

Kid falls into ditch, dies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A minor boy died on Tuesday when he fell into a ditch created by sand lifting with a dredger in Mirpur under Sadullapur upazila of the district.

The victim was Shihab Mia, 9, a Class III student of local Mirpur Kindergarten School.

Locals recovered the body from the ditch at night.

Islam Mia, father of Shihab, said his son went out of his house to search for their pet ducks, but did not return home until 9:00pm. Shihab's relatives searched everywhere but failed to find him. Locals spotted the body of Shihab in the sand in the water logged ditch.

Locals said Jamalpur Union Parishad Chairman Nuruzzaman Mandol installed a locally made dredger for lifting sand to fill the land of his under-construction rice mill.

Random lifting of sand created a deep ditch, which is widening gradually, locals said. They demanded an immediate end to sand lifting from the ditch that caused the untimely death of the schoolboy.

Locals said the chairman is an influential person and a local leader of the ruling party, so nobody dares to complain against him. Despite several appeals to the upazila administration, no action has been taken to stop the sand lifting, they alleged.

Admitting that he is lifting sand from the ditch, Nuruzzaman said the boy accidentally fell into the ditch and drowned.

Shihab's father filed a case regarding the matter with Sadullapur Police Station yesterday.

The matter is being investigated, said Farhad Emrul Quaesh, officer-in-charge of the police station.

OMS SUSPENSION Flood-hit haor people frustrated

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Suspension of Open Market Sale (OMS) has frustrated the flood-affected haor people in Sunamganj and Moulvibazar.

The suspension from July 1 in the two districts has deprived them of the opportunity to purchase rice or flour at cheaper rates.

Farmer Ali Ahmad of Telipara village in Dharmapasha upazila said, "After waiting for one day, I got rice at Tk 15 per kg in Moidhanagar market. If the sale is stopped, we will face a crisis. I do not have a stock of rice after my Boro paddy was washed away."

Member secretary of 'Haor Bachao, Sunamganj Bachao Andolon' Bindu Talukdar said it is very sad that OMS has been suspended. If it is stopped, many people in the haor area will have nothing to eat as farmers do not have money to buy rice at higher price, he said. He urged the government to continue OMS for the people of Sunamganj haor.

Akbar Hossain, a dealer in Jamalganj upazila, said the poor families, including farmers, were given the opportunity to buy rice at low price after Boro crops got submerged in the water. If that is stopped, many people will not be able to buy rice from the market at higher price, he added.

District Food Controller (DFO) Md Zakaria Mustafa said 42 dealers were appointed in Sunamganj on April 9 to sell 42 tonnes of OMS rice and flour in the open market after Boro paddy was damaged, adding that a person could buy a maximum of five kg of rice at Tk 15 per kg or five kg of flour at Tk 17 per kg.

A total of 110 dealers were appointed at every union on the prime minister's order on May 9, meeting the demand of the farmers and different organisations, the DFO said. From then, around 22,000 poor families in the district got the opportunity to buy five kg of rice or flour at low price every day, he added.

Zakaria said the programme was launched by the ministry of food and the food department only for April and May. It was extended till June 30 by the ministry, he said, adding that he did not know if the programme will be resumed.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Sabirul Islam told this correspondent that they have sent a letter to the higher authorities for continuation of the OMS programme for the affected families.

Tofail Islam, DC of Moulvibazar told this correspondent that the higher authorities suspended the programme in the district.



Hapless locals look on as the Meghna river devours its bank including a rice mill at Shakhati village in Brahmanbaria's Sarail upazila.

PHOTO: MASUK HRIDOY

River erosion wreaks havoc

Dyke collapses in Lalmonirhat, rice mills, houses go into Meghna riverbed in B'baria, villagers join voluntary service to prevent erosion in Barisal, Jhalakathi school under threat



From left, Mathbari Union High School in Jhalakathi is on the verge of collapse, flood control embankment on the Teesta river collapses in Lalmonirhat, lawmaker Sheikh Md Tipu Sultan inaugurates villagers' work to construct a bamboo parcopine to save Rahmatpur-Mirganj road from erosion by the Sugandha river in Barisal.

PHOTO: STAR

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Massive land erosion threatens dwellings and set-ups in different areas of a few districts as rivers turned turbulent during the ongoing rains.

The Meghna river has devoured five rice mills and five dwelling houses in two villages under Panishwar union of Brahmanbaria's Sarail upazila during the last couple of days.

The Meghna river started erosion at Shakhati and Palpara villages in the upazila on Saturday afternoon, locals said, adding that five rice mills at Shakhati village and five houses at neighbouring Palpara were washed away by the river.

Hundreds of families in Shakhati and Palpara villages are in panic due to the erosion, said Mostafa Miah, former member of

Panishwar union parishad.

In July last year, 10 families left the village as the Meghna eroded their dwelling houses, he said.

Necessary action will be taken to prevent erosion in the area, said Iqbal Hossain, Sarail upazila nirbahi officer (acting).

Around 50 metres of the flood control embankment at Gobordhan village of Mahishkhocha union in Aditmari upazila under Lalmonirhat have collapsed due to erosion by the Teesta river in the last five days.

"The embankment kept eight villages safe from floods for the last ten years. But around 50-metre area of it set with RCC blocks have collapsed. There is fear of further collapse and serious erosion if immediate steps are not taken," said Fazlar Rahman, 55, of the village.

Mosaddeque Hossain

Chowdhury, chairman of Mahishkhocha union parishad, said Water Development Board officials assured taking necessary measures to save the dyke immediately and he helped the officials to collect old RCC blocks for dumping those at the vulnerable spot.

Mohammad Al-Mamun, sub-divisional engineer of WDB in Lalmonirhat, said they have already collected 150 RCC blocks and will collect more 150 blocks by Friday to dump at the spot to save the dyke from collapse.

Over 100 people of Khudrakathi village in Rahmatpur union under Babuganj upazila are constructing bamboo parcopine (a specially made bamboo-structure used for preventing erosion) at their own initiative to protect Rahmatpur-Mirganj-Muladi road from erosion by the Sugandha river.

"Erosion washed away my

house, farmland and trees in the last two years. This year, erosion has taken a serious turn, threatening Rahmatpur-Mirganj-Muladi road," said Khalil Mia, a van driver.

The river that devoured farmlands and houses last year is within 50 feet of the village now, said Mahabub Hossain, a trader and coordinator of the programme.

The villagers decided to construct the bamboo parcopine at their own initiative and over 100 people joined the work as the authorities did not respond to their request for protection against the erosion, he said.

Executive Engineer of Barisal WDB Md Abu Sayed said, "Some emergency work will be done in the erosion affected areas soon. We are also giving logistic support for construction of the bamboo parcopine. A project for prevention of erosion by the Sugandha river

has been sent to the head office."

Around 400 students of Mathbari Union High School at Badurtola in Rajapur upazila under Jhalakathi are attending their classes amid fear of erosion by the Bishkhali river.

Around half of the school ground has already gone into the riverbed.

Meantime, a bazar, several houses and about a hundred acres of agricultural land have gone into the river.

"I communicated with different departments to protect the school but no step has been taken yet. We are trying to manage a land for safe transfer of the school," said engineer Golam Haider Khan, president of the school managing committee.

Our correspondents from Brahmanbaria, Lalmonirhat, Barisal and Jhalakathi contributed to writing this report.



Mayapa Para Government Primary School at risk of landslide in Dighinala upazila of Khagrachhari. Another primary school in the upazila under threat of collapse.

PHOTO: STAR

Landslide fear shuts 2 Khagrachhari schools

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

The authorities on Tuesday announced vacation for the students of two government primary schools in Dighinala upazila following heavy rainfall that may trigger landslides anytime in the area.

They are Mayapa Para Government Primary School and Chamrachi Government Primary School.

They made the announcement as students of the schools are at risk of landslides due to heavy rain, said Dighinala upazila primary education officer Minhaj Uddin.

"Informed by the school teachers, we ordered them to announce vacation," he said.

At least twenty spots of Khagrachhari-Dighinala road are at risk of landslides. Authorities of Roads and Highways (R&H) Department are trying to repair the broken spots of the road by dumping sandbags.

This is the only road to go to tourist spot Sajek Valley in Dighinala upazila of Khagrachhari and Baghaichari and Langadu upazilas of Rangamati district.

Executive Engineer of R&H in Khagrachhari Md Mosles Uddin Chowdhury said the road division is working to keep the road normal.

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Youth killed in B'baria clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A youth was killed and 12 others were injured in a clash between two groups of people over a land dispute in Sarail upazila of the district yesterday.

The dead was identified as Kalu Mia, 30, son of Molai Miah of Shakhaiti village.

Witnesses and police said the victim's cousin Milan Mia had a conflict over a piece of land with Abu Taher of the same village.

The one-hour clash began around 10:00am between the supporters of Milan and Taher, leaving 12 injured from both sides. The villagers used sharp weapons during the clash.

Locals rescued Kalu and brought him to Sadar Hospital in a critical condition where on-duty doctor declared him dead. The injured were admitted to Sarail Upazila Health Complex from where they escaped to avoid arrest, the locals added.

Headmaster jailed for using fake certificates

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhalakathi

A court here yesterday sentenced a school headmaster to 12 years' imprisonment for using false educational certificates to get the job.

Judge Abu Shamim Azad of the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court passed the judgment in presence of the teacher.

The convict is Ruhul Amin, headmaster of Depbra Girls' High School in Nalchity upazila of the district, said Assistant Public Prosecutor Sajib Kumar Biswas.

Jessore education board confirmed that Ruhul's SSC, HSC and graduation certificates were fake, Sajib said.

Upazila Education Officer AKM Harun ur Rashid filed a case on June 26 in 2011 against the headmaster for using fake certificates.

After investigation, police submitted the charge sheet to the court on October 10 in 2011.

The court formed the charge against the teacher on April 8 in 2013.

LAND ACQUISITION Protest continues in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

The char people of Sadar upazila said they will never accept the eviction of around 60,000 people for the interest of a few influential persons.

They said this at a rally held yesterday at char Bhawanipur village in Sadar upazila. The earlier list of 1,220-acres of land for development of Mymensingh division was scrapped to save the land of influential persons, the char people alleged.

They also demanded the immediate release of the names of the influential persons in the first acquisition list.

Protesting the 'unfair' and 'motivated' land acquisition for development of Mymensingh division, thousands of char people of six villages in the upazila have been continuing their movement for the last 10 months under the banner of Basatbhita Rokhha Committee.

Reiterating their demands for a fair list, they also vowed they would spoil 'the deep-rooted conspiracy' of the influential quarters.

They have given an alternative list, and if it is not accepted they will foil any move of the administration, they warned.

At a view-exchange meeting on June 21, Divisional Commissioner GM Salehuddin said the first list of 1,220 acres of land had to be changed due to risk of 'earthquake, severe water logging and traffic congestion' at Sadar's China More area, but not to save the land of some secretaries.

Terming 'earthquake risk' and other reasons a joke on the mostly illiterate char people, they also alleged that the list was scrapped for the interest of vested groups, not for risk of earthquakes.

The administration first prepared a list of 1,220 acres of land for divisional development but the list was later cancelled and a new list of 4,366 acres was released for reasons best known to the authorities concerned, they said.

Presided over by Siddiqur Rahman, the meeting was addressed among others by Dr Harun-ur-Rashid, Md Shahidul Islam, Golam Kibria, Abul Monsur Ahmed, Prof Syed Mosharraf Hossain and Kazi Rafiqul Islam.