

PHOTO: STAR

People use this bridge to cross Pakhimara canal in Kalapara upazila under Patuakhali district as locals have made it somewhat usable by setting wooden planks partially covering the iron structure. The contractor assigned by the Local Government Engineering Department has failed to complete the bridge reconstruction work within the stipulated time.

# Tired of waiting for bridge repair

Villagers work by hand to make it usable

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Locals through their voluntary service have made usable a bridge on Pakhimara canal under Kalapara upazila, after getting tired of long wait get for the work to be done by the authorities.

The 400-foot-long bridge made of wooden sleepers set on an iron structure on Pakhimara canal in Nilganj union under Kalapara upazila facilitated communication of over 15,000 people of Pakhimara, Alempur, Baintala, Kumirmara, Chotokumirmara and

Majidpur villages with Kalapara upazila town, locals said.

But the bridge, badly damaged by super cyclone Sidr in 2007 and again by Aila in 2009, became totally unfit for use, much to the sufferings of locals, especially vegetables growers and students.

In response to locals' demand, the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) in middle of 2014 took a project to reconstruct the bridge.

Suresh Chandra as contractor started the construc-

tion work one and a half years ago and LGED already sanctioned Tk 22 lakh to set up an iron structure where wooden sleepers would be set.

But the contractor has failed to complete even the iron structure in one and a half years, making the locals lose patience.

Finally villagers led by Md Kamal Hossain, member of the local union parishad (UP), arranged setting wooden planks on a portion (horizontally) of the bridge.

Now the bridge has become usable, although

only for walking, after setting up wooden sleepers on it, said the UP member.

Hundreds of vegetable growers regularly use the bridge to carry their produce for sale while a good number of students use it for going to schools, he said.

This correspondent tried to communicate with contractor Suresh Chandra several times through mobile but he did not receive the calls.

Abdul Mannan, Kalapara upazila LGED engineer, said they have asked the contractor concerned to complete the work in a short time.



PHOTO: STAR

Farmers sort newly harvested tomato at a field of Nayapara village in Sariakandi upazila under Bogra district. A good number of farmers in the area are now opting for profitable tomato cultivation.

# Tomatoes bring prosperity to Jamuna char villages, finally

MAMUN-UR-RASHID with ANDREW EAGLE

When the local farmers of Nayapara village, situated on Jamuna River char lands and part of Phulbari union in Bogra's Sariakandi upazila, exchanged paddy for tomato cultivation, they couldn't have imagined that the small red fruit, commonly eaten as a vegetable, would bring about a significant rise in family incomes that would even help them cover the cost of educating their children.

"We're having good days," says tomato grower Krisno Das, smiling. "When we sell our tomatoes in towns or in the capital, the profits are healthy." He says the success of tomato cultivation justifies the hard labour, with many local farmers working in their field dawn to dusk, and is contributing to poverty reduction in the area.

Sanaul Islam, 43, another of Nayapara's farmers says that in the

past he relied on his 3 bighas of land to grow paddy, but these days he also rents 46 decimals of land from a neighbour in exchange for 14 maunds of paddy per year. Two months ago he began tomato cultivation, planting 4,000 mintu tomato seedlings, as well as some other tomato types, across his own and the leased land.

He's spent around Tk 18,000 so far, he says, but has already sold Tk. 1.12 lakh at a rate of up to Tk. 800 per maund of tomatoes. Islam anticipates his plants will yield up to 50 maunds more. "I'm hopeful that our family will be better off," Islam says, "I have some loans to repay and then I want to cover the education expenses of my two daughters. The tomato crop should make it possible."

The Department of Agricultural Extension's Bogra office reports that 2,031 acres in 12 upazilas of the district are being dedicated to tomato cultivation, especially in

Dhunat and Sariakandi upazilas of the Jamuna basin.

According to one Nayapara villager, field level agriculture officials have been encouraging the tomato cultivation, in recognition of the profits to be made and the suitability of char lands for vegetable and tomato growing. They offer farmers regular advice on how to get the best harvests.

Indeed, agriculture officers in Sariakandi regard Nayapara as the best and largest vegetable and tomato cultivating village in the district.

But the situation hasn't always been so bright. Over the last two years due to political instability it was difficult for farmers to sell their tomato because wholesalers could not reach the village, which led to a minimal sale price for tomatoes if they could be sold at all. It is these difficulties from the past two years which make this year's tomato success something of a surprise, and so, so pleasing.

CASE FOR ATTACK ON NOOR'S MOTORCADE IN NILPHAMARI

# 23 more Jamaat-Shibir men land in jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

The Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court in the district ordered sending 23 more Jamaat-Shibir men to jail, rejecting bail prayer, after they surrendered to the court yesterday in the case for attack on the motorcade of Asaduzzaman Noor, the then lawmaker of Nilphamari-2 constituency, on December 14 in 2013.

The attackers on the motorcade of Asaduzzaman Noor, also present lawmaker and minister for cultural affairs, killed four activists of ruling Awami League's front organisations at Ramganj Haat of Tupamari union of Nilphamari Sadar upazila.

The investigation officer of the case, sub inspector

Mostafizur Rahman submitted charge sheet in Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court on March 15 accusing 207 people, all involved with the politics of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami and their front organisations.

Earlier, the same court sent 62 BNP-Jamaat men to jail, rejecting bail prayer, after they appeared before the court in the case.

Meanwhile, the prime accused Abu Helal, also general secretary of district unit of Jamaat-e-Islami, and the number two accused Khairul Anam, president of Sadar upazila unit of the same party, are still fugitive.

On the night of December 12 in 2013, several thousand BNP-Jamaat activists protesting the execution of war criminal

Jamaat's assistant secretary general Abdul Kader Molla attacked the houses of minority Hindu community in several villages of Polashbari and Laxmichap unions in Sadar upazila, mentioned the charge sheet.

They injured a number of people, set fire to their houses and looted properties.

Upon arrival from Dhaka on December 14, Asaduzzaman Noor in a motorcade went to visit the houses of affected people and gave them some assistance for their rehabilitation.

At time of his returning, several thousand BNP and Jamaat activists attacked his motorcade with lethal weapons at Ramganj Haat of Tupamari union under

Sadar upazila.

The attackers killed Md Khorshed Alam, president of Tupamari union unit of Krishak League, local Jubo League activists Forhad Hossen and Lebu and Chhatra League activist Murad Hossen by cutting tendons.

Farhad Hossen and Murad Hossen were siblings.

On the same night, Babul Akhtar, officer in charge (Investigation) of Sadar Police Station, filed a case mentioning names of 14 people and 150 unnamed ones as accused.

Dead bodies of first, second and seventh of the 14 named accused were found beside different roads in Nilphamari and Bogra districts within a few days.

# 16 sued for killing Workers Party leader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Sixteen operatives of outlawed Sarbahara Party were sued yesterday on charge of killing a Bangladesh Workers Party leader in Atghoria upazila of the district the day before.

The accused include regional leaders of Sarbahara Party Alal Hossain and Tanjid Hossain.

Nazma Khatun, wife of victim Abdur Rashid, 35, vice president of Jatiya Krishak Samity, the farmers' wing of Bangladesh Workers Party, filed the case with Atghoria Police Station.

A gang of armed men shot him around 8:30pm on Wednesday when he was returning home after holding a party meeting at Chackia village in the upazila, said Nazma.

The gunmen shot him several times from close range, leaving him dead on the spot, said GM Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Atghoria Police Station.

Rashid's party men claimed that outlaws of Sarbahara Party had killed him as he would persuade farmers to join the Krishak Samity.

"He had received several threats from the outlaws," said Jakir Hossain, secretary of Workers Party's Pabna unit.

Police are raiding different areas to arrest the accused, said the OC.

# BENAPOLE BORDER Indian national held with 7 gold bars

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) detained Naren Biswas, an Indian cargo handling worker, and seized seven gold bars from his possession from no-man's land in Benapole land port yesterday.

Quoting BSE, Subedar Abdul Hamid, camp in-charge of Benapole Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) 26-Battalion, said the detainee is a resident of Chhaigharia village under Bargaon Police Station of 24 Parganas district.

Benapole port police, in a separate raid, detained Abdul Taleb, owner of Sonar Bangla residential hotel on charge of human trafficking. Police rescued two young women.

Abdur Rahim, sub-inspector, Benapole Port Police Station, said a case was filed against Abdul Taleb with the police station on charge of women trafficking.

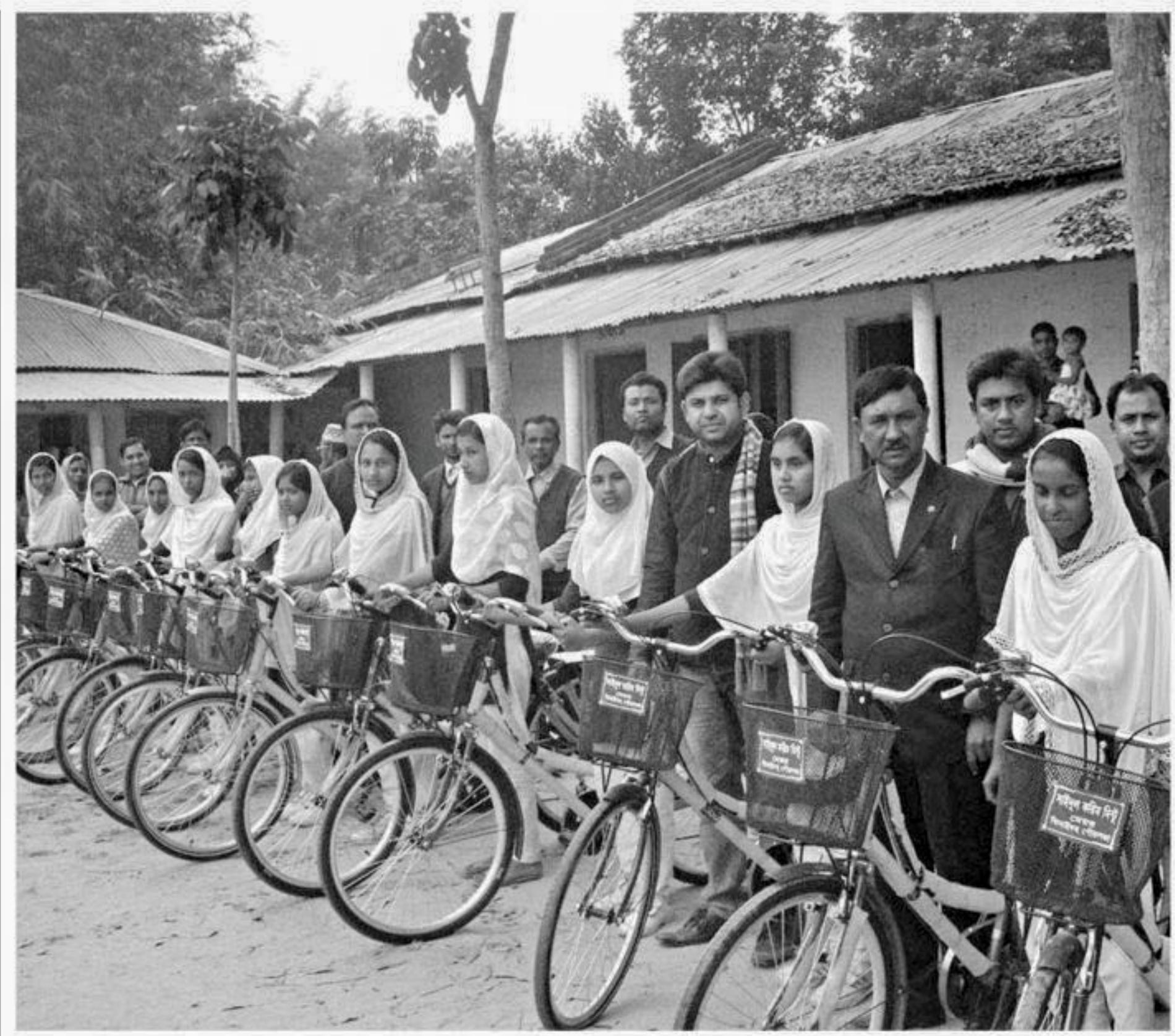


PHOTO: STAR

Girl students pose with Saidul Karim Minto, chairman of the managing committee of Bhaina Shaheed Mosharrif-Dalil Uddin High School in Harinakundo upazila under Jhenidah district, after getting bicycles donated by Minto, also mayor of Jhenidah Sadar municipality, on the school premises yesterday.

# A novel initiative to stop school dropouts

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

The managing committee chairman of Bhaina Shaheed Mosharrif-Dalil Uddin High School in Harinakundo upazila under the district has taken a noble initiative to prevent dropouts and early marriage of the girl students, especially those coming from distant places.

The chairman, Saidul Karim Minto, also mayor of Jhenidah Sadar municipality, yesterday provided 15 bicycles among as many girl students at a programme in presence of Harinakundo Upazila Nirbahi Officer Monira Parvin, Upazila Secondary Education Officer Sultan Ali, among others, on the school pre-

mises. Earlier on January 14, he gave two bicycles to two girls of the school.

"I will provide more bicycles for the girl students," said Minto.

This school, 15 kilometres from Harinakundo upazila headquarters, was established in 1985, said headmaster Abdur Razzak.

"Now 627 students are enrolled with the school and 60 percent of them are girls.

In the last year, 109 students appeared at the SSC examinations and all of them passed, nine obtaining GPA-5," he said.

"A good number of girl students, who have to cover four to five kilometres on foot to come to school, fail

to attend classes regularly. Due to the situation, a section of guardians tend to marry their daughters off at a tender age. Last year, 14 underage girl students of my school were married off.

"The managing committee chairman has taken the initiative to provide bicycles to girl students to ease their communication and save them from early marriage and dropout," the headmaster said.

Feroza Khatun, a Class X student of the school, said she is very happy to get a bicycle as it will help her to attend school with ease.

Appreciating the initiative, Mohi Uddin, a guardian, said it will encourage the girls to continue their study.



PHOTO: STAR

Locals form a human chain on Kazi Nazrul Islam Road in Bogra town yesterday demanding immediate steps to improve drainage system in the area.