



Left, the approach road to the bridge, which connects six villages in Jongra union with Patgram upazila headquarters of Lalmonirhat, was washed away by floodwaters on Sunday morning. **Right**, the damaged rail road between Gaibandha and Bonarpara section at Trimohoni in Gaibandha.

PHOTO: STAR



Floods take toll on rail, road communications

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Surging floodwaters are causing extensive damage to rail and road communications in different districts across the country.

In Gaibandha, the flood situation has turned critical as water in the Brahmaputra river was flowing 146 centimetres above danger mark at different points of the river.

Rail communications between Gaibandha and Bonarpara section remained suspended since Wednesday morning when floodwater gushing over a section of the rail tracks at Trimohoni washed away soil and stone chips from underneath, reports our correspondent in Gaibandha.

Consequently, the west zone of Bangladesh

Railway has suspended all trains for an indefinite period on the section since 11:00am yesterday, said Khalilur Rahman, station master of Bonarpara rail station.

Vast tracts of land were flooded and about a 300-foot stretch of Gaibandha-Shaghata regional highway was washed away by floodwater gushing through Poragram area.

In Sundarganj upazila, road communications broke down after a 200-foot stretch of a road was washed away by surging waters.

Affected people in the area took refuge at different flood shelters. They are facing scarcity of food and drinking water.

In Kalmakanda and Durgapur upazilas of Netrakona, around 5,700 fish farmers in

the upazilas suffered a serious blow as fish in nearly 3,000 ponds were washed away by floodwaters, reports our correspondent in Mymensingh.

The total loss incurred by the fish farmers is estimated at around Tk 9 crore, said sources.

Mosharraf Hossain, a farmer of Charulia village in Kalmakanda said he invested Tk 15 lakh in his 13 ponds, but he was done for as all his fish have been washed away by floodwater.

Ibrahim Khalilullah, sub-assistant engineer of Water Development Board in Netrakona, said the overall flood situation in Kalmakanda and Durgapur upazilas has improved as water levels in the Sumeswari, Kangso and Updakhali

rivers have started to recede.

In Patgram upazila of Lalmonirhat, boats became the sole mode of transport for around 20 thousand inhabitants of six villages in Jongra union as an approach road to a bridge, which connects them with the upazila headquarters, was washed away by floodwaters from the Dharla river on Sunday morning, reports our correspondent in Lalmonirhat.

The bridge is on Jongra-Patgram road that is the only major road for the six villages -- Jongra, Dhabalguri, Nanderghat, Dangapara, Barabhita and Mandirpara.

Only small boats are plying the flooded area to ferry people, but without any road communication, transport of goods is being

affected, said a number of villagers.

"We already informed Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) officials of the collapsed road to the bridge, but they are yet to repair it," said Atiar Rahman, a villager from Mandirpara.

"The bridge's approach road became risky last year after it was damaged by floodwaters from the Dharla. LGED officials were informed about it. But since they did not take any step to repair it all this time, it collapsed this year," alleged Ahadul Islam, a businessman from Barabhita village of the upazila.

Contacted, AKM Amiruzzaman, executive engineer of LGED in Lalmonirhat, said it would not be possible to repair it until the floodwater recedes.

Bonolata Express inaugurated

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

With an aim to boost rail connectivity with the northern districts, a non-stop intercity train service on Dhaka-Rajshahi route was extended to Chapainawabganj.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the service by flagging through videoconference yesterday.

Bonolata Express will start plying from 5:50am today from Chapainawabganj station.

Rajshahi City Corporation Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton joined the inauguration programme.

Netrakona AL leader hurt in attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

An Awami League (AL) leader was injured in an attack by criminals in Netrakona Sadar upazila on Tuesday night.

The victim, Moloy Kanti Majumder, 62, president of Mougati union unit AL, is now undergoing treatment at Netrakona General Hospital.

Quoting the victim, Officer in Charge of Sadar Model Police Station Mohammad Tajul Islam said Moloy was returning home from nearby Chuchua Bazar on a battery-run auto-rickshaw along with three other passengers around 9:00pm.

When he reached near Mougati village, a gang of criminals waylaid the auto-rickshaw, drag Moloy out of the vehicle and beat him mercilessly with sticks, leaving him injured, the OC said, adding that they also beat up the other passengers.

Hearing screams, locals rushed to the spot, rescued Moloy and took him to Netrakona General Hospital but the attackers somehow managed to flee the spot, the OC added.

Moloy filed a case with Sadar Model Police Station accusing six people yesterday, he said, adding that they were investigating the matter but none was arrested in this regard yet.

17 drug peddlers, addicts surrender

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

With a promise to return to normal life, a total of 17 drug dealers and addicts surrendered to police in Pirojpur yesterday.

They surrendered to Deputy Inspector General of Police, Barishal range, Mohammad Shafikul Islam at a programme arranged by the district police at Pirojpur Police Lines yesterday noon.

Speakers at the programme said abuse of drugs have grabbed almost every corner of the society, especially the younger generation.

People should take stand against drug abuse for the development of the country, they said.

22 python eggs hatched in Sreemangal zoo

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A total of 22 python eggs were hatched successfully in a zoo under Sreemangal upazila of the district yesterday morning.

A python, which was rescued in Dinaipur 22 years ago, laid 35 eggs at the zoo of Bangladesh Bonyo Prani Sheba Foundation last month and since then the eggs were kept with the mother python.

The zoo authorities decided to hatch

the eggs in their care and provided proper temperature and favourable weather for safe hatching of those, said Swapan Deb Sajal, director of the privately-run wildlife care centre.

"We believe that the hatchlings will become valuable breeders in the future," he said.

"This is a milestone towards conserving and breeding pythons. We will take care of the hatchlings at the zoo until they are capable of surviving in the wild. After that, we will release

them in their natural habitat," the wildlife centre director added.

The same python laid eggs earlier in 2002, 2004 and 2011 from which 90 hatchlings came out and all of those were released in Lawachhara reserve forest in different times, he added.

Joly Paul, convener of Lawachhara forest, said the number of pythons is declining drastically in the country due to food crisis.

The pythons are struggling in the wild to survive, he added.



Twenty-two python eggs were hatched in a zoo of Moulvibazar's Sreemangal upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



Several of the new houses that were built on the land marked for acquisition for the Payra seaport project. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

PAYRA SEA PORT

Houses mushrooming in project area for false claim

Acquisition of around 6,500 acres of land is underway

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Thousands of new houses are suddenly springing up in the middle of farmlands in nine mouzas of Kalapara upazila where the authorities recently issued acquisition notices to land owners for Payra sea port project.

The new structures are being built in a bid to change category of a piece of land from lower-priced agricultural to higher-priced homestead category -- a change that would enable landowners not only claim higher compensation for the land, but also claim compensation for the new structure at double the market price.

With that same objective in mind, many landowners are also building new structures beside existing structures on their land that is already marked under homestead category.

Patuakhali district administration has already handed over 2,372.79 acres of acquired land to Payra Port Authority (PPA) and they recently issued notices to landowners for the acquisition of another 6,562.27 acres of land from nine mouzas in the upazila, according to the land acquisition department at the office of Patuakhali deputy commissioner (DC).

The nine mouzas are Lalua, Nayakata, Banatipara, Chandupara, Lemupara, Char Baliatali, Dhulashar, Londa and Itbaria.

SM Munim Linkon, land acquisition officer at the office, said in their notice, served under section 4, to the landowners, it was clearly mentioned that new establishments cannot be built on their land for the purpose of changing land category to attain additional gains.

Compensation would not be given to any landowner who violates the condition and the particular property would be dropped from the list of compensation recipients once a joint survey conducted by the district administration and the PPA finds any such anomaly, he added.

Earlier, in June this year, Joint Director (Estate) of PPA Khondokar Nurul Haque in a letter informed the DC of Patuakhali of the new developments on the land marked for acquisition along the Ramnabad river bank and also raised the issue at the meeting of district development and coordination board.

During a recent visit to Char Chandupara village in Lalua union of the upazila, this correspondent found countless new houses, some still under construction, on agricultural land. Most houses were built with corrugated iron sheets on wooden frames.

Ponds were dug adjacent to many houses to elevate the construction sites with dirt dug out from the ponds. Some owners even released

fish in the ponds and planted saplings around the ponds.

Delwar Hossain Chowdhury, a resident of the village, said with the objective of claiming higher compensation, he spent Tk 6 lakh to build two new houses on 2.83 acres of agricultural land that he inherited from his father.

Shahina Begum of the same village also admitted to have built three houses on 1.80 acres of her agricultural land at a cost of Tk 4 lakh. Several influential locals provided her support during the construction after persuading her that the new structures would enable her to receive higher compensation, she said.

The influential people are extending all sorts of support to them with the condition that the landowners would pay them a portion of the extra compensation payment, said another villager Jamal Mollik.

Lalua Union Parishad Chairman Shawkat Hossain Biswas confirmed that a number of unscrupulous brokers are persuading villagers to build new houses on their land in order to make a quick buck.

Contacted, Patuakhali Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) Md Mamunur Rashid said, public representatives in the area were informed of the matter and builders of the new structures would not get extra compensation.