



Mindless sand lifting from the Monu river poses risk to its embankment and a nearby bridge in Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar.

PHOTO: STAR

Sand lifting puts bridges at risk

District admin leases Monu river to one Juber Ahmed for sand extraction

MINTU DESHWARA with ANDREW EAGLE

Two important bridges over the Monu river and a nearby embankment in Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar are at risk due to extensive riverbed sand extraction just 500 metres from the bridges.

"A lot of sand is being taken from the Monu river," says Abu Sufian, a resident of the Kotarkona area where the affected Kulaura to Shamsnagar road and nearby rail bridges are located. "If we have heavy rain the bridges risk being eroded along with the embankment here. The procession of sand trucks is also causing damage."

About a thousand people per day rely on the road bridge, while many more board trains that cross the railway bridge. So concerned are locals by the ongoing sand extraction that they have written to the deputy commissioner to ask for the activity to be stopped.

The local upazila administration reports that

for this Bangla year 1425, the Moulvibazar district administration has leased the Monu river to one Juber Ahmed from Robi Bazar area in Partimpasha union of the upazila for the purposes of sand extraction, for a price of around one crore taka.

Under the lease, sand extraction is said to be permitted in nine locations, but it is occurring in several other places including Kotarkona, too. To take sand from any place that adversely affects bridges, roads or dams is not allowed.

The Daily Star observed six sand extraction machines at work in the Salon and Kotarkona areas, with twelve trucks being loaded while a similar number waited nearby. On condition of anonymity, five workers said up to 200 sand-laden trucks left the area daily.

The chairman of the local Tilaga union council, Abdul Malik, says that the union had been supervising repair work on the flood-damaged embankment near the Monu river in the Dhundalpur area, but last year sand was

extracted from the same area. The union subsequently stopped the work, leaving the water development board to fix a 600-foot long gap in the embankment, work that is currently ongoing.

"Due to unabated sand lifting, the embankment is at risk of collapse," Abdul Malik says.

By phone, leaseholder Juber Ahmed claimed his sand extraction operations are compliant with the lease conditions.

"In the past, sand was extracted from different points along the Kotarkona road, to the right side of the Monu rail bridge," says Kulaura Upazila Nirbahi Officer Chowdhury Md Golam Rabbi. "Due to this extraction, both bridges are at risk. But instructions were given to stop sand extraction from those sites. The current lease allows sand to be extracted not less than one kilometre from the bridges. If the leaseholder disobeys, we will take necessary measures."

'Robber' killed in 'gunfight'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

An alleged robber was killed in a 'gunfight' with police near Kochamari Bridge in Gabtoli upazila of the district yesterday.

The deceased was Md Khairul Islam, 28, son of Abdus Samad of Gaiguli village in the upazila.

He was accused in four robbery cases, said Md Khairul Bashar, officer-in-charge of Gabtoli Police Station.

A gang of robbers was preparing to commit robbery by felling trees on Pargachha road in the area around 2:30am. At the time, a patrol team of police went to the area.

Sensing the presence of the law enforcers, the robbers opened fire, forcing police to fire back that triggered a gunfight, said the OC.

Police later rescued bullet-hit Khairul from the spot and sent him to Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital where he died around 6:30am. Khairul sustained bullet injuries in his right leg, said the OC.

Meanwhile, the cohorts of Khairul managed to flee the scene, said the police official.

Sub-inspector Md Zahid and Inspector Awal were also injured during the gunfight, he said.

Snatchers kill gold trader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A gold trader was stabbed to death by snatchers in Suhilpur area beside Comilla-Sylhet highway in Brahmanbaria Sadar upazila yesterday.

The deceased was Samir Banik, 45, of Shayestaganj upazila in Habiganj.

Police said the victim often moved between Shayestaganj and Brahmanbaria with gold ornaments.

Knowing about this, the snatchers took position near Suhilpur area beside the highway. When Samir reached the area, some snatchers stabbed him and took away his belongings.

He was later sent to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital where on-duty doctors declared him dead, said Md Nabir Hossain, officer-in-charge of Sadar Model Police Station.

14 injured as workers clash with cops

Jamalpur jute workers block road for arrears, bonus

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Agitating workers of Alhaj Jute Mills Ltd in Sarishabari upazila blocked Sarishabari-Jamalpur road yesterday demanding arrears and Eid bonus.

Meanwhile, at least 14 people, including five police personnel, were injured in a clash between the mill workers and police when they latter tried to disperse the agitating workers and remove the barricade.

Of the injured, assistant sub-inspectors Farhad Hossain, Shahadat Hossain and Yasmin Aktar and constables Taslima Aktar and Happy Aktar took treatment at Sarishabari Upazila Health Complex while workers -- Shahjahan, 55, Abul Hossain, 55,

Jahanara Begum, 35, Laily Begum, 40, and Sufia Khatun, 40, are undergoing treatment at the same hospital.

About 1,200 workers of the jute mill took to the street and blocked the road, halting the traffic movement on the important road for nearly two and a half hours from 12:00noon, said Zahidur Rahman, CBA general secretary of the mill.

Hearing the news, when police went to the spot to disperse the agitating workers they started hurling brick chips towards the law enforcers, triggering a clash that left 14 people including five police personnel injured, Officer-in-Charge (investigation) of Sarishabari Police Station Mahabbat Kabir said.

MP assaulted by Jubo League man

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

People blocked Nilphamari-Jaldhaka road for three and a half hours on Wednesday night demanding arrest of Abdul Wahed Bahadur, former president of the dissolved committee of upazila Jubo League, who manhandled local lawmaker Prof Golam Mostofa at a function marking the National Mourning Day.

Golam Mostofa, ruling Awami League (AL) lawmaker from Nilphamari-3 constituency (Jaldhaka), was delivering speech on the life of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the function around 8:45pm when Bahadur and some of his followers hurled abuses at the lawmaker, said Abdul Gaffar, an organiser of the function arranged by Sammilita Sangskritik Jote at Zero Point of the town.

"When the lawmaker was leaving the venue, Bahadur's followers manhandled him. They fled away as the locals chased them," he said.

A large number of people along with the lawmaker blocked the road near Zero Point at 9:00pm demanding arrest of Bahadur and his accomplices, said Abdul Mannan, former president of Jaldhaka upazila Awami League.

Several hundred vehicles got stranded at both sides of the road.

"Bahadur attacked me as I didn't allow him to realize his vested interest. Earlier I had lodged a few general diaries seeking safety from Bahadur but local police did not take any action," the lawmaker said during the blockade.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Uttam Kumar and Assistant Superintendent of Police Ruhul Amin made failed attempts to persuade the agitators to free the road.

The blockade was withdrawn at 12:30am as AL's central committee Joint Secretary Jajhangir Kabir Nanak told over cell phone that action would be taken against the accused.

This correspondent could not talk to Bahadur as he went into hiding.

Yellow monitor released into water body in C'nawabganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

A yellow monitor, locally known as holdey guisap, was released into a water body in the town on Wednesday evening, an hour after it was rescued.

The yellow monitor was trapped by a current net while some locals were fishing in the water body around 5:30pm.

Knowing about the matter, a team of Save the Nature, an environment-friendly organisation in the town, went to the area and got down on knee deep water and rescued the lizard from the current net. The lizard sustained minor injury on its right leg.

Around 6:30pm, the members of the organisation released it into the water body.

It is sona gui or holdey gui, commonly called yellow monitor or common lizard. It's length is around 1.5 feet, said Rokon Zaman, a member of Save the Nature.



PHOTO: ZAHANGIR SHAH

A scene of erosion by the Padma river in Bahadurpur Bazar area of Harirampur upazila under Manikganj. The photo was taken on Monday.

Padma erosion turns serious

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

The Padma devoured over 600 houses, 25 shops and vast tracts of Boro croplands in Bahadurpur, Chhoto Bahadurpur, Ujankandi, Kadamtali, Degirchar and Ramkrishnapur villages in Harirampur upazila of the district during the last one and a half months.

During a visit to the erosion-hit areas on Monday, this correspondent saw a number of villagers shifting their houses to shift to safer places in fear of further erosion.

Bahadurpur Bazar, several school buildings, orphanages and mosques in the areas are under threat of erosion, said locals.

"I with my wife and two sons now live in a rented house at neighbouring Ishakhabad village after my house was devoured by the river in

last week," said day labourer Md Liton Mia of Baro Bahadurpur village.

Another day labourer of the area Md Bachchu said he and his family members are also living in a rented house as he lost his house to the river two weeks ago.

Md Karim, fishermen of Choto Bahadurpur village, said he and his family members are passing their days amid sufferings as they had to take shelter on a road in the area after losing home to the river.

Twenty-five shops of Bahadurpur Bazar washed away with three big trees in last seven days and more than one hundred homestead of Baro Bahadurpur village devoured this time, said Suwash Chandra Dey, general secretary of the bazar committee, also member of Ward No 9 in

Gopinathpur union.

Twenty-six other shops and four old trees of the bazar are now under serious threat of erosion, he said.

Member of Ward No 7 of the Gopinathpur Union Parishad Md Mizanur Rahman said 65 houses of Degirchar village have already been devoured and 20 others are under threat.

Chairman of Gopinathpur Union Parishad Abdul Kuddus said he wrote to higher authorities to take necessary steps to check erosion and seek decision about seven old trees which are going into the river the administration did not take initiative yet.

Manikganj Deputy Commissioner SM Ferdaus said he will take steps after visiting within short time.

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Pistol seized, one arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Police in a raid seized an illegal firearm and ammunition and arrested a man from Gowhatipara in Gobindaganj municipal area on Wednesday night.

Gobindaganj Police Station Officer-in-Charge Majibar Rahman said police arrested Rashidul Mia, 35, son of late Fazer Ali, from his house and seized the firearm and ammunition.

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