



Road users try to rescue a bogged jeep on the Jaintapur-Jaflong road yesterday.

Eid enjoyment lost in the potholes of Jaflong Road

MINITU DESHWARA,
Moulvibazar

Thousands of tourists from across Bangladesh visit Sylhet's scenic Jaflong during Eid holidays every year, but this year many could not reach their intended destination due to the poor condition of the road. Hundreds of sightseers and travellers found themselves stranded, facing a 17 km stretch of the Jaintapur-Jaflong road that has remained in a state of disrepair for many years, with the condition of the road progressively deteriorating. When this correspondent visited the area yesterday he saw up to 90 vehicles stopped for four hours due

to the road's condition. Currently Jaflong-bound vehicles face regular tailbacks in the Mamardukan area. Md. Akther-uz-zaman, a government official posted in Bogra, wanted to visit Jaflong with family, but could not get there due to the damaged road. "I won't come to Jaflong again," he said, "This experience has spoiled my family's enjoyment of Eid." Eight local organisations have demanded immediate renovation of the road which also serves as an important transportation route for quarried stones and sand. Over 2000 trucks ply the road every day, estimated truck driver Jahangir.

Minhaj Uddin, a leader of the Jaflong Bollaghat Pathor Bebsayee Samity, one of the organisations, observed that the heavy downpours of the season can only damage the road further and aggravate suffering. "We have submitted memos to the roads and bridges minister, finance minister, state minister for finance and planning, and local lawmaker Imran Ahmed, to repair this important road, but no positive step has been taken yet," said Hazi Azir Uddin, president of the Jaflong Truck Malik Samity. People of Guainghat upazila joined the programmes of the local organisations to press

demand for urgent road repair. The situation also greatly affects local residents. "The road has numerous potholes and during monsoon season becomes too muddy," said Borla village resident Ismail Hossain. "It is especially a problem for students trying to get to and from their schools." Moreover, after sunset using the road is fraught with added risk. Contacted, Iftekhar Kabir, superintending engineer of roads and highways in Sylhet, said a Japanese-funded project to improve the road has been pending with the planning ministry for months, awaiting approval.



Jute is on sale at Nababerhaat in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila. Farmers in the district are happy as they are getting good prices of the cash crop.

Good prices bring smile to Lalmonirhat jute growers

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Farmers in Lalmonirhat are happy as they are getting good prices of jute in the local markets this year. Jute production in the district fell by around 50 percent due to heavy rain during the growing stage, said farmers and agriculture officials. Farmers said they are getting Tk 2,500 to Tk 2,700 for one maund of jute, while the price was only Tk 700 to Tk 800 last year. Due to loss from jute farming last year, many farmers didn't cultivate the crop this year, they added. "I got only 15 maunds of jute fiber from two bigas of land this year, though I got 30 maunds last year from the same land," jute grower Iman Ali,

48, of Khatamari village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila said, adding that he got only Tk 21 thousand for 30 maunds of jute last year, but he got Tk 39 thousand for 15 maunds this year. Sources in the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Lalmonirhat said jute was grown on only 4,263 hectares of land in the district this year, whereas it was 6,763 hectares last year. Nesarul Islam, 55, a farmer at Bongram village, said he cultivated jute on four bigas of land last year, but grew it on only two bigas this year. "I have already earned Tk 13 thousand from selling 5 maunds of jute, and I am hoping to earn Tk 27 to Tk 28 thousand from selling the rest 11

maunds," he said. Nazrul Islam, 60, a farmer at Doljor village of Aditmari upazila, said they spend Tk 5 to Tk 6 thousand for jute farming on one biga of land. "Jute farming is profitable, if we get market price of over Tk 1,500 per maund," he added. Jute trader Abdus Sattar of Lalmonirhat town said jute price has increased in the local market due to high demand and inadequate supply. "There is high demand for jute fibers due to usage of jute products across the country," he said. Deputy director of DAE in Lalmonirhat, Safayet Hossain, said if the present market price remains farmers will get more interest in growing jute next year.

Magura BNP leader held in arson case

UNB, Magura

Detectives here on Sunday arrested a BNP leader in connection with the arson attack that claimed the lives of five workers at Moghirdal on the Magura-Jessore highway in Sadar upazila in March this year. The arrestee is Mizanur Rahman, publicity secretary of the district unit of BNP. Assistant superintendent of Police Sudarshan Kumar Ray said acting on a tip-off, a team of DB police raided Ichhakhada Bazar area and arrested Mizanur on Sunday afternoon.

On March 21, nine sand workers suffered burn injuries in a petrol bomb attack on a truck at Moghirdal on the highway in Sadar upazila during the three-month blockade programme enforced by BNP-led 20-party alliance. They were admitted to the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital where five of them succumbed to their injuries. A case was filed against 26 leaders and activists in connection with the attack. Mizanur, accused in the case, remained absconding since the incident, said Officer-in-Charge Munsir Asaduzzaman.

Four jailed for stalking in Comilla

UNB, Comilla

A mobile court on Monday night sentenced four teenage boys to three months' imprisonment for teasing some young girls at Ashkanta village in Sadar Dakkhin upazila. The identities of the stalkers could not be known immediately. Prashanta Kumar Pal, officer-in-charge of Sadar Dakkhin Police Station, said police in a drive arrested 15 people on charge of stalking the girls at Ashkanta village. Of them, 11 were released as their parents took them back after signing a bond. Later, the rest four boys were produced before a mobile court, led by Upazila Nirbahi Officer Abdul Awal, which punished them.

Schoolgirl raped in Jessore

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Benapole, Jessore

A schoolgirl was raped allegedly by a neighbour at Rajnagar village in Keshabpur upazila of Jessore district yesterday. Mahtab Uddin, officer-in-charge of Keshabpur Police Station, said Kaizar Islam, 24, son of Rafiqul Islam of Nepakathi, took the girl to a nearby jute field at night and raped her. The victim is a Class VIII student of Rajnagar Baka Barshi High School. After the incident, Kaizar confined the girl to his residence. On information, police raided the house, rescued the girl and arrested the rapist. A case was filed with Keshabpur Police Station against the rapist.

Man arrested with heroin in Rajshahi

UNB, Rajshahi

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) in a drive arrested a man with 100 grams of heroin worth about Tk 5.5 lakh at Hazir More in Godagari upazila of the district on Monday. The arrestee was identified as Azam Uddin, 40, son of late Mozammel Haque of Manikchak area in the upazila. A case was filed in this connection, said BGB Nayek Subedar Selim.

Patuakhali govt colleges face acute shortage of teachers

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Patuakhali

Academic activities in the two government colleges of Patuakhali are being hampered due to an acute shortage of teachers. 32 out of 94 posts in Patuakhali Government College and 20 out of 48 posts in Patuakhali Government Women's College have been vacant for a long time, though they are the only government institutions in the district to provide higher education. Patuakhali Government College, set up in 1957 and nationalised in 1969, has over 12,000 students from intermediate to master's level. A total of 16 subjects in honours and 14 subjects at master's level are taught. Pranes Kanti Sikder, the principal of the college, was transferred on February 25

this year. The post has been vacant since. The numbers of vacant posts of teachers are five in the chemistry department, four in soil science, three in botany, two each in Bangla, English, economics, history, philosophy, accounting, biology and management, and one each in political science, physics and computer science. Newly admitted students in intermediate class for the 2015-16 academic year and their guardians are worried about the academic progress of students because of teachers shortage. Jalal Ahmed, a guardian, said this college was renowned in the area. The authorities should take steps to fill the vacancies considering the future of thousands of students. Joydev Sajjol, acting principal of the college, said

"We informed the authorities about the issue but in vain." It is very difficult to run all classes as we are facing an acute crisis of teachers, he added. Patuakhali Government Women's College, set up in 1966 and nationalised in 1979, is the only government women's college in the district town. Girls from remote areas and poor families get the opportunity to get higher education at the college. About 5,000 female students study here. In addition to the problem of many vacant posts, teachers also face an accommodation crisis as there is no dormitory in the college. Khondaker Oliul Islam, principal of the college, said "We sent several letters to the higher authorities to fill the vacant posts, without result."



People cross the Halta River in a boat at Amua point in Kathalia upazila of Jhalakathi as the steel bridge, which collapsed three years ago at the point, still lies without repair.

Damaged steel bridge lies without repair for 3 years

M JAHIRUL ISLAM JEWEL,
Jhalakathi

Thousands of people have been suffering a lot as the steel bridge over the Halta River, which collapsed at Amua port of Kathalia upazila in 2012, has remained without repair. The 105 meter-long iron bridge connects Chaltabunia union of Bamna upazila in Barguna with Amua port of Kathalia in Jhalakathi. It was constructed over Halta River in 1992 and financed by the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) of Jhalakathi, according to a source in the LGED office. The bridge was first repaired in 2002 and again

in 2007, said the source. It collapsed in June 2012 when it was hit by a loaded cargo ship, said Golam Mustafa, a resident of the area. Thousands of people used the bridge everyday but now they have to cross the river by ferry, he added. Students suffer the most because of the broken bridge, said Ferdous Jomaddar, a teacher of Amua Madrasa. "I am afraid of boarding the ferry as I don't know how to swim," said Afsana Mimi a student of Nursery Class of Amua Kindergarten School. "We have to use the ferry to cross the river but the boatman keeps us standing for more fare, which often makes us late for classes,"

said Salma Aktar a student of Class XI of Amua Degree College. No attempt has been made to repair the bridge since 2012, said local people. A group of musclemen control the ghat and the ferries and earn a lot of money, they added. Thousands of people went to Amua Bazar crossing the bridge. They have to suffer a lot to reach the bazar after collapse of the bridge, said Sabuj Golder, a businessman of Amua. Though people suffer a lot due to the lack of a bridge, there is no project now for construction of another bridge at the site, said Fulkam Badshah, senior assistant engineer of Jhalakathi LGED office.



Risking their lives, passengers on the Lalmonirhat-Burimari route travel on the train roof for lack of space in the carriages. This photo was taken from Lalmonirhat station yesterday.