



Two restaurant workers in Thakurgaon town warm themselves in the heat from burning wastes during the ongoing cold spell gripping the northern region. The photo was taken on Wednesday night.

PHOTO: STAR

Cold wave disrupts life in two northern districts

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Bone-chilling cold wave accompanied by mild wind during the last one week disrupted normal life in different areas of Panchagarh and Thakurgaon.

The lowest temperature was recorded between 4.9 degree Celsius and 5.9 degree Celsius in Tentulia in the last one week, Assistant Met Officer Rohidul Islam of Bangladesh Meteorological Department, Tentulia branch, said, adding that the temperature was 5.8 degree Celsius yesterday.

The country's northern region is witnessing a sharp fall in temperature as cold wind from the Himalayan region is sweeping through the area, Rahidul said, adding that the severity of cold has been increasing due to a less fog this season.

The adverse weather hit many, especially the low income group people like farm workers, day labourers and rickshaw-pullers, who manage their livelihood hand to mouth.

It is also forcing people to stay indoors, affect-

ing business and other day to day activities.

Due to the chilling cold, attendance of number of students in different schools and colleges has also reduced a bit.

Farm worker Abdul Mazid, 52, of Chandipur village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila, said due to the severe cold it is much harder for them to continue their work in the cropland.

Motaleb Hossain, 55, of Milonpur village in the upazila, who was carrying vegetable items on his bicycle to a local market, said it is very difficult to ride bicycle in such bone-chilling cold wind.

This year the severity of cold is much higher than that of the previous years, he said.

Grocer Mohammad Selim, 45, of Kalibari Bazar in Thakurgaon town, said as movement of people is too low due to bad weather sale of different grocery items has decreased a bit.

On the other hand, the number of patients, especially elderly people and children affected with different cold related diseases, has been increasing at different hospitals and clinics.

About 175 children, affected with different cold related diseases, are currently admitted to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital while another 210 adult patients are admitted to other wards of the hospital, hospital sources said.

Besides, over 250 more patients were treated at the hospital in the last one week.

Meanwhile, about 34 pneumonia and diarrhoea patients are admitted to Panchagarh Sadar Hospital while in average over 100 patients are receiving treatment there everyday.

Thakurgaon Deputy Commissioner (DC) Dr KM Kamruzzaman Selim said the district administration has already distributed 24,500 blankets and 200 quilts among the cold-hit people.

"We are also requesting the solvent people from the society to help the poor and distress," the DC said.

Thakurgaon Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) Deputy Director Aftab Hossain said although it is hard for farmers to work in the crop fields in such chilling weather, the situation is not alarming for the Robi crops yet.

31 Rohingyas arrested

They entered Bangladesh from Agartala in India

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Police in a drive yesterday detained 31 Rohingyas, including women and children, from Eidgah Intersection of Cumilla city yesterday.

Of them, Shah Alam, 30, son of Aman Hossain, Shafi Alam, 24, son of Ala Mia, Habibulla, 40, son of Yakub Nabi, Minara Begum, 25, wife of Shah Alam, Yakubnabi, 63, Abu Syed, 58, hail from Bolibazar in Mongdu district of neighbouring Myanmar.

Shah Alam said they went to Jammu in India from Myanmar about three years ago.

They entered Bangladesh following the Indian government's decision to push them back to Myanmar.

"We first travelled to Delhi from Jammu and then to Agartala in Tripura by train. Instead of going to my home country Myanmar, I entered Bangladesh as some of my relatives live in Cox's Bazar," Shah Alam said.

Yakub Nabi and Abul Hossain, two elderly members of the group, said they are not interested to go back to Myanmar as there is no peace and security.

A police team, acting on a tip-off, raided Eidgah Intersection area and detained the Rohingyas, said Abu Faisal Mia, officer in charge of Kotwali Police Station in Cumilla.

After completion of necessary procedures, the arrestees will be sent to the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar, he added.

Snatchers kill train passenger

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A passenger was killed as snatchers threw him from the roof of a train in Basutia area of Gafargaon upazila yesterday morning.

The victim was mason Mukul Mia, 30, son of Rezaur Mia of Gaibanda.

Quoting the victim's co-worker Omar Faruq, police said Mukul along with some co-workers got on the roof of a Jamalpur-bound train from Gazipur.

When the train left for Moshakhali Railway Station in Gafargaon, a gang attempted to snatch away valuables from Mukul and the latter locked in an altercation with them.

At one stage, the snatchers took away Tk 16000 from Mukul and threw him from the train roof at Basutia.

Critically injured Mukul later died at the upazila health complex, said police.

Two-month ban on crab netting

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

The authorities have imposed a two-month restriction on catching crabs from the Sundarbans during the ongoing breeding period.

The ban remained effective from January 1 to February 28, said Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of the Eastern Sundarbans Mahmudul Hasan.

The DFO said January and February comprise the breeding season of crabs. During this time the mother crabs release eggs. Then the crab larva comes out from the eggs.

Though the crabs are grown in the rivers or canals, they move towards the warmer water of the sea for breeding. Besides, the salinity of the sea water is higher, which is suitable for breeding of the crustaceans, he said.

Due to this, the government has imposed the ban so that no one can catch crabs during their breeding time, he added

Besides, when the female crabs bear egg, it is very easy to catch them. If the crabs are not hunted at this time, there will be a boost in its production next year.

Crab catchers and traders, however, have expressed worry over the government decision to impose the ban, saying that it causes seasonal unemployment for a large number of people engaged in the trade.

Crab trader Sanatan Das said a number of crabs in the area come from the Sundarbans. In January-February, the export came down to about zero. As a result, thousands of people involved in the trading have become jobless at that time.

Locals alleged that some unscrupulous fishermen are still netting crabs from different areas of the Sundarbans. This will cause serious harm for the species.

District Fisheries Officer Zia Haider Chowdhury said action will be taken against the unscrupulous fishermen after investigation.

Woman sells newspapers to survive with family

SUZIT KUMAR DAS, Faridpur

A 28-year-old woman carrying newspapers on her bicycle and going from door to door to deliver those in different areas is a common sight in Rajbari town every day.

Jumu Rani Das is wife of late Jibon Kumar Das of Binodpur Railway Colony area under Sadar upazila of Rajbari. Their son Aranay Kumar Das, 14, is a Class IX student at RSK School.

Jumu, daughter of Noni Gopal Dey of Ashapur village under Madhukhali upazila of Faridpur, married Jibon Kumar Das in 2002. He was a hawker cum agent of seven newspapers. He died in June last year.

She is running her husband's business as he had told her before his death that she and their son will not starve if she ran the business.

"I took over the business in January 2017 as my husband was suffering from kidney disease," she said.

"My father-in-law started this business and my husband continued it. My son also ran the business while I and my husband were in Dhaka for three months for my husband's treatment," added Jumu.

"My husband told me to run the business as our son was too young to run it

and we had no savings to maintain our family and treatment of my husband. So I came back from Dhaka after three months and started selling newspapers with my son," she added.

"At first, I was not accepted easily, but I did not lose my belief as my husband told me to run the business. From January, 2017 to September, 2018, I sold newspapers by walking in different areas of this town," Jumu said. "Now I sell newspapers riding a bicycle. My son taught me how to ride it. I sell 100 newspapers daily," she said.

"I get up from bed at 4:30am and cook food for my son as he goes to school. Then I call the driver who carries newspapers in a car. At 5:30am I collect the newspapers from the car. Now I have good relations with my customers, who also help me run my business, she" said.

"My monthly income is Tk 10,000 as a hawker cum agent of newspapers. My only dream is to make my son highly educated," said Jumu.

"She has established a unique example in our society," said Uttom Kumar Datta, 42, a trader in Fulbazar area of the town.

"I think she has been doing a very good job for our society, and it will inspire other women to go ahead," said Alauddin Sheikh, 48, owner of Nasrin Garments in the town.



PHOTO: STAR

Jumu Rani Das carries newspapers on her bicycle to sell those in Rajbari town.



Work for a road cum embankment on the Sandhya river in Banaripara upazila of Barisal continues, ignoring the protest from locals who said the unplanned work will cause immense harm to the river crucial for their livelihoods.

PHOTO: STAR

Unplanned embankment poses threat to river

M JAHIRUL ISLAM, Jhalakathi

The ongoing construction of an embankment on the Sandhya river in Barishal has sparked outrage among locals who believe the structure will damage the river crucial to their livelihoods.

Locals in Banaripara told this correspondent that they depend on the river, which connects Kacha river and Kirtankhola river in the district, and that the embankment would open ways for encroachment by influentials.

"The Sandhya river is important for our lives and livelihoods. The river should be protected for the sake of hundreds of people living on both sides," said Rakib Ahmed, a fisherman.

Barishal Divisional Office of the Department of Environment (DoE) has claimed that the 1.1km embankment is being built illegally. "No NOC (No Objection Certificate) was issued for the construction of the embankment," said Muntasir Rahman, assistant biochemist at Barishal DoE office.

Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) is implementing the Tk 1.36 crore project funded by Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund. The construction started in January last year.

LGED officials, however, claimed that the embankment stretching from Mahishapota Abashonto Dakshin Nazirpur would protect the river.

During a visit last month, this correspondent

saw the embankment being built along a 100-metre stretch. Parts of the river (from the shore to the embankment) were filled with sand and brick chunks and fenced with bamboo.

This correspondent found 30 shops already built and 50 others under construction on the bank. "The businesses are gradually expanding thanks to a group of influential people who are filling up the river and allotting plots to traders," said a shopkeeper wishing not to be named.

Seeking anonymity, an LGED officer said the local lawmaker, municipality mayor, and ruling party leaders fixed the location of the embankment to gain personal benefits.

Humayun Kabir, sub-assistant engineer of LGED in Banaripara upazila, echoed the officer.

When asked, Mayor Subash Chandra Sheel of Banaripara municipality, said he had no involvement in selecting the location.

Talukder Mohammad Younus, former MP of Barishal-2 constituency, declined to make any comment.

Encroachment of the river started in 2013 when local Awami League leaders and influential people constructed an AL office filling up portions of the river.

On August 3 that year, the then local lawmaker Monirul Islam Moni laid the foundation of Banaripara upazila office of the Awami League in presence of Mayor Subash.

When contacted, Moni said back then it was a

small office that he inaugurated on khas land. He further said he was saddened to see that portions of the expanded office were on the bank.

Apart from constructing the office, the AL leaders allegedly filled up about 5,000 sqft of land and sold plots to local traders.

Prompted by reports published in The Daily Star on May 19, 2014, Manzill Murshid filed a writ petition with the High Court. Citing 2010 amendments made to Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act, 1995, he sought directives to save the river.

On the petition, the HC passed an order in March last year directing the director general of the DoE to take necessary action to remove all structures from the river banks after demarcation, Manzill said.

Asked about the HC directive, Sheikh Abdullah Shadid, Banaripara upazila nirbahi officer, claimed that he had a copy of the judgment which states there is no objection to the construction of the embankment.

"In fact, the court has asked authorities to demolish a shelter-home built on the river bank," he said, adding, "We are preparing to appeal [to protect the shelter] against the High Court order."

"I am consulting relevant departments to make sure that the embankment is built in such a way that it in no way harms the river," said the UNO.