

Plea for bridges

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

At least 10,000 villagers in Sadar and Aditmari upazilas of the district have been suffering due to lack of concrete bridges over Ratnai, Sati and Maldah rivers.

The villages are Dolapara, Shiberkuti, Bongram and Char Shiberkuti in Sadar upazila and Uttar Gobdha and Mahistuli villages in Aditmari upazila.

Dayal Chandra Barman, 65, of Dolapara village in Sadar upazila, said around 900 villagers have been using a risky bamboo-made bridge over the river Sati for around eight years. "We use boat for crossing the river during rainy season," he said, adding that villagers spend their own money for building a bamboo-bridge every year.

Azgar Ali, 58, of Shiberkuti village said they have been demanding a concrete bridge over the Ratnai river since the country's independence, but to no avail. "When election comes, we get promises that a concrete bridge would be constructed, but they are forgotten after the polls," he said, adding that they spend Tk 5 for each trip by boat.

"Due to lack of a bridge over the Ratnai river, we can't transport our produce to the town market in time, so we cannot get fair prices," said farmer Nur Islam, 55.

Seher Ali, 62, a farmer at Uttar Gobdha village in Aditmari upazila, said there is no transport facility for connecting to upazila and district headquarters due to absence of a concrete bridge over the Maldah river.

"School and college going students are often late at their institutions as they do not get boats on time," said Saber Hossain, 48, a businessman at Mahistuli village. "We don't want to listen to promises, we just want a bridge over the Maldah river, which is our longstanding demand," he said.

District Local Government and Engineering Department Executive Engineer Zakiur Rahman said they have completed the feasibility test for constructing a bridge over Ratnai river at Shiberkuti village in Sadar upazila, but did not say anything about the two other sites.

"We sent the feasibility test report to the higher authorities concerned six months ago, and they will take the next step in this regard," he said.



Three women of Dolapara village in Sadar upazila of Lalmonirhat cross the Sati river over this risky bamboo bridge to go to the mainland. Below, the people of Shiberkuti village in Sadar upazila use boats to cross the Ratnai river at Shareyartol and farm labourers at Mahistuli village in Aditmari upazila carry harvested paddy from the field to their homes, wading through the Maldah river.

PHOTOS: STAR

FF, his wife, daughter beaten in presence of police

A CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Freedom fighter (FF) Hashem Sikder and his wife and daughter were beaten allegedly by some Lutfar Rahman at Sigrai village in Sadar upazila over a disputed land yesterday.

Hashem, 68, was admitted to a hospital. Lutfar of the village was held.

Hashem said there was a longstanding conflict between his brother-in-law Azizur Rahman and Lutfar over the land.

"Two policemen arrived to resolve the dispute. As Azizur was not at home, I went to the land with the duo. At that time, Lutfar beat me severely in presence of the policemen," he said.

"Lutfar also beat my wife and daughter when they came to save me," said the FF.

OC Mahtab Uddin of Sadar Police Station said, "A sub-inspector went to the land at noon. The freedom fighter and his family members came under attack after the SI returned."

Indian dies in Jessore Central Jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

An Indian national died in Jessore Central Jail on Wednesday night.

The deceased was Sree Damiram, 48, son of Sree Santoram of North 24 Pargana in West Bengal.

Acting jailer of Jessore Central Jail Syed Hasan Ali said Kotwali police arrested him from Jessore town on October 16 for illegally entering Bangladesh and sent him to jail.

Damiram felt pain in the chest on Wednesday night and the jail authorities sent him to Jessore General Hospital, where Dr M Abdur Rashid of the emergency ward declared him dead.

WOMEN'S WORK AT FIELDS 3 on remand for fatwa

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

The Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court in Kushtia on Wednesday granted one day's remand for three people, including a mosque imam, in a case for issuing a fatwa (edict) forbidding women to work at fields.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Mizanur Rahman passed the order. Those who were put on remand are Mohammad Abu Musa, imam of Kalyanpur Jame Masjid at Kalyanpur village in Kumarkhali upazila of Kushtia, the mosque managing committee president Altaf Hossain and general secretary Motiar Rahman.

Last Friday, some people led by the imam sat at a close-door meeting after the Jumma prayers at the mosque.

Later, they announced through the mosque loudspeaker that no women in the area would be allowed to go to field for work.

"The imam said through loudspeaker that women are harmful for crops and their appearance in fields will cause antisocial activities," said Abdul Khaleq, officer-in-charge of Kumarkhali Police Station. Common people of the area reacted

against the fatwa.

On Monday night, Biplob Kanti Sarker, sub-inspector of the police station, filed a case against six people involved in issuing the fatwa.

Police arrested the accused -- Abu Musa, Altaf Hossain, Motiar Rahman, Ansar Ali, Abul Hossain and Abu Daud on Tuesday night.

Police produced them before the court on Wednesday afternoon.

Defying the fatwa, women of the area have continued going to fields for work.

"I must go to work at field. Otherwise, who will feed me and my two kids?" said Sajeda Khatun, whose husband died of cancer two years ago.

Sajeda's eight-year-old son Azmol assists her in field work.

Khaleq Bepari, a poor farmer of Arpara village of Kumarkhali upazila, said, "I am not able to hire labourer and so, I need help of my wife in farming."

SM Mehedi Hasan, superintendent of police in Kushtia, said, "Police filed a case against the culprits as issuing such fatwa is prohibited. We are determined to check such antisocial elements."

Man dies in clash over land dispute

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A man was killed in a clash over land dispute at Velajan Telipara village in Sadar upazila of the district yesterday.

The victim was Abdul Quader, 35, son of late Ibrahim of the village.

Police, quoting locals, said Shamsul Haque and Shaheed Ali had a longstanding dispute over 87 decimals of land.

Shamsul and his family members were harvesting his crop on the land yesterday when Shaheed and his men, equipped with sharp weapons, went to the spot and asked them not to cut the paddy. That led to an altercation.

At one stage, Shaheed's men attacked Shamsul's family members with sharp weapons, leaving Shamsul's younger brother Abdul Quader and son Sohel, 18, critically injured.

They were taken to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital and later shifted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH) as their condition deteriorated.

Quader succumbed to his injuries at the hospital around 2:00pm.

Teacher assaulted by guardian, hospitalised

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A teacher of Bhanga Pilot High School in the district landed in hospital as the father of a student beat him up, apparently to vent his wrath for expelling his son for taking unfair means in the school examination on Wednesday.

The victim, Sarowar Fakir, 32, assistant teacher of the school, filed a case with Bhanga Police Station and police arrested the accused -- Shahid Munshi, 42, a resident of Nurpur area under Bhanga municipality.

"I was on duty during the mathematics test of Class VII from 2:00pm to 4:00pm on Wednesday. I expelled Sohanur Munshi as he was copying in the examination," Sarowar said.

"Later when I was coming out from the room, Sohanur indicated me to his father Shahid Munshi. Then Shahid beat me on the head, nose and mouth and ran away when my colleagues came to the spot. My colleagues took me to upazila health complex."

The injured teacher was shifted to Faridpur Medical College Hospital for better treatment on Thursday noon, said Khalilur Rhaman, upazila health and family planning officer of Bhanga.

Kazi Saidur Rhaman, officer in charge of Bhanga Police Station, said, "The victim teacher filed a case on Wednesday night and we arrested accused Shahid Munshi, 42, the same night. He was produced before a court today [Thursday] and the court sent him to jail."

Haider Hossen, headmaster of Bhanga Pilot High School, said, "We demand punishment of the offender."



Craftsman Ramanuj Barman makes wedding and first-feeding tiaras with cork in his house at Sadhutari village in Sadar Lamonirhat upazila. The picture was taken on Friday.

PHOTO: STAR

Winter, heyday for cork craftsmen in Lalmonirhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Winter is a busy time for cork craftsmen due to the great demand for decorative items made of cork as the number of weddings and religious functions, especially of Hindus, increase during this season.

In the district, 50 to 60 cork craftsmen aided by some 200 assistants make wedding tiaras, first-feeding tiaras, idols of gods and goddesses, especially Bisohori, toys and decorative items.

"We make cork made commodities round the year and we are busiest during the winter," said Ramanuj Barman, 46, a craftsman at Sadhutari village in Sadar upazila.

"We get advance payment from

wholesalers for supplying them cork items, especially wedding and first-feeding tiaras. We sell each tiara for Tk 100 to Tk 150 to wholesalers and get around Tk 50 as profit per item.

"I was trained to make cork items by my late father Bhupendranath Sadhu in my childhood," he said.

Ramanuj's elder brother Nirutpal Barman, 54, said, "I sell cork made commodities worth around Tk 2 lakh per year. We buy cork from distant villages now, but some years ago we could get it easily."

Mohan Kumar Mohanto, 47, of Uttarsaptana village said they are sometimes hired for decorating stages for wedding parties and religious functions with cork items.

"It is mandatory for Hindus to use

tiara during weddings and first-feeding functions, so we make those items of different qualities and prices," he said.

Binod Chandra Roy, 48, a retailer of cork made items at Uttara road in the town, said they sell a tiara for Tk 250 to Tk 400 and other items at different prices. "The sale of tiara increases ten times during winter as there are many weddings," he added.

Atul Chandra Roy, 63, a Hindu community leader at Mahishkocha village of Aditmari upazila, said they use cork made items during weddings, first-feeding functions and other religious functions as it is an ancestral custom. "Cork commodities are cheap but they look nice and costly," he said.

8 injured in gas cylinder blast

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Eight people were injured when a gas cylinder exploded at a fair in Kalai upazila of Joypurhat yesterday.

The injured are Azizul Islam, 40, Rabiul Islam, 29, his son Tafiqul Islam, 8, Swadin Islam, 14, Shakhawat Hossain, 30, gas cylinder owner Dulu Mia, 50, and two unidentified people.

Kalai Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Nuruzzaman Chowdhury said Dulu Mia brought the gas cylinder to Karimpur Nabanno Fair for filling balloons. The cylinder burst, leaving eight people injured on the spot.

Locals took them to Kalai Upazila Health Complex from where three were sent to Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital in Bogra as their injuries were critical, said the OC.

Four people were injured when a gas cylinder went off in Dinajpur on Wednesday.

Rail link with Pabna dist headquarters

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The long cherished dream of the people in the district comes true after test operation of a train on newly built Ishwardi-Pabna rail line yesterday.

Pabna enjoyed train service since the then British rulers connected East Bengal and West Bengal with railway over the mighty Padma through Harding Bridge in early 1915.

But unfortunately, the district headquarters did not get train service. However, the rail line was connected to Ishwardi, Chatmohar and Vangura upazilas.

Deputy Commissioner Rekha Rani Balo and Sadar Upazila Parishad Chairman Mosharaf Hossain welcomed the first test train

carrying 30 railway officials in Pabna town with floral reception.

"This is a test run before formal train movement. Through the trial we have certified that the Ishwardi-Pabna rail line is okay for train movement," said Ashim Kumar Talukder, Pakshy divisional officer of railway.

Formal train movement is likely to begin from early January next year, he said, adding that a commuter train connected with Rajshahi would be added with the new rail line in Pabna.

"Through the Rajshahi-Pabna service we are going to start first train link in newly built Ishwardi-Pabna rail line from early next year," Ashim said, adding that a rail link with the capital would be installed as early as possible.



People gather at newly built Pabna rail station welcoming the first test train in the town yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR