

School under river erosion threat

Education of students uncertain

M JAHIRUL ISLAM JEWEL, Jhalakathi

Education of 400 students of a high school in Rajapur upazila of the district is facing uncertainty as the school is under threat of being washed away due to the increasing erosion by the Bishkhali river during the last one month.

Two-third of the playground of Mathbari Union High School in Badurtola has been devoured by the river, and the school building may be destroyed at any time due to fresh erosion.

The high school was established in 1970 at Badurtola Bazar when the river was one kilometre away, according to the local people.

Most of the students are worried about the school as their final exam is very close, they said, adding that if the school is washed away, their education may be stopped.

A market, around 100 houses and about 100 acres of agricultural land have gone into the river, shopkeepers in the bazar said.

"We shifted our shops five times to avoid the erosion," they added.

"We are always afraid when attending

classes as our school may collapse any time and go into the river," said Shakila Khanum, a student at the school.

Mamun, a Class X student, said they come to school every day with the fear that the school might disappear into the river.

Headmaster Md Ayub Ali Khan said the school playground has already been eroded, adding that the school should be shifted as soon as possible to avoid great loss.

"We need financial support to re-establish the school, and our school committee chairman is trying hard to get a safe place to relocate it," he added.

"SSC examinees will suffer the most if the school goes into the river," the headmaster said.

"I requested the departments concerned to take steps to protect the school, but they have not taken any action as yet. At the same time, we are looking for land to relocate the school," said engineer Golam Haider Khan, president of the school managing committee.

"I will visit the school soon and take necessary steps to save it," said Bazlul Haque Haroon, lawmaker from Jhalakathi-1.



A road and two-third of the playground of Matbari Union High School have been washed away by the Bishkhali river, and the school may be devoured any time. The photo was taken from Badurtola in Rajapur upazila of Jhalakathi recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Ferry service disrupted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Ferry service on Paturia-Daulatdia river route has been hampered as water decreased in the main channel yesterday.

Around 500 vehicles are waiting at Paturia ferry ghat from 4:00pm to cross the Padma river, said Mohidin Russell, assistant manager of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) at Paturia.

Thirteen out of 16 ferries are plying on this route while the rest are under repair in the floating workshop 'Modhumoti' beside Paturia ghat, he said.

Meanwhile, around 300 vehicles were stranded at Daulatdia ferry ghat around 4:00pm, said Shafiqul Islam, manager of BIWTC at Daulatdia.

HACKING OF COLLEGE GIRL

'Punish stalker'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Women in Netrakona yesterday demanded exemplary punishment of the stalker who hacked a college girl on Tuesday.

Kendua Upazila Nari Forum made the demand at a human chain programme, protesting the hacking of the girl.

The victim Jannatul, daughter of freedom fighter Abdul Latif of Pathairkandi village in Itna upazila of Kishoreganj, is an HSC second year student at Parvin Siraj Mahila College in Kendua and lives in a rented house at Shantinagar in the upazila headquarters.

She is now undergoing treatment at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

Emon, 22, son of Mohor Ali of Gagda village in Kendua, used to stalk the girl and proposed a relationship, which the girl declined, police said.

Victim's niece Juma Akter said she and Jannatul were going to a classmate's house on Tuesday when Emon came and hit Jannatul on the head with a machete. When people rushed to the spot, he fled the scene, Juma said.

Emon was arrested on Tuesday.

Victim's father lodged a case with Kendua Police Station, accusing Emon, on Wednesday.

Police produced Emon before a court on Wednesday with a prayer for a seven-day remand and the court granted a three-day remand, said Officer-in-Charge (investigation) Swapon Chandra Sarker.

Man sent to jail for forcing girl to live together

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A Lalmonirhat court yesterday sent a man to jail for forcing a schoolgirl to live with him for two years.

The arrestee is Limon Islam, 34, son of Sekandar Ali of Tangbhanga village in Hatibandha upazila of the district and father of two children.

Police arrested him on Wednesday night and produced him before the Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court yesterday. The court rejected his bail prayer and sent him to jail, police said.

Police said Limon developed a relationship with a girl of Class X two years ago and took her away from the village. He kept the girl in two rented houses in Lalmonirhat town without marrying her for the last two years. Taking help of a local woman, the victim fled away from the house and went back to her parents on October 2.

Limon and his cohorts went to the victim's house three times in the last one week and beat her family members for bringing her back, police said.

"I was kept in a rented house owned by Nuruzzaman Miah in Dalpatti area in the town for the first one year, and the next year I was

shifted to another rented house owned by Lal Miah in Baltipatti area," said the victim.

"He took my signature forcibly on a non-judicial stamp and said he had married me," she said. "I was sexually harassed and also physically tortured by Limon, and I was ordered not to go out of the house," the victim said.

Victim's father said they did not lodge any complaint when their daughter went away with Limon due to shame. "We received our daughter when she came back after two years, but we did not lodge any complaint," he said. "We have been compelled to file a complaint on Wednesday against the culprit when he and his men started attacking us," he added.

Officer-in-Charge of Hatibandha Police Station Shamim Hasan Sarder said Limon failed to show any legal document to prove that he had married the girl. "The girl was harassed sexually and physically. Limon also tried to trick her into going with him as he had the paper she signed," the OC added.

Police arrested Limon after a case was filed, accusing him, by the victim on Wednesday.

Sanjit admitted to medical college, finally

The poor boy stops receiving donation after 'getting enough'

OUR CORRESPONDENT Nilphamari

Sanjit Roy of Badiar More village in Nilphamari Sadar upazila has finally got admission to Sir Salimullah Medical College in Dhaka after depositing the fees on the last date yesterday, thanks to the benevolent help from a few persons.

A grateful Sanjit, 18, on the other hand, has shown an awfully rare noble gesture, as he kept his mobile switched off on Wednesday and yesterday, giving the message that he would not receive further donation.

Thanking all who extended help, Sanjit's mother Jashoda Rani said, "We have already got more than enough."

Seeing the report titled "Will Sanjit be denied medical education for want of money?" in The Daily Star's October 18 issue, Nilphamari DC Khalid Rahim donated Tk 10,000, which would cover the admission fees, the same day.

Engineer Fazlul Huq Khokon, medical technologist Tushar Kanti and bank official Abdullah Al Mahdi gave him Tk 10,000 each while Principal Devi Prasad Roy gave Tk 5,000.

Health Minister Md Nasim said he would bear the expenses for his medical textbooks.

At least 80 other people expressed intention to help Sanjit.



A farmer spraying pesticide on his crop field at Khochabari village in Sadar upazila of Lalmonirhat to prevent attack by pests. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: STAR

Pest attack on Aman paddy

Farmers worry as substandard pesticides flood local markets

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Farmers in the district are worried because they cannot protect their crops from pest attack as the pesticides they are using are substandard and ineffective.

Abdur Rashid, 54, a farmer of Khochabari village in Sadar upazila, said he has cultivated T-Aman on three bighas of leased lands, of which fifty percent has been attacked by pests. "I sprayed pesticides three times in the last ten days but there was no result," he added.

Saidul Islam, 48, of Palashi village in Aditmari upazila, said he cultivated Aman paddy on four bighas, but crops on three bighas have been attacked by pests. "I do not know how I will prevent the attack as the pesticides are not working," he added.

"The leaves of Aman paddy in two of my three bighas are getting reddish. Following the advice of the local agriculture department, I used different medicines but to no avail," said Enamul Haque, 52, of the same village.

"I used medicines after the fields were attacked by different diseases. If I can check the attacks, I hope to get bumper output, but it is uncertain," Delowar Hossain, 55, of Hospitalpara village in the upazila said, adding that the pesticides are ineffective.

Mantaz Ali, a farmer of Palashi village in Aditmari upazila, said most farmers are dependent on pesticides supplied by the sellers, who take advantage of farmers' lack of knowledge and sell substandard pesticides to them.

"The traders earn huge profit by selling substandard pesticides, and the farmers are willing to buy those as they cost less than the standard pesticides," he said, adding that the government should conduct drives against substandard pesticides.

Lutfar Rahman, a pesticide trader at Hajiganj Bazar in the upazila, said he sells pesticides of many companies, but farmers always want to buy the cheapest. "It is true that many pesticide companies are marketing their substandard pesticides in villages," he

added.

The district's Department of Agriculture Extension Deputy Director (DD) Bidhubhushon Roy said Aman was cultivated on 82,259 hectares of land in five upazilas of the district this season. Aman plants on around 9,000 hectares were totally damaged due to the recent floods, and affected farmers collected Aman saplings from adjacent districts and planted those on the damaged fields, he added.

Upazila Agriculture Officer Biplob Kumar Mohanto said they are advising the farmers to prevent pest attack by using standard pesticides.

The DD said agriculture officials are visiting the fields and advising the farmers to use proper medicines. "We hope that the attacks will not affect the production," he said, adding that substandard pesticides have flooded the local markets.

Deputy Commissioner Shafiqul Arif told this correspondent that they will conduct mobile courts against sellers of substandard pesticides in the markets.

Galachipa school building on the verge of collapse

Students attend classes risking their lives as the building is unfit for use

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Around 700 students of Ratanditali High School in Galachipa upazila in the district are attending classes at great risk as the building has become unfit for use due to lack of renovation.

Cracks have developed at many places on the roof, walls, stairs and pillars in the one-storey building, while the science building has already been declared unusable.

Ratanditali High School was set up in 1973 in a tin-shed. From the beginning, the school earned fame for its academic achievements and the number of students is growing.

The Education Engineering Department (EED) built a one-

storey building with three rooms in 1997. Later on, Patuakhali district council built three more rooms, but that did not solve the accommodation crisis. The school authorities built a tin-shed where classes are held. The science building has become unfit for use.

Nahida Akhter, a Class IX student, said they are afraid to attend classes as the condition of the building is very bad.

Rainwater enters the classroom through the ceiling and they and their books get wet, she added.

Sumaiya Akhter of Class X said the science building is unusable and they cannot study the science subjects properly.

Science teacher Arun Kanti

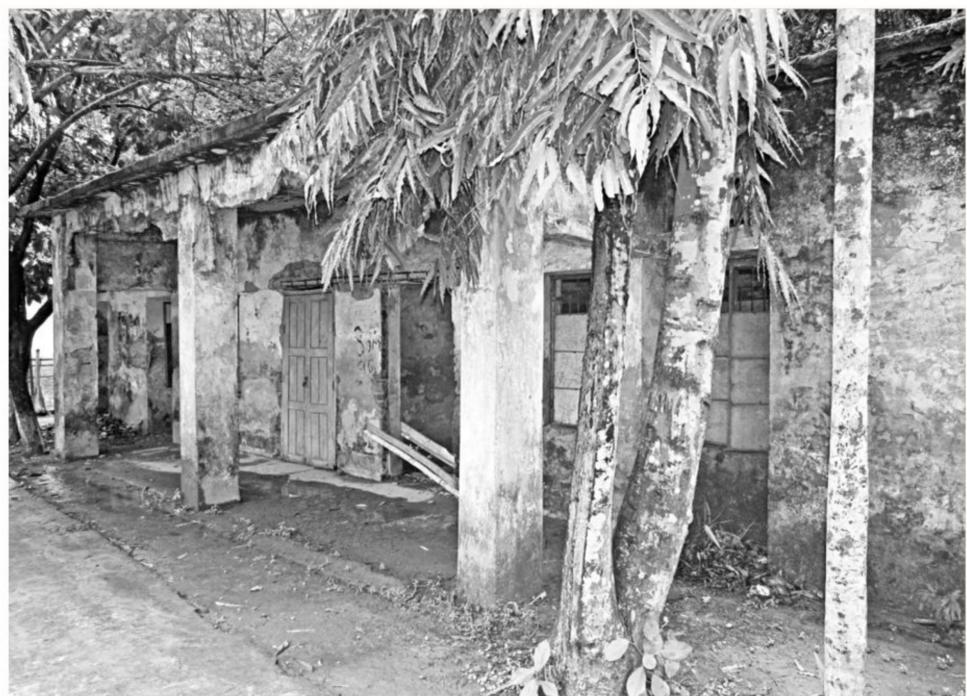
Hawlder said there are 200 students in science group, but their academic activities are greatly hampered as the science building is unfit for use.

"We somehow manage to take classes in the tin-shed," he added.

Headmaster Md Zakir Hossain said they have to take classes in the vulnerable building at great risk due to the accommodation crisis.

School Managing Committee Chairman Md Harun-ur-Rashid said they sent several letters to the higher authorities, including the education minister and the chief engineer of EED, but in vain.

Executive Engineer of EED Md Asaduzzaman said they will start renovation work after getting allocation.



Students of Ratanditali High School in Galachipa upazila of Patuakhali attend classes amid great risk as the building is on the verge of collapse.

PHOTO: STAR