



A truck hit this incomplete road divider on Panchagarh-Dinajpur highway at Untrish Mile village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila a few days ago. Such accidents have become frequent as the work for setting up road divider and expansion of the road has remained incomplete for around six months, leaving several spots of the road highly risky for vehicles.

PANCHAGARH-DINAJPUR HIGHWAY IN THAKURGAON

Accidents on rise as safety work incomplete

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT, Thakurgaon

Different 'black spots' on Panchagarh-Dinajpur highway in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila see frequent accidents as work for construction of new jersey barriers (generally called road dividers) has remained half-done for around six months, making the road too narrow and risky.

On February 18, truck helper Soleman Ali Pramanik, 50, son of Sadek Ali Pramanik of Baiguni village in Gabtoli upazila of Bogra district, died on the spot as the truck hit the incomplete divider at Salondar Chowdhuryhat.

On February 20, a truck hit the divider at the same spot.

The next day, another truck turned turtle as it lost balance on the road that became slanted due to incomplete construction work.

Around 30 accidents

occurred at the spot in last three months, killing at least two people and badly injuring over 30 others, said Fazole Elahi Mukut Chowdhury, chairman of Salondar union parishad.

Three people were injured at Untrish Mile village point on the highway the same day as a Thakurgaon-bound goods carrying truck from Baghabari in Pabna hit the new jersey barrier there around 5:30am.

"The accident occurred in absence of any warning mark there, I failed to realise that a half-done barrier was built in the middle of the road. I demand punishment of the contractor and the authority concerned," Nur Alam, 55, driver of the truck, said.

Visiting different black spots, this correspondent saw low wall like incomplete structures in the middle of the road.

The half-done work poses risk for commuters on

vehicles as well as pedestrians, said Md Manik, 28, an employee of a primary school of Salondar village.

Vehicles, especially goods-laden trucks, face the risk of falling into the roadside ditches as the dug up area meant for widening of the road remains a bit sloping due to the incomplete construction work.

The Roads and Highways Department (RHD) of Thakurgaon floated tender early last year for construction of new jersey barriers and road expansion work at eight accident-prone black spots on highways in Thakurgaon, Nilphamari and Panchagarh districts.

Five of the spots are on Panchagarh-Dinajpur highway at Untrish Mile, Bara Khochabari, Chhoto Khochabari, Old Bus Stand and Salondar Chowdhuryhat village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila.

The RHD issued work order to Taj Monjil

Construction on May 6 last year to complete the Tk 8.49 crore project titled 'Black Spot Improvement Project' for construction of new jersey barriers and road expansion on both sides of the spots by November 5, 2016.

The construction firm started work last August. But after making some barriers in the middle of the road at five points in a month, they stopped the work.

Two letters were issued to the contractor on December 10 last year and February 10 this year to resume the work immediately but to no effect, said the executive engineer of Thakurgaon RHD.

Admitting danger of making new jersey barrier in the middle of the road before widening it, he said, "I will contact my higher authority and take necessary steps in this regard."

Housewife beaten to death for dowry

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A housewife was beaten to death allegedly for dowry by her husband at Kanichgaria area in Bogra town early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Halimatus Sadia Dina, 22, wife of Al-Amin of the area.

Al Amin, 35, son of Jahangir Alam of Kanochgaria area of the town, is accused in Jubo League leader Shahin killing case filed with Shajahanpur Police Station a few years ago.

After killing Dina, he hung the body from the ceiling of her bedroom to pass it off as suicide and fled the scene.

The deceased was the daughter of Hablu Mia of Katnarpara in Bogra town and a student of second year honours at Government Azizul Haque College of Bogra. She left behind a five-year-old daughter and a son of three months, added the sources.

Dina's brother Shahin alleged that her husband used to torture her for dowry after the marriage. He said Al-Amin told her family over cellphone that Dina had committed suicide.

Looted rice recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Police recovered 189 sacks of looted rice from Ghatail upazila in the district yesterday.

They also arrested two people in connection with the incident.

The arrestees are poultry farm owner Mirza Sumon, 30, of Sadhurpara Golgonda village, and Saiful Islam, 35, of the village.

A truck loaded with 300 sacks of rice started from Asia Automatic Rice Mills in Boroil Chehelgazi area of Dinajpur district for Narayanganj on February 20.

The rice-laden truck was looted when it reached Kaliakair in Gazipur, said police.

PM opens 2 bridges on Kuakata road today

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will formally open Shaheed Sheikh Kamal Bridge and Shaheed Sheikh Jamal Bridge on Patuakhali-Kuakata road through a video conference from her office in the capital today.

A meeting will be arranged at the Deputy Commissioner's conference room in this regard and local elite will be invited at the function to be held around 11:30am, said Md Jahurul Islam, executive engineer of Patuakhali Roads and Highways Department (RHD).

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina laid the foundation

stones of the two bridges and Shaheed Sheikh Russel Bridge across three rivers on 72-km-long Patuakhali-Kuakata road on February 25 in 2012, said RHD sources.

On August 20 last year, the PM formally opened the 408.36-metre-long and 10.25-metre-wide Shaheed Sheikh Russel Bridge on the Shibbaria River at Mohipur point on Patuakhali-Kuakata road.

The three bridges are named after Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's three sons, also brothers of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Construction works of the 482.37-metre-long and

10.25-metre-wide Shaheed Sheikh Jamal Bridge on the Sonatala River at Hazipur point and 891.76-metre-long and 10.25-metre-wide Shaheed Sheikh Kamal Bridge on the Andharmanik River near Kalapara upazila town were completed in December last year.

Tourism as well as economic activities will see a boost after opening of the two bridges for vehicular movement, said Md Shafiqur Rahman Chami, president of Kuakata hotel-motel owners association, also former president of Patuakhali Chamber of Commerce and Industries.



All preparations are complete as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate Shaheed Sheikh Kamal Bridge, left, and Shaheed Sheikh Jamal Bridge on Patuakhali-Kuakata road through a video conference today.

Baby boy poisoned to death by grandmother

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A nine-month-old baby boy was allegedly poisoned to death by his grandmother as part of a family dispute at Ronorampur village in Sharifpur union of Jamalpur Sadar upazila of the district on Tuesday evening.

The deceased, Miraj Hossain, was the only son of Aminur Islam, who is speech and hearing impaired, and Monira Begum of the village.

Police and family sources say Aminur beat up his stepmother Anguri Begum, 35, over a family matter on February 15, 2016.

To take revenge, Anguri fed the baby insecticide. As the baby became severely

sick, he was rushed to Jamalpur General Hospital for treatment but died soon after, said police, quoting the baby's mother.

Meanwhile, as the news of the tragic death of the baby spread, family members and neighbours caught Anguri Begum and informed police of the matter.

Police arrested Anguri Begum yesterday, said Abdul Awal, officer-in-charge (OC) of Sadar Police Station.

During interrogation, she confessed that she poisoned Miraj, the OC said.

Monira filed a murder case with the police station, accusing Anguri Begum of murder.

Tobacco farming reduced in Jhenidah

AZIBOR RAHMAN with ANDREW EAGLE

While in many parts of the country hazardous tobacco farming is on the increase, from Jhenidah there is good news. Government officials and civil society activists have achieved considerable success in convincing the district's farmers to say no to tobacco.

Whereas last season 925 hectares of land in the district was dedicated to tobacco cultivation, this year tobacco is being grown on only 795 hectares. The farmers of Kotchandpur upazila meanwhile have avoided tobacco farming altogether.

Several farmers in Saikupa upazila's Kirtinagar village said many have either ceased to grow tobacco or reduced the size of crops in consideration of the ill-effects on human health and enduring damage tobacco crops cause to the soil. They believe that within a few years tobacco farming in their area will be no more.

"For a long while I have suffered cough, headache and fever from working in tobacco fields," says farmer Anwar Ali of sadar upazila's Tetultala village. "I would rather die unfed than work in tobacco fields anymore."

The change in sentiment among farmers is the result

of greater awareness of the dangers to health and soil fertility the crop poses. According to the deputy director of Jhenidah's agriculture extension department Shah Mohammad Akramul Haque, the movement against tobacco taskforce of concerned citizens, the anti-tobacco media alliance and department of agriculture extension officials have been able to coordinate efforts to educate farmers, the main cause of tobacco cultivation's decline.

In addition, field level officers of the agriculture extension department have been instructed to motivate farmers to grow other crops

and not to supply fertilizer to farmers of tobacco as part of the government's anti-tobacco initiatives.

"Farmers have become aware of the implications of tobacco farming on human health and soil," says Kotchandpur's agriculture officer Sheikh Sazzad Hossain. "Tobacco farming in the upazila has been replaced in favour of cotton." In other areas onions, wheat, lentils and other crops have become favoured substitutes for tobacco.

The aim is to achieve a tobacco-free Jhenidah district within five years, a goal that Haque both hopes and expects to be realised.



Helal Mondol of Rangierpota village in Kotchandpur upazila under Jhenidah district tends his maize field where he earlier grew tobacco. Like him, a number of farmers in the district have left cultivation of the harmful item and switched to food crops, thanks to the motivational campaign of government officials and civil society activists.

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