

## Five kids drown in Rajshahi, Kushtia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Four children drowned in ponds in separate incidents in the city and in Tanore upazila yesterday.

Family sources said, cousins Kakoli Khatun, 9, and Jobeda Khatun, 7, of city's Dari Khorbona area were playing at Upashahar in New Market area.

There they went to take a bath in a pond with their playmates and drowned as they did not know how to swim, said Kakoli's father Abdul Kalam Azad.

Two other cousins Sadia Akhtar, 7, of Batar Moar area and Borsha Khatun, 8, of Dari Khorbona area in the city met tragic end while bathing in a pond at their grandfather's home at Sukdevpur village in Tanore

upazila.

Family sources said, they drowned as they went to pond alone at around 10 am. Locals recovered the bodies at about noon.

In Kushtia, a schoolboy drowned in Gorai River yesterday, reports our correspondent.

Body of the deceased, identified as Ali Abir Hridoy, 15, a student of Class IX at Kushtia Zilla School, was recovered in the afternoon.

The boy was son of Advocate Barkat Ali Majed, acting editor of a local weekly and Kushtia correspondent of Dhaka based daily Amar Desh.

Police and family sources said Hridoy went to take a dip with his friends in Gorai River near his house at noon but drowned as he did not know how to swim.



Locals engage in voluntary work to build an embankment on the Dharla River at Bumki village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, inset, a good number of women also join the initiative meant to save their houses and farmlands from recurrent erosion by the river.

## Villagers build 600-ft dyke to stop Dharla erosion

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

People of Bumka village in Mogholhat union under Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila have constructed a 600-foot embankment through voluntary work to save their houses and landed property from erosion by the Dharla River.

The embankment will save several thousand houses, many orchards, about two thousand acres of farmland, two primary schools, a madrasa, six mosques, four temples, and the union parishad (UP) office at Bumka, Itapota, Kurul, Bumka, Megharam, Bongram, Bhotiyatari, Kodalkhata and Saprikhana villages in Mogholhat union, locals said.

Tired of waiting for government fund for construction of a protection embankment, the local UP chairman encouraged the villagers to take their own initiative for protecting their lives and assets, they said.

About four hundred erosion hit people both male and female of Bumka village at Mogholhat union started their voluntary service on April 12 and worked tirelessly until completing the embankment yesterday.

"The union parishad collected about four thousand bamboos, two hundred trees and some cash from the villagers during a month-long campaign in the area. The parishad

donated 4,500 sacks worth Tk 1,12,500 and cash of Tk 2,40,000 for bearing the expenditure for six dredgers," said UP member Joymulyo Chandra Roy.

The UP chairman and members also worked with around 400 villagers to construct the embankment to check erosion by Dharla River, he said.

"The Dharla devoured my house four times in last seven years. Besides, the river eroded 15 bighas of cultivable land and two orchards. To save my remaining assets -- three bighas cultivable land and homestead on 10 decimal land from the threat of river erosion, I joined the dam construction as a volunteer," said Jasim Uddin, 75, of Bumka village.

Rozina Bewa, 68, of the same village said, "After my husband's death five years ago, I lost house, five bighas of cultivable land and a mango orchard due to erosion by Dharla River. So I joined the volunteer work to construct embankment in the village to protect my last two bighas of cultivable land and homestead from the erosion."

Ahmed Ali, 50, a resident of Itapota village, said he donated 40 bamboos to construct the cross dam at Bumka village to check Dharla erosion, as the dam would save his assets from erosion.

Mogholhat UP Chairman Habibur Rahman said, "I submitted applications to

Water Development Board and other government authorities for fund for constructing an embankment at Bumka village last year. Failing to get any response, I encouraged local people to join our initiative and finally succeeded in constructing the embankment to save life and properties of eight villages in Mogholhat union."

"Now the embankment needs protection through using geo-filters and CC block dumping for its strength and longevity. Otherwise it will remain vulnerable to erosion when strong current of Dharla River hits. As geo-filters and CC blocks are costly, we need government help for the

purpose," he said.

Villagers also demanded government initiative to protect the 600-foot embankment and if possible, a permanent protection embankment to save them from recurrent erosion.

Enayet Ullah, executive engineer of Lalmonirhat Water Development Board, said, "The erosion hit people at Bumka and other villages of the union built the protection embankment through voluntary service to save their life and assets from the river. I will try to take steps to strengthen the embankment after talking with the high officials concerned as soon as possible."

## 4 jute godowns, over 100 houses gutted in fire

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Raw jute worth Tk 10 crore was gutted in a devastating fire at an export oriented jute baling press at Saidpur in Nilphamari district on Monday evening.

Fire brigade sources said the fire originated from an electric short circuit at Bright Fibre Jute Baling Press at Tulshiram Road in the municipality area at about 6.30pm, reports our correspondent.

Within a short time, the fire, which followed a huge explosion, engulfed all the four godowns of the press packed with raw jute.

One of the owners of the jute press, Kabir Chowdhury, told newsmen that there was around 40 thousand maunds of raw jute worth about Tk 10 crore in the four godowns.

The jute bales were supposed to be exported to Pakistan, China and Thailand, he added.

In Jhenidah, fire gutted a cotton factory in Kaliganj upazila town yesterday, causing damage to cotton and machineries worth Tk 18 lakh, reports our correspondent.

Factory owner Ruhul Amin said that the fire originated from the pressure machine at the factory.

In Nature, a biscuit factory was gutted in a fire at Collegepara in Singra upazila town on Monday night, said our correspondent.

Local sources said the fire originated from an oven at Pabna Biscuit Factory at about 10.30pm and soon engulfed the whole factory.

Factory authorities

claimed that valuables worth about Tk 20 lakh were gutted in the blaze.

In Thakurgaon, at least 103 houses were gutted in separate fire incidents at Shangaon Kuatol village under Baliadangi upazila, Balia village under Sadar upazila and Bishnupur village under Ranishankoil upazila on Monday afternoon and early yesterday, reports our correspondent.

Local people and fire-fighters said, at least 50 houses were gutted in a devastating fire at Shangaon Kuatol village. The fire originated from the kitchen of one Md. Lablu's house at 1.30pm on Monday, they said.

In another fire incident at Balia village 11 houses were gutted at 5.10pm on Monday.

The fire broke out from a kitchen at one Abdul Hamid's house and soon spread to adjacent houses.

At least 42 houses were gutted in another devastating fire at Bishnupur village under Ranishankoil upazila on early yesterday.

Fire fighters could not say how the fire broke out but said it damaged properly worth Tk 5 lakh.

In Pabna, at least five houses were gutted in a fire at Chhoto Monoharpur village in Sadar upazila early yesterday, reports our correspondent.

Fire fighters and locals said the fire originated from a stove at Abdul Goffar's residence at about 2am and rapidly spread to the adjoining houses.

The affected families claimed that the fire damaged valuables worth Tk 10 lakh.

### SNIPPETS

#### Tiger kills fisherman

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A fisherman was killed by tiger in Matibhanga Canal in the Sundarbans yesterday. The deceased was Abdul Karim Gazi, 50, of village Purbo Kaikhali Barokhal in Shyamnagar upazila. Quoting local people police said, Karim Gazi along with other fishermen -- Sayeed Ali, Momon Gazi and Abdul Bari -- went to the Sundarbans a boat on Monday to catch fish in the canal. When they came out to collect firewood yesterday, a tiger swooped on them and dragged Karim into deep forest.

#### Women form human chain

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Women of Bhurulia village in Shyamnagar upazila formed a human chain by the side of Sardar Bari Pond in the village on Monday, demanding its re-excavation to solve the acute scarcity of drinking water in the area. Over 50 women joined the programme who later also held a press conference. They told newsmen that several thousand people in Bhurulia, Kachhrahati, Sonamugari, Kashempur, Kantapur and adjoining villages under Aila affected Bhurulia union had been facing acute scarcity of safe drinking water for lack of sufficient tubewells and other reasons. Locals used to fetch water from the Sadar Bari pond to meet their water problem for the last 50 years, they said. The water of the pond has now become polluted and unfit for drinking for lack of re-excavation, they added.

#### 10 hurt as villagers clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

At least 10 people, including a woman, were injured in a clash between two groups at Baraigram Uttarpara village under Baraigram upazila yesterday morning. Police and locals said, there was a feud between Nabir Ali and Jahangir Alam over the ownership of a mango tree. Yesterday morning, when Jahangir and his people went to cut down the tree, Nabir's men resisted them, triggering a fierce clash. Both the groups equipped with lethal weapons and sticks attacked each other injuring at least 10 people from both sides.



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