



The broken bridge on a Jhalakathi canal in Sadar upazila has been lying unrepainted for about ten years, thanks to the authorities' negligence to reconstruct it. The photo was taken recently.

Bridge lying broken for 10 years!

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Jhalakathi*

A broken bridge on a Jhalakathi canal in Sadar upazila has been lying unrepainted for about ten years, much to the suffering of thousands of people.

The bridge was damaged in 2007 when a sand-laden cargo vessel rammed into it, said local farmer Abdur Rashid, adding that it was constructed in 1999 by the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED).

The bridge links Jhalakathi Sadar and Swarupkathi of Pirojpur, as well as Banaripara of Barisal.

The broken part of the bridge is still lying in the canal, disturbing movement of hundreds of goods-laden trawlers that cross the canal every day.

The canal is used as a shortcut for going to Swarupkathi, a renowned business centre, from Jhalakathi, said Rafiqul Islam, an agro-businessman of the area.

Every day, farmers have to pay extra to cross the canal on ferries because most of them have their lands across the canal, farmers said.

"I and some of my workers cross the canal four times a day, and we have to pay Tk

5 per head, per trip," said Md Shahid, another farmer.

"My large trawler cannot pass through the canal due to the broken portion of the bridge," said Nurul Alam, a trawler driver.

"The road was a good source of earning for us because passengers used the shortcut for going to Banaripara or Swarupkathi, but our income has decreased after the bridge broke," said Saidur Rahman, a rental motor-bike rider of Jhalakathi college intersection area.

"We informed the authorities concerned several times, but to no avail," villagers said.

Upazila engineer of LGED Md Sharifuddaula said a proposal for reconstructing the bridge was sent to the higher authorities two months ago.

"The broken portion of the bridge will be removed as soon as possible after a meeting of the upazila law and disciplinary committee," he added.

"We repeatedly informed the higher authorities but they did not allot any fund for the bridge. That is why we could not remove the broken bridge," said Md Selim Sarkar, executive engineer of LGED, who joined three years ago.

Quality seed crisis worries potato growers in N-dists

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

Acute crisis of quality seeds in the ongoing potato cultivation season has become a cause of concern for the potato growers in eight northern districts under Rangpur region as they are not getting expected production.

Potato growers in the region are worried as Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) could not supply sufficient quantity of the seeds in the face of their growing demand.

According to Rangpur regional office of Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) the demand for potato seeds in eight northern districts is 2.5 lakh tonnes this year but BADC supplied only 5,000 tonnes.

Beside, farmers produced about 30 percent seeds of the total demand while the rest are purchased from the local markets.

are their only alternative source.

Farmer Bashir Uddin in Dinajpur Sadar upazila said, "All the seeds available in the local markets are packed in good-looking packets to attract the farmers, but its quality is really a worry for the farmers."

An official of BADC in Rangpur said they have taken various steps to stop marketing of substandard seeds in the region.

The government is taking measures to import quality seeds from reputed countries through BADC and the farmers would get BT brinjal and disease resistant jute seeds though the corporation within the next three to four years, the official added.

Hamidur Rahman, director of DAE in Rangpur, acknowledged the crisis of quality seeds in the Rangpur region, adding that they are trying to resolve the crisis in a short time.

Just for a mobile!

Friends kill SSC examinee

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Mymensingh*

A Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinee was killed just for a cellphone in Ram Babu Road area of the town on Friday.

Police yesterday detained one Bappi, 18, for interrogation, said Md Kamrul Islam, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station.

The victim was Ishtiaq Ahmed Tonmoy, 15, an SSC examinee of Science Group at City Collegiate School in the town, and son of Farid Ahmed of Sherpur. He used to live with his mother in the town's Naumohol area.

Quoting family members and local people, the OC said Tonmoy had an altercation with some of his friends over his new smart mobile phone set.

When Tonmoy was sitting in the area around 6:30pm, his friends pressed him to give his new mobile set but he did not. Angered by this, they later stabbed Tonmoy following a scuffle.

Critically injured Tonmoy died at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, police said.



Miah Mashir Rahman

Badly injured by criminals, a freedom fighter is groaning in pain at Magura Sadar Hospital.

Freedom fighter Miah Mashir Rahman, living with his wife at Takhalpur in Magura's Sreepur upazila, became victim of the brutality on Friday evening but no case could be filed yet as the criminals gave death threat to him and his family members.

Recently a group of local miscreants felled and looted trees worth about Tk 3 lakh from a 10-decimal land of Mashir Rahman.

As he protested the incident, the cohorts of his rival Rauf member attacked Mashir when he was returning from Sreepur on Friday evening.

The criminals beat him with hammer and sticks, causing injuries on different parts of his body.

He is now undergoing treatment at a cabin of Magura Sadar Hospital.

Rezaul Islam, officer-in-charge of Sreepur Police Station, said action will be taken if a complaint is lodged.

Tortured FF in hospital, family under open sky

Ex-Jamaat, now AL leader commits the crime

S DILIP ROY, *LaMonirhat*

Injured and ousted from home by land grabbers two weeks ago, freedom fighter Farid Uddin is still reeling from the trauma, lying at the bed of Hatibandha Upazila Health Complex in the district.

"To occupy 10 decimals of household land of freedom fighter Farid Uddin, 73, local muscleman Shamsul Islam Sufi and his men attacked him and his family members twice at their Bichhondoi village home of Dawabari union in Hatibandha upazila on December 12 and 14 nights," said Rezaul Karim, officer-in-charge of Hatibandha Police Station.

"The criminals injured the freedom fighter and vandalised and looted the house. A case was lodged against eight named accused and 5-6 unnamed accused in this regard and police have already arrested

three people including the main culprit," the OC said.

The arrestees are Shamsul Islam Sufi, 47, son of late Soleman Goni, his younger brother Saiful Islam Manik, 43, and his relative Md Abdul Haque, 38, of Bichhondoi village.

"I purchased the land from a resident of the village ten years ago and the man is still alive. But suddenly Shamsul Islam Sufi claimed ownership of our homestead land," said Farid Uddin.

"They attacked us with sharp weapons. They vandalised and looted assets from our houses during the two attacks. We are passing days under the open sky with our remaining belongings on a cropland," said Farid's wife Achhiya Begum.

"The attackers' men are giving death threat to us to withdraw the case," she said.

At a protest meeting organised by

freedom fighters of Hatibandha yesterday, Upazila Mukti Joddha Sangsad Commander Abdul Gafur warned of a tougher programme if police fail to arrest all the culprits involved in the crime by December 27.

"The main culprit, Shamsul Islam Sufi earlier served as secretary of Jamaat-e-Islami's ward No 5 unit under Dawabari union for long. He joined Awami League and became its ward unit secretary in 2012 through managing upazila AL leaders," he said.

The union unit AL president Delawar Rahman Babla and 5 No ward AL president Joynal Hossain confirmed Sufi's present and past political positions.

Hatibandha OC Rezaul Karim said police assured security to the affected freedom fighter's family and are trying to arrest the remaining accused, who went into hiding.



Household items of freedom fighter Farid Uddin lie on a cropland at Bichhondoi village in Hatibandha of Lalmonirhat after land grabbers assaulted and ousted him along with other family members two weeks ago. Inset, injured Farid Uddin at the local upazila health complex.



Two masons risking their lives work on the ninth floor of an under-construction building owned by a housing company without taking safety measures in Sutrapur area of Bogra town. The photo was taken on Wednesday.

Balijuri school centenary celebrations today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Jamalpur*

Balijuri FM High School, a famous non-government educational institution in Jamalpur's Madarganj upazila, is going to celebrate its 100th founding anniversary today.

Established in 1915, about 15,000 students have so far passed the entrance or its equivalent SSC examinations from the institution, which is one of the five century-old schools in the district.

The institution started its journey on January 1, with only a few teachers, including Babu Amulya Chakrabarty as its headmaster.

School sources said only 11 students sat for the entrance exam for the first time in 1920 with a 100 percent pass rate.

GANG RAPE IN PABNA

Four arrested for assisting rapists

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

Police yesterday arrested four people in connection with assisting the men who gang-raped three women, including a mother and her daughter, in Chatmohar upazila of Pabna.

However, the main culprits are yet to be held three days into the incident, said Inspector of Chatmohar Police Station Anwarul Islam, also investigation officer of the case.

The arrestees are Rosina Khatun, Shima Khatun, Masud Rana and Saiful Islam of Rampur village in the upazila.

The three women were reportedly gang-raped on Wednesday night in Chatmohar upazila, said police.

They are residents of Rashid Colony in the same area and two of them are workers at a garment factory in Ashulia in Dhaka.

The incident took place about a week after the two women, aged between 25 and 30, along with the teenage daughter of one of them, came to visit a former female co-worker in Rampur village under Haripur union of the upazila, said Ekramul Haque, officer-in-charge of Chatmohar Police Station.

A group of criminals, 5 to 10 in number, reportedly kidnapped the three from the house they were visiting and raped them after taking them to Gojargari Beel area, said Ekramul Haque, officer-in-charge of the police station.

On Thursday, one of the victims filed a case, accusing five named and several unnamed attackers, the OC said, adding that they are raiding different areas to arrest the main culprits.

'Remove Zianagar FF commander'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pirojpur*

A section of freedom fighters (FFs) in Zianagar upazila of the district blamed another section of FFs for the presence of upazila parishad Chairman Masood Sayeed, also son of convicted war criminal Delawar Hossain Sayeed, at a Victory Day programme where freedom fighters were given gifts.

At a human chain in front of upazila Awami League office around 11:00am, speakers demanded removal of present upazila unit commander Belayet Hossain from the post for not trying to prevent when Masood was giving gifts to the FFs at the programme.

Former commander of the district unit of Muktijoddha Sangsad Fazlur Rahman Senu, and former upazila unit commanders Abdul Latif Howlader and Mahabubul Alam Howlader, attended there.