



Broken bridges: 1) On Banshbunia canal in Amtali upazila of Barguna, 2) Arpangashia canal in the same upazila, 3) Pankhali canal in Galachipa upazila of Patuakhali, 4) Gohinkhali canal in Rangabali upazila of the same district, and 5) Kachupatra canal in Amtali upazila of Barguna.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

Seven bridges lying broken for months

People in Patuakhali and Barguna suffer, authorities indifferent

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

A large number of people are suffering as seven collapsed bridges in Patuakhali and Barguna districts have not been rebuilt or repaired months after they broke.

Of them, four are in Amtali upazila of Barguna, and one each in Taltali in Barguna, and Dashmina and Galachipa upazilas in Patuakhali.

The middle portion of the lone bridge on Sutabaria canal in Dashmina collapsed as a sand-laden cargo hit it on January 14 this year.

Five-year-old Nusrat died after falling into the canal and four others were injured during the incident. Several thousand

villagers including students are suffering as the bridge hasn't been repaired.

"Around 200 school children have to cross the canal by boat to attend classes," said Hiron Ahmed, acting headmaster of Betagi High School.

The Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) repaired a steel bridge in Pankhali village under Galachipa

upazila in November last year but it collapsed after five months, causing injuries to at least 10 school children. Over 1,500 people including a good number of schoolgoers used the bridge daily but it has not been repaired yet.

Abu Saleh Md Hanif, executive engineer of Patuakhali LGED, said steps will be taken to renovate the bridge soon.

In Barguna's Taltali, a 60-metre-long and three-metre-wide bridge on Kachupatra canal was built by the LGED in 1997-98 fiscal year and it collapsed during the onslaught of super cyclone Sidr in 2007. Afterwards, local people made a bamboo bridge to cross the canal.

In Amtali upazila, a wooden bridge built by local Sadar union parishad on Uttar Tiakhali canal in 2015 collapsed about three months ago. Several hundred students and villagers of Uttar Tiakhali used it to go to schools and Amtali upazila headquarters.

A concrete bridge on Banshbunia canal, collapsed by cyclone Roanu on May 21 in 2016, is yet to be repaired. The LGED built a concrete bridge in 2006 at a cost of Tk 40 lakh and over 20,000 people in these areas used it to go to upazila headquarters.

Middle portion of a bridge on Badura Varani canal near Chawla Bazar of Atharogachia union in Amtali collapsed when a sand-laden cargo hit it in 2013. Later, locals made it somehow usable by setting a wooden platform on the broken part.

Md Nazrul Islam, upazila engineer of LGED, said they have already sent a letter to the higher authorities for funds to repair it.

Egg-bearing hilsas victim of early ban

HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

Due to an early ban on netting hilsa, most of the hilsa caught by the fishers, since the end of the ban period, are egg-bearing.

After the end of the 22-day ban on catching all types of fish in the rivers for smooth breeding of hilsa, fishermen started netting the fish in different rivers since Monday.

Fishermen in the area said though they are getting huge hilsa catches, most of the fish are egg-bearing as they could not lay eggs properly due to the early ban.

This year, the ban began a bit early and most of the mother hilsas could not release eggs before the end of the ban period, they said.

"Although we are getting expected catches, most of the hilsas caught in our nets are egg-bearing," fisherman Nasir Howlader said.

"It would have been better if the government imposed the ban 10 days after the declared date this year," said another fisherman Jamal Ukil of Bhandaria upazila.

"We found eggs in almost two-thirds of the hilsas at the fish markets," said Mamun Majhi, a wholesale buyer of Charkhali ferry terminal area in the district.

He said the government should have started the ban from mid October.

"If the ban would have started 10 days later most of the fish could have time to release their eggs," he added.

Pirojpur District Fisheries Officer Mosharraf Hossain said breeding of hilsa goes on all the year round, so eggs can be found in some of them.

Breeding of about 60 percent mother hilsas has already been completed, he said, adding, the date of the breeding period had been fixed after research.



Most of the hilsa fish caught in fishermen's nets are bearing eggs.

PHOTO: STAR

Housewife found dead in Dinajpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A housewife was found dead in Phulbari upazila of the district yesterday.

The victim was identified as Lipi Begum, 25, wife of Shafiqul Haque of Ziatgaon village.

She was daughter of Aminul Islam of Dadpur village in the upazila.

Lipi had been living at her parents' home with her two children since her husband forced her out of their house a couple of weeks ago.

On Tuesday morning, Lipi's family members found her hanging from the ceiling of her room.

Police recovered the body and sent it to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital for autopsy, said Officer-in-Charge of Phulbari Police Station Sheikh Nasim Habib.

Kachalong erosion makes many homeless

ANVIL CHAKMA, Rangamati

Fed by floodwater and water from the upstream, the Kachalong river has washed away many houses and croplands in Tulaban village under Baghaichhari upazila of the district in the last four or five months.

On a recent visit to the village in Marisya union, this correspondent saw that most of the houses near the river are under risk of being eroded. Most people lost their paddy and croplands, while 15 families became homeless due to erosion in the last five years.

"We built our house beside the river four years ago, and we lost it last year due to erosion," said Bishes Chakma, 40, of the village.

Chaya Rani Chakma, 35, said her old homestead in the village went into the river one year ago and she lost many coconut trees and croplands.

"Most families of this village are living under threat of erosion by the Kachalong river. The government should take steps to protect us," said Rasel Chakma, 35.

Union Parishad Chairman Manob Jyoti Chakma said a team of Water Development Board (WDB) visited the village two years ago and took measurements of the river bank. They told villagers that they will take steps to prevent erosion, but no step has been taken yet, he added.

"We also submitted a letter to the Rangamati Hill District Council to find a solution to the problem of erosion. They assured they will build a protection dyke along the river bank," he added.

Deputy Divisional Engineer of Chittagong WDB Tanay Kumar Tripura said a WDB team has checked erosion at the primary stage.

"We are preparing to build only 20 metres of the embankment at first to prevent erosion, and the work will continue.

We submitted an application to the higher authorities for Tk 2 crore allocation and we will start work as soon as we receive it," he added.



The Kachalong river has been eroding dwellings and crop fields in Tulaban village under Baghaichhari upazila of Rangamati. The photo was taken from the village recently.

PHOTO: ANVIL CHAKMA

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Potato growers are facing heavy loss in Dinajpur and Joypurhat this season as the price of their crop is quite low in the markets.

"We did not see such a low price of potato in the markets in the last five years," said Aziz Mollah, a potato grower at Dhantola village in Bochaganj upazila of Dinajpur.

Many farmers in the district are preparing their land for the upcoming potato season, but most of them are yet to collect their previous season's potatoes from cold storages due to the low rate, he added.

Officials of the Department of Agriculture Extension said the two districts produced around seven lakh tonnes of potatoes in the last season, of which 70 percent was kept in 25 cold storages for better price.

During visit to the local retail markets in the districts, this correspondent found potato was being sold at Tk 8 to Tk 10 per kg while it was around Tk 20 to Tk 22 per kg in October last year, traders said.

Farmer Mansur Ali of Kalai upazila in Joypurhat, said he spent Tk 1,200 for each

bag (80 kg) of potatoes, but is selling them for Tk 700 to Tk 750 per bag. He said he stored 2,400 bags of potatoes at a local cold storage in the upazila.

Mansur said he would suffer a loss of around Tk 12 lakh due to the price fall.

Traders in the districts said the potato price dropped due to huge supply of the crop this year. Besides, number of buyers from other districts is less than previous years.

Palli Cold Storage Manager Niamul Haq said most growers in Joypurhat who stored potatoes in cold storages with the hope of good profit are not collecting their crop to avoid transportation costs and cold storage charges.

They prefer selling their potatoes at the cold storage gate instead of the market, he added.

RB Specialist Cold Storage Managing Director Parimal Kumar Basak said the potato growers in the region will suffer a heavy loss due to low price. It can be overcome if the crop is exported, he added.

Parimal urged the authorities concerned to take steps so that the growers can export their produce to other countries.

11 hurt in clash over paddy harvesting

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

At least 11 people were injured in a clash over harvesting paddy on disputed land in Birampur upazila of the district yesterday.

The injured -- Rina Orao, 60, Abdus Sattar, 47, Asim Orao, 28, Rashidul Mondal, 32, Shefali, 30, Abdul Khayer, 40, Pronab Kumar, 32, Sohag, 26, Rezaul Karim, 35, Naresh Tiggia, 35, and Sourav 15 -- are under treatment at Birampur Upazila Health Complex.

Locals said Rina cultivated paddy on 50 decimals of disputed land at Chowgharia village. She and her hired labourers went to harvest the paddy, but Abdul Sattar's men stopped them.

The two groups then clashed with each other, leaving 11 people of both sides injured.

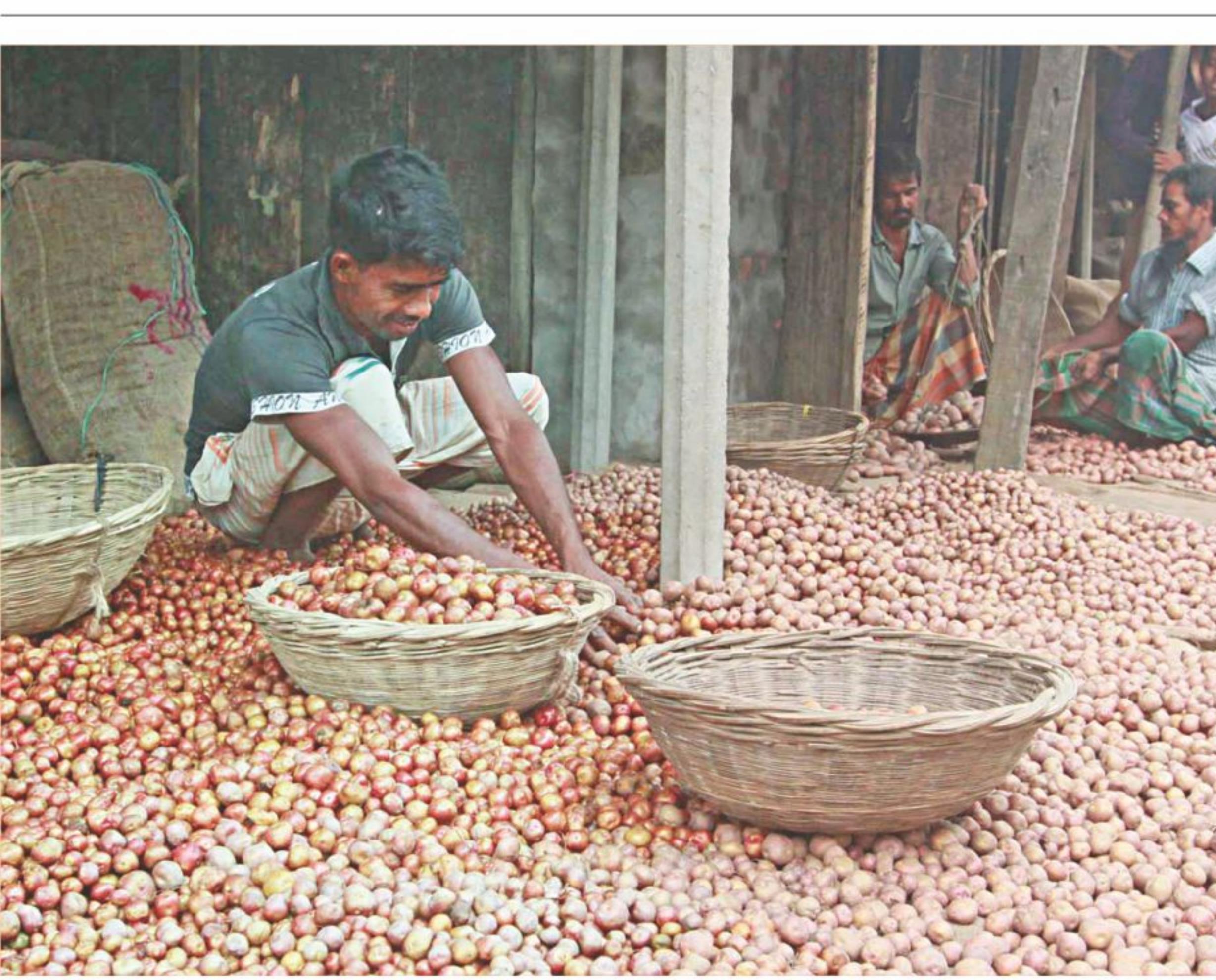


Photo: Star