

## Padma erodes 12 houses in five hours

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Twelve homesteads were devoured by the Padma river under Char Bhadrason upazila of the district within five hours on Wednesday night.

Local said, "Erosion at MP Dangi area started at 7:00pm on Wednesday, and the river washed away 12 homesteads, two acres of croplands and 150 trees within five hours."

Alauddin Sheikh, 45, a victim of river erosion, said, "I had lost my homestead twice before, now I do not know where to go."

Sheikh Ismail, another victim, said, "We shifted our house when the erosion started."

Sadar Union Parishad Chairman Azad Khan said, "Homesteads, croplands and trees were washed away by the river within five hours."

## Woman electrocuted

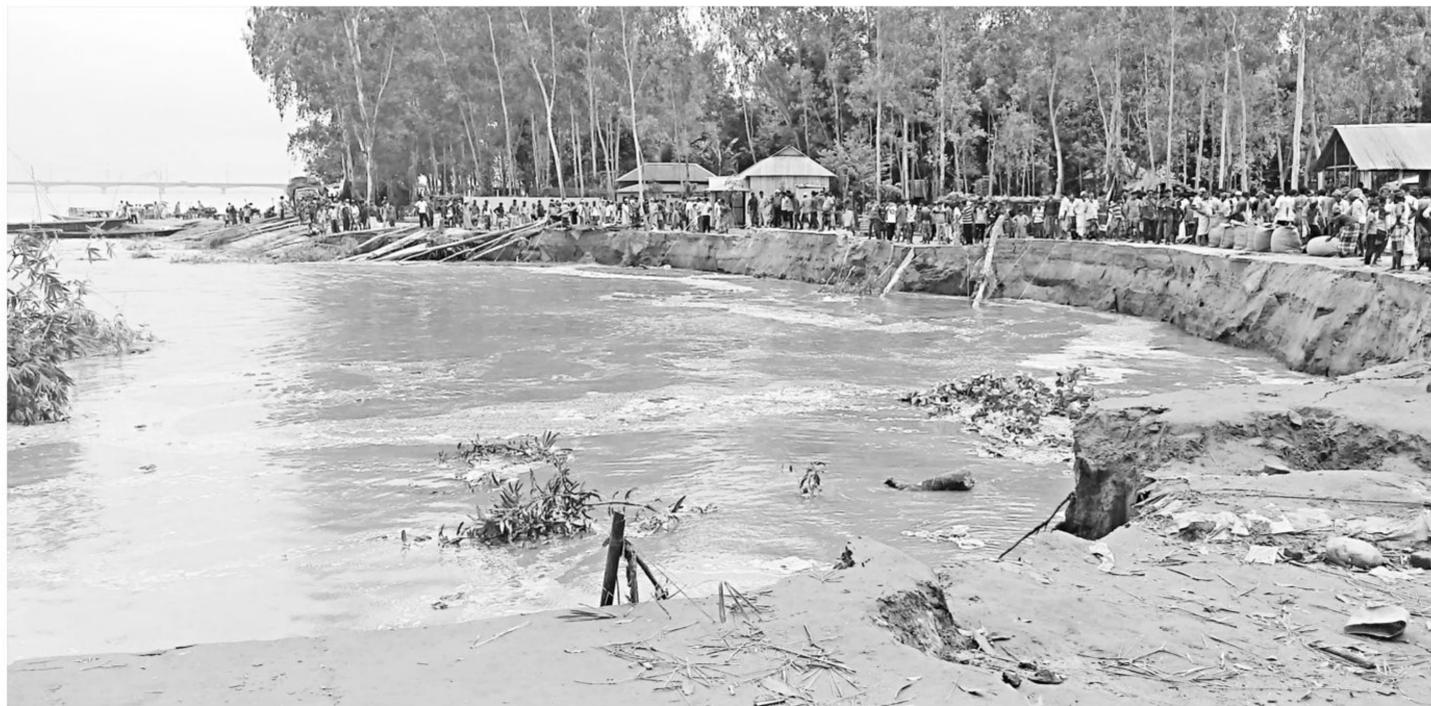
OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A woman was electrocuted at Shakuwai Bazar in Haluaghat upazila yesterday.

The victim was Rekha Rani Dutta, 32, wife of tailor Gopal Dutta of the area.

Officer-in-Charge of Haluaghat Police Station Md Kamrul Islam Miah said Rekha, mother of two children, was electrocuted when she came in touch with a live electric wire set up around a saw mill owned by one Selim Miah of the bazar area.

Selim put the live electric wire around his saw mill to stop theft of wood, he said.



With the receding of water, erosion by the Jamuna river devours fresh areas of the river protection embankment and part of a village near the east guide embankment of Bangabandhu Bridge at Gorilabari village in Tangail's Kalihati upazila on Wednesday.

PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

# Jamuna devours embankment

### Locals blame illegal sand lifting for the collapse near Bangabandhu bridge

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

With water receding in the Jamuna, fresh erosion has damaged a large portion of the bank protection embankment on the eastern side of Bangabandhu Multipurpose Bridge at Gorilabari in Kalihati upazila under the district, creating panic among the locals.

Erosion hit the embankment about 1.5km south of the bridge, around 6:00am on Wednesday, devouring about 100 metres of the embankment and more 100 metres at a nearby village, said sources at Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA).

Earlier on August 20 and 23, around 40 metres of the embankment went into the river, they said.

The BBA constructed the 200-metre bank protection embankment near the confluence of Jamuna and Dhaleswari rivers in 2003 to protect the east side guide embankment of the bridge and nearby

localities from river erosion.

"Geo textiles are being dumped to protect the area from further erosion," Wasim Ali, assistant engineer at the site office of BBA in Tangail, said on the spot yesterday.

"Earlier, after the collapse of 10 metres of the embankment on August 20, an expert team from consultant firm Institute of Water Modeling (IWM) examined the damage on August 21. They later informed us that the damage is not a threat to the bridge," he said.

"The consultants from the IWM will re-examine the damage, and steps will be taken as per their suggestions," he said.

Nazrul Islam Talukder, a member of Gohaliabari union parishad, said over 20 dwelling houses were shifted from the river bank on Wednesday.

If the erosion is not checked immediately, the river may devour rest 1000

houses in the area, he said.

Talking to this correspondent on Wednesday, locals blamed illegal sand lifting near the embankment as the main reason for the erosion.

Although sand lifting is banned within 6km radius of the bridge, over a dozen of influential sand traders, including two local union parishad chairmen, have continued lifting sand from the river very close to the bridge with powerful dredgers for long, posing threat to the 5.63km-long bridge on the Jamuna, they alleged.

Local Awami League leader Mozaherul Islam, also upazila parishad chairman in Kalihati, while visiting the erosion affected area on Wednesday blamed negligence of BBA for the situation.

"Illegal sand lifting in the restricted areas is also one of the main reasons behind the erosion. If such dreadful erosion continues,

the guide embankment as well as the bridge may face threat," he added.

Wasim Ali, assistant engineer of the BBA, said they have already lodged several general dairies with the nearby police station against the sand lifters.

None were given permission from the administration for doing sand business near the bridge, said Abu Nasar Uddin, upazila nirbahi officer of Kalihati.

"I conducted a mobile court drive in Binudluhuria and Beltia areas near the bridge on Wednesday noon and fined four sand lifting workers Tk 50,000 each. We have asked for removal of all the dredgers and other equipment used for lifting sand from the area," he added.

## 3 commit suicide in Panchagarh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Three people committed suicide in Panchagarh's Atwary upazila yesterday and on Wednesday.

Officer-in-Charge Aminul Islam of Atwary Police Station said they recovered the body of Idris Ali, 50, of Maligaon village from under a banyan tree.

Idris might have committed suicide by taking poison, said the OC.

Deceased's wife Momba Begum said Idris went out of his house on Wednesday and did not return home.

Thirteen-year-old Nice, daughter of Nazrul Islam of Krisnanagar village, committed suicide by hanging herself on Wednesday.

Besides, Sohel Rana, 25, son of Nuruzzaman of Raniganj village committed suicide by hanging himself from the ceiling of his room on Wednesday night.

## Lightning kills two farmers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Projoipur

Two farmers were killed by lightning in Bhandaria upazila of the district on Tuesday.

The deceased were Jahangir Hossain, 45, son of Moinuddin Khan, and Nasir Uddin Howlader, 35, son of Abdu Sattar Howlader of Atarkhali village in the upazila.

Md Humayun Kabir, chairman of Ikri Union Parishad, said a thunderbolt struck the farmers when they were working at a paddy field in the village. They died on the spot.



A flood victim family resides in a shabby room along with their lone cow due to lack of accommodation to keep the animal in Sirajganj's Shahzadpur upazila. Bottom left, rickshaw puller Sadequul along with his 10-member family lives inside his damaged clay-made house five days after floodwater receded in Dinajpur's Chirirbandar, and right, some flood-hit people of Lalmonirhat Sadar wear a bleak look as they cannot afford to celebrate Eid-ul-Azha.

PHOTO: STAR

# Vipers terrorise Faridpur char people

SUZIT KUMAR DAS with ANDREW EAGLE

At least four bitten and two dead: for the last three months the people of the river sandbanks of Char

Bhadrason upazila in Faridpur have lived in a state of fear. They wonder where the mysterious, unfamiliar snakes that have been terrorising their villages will strike next.

The four known snakebite victims in Sadar and Char Jhaukanda unions have experienced the same symptoms: swelling at the site of the bite, bone and muscle pain from head-to-toe, and vomiting. To ask any elder in these communities is to hear them say that never before have they witnessed such kind of symptoms arising from a bite by a venomous snake.

On 12 May 2017, Harun Munshi from Abdul Sikder Dangi village was first to be bitten. He tried local treatment without success before finally being taken to a doctor, where he died. "The site of his bite swelled," recalls the deceased's son-in-law Md Borhan Mollah. "It became infected and the area started

to rot. For about 75 days after being bitten he was with us; then he passed away."

Rokon Munshi, 50, and Sukha Munshi, 40, from Lotif Mridhar Dangi village in Char Jhaukanda were both bitten on 22 July 2017. Sukha fortunately recovered but Rokon subsequently died at Faridpur Medical College Hospital where he was being treated.

Rokon's wife Hiatusnessa saw the snake. "It was like a boa," she says. "It didn't move like a normal snake. It was covered in yellow circles and jumped from place to place."

On 5 August 2017 it appears that the species struck again, when Rohim Mollah, from Badullah Matbbor Dangi village near Gopalpur ferry ghat was bitten. He is still receiving treatment for the bite.

"I have seen two patients bitten by the same type of snake," says Abul Kalam, upazila health officer in Char Bhadrason. "One was already dead, the other is alive. Both of them were bitten by vipers."

On 8 August 2017 villagers killed an unusual snake near the house of

Rohim Mollah's neighbour. Since then eleven more snakes of similar appearance have been killed in the area.

Looking at a photograph of the dead snake, Professor Md Kamrul Hasan from the zoology department of Jahangirnagar University says, "It's a Russell's viper, known in Bangla as either the chandro bora or uloo bora snake. These snakes are usually found in the northwest, in the Barind Tract. Perhaps they were carried to Char Bhadrason by recent floodwaters and have since bred. The bite of the Russell's viper is nasty. The bitten area can become gangrenous."

The Russell's viper is common through much of South and Southeast Asia, China and Taiwan. It belongs to the genus "daboia", the name of which stems from the Hindi term for 'which lies hidden' or 'lurks'.

Due to several factors, snakes of this genus account for more snake-bites and human deaths than any other; and that's hardly good news for the people of Char Bhadrason.

# Eid joy elusive for flood victims

STAR COUNTRY DESK

When people are making preparations to celebrate Eid-ul-Azha, over eight lakh flood victims are struggling to manage food in Sirajganj, Dinajpur and Lalmonirhat.

Eid is a joyous occasion for Muslims but it brings no smile on the faces of around four lakh people in six upazilas of Sirajganj due to the floods this year, reports our Pabna correspondent.

Surprisingly, the government has not taken any special initiative this year although the special vulnerable group feeding (VGF) programme used to run for the vulnerable people across the country ahead of the festival in previous years.

"In previous years, we had special VGF programme for the vulnerable people ahead of the festival. This year there is no VGF allotment as we are running regular relief programmes for giving food support for the flood victims," said Abdur Rahim, district

relief and rehabilitation officer in Sirajganj.

Many flood victims started returning to their homes after floodwater receded last week.

When asked about Eid preparation, 60-year-old Dalima of Shahzadpur upazila laughed and said "When I cannot manage necessary food for existence, it is nothing but ridiculous to think about Eid celebration."

Meanwhile, the upcoming Eid celebration will bring no joy to Sadequul Islam and his family members, reports our Dinajpur correspondent.

His family is one of 1,56,000 flood affected families at Dakkhin Palashbari village in Chirirbandar upazila.

"I took shelter with my seven-member family on a high land after water flooded my houses on August 13," said the 37-year-old rickshaw puller.

After four days, he along with his family members returned home and

found the house badly damaged.

When this correspondent asked of his Eid celebration on Tuesday, Sadequul replied that he gave up the hope of celebrating the festival. "I did not earn a single taka in last 15 days," he said.

"Last year, he gave new clothes to the children and me and shared the meat of sacrificial animal," remembered Hameda Begum, wife of Sadequul.

According to our Lalmonirhat correspondent, Eid-ul-Azha will not bring joy for about three lakh flood-hit people in Teesta and Dharla river basin areas of five upazilas under the district this year as all of them are badly affected by flood.

DC Shafiuul Arif said, he does not know why the government did not allocate VGF for vulnerable people for observing Eid this year.

Flood victim Jamiron Bewa, 70, of Sadar upazila said, "I have been passing days amid hardship. I'm half-starved and cannot celebrate the Eid this year."



Villagers erecting this 200-foot-long bamboo bridge over Bhulli river at Basuli village in Dinajpur's Khansama upazila as the nearby concrete bridge was damaged by the flood.

PHOTO: STAR