



Small engine-run boats like this one carry passengers across the mighty Buragourango river in Galachipa upazila of Patuakhali as people of some 50 coastal islands in Char Kazal and Char Biswas unions under the upazila have to take the risky journey even during the ongoing monsoon to go to different destinations including upazila and district headquarters.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

## River journey risky for people of 50 coastal islands

Locals demand ferry service on the route in Patuakhali's Galachipa

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

People of some 50 coastal islands under Char Kazol and Char Biswas unions in Patuakhali's Galachipa upazila have to take risky journey by small mechanized boats on the Buragourango river between Bodnatali and Charkazol terminals to go to the upazila headquarters and the district town.

To mitigate sufferings of the locals, Bangladesh Inland Water Transportation Corporation (BIWTC) launched a ferry service on the 10-km waterway between Bodnatali and Charkazol launch terminals on March 2 in 2018.

But the service stopped within a month, leaving thousands of people of Char Kazol and Char Biswas unions in utter frustration. The people living in the remote coastal islands often have to face natural calamities like cyclones and tidal surges.

"We have to cross the Buragourango river amid life risk as we have to go to upazila

headquarters and district town for various purposes. In the rainy season the river turns turbulent, making the journey riskier," said Rahima Begum, a passenger at Bodnatali terminal.

Tofazzal Hossain, chairman of Char Biswas Union Parishad (UIP), urged the authorities concerned to resume the ferry service to ensure safe journey for the local people.

Better communication would also help improve the life of the char people, he said. Char Kazol UP chairman Md Rubel Mollah expressed the same view.

Abul Kalam Azad, deputy director of BIWTC's Barishal office, said, "Movement of vehicles is a pre-condition for running ferry service but no vehicles cross the route. As per instruction from the higher authorities, we withdrew the ferry from the route."

Accidents occurred on the route at different times, the worst being the launch capsized on May 15 in 2015, which left at least 80 people killed.

## Minor girl raped

A CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A nine-year-old girl, raped allegedly by her cousin in Satkhira Sadar upazila yesterday, is undergoing treatment at Satkhira Sadar Hospital.

The victim, daughter of a framer, is a Class III student at a local school.

"We suspect that the girl was raped as wounds were found in her private parts. Her bleeding has stopped and hopefully she is out of danger," said Kaniz Fatema, a doctor at the hospital.

The girl's mother said their neighbour Sajju, also cousin of the girl, raped her after taking her to his house.

Mohammad Mostafizur, OC of Satkhira Sadar Police Station, said, "Following a verbal complaint from the victim's parents I sent two inspectors to investigate the matter."

## Housewife 'killed for dowry' in Pabna

Case filed, mother-in-law held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A housewife was killed allegedly by her husband and in-laws over dowry in Bera upazila on Friday.

The deceased, Alladi Khatun, 20, was daughter of Joynal Mollah of Char Nakalia village in the upazila.

Quoting the deceased's family members, Officer in Charge (OC) of Bera Police Station Shahid Mahamud said Alladi was married to Siddikur Rahman of Shampur village couple of years ago.

Since the marriage, Alladi had often been tortured by her in-laws for dowry.

Recently, deceased's parents gave Tk 70 thousand to Siddikur but the latter kept pressuring the victim for Tk 1 lakh more, the OC said.

Seeing suspicious atmosphere, victim's family members and neighbours separately informed the matter to police, who recovered the body the same afternoon and sent it to Pabna General Hospital for autopsy yesterday.

Meanwhile, following a case filed by Joynal Mollah with Bera Police Station on Friday night police detained victim's mother-in-law Zainab Begum from her house.

The other accused in the case went into hiding after the incident, the OC said.

## Schoolteacher arrested over rape charge

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Police yesterday arrested a schoolteacher on charge of raping a female student in Amtali upazila of Barguna.

Police produced the arrestee, Md Jahirul Islam, 30, physical education teacher of Kathalia Tajem Ali High School in Amtali, to a Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court the same day and the court sent him to jail, said Abul Bashar, officer in charge of Amtali Police Station.

"Jahirul raped the girl, a tenth grader of his school, on several occasions since December, saying that otherwise she would be made to fail in the examinations. At one stage the victim became pregnant. Then Jahirul took the victim to a clinic in Patuakhali district town and arranged destroying her embryo," he said.

Students, guardians and locals formed a human chain in front of the school demanding arrest of the perpetrator on June 30.

The victim's grandfather filed a rape case with Amtali Police Station on July 1 accusing Jahirul.

Afterwards Jahirul went into hiding and finally police led by Md Foysal Ahmed, investigation officer of the case, arrested him from Amtali Chowrasta area around 10:00am yesterday.



Villagers from Gohaliabari and Durgapur unions in Kalihati upazila at yesterday's human chain along the bank of Jamuna river in Alipur area of Gohaliabari union.

PHOTO: STAR

## 'Stop illegal sand lifting from Jamuna river'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Several hundred inhabitants of all ages from villages under three unions of Tangail yesterday formed two separate human chains in protest at unauthorised sand lifting from the Jamuna river.

At noon, men, women and children from seven villages -- Alipur, Bhoirbari, Singuli, Char Poule, Khakchhara, Beltia and Afzalpur -- under Gohaliabari and Durgapur unions in Kalihati upazila formed a human chain for an hour along the Jamuna riverbank in Alipur area of Gohaliabari union.

About the same time, the second human chain was formed alongside the river in Kakua union of Tangail Sadar upazila by residents of the union.

Holding out placards and banners, many inscribed with messages such as "we will lay down our lives, but will not give away the sand", the villagers demanded putting a stop to

indiscriminate sand-lifting that has been causing erosion of the riverbanks.

Speakers during the events said the erosion of Jamuna has worsened over the past few years and a vast swathe of croplands and numerous dwellings were devoured by the river as sand lifting with powerful dredgers have been going on unabated by those with vested interests.

They demanded the higher authorities take immediate action against the sand lifters and urged the prime minister to take stern action against negligent government officials concerned.

Gohaliabari resident Noor Hossain alleged that local Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Hazrat Ali Talukder has been illegally lifting sand from the river for the last few years, contributing to the erosion of the riverbanks.

Anyone raises objection to the UP chairman's unlawful act becomes victim of various types of harassment including being accused in false cases filed by him,

he also claimed, adding that the local administration did not pay heed to their repeated complaints in this regard.

In the last few years, the erosion of Jamuna and its branches, including Dhaleshwari, Pungli, Jhinai Louhajang and Elongjani, took a serious turn in Kalihati, Bhupur, Tangail Sadar, Mirzapur, Basail, Delduar and Nagarpur upazilas, devouring several thousand dwellings, a vast tract of croplands as well as embankments and roads.

Locals said the severe erosion is a result of unauthorised dredging of the river with the use of powerful dredgers by sand traders having the blessings of a section of local politicians and government officials concerned.

For the last one decade, the influential sand traders have also been operating at least a dozen illegal docks encroaching on the eastern bank of the Jamuna near the Bangabandhu Bridge in Bhupur upazila, they also alleged.

## Kid killed over land dispute in Kishoreganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A two-year-old boy was killed allegedly by his relatives centring a feud over land dispute in Kishoreganj's Astagram upazila early yesterday.

The victim, Wasim Mia, was son of Abdul Wadud Mia of Dalarkandi village.

Meanwhile, following a case filed by the victim's father with Astagram Police Station against five people, police detained Abdur Razzaq, 65, and his four sons -- Alkas Mia, 30, Saiful Islam, 25, Taus Mia, 23, and Sujon Mia, 20, from the village and recovered the murder weapon.

Quoting the case statement, Officer in Charge (OC Investigation) of Astagram Police Station Mohammad Shariful Islam said there had been a longstanding dispute between Wadud and his uncle Razzaq over the ownership of a piece of land.

Although several arbitrations were held in this regard, the issue remained unsettled, he said.

Wadud went to visit a relative's house on Friday keeping his wife Rika Akter, three children and mother at home.

The murder took place when Rika went out of her room to respond to the natural's call around 5:30am.

Taking advantage of the situation, Razzaq and his sons allegedly entered Rika's room and killed the minor boy by slitting his throat with a knife, the OC said, quoting the case statement.

On information, police went to the spot and recovered the body around 9:30am and sent it to Kishoreganj General Hospital for autopsy.

During primary interrogation, the arrestees confessed their involvement in the killing, the OC added.

## Two murdered in separate incidents

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A housewife and a land office employee were murdered in separate incidents in Netrakona and Kishoreganj on Friday.

The victim in Netrakona was Sufia Khatun, 40, wife of Shahjahan Mia, a grocer at Kuttakanda village in Kalmakanda upazila.

"There was an altercation over hand shaking between Shahjahan's nephew Fazlul Haque, 20, a college student, and his neighbour Sharafat Ali, 22, on Thursday," Kalmakanda Police Station OC (Investigation) Sirajul Islam Khan said, referring to the case statement.

"Locals settled the matter but Sharafat and his men allegedly attacked Shahjahan at his shop in the evening. Shahjahan managed to escape but his wife Sufia and sister-in-law Ruma Akter, 35, who rushed to the spot to save him, were injured critically by the attackers," he said.

They were taken to Kalmakanda Upazila Health Complex where Sufia died on Friday evening.

"Shahjahan lodged a case with the police station accusing some 20 people, including 14 named ones. Police arrested Johura Khatun and her son Nazim Uddin the same night. They were produced before a Netrakona court this noon [Saturday] and the court sent them to jail," said the OC.

In Itna upazila of Kishoreganj, a land office employee was killed in a clash centring a football match at Elongjuri

village on Friday night.

The victim, Meraj Mia, 50, son of late Abdul Jobbar of Elongjuri, worked as peon at Elongjuri union's land office, said Itna Police Station OC Mohammad Morshed Zaman.

A clash occurred between the supporters of Elongjuri union parishad (UIP) Chairman Golap Mia and Sharafat Ali, a UP member, over a football match at Elongjuri High School ground on Thursday, the OC quoted locals as saying.

An arbitration was arranged at Elongjuri Bazar to settle the matter on Friday morning but Sharafat's men allegedly assaulted the chairman, creating a tense situation in the area.

Informed, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Another arbitration was called at Elongjuri Bazar in presence of police in the afternoon.

During the arbitration, Meraj, brother of local UP member Siraj Mia, went to buy goods from a shop at the bazar. Finding him alone, alleged supporters of the chairman hacked him with sharp weapons, leaving him critically injured.

He was rushed to Kishoreganj General Hospital where the doctors declared him dead around 9:30pm.

"Four people have been detained for their alleged involvement in the murder. Policemen have been deployed in the area to avert further untoward incident," said the OC.



Two groups of contestants, one comprising married men and the other unmarried ones, try to outdo the opponents at a friendly Ha-du-du match at Anandapara village in Ghtail upazila of Tangail on Friday. Locals arrange the traditional rural game as a pastime during different occasions like the Eid holidays.

PHOTO: STAR