and Tk 55 per kg respectively," he said. "A kg of soybean oil is sold at Tk 160 per litre in the market, but here I get the same for Tk 110."

"The hike in price of daily essentials has made our lives difficult. I have heard that the service will be closed from tomorrow [Thursday]. How will we survive then? I request the government to continue OMS for the sake of people like us," he said.

Schoolteacher Tapati Barman was found standing in the queue. "I stand in the queue once a week as the salespersons do not sell more than two-kg lentil, two-kg sugar and two-litre oil per person at a time," said Tapati. "I run out of sugar and lentil in a week as I have six family members."

"We live on fixed income," she said, adding, "If the OMS operation is shutdown, we will be in big trouble," she added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Seven killed in road accidents in 4 districts

Hit by train, man dies in Pabna

STAR REPORT

At least seven people were killed in road and train accidents in four districts in the last two days.

In Manikganj, three people were killed when a bus hit an auto-rickshaw in Shibhalaya upazila yesterday.

The accident occurred on Dhaka-Aricha highway near Mahadevpur bus stand, said police.

The deceased – Zahid (40), the auto-rickshaw driver, and Rahman (25) and Razzak (30), its passengers – were from Hapania village in Harirampur upazila.

Of the victims, Zahid and Rahman died on the spot, said Barangail Highway police outpost in-charge Riyad Mahmud.

Razzak succumbed to his injuries on the way to Dhaka.

Bus driver Sattar Mollah (55) was arrested and the vehicle was seized, said the police official.

In Jamalpur, a newly-elected union parishad member was killed as a bus hit his motorbike on Jamalpur-Tangail road at Chhatarkandi in Sarishabari upazila yesterday.

Amjad Hossain (40) from Raghunathpur village in Sarishabari was a member of Mahadan Union Parishad.

In Mymensingh, a

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Death-row convict held after 20yrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

After 20 years, a death-row convict was arrested by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-7) from the port city's Akbarshah area early Friday.

The arrestee is Sayed Ahmed (60), said assistant director Nurul Absar of Rab 7's media office. "He went into hiding soon after the murder of entrepreneur Jane Alam, who was shot and hacked to death by criminals in Lohagara upazila of Chattogram on March 30, 2002."

The arrest was made following secret information, he said.

A Rab press release said a court in Chattogram sentenced 12 persons including Ahmed to death in connection with the killing, where eight others were given life imprisonment. However, the accused later filed an appeal against the verdict with the higher court, but it sentenced 10, including Ahmed, to death and two to life in jail.

During interrogation, Ahmed told Rab officials that he went into hiding along with a team of robbers of Banshkhalia upazila. Later, he started roaming around in Banshkhalia, Kutubdia, and Pekua's coastal areas to avoid arrest. At one point, he came to Sitakunda and started living in a jungle at Salimpur, with the help of criminal Moshir, who was recently arrested by Rab.

After law enforcement agencies began frequent drives in the area, Ahmed started working as a cook in different shrines of Chattogram. After several years, Ahmed took up a job as a guard in a residential building in Akbarshah and started living there.



Students protest assault on PUST teacher

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A group of Pabna University of Science and Technology (PUST) students formed a human chain yesterday to protest the assault on mathematics department chairperson Prof Harunur Rashir on Thursday.

On the day, Prof Harun, department chair and member of a recruitment board to recruit teachers for the department, was allegedly assaulted and barred from participating in the recruitment process.

The human chain was brought out under the banner of "PUST Students" yesterday, where protesters brought various allegations of irregularities at the university.

Meanwhile, the university authorities, in an official statement, claimed that a conspiracy is going on against the university's development.

Faruk Hossain Chowdhury, deputy director of public relations office at PUST, issued the official statement, claiming that Prof Harun tried to appoint his wife as a teacher through the recruitment board.

According to the rules, he was asked not to attend the board, but there was no incident of assault, he further claimed. "Conspirators are trying to foil the university's development," Faruk stated on behalf of the university.

Talking to The Daily Star, Somiron Kumar Shah, student affairs adviser of the university, said, "Supporters of the mathematics department chairperson might have formed the human chain to fulfil their personal interests. Other general students of the university did not join it."

A dying craft

Rajbari bamboo artisans struggling to survive

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

At a time when sustainable consumption is a pressing issue, people involved in producing bamboo-made items in Rajbari are struggling to survive, due to increased use of plastic products in lieu of their alternative eco-friendly ones.

There are only four families at Goalanda Textile Mill colony area, under the district's Sadar upazila, who have been producing bamboo-made items for over 10 years. Among the four, three are from Alomdanga, while the other is from Jhenaidah.

While visiting the colony area, this correspondent noticed that only five women and two men were making various bamboo items in their yard.

Many claimed that bamboo artisans have given up their ancestral profession and started working as rickshaw pullers, barbers, RMG workers or labourers. Now, only women and a few male craftsmen are engaged in this craft passed down by their ancestors.

Probad Bed (55) has been engaged in producing bamboo-made products since

childhood. "We make small baskets, fruits trays, flower vases and a variety of toys for children here," he said.

"But the demand for such items has decreased alarmingly due to plastic products," he added.

Rozina Bed (31), another artisan, said, "We first take care of our household work. We try to wrap that up as early as possible so that we can start working on our bamboo products."

"There are several steps to preparing the items. First, we pick the bamboo and cut it into long, thin pieces. Next, we smoothen out each piece and dry them for a number of days. Later, we paint them either red or green, mostly red because it makes the products attractive to buyers."

"Sometimes, we use both the colours together, representing the Bangladeshi flag. In 10 days, we can make 50 pieces of such products," she added.

Another female artisan, Radha Bed (29), said she grew up watching her grandparents and parents crafting bamboo items. She said she earns around Tk 50-60 per day now, even though she

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



The few remaining artisans in Rajbari sadar's Goalanda Textile Mill colony area are struggling to take their ancestral profession forward, as customers keep going for cheaper but environmentally harmful plastic products.

PHOTO: STAR

Freshwater declining
Speakers tell river conference

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Freshwater resources are declining across the country due to rising sea levels and increasing salinity, speakers said at the Coastal Rivers Conference-2022 held at Kuakata yesterday.

Speakers marked occupancy of rivers flowing through the coastal areas, pollution, reduction of water flow in dry season and flooding of river beds as reasons, saying that as a result river biodiversity is declining at a significant rate.

Muki Majumder Babu, chairperson of Nature and Life Foundation, presided over the conference, jointly organised by Bangladesh River Foundation and nine organisations.