

Fund crisis stops construction of '71 martyrs' memorial

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhalakathi

Freedom fighters of Rajapur upazila of the district had started building a memorial on a *badhyabumi* (killing ground) in Bagri Bazar area in 2006, but have not been able to complete it due to shortage of funds.

Then Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Jasim Uddin took the step with the help of the freedom fighters to build the memorial on the bank of the Jangalia river to keep alive the memory of the martyrs who were brutally killed at the spot in 1971, said commander of Rajapur Upazila Muktojodha Sangsad Md Shah Alam Nannu.

"We donated for the construction according to our ability and completed half of it. We also contacted the local administration several times for some funds but have not received any reply as yet," he added.

"We want to build the memorial to remind the new generation about the valiant struggle of the freedom fighters," Nannu said.

"It is unfortunate that the *badhyabumi* is in a neglected state, but no one bothers about it," said freedom fighter Md Nur Islam.

"Recently, I gave a commitment to the freedom fighters that I will allocate funds to complete construction of the memorial," said Chairman of Rajapur Upazila Parishad Md Moniruzzaman.



A woman walks past a killing ground lying uncared for years in Bagri Bazar area in Rajapur upazila of Jhalakathi.

PHOTO: STAR

PUST VC escapes attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Unidentified criminals tried to attack Prof Dr Al Nakib Chowdhury, vice chancellor of Pabna University of Science and Technology, near the toll plaza of Bonpara-Hatikumrul road when he was going to Dhaka in his official car on Friday afternoon.

"When the vice chancellor reached near the toll plaza of Bonpara Hatikumrul highway on his way to Dhaka around 4:00pm, unidentified criminals in two minibuses chased his car," said Faruk Hossain Chowdhury, assistant director of Public Relation Department of the university.

The car driver managed to save the situation by running the vehicle speedily, he said.

"We demand that law enforcers find out the culprits and bring them to book," said Awal Kabir Joy, proctor of the university.

Jhalakathi school under threat of river erosion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhalakathi

Mathbari Union High School in the district is under threat of erosion by Bishkhali River as the river has been devouring land every day, putting the education of 350 students in uncertainty.

The school was established in 1970 at Badurtola Bazar in Rajapur for teaching students of Class VI to Class X.

"We are afraid of attending classes due to erosion, which may destroy our

school at any time," said Nazrul Islam, a student of Class X.

The school playground is being eroded, Headmaster Md Ayub Ali Khan said, adding that the river will devour the building soon if erosion continues.

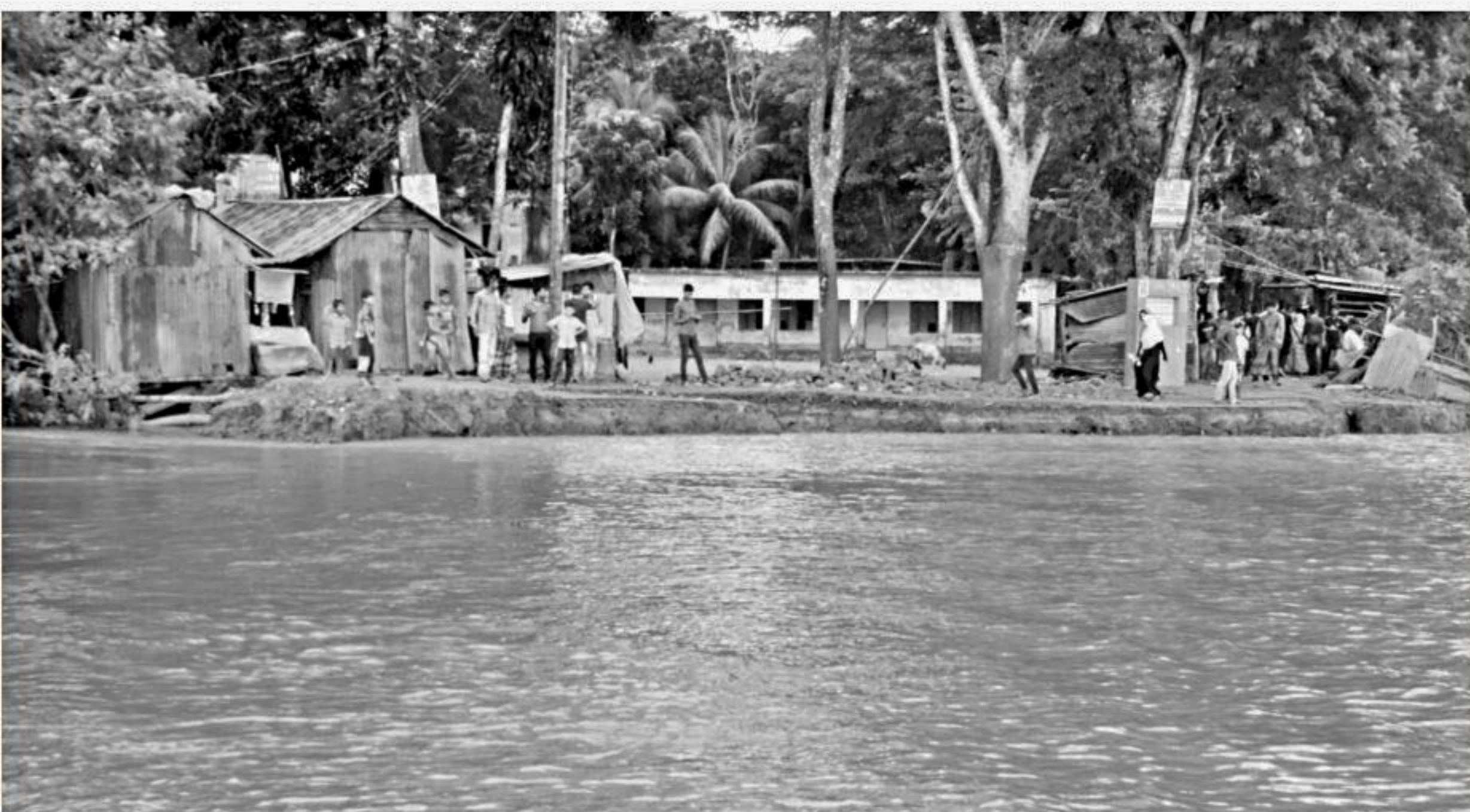
The SSC examinees will be the worst sufferers if the school goes into the river, added the headmaster.

"The school should be shifted as soon as possible, otherwise all the furniture and equipment may be lost if it goes into the river suddenly,"

Ayub Ali said.

"I have told the departments concerned to take steps to protect the school, but to no avail. At the same time we are trying to find a safe place for it," said president of the school managing committee engineer Golam Haider Khan.

"I visited the spot recently and we will inform the higher authorities about the matter," said acting Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Rajapur Md Rafiqul Islam.



The building of Mathbari Union High School at Badurtola Bazar in Rajapur upazila of Jhalakathi faces threat of extinction due to erosion by the Bishkhali river.

PHOTO: STAR

Abducted college student killed in Satkhira

A CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A college student was found dead in a pond near his house in Satkhira Sadar upazila yesterday morning, four days into his abduction.

Gautam Sarkar, 20, only son of Ganesh Sarker of Mahadebnagar village, was a first year student of political science of Satkhira Simanta Adarsha College. Police arrested five people in this connection and Gautam's body was recovered according to their confessional statement, said Firoz Hossain Molla, officer-in-charge (OC) of Satkhira Sadar Police Station.

Gautam might have been strangled to death, the OC said.

The arrestees are Shahadat Morol and Saju Sheikh of Mahadebnagar village and Nazmul Hossain of Surighata village under Satkhira Sadar upazila, and Mohsin Ali and Shaon of Bahera village under Debhata upazila.

After recovery of the body, angry people set fire to the houses of Saju Sheikh, Shahadat Morol and absconding Jamsed Hossain, Sadar Upazila Parishad Chairman Fazlur Rahman said. The victim's father Ganesh, also a member of Ghona union parishad, said his son went missing on December 13 and the abductors demanded a ransom of Tk 10 lakh for his son's release. He said his son went out of a shop near his house after receiving a phone call around 8:30pm when he was watching cricket match on a television at the shop. Ganesh said his son had a feud over a village arbitration.

Ganesh had filed a case accusing six people in connection with the abduction.

LOUHAJANG RIVER RECOVERY

Drive fails to touch influentials

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

The drive to recover the Louhajang river in Tangail is going on, but the influential grabbers are allegedly remaining out of reach.

Around 100 illegal structures have been removed from the river, but some structures, including concrete buildings, belonging to influential people were not removed, locals alleged.

After getting direction from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Tangail district administration started a drive on November 29 to free the river from illegal occupation.

The district administration involved people from all walks of life of the district in the initiative and publicised the drive through social, print and electronic media for drumming up support for it.

Local environmentalists said the river, a lifeline for town dwellers, is almost dead due to mindless grabbing and many influential grabbers have made fake documents for strengthening their occupation.

Though the illegal structures of the poor people were removed during the drive in the last few days, the illegal structures of the influential grabbers, however, were not removed, they alleged.

The illegal encroachment will get legality and the river will turn into a narrow canal if the structures of the influential people are not removed, they added.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Tangail Mahbub Hossain, while briefing local journalists about the progress of the drive yesterday, said they were removing the illegal structures on the river following the records.

The DC said the alleged grabbers showed documents confirming their possession of the structures and the authorities were checking those carefully.

"All illegal structures will be removed from the river gradually," he added.

The administration was initially working to free the 2-kilometre area of the river from Beradoma to Hazraghat under the municipal area, said Assistant Commissioner (land) in Tangail Sadar upazila Sanwarul Haque.

They also planned to dredge the river to revive its flow and construct walkways and a children's park on the freed banks, Sanwarul added.

Originating from Dhaleswari river in Baisnabbari area in Tangail Sadar upazila, the 76-kilometre-long river flows through the district town and falls into the Bangshai river at Jamurki area in Mirzapur upazila of the district.

Cured from addiction, they return to normal life

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

It was a unique occasion as 300 people who recovered from addiction took part in a human chain on Kuakata beach yesterday, ending a two-day programme also joined by local elite, journalists, and social workers.

Sanjog, a network of voluntary organisations helping recovery of addicts, arranged the programme.

Addicted people, after recovery through proper treatment, can contribute well to their families and the society, said speakers at the human chain.

"Addicts who come to our drug treatment centres are provided with treatment including motivational and mental refreshment programmes. Generally they can return to normal life after taking a four-month course," said Mostafizur Rahman Sumon, joint secretary of Sanjog.

Every year a good number of drug addicts return to normal life after taking treatment from 60 centres across the country, he said, adding that programmes including workshops, discussions and cultural functions are also arranged for the purpose.

Dr Piter, president of Sanjog, and Iqbal Masud, its secretary, addressed the programme, among others.

Concrete bridge still a dream

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A concrete bridge over the river Gidari is now nothing but a dream for the villagers at Chawratari in Aditmari upazila as public representatives have only been making promises to build the bridge since country's independence but to no effect yet.

Due to lack of a concrete bridge over the river, more than 900 villagers have to cross a bamboo bridge every day amid risk of accident.

People, especially school kids, are the worst sufferers as the children often fell into the water while crossing the bamboo bridge, said

villagers.

Nazrul Islam, 63, of the bordering village said, they have to go to the mainland at Durgapur bazar through crossing the bamboo bridge at risk.

They have been demanding a concrete bridge over the river since country's liberation but all calls fall on deaf ears, he said.

Farmer Azgar Ali, 33, of the village said his second grader daughter Smrity Akhter fell into the water while crossing the bamboo bridge a week ago, but she was luckily saved as locals rescued her immediately.

The suffering doubled for them when

they have to take any patient to the upazila health complex crossing the bamboo bridge, said Shamsul Islam, 55, another resident of the village.

Member of Durgapur Union Parishad (UP) Mostakim Ali said "We tried several times to build a concrete bridge over the river but failed as Indian Border Security Force (BSF) did not allow it."

UP Chairman Salequzzaman Pramanik said they are trying their best to communicate with BSF through BCB for getting permission to build a concrete bridge over the river.

DINAJPUR, NATORE

Two die in land disputes

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Two people were killed in clashes over land disputes in Dinajpur and Natore yesterday.

A man was killed and three others were injured in a clash in Phulbari upazila of Dinajpur, reports our correspondent.

The dead was Liakat Ali, 38, son of Mosir Uddin of Harharia village.

Police said there was a longstanding conflict between Liakat Ali and his neighbour Aftab Uddin over the land.

The duo locked in an altercation over the issue on Friday afternoon.

At one stage, family members of Aftab started beating Liakat Ali with bamboo sticks. Three other people were also injured

when they tried to resist the attackers. Liakat later died at Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

A murder case was filed, said OC Moked Ali of Phulbari Police Station.

In Natore, a man was killed and four others were injured in a clash between two rival groups at Kuchkuri village in Naldanga upazila, reports our correspondent.

The deceased was Abdus Salam Mollah, 45, son of Abdul Hakim Mollah of Chandpur village.

Police said there was a longstanding conflict between Khazura UP Chairman Khalilur Rahman and Khazura union Awami League secretary Sohorab Hossain over grabbing 11 acres of khas land.

Pabitra gets tiller after Star report

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Hard-pressed elderly farmer Pabitra Das of Borodal village in Kulaura upazila under the district has got a power tiller, thanks to the benevolence of Kohinoor Chemical Company Ltd.

"After reading the caption story titled 'Hard-pressed, They Fight to Survive' in The Daily Star on December 9, our company authorities decided to give Pabitra the tiller," said Golam Kibria Sarker, vice-president (Brand) of the company.

"We feel happy to make the donation as part of our social responsibility," he said after handing over the tiller worth Tk 78,000 to Pabitra Das yesterday afternoon.

"I am grateful to The Daily Star and Kohinoor Chemical Company for the great help," Pabitra said after getting what has now become his prized possession.

"Publishing reports like this will help to create public awareness about our social conditions," said Pius Nanuar, regional manager of Aloghar project under Caritas in Sylhet region.

Pabitra Das, 65, with his nephew Santo Kumar Das, 11, engaged in tilling the farmland manually as he cannot afford to buy any bull, let alone tractors.

Santo appeared at the Primary Terminal Examinations from Kanehat Government Primary School this year.



Pabitra Das, second from right, receives a power tiller donated to him as part of the social responsibility of Kohinoor Chemical Company Ltd yesterday afternoon. Inset: The Daily Star photo on December 9, which inspired the company authorities to extend helping hand to the poor elderly farmer at Borodal village in Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar.

PHOTO: STAR

Pabna freed 2 days after Dec 16 victory

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The people of Pabna tasted freedom on this day in 1971, two days after the nation won the final victory against the Pakistan occupation forces on December 16.

Baby Islam, a freedom fighter, said even after the victory on December 16, the Pakistan army in Pabna continued preventing the freedom fighters from entering the town.

On December 18, following assurance from the Indian forces, the Pakistani troops gathered at the compound of the then Wapda and surrendered to Indian Army officer Captain Nanda.

The freedom fighters then entered the district headquarters and hoisted the national flag. Baby added.

