



Locals in Dharmadah village under Kumarkhali upazila demonstrate how asphalt paving of the newly built road in the village is coming off without using any tools. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: AMANUR AMAN

Surface of Tk 1.2-cr road comes off with bare hands!

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Chunks of asphalt layer can be pried apart with bare hands from a Tk 1.2-crore road built recently in Kumarkhali upazila.

Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) completed carpeting of the 1.5-kilometre road between Lalon Bazar and Dharmadah in the upazila on June 21.

According to LGED, contract of the work was awarded to 'Rashedul Harun Sujon Traders' from Kushtia and the contractor started the work in February this year.

The defect in the asphalt pavement came to light before the contractor handed the road over to LGED.

Rakibul, a youth from Dharmadah village and one of the several others who first came across the flaw in the road, said on June 24, he first noticed a bubbled-up spot on the road peeling off as soon as he jumped on it from a van.

Noticing the incident, others came to the

spot and were able to pry apart pavement chunks off the road with bare hands, without applying much effort, said Arshed Ali, another villager.

Many villagers told this correspondent that soon after the work began, they suspected quality was being compromised in the road work as the contractor was using substandard materials.

"We informed local LGED engineers [of the matter], but they did not pay heed," said schoolteacher Robiul Islam.

While speaking with this correspondent, the contractor firm's co-owner Harun-or-Rashid claimed that they finished the road according to specifications set by the LGED.

Echoing his claim, Abdur Rahim, engineer of LGED in Kumarkhali upazila, said the work was done as specified and "people, who are prying apart the surface of the road, are committing an unlawful act".

'Santal rebellion day' observed in Thakurgaon

Ethnic minorities demand fundamental rights on 164th anniversary of the anti-British movement

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Indigenous people yesterday observed different programmes marking the 164th anniversary of the anti-British Santal Hool (rebellion), with urge to give them constitutional recognition and ensure their fundamental rights including that on ancestral lands.

Marking the day, a colourful procession was brought out in the town from Thakurgaon Press Club premises and it ended at the same point after parading different streets of the town.

The procession followed a discussion at the auditorium of Thakurgaon Press Club.

On June 30 in 1855, indigenous Santal community led by four Murmu brothers (Sindhu, Kanhu, Chand and Bhairab) started an uprising against the misrule, extortion and torture by local landlords and police of the then British government, speakers said at the meeting.

Thousands of indigenous people, especially Santals, joined the revolution. The forces loyal to the British government crushed the rebellion, killing the impoverished community people in large numbers during the following months.

Santals and other ethnic minority communities are yet to see their social, economic and political rights established, even 164 years after the uprising, the

speakers said.

They demanded meeting nine-point demand including establishing constitutional rights of indigenous people and formation of a separate land commission to protect their land rights.

Urging the government to save the indigenous people from the land grabbers, they said all fake documents made to occupy their land should be declared illegal.

They also demanded allocation of khas land among the landless indigenous people for their survival.

Demanding withdrawal of all false cases against the indigenous people, they said the indigenous community is still lagging behind in the society as they are not getting facilities like others in education and job market.

The speakers also demanded mother tongue-based primary education for their children and the community's quota in higher education and government services.

Arunangshu Datta Tito, chairman of Thakurgaon Sadar Upazila Parishad, attended as chief guest at the programme with Shamim Hossain of Eco-social Development Organisation (ESDO) in the chair.

District unit of Jatiya Adivasi Parishad and ESDO's Pradip Project jointly organised the programmes.

Bus service on Pirojpur-Barishal route suspended for 2 weeks

Transport workers, owners enforce strike protesting alleged attack on fellows

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Direct bus service on Barishal-Pirojpur route remained suspended for nearly two weeks following an indefinite bus strike enforced by transport owners and workers of Jhalakathi, protesting alleged attacks on their fellows in Barishal on June 15.

Due to the sudden strike, passengers are compelled to reach their destinations changing vehicles several times.

According to sources at Pirojpur Bus Owners' Association, bus services on Pirojpur-Barishal route were suspended after one of the workers of Jhalakathi Transport Owners and Workers Association was assaulted at Barishal Bus Terminal on June 15, following altercation with fellow workers over demanding extra terminal fees.

They later beat up the transport workers from Pirojpur and Jhalakathi when the latter refused to pay the 'extra fees'.

As a result, passengers from different upazilas of Pirojpur are facing immense sufferings to go to Barishal and other destinations.

"Due to suspension of direct bus services passengers are forced to change their vehicles four to five times to go to Barishal," said Ruhul Amin, who was waiting at Kumirmara Ferry Terminal with his family to go Barishal.

"Although the strike has been enforced nearly two weeks ago, no step has been taken to resolve it," another passenger Reazul Islam said.

Now passengers have to cross the mighty



Due to suspension of direct bus service on Barishal-Pirojpur route, passengers are compelled to cross the Kacha river by engine boats, risking their lives and paying extra money. The photo was taken from Kumirmara Ferry Terminal in Pirojpur Sadar upazila a few days ago.

PHOTO: STAR

Kacha river by boats, risking their lives and paying extra money, he said.

"Usually we conduct about 30 trips of ferry carrying vehicles including Barishal and Khulna bound buses daily," Manager of Kumirmara-Bekutia ferry route Mahbub Hossain said, adding that but due to the strike they cannot even conduct five trips a per day.

When asked about the matter, General Secretary of Pirojpur Bus-Mini Bus Owners' Association Nurul Haque Khokon said they were trying to resolve the issue.

He said due to the suspension of bus services hundreds of transport workers have now become unemployed.



A section of the eroded bank of the Mahadeo river near Baruakona Bazar in Netrakona's Kalmakanda upazila.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Swollen river eroding banks in Kalmakanda

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Swelled up by the flash flood that started last week, the Mahadeo river is eroding Baruakona Bazar area in Netrakona's Kalmakanda upazila.

Several dwellings in the area, under Rongchhati union, have already been devoured by the river and unless immediate steps are taken, the situation can turn for the worse during the ongoing monsoon season, said Mozammel Haque, member of Rongchhati Union Parishad.

Aus crops and Aman seedbeds in the area have also been affected by the flash flood, but despite the fact, no steps have yet been taken even after officials of Water Development Board (WDB) visited the area last Friday, he alleged.

Flash floods cause damage and erosion every year in the area and there needs to be a well-devised plan to cope with the situation, he also said.

Around 3,000 families were affected after an onrush of water from hills across the border early Wednesday flooded 25 villages in Rongchhati, Khamoi and Lengura unions in Kalmakanda.

While speaking with this correspondent, Kalmakanda Upazila Nirbahi Officer Zakir Hossain said he visited the affected areas on Saturday and he already asked the WDB to initiate a project for saving the area from erosion.

The villages have been flooded as local rivers including the Sumeshwari, Mahadeo, Mohishkhola and Dhaleshwari swelled up by the incoming water from the hills, he said.

Near about 50 ponds and eight kilometres of unpaved roads were also affected in the flash flood, causing sufferings to thousands of villagers, he added.

Rongchhati Union Parishad Chairman Tahera Khatun said the situation is getting better after the floodwater started to recede since Thursday.

Local lawmaker Manu Majumder visited the affected areas and distributed relief materials among flood victims on Friday.

Imam arrested over rape

Fifth grader raped 'by driver'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Police on Friday night arrested an imam of a mosque for raping a teenage girl in Zakiganj upazila.

The arrestee is Kazi Jahid Hasan from Uttarkul village and an imam of Hazarichalk Jame Mosque in Zakiganj upazila.

Habibur Rahman Hawladar, OC of Zakiganj Police Station, said the victim's father filed a case against the imam and there are many allegations of theft and repression on women against him.

According to the case statement, the 16-year-old ninth grade student used to take Arabic lessons from Kazi Jahid. On June 25, he raped the girl in a hotel in Sylhet city and after she fell sick, he got her board a Zakiganj-bound bus.

On Friday night, police arrested the accused from a house of his in-laws after the girl's father filed the case with the police station on June 26, said the OC.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday, a class fifth grader girl in Bishwanath upazila was raped allegedly by an auto-rickshaw driver.

The accused, Abul Kahar of Choudhurigaon village, remains on the loose since the incident and the girl child is undergoing treatment at One-Stop Crisis Centre at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, said Shamsuddoha, OC of Bishwanath Police Station.

Abul Kahar raped the child while she was going home after school that afternoon. She was found in a roadside ditch hours later and rushed to the hospital, he said.

Fishing in Sundarbans banned for 2 months

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Netting of fish has been banned in all the canals of the Sundarbans from July 1 to August 31 as part of an initiative to help safe breeding and preservation of aquatic creatures.

The move is also being imposed to stop netting of fishes by spraying poison in the canals, said Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of Sundarbans East Mahamudul Hasan.

The area of the Sundarbans in Bangladesh part is 6,737 square kilometres of which the aquatic area is 1,874.1 sq km. This is 31.15 percent of the total Sundarbans, he said.

In the Sundarbans, there are 13 big rivers including Bhola, Baleshwar, Salah, Passur and around 450 small creeks.

The mangrove forest which is

constantly flooded with tidal waters is home to 210 varieties of local fish like bhetki, poopchanda, datina, chitra, pangas, leyte, churi, med, parese, poya, tapsay, lakhna, koi, magur, shol, kain and hilsa.

A total of 24 species of shrimp including Bagda, Chali, Chaka and Chamti are found here. There are total of 14 species of crab and six species of dolphins in the Sundarbans.

A section of fishermen spray poison in the waterways of the Sundarbans to easily catch fish, but owing to the poisoning, all species of aquatic species including small and big fish are being killed, the DFO said.

The poisoning also has an adverse effect on the biodiversity of the Sundarbans and destroys the breeding cycle of very important aquatic resources.

Irregularities, corruption alleged against UP chairman

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Ten out of twelve union parishad (UP) members yesterday submitted a petition to the upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) in Patgram, expressing 'no confidence' against Bawra UP Chairman Abul Kalam Azad Basuniya Dulal.

In their written complaint, the UP members alleged the Awami League-backed UP chairman runs the office according to his will.

The chairman never shares his views with the UP members regarding implementation of different government schemes, they alleged.

They said although Tk 2.2 lakh was allocated for Test Relief (TR) and Tk 4.97 lakh for implementing solar scheme recently, Chairman Dulal didn't share the matter with them.

"We will raise the allegations of corruption and irregularities against the UP chairman to the UNO when he will start investigation in this regard," UP member Anarul Islam said.

When asked, UP Chairman Dulal denied the allegations brought against him and said he runs union parishad as per the system.

Youth hacked dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

A youth was hacked to death in sleep by criminals at Purbo Bhaga village in Rampal upazila early yesterday.

The deceased is Lahu Sheikh, 35, son of Mohsin Sheikh of the village.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) Md Lutfor Rahman of Rampal Police Station said Rumana Begum woke up from sleep by hearing groaning of her son around 12:00am and found him with his throat slit in the room.

Lahu was rushed to Khulna Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries around 11:00am.

Lahu might have been killed over land dispute, said the OC.



Artistes render songs at Barsha Mangal Utsab on the premises of Eco Pathshala and College at Govindanagar in Thakurgaon municipality on Saturday evening. Lokayan Museum, an initiative of Eco-social Development Organisation, arranged the programme.

PHOTO: MD QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAYATY