



PHOTO: STAR

School children cross the risky bamboo bridge over Ichhamati Canal at Nawani Chokkonabari point of Santhia municipality due to lack of a concrete bridge. Although people of four wards have been demanding construction of a permanent bridge there for a long time, the authorities concerned have not taken any steps yet.

## Thousands suffer due to lack of concrete bridge

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

Thousands of people, including children, of four wards under Santhia municipality have to cross a 200-foot-long bamboo bridge to come to the municipality headquarters every day amid great risk due to lack of a permanent bridge on the Ichhamati Canal at Nawani-Chokkonabari point at Ward No 7 of the municipality.

"Around 5,000 people of the four wards, including hundreds of school children, cross the bridge for going to the markets, offices and educational institutions in the municipality headquarters every day," said Abdul Aziz Khan, a resident of Chakkonabari village. But the municipality authorities have not taken any initiative to

build a concrete bridge on the canal, he added.

"Most of the educational institutions of the four wards are located in the municipality headquarters, so the children have to suffer everyday while going to the schools," said Manik Mia, a resident of the area.

Sometimes children fall into the canal when many of them cross the bridge together, yet they have to go to school amid the risk everyday, he added.

When farmers cross the bamboo bridge carrying their produce, they sometimes fall into the canal, villagers said.

"The bridge becomes risky in the monsoon. The bamboos get slippery

and we cannot cross it easily. Sometimes the bamboos get damaged, yet we have to cross the bridge every day," said Habibur Rahman of Nawani village.

Although the people of four wards of Santhia municipality have been demanding a permanent bridge at Nawani-Chokkonabari point of the canal since establishment of the municipality, the authorities have not taken any step in this regard.

Md Mirazul Islam Pramanik, mayor of Santhia municipality, said primary survey has been completed, but it is not enough. "After completing ground work, we will submit the proposal for a bridge on the canal to the ministry very soon," the mayor added.

## Lotkons a win-win for farmers and consumers

Bumper crop expected in Lalmonirhat, fruit chemical-free

S DILIP ROY with ANDREW EAGLE

With ever-growing demand, easy farming and favourable weather this season leading to hopes of a bumper crop, Lalmonirhat's lotkon orchardists have reason to smile. Moreover in what seems at times to be a minefield struggle by consumers to buy fruit untainted by chemicals, lotkons are star performers. Lotkons are the unadulterated work of nature.

"We never use chemicals on lotkons," says Harinath Sen, 56, of Dighaltari village in Aditmari upazila. "The fruit grows naturally. No chemicals are needed. We get about 7 maunds per tree, and sell the fruit to traders who buy direct from the orchard."

"I have five lotkon trees," says neighbour Jaldhar Chandra Sen, 45. "Some years ago I barely thought about them but in 2012 I earned Tk 18,000 from selling lotkons after meeting our family's demand. This year I hope to earn at least Tk 25,000."

According to Lalmonirhat's deputy director of the agriculture extension department Safayet Hossain, five years ago lotkons were known as jungle fruit, with the district's farmers unaware of the commercial potential of lotkons. "Many now farm lotkons on a commercial basis, achieving their expected profit every year," he says, adding that his department is providing technical support on how to grow lotkons chemical-free.

Shariful Islam, 42, of Fulgachh village in Lalmonirhat sadar upazila is another orchardist who's pleased with the lotkon.

"Harvest runs from the first week of June until mid-July," he says. "I started commercial production in 2013, with 150 lotkon trees on 5 bighas of land."

"Many of my neighbours have followed my lead after observing my success," he adds.

One of them, Delwar Hossain, 55, has planted more than 50 lotkon saplings of his own on one bigha of land. "I hope that harvest can start after three or four years."

Lotkon trader Hasan Ali from Mogholhat Rail Gate in Lalmonirhat town says the current purchase price for one kilogram of lotkons from a grower about Tk 25 this year, which last year he could sell in the market for Tk 30 - 35. He hopes for the same selling rate this year.

Confident in the profitability of lotkons, Hasan offers growers money in advance. "There is high demand for this fruit," he says, "We also send lotkons

to Dhaka and other parts of the country."

Sub-assistant agriculture officer in Aditmari upazila Khabir Uddin, observes that lotkons prefer a shady position and are often grown beside the homestead. According to agriculture extension department sources, there are about 20,000 lotkon trees across the district's five upazilas, with at least 120 orchardists involved in lotkon farming on a commercial basis.

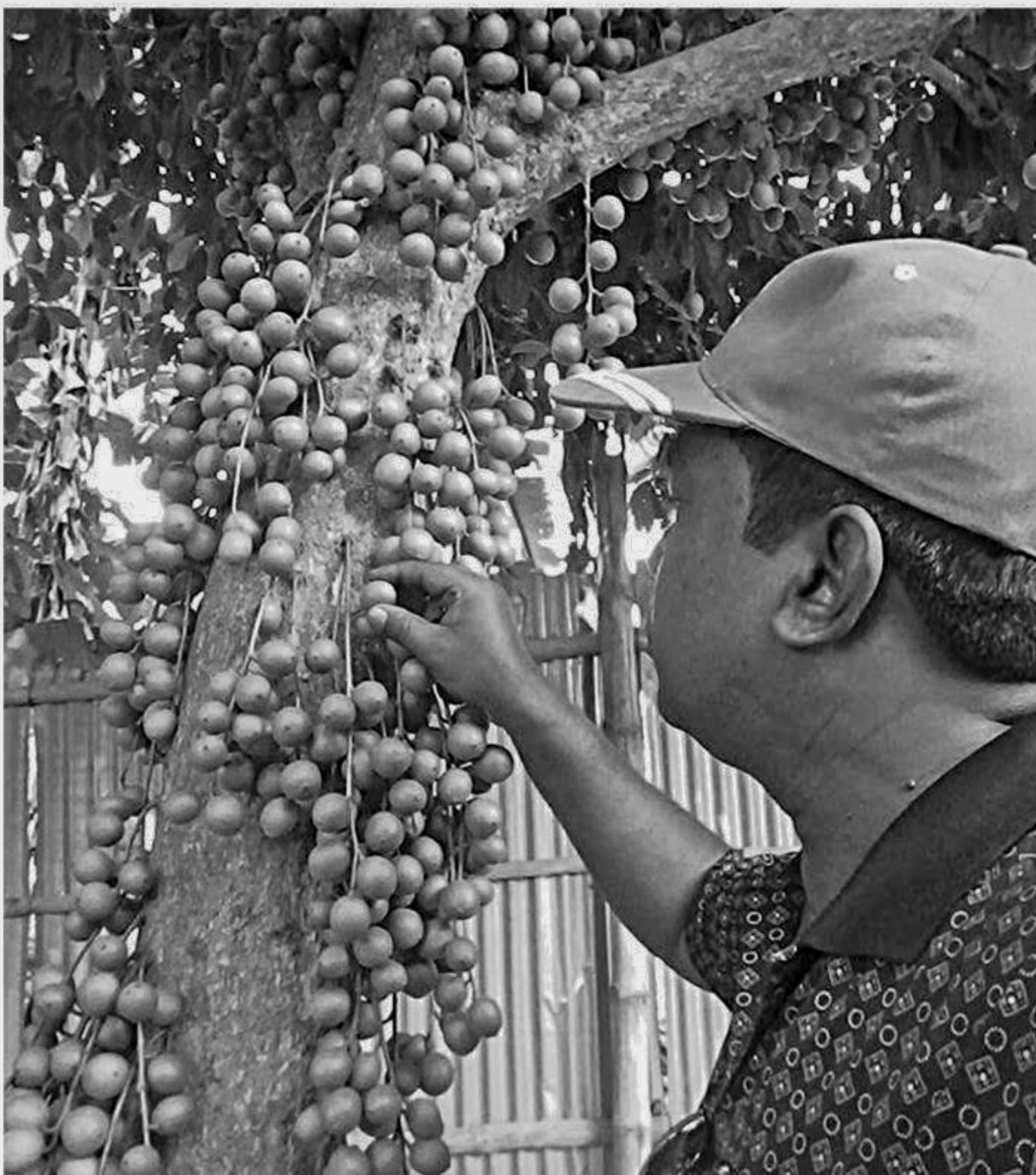


PHOTO STAR

Chemical-free lotkons are proving to be a valuable crop for Lalmonirhat farmers.

## BGB, BSF swap fishermen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

Border Guard of Bangladesh (BGB) and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) exchanged the fishermen arrested by the border guards of both countries at a flag meeting held at Charghat upazila of the district on Wednesday night.

BGB members returned the 11 Indian fishermen they caught earlier on the day from the Padma River for intruding into Bangladesh territory hours after BSF members picked up nine Bangladeshi fishermen and a minor boy on the same charge.

The border forces of both countries held a flag meet-

### Follow-up

ing at 9:00pm at a place between Charghat's Chalkpara and India's Kagmari, said Charghat BGB camp commander Nayeb Subedar Muhammad Ali.

Ali and Subedar Golam Mostafa led the Bangladesh side in the meeting while Kagmari BSF camp commander Assistant Commissioner Sanjay Kumar led the Indian side.

BGB protested the arrest and requested BSF officials to return the fishermen.

As the Indian side did not return the Bangladeshi fishermen, BGB members of Charghat BGB camp picked up 11 Indian fishermen

## 4 drug addicts jailed in Hatibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Lalmonirhat*

Police arrested four drug addicts from Jot Baraipara village in Hatibandha upazila of the district yesterday afternoon.

The arrestees were later produced before a mobile court led by Executive Magistrate Azizur Rahman, who sentenced them to jail.

The convicts are Zikirul Islam, 26, son of Abdul Hamid of Purbo Saradubi village, Milton Khandaker, 42, son of late Aftab Uddin of Dakkhin Gaddimari village, Alamgir Hossain,

23, son of Golap Hossain of Tangbhanga village under Hatibandha upazila, and Jelal Hossain, 32, son of Shamsul Haque of Khariza Jongra village under Patgram upazila.

On the same day, police arrested two drug peddlers and seized two kgs of contraband hemp from their possession from a house at Saniyazan Bridge area in the upazila.

The arrestees are Saheb Ali, 50, son of late Motalab Hossain, and Saddam Hossain, 20, son of Rasul Sheikh of Ramaniganj village under the upazila.



PHOTO: STAR

The charred remains of poultry birds at a farm that was set afire by criminals at Nijputia village in Jhenidah's Sadar upazila early yesterday.

## Arms, ammo seized from microbus, 4 arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Bogra*

Highway police in a drive arrested four youths with pistol and bullets near Padmapara Bridge in Gabtoli upazila of the district on Wednesday.

The arrestees are Rakib Hasan, 30, son of Abu Hannan, Rabbi Khan, 25, son of late Sajedur Rahman, Rajen Sheikh, 28, son of Shaheed Sheikh, and Siraj Ahmed, 35, son of late Mobarak Ali. They hail from different areas under Bogra Sadar upazila.

Police also seized a microbus carrying the criminals.

A patrol team of Gabtoli Model Police Station, acting on a tip-off, intercepted a microbus carrying the four youths in the guise of journalists.

As the youths were trying to flee the scene, sensing the presence of the police team, the law enforcers chased the gang members and caught them.

Police later searched the microbus and recovered a pistol, one bullet, one magazine, three bottles of phensidyl and some fake stickers of different Newspapers from the vehicle.

Bogra Additional Superintendent of Police Arifur Rahman Mondol said police filed two separate cases against the

arrestees under the Arms Act and Narcotics Control Act with Gabtoli Police Station.

## Rampal plant

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power plant in Khulna will rather create employment for local people, increase their purchasing capacity and reduce their dependence on the forest's resources, the minister added.

Super critical technology will be applied during the construction and operation of the power plant to avoid any negative impact on the forest.

In a written statement, Manju also said bituminous coal from Australia or Indonesia having only 0.6 percent sulfur would be used to meet the conditions.

He insisted that the quality of smoke emitted from the plant would be maintained in line with the World Bank guidelines, boiled or untreated water would not be released into the river, and the water treated by the Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) will be reused as much as possible.

Proper measures would be taken to ensure optimum utilisation of fly/bottom ash from the plant.

As part of the mitigation measures, there will also be electro static precipitator, low-NOx burner, flue gas desulfurization and 275-metre chimney to contain air pollution. There will also be ETP, settling pond, waste water treatment plant, desalination plant, API oil water separator and ways to recycle and reuse water, the minister said.

To prevent pollution caused by coal, coal dust suppression system, closed conveyor belt and covered cargo or ships will be used.

Besides, there will be online monitoring system to control pollution. A coordinated monitoring team comprised of officials from the DoE, Bangladesh Power Development Board and other agencies concerned will be deployed to assess the environmental

## A day out

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actually looking for another bird, called the long-tailed minivet. Knowing that there is no certainty in birdwatching, we were keen to take every chance of having a glimpse of the species.

In the dark-green forest patches, sudden appearance of skinks on the forest floor, silent departure of the vivid butterflies from nearby undergrowth, comical actions of primates above and mesmerising bird songs have always fascinated me. But today, for some unknown reasons, the forest seemed unfamiliar with unusually fewer appearances of life.

With time the serene sunlight, peeping through the thin leaves, was becoming increasingly harsh. I stopped to catch my breath, looking around to find a suitable place to rest for a while. As we were discussing about not finding anything of interest so far, I noticed some arboreal locomotion. Curiosity got the better of me, and my mind relentlessly tried to identify the creature. My friends noticed my restless eyes and asked me about the excitement. I unknowingly uttered: "I am not sure but [it] could be a flying lizard!"

In no moment, they were all set to take it down with their camera guns. It made another leap from the tree, glided through the dense canopy and landed on a fig tree. Even though all of us were ready to capture its movement in frame, we were mesmerised to witness the breathtaking wonder of nature. A lizard is flying, you must be kidding!

Over 40 species of gliding or flying lizards (genus Draco) are native to Southeast Asian forests and

cannot be found anywhere else in the world. These flying reptiles have a wide-spread distribution from India to eastern Indonesia. Amongst the two species of flying lizards of Bangladesh, the spotted flying lizard, Draco maculatus, occurs in the hill forests of Sylhet and Chittagong divisions.

Now, what makes these lizards fly like dragons? Fascinatingly, it uses its skin along the sides of the body. When it jumps off a tree, it merely spreads its spare skin, which acts as wings. Well, they can't really fly like birds or bats, but they can glide up to 30 feet. It was an incredible experience for the three of us to witness two dragons gliding from one tree to another.

Within a few moments the lizards disappeared into the surroundings, with their charismatic camouflaging ability. It did not take us too long to spot the lizards again, but this time, different acrobatics amused us. They were looking at each other and puffing out their yellowish-orange throats while their wings were folded against their bodies. While not foraging, these diurnal, arboreal and ant-eating lizards spend most of their days sitting head-up on large tree trunks.

Previously, flying lizards could be spotted throughout greater Sylhet and Chittagong regions, but lately they have disappeared from much of their former ranges due to extensive deforestation in Bangladesh. These rare reptiles are still flying through the canopies of our remaining hill forests, but for how long?

The writer is a Conservation Biologist, currently working on threatened species conservation and research in

## 14<sup>th</sup> Death Anniversary



We pray for Marhum M. Masihur Rahman on his 14<sup>th</sup> Death Anniversary today, the 10<sup>th</sup> of June 2016. Marhum Masihur Rahman was a Founder Life Member of the North South University (NSU) Foundation, renamed as the North South Foundation, which established and administered NSU, now run by the North South University Trust. He was also the Founder Life Member of the Board of Governors of the Foundation and the then Parichalona Porshod of NSU.

He was a successful industrialist, a prominent banker and an ideal philanthropist.

May Allah bless his soul and give the members of his family the strength to keep on bearing the loss.



North South Foundation  
North South University Trust  
North South University