

COASTAL ISLANDS OF PATUAKHALI

Passengers suffer for want of pontoons at 60 terminals

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Passengers in coastal islands of the district often have to wade through mud and water to get into launches as there is no pontoon at around 60 ghats (landing stations).

During a visit to Char Mondol in Rangabali upazila a few days ago, this correspondent found that a

local launch on Galachipa-Char Montaz route got anchored about 200 metres from the riverbank as there was no pontoon. Many passengers including children and women were crossing the muddy water on foot to get on the launch.

Although there is no pontoon, not even any shed for waiting passengers, they

have to pay Tk 5 as 'entrance fee' to a person assigned by the upazila administration.

On several occasions, we demanded setting up a pontoon at the ghat considering the interest of local passengers but in vain, said Md Nazrul Islam, chairman of Char Montaz UP.

Locals said as many as 60 ghats at different places of the

coastal areas in the district are without any pontoon.

Twenty of the ghats, namely, Patua, Felabunia, Taktabunia, Tungibaria, Gaipara, Chinabunia, Moudubi, Chalitabunia, Tulatali, Modhukhali, Char Gonga, Gab Bunia, Khalgora, Fulkhali, Nayabhanguni, Jintala, Gramardon, Char Biswas,

Char Lakhmi, and Char Bestin are officially recognised for halting and departing of launches, said officials of Patuakhali port.

These are in Galachipa, Rangabali and Kalapara upazilas under Patuakhali district.

"We have to walk through mud and water to get into launches as there is no pontoon and the vessels cannot anchor on the riverbank during the low tide. We have to wait under the open sky during rain and sun as there is no shed. Still we have to pay entrance fee," said Abul Kashem, a passenger.

When contacted, Mostafizur Rahman, deputy director of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority, said, "We do not lease the ghats that are without any pontoon. District or upazila administrations collect revenue by leasing such ghats."

Md Liakot Ali, upazila nirbahi officer of Rangabali, said, "We collect revenue from local passengers at the ghats without pontoon. Launches cannot anchor on the bank at Char Mondol ghat due to massive siltation there. I will take step to mitigate suffering of launch passengers."



PHOTO: STAR

Passengers wade through muddy water to get into a launch at Char Mondol in Rangabali upazila of Patuakhali due to lack of pontoon at the terminal.

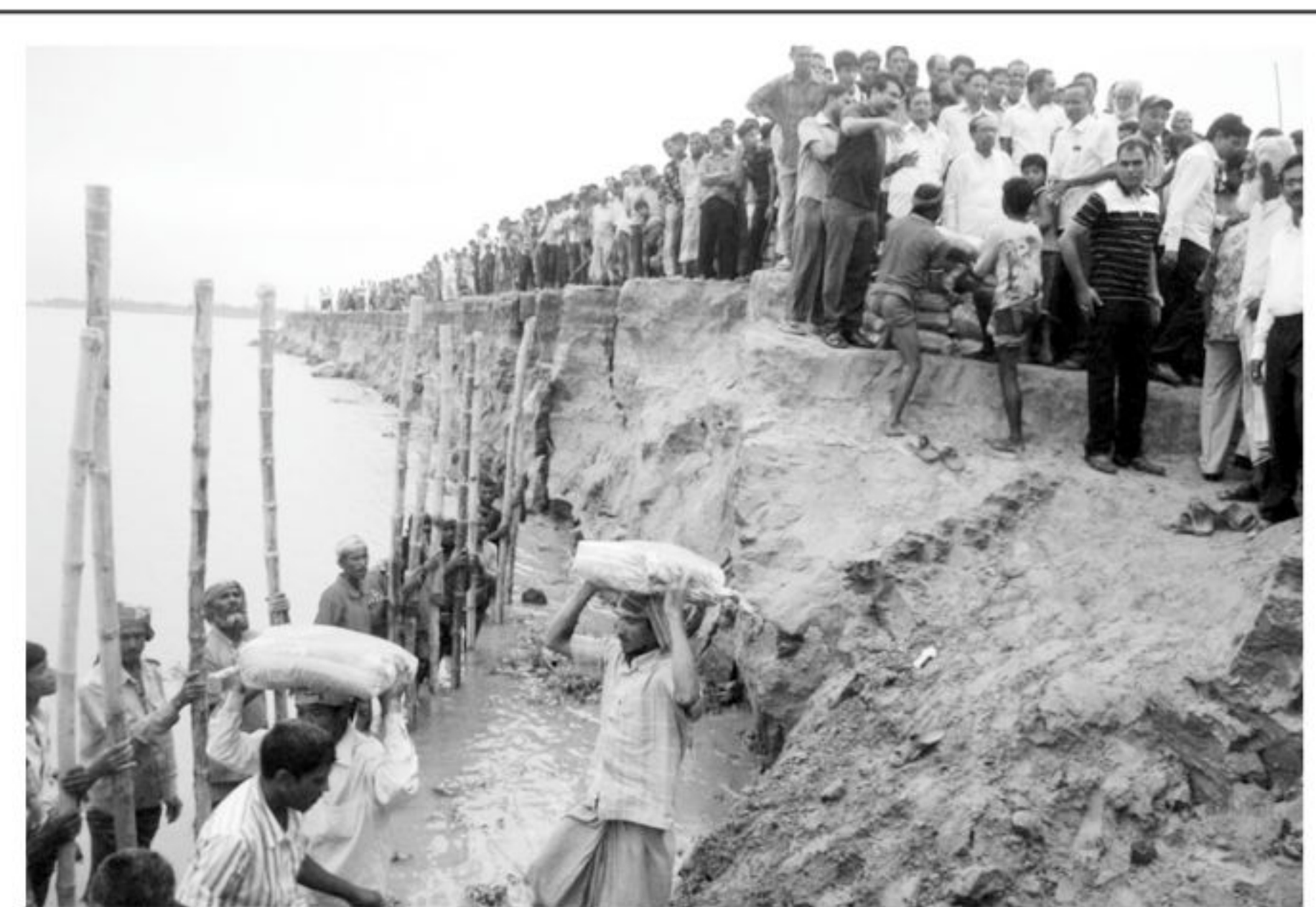


PHOTO: STAR

Villagers erect bamboo spars and dump sandbags at the erosion-hit point in Gobindi area under Saghata upazila of Gaibandha on self-help basis to protect their homesteads and cropland from further onslaught of the river Jamuna.

Villagers join hands to thwart river erosion, finally

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

People of three villages in Saghata upazila have finally joined hands to protect themselves from the erosion by the River Jamuna as their appeals for years fell on deaf ears of the authorities concerned.

More than 700 families of Gobindi, Bashhatta and Bharatkali villages were rendered homeless by the river in the last one week.

Apart from this, the river devoured a number of structures and vast farmlands during the period.

Local lawmaker Fazle Rabbi Mia inaugurated the work of dumping sand bags at erosion-prone points at Gobindi village on Saturday.

The erosion also threatened a biggest cattle market, a temple and around 20

educational institutions in the areas, said Farukul Islam, convener of erosion protection committee.

For long the villagers made appeals to the district Water Development Board (WDB) to take steps to protect them from erosion but to no effect.

Finding no other alternatives, they decided to voluntarily erect bamboo spars at the erosion-hit points on Saturday and dump sand bags, said Mosharraf Hossain Sweet, chairman of Saghata union parishad.

Besides, SKS Foundation, a local NGO and Puja Uddhapan Committee extended financial help to continue the drive.

The authorities have already written to the ministry concerned for funds to take steps to stop erosion, said the lawmaker.

Violent incidents during Shibir-enforced hartal

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Stray incidents of violence marked the half-day hartal enforced by Islami Chhatra Shibir in three districts of greater Noakhali yesterday.

The student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami called the strike in Noakhali, Feni and Laxmipur districts on Saturday, protesting the arrest of Fakhruddin Manik, former central president, Atiqul Islam, office secretary and Mohsinul Kabir, international affairs secretary of Shibir, report our correspondents.

During the hartal, Shibir men brought out procession from Rashid Colony in Noakhali district town and Chowmuhani of Begumganj upazila.

Police dispersed the processions and arrested 14 activists on charge of planning subversive activities.

In Laxmipur, seven policemen and six Shibir activists were injured in a clash in the district town during the eight-hour hartal.

Police and witnesses said, Shibir activists brought out a procession from Aliya Madrasa in the morning.

When the procession reached Uttar Temuhoni of the town, police obstructed them, triggering a clash.

Shibir activists pelted police with brick chips, leaving seven policemen, including officer in-charge of Laxmipur Sadar PS Altaf Hossain, injured.

Police fired several rubber bullets and tear gas shells in retaliation, leaving six Shibir men injured.

Earlier, Shibir activists vandalised a covered van in the district town and torched a truck in Bagbari area.

In Feni, pickets vandalised about a dozen vehicles and torched a battery-run easy-bike on different roads of the district town during hartal yesterday.

Pro-hartal pickets put up barricade at Lemua point of the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway in the morning and damaged a covered van.

Police dispersed the Shibir men when they tried to bring out a procession from Old Police Quarter area and Khajuria.

Shibir activists threw two crude bombs at police and vandalised 4-5 trucks in the areas. They also tried to create a roadblock.

At this, the law enforcers fired several rubber bullets and lobbed tear gas shells triggering a chase and counter chase.

Police detained three Shibir activists from Khajuria.

Peaceful hartal in 3 hill districts

STAR COUNTRY DESK

A daylong hartal enforced by Bangalee settlers in Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachhari districts passed off almost peacefully yesterday.

Parbattya Somo Odhikar Andolan (SOA), Parbattya Bangalee Chhatra Oikya Parisahd (PBCOP) and Parbattya Bangalee Chhatra Parisahd (PBCP) jointly called the shutdown in the hill districts, demanding cancellation of CHT Land Commission Act amendment proposal passed by the cabinet on May 27.

In Rangamati, no motorised vehicles, including long distance routes, were seen playing the roads while most business establishments remained shut during hartal hours.

Besides, river vessels did not operated in the area, reports our correspondent.

During hartal, activists of SOA and PBCOP brought out a procession in the town, protesting the amendment.

Meanwhile, the dawn to dusk shutdown called by Bandarban district unit Parbattya Bangalee Chhatra Parishad (PBCP) in the hill areas was observed peacefully, reports our correspondent.

However, the educational institutions, government and non government offices at the district town remained opened.

In Khagrachhari, the district unit PBCP enforced hartal marked stray incidents, reports our correspondent.

During the hartal hours, at least four people were injured in a clash between the pickets and ethnic people in the town in the morning, said SP Sheikh Mizanur Rahman.



PHOTO: STAR

Members of Bagerhat Bar Association stage a sit-in on Khulna-Bagerhat Road in front of the dilapidated district judge's court building yesterday, demanding shifting of the court to a safer place in the town.

Shift court to safer place, declare bldg abandoned

Bagerhat lawyers demand

A CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Bagerhat District Bar Association yesterday gave a seven-day ultimatum to the authorities concerned to declare the dilapidated Judge's Court building abandoned and shift the court to a safer place in the town.

The ultimatum was issued from a human chain formed on Khulna-Bagerhat Road in front of the court building in the morning.

Leaders and members of the Bar and several hundred people, who came to the court building in connection with different cases, also joined the programme that continued for 45 minutes from 10:30am. The lawyers also staged a sit-in on the road, disrupting traffic for 15 minutes.

Addressing a rally at the venue, Bagerhat District Bar Association General Secretary Abdul Hai urged the authorities concerned to take necessary steps to shift the court to a new place within the next seven days. Otherwise, he threatened to launch a tougher agitation programme. Officials and employees of the Judge's Court also expressed solidarity with the agitation programme.

The Judge's Court building is on the verge of collapse only after 17 years of its construction. The two-storey building has become so rickety that the Public Works Department (PWD) has hastily put up mahogany logs to prevent it from crashing down.

Superintendent engineer of PWD Khulna circle said the officials and employees work in the dilapidated building in constant fear of a disaster.

In April last year, the office of the Bagerhat District Judge had sent a letter to the chief engineer of PWD about the cracks developed in different parts of the building. A four-member team led by Additional Chief Engineer of PWD Md Abul Kashem visited the building on June 15 the same year.

In its written statement, the inspection team stated that the extension of the building was done with low quality construction materials. As a result, the building has become unfit for use as some of its columns and beams have developed cracks, the team said, adding that in many parts decay of rods is 50 percent.



PHOTO: STAR

Rajapur High School playground at the upazila headquarters in Jhalakathi district gets submerged even after a brief shower for lack of drains, depriving hundreds of kids of three schools around the field of any games.

C'nawabganj traders continue protest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Traders formed a human chain in the town yesterday, demanding immediate arrest of the 'real culprits' who looted gold ornaments from a jewellery shop on May 22.

Under the banner of Thakurgaon Zila Baboshayee Shangathan Oikya Parishad, they also held a rally at Thakurgaon intersection.

Eleven days into the incident, police are yet to arrest the 'real' criminals and recover the looted gold ornaments, alleged the speakers at the rally.

They threatened to go for a tougher

agitation if the demand was not met immediately. Among others, president of vice-president of Thakurgaon Chamber of Commerce and Industries Md. Habibur Islam Bablu, president of Thakurgaon Baboshayee Samity Shamsuzzaman and acting general secretary of Thakurgaon Jewellery Owners' Association Hafizur Rahman, spoke.

After the hour-long human chain programme, the traders laid a siege to the DC and SP offices respectively and placed a memorandum.

The shopkeepers and also owners of different business establishments kept

their shutters down till noon yesterday to realise the demand.

A gang of 7/8 can in a microbus and swooped on 'Khawaja Guinea House' at about 9:30pm and looted 300 tolas of gold ornaments amid presence of hundreds of people at Bazarpara market, said police.

The law enforcers later arrested seven people in this connection and seized the microbus at Bhulli Bazar in Sadar upazila.

The arrestees are Ilyas Mia, Mosharraf Hossain, Arman Ali, Tazul Islam, Selim Mia, Md Sobhan and driver Musa Mia of Narayanganj.

Clashes mark hartal in C'nawabganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Incidents of clashes between the law enforcers and Jamaat-Shibir activists marked the half-day hartal in the district yesterday.

The hartal was called by BNP-led 18-party alliance to protest arrest of Jamaat leader Keramat Ali of Shibganj on Saturday.

Jamaat-Shibir men yesterday brought out a procession from Shibatala area in the town in favour of hartal in the morning. As the law enforcers intercepted them a chase and counter chase took place with the Jamaat-Shibir activists. At a stage, the Jamaat-Shibir activists hurled cocktails and brick chips on policemen from their procession in Shibatala area.

Police fired 68 rubber bullets to disperse them. Jamaat-Shibir activists also blasted 15 to 20 cocktails, leaving at least four policemen including SI Rawshan Kabir injured during the clash.

Police recovered two live cocktails from in front of PIT and Shibatala area, said Bazlur Rashid, officer-in-charge (OC) at Sadar police station. Police also detained three pickets from the area.

Rab, police and BGB were deployed to ensure law and order in the district town, he said.

BNP hartal in Rangpur today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

BNP and its associate bodies will enforce an eight-hour hartal in Rangpur district today, demanding immediate release of their seven leaders.

Md. Mozaffar Hossain, convener of district unit BNP, on Saturday announced the hartal at a press briefing at the district party office at Grand Hotel intersection in the city.

Earlier police arrested the seven leaders of BNP and associate bodies along with a cocktail on May 19 midnight, a day before a hartal enforced by Jubo Dal, Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and Swachchhabesok Dal in the division, demanding the unconditional release of Ruhul Kabir Rizvi Ahmed, joint

secretary general of BNP and Syed Moazzem Hossain Alal, president of Jubo Dal central committee.

Roich Ahmed, president of Jubo Dal Rangpur district unit and assistant general secretary of its central committee, Mahfuz-un-Nabi Don, vice-president of JCD central committee, Anisur Rahman Laku, general secretary of Jubo Dal Rangpur district unit and assistant organising secretary of its central committee, Zahir Alam Nayan, president of JCD Rangpur district unit are among the detainees.

Meanwhile, BNP and its associate bodies held demonstrations in Rangpur city and all eight upazilas of the district yesterday to protest the arrests.