



# UTTARA GONOBHABAN 25 trees felled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Natore*

Although the tender was for cutting branches of dead trees, the contractor of Public Works Department (PWD) has felled 25 big old trees from the premises of Uttara Gonobhaban in the district during the last two months.

Following the report of unauthorised cutting of old trees from the premises of Uttara Gonobhaban, the district administration conducted an investigation regarding the matter and submitted report to the Rajshahi divisional commissioner yesterday. The authorities have decided to file a case against the culprits.

The Public Works Department floated the tender and gave work order to cut branches of dead trees to a bidder for only Tk 18,400.

The PWD did not take any approval from the district administration before floating the tender.

The management committee of Uttara Gonobhaban held a meeting at the office of Natore Deputy Commissioner Shaheena Khatun yesterday.

"The contractor has cut down 25 big trees from the premises of Uttara Gonobhaban. But he was supposed to cut some branches of dead trees," said the deputy commissioner, who presided over the meeting.

"The PWD officials did not take any permission from the DC office before floating the tender. We will take action against those who were involved with the irregularities," she said.

Before the meeting, officials including Assistant Chief Engineer of PWD of Rajshahi Zillur Rahman, Executive Engineer of Natore PWD Mashiur Rahman Akhondo and Natore Sadar UNO Sharmin Akter Banu visited the Uttara Gonobhaban premises yesterday morning.

NDC of Natore Ananda Mandol, also member secretary of Natore Uttara Gonobhaban committee, said the value of 25 trees that the contractor has cut down would be around Tk 5 lakh.



Remains of large trees and logs bear testimony to felling of the trees on the premises of Uttara Gonobhaban in Natore.

PHOTO: STAR

# Poverty forces fishermen to defy ban

Netting hilsa continues as govt support for them not enough

M JAHIRUL ISLAM JEWEL, from Barisal

Poverty forces hundreds of fishermen of Barisal division to catch hilsa fish during the ongoing ban, despite the aid given by the government, which is not sufficient to meet their needs.

Every day, many mobile courts are operated by the fisheries department with the help of police and administration, and they have fined or jailed hundreds of fishermen, according to the information given by the fisheries departments of Jhalakathi, Barisal and Bhola.

Hilsa catching is suspended from October 1 to October 22 to facilitate breeding of the popular fish.

During this time, they have been offered help by the government, but that is insufficient for the large number of fishermen, many fishermen of Jhalakathi, Barisal and Bhola said.

As many as 2,27,943 fishermen are getting government aid out of 3,16,044 registered fishermen in the division during the ongoing ban, said Md Bazlur Rashid, director of the fisheries department of Barisal

division.

"I have to pass my days in hardship during the ban period as there is not enough food in my house," said Md Delowar, a fisherman in Nalbunia of Nalchhity, who did not get any kind of help from the government.

"I need three kg of rice and other necessities every day, but I will get only 20 kg of rice for the 22 days. If I

don't go fishing, my family members will starve," said a fisherman of the same area, adding that he gets help from the government, but not at the right time.

"Hilsa fishing is the only way of earning my livelihood, so I am bound to do it during the ban period for my survival," said Jakir Hosain, a fisherman of Ilisha area in Bhola Sadar.

"We cannot go for fishing, which is the only source of our income. We cannot arrange food for our children. How can we survive when most of us have to pay the instalments on the loans that we took at high interest rate from microcredit banks or money lenders?" added Jakir.

"If we get government help during the ban period, it can benefit us a lot," many fishermen said.

"Every year, the government helps the fishermen during the ban, but they have not received help as yet this season," said a member of Nalchhity Upazila Parishad.

"I have got 13 cards for distribution among 13 families, while there are 35 families in my ward," said union parishad member Nurul Alam of Nalbunia under Ranapasha union in Nalchhity.

"The allotted government aid has not yet reached the fishermen, but it will be given very soon," said Fisheries Officer of Rajapur in Jhalakathi Mukta Rani Sarkar.

"We are making special identity cards for the fishermen so that we can help them all," she added.



PHOTO: M JAHIRUL ISLAM JEWEL

SONIA RAPE, SUICIDE

# Body exhumed for fresh autopsy

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Thakurgaon*

Following a court order, the body of Rahima Akhter Sonia, 14, was exhumed in presence of Executive Magistrate Sohrab Hossain in Panchagarh yesterday, six days after the rape victim's death.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Md Zahangir Alam on Monday ordered exhumation of the body for fresh autopsy.

On October 10, Sonia, a Class VIII student of Kazi Shahabuddin School and College in Tentulia upazila, committed suicide as two men, after raping the girl, threatened to release the video clips of the incident on the Internet. The following day, she was buried after autopsy.

The victim's mother Selina Begum filed a case with the local police station on Saturday, accusing Monsur Ali Rajon, 32, son of late Solaiman Ali of Mominpara village, and a ward boy of Tentulia Upazila Health Complex, and Atikuzzaman Atik, 33, son of Basir Uddin of Khuniavita village, and a local agent of bKash.

On Monday, police sought to conduct autopsy again and also appealed for 10-day remand for the two accused when they surrendered before the court.

The same court placed Rajon and Atik on five-day remand yesterday after hearing the case, Court Inspector Rezaul Karim said.

Meanwhile, district unit of Prothom Alo Bandhusava formed a human chain in front of Panchagarh Government Girls' High School demanding exemplary punishment of the rapists.

# Indian held with gold at Benapole

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Benapole*

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) yesterday arrested an alleged Indian gold smuggler with 18 gold bars worth Tk 82 lakh from Ghiba border area under Benapole Port Police Station.

The arrestee was identified as Sree Sravon Biswas, 50, son of Birendranath Biswas, and a resident of Churulia village in North 24 Pargana of West Bengal in India.

BGB-49 Battalion Commanding Officer Lt Col Ariful Haque said, acting on a tip-off, BGB members conducted a drive in Ghiba village and arrested Sravon with the gold bars.

The gold bars were deposited in the Benapole customs godown.

A case was filed with Benapole Port Police station.

The law enforcement agencies seized 63 gold bars in 10 days from Benapole border area.

# Man to die for killing wife in Jessore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Benapole*

A Jessore court yesterday sentenced a man to death for killing his wife for dowry at Dhopadi village in Abhaynagar upazila of Jessore in 2007.

The convict Rafiqul Islam, son of Shahid Ali of the village, is absconding. Judge Amit Kumar Dey of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal announced the verdict and also fined Rafiqul Tk 1 lakh. The judge issued an arrest warrant against Rafiqul as he is absconding.

Public Prosecutor Idris Ali said Rafiqul married Najma Begum, daughter of Motiar Rahman of South Nawapara in the upazila, about ten years ago.

On May 20 in 2007, Rafiqul demanded Tk 1 lakh dowry from Najma, which she refused. Rafiqul then strangled her and hung her body from the ceiling in a bid to pass it off as a suicide.

Najma's father filed a case with Abhaynagar Police Station on May 21, accusing Rafiqul.

The investigation officer of the case filed the charge sheet against Rafiqul one month later.

# Saidpur bridge collapse woe to thousands

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Nilphamari*

Thousands of people are badly suffering as construction work of a bridge over Pochanala canal in Saidpur municipality has continued for long eight months without the arrangement of an alternate way for crossing the canal.

The bridge is situated on an important road beside Saidpur upazila parishad, cantonment, railway market and Saidpur Cantonment School and College.

Locals said, due to the construction work, people are compelled to use a long alternative way for going to their destinations. Due to the situation,

cantonment authorities are also unable to ply their vehicles through it.

The 40-foot-long bridge, owned by Water Development Board (WDB), collapsed on July 1 last year when a sand-laden truck was crossing it, disrupting communication.

WDB started construction of a new bridge in the same place on March 27 this year, which is scheduled to end by June 2018.

Municipality Councillor Al Mamun Sarkar said the road is the shortest distance for people of Badarganj, Taraganj and Parbotipur upazilas to go to their destinations but in absence of alternate way, people have to walk additional

three km via Saidpur bus terminal.

WDB authorities have hung a cautionary signboard regarding the construction work without making any alternate way, he said.

A trader of Badarganj upazila, Khademul Islam, said he has to carry goods from Saidpur to his village market using a lengthy way, wasting time and money.

WDB Sub-Assistant Engineer Atiqur Rahman, also in-charge of looking after the construction work, said an alternate road cannot be made due to space constraint as cantonment public school is situated on one side of the bridge and military abattoir on the other.

# Mentally sick teen raped by 60-yr-old

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pirojpur*

A 14-year-old mentally challenged girl was raped allegedly by an elderly man in Sadar upazila on Monday.

The accused is Nasir Munshi, 60, of Uttar Shankarpasha village in the upazila, said Md Masumur Rahman Biswas, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station.

The girl's father filed a case accusing two people, including Nasir, under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

On Monday afternoon, the victim's neighbour Tamanna Akter, 18, called in the girl and took her to the house of Nasir. Later, he raped her, said family members.

The following day, a case was filed, accusing Nasir and Tamanna, said the OC.

Police arrested Tamanna from her house. Meanwhile, the victim was sent to Pirojpur Sadar Hospital for medical test.

# A noble initiative

Community-built bamboo bridge solves river-crossing crisis for now

ABDUL WAHED with ANDREW EAGLE

When, on 13 August last, floods caused the bridge across Chhinaye Beel wetland in Kurigram's Rajarhat upazila to collapse, it left 15,000 people from twelve villages without a convenient link to the upazila headquarters and the district town. Realising that any construction of a replacement government-built bridge would take quite a long time, a number of motivated locals set about building a temporary bamboo bridge in its place.

"As the floodwaters receded in the first week of September, some of the locals got together to plan a bamboo bridge," says Abul Kalam Azad, 35, from Chhinaye Hat village, one of 22 villagers involved in organising the construction project. "We started to collect bamboo and money; and convinced the ex-chairman of Chinnaye

union council, Sadequul Haque Nuru, to coordinate the project."

"Construction of the bridge began in full swing on 8 September," he continues, "with more than 500 bamboo poles along with money donated by local people. Some villagers helped by providing food to the labourers."

"It was when I realised that even if the government earmarked funds for rebuilding the fallen bridge in the upcoming fiscal year, the new bridge would still not be completed for at least a year, that I decided to participate," says the project's coordinator, Sadequul. "None of us, not even the labourers, are bridge construction experts."

"Our bamboo bridge is 82-foot long and nine-foot wide," he explains. "It cost Tk 40,000 just for nylon ropes, wire and paint, with a further Tk 30,000 expended on wages for the

construction workers. The bridge was completed within 22 days."

Since the ambitious initiative's opening life for affected villagers has regained some semblance of normality. "I am really happy about this replacement bridge," says Samiul Haque, a resident of Baroloye village in Barovita union of Phulbari upazila, while crossing the new bamboo bridge. "Many villagers use it to reach Kurigram town and Barobari market."

"After the permanent bridge collapsed," says auto-rickshaw driver Rashedul Islam, 23, who is taking passengers across the new bridge as he speaks, "I faced economic hardship for not being able to run my vehicle on its usual route. Now I can."

"I am glad to have coordinated the project," reflects Sadequul. "I learnt a lot. I saw what a spirit of community



Local people construct the 82-foot-long bamboo bridge over Chhinaye Beel in Kurigram's Rajarhat upazila to mitigate suffering of thousands of villagers.

PHOTO: STAR