



Lifting of earth just under this bridge over the Fanai River in Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar poses threat to the structure. Inset, a closer view of the effect of the callous act. PHOTO: MINTUDESHWARA

# Unplanned river excavation puts bridge under threat

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Indiscriminate earth lifting threatens a locally important bridge over the Fanai River in Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar. For the re-excavation of around 39 kilometres of the river, Water Development Board (WDB) earlier gave a Tk 16-crore work order to SASI-JV and Ma-Baba Construction, said officials. Around 12 days ago, workers of SASI-JV started digging soil from the riverbed just beside the pillars of the Fanai bridge on Kulaura-Bhabanipur road, posing threat to the structure, locals said. A high-voltage electric pole, which is only 10 feet from the site, is also at risk due

to the callous act, they added. Visiting the spot, this correspondent saw workers cutting soil beside the bridge that serves as a link between the upazila headquarters and some 15 villages including Bhabanipur, Bhatuttogram, Paulgaon and Tilashijura. Some people went to the spot as soil lifting created a deep hole at the spot a few days ago, Ram Sarkar, 42, of Bhabanipur village told this correspondent. "Ignoring repeated requests from locals, the workers continued the callous act. We put 20 sandbags near the bridge to stop erosion at the spot," said Shamim Ahmed, another local. "If the bridge collapses, road

communication of 15 villages with the upazila headquarters will be snapped. Local people appealed to the authorities concerned to take steps to stop lifting soil from near the bridge, but to no effect yet," he added. Jamil Mia, a resident of Paulgaon village, said the bridge faces the risk of collapse in the upcoming rainy season if earth cutting continues and repair work is not done. Abdul Kader, sub assistant engineer of WDB in Moulvibazar, said, "We asked the contractors not to extract soil within 50 feet of the bridge but they violated it. We will look into the matter." Liton Mia, manager of SASI-JV, said, "We were doing excavation 30 feet away from

the bridge. But it caused soil erosion. We will do the work after ensuring safety of the bridge." Engineer Kamruzzaman, president of Kulaura upazila unit of Institute of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh, said lifting of soil or sand within 100 feet of a concrete bridge affects the pillars, although the damage may not be visible immediately. Unplanned excavation also causes soil erosion, he added. AKM Shafi Ahmed Salman, chairman of Kulaura Upazila Parishad, told this correspondent, "The upazila administration is informed of the matter. We will try to find a solution with the cooperation of WDB officials."

## Kushtia AL leader arrested under ICT act

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A local Awami League (AL) leader was held under the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act over Facebook post in the town early yesterday. The arrestee is Mominur Rahman Momiz, former general secretary of Kushtia town unit AL. He was expelled from the party in 2015. SM Tanvir Arafath, superintendent of police (SP), said one Zahirul Islam, an activist of Kumarkhali upazila unit of AL, filed a case with Kumarkhali Police Station under ICT Act accusing three people, including Momiz, on Wednesday night. The other accuse are Robi Ahmed and Shimul Ahmed. According to the case statement, the trio were spreading false information about local lawmaker Selim Altaf George through social media. After a case was filed in this connection, police, on information, raided the house of Momiz's father-in-law house in Narikeltoala area of Kushtia town around 2:30am yesterday and arrested him, said the SP. The arrestee was later produced before Kushtia chief judicial magistrate's court, which sent him to jail. The law enforcers were raiding different areas to arrest the other accused, said the police official.

## 'Arrest killers of lawyer's assistant'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Colleagues of slain lawyer's assistant Siddiqui Rahman Khaliph demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment of his killers. They came up with the demand at a human chain on the Pirojpur court premises yesterday. Expressing solidarity with the Siddiqui's colleagues, lawyers of the court also joined the human chain. Pirojpur District Aynjibi Samity President Md Belayet Hossain, General Secretary Shahidul Haque Khan Panna and Pirojpur Lawyer's Assistants' Association President Md Unus Ali Hawlader, among others, spoke. The speakers at the programme also said they will not provide any legal support to the accused killers of Siddiqui. On Monday morning, criminals stabbed Siddiqui, also the former union parishad member, to death over previous enmity in Pirojpur Sadar upazila. Around 8:00am, Siddiqui was going to Pirojpur court by a rickshaw. When he reached Raribari area, five youths, riding two motorbikes, waylaid the rickshaw and started stabbing him indiscriminately with sharp weapons. They also shot him in the foot, before fleeing the spot. Later, locals and relatives rescued Siddiqui and took him to Pirojpur Sadar Hospital, where the doctors declared him dead. The deceased's wife Nilu Begum filed a murder case, accusing four named and eight unnamed people. Police are yet to arrest any of the accused.



At least six cloth shops and three dwelling houses were gutted in a devastating fire that broke out in Modhya Bazar area under Durgapur municipality in Netrakona on Wednesday. PHOTO: STAR

## Father, son allege death threat by Jamaat leader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A man from Kholahati Kalmati village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila have alleged harassment and death threat by his younger brother, also a leader of Jamaat-e-Islami. Manir Uddin, 58, and his son Mizanur Rahman, 28, made the allegations against Manir's younger brother Kazi Aminur Islam, 52, amir (chief) of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila Jamaat, and his men at a press conference at a local weekly office in Stadium area of the town yesterday afternoon. Local journalists from different electronic and print media were present there. "My younger brother Kazi Aminur Islam is a Jamaat leader. He is also a schoolteacher and a marriage registrar of Khuniyagachh union. He is trying to do harm to us, using hired goons," Manir Uddin said at the press conference. "We made a proposal for mediation with the help of locals, but Aminur did not agree. We are living amid fear of possible harm by him," he said. Manir's son Mizanur Rahman said, "My uncle Jamaat leader Kazi Aminur Islam, his

younger brother Jamaat activist Habibur Rahman, and Aminur's son Islami Chhatra Shibir activist Al-Mahmud and their men are harassing us in various ways. "Aminur told us to join Jamaat but we did not agree. He cut the road in front his home to prevent our movement. His hired goons also beat me," he alleged. "I filed a case with the court in November last year against four people, including Kazi Aminur Islam for vandalising and looting our house. "I lodged a General Diary GD with Lalmonirhat Sadar Police Station on January 23 as Aminur and his men gave death threat to our family. They are damaging our crops and giving pressure to leave the area," he said. Kazi Aminur Islam claimed that the allegations made against him are false and baseless. "Taking the advantage of my involvement with Jamaat politics, my elder brother's family are trying to do harm to my family," he said. However, he dropped the mobile call when asked about the allegation of hiring goons for attacking and assaulting his elder brother's family members.

## Youth held for killing girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Police early yesterday arrested the prime accused in connection with a case for killing a teenage girl at Barunagaon village in Sadar upazila on Wednesday. The arrestee, Sohag Barman, 22, is son of Dhiren Chandra Barman of Salondar Shingia village. Inspector (Investigation) of Sadar Police Station Golam Mortuza said Shraboni Rani, 15, daughter of Bhabesh Chandra Barman, also a Class X student at a local high school, was found murdered on Wednesday evening. Victim's father filed a murder case with the police station accusing Sohag and some unidentified people the same night. During primary interrogation, Sohag confessed his involvement in killing the girl, police said.

## Period no more a taboo in Barguna

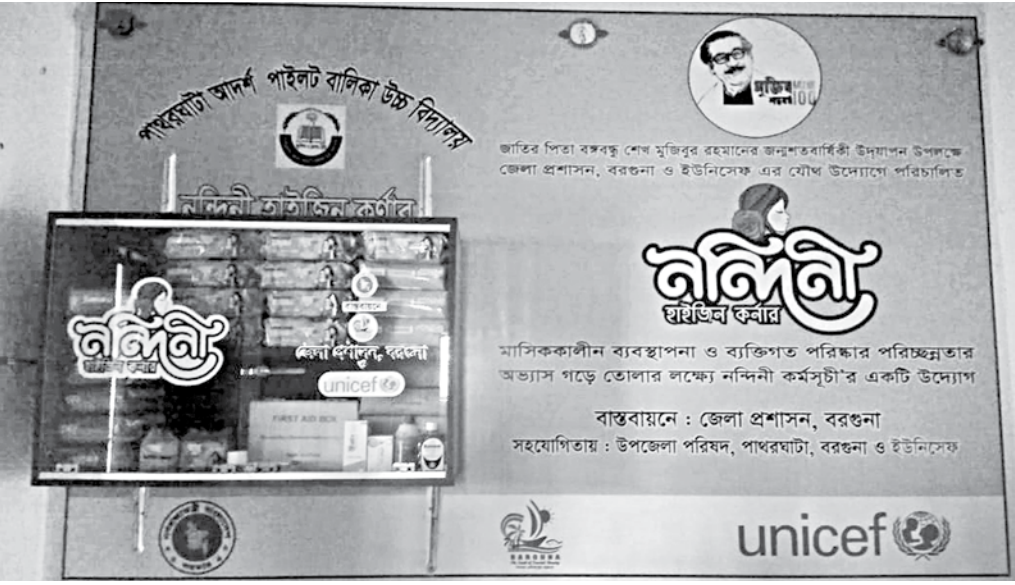
The district administration is providing free menstrual hygiene items and training on adolescent health and hygiene issues in all educational institutions

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

When the topic of menstruation is still considered somewhat a taboo in the country, the district administration of Barguna has come forward with a bold move to ensure proper adolescent health practices among students in the district. The administration under a programme is providing free sanitary napkins for female students in all 305 educational institutions including schools and madrasas in the district. Under the programme styled 'Nandini Hygiene Corner', free sanitary napkins, first aid kit and iron pills are being kept in a glass case installed on the wall of a secure room at each educational institution. Each of the room is also provided with a covered trash bin to dispose of used napkins. The administration, assisted by upazila parishads concerned and the UNICEF, took the initiative to ensure hygiene among schoolgirls who are found to be skipping school during their menstruating days. In a survey titled 'Survey on Personal Menstrual Hygiene Management', conducted by the district administration, it was found that 81 percent of female students at secondary schools and 83 percent of them at madrasas use rags during their menstrual periods. During the time, 84 percent of the girls at secondary schools and 86

percent of them at madrasas do not attend classes. The survey was conducted from December, 2019 to January this year when 380 students and teachers in Barguna took part. In 2014, a national survey titled 'Bangladesh National Hygiene Baseline Survey-2014' revealed that 86 percent of the country's girls use rags during menstruation and 40 percent of female students do not attend school during their menstruation. The use of rags during menstruation is a cause for various infections among women, the study also mentioned. Since August last year, as part of building awareness on menstrual hygiene among students and as a special initiative ahead of the Mujib Centenary celebrations, the Barguna district administration also started training students and teachers on adolescent health and hygiene issues. Under the programme, a female student, a male student, a female teacher and the head teacher of each school are being trained on the issues. So far, 1,220 students and teachers of different schools have received the training that is scheduled to be completed by this year. The trained students and teachers will later on disseminate information on proper adolescent health and hygiene practices among other students at their respective educational institutions.

Khaleda Akhter, an eighth grader at DKP Secondary School in Barguna Sadar upazila, said she and her female classmates used to stay home during their periods. But now, thanks to free sanitary napkins provided by the district administration at a convenient location in the school, she no longer skips school during her periods. This is a noble initiative that is also helping eradicate superstition and disinformation in the society, she added. Mahfuzur Rahman, assistant commissioner in Barguna and coordinator of the programme, said various activities taken by the district administration have now created an open environment for dialogues. But before, even teachers were hesitant to talk about the topic of menstruation in their classrooms. As many as 50 educational institutions have come under the ongoing training programme so far, he added. Barguna Deputy Commissioner Mustain Billah said for a healthy and prosperous nation, proper health and personal hygiene practices have to be ensured among adolescents of today. The Nandini Hygiene Programme is contributing to achieving various sustainable development goals (SDGs) including ensuring health services, gender equality and dissemination of quality education for all, he also said.



Sanitary pads and other personal hygiene items are stacked inside a glass case at the 'Nandini Hygiene Corner'. The photo was taken at Patharghata Model Pilot Girls' High School in Barguna's Patharghata upazila recently.

PHOTO: STAR