

Re-open Chilahati-Holdibari transit route

Demand people of 3 northern districts to ease communication with India

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

People of Nilphamari, Panchagarh and Thakurgaon districts want early re-opening of Chilahati-Holdibari transit route for their convenient journey to and from India, especially against the backdrop of Indian premier Narendra Modi's recent visit to Bangladesh.

This route had been in use till 2002, facilitating a good number of people to travel to and from India daily.

But in June 2002, Indian authorities unilaterally decided to close their

Holdibari land customs station on the other side of the border in Cooch Bihar district of West Bengal, 22 kilometres from Chilahati land customs station in Nilphamari district, making Chilahati-Holdibari transit route virtually inoperative.

Since then, people of Nilphamari, Panchagarh and Thakurgaon districts requiring travel to India have to cover a long distance to Burimari land customs station in Lalmonirhat district to go to Chengra Bandha land customs station in India for formalities for the purpose.

"When I visited India last year, businessmen of Jalpaiguri district in West Bengal expressed the need of reopening Chilahati-Holdibari transit route," said Mostofa Azad Babu, president of Rangpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Assistant commissioner of customs in Nilphamari, Muhibur Islam Bhuiyan said they formally sent messages to their Indian counterpart several times in last couple of years, asking for resuming transit operations through the route but the latter did not respond.

A large number of

Bangladeshi citizens from the area go to India every year for study, treatment, business, visiting relatives and other purposes, sources said.

Re-opening of Chilahati-Holdibari transit route has become all the more essential for trade, tourism and other purposes as Indian premier Narendra Modi's recent visit to Bangladesh helped enhance mutual co-operation between the two countries, said Abdul Wahed Sarker, president of Nilphamari Chamber of Commerce and Industries.



PHOTO: STAR

The land customs station at Chilahati in Domar upazila under Nilphamari district has remained virtually inoperative, depriving people of Nilphamari, Panchagarh and Thakurgaon districts of short travel to and from India after the Indian authorities closed Holdibari land customs station in their part in 2002.

CASE FOR VANDALISING VEHICLES DURING BLOCKADE

Charges pressed against 26 Tangail BNP men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Charges have been pressed against 26 leaders and activists of BNP and its associate bodies in the case for vandalising vehicles at Ghatail upazila headquarters in January this year.

Sub-Inspector Tajul Islam, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet

to Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court, Tangail, on May 15. The court accepted the charge sheet on June 11 and Ghatail police disclosed it to local newsmen on Monday.

BNP Ghatail upazila unit general secretary Rezaul Karim, organising secretary Shamim Khan, Ghatail municipality unit general secretary Faruk Hossain, organising secretary

Shamim Sarker, Jubo Dal Gatail upazila unit president Rafiqul Islam Dulal, and municipality unit president Shahidul Islam Bhuiyan, are among the accused.

According to the case statement, the leaders and activists of the upazila unit of BNP and its associate bodies vandalised a good number of vehicles at Ghatail College intersection

during the blockade enforced by BNP-led 20-party alliance on January 11.

Rajob Ali, the then Sub-Inspector of Ghatail Police station, filed a case the same day, accusing 89 leaders and activists of BNP and its associate bodies.

After investigation, IO Tajul Islam submitted a charge sheet to the court against 26 out of 89 accused.



PHOTO: STAR

Stick holding villagers including a good number of women get ready to prevent some people's attempt to occupy a piece of land at Radhanagar village in Srimangal upazila under Moulvibazar district yesterday. Inset, the car of Syed Liakat Ali, brother of Social Welfare Minister Syed Mohsin Ali, got damaged during a clash between the villagers and the alleged land grabbers.



Indefinite transport strike in Sylhet

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

An indefinite transport strike began in Sylhet district yesterday, protesting toll hike on MA Khan Bridge and alleged harassment by police on highways.

Long distance buses, trucks, oil tankers and covered vans went off the roads in the district yesterday.

Zila Sarak Paribahan Sramik Union, Truck and Covered-van Sramik Union and Tank-lorry Sramik Union jointly enforced the strike.

District Transport Workers' Union President Selim Ahmed said the authorities concerned have increased toll for crossing MA Khan Bridge from Tk 35 to Tk 100 without prior notice.

Besides, transport workers are often detained on false charges and harassed by the highway police in the name of checking licence, he alleged.

"We have been compelled to enforce the strike as the authorities concerned ignored our repeated complaints, Selim said, adding that they would continue the strike until the issues were resolved, Selim said.

Dilu Mia, president of Truck and Covered-van Sramik Union, and Abdul Gafur, general secretary of the union, said they submitted a memorandum to the deputy commissioner of Sylhet on Monday, demanding an end to their harassment.

22 held while returning from India illegally

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole, Jessore

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) arrested 22 Bangladeshis while they were returning home from India through Gatipara border under Benapole Port Police Station without passports early yesterday.

Tajul Islam, sub-inspector of Benapole Port Police Station, said a team of the border guards, acting on a tip-off, conducted a drive in the area around 12:30am and detained 10 women, eight men and four children.

BGB arrested the Bangladeshis while they were entering the country without valid documents, the SI added. The arrestees hail from different upazilas of Barisal and Jhalakathi districts.

BGB personnel later handed them over to Benapole Port Police Station. A case was filed with the police station in this connection.

Housewife commits suicide

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhalakathi

A housewife committed suicide at Nikathi village under Jhalakathi Sadar upazila yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Jahanara Begum Nupur, 35, wife of Jahangir Hossain of Chandkathi village in the upazila.

Following an altercation with her husband over a trivial matter, Jahanara, mother of four children, came to her father's house at Naikathi village in the upazila four months ago.

Police quoted family members as saying that she committed suicide by hanging herself from the ceiling at the house.

2 kids drown

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Two minor girls drowned in a pond at Arenga village in Beanibazar upazila of Sylhet on Monday.

The deceased were identified as Jobaida Rahman, 5, daughter of Abdul Rahman, and Fahima Begum, 7, daughter of Abdul Kadir.

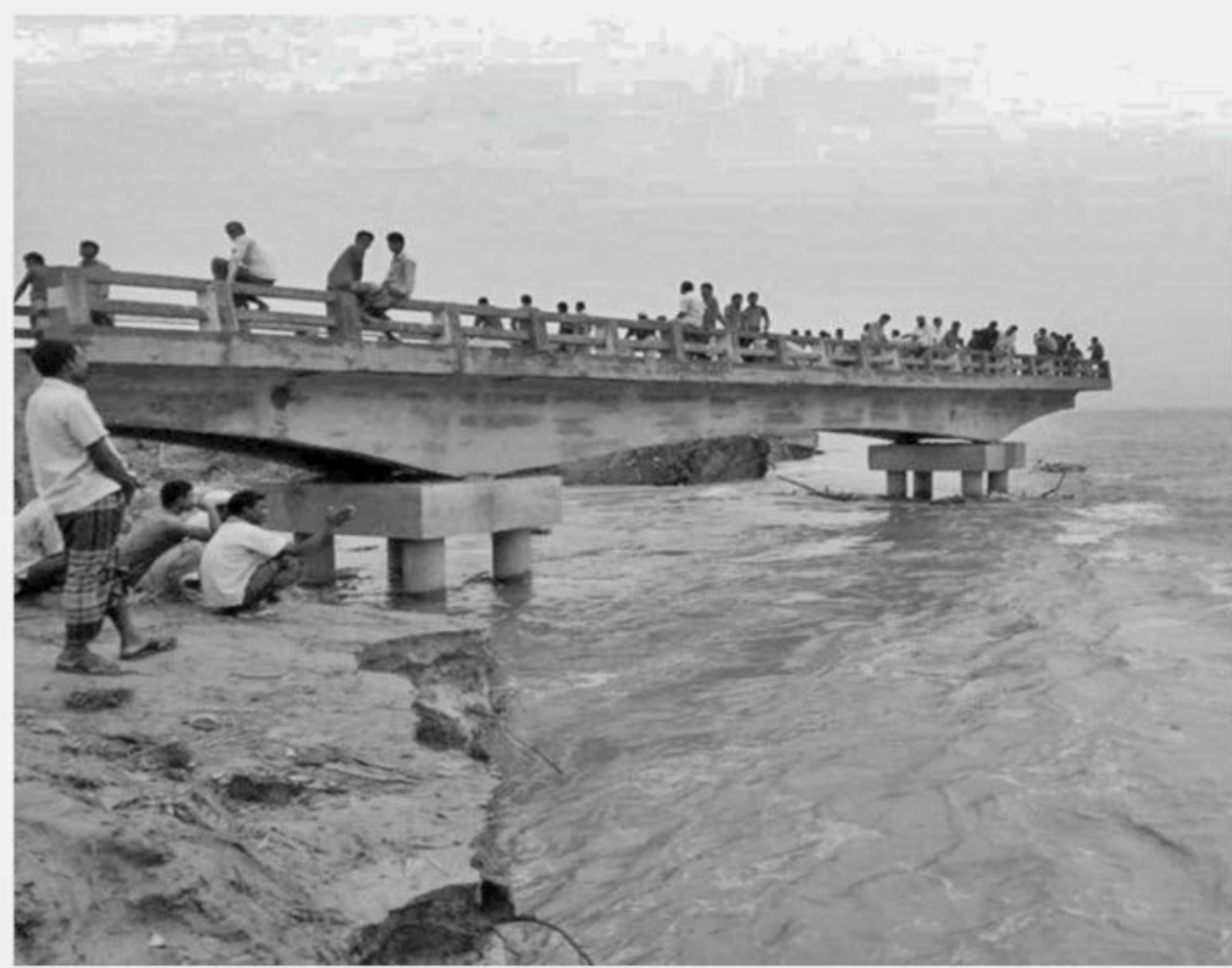


PHOTO: STAR

This bridge over a tributary of the Jamuna River in Khaskaunia union of Chowhali upazila under Pabna district collapsed on Monday due to the pressure of water from the swelling river that also eroded a large number of dwelling houses and vast croplands in the area during the last few days.

Jamuna devours over 500 homesteads in Sirajganj

Flood situation in Gaibandha, Bogra remains unchanged

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Erosion by the Jamuna River took a serious turn in Chowhali upazila of Sirajganj district in the last seven days, devouring over 500 homesteads, reports our Pabna correspondent.

A bridge at Brac intersection in Khaskaunia union collapsed due to unusual pressure of water on Monday afternoon, said Md Rafikul Islam alias Gani Mollah, chairman of the union parishad, adding that over 100 houses were eroded by the river on the day.

At least 10 educational institutions went into the river while 20 others face erosion threat, said Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Rezaul Bari.

Despite repeated pleas, Water Development Board (WDB) authorities are yet to take any remarkable steps to check the erosion, said Abdul Latif, a resident of

Khaskaunia village.

Contacted, the UNO said they have already informed the authorities concerned about the matter.

Meanwhile, the flood situation in the district remained static.

However, the river was flowing 13.23 centimetres above the danger mark yesterday.

The floodwater entered the low lying areas of Sadar, Chowhali, Belkuchi and Shahzadpur upazilas, causing immense sufferings to the villagers.

"We are taking steps to repair the vulnerable point," said Sirajganj WDB Executive Engineer Sayed Hasan Imam.

According to our Gaibandha correspondent, the flood situation in the district remained unchanged although the River Brahmaputra was flowing above the danger mark yesterday.

On the other hand, a vast

tract of croplands went under water in four upazilas.

At least 365 flood-hit families are facing for acute crisis of safe drinking water and dry food.

Meanwhile, the Jamuna erosion left at least 140 families in Fazlupur union homeless yesterday, said locals.

In Bogra, the flood situation at 15 villages in two upazilas of the district improved as the water of the Jamuna started receding yesterday, reports our correspondent.

The flood-hit people, who took shelter on roads and embankment, are suffering for acute crisis of safe drinking water and dry food.

Contacted, Shariakandi Upazila Nirbahi Officer Shakil Mahmud said 13 metric tons of rice have been distributed among 1000 families in the area.



PHOTO: STAR

Villagers render voluntary service to build a 180-foot-long wooden bridge over the Ghagot River in Sundarganj upazila under Gaibandha district to ease their communication.

Villagers join hands to build wooden bridge

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

People of two villages have joined hands for construction of a wooden bridge over the River Ghagot to ease road communication between Gaibandha and Rangpur districts.

Villagers of Satgiri in Sundarganj upazila of Gaibandha and Emadpur in Mithapukur upazila of Rangpur collected donation and gave other inputs to build the bridge for restoring road communication with Rangpur divisional headquarters.

Especially during the

monsoon, the villagers suffer much as they have to cross the river by banana tree raft amid risk.

Students are the main sufferers as they cannot attend classes regularly, said locals.

One Mojibar Rahman Master of Satgiri village played pioneer role in construction of a 180 feet long bridge across the river.

He encouraged villagers of both sides and started working for construction.

The villagers willingly came forward to supply wood, bamboo, wire and nails to build

the bridge.

"It is really a hard task to build the bridge on self help basis," said Mojibar Rahman, convener of the bridge implementation committee, adding that it needed Tk about 3 lakh.

Thousands of people can go to Rangpur divisional headquarters for business, official works and better treatment if the construction work of the bridge is completed, he said.

Mojibar hoped that construction of the bridge will be completed within next 15 days.