

# Teesta barrage faces erosion threat due to tree looting

EAM ASADUZZAMAN,  
Nilphamari

Stealing of big trees from a manmade forest owned by Bangladesh Water Development Board (WDB) along the eastern end of Teesta barrage puts the country's largest structure of the kind vulnerable to erosion.

Authorities of WDB Dalia Division of Nilphamari planted about 7000 trees of different varieties like mahogany, shishu, teak, acacia and eucalyptus in forest No-1 comprising 33 acres of land at Doani village in 1993-1994 fiscal year to save the barrage structures from erosion.

Visiting the forest on Saturday, this correspon-

dent saw a large number of big trunks, some of them covered with earth to hide the act of felling, although the place is in front of a camp where 40 Ansar members are posted to look after safety of the barrage and its infrastructures.

"Almost every night, thieves fell and remove big trees and more than 130 trees were stolen in last three weeks," said Abdus Samad, 45, a tea stall owner living near the forest.

Several locals seeking anonymity said that a section of dishonest BWDB men and some Ansar personnel are aiding the thieves in the crime.

"I have heard from locals that stealing of trees from the WDB forest is occurring

almost every night but we could not take action as authorities did not lodge any complaint," said sub inspector Sayed Mahbub Alam, in charge of Doani police camp near the barrage.

Commander of Doani Ansar camp, Ataur Rahman denied the allegation of his men's collusion in stealing trees.

Surat Uz Zaman, sub assistant engineer of BWDB in Dalia, also the in-charge to look after the forest, said, "The allegation of random felling and removal of trees and helping with thieves by BWDB men is not true. We sold many of our old and big trees in auctions and will invite more auctions in near future for selling trees.

We have also made agreement with the forest department for planting new trees to keep the forest intact."

He, however, failed to say how many trees were sold in auctions, how many auctions took place and what amount of money the BWDB got by selling the trees.

Sohrab Hossain, secretary of CBA at Dalia, said the WDB Division sees serious irregularities as posts of two executive engineers have remained vacant for a couple of months.

"We are concerned as the natural safety of the barrage is threatened due to felling and removal of trees from nearby WDB forest," he said.



Illegal felling of trees from the forest near the Teesta barrage in Nilphamari has made the important structure vulnerable to erosion. Inset: Remains of the trunks of two stolen trees.

## 245 BNP men sued in Habiganj

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,  
Sylhet

At least 245 leaders and activists of Habiganj district unit of BNP have been sued in three cases yesterday for vandalising government properties and attacking police.

They arrestees were protesting the rejection of the bail petition of Habiganj municipality Mayor Golam Kibria Gaus in a case filed for killing former Finance Minister SAMS Kibria and 4 others.

Of them, 45 were sued in a case filed under explosives substance act, 150 in another case for attacking police and 50 others for vandalising private transports and government establishments, said Shahidul Islam, additional superintendent of police in Habiganj.

On Sunday, Senior Judicial Magistrate Rokeya Akter sent Gaus to jail after rejecting his bail prayer in the murder case.

Hearing the news, district BNP and its associate bodies locked in separate clashes with the law enforcers that left 30 people injured.

## PATUAKHALI, JOYPURHAT 2 housewives killed

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Police recovered the body of a housewife with the throat slashed from her house at Katakhal village in Sadar upazila of Patuakhali Saturday morning.

The deceased was identified as Beauty Begum, 45, a resident of the village, reports UNB.

Police said, on information from the deceased's family members, police recovered the body of Beauty from her house in the area in the morning.

It could not be confirmed immediately whether it was case of murder or suicide, police said.

In Joypurhat, police recovered the body of an unidentified woman from beside a road on Saturday.

The 35-year-old woman was probably strangled, police said.

They said, being informed a team of Joypurhat Sadar police recovered the body from roadside at Belamla village under Joypurhat Sadar upazila at around 11.3.am, reports our Dinajpur correspondent.

OC of Joypurhat Sadar said criminals might have dumped the body there after killing her.

Meanwhile, a housewife, who attempted to kill herself on December 22, died at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) on Saturday.

The deceased was identified as Papia, 20, wife of Sabuj Ali, a resident of Fakirabad area in Mirpur upazila of Kushtia district.

The deceased's father Abbas Miah, a resident of Mallikpara area of the same upazila, said Papia had an altercation with her husband Sabuj over going to her friend's house on December 22.

Later, she in a huff with her husband attempted to kill herself by hanging from the ceiling of her room on that day.

## Indian girl sent back home

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Kushtia

An Indian girl who was jailed for six months for illegally entering Bangladesh following love affair with a Bangladeshi youth was sent back to her country yesterday.

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) handed over the 20-year-old girl, to Indian Border Security Forces (BSF) at Darshana border in Chuadanga district at noon.

Later, BSF handed over the girl to her family.

According to Kushtia police, daughter of Horsho Mondol of Shikarpur in Morutia PS under Nadia district in Paschim Banga came to Bangladesh to marry Amzad Hossain of Dharmadah village in Daulatpur upazila of Kushtia district.

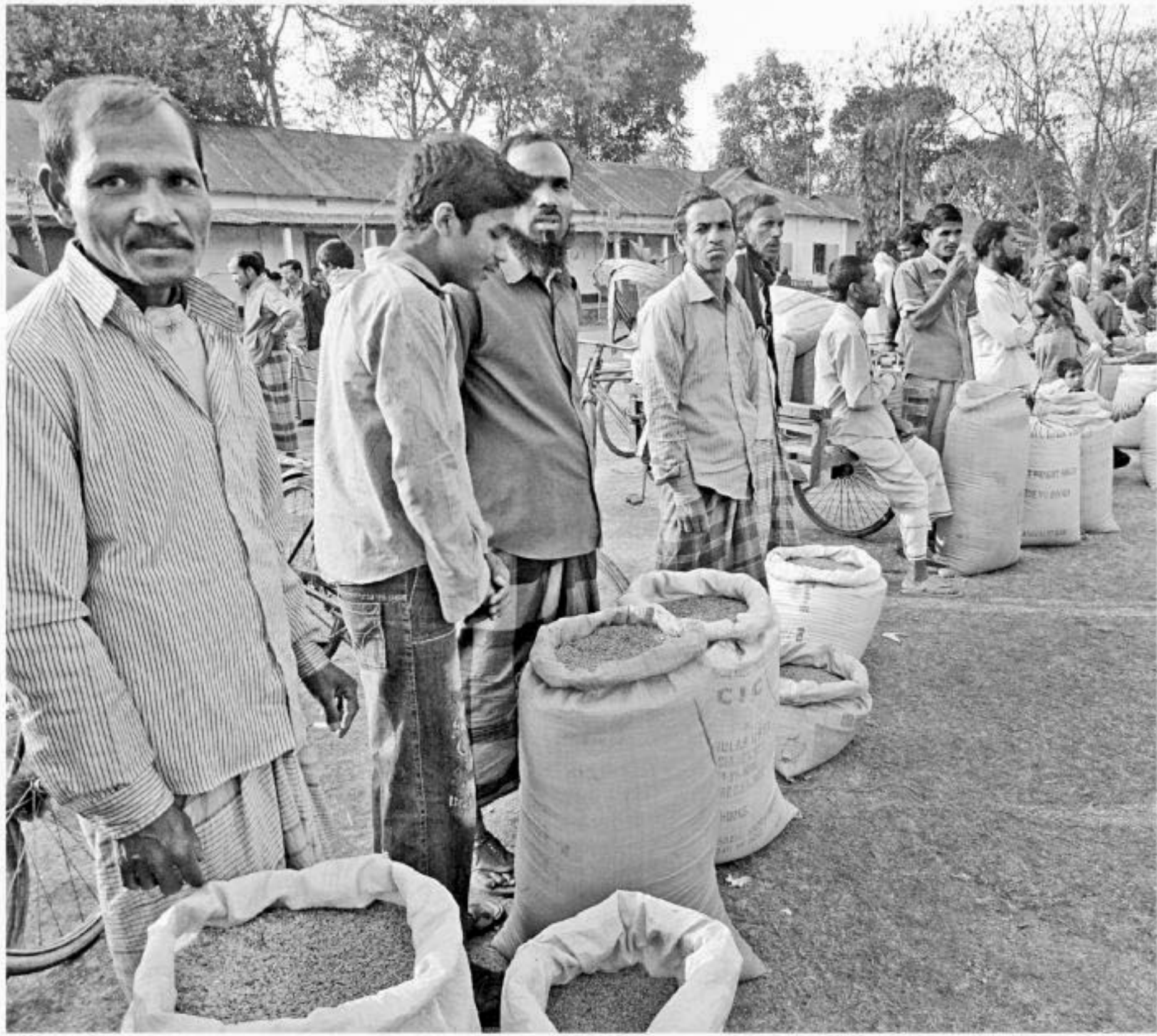


PHOTO: STAR

Farmers wait for paddy buyers at Durakuti Haat in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila. The prices of the paddy marked fall in the last three weeks.

# Farmers upset as paddy sells below production cost

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Lalmonirhat

Farmers are upset as they are selling paddy at prices below the production cost at local markets.

One maund of paddy (one maund equal 40 kg) is being sold at Tk 650-70 in five upazilas of the district.

These farmers had sold paddy at Tk 750 to Tk 780 a maund in the local markets only three weeks back.

They are now compelled to sell paddy at low rates as they have no alternative way to arrange money to cultivate boro paddy and other crops in the ongoing season.

Farmer Azizul Islam, 48, of Saptana village in Sadar upazila who came to Nababherhat for selling five maunds of paddy said he had to sell paddy at low price as he needs money to grow boro paddy and vegetables.

"I have sold five maunds of paddy for Tk 3250 a the rate of Tk 650 a maund. I am

really upset as the price is below my production cost," he said.

Like him, farmers Ashraf Ali, 52, of Nhatibari village, Nur Islam, 48, of Kulaghat village and Dhirendra Nath Barmon, 55, of Harati village in Sadar upazila were upset over the present price of paddy.

"One maund of paddy is sold between Tk 650- 670 in the local markets, whereas the production cost of each maund was between Tk 700 and 750," said Ashraf Ali.

"I came to Furakuti Haat for selling 10 maunds of paddy. I thought I would get Tk 7,800 to 8,000 but I sold the paddy for only Tk 6,500 as the market price is fell sharply in the last three weeks," said Rajob Ali Sarker, 62, a farmer of Karnapur village.

Visiting different markets, this correspondent found farmers waiting for hours with their productions for customers.

A few were seen purchasing paddy despite low prices.

Buyer Pappu Mia of Roypara area in Lalmonirhat town said, "I bought one maund of paddy at Tk 650.

Mahir Ali, a big merchant of Haribhangaa area in the town said that they were not interested to purchase paddy from the markets as they import rice from India at reasonable rate.

"We supply imported Indian rice to the local markets," he said.

Deputy Director (DD) of Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Lalmonirhat Safayet Hossain said, growers will lose interest in farming paddy if they are deprived of fair prices.

He stressed an appropriate market policy for farmers' agri produces so that essential and seasonal crops are cultivated properly, he said.



PHOTO: STAR

A motorbike crossing the damaged bridge of Pirojpur-Lahuri road at Jhanjhaniya village in Pirojpur Sadar upazila.

# Bridge damaged 4 yrs ago still awaits repair

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Pirojpur

An important bridge on Pirojpur-Lahuri road at Jhanjhaniya village in Sadar upazila which got damaged over four years ago, still awaits repair, causing immense sufferings to the local people.

For the last three months, it has become almost unfit for use as a portion of the bridge got developed a big hole, said locals.

After the fresh damage,

no three-wheelers except for motorbikes can cross the bridge, said Zakir Hossain, a battery-run auto driver of the area.

Despite repeated pleas, the authorities are yet to take any steps to renovate the damaged bridge, said Abdul Jalil, a resident of the village.

As there is no railing in the sloppy bridge, local people, especially women and children, have to cross it amid risk of accident everyday, he said.

Thousands of people

in Kalibari and Lahuri under the area use the road for reaching Pirojpur town.

People of Ghop and Chingrakhal areas in Morelganj upazila of Bagerhat district also use the road to come to Pirojpur as it is the nearest town for them, said villagers.

Contacted, Pirojpur LGED sub-assistant engineer Subash Chandra Malakar said, the construction work of the bridge will start soon.

## SNIPPETS

### Elephant from India kills man

UNB, Netrakona

A man was killed by an elephant at Kamarkhali village in Durgapur upazila of the district on Sunday morning. The deceased was identified as Chand Miah, 55, a resident of the area. Police said a herd of six elephants came down the hills of Meghalaya state of India and stormed the village. The elephants attacked Chand around 5:30am while he was going to mosque for saying Fajr prayers, leaving him dead on the spot. On Information, police rushed to spot and frightened elephants away to the border hills with the help of local people.

### Robber held, arms seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Police arrested an alleged robber with a foreign-made pistol at Lohagara village in Debiganj upazila of Panchagarh on Sunday night. The arrestee is Md Amanullah, 35, son of Kijmat Ali of Khalpara in Thakurgaon municipality area. Chairman of Dandapal union parishad of Debiganj upazila Asgar Ali told this correspondent over cell phone that Shahed Ali, 35, son of Abdul Gafur of Lohagara village was coming from Kaliganj Bazar on Debiganj-Bahadur Bazar road at about 9:30pm. When Shahed reached near his house, a gang of robbers numbering 4/5 intercepted him to snatch his bike and money. At one stage, the robbers stabbed Shahed's hand with sharp weapon. Hearing his screams, local people encircled the gang and detained Amanullah and recovered a foreign-made pistol with six bullets while the other robbers fled with Shahed's motor-bike. Early yesterday, Shahed's motor-bike was found abandoned alongside Debiganj-Bahadur Bazar Road at Chengthi Hazeradanga village in the same upazila.

### Jamaat leaders denied bail

UNB, Sylhet

A court here on Sunday rejected the bail petitions of three Jamaat-e-Islami leaders, including its Sylhet metropolitan unit ameer Ehsanul Mahbub Jubayed in a case filed in connection with the killing of Bangladesh Chhatra League leader Jagot Jyoti Talukder. Senior Judicial Magistrate Shahedul Karim passed the order when Ehsanul Mahbub Jubayed along with two other accused appeared before the court seeking bail. Jagot Jyoti was stabbed by miscreants on March 2 and later he succumbed to his injuries at Osmani Medical College Hospital (OMCH).

## Eyes on 5 priority areas

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and information and communications technology sector, and maritime affairs.

China also proposed signing a free-trade agreement (FTA) and emphasised importing jute and jute-goods from Bangladesh, Ali said.

He said Bangladesh would look into the proposal for the free-trade agreement.

Regarding China's assurance of standing by Bangladesh during its emergency needs, the foreign minister said Wang wanted to mean that China would always remain a "partner in economic cooperation" with Bangladesh.

He said, "Fruitful discussions have taken place with the Chinese foreign minister regarding setting up a specialised economic trade zone for China in Bangladesh as per an MoU signed between the two countries."

Renewing China's commitment to provide assistance in infrastructure development of the country, the Chinese minister has also expressed interest in moving a part of the goods production capacity surplus of China into Bangladesh, Ali said.

He said Bangladesh agreed with China to quickly construct the proposed tunnel under the Karnaphuli river.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has invited Chinese President Xi Jinping to visit Bangladesh next year, marking the 40 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries, sources at the foreign ministry said.

During Xi's likely visit, the foundation stone of the tunnel could be laid. Bangladesh has already signed an MoU with China

for the \$1.2 billion project.

China also assured Bangladesh of membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Ali said.

The minister said Bangladesh urged China to invest more to reduce the trade imbalance, which is about \$7 billion.

China also responded positively to Bangladesh's proposal for a road from Chittagong to Kunming via Cox's Bazar and Myanmar, he said.

The foreign minister said Bangladesh wants to strengthen relations with Myanmar since the proposed road would go through its territory. Replying to a query, he said India has no reservations regarding the road.

"We have also urged China to form a joint working group and bilateral investment forum related to industries and commerce. Chinese foreign minister welcomed it," Mahmood Ali said.

About Chinese interest in the construction of the deep-seaport in Sonadia, the foreign minister claimed that no discussion took place over the issue during Wang's visit.

Replying to another query, the foreign minister claimed that Wang did not ask for any political consensus between the Awami League and the BNP during his meeting with BNP chief Khaleda Zia.

"He [Wang] spoke about peaceful solution to any problem through dialogue and by 'peaceful' he meant non-violent ways," he claimed.

During his visit, Wang also met President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, and Leader of the Opposition Raushan Ershad.