

# Flash flood hits vast lands in Teesta basin

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Onrush of water from upstream has submerged a vast tract of croplands in low-lying char areas along Teesta river basin, leaving over 500 families marooned in Sundarganj upazila.

However, water level of Jamuna, Karatoa and Ghaghat rivers was below the danger mark yesterday.

Locals said Aman seedlings on vast tracts of low-lying lands already went under water while many dwelling houses in those areas were submerged in four to six inches water.

Meanwhile, fearing further deterioration of the flood situation, dwellers of the low-lying char areas are looking for alternative shelters for their families along with cattle and poultry birds, they said.

Water level of Teesta has increased by about four-feet in the last 24 hours and might cross the danger mark if the trend continues further ahead, Kapasia Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Jalaluddin said.

Although some of the villagers have started shifting their dwelling houses to

safer places, many are still passing their days at their respective homes amid fear of being eroded, the UP chairman said.

"Sudden rise of water in Teesta river has submerged Aman seedlings on my two bighas of land," farmer Altaf Hossain of Haripur said.

"We thought there will be no flood this year as the rainy season is already over, but unfortunately water from upstream hit the croplands in the low-lying areas," another farmer Abbas Ali of the area said.

Chairman Jalaluddin said the flash flood has marooned nearly 500 families at a number of villages under his union and if the situation continues more areas may get flooded.

Sundarganj Upazila Project Implementation Officer (PIO) Nurunnabi Sarker said they have already requested the district administration for emergency relief materials and asked the chairmen of the affected unions to monitor the flood situation.

Gaibandha Water Development Board (WDB) Executive Engineer Mahbubur Rahman said it is a usual mid-level flood which will not create any major devastation.



Dwelling houses in a Teesta basin area at Belka in Gaibandha's Sundarganj upazila gets inundated due to a flash flood triggered by the onrush of water from upstream. The photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: STAR



Shafiul Alam Sarker takes care of koel at his farm at Mostofi Gobdha village in Kurigram's Rajarhat upazila. Below, eggs collected from the farm.

PHOTO: STAR



## Koel farming makes him solvent

Shafiul of Kurigram also encourages others to go for self-employment

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Shafiul Alam Sarker of Mostofi Gobdha village in Kurigram's Rajarhat upazila has set a laudable example of self-employment through koel farming alongside inspiring others to follow suit.

"After obtaining MA in economics in 2009, I joined a private company job but it failed to bring me satisfaction. Lastly I started a new journey, setting up a koel farm a year ago," said Shafiul, 33, a resident of Mostofi Gobdha village in Kurigram's Rajarhat upazila.

Now there are 1,000 koel birds at the farm from where he gets 800 to 900 eggs daily and sells 100 pieces at Tk 170 to Tk 175.

He gets around Tk 1,500 from selling the koel eggs while Tk 600 is spent for feeds and maintenance cost every day.

"I had to start alone as I didn't get family's support for koel rearing. However, the initiative saw success in a short time," Shafiul said.

"I have already encouraged 42 educated unemployed youths for koel farming and gave them necessary suggestions on the

matter. Of them, 15 youths started the trade in the last four months," he added.

Shafiul's father Sekendar Ali, 62, said, "At first I did not like my educated son's involvement in farming. Now I realise he took the right decision. Many local educated people are visiting him for getting advice on koel farming."

"I started koel farming at our house after getting the idea and suggestion from Shafiul Bhai in July this year," said Javed Ali, 23, an educated youth at Mostofi Gobdha village.

Schoolteacher Yakub Ali Mandal, 48, of the village said he also got the idea of koel rearing from Shafiul and hopes to start a farm by this year.

Koel farming is profitable as the bird and its egg have a high demand in the local markets, said Shafiul, who has a plan to rear native variety of shol fish beside his koel farm next year.

Dr Pabitra Kumar, acting upazila livestock officer in Rajarhat, said, "We provide technical support to Shafiul as he is playing an important role to encourage unemployed educated people to be self-reliant through rearing koel."

## Mother, daughter poisoned to death

The woman's dowry-greedy husband suspected

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A woman and her four-month-old daughter were poisoned to death allegedly by her dowry greedy husband in Jamirdia Kashor area under Bhaluka upazila of the district early yesterday.

The deceased are, Nazma Akhter Moyna, 22, wife of Saidul Islam, 25, a pick-up van driver, and their daughter Sadia Akhter.

Quoting Moyna's father Nuhu Mia, a textile mill worker, police said Saidul had been pressing Moyna for dowry since their marriage about six years ago.

Recently, Saidul started pressuring his wife for Tk 18 lakh to buy a new pick-up van.

As a sequel, the couple locked in an altercation over the issue around 1:30am, Officer-in-Charge (Investigation) of Bhaluka Police Station Mazharul Islam said.

At one stage, Saidul might have poured poison into his wife's and daughter's mouths before fleeing the scene, police quoted locals as saying.

Hearing suspicious noises, neighbours rushed to the spot and took them to Bhaluka Upazila Health Complex first and then shifted them to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, where the doctors declared the two dead.

On information, police recovered the bodies and sent them to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

Saidul and his family members went into hiding after the incident, police said, adding that none had filed any complaint in this regard as of filing of this report around 8:00pm.

## Dykes in 3 UZs badly damaged

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Farmers in three upazilas are uncertain about cultivation of Aman paddy as three embankments in those upazilas have collapsed due to tidal surge and erosion, allowing the water to submerge the fields.

The areas are Bashbaria village under Dashmina upazila, Dhulia under Baufal upazila and Piprakhal under Mirzaganj upazila.

In Dashmina, the embankment on the bank of Tentulia river in Bashbaria village broke up due to erosion and heavy tidal surges.

"The river devoured my house seven times in 30 years. Now we are landless, but we once had land, cattle, cropland and dwelling house. After Sidr we got a tin-shed house from the government but that also went into the river three years ago. Since then, I have been living in a tiny house with my family of five," said housewife Salina Begum of Bashbaria.

Bashbaria Mariam Memorial Girls' High School, Akram Khan Government Primary School and Bashbaria Government Primary School are on the verge of collapsing into the river.

Mariam Memorial Girls' High School Assistant Teacher SM Enayet Karim said students cannot pay atten-

tion to their studies as they are always afraid that the school might collapse any moment.

Local Union Parishad (UP) Member Abdul Halim Khan said agricultural land is also being washed away into the river and farmers cannot cultivate their land as tidal surge covers their paddy land during high tide.

Bashbaria UP Chairman Altaf Hossain Akon said Amraia village has been totally eroded and about 75 percent of Dhondhonia village has been washed away due to lack of a embankment.

"We submitted a memorandum to the higher authorities concerned to build the dyke with concrete blocks," he said.

Water Development Board (WDB) Sub-Divisional Engineer Javed Iqbal said they have taken up four separate projects at a cost of Tk 11.37 crore to build a 30-km-long dyke and four sluice gates to save Bashbaria area from erosion.

Erosion at Dhulia area under Baufal upazila has taken a serious turn as the dyke has collapsed.

Several hundred houses, bazars and the Baufal-Dhulia-Hosnabad road were washed into river. Many people have become landless while Dhulia Government Primary School,

Mothbaria High School and the grave of language hero Syed Ashraf are about to collapse.

Baufal Upazila Nirbahi Officer Pijush Chandra De said he visited the spot recently and informed the authorities concerned about the situation and asked them to take steps to protect the area.

District WDB Executive Engineer Hanasnuzzaman said they have submitted a project proposal and work will start after approval.

A two km section of the dyke from Piprakhal to Kalikapur bank of Payra river in Mirzaganj is facing serious erosion. Piprakhal Government Primary School has gone into the river and three more primary schools and a madrasa are about to collapse.

Shamim Hossain, a local resident, said agricultural land, houses and educational institutions were devoured by the river in the last several years.

Farmer Abul Kalam said they have not been able to cultivate their lands ever since super-cyclone Sidr destroyed the dyke.

Patuakhali WDB Executive Engineer Hanasnuzzaman said they are taking steps to build a new dyke in Piprakhal area to save it from erosion.



Surging tide submerges the bank of the Tentulia river following breach in the embankment in Dashmina upazila of Patuakhali. PHOTO: STAR

## One to die for rape, murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A court here yesterday sentenced a youth to death for killing an eight-year-old girl after rape in Madhupur upazila in 2014.

Khaleda Yasmin, judge of Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal in Tangail, passed the order against Kamrul Islam, 25, son of Sabash Ali of Bhutia village in the upazila, said Anwarul Islam, court inspector in Tangail.

The court also fined him Tk 1 lakh, he said.

According to the prosecution, Bithi Akter, daughter of Abul Kalam of Bhutia village, went missing on May 19 in 2014.

The following day, police arrested Kamrul in this connection. Following his confession, police recovered Bithi's body from a pineapple orchard at the village.

The victim's father later filed a murder case, accusing Kamrul with Madhupur Police Station.

## 2 kids drown

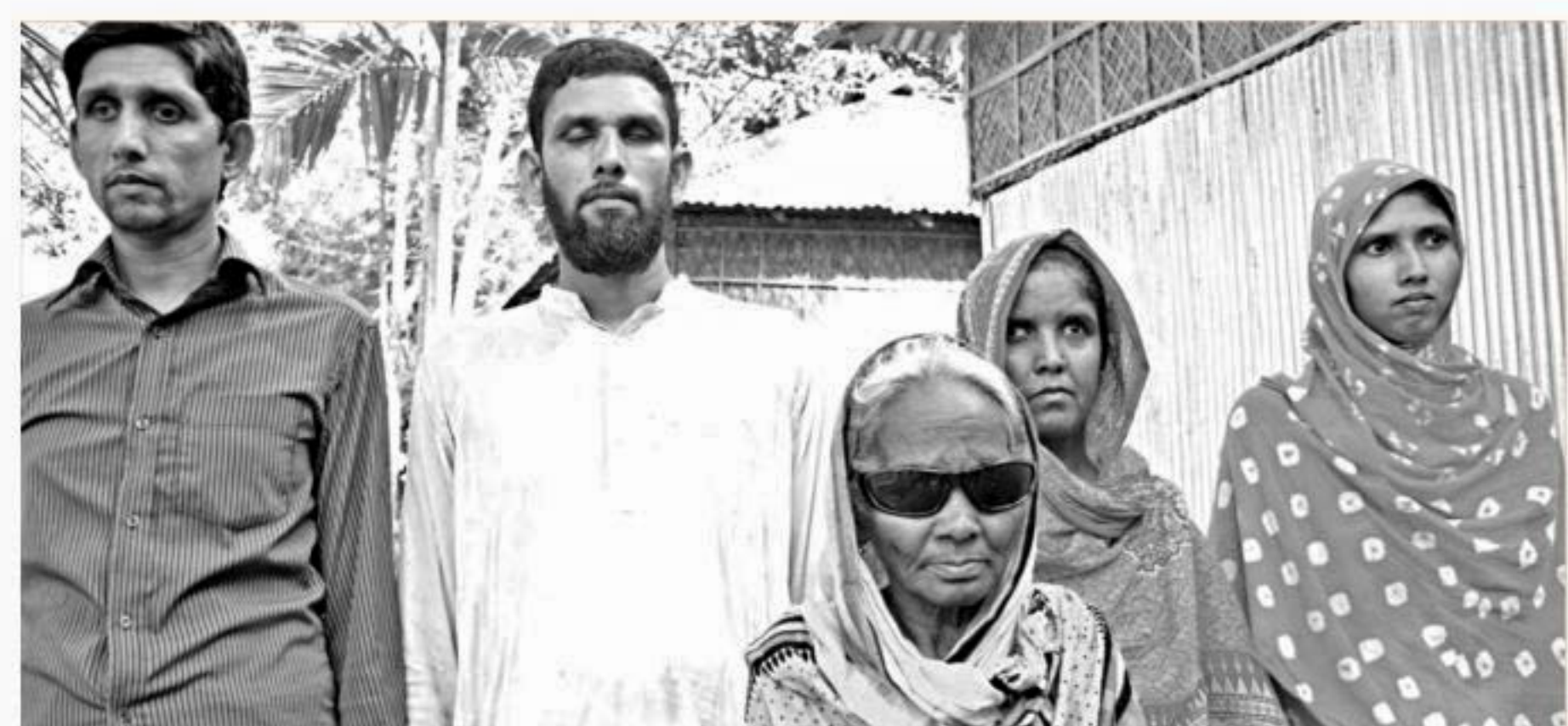
OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Two children drowned in a pond at Walia village in Lalpur upazila of the district yesterday morning.

The deceased were Afia Khatun, 7, daughter of Alamgir Hossain of Beldarpara of Rajshahi city, and her cousin Naim Hossain, 9, son of Adam Ali of Walia village.

Nazrul Islam Jewel, officer-in-charge of Lalpur Police Station, said the kids accidentally fell into a pond when they were playing on its bank.

Later, locals recovered the bodies from the pond, said the OC.



## When darkness falls

Rangpur mother, four adult children suffer blindness from hereditary condition

KONGKON KARMAKER with ANDREW EAGLE

Morzina Begum from Daktarpara in Rangpur town works in a bidi factory, rolling cheap cigarettes. Aged 75, it's not an ideal retirement. But the work is manageable for someone who is blind. In any case, Morzina has more to worry about. The same darkness that found her a decade ago haunts her children. In their adulthood, a rare hereditary condition has claimed the eyesight of four of them. A fifth, her nineteen-year-old youngest son Shariful Islam, can still see, for now.

"I pray to God to save Shariful from such a disease," Morzina says. "He is the only one who can work easily. He is the main breadwinner for all of us."

One by one any dreams she had for the four of her children were dashed, as first they suffered from vision loss and then lost vision altogether. Since her husband Shahidur Rahman passed away in 2015, Morzina has struggled to hold the family together.

The oldest daughter, Hosne Ara, is now 38 years old. She got married in 2008. "My vision was fine at the time," she says. Just two years later blindness took her. Eventually her husband forced her out of the house and she had no choice but to return to her parental home.

Son Abdul Ahad is 35. He completed an honours degree from Rangpur's Carmichael College in 2007, while working as a tutor. That same year he secured a job at a primary school, which brought hope of financial security for the whole family. He married and fathered a daughter; but then, in 2016, he lost his vision too.

"At first the vision went from my right eye," he recalls. "I was working at the

school then." A few months later his left eye followed. Despite consulting many doctors in Rangpur and Dhaka, it seemed that nothing could be done. He wasn't able to continue working as a teacher.

"Now I am unemployed despite being educated," he says. "Now I am dependent on the eyesight of my wife and daughter." Ahad's wife Mahfuza helps the family financially, as she can. She brings in a meagre income doing garment work from home.

Ahad's younger brother Anisul Huq, now 28, started to work in a packing factory in Dhaka in 2009. He was married and the future seemed to hold promise. But two years later his eyes failed him and he lost his job. "Nobody offers work because of my blindness," he says. "It's unsurprising that my wife left me."

The turn for their youngest sister Shahanaz Parvin, now 20, to lose her eyesight came early, while she was preparing for her Junior School Certificate exams in 2012. She couldn't continue to study. The family has since tried to find her a husband, but nobody was willing to accept her condition.

"As a family, we only manage thanks to the help of others," says Morzina. "My only wish is that my children could find jobs, despite their blindness."

Ward councillor of Rangpur City Corporation Rafiqul Islam knows the family. "Locals support them as they can," he says. "The family is wholly dependent on that."

Rangpur ophthalmologist and surgeon Dr Mokhlesur Rahman confirmed that the family is afflicted by a hereditary condition. "Whoever carries this disorder will lose their eyesight at a certain age," he says.