

DHELAPIR LEVEL CROSSING IN SAIDPUR

No gateman even after last month's fatal accident

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Over three weeks after the fatal accident that killed four policemen and left seven others injured, Dhelapir rail crossing in Parbatipur-Saidpur railway section near Saidpur railway station in the district still remains without gate or gateman.

The casualties occurred on the night of August 15 when a patrol van carrying the policemen crashed, being hit by Dhaka bound intercity Nilsagar Express train at the open level crossing.

The Bangladesh Railway (BR) and the police formed separate inquiry committees after the incident and

both focused on the vulnerability of the level crossing.

Thousands of people and vehicles have to cross the point daily as two well-known markets, Dhelapir Haat and Porar Haat, are situated on its two sides, which also comprises a residential area.

Dhelapir rail crossing has remained without gate and gateman since 1985 when the then government sent a large number of railway officers and employees to retirement under 'golden handshake' programme, said railway sources in Saidpur and locals.

Chairman of concerned Botlagari union parishad of Saidpur upazila Saidur Rahman said, "After the

accident at Dhelapir rail crossing on August 15, I submitted an application to Khairul Alam, general manager of West Zone of BR, to set up a gate and appoint a gateman but there is no response till now."

Visiting the spot on Saturday noon, this correspondent found a railway department's signboard on its both sides warning people to cross the rail gate at own responsibility.

The area is surrounded with bamboo clusters and bushy trees that create obstacle for passers-by and vehicle drivers to see approaching trains.

Tohidul Islam, senior assistant engineer of railway works department at

Saidpur, said many unsafe rail crossings were created as Roads and Highways Department and Local Government and Engineering Department built roads through the rail tracks without approval from the railway authorities.

Shawkat Jamil, divisional transport officer of West Zone of BR at Pakshi, said the department identified risky crossings in 54-km long Parbatipur-Chilahati railway section and those include Dhelapir rail crossing.

"We've started development work at the risky spots which is likely to be completed by June 2017. Posting of gatemen at the crossings is underway," he added.



PHOTO: STAR

Dhelapir level crossing near Saidpur railway station in Nilphamari district has remained without any gate and gatemen for years. Even after last month's fatal accident that claimed lives of four policemen and left seven others injured, the authorities' responsibility so far remains limited to keeping a signboard with a warning message, set earlier.

Waterlogging, pest attacks wreak havoc on chilli fields

Production fall in six western districts leads to its price hike

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

Waterlogging due to excessive rain coupled with massive pest attacks has damaged most of the chilli plantations in several western districts this season, much to the sorrow of the farmers.

The drastic fall in production has led to price hike of the item considered as an essential cooking ingredient.

The damaged chilli fields include 9,335 hectares of land including 1745 hectares in Jessore, 1700 hectares in Jhenidah, 1450 hectares in Chuadanga, 1345 hectares in Magura, 1885 hectares in Kushtia, and 1210 hectares in Meherpur district, said

sources at the regional office of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Jessore.

Large quantities of chilli from the six districts find way to different areas including Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet, they said.

Around two months ago, chilli sold for Tk 40/50 per kg in the market, farmers said.

But the production has come down sharply due to waterlogging and pest attacks in the chilli fields.

"I have cultivated chilli on 66 decimals of land but I could harvest only 15 kg from 16 decimals. The rest have already been destroyed. I sold the item at Tk 190 a kg," said Ashrafal Islam of

Ganna village under Jhenidah Sadar upazila.

Nazrul Islam, a chilli grower of Dudshar village under Kotchandpur upazila, said he had cultivated chilli on three bighas of land this year but plants on two bighas have died.

"After buying chilli at the local market, I bring it to Karwan Bazar in Dhaka. Now it is selling for Tk 210/210 per kg there. Transport cost per kg stands at Tk 10," said Minto Shikdar, a chilli trader of Nagar Bathan Bazar under Sadar upazila.

Chilli plants on around 90% fields in the region have died due to excessive rain and pest attack, said the deputy director of DAE in Jhenidah.



PHOTO: STAR

A chilli field destroyed by excessive rainwater and pest attack at Nagar Bathan village in Jhenidah Sadar upazila.

Flood brings woe to fish farmers in Lalmonirhat

15 thousand affected as fish from 4,000 farms washed away

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Around 15 thousand fish farmers in five upazilas under the district are badly affected by the ongoing flood that washed away fishes from their 4,000 fish farms.

"We 110 landless farmers are dependent on fish farming in a 92-acre leased government water body at the village. But sudden onrush of water from the upstream overflowed the fish project area, washing away fishes," said Mahasin Ali at Dighaltari village of Aditmari upazila under the district.

"We took loan from NGOs for fish farming in the water body, but we have lost the investment due to the flood," said Nafir Uddin of the same village.

Noor Hossain, 55, of Char Kulaghat village in Lalmonirhat Sadar said he and five other fish farmers in the village cultivated fishes in a 10-acre pond with the money borrowed from a local NGO, but all fishes of the pond have been washed away.

"We are now worried about paying the loan with interest," he said.

Fisherman Nazrul Islam, 60, of Namuri village in Aditmari upazila said he and three partners had hoped to earn at least Tk 4



PHOTO: STAR

The ongoing flood has washed away this fish enclosure at Mogholhat village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila. Inset, a fish farmer in despair sits beside his flooded fish farm at Dighaltari village in Aditmari upazila under Lalmonirhat district.

lakh from fish farming in two ponds comprising eight acres of land but all the fishes have been washed away.

Fishes from 4,000 farms in the district have been

washed away by the recent flood, causing loss of about Tk 10 crore to at least 15 thousand fish farmers, said sources at the district fisheries office.

"I have already sent letter

in this regard to the office of the director general of fisheries department, seeking help for the flood affected fish farmers," said Latifur Rahman, district fisheries officer.

Man to die for murder in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A Mymensingh court yesterday sentenced a man to death for killing his neighbour over a land dispute in Tarakanda upazila in 2008.

The death penalty awardee is Md Sohel Khan, 35, of Panihata village in the upazila.

According to the prosecution, there had been a long-standing dispute between Monjurul Islam Khan, 45, of Panihata village and his neighbour Sohel Khan.

Sohel Khan and his men locked in an altercation with Monjurul over the issue on October 5, 2008. At one stage, they attacked Monjurul with sharp weapons, leaving him critically injured.

Monjurul was admitted to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital and died on way to Dhaka Medical College Hospital the same day.

Later, victim's younger brother Sadiqul Islam Khan filed a murder case with Tarakanda Police Station, accusing Sohel Khan and two others. Police investigated the incident and pressed charges against Sohel.

Schoolboy drowns in boat capsized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A schoolboy drowned when a boat capsized in the Kharia River in Phulpur upazila of the district yesterday.

The victim is Ujjal Miah, 9, son of Helal Uddin of Chhoto Sunay village in Phulpur, and a Class II student of a local primary school, police said.

Ujjal along with his father was crossing Kharia River by a small boat (dingy) on way to their relative's house at Hirondi village in Phulpur around 12:00 noon. Suddenly, the boat overturned and sank into the river, said Mazharul Haque, officer-in-charge of Phulpur Police Station.

Hearing the news, local people rushed to the spot and rescued Ujjal, but he died on way to Phulpur Upazila Health Complex, police said. The victim's father Helal swam ashore.

CASE FOR TORCHING POLLING CENTRES

2 JCD leaders sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

A court here yesterday sent two leaders of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) to jail in the cases for snatching ballot boxes and setting two polling centres on fire in Domar upazila of the district during the 10th parliamentary elections in January 2014.

They are Shahin Alam Santo, 26, and Mamunur Rashid Sajib Basunia, 25, president and general secretary of Domar upazila unit of JCD.

According to the cases, a group of BNP, Jamaat and JCD men led by Santo and Sajib snatched ballot boxes from the presiding

and polling officers of Dugdugi Borogachha government primary school centre and Dorgapara madrasa centre and later set the centres afire.

Presiding officers of the two voting centres filed cases against a good number of BNP, Jamaat and JCD men, including Santo and Sajib.

The two JCD leaders, who had been absconding since filing of the cases, surrendered to the Judicial Magistrate's Court yesterday and sought bail. Judicial Magistrate Samiul Islam rejected their bail prayers and sent them to jail.



PHOTO: STAR

Authorities prepare sandbags to drop on the bank to protect Puranbazar in Chandpur town from the erosion by the Meghna River yesterday.

9 Rangpur Shibir men held on subversion charge

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Police arrested nine activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir from a students' mess in Rangpur city yesterday on charge of planning subversive activities.

The arrestees are Abdul Quddus, 19, son of Nazir Hossain of Pulpar village under Ranisankail upazila in Thakurgaon district; Sultan Mahmud, 18, son of Abdur Rahman of Bhajaner Khamar village in Gaibandha Sadar upazila; Maruf Mian, 18, son of Khairul Islam of Balarampur village under

Palashbari upazila in Gaibandha district; Hasan Uddin, 18, son of late Abdul Jabbar of Mostafapur village under Palashbari upazila in Gaibandha district; Masud Rana, 18, son of Rafiqul Islam of Deodoba village under Sundarganj upazila in Gaibandha district; Mosaddek Hossain, 18, son of Abdus Sattar of Jahanabad-Bazarpara village under Parbatipur upazila in Dinajpur district; Anisur Rahman, 18, son of Jonab Uddin of Ajtari-Neoashi village under Nageshwari upazila in Kurigram district; Mahfuzur Rahman, 18, son of

Nowsher Ali of Chhayanipara village under Ulipur upazila in Kurigram district; and Arif Hossain, 18, son of Wazed Ali of Madhupur village under Kishoreganj upazila of Nilphamari district.

Md Abdul Quader Jilani, officer-in-charge of Rangpur Kotwali Police Station, said, law enforcers, acting on a tip-off, raided the students' mess in Luckypara area in the city and arrested the Shibir activists while they were holding a 'secret' meeting. Police took them into custody for primary interrogation, the OC added.