



PHOTO: STAR

A mass prayer was held in Shaghata upazila on Thursday seeking divine blessings to save the area from erosion by Jamuna.

## Turning to God as govt inactive

Thousands join mass prayer for protection against erosion in Gaibandha after agitation fell on deaf ears of WDB officials

REZAUL HAQUE, Gaibandha

Thousand of erosion victims of Shaghata upazila gathered on the bank of Jamuna and joined a prayer seeking mercy from the almighty to save them from further erosion as government remained inactive to control it.

The mass prayer was part of a day-long programme that included Quran Khwani and Milad Mafil. They said they decided to hold the programmes after failing to draw attention of Water Development Board (WDB) authorities and the district administration. Earlier, erosion victim in Shaghata upazila staged demonstrations, brought out processions, ventilated their grievances at a press conference and formed a human chain demanding precautionary measure to stop the rapacious erosion along the western bank of Jamuna river. They also handed over a memorandum to the water resource.

Locals and the victims said that in about a month 22 villages in five unions were badly affected by erosion, rendering over 13,410 families shelterless. The Jamuna devoured over 500 acres of cultivable

land and many structures including houses and educational institutions. The affected unions are Shaghata, Ghuridaha, Haldia, Jumarbari and Bharatkhal.

In last one week, erosion hit eleven villages, forcing about 4,300 families to shift to safer places.

The river is now only 500 yards from the police station. The erosion continues but the local WDB is yet to take any initiative to control it despite repeated appeals, they said while talking to this correspondent.

The local people in Shaghata upazila have formed an All Party Development Parishad to launch a tougher agitation against inaction by the authorities.

Hundreds of people together led by the five Union Parishad chairmen and members on May 15 brought out a procession that paraded the streets of Gaibandha town and formed a human chain. They laid a siege to the WDB office, handed over a memorandum to the water resources minister through the Gaibandha Water Development Board Executive engineer and narrated their plight at a press conference held at Gaibandha Press Club.

Earlier, WDB undertook an erosion control programme at Munshirhat involving Tk 60 lakh but it is yet to be implemented. The project, if implemented now, will not be effective as the situation is worse, a UP chairman told this correspondent.

In last three days, 130 families lost homes due to erosion at Kalurpara village in Haldia union, said Shah Newaz Mandol Bablu, convener of Shaghata Unnayan Parishad.

"We submitted a fresh proposal to control the erosion in Shaghata", said the WDB executive engineer when contacted.

Union Parishad Chairman Ataur Rahman claimed that several thousand concrete blocks are lying at Munshirhat but WDB is dumping those to stop the erosion. "We will go for tougher agitation soon if the authorities do not take initiative right now to stop the erosion along the western bank of Jamuna", said convener of the Shaghata All Party Parishad.

The erosion victims have taken shelter on embankments and roads, passing days under the open sky, said another UP chairman Ekramul Hossain.

## Miscreants burn school in Chandpur

A CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

Miscreants have burnt a junior secondary school in Hajiganj.

Property and valuables worth Tk 30 lakh were gutted, according to the headmaster of the school.

Education of over 200 students of Borkhal Adarsha Junior High School has become uncertain due to suspension of classes for an indefinite period.

Witnesses said, criminals set on fire the tin-roofed school at about 11 pm on Tuesday and disappeared under cover of darkness. Eighty per cent of the school's structure was burnt, they said.

Being informed, Hajiganj UPO along with the OC and local UP chairman visited the spot.

## Indigenous people want security in Joypurhat

A CORRESPONDENT, Joypurhat

National Aadibasi Council, an organisation of indigenous people, at an emergency meeting held at Shantinagar here recently, expressed their grave concern over increasing incidents of repression on indigenous people living in the district.

Presided by the council chairman, Advocate Babul Rabidas, the meeting demanded of the administration to ensure safety and security of indigenous people.

The meeting said the indigenous people are facing many depressing problems like forced eviction from land, false cases and rape.

The meeting cited an example of a recent attack on an Aadibasi family members at Panchbibi by a gang of criminals led by a local influential. The attackers ransacked the house and looted their belongings. Being resisted, the goons beat them. At that time, some of the female members were injured seriously.

They are undergoing treatment at Mohipur Upazila Hospital where condition of two women is stated to be critical.

## MURDER OF LONDON EXPATRIATE

# My son's killers threatening us, says Iffat's mother

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Killers of London expatriate Iffat-bin-Mahub are threatening his family with death if they proceed further with the case, his mother Farida Rahman alleged at a press conference at Rangpur Press Club yesterday.

Other members of the victim's family were also present during the press conference.

"Our lives are also at stake. They (killers) are threatening us over cell phone", she alleged. She also mentioned a cell phone number of the callers.

"I believe the callers are none but the killers of my son. I, therefore, urge law enforcing agencies to arrest them within 24

hours", she said.

She also demanded trial of the accused under the Speedy Trial Tribunal.

The family members alleged that some unidentified callers threatened them with death if they continue pursuing the case.

They also alleged that law enforcers were not properly investigating the case and are showing a lax attitude to arrest the rest of the accused.

Rangpur Kotwali police, when asked, said they got "many information" from accused Capt Iftekhar, now being quizzed in collection with the murder. He was interrogated on the third day yesterday of his five-day remand, they said.

Quoting from Iftekhar's state-

ment, investigation officer (IO) of the case Sib-inspector Rezaul Islam said that Iffat was stabbed at a place in Teesta.

Iftekhar, Pavel and some hired goons stabbed him to death and dumped the body at Rathbari along the Rangpur-Kurigram highway.

Rezaul said investigators are verifying his statement.

Quoting some locals at Rathbari, SI Rezaul said Iffat was alive after being stabbed. When he was dropped at Rathbari from the car, Iffat was still groaning and screaming.

The car then ran over Iffat twice to confirm his death.

The Officer-in-charge of Kotwali police station said, Iftekhar was suspended from army after news of

the murder was published in newspapers.

Iffat was killed on Mar 16. His brother Adib-bin-Mahub filed a case with Kotwali police station accusing Khandaker Mahub Elahi Biplot, Capt Iftekhar Elahi Shanto Ershad Elahi Shuvo, Laila Monjur and Pavel. Capt Iftekhar is Iffat's cousin.

Capt Iftekhar was caught by locals when he was going to Rangpur from Rathbari after the murder. He was handed over to police.

Police said the rest of the accused are absconding.

## Truckers guard their vehicles from robbers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Jaldhaka unit of Nilphamari District Truck, Tank Lorry Workers' Union has formed escort teams to ensure safe plying of trucks moving at night to and fro Burimari port.

The move was taken to avert frequent truck dacoities on the vulnerable road from Jaldhaka to the land port where trucks move very slowly.

Transport union leaders of Jaldhaka on Sunday submitted a petition to Jaldhaka Police Station officer-in-charge (OC) seeking permission to guard their vehicles. They also brought the matter to knowledge of Nilphamari Deputy Commissioner (DC) and Superintendent of Police (SP).

Sources in both the Exporters and Importers Association and Truck, Tank Lorry Workers' Union said at least 25 incidents of armed robbery, theft and mugging took place at night on the road in last six

months.

The general secretary of Jaldhaka unit of Nilphamari District Truck, Tank Lorry Workers' Union, Aminur Rahman said the robbers beat up truck drivers and helpers and created insecurity among themselves.

Greater Rangpur Exporters and Importers Association convener Shamsuzzaman Shamu also expressed his great concern over the situation.

The most vulnerable portion of the road passes through Jaldhaka from where food, fruits, spices, engineering and electronics goods and other items are carried to different parts of the country from India, Bhutan and Nepal by heavy trucks.

Garment items, jute and jute goods are also carried from Saidpur through the road.

On contact, Jaldhaka OC Abdul Mannan told they have intensified night patrolling to prevent armed robbery.

# Govt planning polls 'engineering,' use of muscle power: Hamid

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad advocate Abdul Hamid yesterday said the government has created a state of uncertainty and instability in the country in a planned way to cling to power.

The opposition demand for reforms to the caretaker system and Election Commission (EC) are now demands of the people but the government has adopted a dilly-dally tactics to kill time with a motive to go for election without reforms.

"Awami League-led opposition alliance will not allow any election without reforms", he told a press conference at the district Awami League office in the town on Thursday.

Hamid lead a five-member AL parlia-

mentary team that visited houses and establishments of AL leaders and workers in the town vandalised allegedly by BNP men on May 10. Four other members of the team were Sayed Ashrafur Islam MP, Dr. Mujibar Rahman MP, Abdul Matin Sarkar and Col (Retd) Faruk Khan MP.

On May 10, at least 50 people including some policemen were injured when BNP men attacked opposition activists when they were marching towards the Deputy Commissioner's office to besiege it for smooth supply of electricity. Later in the evening, some armed BNP activists damaged and looted many shops, business establishments and houses of AL leaders and activists.

Hamid addressed the press

conference after visiting some injured party men and their damaged houses and establishments.

He condemned the incident and said State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar should be liable for this.

He demanded withdrawal of three "false" cases against 130 AL leaders and activists, filed with the Speedy Trial Tribunal after the May 10 incident.

Hamid alleged that the ruling BNP-Jamaat government wants to cling to power by conspiracy and muscle and money power.

They have adopted a policy not to allow opposition to hold and political programmes. They will retain power through "election engineering".

## APPOINTMENT OF VICE PRINCIPAL

# BNP lawmaker among 17 sued in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Seventeen people including a BNP lawmaker were sued yesterday for allegedly appointing a BNP man the vice-principal of a college by violating the official rules.

The accused are BNP lawmaker and Sheikh Amanullah College governing body chairman Habibul Islam Habib, Principal Raisuddin, also vice president of Kalaroa upazila BNP, newly-appointed vice principal Rezaul Islam and 14 others.

Patkelghata Harun-or-Rashid

College assistant professor Habibur Rahman who was one of the candidates for the post filed the case with the Assistant Judge's Court here.

The court also issued an order to the accused to reply within seven days why the appointment would not be declared illegal.

The complainant said, 10 candidates took part in a test held for appointment of vice principal of the college on March 31. But Kalaroa Upazila Sechhasebak Dal president Rezaul Islam, also

younger brother of the Upazila BNP organising secretary Sirajul Islam, was appointed vice principal of the college although he had no requisite qualification for the same, he stated. He said, as per official rules, candidates having 12 years teaching experience were eligible for the post.

But the accused persons, in collaboration with each other, favoured their party candidate, Rezaul Islam and illegally appointed him the vice principal, he said.

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