



Erosion by the Jamuna river takes a serious turn in different unions of Manikganj's Daulatpur upazila in the last nine days, devouring 350 homesteads.

PHOTO: STAR

People pass days under open sky

350 houses washed away, dyke collapses due to Jamuna erosion in Manikganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Vast areas of Daulatpur upazila in the district have been devoured by the Jamuna river during the last nine days after the collapse of a flood protection embankment due to erosion.

More than 350 houses were washed away at Charkatari, Bachamara and Baghutia unions in the upazila, said Daulatpur Upazila Nirbahi Officer Kaniz Fatema. She said around 5000 people of 1000 families were affected due to the erosion. Many erosion-hit people are passing their days under the open sky in utter uncertainty, she added.

Fatema said steps would be taken in coordination with Water Development Board (WDB) and the district and upazila administrations to help the affected people.

The temporary embankment was built by the WDB before the rainy season this year with GO bags at Tk 1.48 crore to prevent erosion on the east bank of the river at Charkatari union, Sub-Divisional Engineer Abdul Hamid said.

Hundreds of houses, educational institutions, mosques, madrasas, bazars, roads, ghats, union parishad office and land office in Lalpur, Kathaltali, Charkatari-Mondalpara, Board Bazar and Charkatari Bazar of the union are

under threat of erosion due to collapse of the newly-built embankment over a week ago.

This correspondent saw the people were moving away from their homesteads on Wednesday due to erosion. Some people took shelter in others' land and are passing their days under the open sky along with their family members.

Abdul Khalek Mondal of Charkatari-Mondalpara said they are facing untold sufferings with family members due to shortage of food and drinking water.

Alamgir Hossain of Board Bazar said the river devoured his house two days ago and they are passing their days under the open sky.

Charkatari Union Parishad Chairman Abdul Berek Mondal said the Charkatari Health and Family Planning Welfare Centre, two primary schools, hundreds of houses and farmlands were washed away by the Jamuna. He urged the authorities concerned to take immediate steps to check the erosion.

Engineer Hamid said they visited the erosion-affected areas and measures will be taken on an emergency basis to prevent further erosion. They have written to the authorities for allocation of money for the work, he added.

Cops' power!

Plain-clothes men assault couple on street, rob them of money, motorcycle

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Plain-clothes policemen allegedly assaulted a couple on the street at Hili Bazar in Hakimpur upazila under the district and took away Tk 8,500 cash and a motorcycle from them on Friday evening.

The victims are Abdur Razzak, 37, and his wife Laboni Akter of Dalardargah village under Nawabganj upazila of Dinajpur.

Razzak, son of Mobarak Ali, runs a cosmetic shop at Dalardargah Bazar.

"We went to Hili Bazar in Hakimpur on our motorcycle for buying cosmetics for my shop on Friday afternoon. When it was nearing evening, three plain-clothes men asked us to go with them," Razzak told this correspondent.

"When we declined and wanted to know their identity, the plain-clothes policemen led by Sub Inspector Rakib Hasan of Hakimpur Police Station handcuffed me after slapping several times. As my wife came forward to protect me, the policemen slapped her on the face and pushed her hard," said Razzak over phone.

Then the plain-clothes policemen took away Tk 8,500 and my motorcycle worth Tk 1,35,000 and left the spot after unlocking the handcuff. Everything happened in front of

public and there are many witnesses," he said.

The assault of plain-clothes policemen triggered an outrage in the upazila on Friday night.

Protesting the assault on the couple, Delwar Hossain, secretary of Bangla Hili Hat O Bazaar Babosayee Samiti, said, "The law enforcers committed the crime although the High Court earlier issued an order, restricting raids by plain-clothes policemen."

Jamil Hossain, mayor of Hakimpur municipality and advisory member of the traders' body, condemned the attack.

This correspondent could not reach SI Rakib Hasan for his comments despite repeated attempts.

Abdus Sabur, officer in charge (OC) of Hakimpur Police Station, said, "Police did not assault anybody. Informed that the said motorcycle was a smuggled one, a team of five policemen including two in uniform raided Hili Bazar and seized the vehicle."

Md Anis, bother-in-law of Abdur Razzak, approached the police on Saturday with the documents of the seized motorcycle, but the latter claimed the papers to be faked.

A case will be filed against Abdur Razzak for possessing a smuggled motorcycle, said OC Abdus Sabur.

Bumper yield, low price

Jackfruit growers worried as they are not getting expected prices

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Jackfruit growers are worried as they are not getting expected prices in the local markets in the district due to lack of customers.

Farmers said there was a bumper yield of jackfruit this year, but they are not happy as they are compelled to sell their produce at low price due to lack of customers in the area. They do not need to spend money for producing jackfruits as the seasonal juicy fruit is produced naturally without using any chemical fertiliser and pesticide, they said.

Now, one small jackfruit sells at Tk 5 to Tk 7 while it was Tk 10 to Tk 15 last year, a medium one sells at Tk 10 to Tk 15 against Tk 20 to Tk 25 last year, and a big one sells at Tk 15 to Tk 25 against Tk 35 to Tk 40 last year, growers said.

Department of Agriculture Extension Deputy Director Bidyu Bhushon Roy said there are around 300 jackfruit orchards in the district and each orchard covers one to three acres of land. Besides, almost every house in the rural areas has a jackfruit tree. Each tree yields 20-150 jackfruits, he added.

Ranjit Chandra Sarker, 55, of Kakina village in Kaliganj upazila said he got 6,400 jackfruits from 160 trees on two acres of land, which he sold for Tk 64,000. "I earned Tk 1,25,000 from selling jackfruits last year, but I earned less this year due to low prices



A truck loaded with jackfruits gets ready to start from Uttar Saptana village in Lalmonirhat Sadar.

PHOTO: STAR

in the local market," he added.

"Jackfruit is our national fruit, but local people are not interested in eating the fruit for fear of digestion problems. So there are very few customers for jackfruit in the local market this year," said Amzad Hossain, 50, a farmer at Kulaghat village in Sadar upazila.

Rafiqul Islam, 46, a fruit trader in the

town, said he sends around ten trucks of jackfruit to different parts of the country every day. "We sell one piece of jackfruit for Tk 20 to Tk 30 and earn Tk 4 to Tk 5 per piece after meeting all the expenditure, including transport cost," he said, adding that there are around 100 traders sending jackfruits to other places from here.

EARLY MARRIAGE 17 fined

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A mobile court yesterday fined 17 people Tk 1.55 lakh for arranging marriage of an underage schoolgirl in Ghatail upazila of the district.

The bride's father Helal was fined Tk 40,000, groom Ashraful Tk 20,000, four other people Tk 10,000 each and 11 others Tk 5,000 each.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Abul Kashem Mohammad Shaheen led the court.

The 17 people would have to serve three months in jail if they fail to pay the fines.

Helena Khatun, 14, a class-VI student of Brahmanashan Khadiza Asia Girls' High School and daughter of Helal Uddin of Dhopajani village, was going to be married to Ashraful Islam, son of late Arshed Ali of Norjona village Friday night.

Transport strike protesting BCL attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Transport workers enforced an indefinite strike on Benapole-Jessore highway from yesterday protesting assault on four fellow workers allegedly by some unruly Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) men on Friday.

All kinds of vehicular movement remained stopped as the workers placed a barricade on the Benapole-Jessore highway demanding punishment of the culprits.



This speedboat meant for using by tourist police to rescue people facing danger in Kuakata sea beach area are often rented to adventure loving visitors, although such joyrides on the fast moving boat may lead to fatalities of the people having a bath there.

PHOTO: STAR

Kuakata tourist police jet ski for rent

Only available rescue vehicle used instead as tourist attraction

SOHRAB HOSSAIN with ANDREW EAGLE

In periods of bad weather at Kuakata beach, the speedboats that could normally assist in rescue operations are unavailable. At such times the sole rescue vehicle is supposed to be a jet ski, locally known as a 'water bike,' operated by the tourist police. But rather than being at the ready to assist any swimmer, the jet ski is rented out for joyrides.

"I enjoyed a jet ski tour for Tk 300," says Rafiqul Islam, a tourist from Narayanganj visiting Kuakata zero point.

"My son who studies in class seven recently paid Tk 200 for a five minute jet ski tour," says Lija Akhter, a beachgoer from Patuakhali town.

Formed at the end of 2013 to ensure tourist safety and security, the tourist police began

operations at Kuakata in 2015. With 45 officers and based in rented premises near the beach-front, the police were allocated a speedboat and a jet ski to operate as search and rescue vehicles.

But the jet ski has become a popular leisure activity for visiting thrill-seekers. Beyond making the vehicle not always available for rescues, the jet ski is itself a hazard to both swimmers and inexperienced riders.

"When the jet ski moves through the bathing zone at high speed," says Md Belal Khalifa, president of the Kuakata speedboat owners' association, "it's a danger to bathers." He also confirmed that the fifteen speedboats in the area are out-of-service during periods of rough weather.

Tourist police assistant sub-inspector Md Saidul Islam says the jet ski is being used for rescues. "On the day after Eid we rescued three

tourists who got into trouble while swimming," he says, noting that the vehicle is operated by a local youth trained by Yamaha, the Japanese company who manufactures the jet skis.

"If you wish to know about jet ski rental," Saidul continues, "you can speak to the assistant superintendent of the tourist police Abdul Karim who organised for the youth to drive it."

The assistant superintendent says the vehicle is used to patrol the beach area to ensure the safety of swimmers. "A local youth drives it," he says, "because we don't have anyone trained to drive it well. And tourists can enjoy a ride on it."

The Daily Star attempted to speak to the youth involved but he declined to comment.

"A government vehicle shouldn't be used for rental purposes," said one tourist who requested anonymity.

Case under Sec 57

Withdrawal of case against journo, Jubo League man demanded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Cross section of people joined a human chain in front of central Shaheed Miner in Mathbaria upazila headquarters in the district yesterday protesting the suing of two men, including a journalist, under Section 57 of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act.

Speakers at the programme under the banner of Mathbaria Press Club demanded withdrawal of the case against Ajmal Haque Helal, senior reporter of daily Sokaler Khabor, and former vice-president of Dhaka Reporters' Unity, and local Jubo League man Nurul Amin Rasel.

They also demanded scrapping of Section 57 of ICT Act, saying that it is being used for harassing people, especially journalists.

On July 4, locals brought out a protest procession against independent lawmaker Dr Rustom Ali Farazi, following allegation of drawing bill of Tk 30 crore of different projects of Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) without doing the stipulated works and the news was published in different media.

Over the issue, Helal and Rasel made comments on their Facebook pages and uploaded photos of the protest procession.

On Thursday night, Md Faruk Hossain, a lecturer of Dr Rustom Ali Farazi College founded by the lawmaker in Mathbaria, filed the case.

Upazila Awami League Vice-president Ariful Haque, Mathbaria Press Club President Abdus Salam Azadi and General Secretary Zillur Rahman spoke at the programme.

BGB MAN MURDER CASE

4 of 17 accused held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Four of 17 accused in the BGB member murder case were arrested in Patgram upazila of the district on Friday.

The arrestees are Saheb Ali, son of Aynal Haque, Abu Taleb, son of Abdur Rashid, Sona Miah, son of Durjon Ali, and Rafiqul Islam, son of Abdul Gafur of Katipara village in the upazila.

They were later produced before Judicial Magistrate's Court that sent them to jail, said Officer-in-Charge Aboni Shankar Kar of Patgram Police Station.

Nayek Sheikh Abdul Wahed, commander of Dahagram Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) camp, filed the case, accusing 17 people, said the OC.

BGB men arrested the four and they were later handed over to Patgram police, said Nayek Abdul Wahed.

On June 27, Lance Nayek Sumon Miah went missing in the Teesta river at Abulher Chak of Dahagram while he was chasing a group of cattle smugglers.

The following day, Indian Border Security Force recovered BGB man Sumon's body from the river on the Indian side.