

Risky job without safety measures

Workers at different dockyards in Nesarabad upazila work risking their lives

HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

Thousands of workers at different dockyards in Nesarabad upazila work without any safety measures and equipment, risking their lives.

As a result, accidents often occur there, some of them fatal. Recently, two people were electrocuted at two separate dockyards there.

On a visit to several dockyards, this correspondent saw electric wires spread all around the dockyard while uncovered electric wires were found tied to a pillar.

Although gloves, helmets, protection boots, safety belts and other equipment are necessary for working in dockyards where the workers have to work with electricity, gas, iron bars as well as iron cutters, not a single worker at any dockyard in Nesarabad has any safety equipment.

"We are working in the dockyard without any safety measures as nobody has given us the equipments," said Akram Hossain, a worker at Salehia Dockyard in the upazila.

They do not wear helmets even when they work on a ship, he added.

"To work amidst scorching heat, we need to wear protection boots to protect us from the heat of the iron," said Akram Hossain, another worker there.

"We asked the contractor to arrange safety equipments for us, but he did not pay any heed," said worker Goutom.

"We work here amidst unsafe environment as we have to depend on the earning from the dockyard," he adds.

Md Abul Kalam, an employee of Salehia Dockyard in the upazila, said they urged the contractor to arrange safety equipments for the workers, but nothing has changed.

"We only lease the dockyard land to the contractors, who make new water vessels or repair old ones," he said, adding that the contractors are responsible for the other works connected to repair



Workers building a ship without using any safety equipment at a dockyard near Nesarabad Bus Terminal under Nesarabad upazila of Pirojpur. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

or construction of vessels.

This correspondent tried to talk with several contractors, but they declined to make any comment over the issue.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Abu Sayeed said he is unaware of the unsafe environment in the dockyards.

"I will look into the matter," he said, adding that

necessary steps will be taken to ensure safer working places at the dockyards.

There are at least 25 dockyards on the two sides of the river Sandha under Nesarabad upazila, and over 3,000 workers in different categories work there.

Construction of water vessels has been going on there for around 30 years, and it has

spread rapidly during the last eight years. Different types of water vessels, including motorised passenger carrying trawlers and sand carriers are made there.

As labour and other costs are cheaper in Nesarabad than other areas of the country, people from different areas come here to make new water vessels or repair the old ones.

Thousands suffer for years

People of Jamalpur's Sarishabari and Kazipur of Sirajganj cry for a bridge over a branch of river Jamuna



People cross the river on the only boat service between Dasherbari and Charsarishabari under Sarishabari upazila of Jamalpur.

PHOTO: STAR

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

People of Satpua union in Sarishabari upazila in the district and Munsurnagar union under Kazipur upazila of Sirajganj have been suffering much for want of a bridge over a branch of the Jamuna river, thanks to the indifference of the authorities concerned.

Around 50,000 people of three villages in Satpua union and Munsurnagar union cannot communicate easily with other due to lack of a bridge.

This correspondent visited the places recently and saw that a concrete bridge is direly needed for smooth communication between Charsarishabari village and Dasherbari village of Sarishabari upazila.

He saw that people of the three villages in Satpua union and seven in Munsurnagar union have to cross the river to reach their respective destinations facing great difficulties.

People of Munsurnagar union go to Sarishabari upazila headquarters in connection with their everyday work as the union is geographically cut off from Kazipur upazila by the river Jamuna and only 15 km from

Sarishabari upazila, said Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Abdur Razzak.

Around 15,000 people living in Charsarishabari, Rakhalgachha and Ghoramara villages in Satpua union, and 35,000 people in Brahmanjani, Shalgram, Shaldah, Chhinna, Charsalal Majnabari and Kumariabari villages in Munsurnagar union are facing troublesome communication due to lack of a bridge over the river, said residents of both the unions.

A good number of students from the three villages of Satpua union and many students of Munsurnagar union studying at RDM Pilot High School, Reaz Uddin Talukdar High School, Sarishabari Alia Madrasa, Sarishabari College and Mahmuda Salam Girls' College go to attend their respective institutions by facing the troublesome communication for years, said Satpua UP Chairman Abu Taher.

"During the rainy season, the river naturally becomes wider and there is strong current. So, we have to face severe problems and spend more time to cross the river by boat," said students Suma of Charsarishabari village and Kamrunahar of Shalgram village. Sometimes they fail to attend

classes in time and that hampers our education, they said, adding that there is dire need of a bridge for smooth communication.

The other commuters, including farmers and patients, are facing the same ordeal, said villagers of both the unions, adding that the situation has been prevailing as the authorities concerned have never come forward to solve the problem.

A large number of farmers carrying agro-products face troubles every time they cross the river by boat to reach Aramnagar and Shimla bazars in Sarishabari upazila town, said farmers Sohrab Fakir, Sairuddin Miah and Shahid Mondal of Ghoramara village.

Sarishabari upazila Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) Engineer Shafiullah Khandaker said a proposal for construction of a concrete bridge over the river was sent to the higher authorities concerned about two years ago.

"I do not know when the construction work will start as design of the bridge and the cost assessment are yet to be completed by the LGED headquarters," he added.

Elderly woman murdered

Son-in-law goes into hiding after the incident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A 70-year-old woman was brutally murdered allegedly by her son-in-law at Mirzapur village in Madarganj upazila following a family feud on Sunday.

Deceased Bhanu Bewa, wife of late Abdur Razzak of Itail village in Sadar upazila, used to live with her son-in-law Rafiqul Bepari Dipu, 45, husband of her younger daughter Hasna Begum, in Dhaka.

Informed by locals, police recovered the victim's beheaded body from an eucalyptus orchard and the head from beside a canal adjacent to the orchard on Monday night, said Asaduzzaman, sub-inspector of Madarganj Police Station.

Bhanu left Dhaka on August 18 to

visit her elder daughter Komola Begum's house at Itail village to celebrate Eid-ul-Azha.

Dipu along with his family members came to his home at Dilalpara village in Melandah upazila from Dhaka on August 21 to celebrate Eid, the SI said.

On Sunday afternoon, Dipu, a trader at Amin Bazar in Dhaka, phoned his mother-in-law (Bhanu) to join with his family members so that they could return to Dhaka together and asked her to come to Jamalpur town from where he would take her to his village home on the day, said the SI.

Accordingly, she came to the town on Sunday evening and Dipu took her to the orchard and killed her and fled the scene, the SI quoted Hasna as saying.

25 buses

FROM PAGE 2

passengers," he said, adding that local political leaders later requested them to stop the bus services.

The district administration yesterday conducted six mobile courts on the highways and stopped movement of all modes of human hauliers and three-wheelers including battery-run auto-rickshaws and shallow-engine driven Nosimons.

Deputy Commissioner Shaheena Khatun said they have taken a decision to conduct continuous mobile court drives against unauthorised vehicles for three months.

She chaired a meeting of the Regional Transport Committee at her office's conference room yesterday where a 20-point decision was taken to ensure road safety.

The decisions also include checking unsafe overtaking and overloading of buses, removing illegal roadside markets, repairing damaged roads, widening highways, and introducing a hassle-free system to get driving licence and vehicle documents.

Earlier on Monday night, three mobile courts sealed an illegal auto-rickshaw factory in Bhabaniganj area and jailed its manager Ranju Sarker for one month. The courts also collected Tk 10,700 in fine from 11 auto-rickshaw drivers and jailed five for one day.

Lawmaker Shafiqul Islam protested against the drive and demanded release of the arrestees, but the mobile courts did not listen to him.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, the MP however said he is in favour of the drives against unauthorised vehicles.

"My problem is that it's being conducted only in Natore. Unauthorised vehicles are running freely everywhere else. Over the years, the number of such vehicle has reached so high that a sudden ban would cause huge unemployment and the affected people will blame me," he observed.

Lawmaker Fazle Hossain Badsha of Rajshahi said removing all the three-wheelers would create an impact on local economy.

Rape of two Tripura girls sparks protest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Indigenous students at a human chain in the town yesterday demanded exemplary punishment of the rapists of two Tripura girls in Lama upazilla.

They also alleged that violence against indigenous women is on the rise in Chittagong Hill Tracts.

The students formed the human chain in front of Bandarban Press Club.

Tripura Student Association Bandarban unit General Secretary Samiron Tripura, Pahari Chhatra Parishad Bandarban college unit General Secretary Bamong Marma, Chak Student Association President Thoigya Chak spoke at the rally.

Two Tripura girls, aged 12 and 17, were raped allegedly by two members of Border Guard Bangladesh on Wednesday night.

Good sugarcane yield delights farmers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Sugarcane growers in the district are all smiles as they got good yield of the crop due to favourable weather and absence of attacks by pests and diseases.

The prices are little higher in the beginning of the season but the sellers and the buyers are happy over the good supply.

Though sugarcane cultivation demands hard labour, local farmers became interested in cultivating it due to higher profit than other crops, including jute.

Sugarcane was cultivated on 559 hectares of land at nine upazilas out of 12 upazilas in the district this year, said district Sub-Assistant Agriculture Officer of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) Shariful Islam. Of those, 260 hectares are in Sadar upazila, 100 hectares in Nagarpur, 60 hectares in Bhuapur, 32 hectares in Mirzapur, 20 hectares in Ghatail, 18 hectares in Kalihati, 16 hectares in Madhupur, 14 hectares in Gopalpur, 38 hectares in Delduar, and one hectare in Basail upazilas, he said.

Sugarcane was cultivated on 699 hect-

ares of land in the district and the production was 33,574 tonnes, he added.

Rakibul Islam, a sugarcane farmer of Dharrerbari village under Baghil union in Sadar upazila, said he has cultivated sugarcane on one bigha of land.

"I have spent Tk 25,000 for cultivation, including Tk 3,000 for buying saplings, Tk 1,000 for ploughing, Tk 5,000 for labour cost, and Tk 3,000 for fertilisers," he said.

"I hope I can sell my sugarcane for at least Tk 50,000," he said.

Farmer Shayan Miah of the same village said he cultivated sugarcane on 1.5 bighas of land and also got good yield.

Sugarcane was cultivated on around 100 hectares of land at Pitchuria, Krishnapur, Tablapara and Dharrerbari villages and the yield was good as pests or diseases did not attack the fields this year, said farmer Rokon Hossain.

DAE District Deputy Director Md Abdur Razzak said bumper sugarcane was produced in the district this year and the farmers are getting good prices for their produce.

Rape of 8th grader in Patuakhali Court asks OC to record case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A court here yesterday directed the officer-in-charge of Mirzaganj Police Station to record the rape case as First Information Report (FIR), after victim's father filed a case with the court the same day.

Judge Nitai Chandra Paul of Patuakhali Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal delivered the order at noon, said Pabitra Sarker, lawyer of the plaintiff.

Earlier in the day, victim's father Younus Bepari filed a case with the court accusing Md Rasel, 25, son of Abdur Razzak Sikder, for allegedly raping his daughter on August 15.

Meanwhile, the 14-year-old victim, a Class VIII student at a local Dakhil madrasa, got released from Patuakhali General

Hospital on August 26, after undergoing treatment there since August 16.

According to the victim, Rasel came to their house and raped her when her parents were out of the house around 1:00pm on August 15.

Hearing her screams, neighbours went to the house and rescued her while Rasel managed to flee the scene.

She was taken to Mirzaganj Upazila Health Complex first and later admitted to Patuakhali General Hospital the same evening.

Younus said they went to Mirzaganj Police Station to file a case but police didn't record the case.

A police officer brought Rasel to the police station the next day, he said, adding that a local influential man took Rasel away from the police station after several hours.

Trawler with 100 people capsizes

Three passengers missing in Jamuna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

At least three people, including a minor girl, went missing when a trawler carrying 100 passengers capsized after it collided with a cement-laden cargo vessel in the Jamuna river yesterday.

The missing people are Noor Box, 50, of Ataikula upazila and eight-year-old Mehla and Mohammad Masum of Sujanager upazila of Pabna.

The trawler left Aminpur area of Pabna's Sujanager upazila for Aricha in Manikganj in the morning. The engine-boat capsized in the river after it hit a cargo vessel near Alokdia Char.

All the passengers, except the three, managed to swim ashore, Officer-in-Charge of Shivalaya Police Station Habib Ullah said, adding that at least 15 people were injured in the accident.

Mizanur Rahman, deputy assistant director at Manikganj Fire Station, said divers continued rescue operation till filing of this report.



A field covered with a good crop of sugarcane at Dharrerbari village in Sadar upazila of Tangail. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR