



The mighty Padma has devoured a number of buildings in Bashbari and Mulfatganj of Naria in Shariatpur as river erosion has hit hard the areas. A health centre, a mosque, houses, shops and roads either got badly damaged or went into the river. Some houses are yet to be lost but at risk of being eroded and people are vacating the places with whatever they can take with them. The photos were taken on September 3.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Furious Padma threatens Naria

FROM PAGE 1

"The Upazila Health Complex would be abandoned tomorrow as the river is now 10 metres from its walls," she said on Monday.

Yesterday, locals confirmed that the government health facility was indeed abandoned with the main building only a few feet away from being devoured.

The Padma meanders its way to the Bay of Bengal from the Himalayas. It is known to be one of the few mysterious rivers in the world. The river erodes one bank and build chars on the other.

Naria had been on the good side of the Padma. "The river used to erode its left bank. But it has started eroding its right bank five to six years ago," said Mainuddin Madbar of Mulfatganj Bazar.

On the evening of August 8, around 100 square metres of the bank near Sadur Bazar Launch Terminal went

into the river with 10 people, who were standing or working along the bank, and some shops. Only one body was recovered.

Tea stall owner Gopinath Bachhar was among the victims. A few days later the Padma took his homestead too.

Even though Parbati Bachhar, his widow, knows Gopinath is not coming back, she waits by the river, still wearing vermilion that Hindu women use on their foreheads as a sign of marriage.

"We do not know what to do now," she said.

Everyone from her used-to-be village are on the same boat. Rich or poor, they have no home now.

Locals claimed that the river began eroding its right bank after the river training project of the Padma Bridge began at Mawa, and it has sped up this year.

"I don't know why the river is eroding the right bank. All I can tell you is

that the river has changed its course," said Swapan Kumar Das, chief scientific officer of the River Research Institute, Faridpur. He said they were conducting a survey to know why.

Safiu Islam Sheikh, executive engineer of the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), also said there was no connection between the erosion and the river training work.

In the past, the Padma current used to erode the bank on the north of Naria. "Now, the current is slamming the banks at Jajira and Naria and causing the erosion," Safiu added.

During a visit to the area, The Daily Star correspondent found that people living near the river were spending sleepless nights. They keep an eye on the river and are ready to dismantle their homes and move.

"I was not sleeping at night. Suddenly, I heard an announcement from the mosque horn speakers. It

asked those who had not yet moved to go someplace else," said Shahid Bepari of Uttar Kedarpur in Naria.

"I went out to check and found a large chunk of our orchard near our house was gone. In the evening, I had seen the river about 50 metres away from the orchard," said Shahid.

The launch terminal was a kilometre away from the Bepari home a month ago but now it is just 100 metres away.

Bashbari, Kedarpur and the adjacent Mulfatganj Bazar were all messy on Monday. People were busy dismantling their homes, taking window frames, doors, and roofs. Some were even pulling their homes apart brick by brick.

Traders of Mulfatganj Bazar said there were 1,500 structures of businesses in the market and all of them were under threat.

Nur Hossain Dewan, president of

Mulfatganj Bazar Businessmen Association, said about 10,000 people would be affected if the bazaar was devoured entirely.

As this reporter was talking to traders there, a large three-storied building opposite the Upazila Health Complex went into the river in about 20 seconds.

Charuria Government Primary school and Purbo Naria Primary school are also gone and 12 more schools are under threat.

"Many, who had properties worth a few hundred crores taka, became penniless," said Ibrahim Hossain, a teacher of a local school.

UNO Sanzida said they learnt from a survey that the water was between 100 and 250 feet deep in Naria side of the Padma and was quite shallow on the other side and that a char was forming there.

When asked about the govern-

ment's measures to stop the erosion, she said it had allocated Tk 5.5 crore in two phases to put sandbags in affected areas and reduce the pace of erosion.

But the sandbags were no match before the current, although they weakened its force a little.

The government has now taken up a Tk 1,097 crore project to protect the right bank.

"We will start the work possibly in November," said BWDB Executive Engineer Safiul, also the director of the bank protection project.

Mominul Haq Sarkar, deputy executive director of the Centre for Environment and Geographical Information Service (CEGIS), the agency that predicts river erosion, said they observed that the erosion had increased.

"But without conducting a study, it is not possible to say whether it is an impact of river training," he added.

## Dhaka to call for action on Rohingya issue

REZAUL KARIM

Bangladesh plans to raise the Rohingya issue in the upcoming 73rd UN General Assembly and urge the international community to unite and mount more pressure on Myanmar to resolve the lingering crisis.

Diplomatic sources say it is time the international community asked Myanmar to end all practices that led to the crisis and create conditions for the safe return of hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas who have fled the country since a military crackdown in August 2017.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will leave for New York on September 21 to attend and deliver a speech in the UNGA session. She is expected to place fresh proposals and Bangladesh's demand for early repatriation of over one million forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals as well as implementation of the Kofi Annan Commission's recommendations to resolve the Rohingya crisis.

The opening of the 73rd session of UNGA will formally begin on September 18.

The UK has intended to host a "high-level meeting of ministers" at the upcoming UNGA.

Speaking in the House of Commons on Tuesday, Jeremy Hunt, British secretary of state for foreign affairs, said the UK is to "take a stand" and push for military leaders in Myanmar to be "brought to justice" over claims of genocide.

Hunt told MPs that the perpetrators of appalling crimes against the Rohingyas "must be brought to justice". He said he would urge foreign ministers at the UN to refer the leadership to the International Criminal

Court.

The UK had a "special responsibility to act", he said and confirmed he would launch a diplomatic effort on the matter later this month.

"Ethnic cleansing in whatever shape or form, wherever it happens, should never go unpunished and the perpetrators of these appalling crimes must be brought to justice," Hunt said.

"There was gang rape, assaults on children, villages razed, and, in northern Rakhine, mass extermination and mass deportations.

"This is the kind of issue where countries that believe in civilised values have to take a stand and make sure that justice is done."

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Marcia Bernicat on Wednesday held a meeting with Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque where they discussed the Rohingya issue with special focus on the upcoming UNGA.

As Bangladesh is trying to move the Rohingya issue in UNGA, Dhaka expects that the US will go for a comprehensive action against Myanmar military.

Apart from raising the issue in the UNGA session, Dhaka would continue its efforts to put international pressure on Myanmar to ensure secured repatriation of the Rohingya refugees, who have taken shelter in Bangladesh, foreign ministry officials said.

The Rohingya issue might get prominence in the upcoming UNGA with the latest report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar that urged for investigation and prosecution of the top military generals for genocide as well as for crimes against humanity and war crimes in Rakhine State.

He had been expected to discuss the ICC's decision, telling AFP on Thursday night that he would answer questions on the matter at the media conference.

But he refused to be drawn on the matter yesterday, instead saying the government would give an official

## Myanmar govt to refuse media phone calls after ICC ruling

APP, Naypyidaw

Myanmar's government spokesman will no longer answer phone calls from media, he said yesterday, one day after the International Criminal Court ruled it had jurisdiction to investigate crimes against the country's Rohingya Muslim community.

Myanmar's reputation has been further battered in the last two weeks with a damning UN report calling for military chief Min Aung Hlaing and other top generals to be prosecuted for "genocide" after more than 700,000 Rohingya fled a military crackdown last year.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) flexed its muscles Thursday with its unprecedented ruling that it had the power to investigate the forced deportation of Rohingya to Bangladesh, even though Myanmar has not signed the statute underpinning the tribunal.

Myanmar has stonewalled in response to international criticism, barring journalists and diplomats from visiting the scene of the crackdown except on short, military-chaperoned trips.

Communication from authorities is also often slow and scarce, with only one official media spokesman for the entire government.

Now even that channel of information is all but drying up.

"We won't answer the phone in future," government spokesman Zaw Htay told reporters in the capital Naypyidaw yesterday, adding that he will instead hold press conferences every one or two weeks.

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## 'Gunfight' with police

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At one stage, Shamim and Eklas fell from the bike being hit with bullets from Rahman's Gazipur house. Police super Jayedul said Eklas took the gun to the house after the killing of Bacchu.

Rahman and Shamim, both professional robbers, were drawn to militancy by JMB leaders while in jail, said police.

Counterterrorism officials said JMB in recent years has been gathering strength through collecting funds mainly by robbery.

Militants in jail are also convincing other inmates, who were jailed for robbery and other similar crimes, to share with JMB a portion of looted money, they said.

They are telling inmates in robbery cases that, "If you spend a portion of the looted money for the welfare of Islam, your sins will be forgiven," said a counterterrorism official.

### 'GUNFIGHT' IN CHAPAINAWABGANJ

An alleged drug peddler was killed in a "gunfight" with Rab at a mango orchard of Nayadiari-Namotola village of Gomostapur upazila early yesterday.

The deceased was Abul Hossain alias Babu, 35, son of Alam Sheikh of Shib RAMPUR village in the upazila, reports our Chapainawabganj corre-

spondent.

Based on information that a group of drug peddlers had gathered at the mango orchard, a team of Rab-5 conducted a drive there around 1:00am, said Squadron Leader Sayeed Abdullah Al Murad, commander of Chapainawabganj Rab camp.

Sensing presence of law enforcers, the drug peddlers opened fire, forcing Rab men to fire back in retaliation, he said, adding after the "gunfight", bullet Babu was found lying on the spot.

Later, he was taken to the Gomostapur Upazila Health Complex, where doctors declared him dead. Two Rab members were also "injured" during the incident and they were given primary treatment at the health complex, claimed the official.

Rab also recovered one pistol, one magazine, three bullets and 177 bottles of Phensedyl from the spot. He was an accused in nine cases, including eight drug-related cases, filed with different police stations in district, said Rab official.

With the death, at least 224 suspected drug dealers and peddlers have been killed since the anti-narcotics drive began on May 4. Most of them were killed in "shootouts" with police and Rab.

## Galactic wind spotted for the first time

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think outflows and winds are critical pieces to how they form and evolve, regulating their ability to grow," explained University of Texas at Austin astronomer Dr Justin Spilker, who led the research.

Using observations from the ALMA observatory in northern Chile, Dr Spilker and his colleagues were able to detect traces of these winds from a time shortly after the Big Bang when the universe was only one billion years old.

Galaxies such as our own, the Milky Way, have a history of relatively slow, controlled star birth, with about one new star emerging every year.

However, thousands of stars can emerge in the same space of time in

starburst galaxies.

These will rapidly consume the gas reservoir they rely on to form new stars, so their lifespans tend to be relatively short.

Galaxies avoid this early death when they eject vast quantities of gas early on, slowing down the rate of star formation and producing galactic winds.

These astronomical weather patterns can be seen in nearby galaxies using conventional X-ray and radio techniques from Earth.

However, identifying them in the farthest reaches of the universe, which provides insight into its early years, is far harder.

ALMA was able to pin down the effect in the galaxy known as SPT2319-

55 using gravitational lensing, the process by which gravity bends light and in doing so magnifies events that would otherwise be impossible to observe using existing technology.

This technique has previously allowed scientists to identify planets far beyond the Milky Way for the first time.

In their distant galaxy, the team was able to detect large amounts of cold gas flowing outwards from the ancient galaxy at approximately the same rate as new stars are forming.

"So far, we have only observed one galaxy at such a remarkable cosmic distance, but we'd like to know if winds like these are also present in other galaxies to see just how common they are," said Dr Spilker.