



PHOTO: STAR

SAVE NO TO EARLY MARRIAGE: Non-governmental organisation Save the Genesis arranges a procession in Sadullapur upazila under Gaibandha district on Sunday, marking the end of a ten-day campaign aimed at creating awareness about the bad effects of child marriage, especially in the economically and educationally backward remote areas.

Indigenous fishes disappearing fast from Old Brahmaputra

UNB, Kishoreganj

The indigenous fish species have rapidly been disappearing in the downstream of the Old Brahmaputra River due to poor water flow and over exploitation of fishes.

Banabashi Barman, a fisherman of Darigaon in Kuliarchar upazila who has been catching fish from the river for the last 20 years, said once the downstream of the Old Brahmaputra abounded with plenty of fishes and many fisherman families depended on the river to earn a living.

"But, nowadays the fisherman community in the river basin has been passing hard time for lack of fish in the river. So, many of them have been compelled to change their traditional fishing occupation," he said.

Debashish, 60, an elderly fisherman, said they could catch a huge

amount of fishes from the river in the monsoon barely 8-10 years ago. But we had very poor catches in the river this monsoon, he lamented.

"We saw *sada pani* (clean water) during the monsoon. After a whole day of fishing, I could catch only half a kilogram of small fishes," he told this correspondent.

Debashish said some species -- gutum, korika, boal, puti, ghora mukhya, nandil, kulsa, bhorkhol, tengra and kajuli, torrent catfish, tengra, chhoto koi and tila shol -- were plentifully available in the river just five years ago. "But, now all the species are on the verge of extinction."

He also said, some species -- mola, chela, darkina, pathorchata, joiya, ghora machh, baitka and mohashol -- are rarely found in the river nowadays.

Zillur Rahman, who was catching fish in the Jhira Nadi, a tributary of the

Old Brahmaputra, amid heavy down-pour, said people caught big fishes like boal, shoal, katla and chital during monsoon in the past, but no big fish was found this year.

"The river was full of fishes only five years back. Local people had been dependent on the river to meet their fish requirement and for livelihood. But, we find very poor quantity of fish now".

Locals said the river saw a rapid decline in fishes in the last one decade due to drying up of the river, frequent and indiscriminate use of pesticides and insecticides in agricultural land and change of the river direction.

According to the Department of Fisheries, at least 28 species of indigenous fish have already been disappeared while 10 percent of the 260 remaining categories are now endangered.



With recession of water at the end of the rainy season, the Madhumati River erodes areas at Gayeshpur village in Madhukhali upazila under Faridpur district, right, a teacher of Muslihul Ummah Nurani and Hefezia Madrasa conducts a class under the open sky as the madrasa house remains highly vulnerable to erosion by the river that has reached only 20 to 25 metres from the institution.

Fresh erosion by Madhumati in Faridpur

More families shift houses to safer places in Madhukhali upazila

MAGURA CORRESPONDENT, back from Faridpur

With the recession of water from rain-fed Madhumati river, erosion has started again forcing more villagers to shift their houses to safer places at Gayeshpur village under Kamarkhali union in Madhukhali upazila of Faridpur district.

During a visit to the village a couple of days ago, it was found that people of seven families shifting their houses hur-

riedly to the western bank of the river as erosion took an alarming turn on the eastern part again.

Apart from rendering more people homeless, erosion by the river was devouring a vast area of cropland. It was also threatening the lone madrasa of the village. Panicked teachers were seen holding classes under the open sky fearing erosion any time as the river reached only 20 to 25 yards away.

Earlier, from September

26 to October 30, the river washed away huge farmland, a portion of the Kamarkhali-Bakshipur-Gayeshpur embankment and homesteads rendering at least 136 families at the village homeless.

Of the total 143 affected families, 115 have taken shelter at safer places on the western bank of the river while 28 families including that of Solaiman Mondal, Makbul Sarder, Sayeedur Rahman and Abul Khayer Fakir went to

Ulinagar village in Magura Sadar upazila on the north-western part of the river.

Meanwhile, a team led by Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Faridpur Mohammad Helaluddin Ahmed, the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) in Madhukhali Mirajul Islam Ukil and the chairman of the Madhukhali upazila parishad Mafizur Rahman Manju distributed 30 kilogram of rice, a blanket and one thousand taka to each

PATUAKHALI GENERAL HOSPITAL

Sludge, stink all over due to cracks in sanitation pipes

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Sanitation system in the 250-bed Patuakhali General Hospital has virtually collapsed as most of the sanitation pipes developed cracks during the last one year.

Human wastes and dirty water coming out from the damaged parts of the pipes spread all around, making the hospital environment repulsive to the patients and visitors.

The extension building comprising the Labour Ward and the Male Surgery Ward see the most horrible condition.

"The woefully dirty atmosphere of the hospital is bad enough to make the patients' condition worse still. Human wastes from the damaged pipes mixes with the stagnant water on the open place beside the Male Surgery Ward and the stink can be felt from the entire hospital campus," said Fakhrul Islam, a visitor to the hospital.

"The hospital environment is just the opposite of one's expectation. Visitors find it difficult to stay here even for a short time in such



PHOTO: STAR

PICTURE TELLS THE TALE: Dirty stagnant water mixed with human wastes just beside the Male Surgery Ward of Patuakhali General Hospital makes the environment woefully nasty, thanks to the indifference of authorities concerned.

an unhygienic atmosphere. Just imagine the condition of a large number of patients who have to stay for days or weeks for treatment," said Md Shamimul Islam, another visitor.

Dr Reza Md Zaman, acting superintendent of the

hospital, said they sent several letters to the Public Works Department (PWD) to repair the damaged sanitation pipes but to no effect.

When contacted, Kamrul Islam, sub divisional engineer of PWD, said, "We could not repair the pipes due to

lack of fund. Earlier this year we sent a Tk 38 lakh project proposal to the higher authorities concerned but no fund has been allocated till now. We hope to do the work by June next year if necessary funds are allocated."

Jail warden stabbed

UNB, Kishoreganj

Acting chief warden of Kishoreganj District Jail Mahtab Uddin was stabbed and beaten up by the son of a female prison guard on Sunday.

Jail sources said, an altercation ensued between Mahtab, 50, and Sujan, 26, son of Rahima Akhter, at about 12:30pm.

At one stage, the unruly youth started beating up Mahtab. He also stabbed the acting chief warden with a knife, leaving him seriously injured.

The injured was rushed to Kishoreganj Adhunik Sadar Hospital where the doctors referred him to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

Contacted, jailer Jannatul Ferdous confirmed the incident but she could not say anything about the reason behind the incident.

Sujan went into hiding after the incident.

Puja flavour in the air

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Preparations for a five-day celebration of Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of Bangalee Hindus, are going on in full swing in five upazilas of the district.

The puja celebration will start with welcoming Goddess Durga on October 20 and end through immersion of the images of the goddess in different rivers and canals on October 24.

The artisans are busy making clay images of Goddess Durga at temples in different areas of the district. One of them named Narayan Chandra Roy, 42, of Saptana village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila said his team, comprising eight members, is making images of Goddess Durga at Roypara Temple, Sadhuti Temple, Saptana Temple and Hospital Road Temple in the town.

Another artisans Nirmal Chandra Roy, 35, of Mohishkhocha village under Aditmari upazila said he has engaged six teams, each consists of five to seven people, for making clay images of the deity at 16 temples in different areas of the district.

District Puja Udjapon Parishad President Propid Kumar Roy said as many as



PHOTO: STAR

Artistes busy finishing the idols of Durga and other deities at Roypara temple in Lalmonirhat town ahead of Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of the Bangalee Hindus.

388 puja mandaps are being set up in five upazilas of the districts--123 in Lalmonirhat Sadar, 75 in Aditmari, 65 in Kaliganj, 75 in Hatibandha, and 50 in Patgram upazila.

He further said the well decorated mandaps and artisans of the finest idols will be awarded prizes by the parishad.

Gopal Chandra Roy, general secretary of Lalmonirhat Puja Udjapon Parishad, has urged the district administration to ensure peaceful celebration of Durga Puja at all

mandaps in the district. Leaders and members of the parishad will also take all-out preparations for peaceful celebration of 'Sharodiya Durga Utsab' in the five upazilas, he said.

Contacted, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Mokhlesar Rahman Sarker said all puja mandaps will get special financial assistance this year. Special security measures will be taken and uninterrupted power supply and better traffic management will be ensured, the DC added.

MAFU MURDER IN PABNA

8 ruling party men sued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Family of slain Jubo League leader Mahfuzur Rahman Mafu filed a murder case against eight ruling party activists including a municipality councillor on Sunday night.

"Md Rajib, councillor of ward No 12 of Pabna municipality, Tushar, Toton, Mishor, Rono, Jony, Shimul and Aupu have been made accused in the case filed by Mafu's brother Md Ripon Hossain. The accused have fled away. Police have continued drive to arrest them and seized a motorbike from Rajib's residence," said Md Jasim Uddin Sarkar, officer in charge of Pabna Sadar police station.

Beat up and hacked by criminals near Krishnapur School in the town on Saturday night, Mahfuzur Rahman Mafu, vice presi-



Mahfuzur Rahman Mafu

dent of district unit of Jubo League, died on the way to Dhaka early Sunday.

Meanwhile a faction of local Jubo League led by its district unit Secretary Ragib Hassan Tipu in a press conference held at Pabna Press Club yesterday blamed a faction of ruling party men for killing Mafu.

"Mafu was killed in a planned way as he protested tender scam and drug business by some local Awami League men

led by Kamil Hossain, publicity secretary of the party's district unit. Mafu earlier demanded Kamil's expulsion for patronising unruly activists in his area," Tipu said.

Speakers at the press conference announced a protest rally on Wednesday and warned of tougher programmes including hartal if the accused in Mafu murder case are not arrested.

Asked about the situation, lawmaker from Pabna-5 constituency Golam Faruk Khandaker Prince, also organising secretary of Pabna district unit AL, said, "The killers are identified. We have ordered the law enforcers to arrest them. There is no scope to politicize a crime."

This correspondent failed to talk with Kamil Hossain as his cell phone remained off.