

RMCH shuts Covid unit for lack of patients

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) has shut down its Covid Unit as it lacked patients.

"We have no reason to run the unit any more as patients barely come," hospital director Brig Gen Shamim Yazdani told The Daily Star yesterday.

From now on, Covid-19 patients would be sent to the Infectious Disease Hospital instead of the unit, he said. The unit was opened in May 2020.

RMCH hired two more private hospitals to treat Covid-19 patients as their numbers rose up.

To manage patients, the government last year decided to revive Rajshahi Sadar Hospital which had been shut for three decades. The number of Covid-19 patients started reducing from the beginning of this year.

Last month, only a few patients went to the hospital for treatment. This month, no patients turned out so far.

"We still have all the facilities developed in the hospital for treating Covid-19 patients. If situation demands, we can reopen everything," the hospital director said.



Standing on his small boat, a man cleans off the roots of water taro (pani kochu), which tends to grow on the bank of canals and other waterbodies. After collecting them, he sells the different sized taro at local markets, earning Tk 500 per day. This photo was taken yesterday at Barishal's Harta village.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

3 held with snake venom worth Tk 5cr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Detectives in a drive in the port city's Double Mooring area seized more than 1,350 grams of snake venom and arrested three people on Friday night.

The arrestees are Mohammed Ismail, Md Jaynal Abedin and Rupan Chakma, said a DB press release. Zahirul Islam, additional deputy commissioner of Chattogram Metropolitan Police's Detective Branch (north), said, "After receiving information, detectives conducted the drive and seized the venom." Checking market price, police estimated that the price might be Tk 5 crore.

In a primary interrogation, the arrestees confessed that the venom was illegally brought into the country to be sold for producing drugs, said Zahirul.

"We're suspecting that an international syndicate is behind the trade. We are looking into it," said the police official.

A case has been filed with Double Mooring Police Station.

The land was greener

Bagerhat's Rampal sees massive deforestation due to growing industries

PARTHA CHAKRABORTY, Bagerhat

A vast area of Bagerhat's Rampal upazila is at risk of environmental degradation due to massive industrialisation surrounding the power plant.

Sand-filling in croplands and water bodies in around 1,750 acres of land are going on in full swing, while hundreds of trees have been cut to set up factories and industries.

The area is currently in a desert-like situation from the rampant sand filling.

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw signboards of dozens of companies hoisted on the lands

on both sides of Khulna-Rampal highway, stretching across the 15-kilometre area.

"Many companies are working here to set up their factories. Ours was an area calm and quiet



PHOTO: STAR

Due to massive industrialisation surrounding the Rampal power plant, cropland and waterbodies are being filled with sand. Hundreds of trees have been cut down to set up industries, affecting the area's biodiversity and harming the lives of locals.

with natural greeneries. Now life itself has become hazardous for us," said Yasin Miah (37), resident of Rampal's Tangramari area.

"We used to grow paddies and

other crops in this area. Now all our croplands are filled up," said a resident of Rampal's Hurka village, seeking anonymity.

Some entrepreneurs are also turning croplands into shrimp

enclosures.

Locals said they are in a severe crisis of drinking water and have to collect saline water from nearby ponds for their daily consumption.

Noor Alam Sheikh, convener of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa), said vast areas have been acquired for multiple mega-projects like Khan Jahan Ali Airport, railway and coal-based power plant, which is also contributing to the destruction of the environment.

"The amount of carbon dioxide in this region's air will sharply increase as trees and greeneries have been destroyed. The disappearance of water bodies will pose a severe threat to environmental degradation as well," said Prof Abdullah Harun Chowdhury of Khulna University's environmental sciences discipline.

Contacted, Arafin Badal, deputy director of the Department of Environment (DoE) in Bagerhat, said he would investigate and take action against anything that is causing environmental hazards in the area.

Serenity lost at the hands of TikTokers

Tourists hesitant to visit Madhabkunda waterfall fearing harassment

MINTU DESHWARA

With its serene waters and tranquil environment, Madhabkunda waterfall in Moulvibazar is among the top picks of tourists to visit during the holidays.

However, the situation has changed since the waterfall has been infiltrated with "TikTokers", who breach the privacy of tourists and often create a chaotic situation that is unpleasant for visitors, alleged many.

Besides, some of these young TikTokers are risking their lives by climbing the slippery slope of the waterfall, evading the eyes of the law enforcers, for making videos. Some of these videos have circulated on Facebook.

They've also been accused of harassing and physically abusing tourists.

Sajjad Mia, a trader in the waterfall area, said, "On different occasions, teenagers and young 'TikTokers' from different areas of Barlekha and surrounding upazilas come to visit Madhabkunda. They are harassing tourists in various ways. Some are filming female tourists getting drenched in the

waterfall without their consent."

Enam Uddin, chairman of Dakshinbhag Uttar Union Parishad, said some tourists visiting Kulara and Juri were intentionally drenched in water by TikTokers. There was even a confrontation after which they beat up the tourists.

Tourist Jahangir Hossain, who went to visit Madhabkunda during the Eid holidays, said, "I saw a huge crowd of TikTokers making videos. In this situation, female tourists were feeling uncomfortable."

Advocate Subimol Lyngdohkiri, a local and assistant public prosecutor of Moulvibazar court, echoed him.

Some traders also alleged that every day teenagers make videos there and harass tourists. Khairul Islam, in-charge of Madhabkunda tourist

police, said, "We're always working to ensure that tourists aren't harassed in any way."

He also said they are warning those who try to get up the slippery cliff. UNO Khandaker Mudassar Bin Ali said, "We have also set up a mobile court for tourists' safety."

Some of these young TikTokers are risking their lives by climbing the slippery slope of the waterfall, evading the eyes of the law enforcers, for making videos. Some of these videos have circulated on Facebook.

Dhaka's air

FROM PAGE 3

the World Bank in March 2019 pointed out that the three main sources of air pollution in Dhaka "are brick kilns, fumes from vehicles and dust from construction sites".

With the advent of winter, the city's air quality starts deteriorating sharply due to the massive discharge of pollutant particles from construction work, rundown roads, brick kilns and other sources.

Air pollution consistently ranks among the top risk factors for death and disability worldwide. Breathing polluted air has long been recognised as increasing a person's chances of developing a heart disease, chronic respiratory diseases and lung infections.

No warning sign

FROM PAGE 5

Relatives of the deceased blamed authorities for not sealing the abandoned bridge and not using cautionary signs.

Among the teenagers, Fahim Hossain (18) and the driver Jisan Hossain (19) were killed, while Zahid Hossain (16) was injured, said Tongibari Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mollah Soheb Ali.

"A police patrol team rescued the three and took them to Munshiganj General Hospital, where the two were declared dead. The car fell from a height of 15 to 20 feet," he said.

During their drive, the three saw the abandoned Bailey bridge. Since plans to build a new bridge there are in place, vehicles usually

ply on a bypass road at the location. But the friends did not notice the bypass road, as they had not gone there before.

Rupa Akter, sister of deceased Jisan, said, "There was no warning sign beside the bridge. They fell into a ditch directly and died, since they couldn't see the bypass road," she said.

Md Babu Hossain, a resident of Pura Bazar, said for the last two years, no warning sign has been in place. From a distance, there is no way to know that there is a bypass road in front.

Munshiganj Roads and Highways Department Executive Engineer Dewan Abul Kashem Mohammad Nahin Reza, said, "A warning sign was put

up about two years ago. Locals may have covered the signboard with election and greeting posters. We will put up a new one and ensure lighting at night."

He said that there was no negligence on their part. People in the area are aware of the road's conditions. Design and soil tests have already been completed for installing a new bridge. The tender process will start from June.

1 KILLED, 25 HURT AS BUSES COLLIDE IN TANGAIL

The driver of a bus was killed in a head-on collision between two buses in Madhupur, Tangail yesterday.

At least 25 passengers of both the buses were injured in the accident, said police.

Shamim Miah (45), the driver of a bus of Prantik Paribahan, succumbed to his injuries while undergoing treatment at Tangail General Hospital.

The incident occurred around 8:00am on Tangail-Mymensingh highway in Gangair area, said Mamunur Rashid, a sub-inspector of Madhupur Police Station.

Police and fire service personnel with the help of locals rescued the injured and took them to Tangail General Hospital and Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

Quoting witnesses, SI Mamunur Rashid said both the vehicles were damaged in the accident which might have happened due to reckless driving.

One held over

FROM PAGE 3

information written behind the admit card.

After the centre's invigilator and police questioned him, Sumon said he got the answers in WhatsApp around 2:18pm, with help from Saiful from Patuakhali, Khokon from Tangail and four to five others. Police then seized two admit cards, an answer sheet, a question paper and phone from his possession, reads the FIR.

Analysing his phone, police found that Sumon received answers for all 70 questions, Shahadat Hossain Sumon, additional

deputy commissioner of DB, told The Daily Star.

"We are now conducting drives to arrest the mastermind behind the question leak and his associates," said the official.

Prof Nehal Ahmed, director general of DSHE, told The Daily Star yesterday that an examinee was identified by the invigilator while he was cheating in the exam hall.

"We have handed the examinee over to police," he said. Asked about the leak, he said if police find any proof of the leak, they will think of an alternative to the examination.

We will keep

FROM PAGE 5

system, politicised the news media and took the country towards ruin, he said. "Through the 2023 elections, we want to rebuild Bangladesh, where there will be no such oppression and repression," he said.

He demanded that

the AL step down and hand over power to a neutral government. "The elections should be held under a neutral Election Commission," he added.

BNP will force the AL government to accept their demands through strong movements, added Fakhru.

A pioneer

FROM PAGE 3

the thought leaders of the movement. He wrote the first leaflets of the movement, which inspired hundreds of students and student leaders at that time."

"His role in constructing the thoughts and philosophical background of the movement is unforgettable. At the same time, he was active on the ground, organising

processions during the movement," he said. Anisul said, "If we study Anisuzzaman's life, we can learn deeply about the contemporary history of Bangladesh. He was a scholar like no other. However, there is hardly any academic research on his life and works."

Bannya said, "We can learn the beauty and wisdom of simplicity from Anisuzzaman's life. He

Farmer killed in lightning strike

STAR REPORT

A farmer was killed and another was injured after lightning struck them in Battola village under Phulbari upazila of Kurigram yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Rahim Badsha (47), said Bazlur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Phulbari Police Station.

The injured, farmer Matiar Rahman (38), is now undergoing treatment at Phulbari Upazila Health Complex, added the OC.

Quoting locals, the OC said lightning struck on Rahim and Matiar when they were working at a paddy field along with other farmers at Battola village in the upazila.

Fellow farmers rescued and took them to Phulbari Upazila Health Complex, where an on-duty doctor declared Rahim Badsha dead, informed the OC.

used to respect people from all walks of life."

At the end of the seminar, speakers launched a photo-book on Prof Anisuzzaman's life, edited by poet Maruful Islam. Maruful said, "Professor Anisuzzaman was a great scholar. He has enlightened the entire nation through his scholarly works. His works and contributions will always be remembered by this nation."

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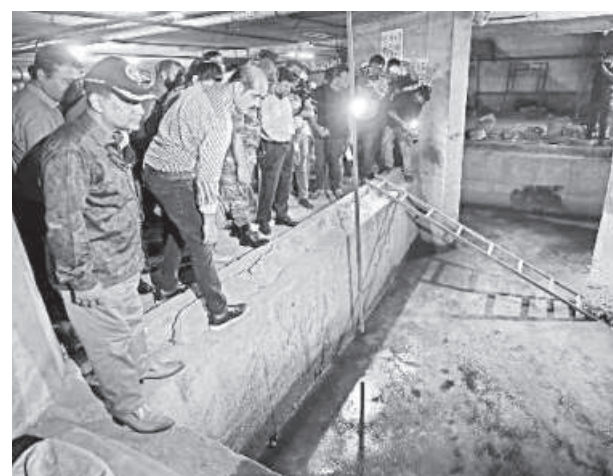
Will introduce school

FROM PAGE 3

About clearing footpaths, the mayor said they have talked with different city planners to provide them with proper suggestions. "We are working on a system to facilitate hawkers in a systematic way, so that they can sit for a limited time, keeping road crossings free. We will also give them specific cards," he said.

The DNCC mayor said people keep their construction materials on the road while constructing buildings, even though they took actions against it. Some blame councillors, while others blame police and political activists for this.

"But when I go there, I find the place clear. It's true," he said.



The DNCC mayor inspecting an establishment for aedes mosquito larvae in the capital.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

About the waterlogging problem, the mayor said they have already taken various initiatives to protect canals and waterbodies

from encroachers, and the work to demarcate canals through drones is at the final stage.

He said they will start a