

Rehabilitation main challenge

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, back from Sirajganj

Nurjahan Begum along with her husband Mozammel Hossain, a poor farmer of Boro Moharajpur village in Shahzadpur upazila of Sirajganj, left her flooded home on August 14. After staying on a flood protection embankment for several days, they returned home on August 27, but the receding floodwater had already eroded the soil from the floor, turning the house risky for living. "We do not have the ability to repair the damaged house. We have to live here amid the threat of snakebite. Our Aman paddy on one bigha of land was also washed away by floodwater," Nurjahan, 40, said during this correspondent's visit there a couple of days ago.

Bahadur Mondol, 50, a van puller hailing from Jamitri Dakkhinpara village of Shahzadpur, could not restore his house that collapsed due to the strong current of floodwater a couple of weeks ago.

Bahadur, also a diabetic patient, could not manage proper foods, let alone insulin, during last couple of weeks.

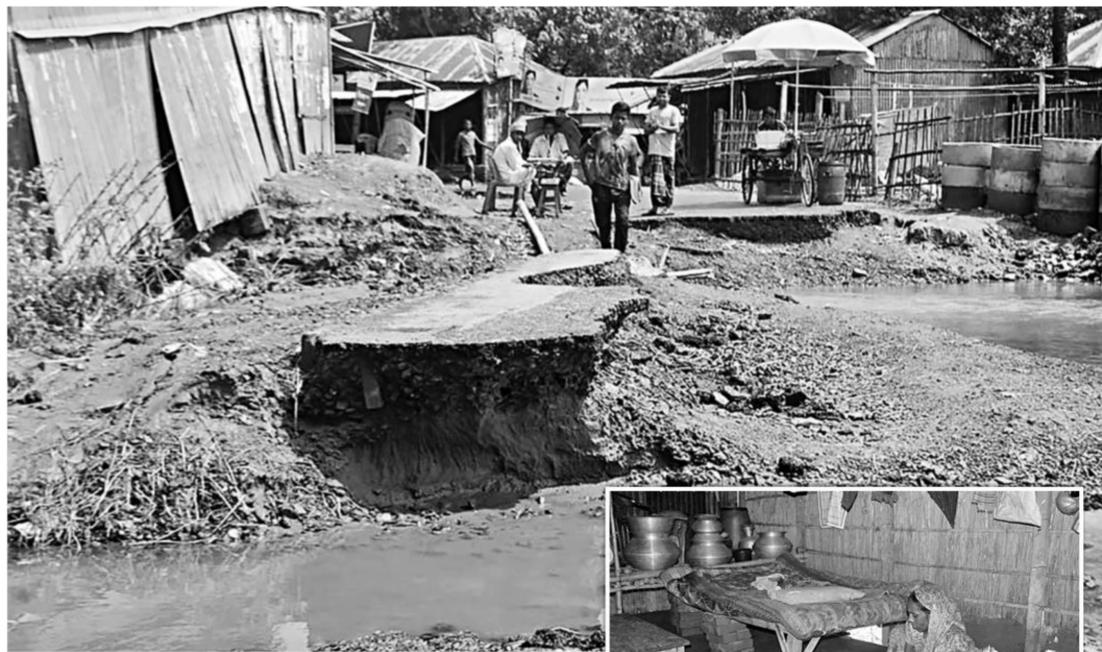
"Now I cannot drive van for carrying passengers and goods as the flood damaged the village roads," Bahadur said.

Like Nurjahan and Bahadur, around four lakh flood victims in six upazilas of Sirajganj district face crises after the receding of floodwater. Floodwater washed away belongings of 93,334 flood hit families in six upazilas of the district.

According to the district relief and rehabilitation office, a total of 5,548 houses were totally destroyed while 34,053 others partly damaged in six upazilas of the district as flood hit the areas early August and then again in mid-August.

"We have got the list of flood damaged houses and an estimated Tk 101.94 crore rehabilitation fund is required for repairing the damaged houses. We have already submitted the report to the ministry concerned but the fund is yet to be sanctioned," said Md Abdur Rahim, Sirajganj district relief and rehabilitation officer.

The floods caused extensive damage to



A flood-ravaged road at Jamitri Dakkhinpara village in Shahzadpur upazila of Sirajganj. Inset, a woman smoothens the floor of her house damaged by the recent flood at Boro Moharajpur village in the upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

roads and culverts, disrupting communication in 391 villages of the six upazilas.

"A total of 386 km roads out of 1162 kilometre concrete roads have been damaged due to the floods in Sirajganj in last few weeks. We have estimated the loss to be of Tk 113 crore," said Nure Alam Siddique, senior assistant engineer of LGED.

"Besides, 21 culverts were totally damaged, causing loss worth Tk 8.28 crore. The LGED has already submitted a letter for a Tk 122 crore rehabilitation fund to the ministry concerned that has allotted Tk 25 crore for urgent repair works," he added.

The agriculture sector also suffered huge

losses due to the floods.

"A total of 52,592 hectares of land was brought under Aman cultivation with the target to produce 1.5 lakh tonnes of rice. But the two times flood washed away paddy on 22,259 hectares of land, hampering production of 66 thousand tonnes of rice," said Md Arshed Ali, deputy director of Sirajganj DAE.

"Production worth Tk 175 crore has been damaged due to the floods in August. We need Tk 9 crore for the immediate rehabilitation for the flood victim farmers so that they can restart cultivation. The DAE has already prepared new seedlings for flood

victim farmers of the district," he said.

Although the district administration and different departments prepared lists of flood damage in Sirajganj, the rehabilitation programme is being delayed due to unavailability of funds, officials said.

"We have estimated the flood loss of Tk 369 crore and sought immediate allotment of a Tk 101 crore rehabilitation fund to the ministry. Different departments submitted separate reports to the ministries concerned for rehabilitation funds but the funds have been allocated yet," the DRRO said.

However, regular relief programmes are continuing for the flood victims, he added.

Acid thrown on woman in Rangpur

Two sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A Rangpur court yesterday sent two men to jail for allegedly throwing acid on a widow in Badarganj upazila of Rangpur.

The court gave the order when police produced them before it.

Earlier, police arrested them from Chhatrapar village. The arrestees are Asgar Ali, 45, and Azizul Islam, 40, of the village.

The victim is Selina Begum, 35, wife of late Ohidul Haque of Dilalpur Chhatrapar village. She is undergoing treatment at Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH).

Md Shahin, younger brother of the victim, filed a case with Badarganj Police Station on Wednesday, accusing five people.

Shahin said there was a dispute over land between his sister and the arrestees. He alleged that they poured acid on his sister through an open window while she was asleep on Monday night.

Hearing Selina's cries for help, family members took her to Badarganj Upazila Health Complex. Later, doctors referred her to RMCH as her injuries were severe.

SCHOOLBOY JISHAN MURDER

Hearing on remand prayer Sept 10

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A court here yesterday fixed the date for hearing the investigation officer's prayer for remand of one of the accused Nabin in connection with a case filed for killing schoolboy Mominul Islam Jishan in Jamalpur town early Monday.

Jamalpur Senior Judicial Magistrate Niskriti Hagidak fixed September 10 as the date for hearing after police produced the arrestee before his court seeking a five-day remand.

Nabin, 28, son of Mamun master of Kacharipara area in the town, was shown arrested on Tuesday night after Jishan's mother Monira Begum filed a murder case with Sadar Police Station accusing three named and 10 to 12 other unnamed people the same day.

Two other named accused are Rahi, 22, and Kawsar, 24.

Police detained Nabin for his alleged involvement in the murder on Monday.

Following an altercation, the trio stabbed to death Jishan, a Class IX student of Singhajani Multilateral High School, when he came out of a cinema hall on Sunday midnight.



Fifteen-month-old Bidipta, in her mother's arms, at the office of Thakurgaon Deputy Commissioner Abdul Awal yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Ray of hope for Bidipta

Thakurgaon DC arranges better treatment in Dhaka for the baby girl with rare Hydrocephalus disease

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Parents of fifteen-month-old Bidipta, who had been suffering from rare Hydrocephalus disease, finally see some hope for their daughter's better treatment in the capital.

It was possible because of the timely initiative taken by Thakurgaon Deputy Commissioner (DC) Abdul Awal.

Hydrocephalus is a disease which accumulates cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) in the brain that gradually increases pressure inside the human skull.

Khokon Mondal, a resident of Zamindarpara area in Sadar municipality, and father of the baby girl, said Bidipta's head is becoming larger day by day.

Khokon, who earns Tk 6,000 as an employee of a book stall in the town, told this correspondent that his daughter was physically well enough and did not have any complications about three months ago, when they suddenly noticed that her head was growing enormously larger.

Khokon later took the baby girl to child specialist Dr Sajjad Haydar Shahin, who advised Khokon to immediately take his daughter to Dhaka.

As Khokon did not have ability to meet his daughter's treatment cost in Dhaka, he then took Bidipta to a local homeopath and continued her treatment there, which did not see any improvement at all.

Bidipta's mother Madhabi Mondol said the initiative taken by

the DC have brightened their hope of providing better treatment for their daughter.

DC Awal said after learning of the matter through social media he contacted Bidipta's parents. After becoming aware of the impact of the disease he contacted a professor of Neuroscience Hospital in the capital, who assured him of admitting the baby girl to the hospital and taking necessary steps for her treatment free of cost, the DC added.

The district administration handed over Tk 50,000 to the hapless parents for their child's treatment, he said.

The DC also made an arrangement for Bidipta's admission to Neuroscience Hospital in Dhaka.

Patuakhali, Barguna public housing in bad shape

Many Ashrayan project houses have become unliveable due to lack of maintenance

SOHRAB HOSSAIN with ANDREW EAGLE

Fifteen years ago when Nasir Uddin from Bazargona village in Patuakhali Sadar upazila moved into a local Ashrayan public housing project, he thought that the accommodation crisis his family faced had been solved for good. But six years ago the family had to relocate as the dilapidated Ashrayan project was no longer fit for habitation. Many other families across Patuakhali and Barguna districts have had a similar experience.

"In 2011 at least eight houses in the project where I live were gutted by a fire caused by an electric short circuit," says one Ashrayan resident, Jaynab Begum. "Most families left the project."

"I am still there though our house is also damaged. I have no alternative," she said.

"The houses here leak when it rains," says Raju Gazi, who lives in the project with his family of six. "Many of the tin sheets that comprise the roofing of our dwellings are badly damaged. In the barrack-style accommodation, six of the ten families have already left."

In the Char Lata Ashrayan project

in Rangabali upazila constructed in 2001 meanwhile, fifty out of the ninety accommodated families have left due to an absence of maintenance since the project's inauguration.

"Nine of the barrack-style houses, each of which was supposed to accommodate ten families, are unfit for use," says Mainuddin, one of the remaining residents at the Char Lata project.

"In the case of Char Lata," explains the chairman of the local Chalitabania union council, Fazlur Rahman, "cyclones and storms hit the area every year leaving the houses badly damaged."

Tapan Kumar Ghosh, the project implementation officer responsible for Ashrayan housing projects in Rangabali upazila, says higher authorities have been informed several times about the poor condition of the Char Lata public housing. Repeated requests have been made for funding to renovate the dwellings, he says, but thus far without success.

"Of the 79 Ashrayan projects in Patuakhali," says the district-level acting relief and rehabilitation officer Tariqul Islam, "29 are unfit for occu-

pation due to a lack of repairs."

In neighbouring Barguna most of the houses in the 28 Ashrayan projects there are also unfit for habitation. In Amtali and Taltali upazilas where 17 projects are supposed to shelter more than 2,300 families, only 811 families are currently residing, with more than 1,500 houses lying vacant. From these houses many fittings including doors, windows and tin sheets from the roofing have been stolen.

Yet the state of disrepair evident in many Ashrayan projects is not the only problem. Some projects are inconveniently located. Locals in several areas of Barguna told The Daily Star that there is little interest in being allocated an Ashrayan house since often there is no employment opportunity nearby and the upazila town can be as far as 25 kilometres from the Ashrayan site.

"We will send a proposal to higher authorities very soon to repair the Ashrayan dwellings," says Patuakhali Sadar upazila's nirbahi officer, Bakahid Husain. "As soon as we have received the estimated repair cost from the Local Government Engineering Department."



All the 30 houses of the Ashrayan project in Amtali upazila of Barguna are lying unused. Inset, members of a family in front of their dilapidated house in Patuakhali Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

UP chairman held with Yaba

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Police on Wednesday night arrested a union parishad (UP) chairman from a Rowshanbag village in Palashbari upazila on charge of taking Yaba.

The arrestee is Rafiqul Islam, 45, chairman of Ramchandrapur UP under Gaibandha Sadar upazila.

Police said a team from Palashbari Police Station, acting on a tip-off, conducted a raid at a house in the village and detained Rafiqul and one of his close aides Abdul Qayum Prodhan, 50, from there.

The law enforcers also seized 150 Yaba tablets from their possession.

Youth stabbed to death in Joypurhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A youth of Joypurhat, who was stabbed by some unidentified criminals on Monday, succumbed to his injuries at a hospital in Bogra yesterday.

The deceased was Sagar Hossain, 20, son of Golam Mostafa of Natunhat area in Joypurhat municipality.

He succumbed to his injuries at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital in Bogra at noon, said police.

Family members said the criminals stabbed Sagar in Gohati area under Joypurhat municipality on Monday night.

Later, local people rescued the victim and sent him to Joypurhat Modern Hospital in critical state, said Selim Hossain, officer-in-charge of Joypurhat Sadar Police Station.

As his condition was deteriorating, doctors referred him to Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital.

Selim Hossain confirmed the incident.