



The Dhaleshwari in Manikganj is virtually a dead river now as the picture, taken near beside Jaigir bridge, shows it to be nothing but a puddle of unusable stagnant water. Right, the Kaliganga is one of the four rivers that are barely in existence, with vast swathes of it filled with silt near Tora bridge. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: JAHANGIR SHAH



RIVERS OF MANIKGANJ

7 already dead, 2 more closing in

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Manikganj*

On paper, Manikganj has 11 rivers on which lives and livelihoods of thousands depended on. In reality, the picture is quite grim -- seven of those rivers are already dead or on their deathbeds.

Among the dying seven, Dhaleshwari is the most prominent one in the district. The other six dying rivers are Kantabati, Manalkhani, Gazikhali, Khirai, Manda and Bhubaneswar.

The four that are still surviving are Padma and Jamuna on the outskirts of the district. The condition of the other two -- Ichhamati and Kaliganga -- do not look too promising at places.

The situation is already starting to affect agriculture and livelihoods in Manikganj. Unless the authorities undertake a well-devised revival programme for all the rivers in the district, the district's overall environment, especially its agriculture, might take a disastrous turn.

Shortage of water in these rivers is already affecting irrigation of croplands. River transport has already disappeared, and with it disappeared the associated occupations. With no flowing water, fish and other aquatic animals have disappeared -- a sign of decaying biodiversity. And with disappearance of fish, fishers and occupations relating to fishing

trade have ceased to exist.

As a result, the economic activities in the district are gradually seeing a decline, forcing its inhabitants to migrate to the capital or elsewhere.

Veteran farmer Lalchan Mia, from Betilla village in Sadar upazila, said the Dhaleshwari has died due to siltation at its upstream at Tilli. But it used to be the primary source of irrigation for thousands of acres of land in at least 10 unions of Saturia, Manikganj Sadar and Singair upazilas.

Except for the Padma and Jamuna, siltation and week flow of water from upstream are drying up all the other nine rivers in the district.

Moreover, manmade ponds and other

waterbodies, where rainwater is harvested during the monsoon, are also getting filled up or destroyed by locals for houses and other establishments.

Bimal Roy, member secretary of Dhaleshwari Nodi Banchao Andolon, said if this situation continues, excessive dependency on groundwater will deplete the groundwater aquifers, resulting in a severe water crisis in the long run, he added.

Contacted, Manikganj Deputy Commissioner SM Ferdous said the government will soon undertake various tasks including dredging of the Dhaleshwari and seven other rivers as well as five canals in Manikganj.

Man gets life term for killing brother

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Mymensingh*

A Kishoreganj court yesterday sentenced a man to life term imprisonment for killing his brother in 2011.

The convict is Akter Hossain of Uttar Gomdi village in Hossainpur upazila.

Judge Mohammad Abdur Rahim of Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court 2 also fined the convict Tk 5 lakh, Court Inspector Toufiq Ahmed said.

The court also sentenced Akter's wife Kamrunnesa and son Farhad Hossain to 10 months' imprisonment.

According to the case statement, Akter and his brother Taher Uddin, who were in a dispute over the ownership of a piece of land, locked in an altercation on July 19, 2011 and at one stage, Akter and his family members attacked Taher with sticks and sharp weapons that left Taher and his son Shahidullah injured.

Taher later succumbed to his injuries at Dhaka Medical College Hospital on July 30.

Taher's son Johirul Islam filed a case with Hossainpur Police Station accusing five people, including Akter, his wife, son and two daughters.

Road work stopped for using 'substandard' materials

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Latmonirhat*

Local people stopped construction work of a road at Fulgachi village in Sadar upazila on Wednesday, protesting use of substandard materials.

The villagers also demanded to complete construction of the 500-metre road under Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), otherwise they will continue the protest.

Contractor Golam Mostafa got the work order of Tk 29 lakh and started the construction work in January this year, said Latmonirhat LGED Section Officer Moniruzzaman.

During a visit, this correspondent saw low quality materials were used in

the construction work.

Benzir Islam, a resident of the village, alleged that the contractor in unison with some unscrupulous officials of LGED used substandard materials like third class bricks and brick chips in the road construction work.

"As we protested the use of low quality materials in the construction, the contractor threatened to file case against us," said Benzir.

Another villager Ali Hossain said if the road is carpeted in such standard, it will be damaged within a year.

Refuting the allegation, the LGED official said he is supervising the work but did not find any substandard materials used in the road construc-

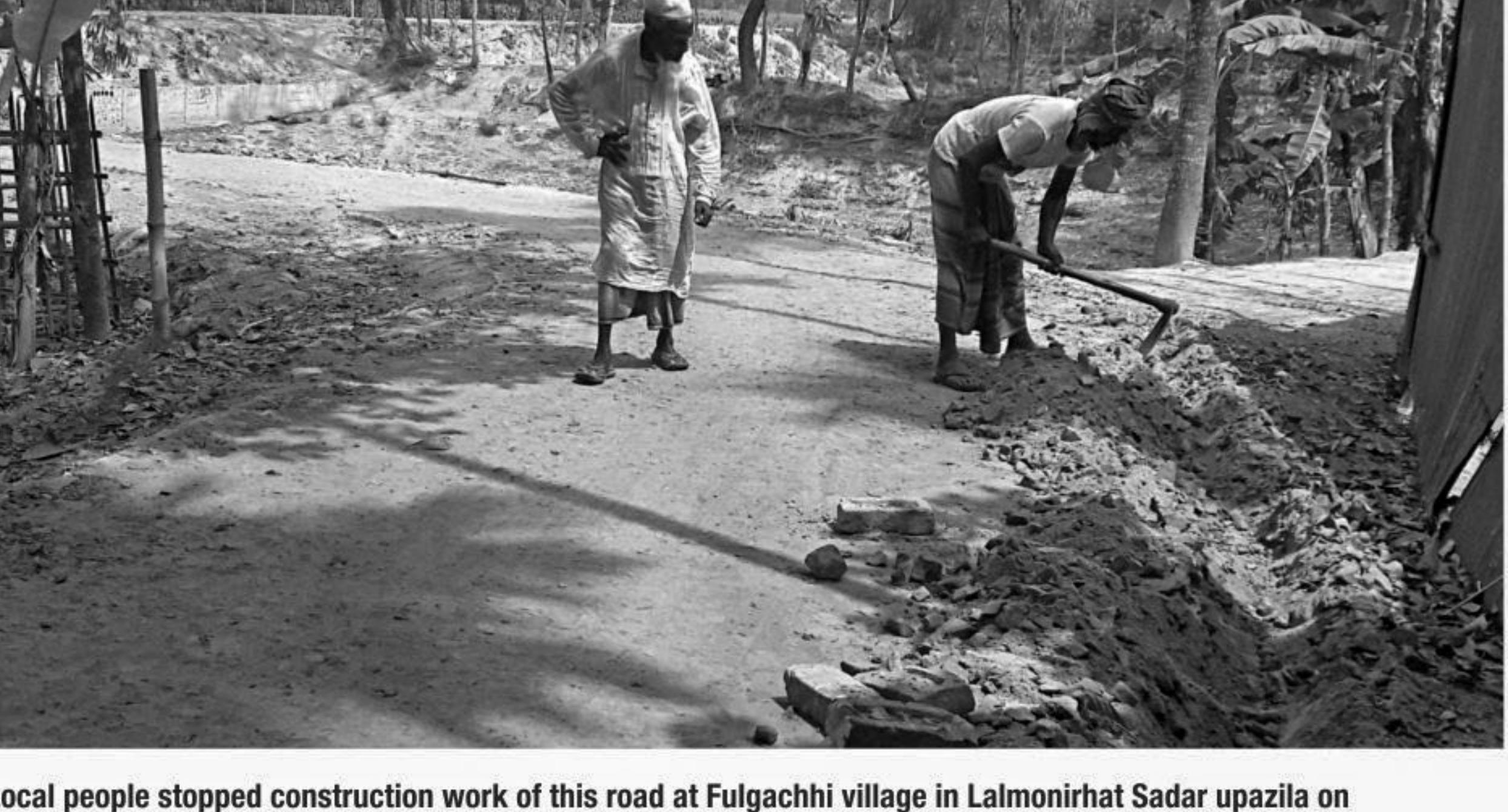
tion.

Contractor Mostafa refuted the allegation of making threat of filing any case against the villagers.

The construction workers may use low quality bricks in the construction work at some places and those will be removed, he said.

Upazila LGED Engineer Shah Obaidur Rahman said he will visit the site soon and if it is found that substandard materials were used in the construction work, the contractor will not be given payment.

The road will be constructed, using standard materials as per schedule, he assured.



Local people stopped construction work of this road at Fulgachi village in Latmonirhat Sadar upazila on Wednesday, protesting use of low quality materials.

PHOTO: STAR

No project that affects people: PM

FROM PAGE 2

"There was nothing in Cox's Bazar and the people of the entire region used to depend on only salt and betel leaf cultivation."

But her government is developing Cox's Bazar as a tourist hub. Besides, industries are being set up by the government in char areas of the district after discussions with the communities, she said.

The largest coal-fired power plant of the country, a coal jetty and an LNG terminal are being built in Matarbari.

Besides, a multipurpose seaport, special economic zone, road, rail and other relevant projects are being taken there, she added.

Countries like Japan, China, India and Korea have already expressed their interest in investing in Matarbari, the PM said.

Once implemented, the projects in Matarbari will play a major role in

developing the region and the country's economy.

The PM said the government is setting up the economic zone while developing Cox's Bazar as a tourist centre.

Setting up of rail lines to Cox's Bazar is progressing fast, she said, adding that high-speed trains would be introduced on the route.

Nazrul Islam, the PM's speech writer, briefed reporters after the event.

Paban Chowdhury, executive chairman of Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority, handed the PM a master plan of the MIDI Project at the beginning of the event.

Ministers and secretaries concerned as well as high officials of different ministries and departments were present at the event moderated by Abul Kalam Azad, principal coordinator on the SDG affairs at PMO.

Officials said the work on formulat-

ing a draft on the Land Use Survey of the project site was underway by JICA.

The Japan government has proposed investing about \$ 20 billion for the project, they added.

Meanwhile, the Awami League and the Communist Party of China yesterday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to enhance cooperation between the two parties.

AL International Affairs Secretary Dr Shammi Ahmed and visiting Minister of International Department of the Central Committee of Communist Party of China (CPC) Song Tao inked the MoU on behalf of their respective parties at the Prime Minister's official residence Gono Bhaban in the city.

The deal was signed after a meeting between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Song Tao at the Gono Bhaban.

At the meeting, the prime minister sought China's support for safe and

sustainable return of Rohingyas to Myanmar from Bangladesh.

In reply, the CPC leader assured her of China's cooperation for safe repatriation of Rohingyas and said Beijing was already working to this end.

PM's Speech Writer Md Nazrul Islam briefed reporters after the meeting.

"China can play an important role in the repatriation of Rohingyas," Nazrul quoted the prime minister as saying.

Sheikh Hasina, also the AL president, hoped that the relations and cooperation between the two friendly governments and the two parties would strengthen further in the days to come.

Song Tao also expressed the same hope, saying CPC and AL believe in the similar ideology.

The Prime Minister said China was one of Bangladesh's very important partners in developing its various sectors, particularly power and infrastructure. "Such cooperation is playing

a significant role in increasing Bangladesh's GDP growth."

She mentioned that steps had been taken to further expand the cooperation between China and Bangladesh in trade and communication.

Pointing to China's project to export gas to Myanmar through pipeline, Hasina proposed bringing gas through the pipeline from Myanmar to Mirsarai Economic Zone in Chattogram where 700 acres of land were allotted to China for setting up an industrial park.

She also called for bringing more Chinese investors who can invest in various sectors of Bangladesh for mutual benefits.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs M Shahriar Alam, and AL leaders Faruk Khan, Mohammad Jamir, Mahbubul Alam Hanif, Jahangir Kabir Nanak and Abdur Rahman were, among others, present.

Man awarded life term for raping minor girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

A Joypurhat court yesterday sentenced a man to life term imprisonment for raping a minor girl in Panchbibi upazila in 2008.

The lifer is Nazmul Islam, 42, son of Shahidul Islam of Kutahara village in the upazila.

The court also fined him Tk 20,000, in default, he is to suffer another six months in jail.

Women and Children Repression Prevention Court of Golam Sarwar delivered the verdict.

According to the prosecution, Nazmul lured the girl with chocolate, took her to an isolated place and raped her on August 28 in 2008.

Hearing her scream, locals rushed in and rescued the girl while the perpetrator fled away.

The victim was admitted to Joypurhat Modern Hospital.

Later, the victim's father filed a case with Panchbibi Police Station.

Danger

FROM PAGE 2 credibility of the election could be put under question when it remained limited to a party. "If we believe in the existence of Bangabandhu, and his politics and dreams, we must free democracy for all."

He added that the politics of respect must be revived in the country, shunning the politics of hatred and vengeance.

About the recent killing of a university student in a road accident in the capital, Badruddoza said road accidents were growing due to carelessness among drivers and lack of enforcement of laws. "There're many laws in the country to ensure road safety, but those are not being enforced. It's a matter of shame."

He also urged the government to take effective steps to make the roads safe for commuters.

Juktafront was the polls ally of the Awami League in the December 30 election.

Road crashes kill eight in six dists

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with his wife and daughter was returning home in Darikandi from Sonargaon town.

The OC said the bodies were sent to Narayanganj General Hospital morgue for autopsies.

In Manikganj, a man and his son were killed when a bus hit their motorcycle at Pukhuria in Ghor upazila in the evening.

The victims are Obaidullah, 35, and his son Abdullah, 4, of Faridpur's Madhukhali upazila.

Yamin Udd-Dowla, in-charge of Barangail Highway Police Outpost, said Obaidullah was going to Faridpur from Dhaka with his son. The accident happened on the Dhaka-Aricha highway around 6:15pm, killing the two on the spot.

Police seized the bus, but its driver fled, he added.

In Narsingdi, a seventh-grader was crushed under the wheels of a

lorry on the Dhaka-Sylhet highway near Baroicha bus stand in Belabo upazila.

Rabbi Mia, 13, son of Farid Mia in Hossainnagar village, was a student of Belabo Hossain Ali School and College.

Tariqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Bhairab Highway Police Station, told The Daily Star that the victim was crossing the road by a bicycle around 3:00pm. At that moment, the Dhaka-bound lorry hit Rabbi from behind, leaving him critically injured.

The schoolboy was rushed to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Police seized the lorry and arrested its driver, the OC added.

In Sirajganj's Kamarkhand upazila, an HSC examinee lost his life as a truck hit him on Sirajganj-Bangabandhu bridge road at Hodraghat area yesterday morning.

The victim, Hridoy Hossain, 17,

of Bhodraghat village, was a student of Dhukuria Technical College in the upazila.

Police and locals said the truck hit the victim and his friends when they were returning home from their tutor's house around 7:30am. Hridoy died on spot and his two friends were wounded.

After the accident, agitators set fire to the vehicle. Firefighters doused the fire. Vehicular movement was halted on Sirajganj-Bangabandhu bridge road for around an hour.

Police seized the truck, but its driver managed to flee, said Habibul Islam, OC of Kamarkhand Police Station.

In another incident, the driver of a battery-run three-wheeler, locally known as easy bike, was killed and two others were hurt when an earth-laden truck hit the three-wheeler on the Natore-Bogura highway at Dalsarak in Natore Sadar

upazila around noon.

The deceased, Rafiqul Islam Rafiq, 42, was a resident of Swoail village in Singra upazila, said Ali Akbar, sub-inspector of Natore Sadar Police Station.

A minor boy was killed and another injured in a motorcycle accident around 2:00pm yesterday. The motorbike hit them while they were crossing Aftabganj-Maddhyapara road at Shikarpur in Dinajpur's Nawabganj upazila.

The deceased, Tamim Babu, 6, was a son of Tohidul Islam in Shikarpur village.

The injured, Shahidul Islam, 9, was undergoing treatment at M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital in Dinajpur.

Our correspondents in Narayanganj, Manikganj, Brahmanbaria, Pabna, Natore and Dinajpur contributed to the report.

The sixth

FROM PAGE 1 Bangabandhu lasted for about an hour and 15 minutes.

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