

National

Bus accidents near Bangabandhu Bridge

Highway divider suggested

From Akhteruzzaman Bablu

SIRAJGANJ, Aug 5: Local elite including political leaders and journalists, social workers and union parishad chairmen expressed their opinion to construct road divider or another one way road from Bangabandhu Bridge West to Hatikumrul along the Dhaka-Dinajpur highway with a view to averting frequent highway accidents.

This correspondent collected their opinions recently following some serious highway accidents including a worst-ever road disaster in the recent past along this route.

According to survey reports of various government and non-government agencies, at least 100 people lost their lives and 381 others sustained injuries in different highway accidents from April this year till filing of this report.

This year on April 11 a total of 10 persons were killed and 57 others injured in a highway accident at Horegat while on April 22 two persons were killed and 50 others injured in another highway accident near Jamuna Bridge West.

At Konabari 55 persons were killed and 150 others injured in a worst-ever highway disaster on April 29. A total of 15 persons were killed while 50 others sustained injury in highway accidents at different places of Bangabandhu Bridge West in the month of May.

On July 3 two persons were killed and 10 others hurt in a highway accident at Bangabandhu Bridge West. On July 9 five persons were killed and four others injured in a highway mishap at Hati Kumrul Bangabandhu Bridge West. On July 13 nine people were killed and 30 others injured in a highway accident at Degree Char. On July 20 near Boalia Bazar two persons were killed and 30 others sustained injury in the latest highway accident. A total of 100

persons were killed and 381 others injured in these highway accidents.

But surprisingly no measures were taken till now to halt further highway accidents.

Meanwhile, the bad practice of allowing travellers on rooftop of buses was going on unabated along the route. Reckless driving of the drivers was still going on caring less for the valuable lives of passengers. Unfit vehicles were plying along the highway very off and on. But there was none to check plying of such vehicles from where black smokes emit always threatening the environment and public health.

The death toll would have been lesser if the injured persons could be treated just immediately after

the aforementioned highway accidents, according to the opinions collected by this correspondent. The death toll was bigger because there were no road divider, no hospitals, no over-bridges or no fire stations along this highway, specially near the Bangabandhu Bridge area. As a result the highway accident victims had to be shifted to hospitals or clinics at distant places from the actual accident spots.

The opinion leaders expressed that the death toll might have been reduced in case of availability of healthcare facilities near the accident spots. So they demanded construction of highway divider along the Dhaka-Dinajpur highway, establishment of trauma hospitals, construction

of overbridges and setting up of fire stations initially at Nalka-Konabari or at kodder intersection point on an emergency basis. Afterwards similar highway divider and important establishments might be created at convenient places along the northern highway.

Among others, the opinion leaders included Abu Yusuf Surja, General Secretary of Sirajganj District Awami League, TMA Mannan, MP, Convener of Sirajganj District BNP, Abdul Hye Talukder, President of Jatiyo Samaitantrik Dal (JSD), Sirajganj District unit, Namdar Al, Chairman of Jawil Union Parishad and Mozammel Haque, Chairman of Bhadrabat Haque Parishad.



Travelling on roof-tops of highway buses going on unabated despite some serious bus accidents including the worst-ever highway disaster on April 29 in Sirajganj district along this northern highway. This photo was taken recently on Bangabandhu Jamuna Bridge. —Star photo

T-Aman farming faces setback in five districts

By Staff Correspondent

Target of transplanted Aman cultivation in Jamalpur, Netrakona, Gaibandha, Bogra and Chapainawabganj districts may not be achieved this season mainly due to inadequate rainfall.

Our Jamalpur correspondent says: Agriculture Extension Department (AED) had fixed the target to bring 50,000 hectares of land under high yielding variety (HYV) of T-Aman paddy and 35,000 hectares under local variety of paddy.

When contacted Golam Mostafa, Deputy Director of AED, said water crisis may seriously hamper the cultivation.

Farmers in Sadar, Islampur, Malendah, Madarganj, Bakshiganj, Dewanganj and Sarisabari areas cannot till due to lack of rainfall. Small cracks developed in many croplands.

Meanwhile, farmers say shortage of draft animals is also hampering cultivation to a great extent.

According to an estimate, 25 per cent farmers hire bullocks for tilling lands. Farmers have to pay

between Tk 150 and Tk 200 per bigh of land for tilling.

A pair of bullocks now sells for Tk 15 thousand and Tk 17 thousand. The price is too high for many farmers.

Our Netrakona correspondent says: Inadequate rain during the Bangla months of Ashar and Shrawan, the peak period of T-Aman cultivation, has obscured the chance of another bumper production in the district this season.

Most poor farmers of the district could not prepare their croplands for T-Aman paddy this year as they could not afford water, supplied from deep tubewells.

Some of the farmers are taking loans from moneylenders at high interest rates, while some others are selling their cows and household appliances in a bid to collect money for the cultivation.

According to local AED office, the target was fixed to bring 1,20,000 hectares of land under the cultivation with a production target of 2,27,947 metric tons of

paddy. According to upazila-wise break-up, 8,500 hectares will be brought under HYV and 10,500 hectares under local variety in Sadar upazila, 4,300 under HYV and 6,700 hectares under local variety in Atpara, 8,000 hectares under HYV and 10,300 hectares under local variety in Kendua, 3,500 hectares under HYV and 5,500 hectares under local variety in Mohanganj, 4,400 hectares under HYV and 6,800 hectares under local variety in Barhatta, 7,800 hectares under HYV and 9,800 hectares under local variety in Purbadhala, 5,300 hectares under HYV and 6,700 hectares under local variety in Kalmakanda, 4,000 hectares under HYV and 7,000 hectares under local variety in Durgapur, 4,000 hectares under HYV and 6,500 hectares under local variety in Madan, and 200 hectares under HYV and 200 hectares under local variety in Khalilajuri upazilas.

Our Gaibandha correspondent adds: T-Aman farming is

being hampered as farmers in the northern district of Gaibandha cannot till due to inadequate rainfall.

Most poor farmers of the district could not prepare their croplands for T-Aman paddy this year as they could not afford water, supplied from deep tubewells.

However, some better-off farmers have started plantation of T-Aman seedlings using deep tubewell water.

So far only 30 per cent of targeted land have been brought under T-Aman farming. Many farmers are waiting for rainwater.

According to local AED, production target was fixed at 10.82 lakh tons of HYV variety and 5.29 lakh tons local variety.

UNB from Bogra says: Rejuvenated by bumper Boro production farmers of the district have embarked on a massive Aman farming.

According to local Agriculture office, some 1.48 lakh hectares of land are likely to be brought under Aman farming in district.

Seed sowing in the district began in the first week of July, but the cultivation process was seriously hampered for lack of rain during the period.

Although some farmers irrigated their seedbeds with water from shallow tubewells, a huge quantity of seedlings have already become unfit for planting, disheartening the beleaguered growers.

Another report from Chapainawabganj adds: Aman output in the district is unlikely to achieve the target this season, as there was not sufficient rainfall during the peak period of cultivation.

Agriculture officials said a scheme was taken up to bring some 46,000 hectares of land under Aman farming with a production target of 97,720 mts in sadar, Shilganj, Gomostapur, Nachol and Bholahat upazilas. But most farmers, particularly the marginal ones, could not cultivate their lands in time for lack of rainwater, delaying the sowing of Aman seeds.

So far, 9,045 hectares of land have been brought under the farming in the district.

Flash flood in Lalmonirhat

LALMONIRHAT, Aug 5: incessant shower for last two days, till Wednesday coupled with onrush of water from upstream caused flash flood in the frontier district, rendering over 5,000 people marooned, reports UNB.

At least 120 families of Sindurua village in Hatbandha upazila were rendered homeless in erosion by the river Teesta in last 24 hours till Wednesday afternoon.

The homeless people took shelter on the embankments, in school compounds and under the open sky. A three-year-old boy of Sindurua village drowned in the river.

The Lalmonirhat-Burimari road link may be cut off anytime as the swelling Teesta almost submerged the road at Parulla in Hatbandha upazila.

"The flood situation deteriorated with the erosion of riverbank by the Teesta," Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Hatbandha said. He said rescue operation was being hampered due to disruption in road communications.

No relief supplies have been sent to the flood-affected areas.

Another report from Bagerhat adds: Low-lying areas in four upazilas of the district were inundated due to incessant rain and onrush of hill water from upper catchment during last few days.

Some low-lying areas in Moreganj, Sharankhola, Mongla

and Rampal went under 3-4 feet water with the rise of water levels in the river. Panguchi, Dhaleshwari and Daratana. Meanwhile, over 200 people in the district town were marooned by flood waters as some 40 homesteads were submerged due to heavy rainfall.

Another report from Kishoreganj says: About 35 families who lost their homes in 1988-flood and river erosion have been living inhuman life at the Nikli flood shelter.

The flood shelter established on the bank of Soljee river at a cost of Tk 6.50 lakh in fiscal 1976-77 is in deplorable condition due to lack of proper maintenance and care.

The other eight shelters constructed in the same year in the district costing Tk 6.30 lakh each are also in a dilapidated condition.

There are no roofs, doors and windows in two, out of four structures in Nikli flood shelter as thieves stole those. Walls of those structures are also collapsing.

Besides, only one tubewell is available for the 200 members of these families in the shelter but there is no proper toilet system.

Due to unhygienic condition in the shelter including the children have been suffering from various ailments including diarrhoea, dysentery and other water borne diseases.

Demand for 4-yr diploma engg course reiterated

From Rajat Kanti Goswami

MOULVIBAZAR, Aug 5: Diploma engineers working at different departments have demanded introduction of four-year course of Diploma Engineering polytechnic institutes instead of existing three year course.

Diploma engineers made this demand in a press conference at Moulvibazar Press Club on July 27.

Ranadhr Roy, member-secretary of Moulvibazar district committee of Bangladesh Diploma Engineering Student-Teachers-Professionals Action Council read out written statement in the press conference. Abdus Sattar, Convenor of the

council replied to the questions. Leaders of Moulvibazar district unit of the Institute of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh attended the press conference.

In a written statement the diploma engineers said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had declared the government's decision of introducing 4-year course of Diploma Engineering when she addressed at the national conference of the Institute of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh in 1997. But, till now the PM's decision is yet to be implemented.

In the press conference, they declared that they would go for tougher action if the decision is not implemented immediately.



The 20th installation ceremony of Rotary Club of Bogra was held in Bogra recently.

Shortage of teachers in Shariatpur College

SHARIATPUR, Aug 5: Although Shariatpur Government College faces numerous problems, nothing enough is being done to salvage the college, reports UNB.

Set up in 1978 and subsequently nationalised in 1980, the college has been grappled with shortage of teachers and lack of accommodation.

Apart from BA, BCom and BSc courses, the college introduced honours programmes on Political Science and Management in 1998-1999 academic session.

When contacted Vice-Principal of the college Prof Muhammad Sirajul Haque said there are over 530 students in the college and they want to introduce honours courses on more subjects.

The vice-principal has long been performing the duty of the principal, as the post remained vacant for two years. Some posts

of assistant professors and lecturers are also lying vacant.

That is not the end of it. The college has no residential facility for its teachers and it has no boundary wall to protect the campus.

The college, which has honours courses on a number of subjects, does not subscribe newspapers or periodicals for its students.

The science students are the worst sufferers as there is no full-fledged science laboratory in the college. Lack of demonstrators for the Intermediate class also hampers practical classes.

Responding to a query, the vice-principal said he had brought the problems to the notice of the higher authorities long ago, but his appeal to resolve the problems went unheeded.

Heart patients on alarming rise

SHARIATPUR, Aug 5: The number of heart patients is on alarming rise in six upazilas here, reports UNB.

The upazilas are Sadar, Naria, Bhedarganj, Jajira, Damudya and Goshairhat.

A survey conducted by a local NGO revealed that most of the patients are 35 to 45 years of age who come to the sadar hospital and upazila health complexes for treatment. But they are to go back without any treatment, as there is no heart specialists in upazila level.

The on-duty physicians in the health complexes only give prescriptions to the patients and advise them to take rest while in most cases patients were advised to consult with senior physicians either in Shariatpur town or in Dhaka.

A good number of patients are going abroad like India and Singapore every year for better treatment, as they do not get proper treatment in the country.

Most of the rural poor people are ignorant about the heart diseases and the number of such affected people is rising day by day in the district.

Meanwhile, local people complained that most of the doctors serving in the hospitals are connected with one or more private

clinics. A good number of doctors have also their own clinics.

It is alleged that the doctors of different health complexes and hospitals advise the patients to go to their clinic for better treatment, which is very expensive.

A good number of private clinics have sprung up in the district town without registration from the authorities concerned.

Locals said eight doctors, working in the district Sadar Hospital, have jointly set up a private clinic named Shariatpur Nursing Home at Kachari Road in town where rural people are being harassed as they are compelled to pay heavy charge by the clinic authority.

According to reliable sources upazila health complexes and union level health sub-centres are facing shortage of specialist physicians, medicine, bed and other necessary apparatus for treatment.

Gaibandha traders observe strike

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT
GAIKANDHA, Aug 5: Businessmen and traders here on Sunday observed a dawn to dusk strike, demanding punishment to the killers of businessman Sazzad Hossain.

News snaps

Prices of essentials up

MADARIPUR, Aug 5: Prices of essential commodities like onion, sugar and salt shot up in local markets during the last week, reports UNB.

Market sources said prices of onion, salt, sugar, pulse, and cumin seed went up during the period. Onion is now selling at Tk 16 as against Tk 12 a week back. Similarly, sugar price rose by Tk 4 per kg while salt price by Tk 2, pulse by 5, cumin price by Tk 50. Shopkeepers attributed the sudden rise in prices of essentials to short supply caused by rain.

Community policing introduced

SHERPUR, Aug 5: A community policing system has been introduced here to help the regular police maintain law and order, thanks to the district Police Super for taking the initiative, reports UNB.

The Police Super with the help of local people and local upazila administrations introduced the community policing in different parts. According to locals, law and order situation has improved in different huts, bazars and villages with the introduction of the community policing. Meanwhile, local administration distributed umbrellas and torches among the members of the community police in Sriward upazila complex on July 31. Local MP MA Bari distributed torches and umbrellas among the volunteers from West Zinia and Kuria, Vliadanga, Singabakna, Jhograchar in Sriward upazila and Mobarakpur and Saheber Bazar in Sadar upazila.

Acid thrower convicted

BARISAL, Aug 5: A court here on Thursday found a youth guilty of acid attack on a girl and sentenced him to 14 years in jail, reports UNB.

The court also fined the convict, Tyebur Rahman Sagar, Tk 25,000 with a provision to suffer three years more in default. According to prosecution, Sagar, son of police constable Abdul Goni, hurled acid at Sheikh Akhter Lisa, 15, of Polashpur area in the town on March 11, 1998 as Sheikh turned down his offer to make a relation with her. Sheikh was an SSC candidate at that time. After examining the records and witnesses, District and Sessions Judge M Kamal Uddin Mia handed down the judgement. Sagar was tried in absentia.

Municipality chairman sued

MAGURA, Aug 5: Magura Municipality chairman Mahbubul Haque Siddiqui has been sued for failing to repay loan of Bangladesh Shilpa Bank, reports UNB.

Officials said Siddiqui, the younger brother of former Minister Majidul Haque, took loan totalling Tk 3.26 crore from the bank for constructing Arpara Textile Mills in the town. Shilpa Bank authorities filed the case with local Artha Reen Adalat as he failed to repay the loan.

41 murders in July

BAGERHAT, Aug 5: Some 41 murders took place in nine districts of Khulna division during the month of July, indicating that the law and order situation continues to go down the slope, reports UNB.

According to police records, 12 people were killed in Jessore during the period while eight in Khulna, four each in Satkhira, Bagerhat and Chuadanga, two each in Narail, Jhenidah and Magura and three in Kushtia districts. Most of the victims were political activists, police, women, children or leaders of terrorist group. During the period, over 50 robberies, 27 abductions, five acid attacks, 100 muggings, 10 rapes, 22 incidents of women repression and 100 terrorist acts were recorded. Another report adds: Law-enforcers as part of their three-month combat operation in southern region arrested some 4,636 alleged criminals and recovered 67 firearms during the month of July.

Allocation

RANGAMATI, Aug 5: A total of Tk 10.88 crore has been allocated to implement the second phase of the UNICEF-assisted integrated social development project in the Chittagang Hill Tracts in the current fiscal, reports UNB.

Of the amount, Tk 4.70 crore has been allocated for the government's fund while Tk 6.28 crore from UNICEF, official sources said. Various programmes on non-formal education, healthcare and sanitation are being implemented in Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban hill districts under the Tk 25 crore project.

Man killed by son

RANGPUR, Aug 5: An elderly man was killed and his wife and son were critically injured in an attack by his another son at Parabandhi in Mithapukur upazila Tuesday, reports UNB.

The deceased was identified as Mozil Islam, 70. His wife Rokya Begum, 55, and their son Robul Islam, 35, who suffered injuries in the attack, were admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH). Police said Rakibul Islam, 37, a teacher of Salmara Government Primary School, swooped on his father, mother and younger brother as they prevented him from constructing a house on a disputed land, leaving his father dead on the spot. Witnesses said Rakibul had tried to commit suicide by stabbing himself after the incident. However, police arrested Rakibul and sent him to the RMCH.

Conspiracy protested

TARAGANJ (Rangpur), Aug 5: State Minister for Communications Mohammad Anisul Haq Chowdhury on Tuesday said the fundamentalist Jamaat-Shibir clique has hatched conspiracy to kill the Prime Minister being jealous of her successes in conducting the massive development activities, reports BSS.

He was addressing a protest rally at Akorchal School and College ground here. Local Awami League organised that rally to protest against the bomb planting incident at Kotlipara to kill Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Presided over by local Union Awami League president Sudhir Chandra Ray, the rally was also addressed, among others, by President, General Secretary and Organising Secretary of Taraganj Thana Awami League Alamgir Sarkar, Ruhul Amin and Atiar Rahman.

Misappropriation

KISHOREGANJ, Aug 5: District Anti-Corruption Bureau have filed two separate cases against four people including two former sub-assistant engineers of Kishoreganj municipality for misappropriation of fund in fiscal 1993-94, reports UNB.

Contractor Iqbal Ahmed and sub-assistant engineer M A Mannan have been accused in one case and contractor Mohammad Enamul Haq, the same sub-assistant engineer M A Mannan and another engineer Jasimuddin in another case. In the first case, the accused misappropriated Tk 1.72 lakh by showing additional work of the construction of a road from Kurumdi Primary School to Chandishaha Bari which was not at all done. In the second case, the contractor and engineers were accused of grabbing Tk 2.01 lakh by not properly completing the reconstruction work of a road from Gaital Janata Primary School to Nilganj road. After the preliminary investigation the bureau filed the cases with the Sadar upazila police recently.

Money recovered

NARAYANGANJ, Aug 5: Siddhirganj police recovered a sum of Taka one lakh nine thousand after the 10 hours of snatching at pistol point by two muggers from near Sanarapur on Dhaka-Chittagang highway on Sunday night, reports BSS.

Police also arrested Masudur Rahman, 28, and Murad Hossain, 22, for their alleged involvement in the mugging. According to police sources, Bazulur Rahman, 35, an office peon of Top Star Cargo Ltd at Mogbazar in Dhaka while came out of a bank branch at Hotel Sheraton and drawing the money on Sunday at 11 am, was whisked away by a baby taxi by the two snatchers at pistol point. The peon shouted when he saw police patrol team near Sanarapur on Dhaka-Chittagang highway after the baby taxi came out from hideout at night. Police then intercepted the baby taxi and arrested the snatcher and recovered the entire amount of the money.

Cotton seeds farming scheme

CHUADANGA, Aug 5: Bangladesh Cotton Development Board (BCDB) has fixed up a target to produce 64 tonnes of cotton seeds in the Chuadanga Zone during the current season, reports BSS.

According to an official source, seeds will be raised from cotton to be cultivated on 40 hectares of land in the zone. These seeds will be raised from nine units in the zone. Three hectares each will be brought under cultivation in Daulatganj Kederganj and Jibannagar units, two hectares each in Alamdanga and Munshiganj units, 4 hectares in Baradi Unit, 5 hectares in Andulbari Unit, 6 hectares in Damurhuda Unit and 12 hectares in Mehrpur Unit. The cultivation of cotton has started.



Following bumper harvest of Boro paddy some Jhenidah farmers tilling land with renewed zeal and enthusiasm for preparation of cultivation of succeeding crops. —Star photo

Ashrayan project faces problems in Panchagarh

PANCHAGARH, Aug 5: Lack of proper initiatives by the local administration, the noble initiative of the government for sheltering the homeless people has been facing a setback here, reports UNB.

As part of the countrywide government programme to provide shelter to the homeless people the Open Coughki Bhajani Ashrayan Project was established in Debiganj last year with an accommodation facilities for 140 families.

Despite a large number of actually deserving families reportedly living in the veranda of the locked rooms of the project, 68 homes still remained vacant

and undistributed even after one year of completion of the project. Local people alleged that due to the nepotism of the Ashrayan authorities most of the 72 families who got allotment despite having their own houses already left the Ashrayan Project after getting loan for self-employment.

An erosion-hit homeless widow Jobeda who has been living in the veranda of a locked room since long in the project told the news agency that she had already applied for a room but no step has yet been taken due to unknown reasons.

Besides, in the absence of any school in the project the kids of the allotted people have been

engaged in many odd jobs. BSS from Chuadanga says: Forest Extension Department has taken up a programme to plant 8,350 saplings in the district during the current season.

Saplings will be planted particularly in the Ashrayan Projects of the district. The projects are located at Dhutarhat in Chuadanga sadar upazila and at Subalpur, Karpashdanga and Chitla in Damurhuda upazila.

Six hundred and thirty saplings will be planted in Dhutarhat under sadar upazila, and 1,260 in Subalpur, 160 in Chitla and 6,300 will be planted at Karpashdanga under Damurhuda upazila.

Shamsur Rahman killing: Reports of more protests

By Staff Correspondent

Journalists of Faridpur organised protest meetings condemning the brutal killing of Janakantha journalist Shamsur Rahman in Jessore recently.

Our Faridpur Correspondent says: Faridpur Press Club held a protest meeting at the club premises recently protesting the brutal killing of Shamsur Rahman, Special Correspondent of The Daily Janakantha based in Jessore.

It was presided over by ASM Manjur Murshed, Vice-President of the Club.