

Five-year-old raped girl unconscious for 4 days

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A five-year-old raped girl is undergoing treatment at Rangpur Medical College Hospital, still unconscious from injuries due to the brutality four days ago.

"My daughter went missing from near our house at Jamirhat village in Parbatipur upazila of Dinajpur on Tuesday evening. Next morning, villagers found her at a turmeric field, unconscious and in blood," said the victim's mother.

The girl suffered massive bleeding and trauma due to rape, said Dr Bikash Majumder, paediatrician of the hospital.

The girl's father filed a rape case with Parbatipur Police Station on Thursday accusing Saiful Islam and Afzal Hossain of Jamirhat village.

The accused went into hiding, said Mahmudul Alam, OC of Parbatipur Police Station.



A cotton pygmy goose hatching eggs at a breeding nest installed on the bank of Baikka Beel in Moulvibazar.

PHOTO: STAR

BAIKKA BEEL BIODIVERSITY

Rare cotton pygmy geese appreciate nesting boxes

MINTU DESHWARA with ANDREW EAGLE

There are white eggs to be found on the banks of Baikka Beel in Moulvibazar's Sreemangal: cotton pygmy goose eggs that signal new hope for an endangered species. Some of the eggs have hatched. Newborn light enters the world in the form of the cuddly chicks swimming about the wetland. May they always contribute to the idyllic location's biodiversity!

By habit, the cotton pygmy goose, also called the cotton teal and locally known as the "balihash", builds its nest in an old tree. They may also adopt a quiet spot in any abandoned house waterside; even a monastery or temple will do. Yet despite their adaptability, numbers have been in decline for a lack of suitable nesting sites, or at least they were in decline until breeding boxes were discretely added to the landscape.

"We thought about how to save the cotton pygmy goose," says Md Mazharul Islam Jahangir, the regional coordinator of

the USAID funded Climate-Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihood project, which, since 2006, has been working to prevent hunting and indiscriminate fishing and is being implemented across Baikka Beel and other wetland areas. "We decided to install breeding boxes to provide the birds with better shelter and more nesting sites."

The decision has proven itself worthwhile. Female cotton pygmy geese have found the 30 wooden boxes installed this year to their liking. This nesting season, from July to September and even into October, the pygmy geese have been busy laying eggs. And within just four hours of hatching, the chicks dive into the water to swim.

"It's so nice to see the chicks playing in the beel," says Jahangir. The Daily Star can only agree. It's not easy to imagine how Baikka Beel in the monsoon months could be more beautiful; but the addition of cotton pygmy geese hatchlings does indeed make it so.

PCJSS leader's release demanded

A CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Parbattya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) and its associate organisations staged a sit-in in front of the DC's office in the district yesterday protesting the arrest of its Rajastali upazila leader.

Suvash Tanchangya Bachchu, organising secretary of Rajastali upazila unit, was arrested on Friday.

The PCJSS submitted a memorandum to the home minister through the deputy commissioner.

The PCJSS paraded the main streets of the town before holding the rally in front of the DC's office.

Speakers at the rally said they would launch tougher agitation if Bachchu was not released unconditionally.

PCJSS district President Subarna Chakma presided over the meeting.

BETEL NUT CULTIVATION IN PIROJPUR

Farmers frustrated for low yield, price fall

HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

Betel nut growers in the district are frustrated as both the production and the price have fallen this year.

This year the yield of betel nut is four to five times less than the previous year as there was serious drought during the flowering period, said Md Khalil, a grower of Khalisakhal village under Pirojpur Sadar upazila.

Now one kuri (210 pieces) of betel nut is selling for Tk 150 to 250 although it was up to Tk 400 last year, said Abdus Sobahan, a wholesale buyer at Chalisa Bazar in Pirojpur Sadar upazila.

Visiting several betel nut wholesale markets in the district, it was found that buyers and sellers are passing busy time in buying and selling betel nuts.

This crop grows well in different areas of the district, especially Pirojpur Sadar, Zianagar, Kawkhali and Bhandaria upazilas.

Traders from adjacent Bagerhat, Khulna and other districts come to Pirojpur by truck or trawlers and buy betel nut.

Wholesale buyers send it to different areas including Dhaka and a few northern districts.

Traders store betel nuts by drying or sinking in the ditch for selling them next year.

"Like me, a large number of traders failed to sell their betel nut that was bought last year. This has resulted in price fall," said wholesale buyer Zakir Hossain.

There are betel nut gardens covering 4,600 hectares of land in the district, said sources of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Pirojpur.

Md Abul Hossain Talukder, deputy director of Pirojpur DAE, said, "Betel nut grows well in the district but the yield has decreased this year. Although betel nut earns cash, it has hardly any food value. And so, we are inspiring farmers to cultivate fruits and vegetables."

Kidnapped Bogra girl yet to be traced

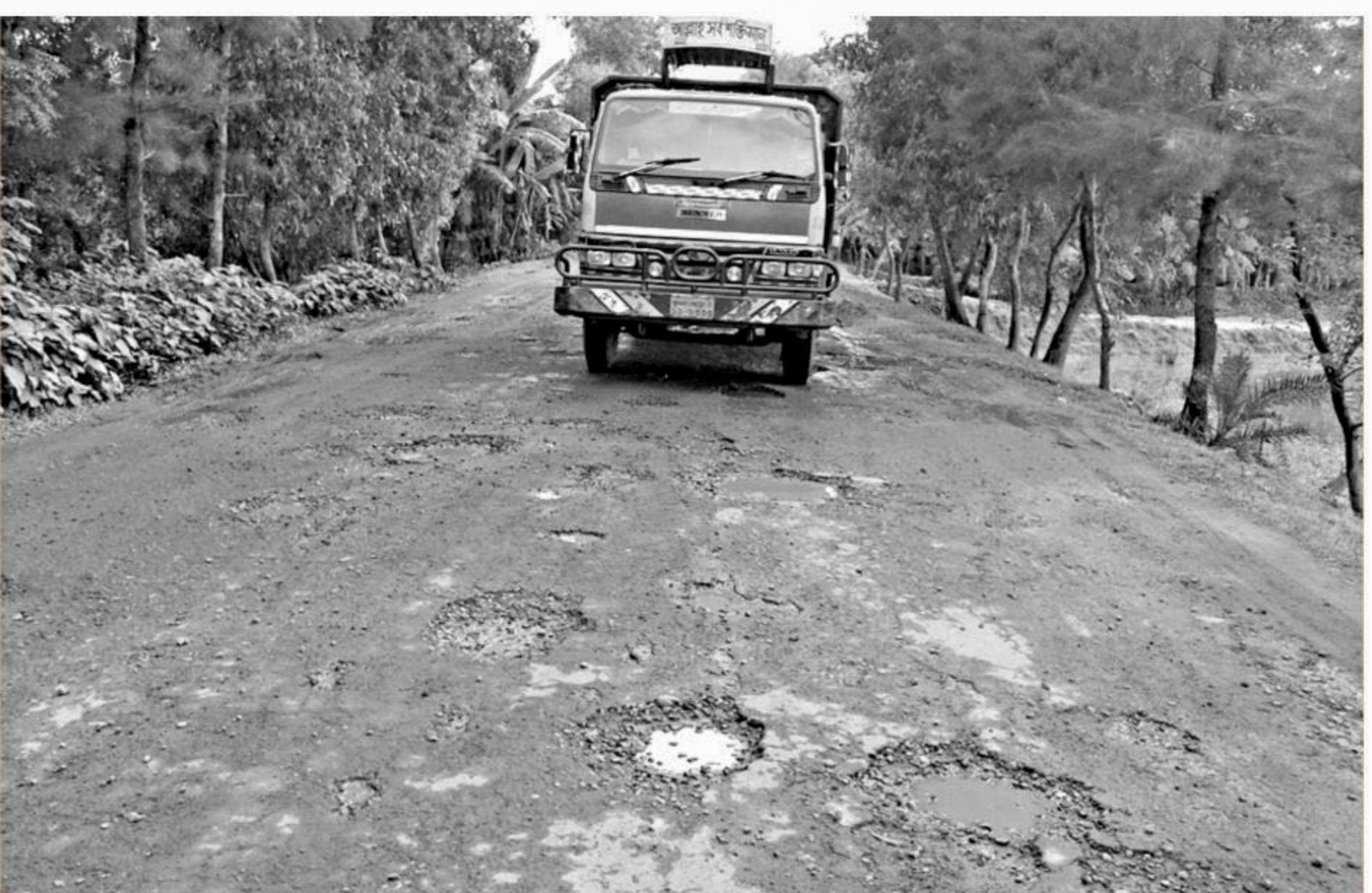
OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A schoolgirl, who was abducted allegedly by her stalker from Guyadhuri village in Dhunat upazila four days ago, remained traceless as of yesterday.

Abdul Latif, father of the 14-year-old victim, filed an abduction case against Limon Mia, 23, son of Shahidul Islam of Saharabari village in the upazila, with Dhunat Police Station on Friday evening.

According to the case statement, Shahidul used to propose the girl, a Class IX student of Goshabari KO Girls' School, on her way to and from school often, which she refused.

On October 19, a gang led by Shahidul forcibly picked up the victim while she was going to school.



This section of the road from Kalapara upazila town to Kuakata has been in awful condition for three years as a court has ordered that no repair work can be carried out until final judgment in the case filed by the firm that rebuilt the road in 2009-10 fiscal year.

PHOTO: STAR

Kuakata road in bad shape

Numerous potholes have developed on the road from Pakhimara Bazar to Mohipur fish landing station

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Around half of the 22 kilometre road from Kalapara upazila town to Kuakata has become virtually unfit for vehicular movement as numerous potholes have developed on it from Pakhimara Bazar to Mohipur fish landing station.

The Roads and Highways Department (RHD) cannot take steps to repair the road as a court delivered 'stay-order' three years ago after a bidder filed a case over the road.

Sub-assistant Engineer of RHD Md Humayun Kabir said Rupsha Engineers Limited, a construction firm, rebuilt the 11km road from Pakhimara Bazar to Mohipur in 2009-10 fiscal year at a cost of around Tk 7 crore. RHD stopped the final payment to the firm, alleging low quality of work.

Later on, two high level probe bod-

ies of the RHD separately visited the spot and found the allegation was true. Md Rashidul Islam, representative of the firm, filed a civil suit with a Patuakhali court in 2014, which ordered stoppage of all work on the road until final judgment of the case. The road has not been repaired or renovated since then, Humayun added.

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw countless potholes filled with water on the road, with hundreds of vehicles using it in spite of the condition.

Locals said over 200 metres of the road from Alipur fish landing station to approach road of Sheikh Russel Bridge has also become unfit to use due to lack of repair.

"We are facing serious problems in transporting fish to different places across the country, including the capital Dhaka, as trucks, pick-ups and

other vehicles can't run smoothly on the road," said President of Alipur Fish Warehouse Owners' Association

Ansar Uddin Mollah. President of Kuakata Hotel-Motel Owners' Association Md Shafiqur Rahman Chan said the number of tourists has increased recently as all three bridges on Kalapara-Kuakata road have been opened.

The authorities concerned should take immediate steps to repair the road considering the comfort of tourists from both home and abroad, he added.

Executive Engineer RHD Mir Nizamuddin said the damaged road from Alipur to Sheikh Russel bridge approach road would be taken under a 'minor periodic maintenance' programme very soon.

They will take immediate steps to repair the road after withdrawal of the stay order, Nizamuddin added.

'Union centres to cut digital divide'

A CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

The government has set up 4,550 Union Digital Centres (UDC) across the country in a bid to reach information and services to the doorsteps of the common people, Additional Secretary of the ICT Division, Susanta Kumar Saha said at a workshop in the district yesterday.

"The entrepreneurs of these centres have been providing services to the people and helping the government implement its plan to reduce the digital divide," the additional secretary said at the concluding session of a three-day-long ICT workshop for union parishad leaders.

Trinomuly Tathyajanala Programme of ICT Division and Tathyaseba Barta Sangstha (TSB) jointly organised the programme at the Circuit House auditorium.

Special correspondent of BSS Ajit Kumar Sarkar said ensuring of equal access for the rural and urban people to information technology has changed the socioeconomic condition of the country radically.

Chaired by Satkhira Deputy Commissioner Abul Kashem Mohiuddin, the function was addressed, among others, by TSB Assistant Editor Protik Mahmud.

MATHBARIA IN PIROJPUR

Tension ahead of Oct 31 poll at a union centre

HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

A tense situation is prevailing in ward No 8 of Dhanisafa union of Mathbaria upazila under the district ahead of the October 31 voting at a centre, against the backdrop of the bloody incident in the union parishad polls held on March 22 this year.

Five men were killed and several others injured as law enforcers opened fire to tackle the riotous situation after cancellation of 746 faulty votes cast in favour of Awami League (AL) nominated candidate Harun Or Rashid at the centre.

Finally the result of the polling centre at Uttor Patakata Government Primary School in ward No 8 of Dhanisafa union was declared cancelled.

Voting will be held on October 31 at the centre, along with 11 other centres of ten unions in the district, where the polls were earlier postponed, Pirojpur election office

sources said.

As many as 1,554 voters will cast their vote at the centre for the decisive result about the chairmanship at the union where independent candidate Rafikul Islam Akon is ahead of AL candidate Harun Or Rashid by 128 votes.

During this correspondent's visit to the ward a couple of days ago, locals expressed anxiety.

"Harun's men are everywhere. He is visiting our area to woo voters almost daily. If anyone says no, he faces threat and harassment," said an elderly man seeking anonymity.

Akon alleged that Harun's men are disturbing his men in different ways while Harun refuted the allegation and claimed that there is no trouble in the area.

Mathbaria Upazila Election Officer Md Mahfuzur Rahman, also the returning officer for Dhanisafa union, said they will take adequate measures for peaceful voting there.



People under the banner of 'Bangladesh Gram Theatre' and 'Bejora Jubo Unnayan Sangha' organised a boat race in the Karatoa river from Bhatkandi to Defoitola under Shahjahanpur upazila in Bogra on Friday to create awareness about saving the river from mindless grabbing and pollution.

PHOTO: STAR