

GREEN RIVERBEDS EMERGE AS RIVERS DIE

Lucky for some, costly for many

MEHEDY HASAN, Rangpur

All the rivers in the district including the Teesta, Dharla, Jamuneshwari, Karotoa, Chikli, Akhira and Ghaghat see serious fall in flow, badly affecting navigation, natural fish production and overall ecosystem in the area.

Various reasons including unilateral withdrawal of water in the upstream by neighbouring India and climatic changes have led to the situation while mindless

encroachment on the river-bank and lack of proper dredging add to the problem.

However, a large number of landless people and small and marginal farmers living on the river basin and char (landmass emerged from riverbed) areas, are cultivating boro, wheat, maize, mustard, pulses, vegetables, groundnut, watermelon, tobacco and other crops on the dried-up riverbeds in eight upazilas under

the district.

"As the land on the riverbed is very fertile, we are getting good yield by cultivating crops and vegetables here. It requires only a small investment including use of some organic fertilisers," said Nowsha Mian, 65, a farmer of Gannarpar area beside the Teesta River in Gangachara upazila in the district.

Despite serving as a good earning source for many poor farmers, such large-scale cultivation on the

riverbeds eventually leaves a negative impact on agriculture and environment, agriculturalists said.

Thousands of fishermen and boatmen in the district have become unemployed.

"With decline of water flow in the Teesta, many kinds of delicious fishes have already disappeared. Like me, many people had to leave fishing as only a very small amount of fishes are now found in the dried up river," said

Poran Mondal, 60, of Panjor Bhangra Char on the Teesta River in Kaunia upazila.

Porimol Chandra, 65, of char Bhuthnath in the same upazila said he sold his fishing boat about six years ago as the fish in the Teesta became too scanty.

As many chars appeared in the bed of the Teesta during the last two decades, most of the boatmen remain unemployed during the dry season, said Mosfer Ali, 52, a boatman of Char Bhuthnath.

Md Latif, 50, a former bamboo trader of Dushmara Char village under Kaunia upazila said, "Once I used to transport a lot of bamboo on water from my village to Dhaka as the Teesta had sufficient flow throughout the year. But recently I have left the business as flow in the river remains unusually low for nine months a year. To earn a living, I have set up a small shop on the river-bank."

Md Sekendar Ali, additional director of the Department of Agriculture Extension of Rangpur division, said, "Hundreds of shoals have appeared as a result of massive deposition of silts. The drying up of rivers continues alarmingly as a result of the adverse impacts of climatic changes, lifting of underground waters and many other reasons."



PHOTO: STAR

Carrying laptops and related accessories in a bag, these eleven women of Gaibandha Sadar have recently started providing IT services to people in remote villages.

REACHING IT SERVICES TO REMOTE VILLAGES
Eleven 'pioneering' women

KM REZAUL HOQUE, Gaibandha

Although denied higher education due to poverty, eleven women are now providing information technology (IT) services to the people of rural areas in Gaibandha Sadar upazila.

Carrying laptop and other accessories in a bag inscribed with *tathya kalyani* (information provider), they reach people in remote villages on bicycles to provide useful services for small charges.

The services include arrangement of communication with their near and dear ones at different places at home and abroad and suggestions on health and agriculture related issues through Internet-

based audio-visual devices.

The service providers -- Nayon Tara, Aleya Begum, Shahena, Jahanur, Halima, Ishrat Jahan, Jannati, Manjuri Begum, Dolna, Salema Begum and Afroza -- all residents of Gaibandha Sadar upazila, are easily recognised from their special cap and sky blue dress.

They had discontinued education after SSC or HSC due to family hardship.

Recently local NGO Gano Unnayan Kendro in collaboration with Dhaka-based D-Net and Fair Price International arranged for them necessary training on computer operation and Internet use and National Bank Limited provided them with loan for buying laptops, modems and

bicycles on condition of repayment from the earning.

"Within two weeks of beginning the work, I have earned Tk 4,000," said Nayon Tara.

"Our task is a bit challenging but we are happy to get the self-employment opportunity," said Aleya Begum, another service provider.

"These women with not much formal education have shown how successful use of IT can make one self-reliant through bringing helpful services to the doorstep of people. We hope more people from rural areas to join the line," said M Abdus Salam, chief executive of Gano Unnayan Kendro, Gaibandha.



PHOTO: STAR

Although deaths of rivers in Rangpur would ultimately leave a deep negative impact on agriculture and environment, the green riverbeds have become a major source of income, at least for now, for many poor people.

Rab men hurt while defusing bombs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Madaripur

Three members of Rab's bomb disposal squad sustained injuries while they were defusing cocktails at Kalkini upazila headquarters yesterday.

The injured are Sergeant Iqbal Hossain, Corporal Mostofa and Corporal Mosharraf Hossain.

Following a court order, four bomb disposal experts of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab)-8, Barisal, came to Kalkini Police Station yes-

terday noon to defuse 15 cocktails recovered from a field in an abandoned condition on March 24.

After defusing seven cocktails, one of the remaining eight suddenly went off, leaving the three Rab men injured.

Sergeant Iqbal Hossain, Corporal Mostofa and Corporal Mosharraf Hossain were admitted to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College and Hospital while Corporal Mosharraf Hossain was given first aid at Kalkini Upazila Health Complex.

3 accused in Shaon killing case held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Three of the accused in school student Shaon killing case were arrested in Jirani area of capital Dhaka early Saturday.

Shaon, 09, was son of Abdul Kuddus of Bejar village under Adamdighi upazila of the district. He was a class two student at a local primary school.

The arrestees were identified as Lutfar Rahman, 36, Shah Alam, 27, and Abdul Hakim, 22, of the village and relatives of the main accused Abdul Latif.

Police said they arrested the three after 73 days of the killing on the basis of the confession of the boy's mother and her alleged lover before the magistrate.

According to the case state-

ment, Shaon was killed allegedly by his mother and her lover and others when the boy saw their innocent activities on return from school on January 28.

Shaon's body was found on February 01 morning near their house. His grandfather Koresh Ali filed a murder case, accusing his mother Shefali Begum, her lover Abdul Latif, son of Khobir Uddin of the same village and his cohorts on that day with Adamdighi PS.

Officer in-charge (OC) of Adamdighi PS Tozammel Haque told this correspondent that police arrested Shefali and her alleged lover the same day and sent them to the court.

On the basis of their confession, police arrested the three from Dhaka early Saturday, added the OC.

Nor'wester hits 2 Chuadanga upazilas

One killed, 12 injured

A CORRESPONDENT, Chuadanga

A man was killed and 12 others were injured as a nor'wester swept over Sadar and Alamdanga upazilas on Sunday evening.

The deceased was Abdur Rashid, 45, son of Rajab Ali at Kalupol village in Sadar upazila.

Police said the man died on the spot when a large tree uprooted by the storm fell on a Jhenidah-bound bus from Chuadanga.

Rashid was travelling by the bus. The incident happened near the BGB camp.

The tree collapse also left the driver and several other passengers of the bus injured.

Firefighters from Chuadanga fire service rushed to the spot and res-

cued the passengers.

Among the injured, nine were admitted to Chuadanga Sadar Hospital.

The storm damaged scores of houses and boro

paddy on a vast tract of land. Besides, it destroyed many vegetable orchards and uprooted a good number of trees.

In Dinajpur, a storm

lashed Sadar upazila on Sunday night, reports our correspondent.

It damaged at least 60 houses and standing crops on a huge area.

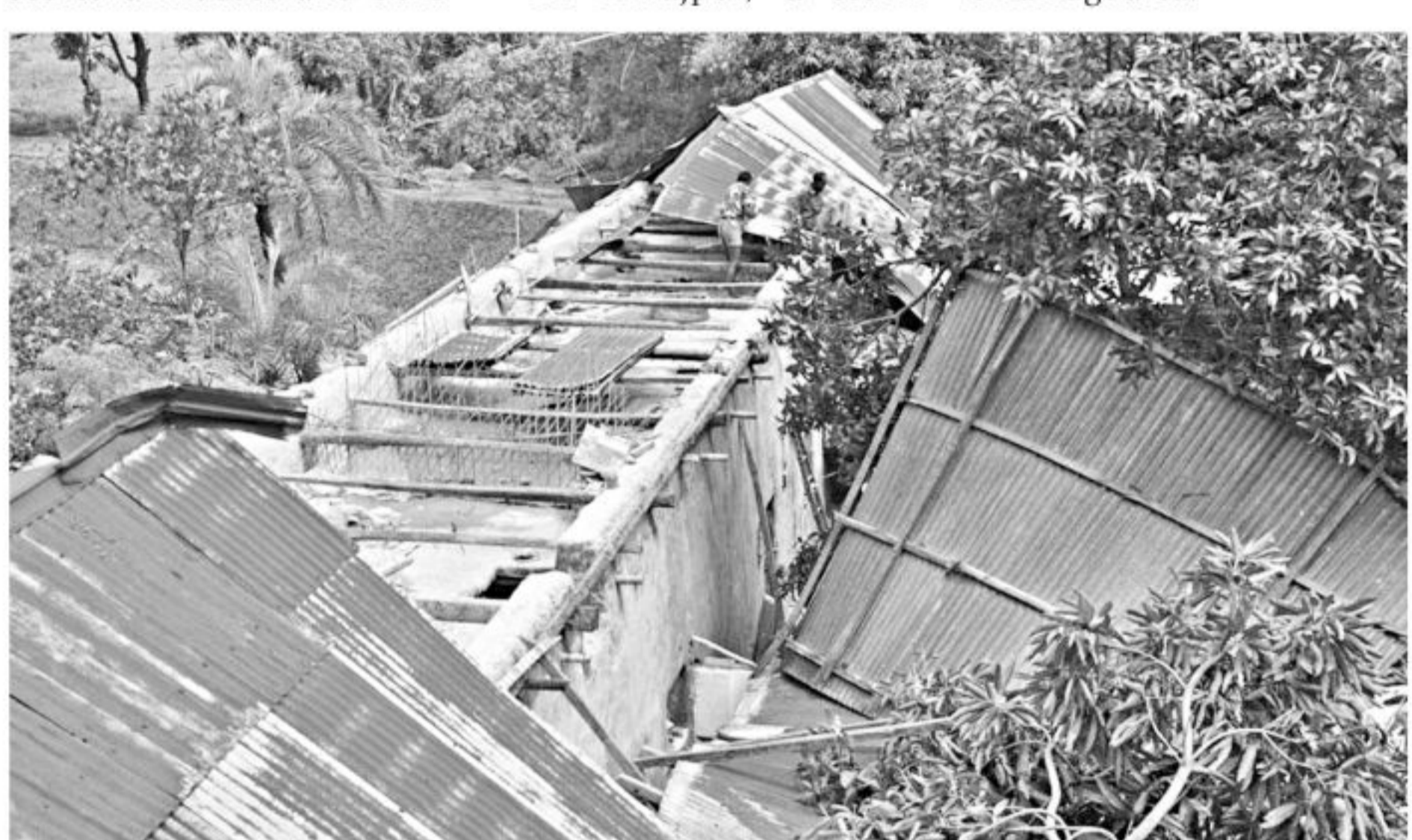


PHOTO: STAR

A large portion of the roof of a tin shed house at bordering Gahangachhi village under Dinajpur Sadar upazila was blown away during nor'wester that lashed the upazila on Sunday night.

BRUR reopens today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

After a vacation of 24 days, all academic activities at Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur (BRUR) will resume today.

Earlier, a syndicate meeting on Saturday evening took the decision.

Professor AKM Nur-un-Nabi, the newly appointed vice-chancellor (VC) presided over the meeting.

On April 20 last, the BRUR authorities in an emergency syndicate meeting suspended all academic activities of the university for an indefinite period after a clash between police and members of 'Dumiti Birodhi Mancha', a joint platform of a section of teachers, students, officials and employees of the university who demanded resignation of the then VC Dr. Muhammad Abdul Jalil Miah.

Defeated candidates reject mayoral by-poll results

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

Three candidates defeated in Magura municipal by-poll for the mayoral post on Saturday rejected the result alleging manipulation.

Demanding recounting of votes, they blamed a government official for the 'blueprint'. Speaking at a press conference, the three candidates gave separate written statements.

The candidates are Awami League (AL) backed Khurshid Haidar Tutul, BNP backed Dr. Mahbubul Haque Siddiquee and Jatiya Party (JP) backed candidate

advocate Hasan Seraj Suja.

The by-poll for the mayoral post was held on May 6 as the post fell vacant following the death of Mohammad Altaf Hossain on February 12.

They told the press conference that 19 presiding officers (POs) out of the 31 were appointed from teachers of Magura Government Huseyn Shahid Suhrawardy College in a bid to influence the election.

Those POs forced the polling agents to remain out of the room for about 15 minutes before counting of ballots, they alleged.

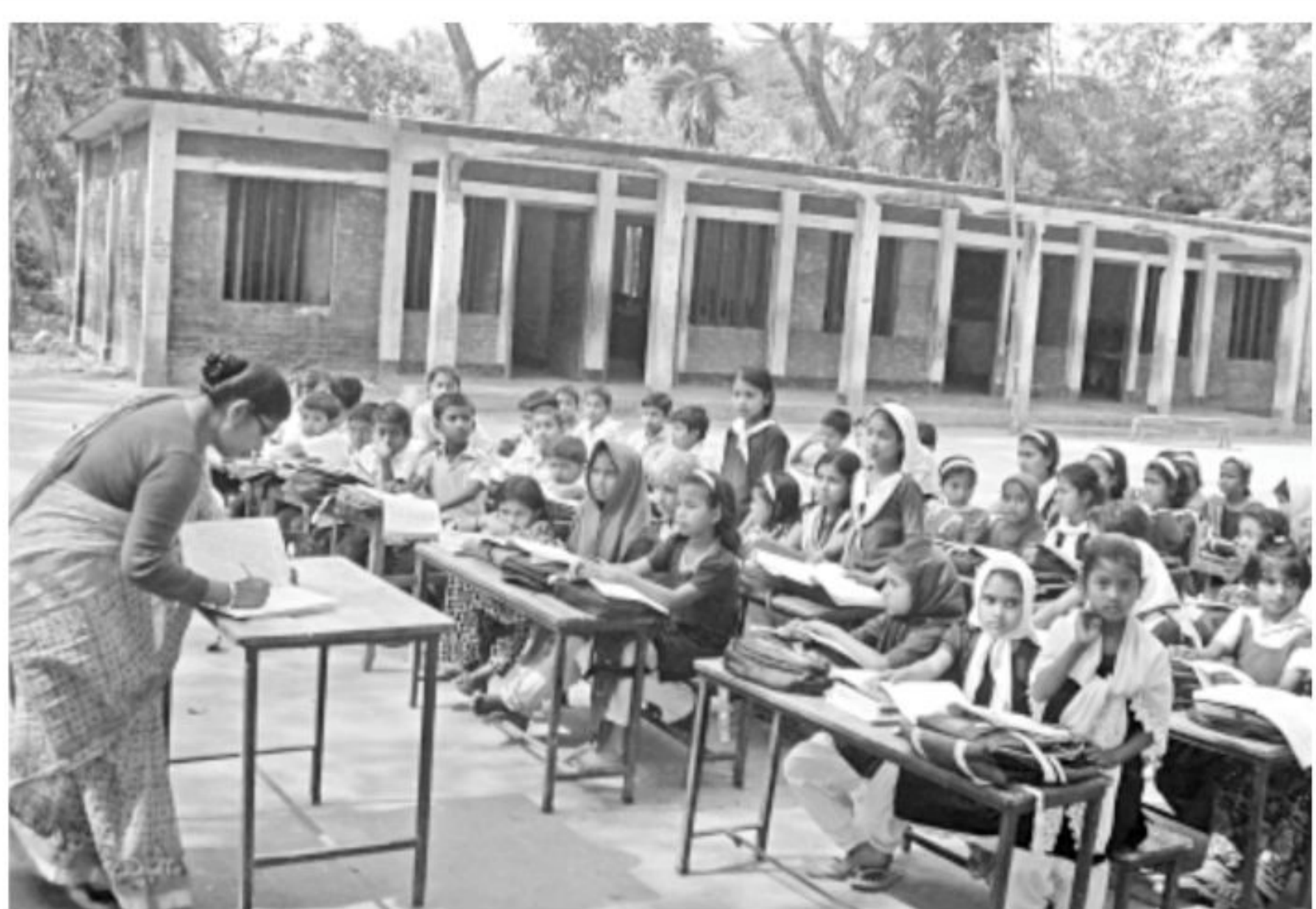


PHOTO: STAR

Students of Devipur Government Primary School in Rajnagar upazila of Moulvibazar district, right, Purbo Madna Registered Primary School in Sadar upazila of Chandpur district attend their classes under the open sky as both schoolhouses are vulnerable to collapse due to cracks developing in roofs, beams and concrete pillars.

SNIPPETS

20 mothers honoured

A CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

On the occasion of the 'World Mother's Day', twenty mothers were honoured in Kawkhali upazila on Sunday evening for their role as proud mothers. They were given 'Press Club Award'. Among them six were honoured posthumously. Presided by Kamruzzaman Khan, president of Kawkhali Press Club, the programme was held at Kawkhali Press Club where Manikhar Rahman, additional deputy commissioner (ADC) of Pirojpur was present as the chief guest.

Schoolboy 'commits suicide'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A schoolboy allegedly committed suicide at his house at Panidhar village in Borolekha upazila early yesterday. The deceased was identified as Jahed Ahmed, 14, student of class nine at PC High School in the area. The boy was a son of Samed Ali at the village. Family sources said, Jahed killed himself by hanging from the ceiling fan at his room. Police said that an UD case was filed but could not tell the exact reason behind the suicide.

Housewife murdered

A CORRESPONDENT, Kishoreganj

A housewife was murdered at Mowgaon village under Raoti union in Tarail upazila yesterday. Locals said, Helena Akter, 22, daughter of Abdul Mannan, chairman of Maizbag union in Ishwarganj of Mymensingh, was married off with Mostafizur Rahman Bokul, 30, son of late Abdul Khalek, 6-7 months ago. On Sunday night, Bokul and Helena locked in an altercation over a phone call received by Helena. Locals later found Helena murdered beside her home and informed police. Bokul went into hiding after the incident, police said.

'Drug addict' found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patna

A 'drug addict' man was found dead at Sirajganj rail station on Sunday morning. Identified as Md. Babu Hossain, 32, of village Nolschondha in Tangail Sadar upazila, he was a drug addict, Sirajganj GRP sources said. Officer in-charge of Sirajganj GRP station, Md. Akbar Hossain, said Babu used to take drug and stay on the platform of the rail station since long. He was found dead at about 9:00am on Sunday.

Boy killed in wall collapse

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A minor boy was killed when a wall of a house collapsed on him at Majikera village of Nabinagar municipality in Nabinagar upazila around 11:30am yesterday. The deceased was identified as Abdur Rahman, 3, son of Mujibur Rahman of the village. According to family sources, the incident happened when Abdur Rahman was playing beside the wall. He died on the spot.

Youth stabs teacher

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A primary school teacher was stabbed on the way to his school by a gang at Tarakandi in Dhunat upazila on Saturday noon. The victim was Ashtosh Sarkar, 37, son of Panchanon Sarkar of Tarakandi village in the upazila. Police and locals said, a derailed youth, Shagor Mia, 16, son of Abdul Khaleque, and former student of the school, had been throwing stinky waste to the school. His parents were informed by the teacher several times. But on Thursday last Shagor entered the school breaking open the window and threw the waste again. Rebuked for this, an angry Shagor stabbed the teacher on Saturday noon, said the sources. Local people took the seriously injured teacher to local health complex when he is yet to be fully out of danger.