

Important road in awful condition

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Thousands of people in Kalmakanda upazila of Netrakona are suffering for years due to awful condition of the 21-kilometre Kalmakanda-Thakurakona road connecting the district headquarters, especially in rainy season.

Meanwhile, due to recent rainfall, people of Mohanganj, Barhata and Purbadhala upazilas have been suffering more to go to the district town.

The road, repaired about three years ago, has developed numerous potholes at different spots in the last couple of months due to use of substandard materials, locals alleged.

Besides, eleven bailey bridges on the important road have become too risky to use as many of those bridges shake when overloaded vehicles cross them, they added.

Of them, the bailey bridges built on Kongsho, Bhogai and Asharani rivers in 1980's are most vulnerable, they said.

Moreover, pressure on Kalmakanda-Thakurakona road has increased many fold due to the ongoing repair work of the 38-kilometre Shyamganj-Durgapur road, locals said, adding that trucks loaded with sand, coal or stone ply the road to go to different destinations across the country.

They said most of the trucks carry goods three or four times their capacity but the authorities concerned seem reluctant to take steps against the truckers.

People of different upazilas of adjacent

Sunamganj also use the road to go to Netrakona, Mymensingh and Dhaka, local journalist Sheikh Shamim said.

Pallab Chakraborty of Ghanita village in Kalmakanda upazila said although the important road has been lying in such awful state for years, no step has been to repair it yet.

Fariduzzaman Talukder, a cement trader at Pagla Bazar in Kalmakanda, said it is very difficult to run his business as he has to pay high transportation cost for carrying goods.

Sources said the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC) recently approved Tk 310 crore project proposals for the repair work of the 21-kilometre road that include widening of the road, land acquisition, construction of 11 bailey bridges and other development works.

Netrakona Roads and Highways Department Executive Engineer Didarul Alam said a tender of Tk 84 crore was floated recently for constructing the 11 bailey bridges and tender for construction of the road will be floated soon.

Netrakona district unit Krishak League President Keshab Ranjan Sarker alleged that corruption cannot be stopped due to nexus between a section of government officials and contractors and demanded proper monitoring of the construction work.

Denying any corruption the executive engineer said if there is any specific allegation they will investigate.



Kalmakanda-Thakurkona road in Netrakona remains in awful condition for years. The photo was taken from Babni area of Kalmakanda upazila a few days ago.

PHOTO: STAR



Mango grower Ebadulla Chowdhury Jewel in his orchard at Sagardighi in Ghatail upazila of Tangail.

PHOTO: STAR

MANGO GROWERS IN TANGAIL

Happy over good yield, upset over low price

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Although mango growers in Ghatail upazila are happy over the good production of the fruit this year, they are disappointed over the low prices.

Around 350 farmers cultivated different varieties of mangoes commercially on 20 hectares of land in the upazila this year, said Upazila Agriculture Officer (UAO) Abdul Matin Biswas.

The varieties of cultivated mangoes include Amropali, Haribhanga, BARI-4, Misribhog, Gopalbhog, Fazli, Kopil, he said. Mango grower Ebadullah Chowdhury Jewel of Sagardighi area said he has cultivated different varieties of mangoes on his three acre orchard.

"Though good yield of mangoes is seen in my orchard this year, the wholesalers are offering me lower prices for the fruit than last year. The mangoes that I sold for Tk 40 per kg last year are not fetching Tk 20 per kg this year," he said.

Mango orchard owner Delwar Hossain of Malir Chala village said he has cultivated different varieties of mangoes on 20 acres of land this year, but he is not getting expected prices.

"I am happy over the production but buyers are not giving fair prices on the plea of huge production of mangoes across the country," he said.

Farmer Bablu Miah of Sholakura village said he had become solvent by cultivating mangoes on his orchard in the last few years after leaving paddy cultivation.

"However, I am frustrated over the low prices of mangoes this year. Local mango growers will incur losses if prices are as low next year," he said.

The UAO said more local farmers are getting interested in mango cultivation every year as it is more profitable than paddy cultivation due to less production cost.

However, local mango growers are feeling frustrated over the low prices of the fruit this year, he added.

Abducted college girl traceless for month

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A college girl is yet to be rescued nearly one month after being abducted from Dewdoba village in Aditmari upazila. The girl, an HSC first year student, was abducted on the way to her college on June 11.

The victim's mother lodged a case with Aditmari Police Station on June 17, accusing two people, police said.

The alleged abductors are Ashish Kumar alias Dipu, 20, son of Atul Chandra Das, and his cohort Shubho Mandal, 19, both of Dewdoba village.

The victim's mother said her daughter was disturbed by Ashish, who followed the girl on her way to college and also sent letters to her expressing his love for her.

"Ashish continued disturbing my daughter even after his guardians were informed of the matter," she added.

"Ashish is locally known as a notorious youth in the village. He abducted my daughter with the help of his cohorts," she said.

"We failed despite searching everywhere to trace out the location of our daughter and the abductors," she added.

Aditmari Police Station Officer-in-Charge Masud Rana said the alleged abductors went into hiding after the incident. "Police are trying to rescue the college girl unhurt and arrest the alleged abductors," he said.

2 construction workers die of toxic gas

They entered a septic tank to clean it

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Two construction workers died after inhaling toxic gas inside a septic tank of a newly constructed building at Maligach village in Tentulia upazila of Panchagarh on Sunday afternoon.

The deceased were Bablu, 20, son of Alauddin of Mirgarh of Panchagarh Sadar upazila, and Mahabub Hossain, 30, son of Koyrul Islam of Bakshigach village in Tentulia upazila of the district.

Officer in Charge of Tentulia Police Station Joharul Islam said a septic tank was built in a house of one Gamiruddin of the village about a month ago.

Bablu and Mahabub opened the cover of the septic tank for removing bamboo and wood from inside yesterday afternoon. But soon after entering it, they became sick due to inhaling toxic gas.

Local people brought them to Panchagarh Sadar Hospital where the on-duty doctor declared them dead.

The toxic gas might have formed inside the tank as its cover remained closed for long, the OC said.

Youth held with car, phensidyl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested a youth with a car carrying 700 bottles of phensidyl on Patuakhali-Barisal road in Lebukhali area under Dumki upazila early yesterday.

The arrestee is Saiful Islam Rasel, 33, son of Humayun Kabir of Patuakhali town, said Md Hasan Ali, acting company commander of Rab-8.

Saiful was coming from Khulna by a private car. At Lebukhali, the elite force stopped the car, arrested Rasel with the phensidyl and seized the vehicle.

'Arrest killers of Jubo League leader Mukul'

Hartal observed in Gaibandha's Saghata

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Local people and traders at Bonarpara bazar in Saghata upazila observed half-day hartal yesterday, demanding immediate arrest and capital punishment of the killers of Jubo League activist Shafiqul Islam Mukul.

They also formed a human chain on the road at upazila parishad.

On Thursday evening, two men were injured in a clash between the activists of the upazila Chhatra League and Jubo League at Bonarpara rail station bazar.

At night, a group of Bangladesh Chhatra League activists, allegedly led by Saghata BCL President Asadul Islam, hacked Mukul, a member of the upazila Jubo League, and his two men when they were taking tea at the bazar.

Later, critically injured Mukul died at Gaibandha Sadar Hospital.

The victim's brother Raiquul Islam on Friday filed a murder case with Saghata Police Station, accusing 19 people, including Asadul Islam.

Police have continued raids to arrest the accused, said Mostafizur Rahman, OC of the police station.



Locals form a human chain in Saghata upazila of Gaibandha yesterday demanding arrest and punishment of the killers of Jubo League activist Shafiqul Islam Mukul.

PHOTO: STAR



Balashi river port on the Jamuna in Fulchhari upazila of Gaibandha is now lively with people as the recent rise of water level during the monsoon brought back navigability on the route, after a couple of months.

PHOTO: STAR

Dried waterways regain life as Jamuna branches flowing

Several channels remain functional only during the rains

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Plying of passenger and cargo boats on the river routes suspended river routes in the district resumed as dried up branches in the Jamuna river basin areas regained navigability due to rain and onrush of water from upstream.

During the rainy season every year, people living in the chars (landmass emerged from the riverbed) travel on small or large engine-boats to go to their destinations, but in dry season they have no alternative but to walk across the sandy lands on foot as no transport is available then.

Moreover, it becomes very difficult for farmers to carry their agricultural produce to the markets while many patients cannot even go to health complexes for treatment for lack of transport facilities.

People living in the river basin areas said plying of boats on the river routes remain suspended from November to June every year due to a sharp decrease of water level, poor navigability and development of chars.

According to district administration, about 4.20 lakh people live in 165 chars in Jamuna and Teesta river basin areas under four upazilas of the district.

Boatman Jasijol Mia of Balashi ghat in Sadar upazila said due to increase of water level, plying of boats resumed on at least 15 routes, including Balashi-Fulchhari, Gajaria-Golna, Singria-Jhanjhair, Goonvari-Kalasona and inter-district routes like Fulchhari-Gutail of Jamalpur, Sayedpur-Rajibpur of Kurigram, Teestamukh-Amtoli-Sariakandi of Bogra.

During a visit to the area this corre-

spondent saw passengers from many northern districts travelling to and from Jamalpur, Mymensingh, Tangail and even Dhaka by engine-boats.

Abu Hanif Mia, chairman of Fazlupur Union Parishad (UP) in Fulchhari upazila, said communication through the river routes resumed again as almost all the routes along Jamuna basin regained navigability due to increase of water level in the ongoing rainy season.

Local people usually cross the sandy chars on foot during the dry season, the UP chairman said.

Gaibandha Water Development Board Executive Engineer Mahbubur Rahman said Jamuna branches regain some navigability during the rainy season, but during winter they dry up.

The river needs to be dredged to ensure plying of boats round the year, he said.