



A boat craftsman at work by the Testa river in Lalmonirhat's Hatibandha upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

# Char people in despair as boat price shoots up

Recent rise in price of wood and making charge resulted in the price hike, say boat traders

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Boat making charge has doubled this year in the district, much to the worry of char people, especially fishermen and boatmen.

Boat is very essential transport for them in the upcoming rainy season, but many of them cannot afford boats due to its high prices.

Meanwhile, boat craftsmen are also not happy as they are not getting expected orders this year, said locals.

It is charged Tk 1.20 lakh for making a

50-foot length boat, Tk 1 lakh for a 40-foot length boat and Tk 80,000 for a 30-foot length boat according to sizes but it was charged Tk 30,000 to Tk 70,000 last year and more less in 2017, said boat craftsmen and fishermen.

Meher Ali, 48, of Teesta River Char Bairati in Kaliganj upazila, said around 30 to 40 char people jointly buy a big size boat for carrying people and goods during flood.

Besides, a number of affluent men buy new boats during the time but they are showing less interest in this regard this

time due to higher prices. So, old boats are now being repaired, said Meher.

Shafiqul Islam, project manager of a local NGO working for char people's livelihood, said there are 95 char areas in the Teesta and Dharla rivers. There are 42 ghats and two or four boats are anchored at each ghat. Around 5,000 fishermen are dependent on the rivers.

Four to six fishermen use a big size boat for netting fish in the rivers, said Shafiqul, adding that there are two or three big boats for the villagers in each char area. Many char people have also middle size

boat for personal uses.

Craftsman Nazrul Islam, 44, of Teesta river Char Gaddimari in Hatibandha upazila, said the charge of boat making jumped as the price of wood shot up at a rapid speed this year.

Another craftsman Abdus Samad, 55, of the area, said boat making order has fallen drastically this year.

He got order for making three boats only this year while it was six last year and eight in 2017, Samad said, adding that they all 60 boat craftsmen in Teesta and Dharla char areas are facing same situation.

## Widow tortured by land grabber

Accused threatening to kill her son, rape daughter

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Bringing allegation of extramarital affair against a widow, a land grabber has allegedly evicted her from her land after torturing her inhumanly. She along with her children could not return home for the last 16 days due to death threat by the accused.

"The land grabber continued threatening to kill my son and rape my daughter if I return home with my family," said victim Reshma Begum, 38.

She is now staying at her relative's residence since the incident took place on April 4 at Putkia village in Phulbari upazila. Reshma was wife of late Ashraful Islam.

Reshma alleged that her elder brother-in-law Nazrul Islam has been conspiring against her to evict her from the land since her husband died two years ago. She, along with her seven-year-old son and 15-year-old daughter were asleep on April 4. She abruptly woke up hearing chaos outside.

Later, Nazrul and his neighbour Abdul Kaiyum blamed her of having an extramarital affair with a local youth and tortured her for hours tying to a tree. Being informed, police rushed to the spot and rescued the woman.

The woman filed a case, accusing seven people, including Nazrul.

"Situation turned bad for me after filing the case against Nazrul," said Reshma, adding that the accused in the case have been continuously threatening her to withdraw the case or face dire consequences.

"They have also threatened to kill my son and rape my daughter", she said.

Nazrul could not give any suitable answer when this correspondent asked him why he tortured the woman.

Sheikh Nasim Habib, officer in charge of Phulbari Police Station, said police are trying to arrest the accused.

## Woman killed by son

Minor boy found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

An elderly woman was killed allegedly by her 'mentally challenged' son in Phulbaria upazila of the district yesterday.

The victim was Ambia Khatun, 65, of Kandania village.

Quoting the neighbours, Officer in Charge (OC) of Phulbaria Police Station Sheikh Kabirul Islam said Ambia's mentally challenged son Alam Mia, 45, beat her mercilessly with a stick, leaving her dead around 4.00am.

Villagers later caught Alam from the house and handed him over to police, the OC said, adding that they recovered the body and sent it to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) for autopsy.

Meanwhile, police recovered the body of 10-year-old boy from the Ayman river in the same upazila yesterday morning.

The victim, Saidul Islam Sifat, was son of Enamul Haque, a rickshaw-van puller of Baruka Namapara village. Quoting the deceased's family members, OC Kabirul said Sifat went to say his Esha prayer at a local mosque on Friday night and remained missing since then.

Locals spotted Sifat's body floating in the river yesterday morning.

## AL activist shot dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenaidah

Unidentified criminals shot an Awami League (AL) activist to death at Kubirkhali village in Sadar upazila on Thursday night.

The victim, Jamirul Islam, 30, a hardware trader at Atlia Bazar, was an activist of local union unit AL, Modhuhati Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Faruk Hussain said.

Faruk said Jamirul was returning home from his shop around 9:00pm when a gang waylaid him near a canal at Kubirkhali village and hacked him indiscriminately first and then fire gunshots, leaving him dead on the spot.

Deceased's cousin Saiful Islam alleged that Jamirul, son of Maznur Rahman of Kubirkhali village and father of three, might have been killed over internal party feud.

Contacted, Officer in Charge of Sadar Police Station Mizanur Rahman said they were trying to arrest the culprits.

## ASHRANYAN PROJECT

# Run-down tin roofs need urgent repair

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Nearly 200 members of at least 50 destitute families are enduring immense sufferings as tin roofs of most of the houses, received under Ashrayan project in Gobindi area of Saghata upazila in 2004, have worn out due to corrosion and hailstorms.

Victims of erosion of the Jamuna river were given the houses under the Ashrayan project in Gobindi

Almost 15 years of wear and tear and lack of timely maintenance have left most of the roofs riddled with large cracks and holes through with rainwater comes gushing in during monsoon, said the residents.

One of them, Khodeza Begum, said, "It's almost impossible to stay in the house during rainy season, while the holes in the roof keep getting bigger every year."

Many of them, as an attempt to save themselves and their belongings from getting drenched in water, hung makeshift water traps below the damaged ceilings. They made the traps with whatever they could get their hand on -- polyethene

sheets or discarded plastic bags.

"During pouring rains, the polyethene coverings are not strong enough to save us, our grain, clothing or our bedding," said Khairom, another resident in the project.

The hailstorm few days ago did the most damage to the roofs, said project resident Sajib Mia.

Echoing the residents' voice, Gobindi union ward member Majedul Akanda said, during rain it becomes quite inhumane inside the houses as the residents have to keep themselves occupied with their struggle to keep their houses dry.

Deputy commissioner of Gaibandha during his visit to the project area a few months back assured of taking steps in this regard, but no repair work was conducted as yet, he added.

Uzzal Kumar Ghosh, upazila nirbahi officer of Saghata, said there is no allocation of additional funds for repair of houses in the Ashrayan project.

However, they sought funds from the ministry concerned for the repair work, he also said.



A makeshift water trap hung inside a house with worn out roof in Ashrayan project under Saghata upazila. Roofs of most houses in the project have become dilapidated over the last 15 years.

PHOTO: KM REZAUL HOQUE



A 10-day-long furniture fair that began at Pirojpur Government High School premises in the town on April 14 attracted many visitors. The district administration organised the fair on the occasion of Pahela Baishakh. Various type of sofa, showcases and dressing tables are available here.

PHOTO: STAR

## CHILD RAPE ACROSS COUNTRY

# Madrassa principal among three arrested

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Three people were arrested in the last two days in separate cases filed for raping children in Rajbari, Lalmonirhat and Bagerhat.

A man was arrested yesterday for raping a 12-year-old girl in Baliakandi upazila of Rajbari.

The arrestee -- Chitta Ranjan Pramanik, 45, son of late Jagannath Pramanik in the same upazila -- is a farmer by profession, reports our correspondent in Faridpur.

The girl's father said while his daughter was playing beside their house 10 days ago, Chitta lured her to a mahogany orchard and raped her.

He also said his daughter did not disclose the incident to her parents until on Friday, when Chitta approached her with the same motive.

Obaydul Haque, sub-inspector (SI) of Baliakandi Police Station, said police arrested Chitta after the victim's father filed a case against him yesterday morning.

The court sent Chitta to jail after he was produced before it, said the SI.

In Lalmonirhat, police arrested a man on Friday night in a case, filed on

Wednesday, for raping a fifth-grade girl student in Rangpur city on April 15, our correspondent in Dinajpur reports.

The arrestee -- Montu Roy, 32, of Dhapkamarpara area of Rangpur city -- had been on run since raping the child on April 15.

After police produced Montu before the court, it sent him to jail, said Altaf Hossain, assistant commissioner of the city police.

Family members of the girl said noticing that the girl's father was the only person accompanying her on the day of the incident, Montu engaged her father to fetch grass for cattle from a field. Montu then went to the child's house and raped her.

Montu fled the scene after her father and locals responded to her screams for help.

In Bagerhat, detective police on Friday night arrested the principal of a madrasa in Foyla area of Rampal upazila in a case filed over rape of a 10-year-old girl student of the madrasa, our Bagerhat correspondent reports.

Meanwhile, our Moulvibazar correspondent reports, a court on Friday recorded confessional statements of two men under section 164 in a case filed for gangrape of a teenage girl in Kulaura upazila on April 15.

## Temple torched in Faridpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Criminals vandalised idols of Hindu god and goddess at a temple and set fire to another temple at Manikdaho village in Bhanga upazila of the district early yesterday.

Narayan Chandra Das, president of Manikdaho Kali Temple Committee, said locals found disfigured two idols, including Kali and Shiva, at Manikdaho Kali Temple early in the morning.

A gang also torched another temple of goddess Saraswati at the village, said police.

Uzzal Saha of the village said "I saw fire at Saraswati temple around 4:30am when I was going to my shop. Then I called locals and doused the blaze."

On information, police visited the spot.