

# Price tag of Lohalia bridge to double

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Ending a suspension of five years, construction work of the bridge on the Lohalia river will resume soon with a modified design accommodating an extended height clearance.

Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) on July 17 issued work orders to two construction firms in this regard.

The fresh work orders of Tk 47 crore will add on to the bridge's previous construction cost of Tk 46 crore and raise its price tag to Tk 93 crore.

On October 1, 2014, when the work of the Lohalia bridge was put on hold over an objection raised about its inadequate height clearance, 55 percent work of the bridge was already completed.

The objection about the bridge's height was raised by Payra Port Authority (PPA) via shipping ministry.

The LGED in 2008 initiated process for constructing a bridge on the Lohalia to connect thousands of inhabitants of Baufal, Dashmina and Galachipa upazilas with the Patuakhali district headquarters.

The construction of a 464-metre-long concrete bridge, on Patuakhali-Dashmina road via Baufal, commenced on November 9, 2011, with its completion scheduled for October 20, 2014. According to the original design, the height of the bridge was

set at 9.57 metres, said sources at LGED in Patuakhali.

Till date, LGED has disbursed Tk 29.04 crore -- Tk 25.29 crore to the construction firm while Tk 3.75 crore for land acquisition.

Following the objection raised over the bridge's height, LGED and the shipping ministry jointly decided to put the construction work on hold.

On July 17, 2016, the LGED and shipping ministry decided to raise the height of the bridge's middle columns to 18.30 metres and place a steel span in between the concrete columns, the sources added.

In the absence of a bridge, thousands of locals have been facing immense sufferings as they are having to cross the Lohalia in small boats.

Rakibul Hasan, a student of Abdul Karim Mridha College and a resident of Lohalia village, said he would not have to cross the river in small dinghies every day if there were a bridge on the river.

Raisul Islam, an employee of a non-government organisation; and Khokon Mia, a teacher of a private college; echoed the same sentiment.

LGED Executive Engineer Tirthojit Roy said the construction work of the heightened bridge, with a steel span in the middle, is scheduled to be completed within a couple of years.



After a hold-up of five years, Local Government Engineering Department is resuming construction work of Lohalia bridge on Patuakhali-Dashmina road. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: STAR

# Hot spell holding back Aman farming in Lalmonirhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Aman farmers in Lalmonirhat are facing shortage of day labourers due to a hot spell in the region over the past few days.

While many of the labourers are refraining from working in the open, others are overcharging, said many farmers.

Being unable to find labourers at affordable rates, several farmers said they would shelve their plans to plant Aman seedlings for the time being.

They said the spike in labour rates is a double blow to them as they are still reeling from losses incurred due to falling prices of paddy.

Farm labourer Nazrul Islam from Hatibandha upazila's Gaddimari, a village by the Teesta river, said the heat has been so intense that they cannot work under the sun without taking frequent breaks in the shade.

"We haven't been planting Aman seedlings due to the scorching heat. Some of us, however, might consider it if the pay is good," he also said.

Another day labourer, Nur Alam, from the same village, said usually a team of seven workers can sow Aman seedlings on five bighas of land in one day. But, due to the excessive heat, they can barely sow seedlings on three bighas now.

Each labourer now charges Tk 1,000 for sowing seedlings on one bigha of land, he added.

Even though their rates have gone up, their earnings are falling because they cannot stay out long



Sitting in the shade of a tree beside a paddy field, a few farm labourers try to find respite from the scorching weather. The photo was taken from Gaddimari village in Hatibandha upazila on Saturday.

PHOTO: STAR

enough to work on a larger area in the boiling heat, said labourer Nazir Hossain from Durakuti village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila. "Many are even falling sick trying to sow the seedlings in the field."

Farmer Ramesh Chandra Barmon, from Ratherpar village in Aditmari upazila, said labour rates have gone up -- from last year's Tk 700 to Tk 750 to Tk 1,000 this year. But there is still a shortage in number of labourers available for

work in the heat.

"I got 15 bighas of my land ploughed. But out of those, six bighas had to be left uncultivated due to labour shortage," said another farmer, Sohrab Hossain, from the same village.

Meteorological office in Rangpur said the temperature in the division has remained between 32 and 35 degrees Celsius over the past few days and the highest temperature in the division on Friday was 35

degrees Celsius -- a record high for that day. The temperature on the same date a year ago was 27 degrees Celsius.

Director of Department of Agricultural Extension, said 5,042 hectares of land was used to grow Aman seedlings for cultivation on 90,400 hectares of land this season, but the labour shortage due to the heat is delaying the cultivation.

## Raped boy hospitalised Accused madrasa teacher flees

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A madrasa teacher, sued for forcibly sodomizing an 11-year-old boy, went into hiding on Sunday night.

The victim, son of a poor rickshaw-van driver, is undergoing treatment at Joypurhat Modern hospital.

The accused, Ayub Ali, 42, son of Nasir Uddin of Kamiadanga village under Dharmoirhat upazila of Naogaon, taught at Hafezia Madrasa at Aramnagar of Joypurhat municipality.

Fifteen boys, all belonging to poor families, are students of the madrasa, said police.

"Ayub Ali sodomized the boy at his bedroom a week ago and threatened him of tough punishment if the matter is disclosed. Afterwards, he committed the brutal act almost every night," the boy's father said in the case statement.

On Sunday morning, the boy fled from the madrasa and informed his parents at home.

As the boy fell sick, he was admitted to Joypurhat Modern Hospital the same day.

The boy was brought with serious anal injuries, said Dr Mubiniul Islam, resident medical officer of Joypurhat Modern Hospital.

Demanding arrest and punishment of the perpetrator, the victim's family members said the madrasa teacher allegedly did the same with some other boys too.

"The victim boy's father filed a case on Sunday afternoon and we have started investigation into the incident. Drives are on to arrest the accused teacher," said Raihan Hossain, inspector (Investigation) of Joypurhat Sadar Police Station.

## College girl found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Police recovered the hanging body of a college girl from a private dormitory in Ranishankoil upazila headquarters yesterday.

The deceased was Sima Rani Bhoomik, 23, daughter of Nikhil Chandra Bhoomik of Damol Malipara village, and a student of Ranishankoil Degree College.

Police said Sima hanged herself from the beam of a room at Sayem Mess around 8:00am when her roommate went outside for private tuition.

As Sima did not respond after repeated knocks by other boarders, they informed police who later recovered her body from the room by breaking open the door.

The body was sent to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital for autopsy, police said, adding that the reason behind the suicide could not be known immediately.

## Abducted girl rescued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Police rescued an abducted schoolgirl from Mela Panga village in Domar upazila on Sunday night and arrested a youth in this connection.

Hailing from Panga village, the 15-year-old victim is a student of Class IX at Panga Motukpur Girls' High School.

Sub-inspector Abu Hanif Mandol of Domar Police Station said on the night of August 30, local youth Moinalul Islam, 21, along with his associates abducted the girl when she went out of her room to respond to the call of nature.

The victim's father then filed an abduction case with Domar Police Station accusing six persons including Moinalul.

On secret information, police raided the abductors' hideout on Sunday night and rescued the girl.

They also arrested key accused Moinalul from the spot, said the SI.

## Youth killed by cousin

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A youth was killed by his cousin allegedly over a trivial matter in Harinakundo upazila yesterday.

The victim is Tarikul Islam, 28, of Hariarghata village.

Quoting locals, police said Tarikul locked in an altercation with his cousin Habibur Rahman over felling a bamboo from a nearby cluster.

At one stage, Habibur hit Tarikul on the head with a stick.

Tarikul later died on way to a hospital.

# Sugarcane growers call 20-day demo from Sep 5

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Demanding steps to protect Sahebganj agriculture farm of Rangpur Sugar Mills in Gaibandha from land grabbers, labourers and sugarcane growers announced a 20-day agitation programme from September 5.

The programmes include submission of memorandum, human chain, demonstration in Mohimaganj and Gobindaganj, road and rail blockade and a half-day hartal.

They made the announcement at a press conference at the mill's gate on Sunday.

Rangpur Chinikal Sramik-Karmachari Union and cane growers jointly organised the conference.

The speakers at the programme also demanded to stop looting in the cane farm, criminal activities and attack on them and preventing government officials from discharging their duties.

At the press conference, Faruk Hossain, assistant secretary of the union, read out a paper.

Six decades ago, the then East Pakistan government acquired 1854 acres of land at Sahebganj for erecting a sugarcane farm just to run the sugar mill smoothly. Accordingly, government handed

over the acquired lands to the then East Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation (EPIDC). After liberation, the organisation was converted into Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation (BSFIC).

Since 2016 a section of grabbers continued instigating innocent Santal community to occupy government land on the plea of getting their forefather's property. They even called Santal families from different areas and occupied around 100 acres of land at Sahebganj cane farm, the paper said.

Since then Santal community started carrying out occasional attacks on farm's office and workers, looting away properties of the farm and damaging tractors, cranes and other equipment. Even they looted firearms from the ansars deputed in the farm, said the speakers.

In this situation, on November 6 in 2016, local administration and law enforcing agencies in an eviction drive recovered the government properties from illegal occupants.

The Santal community still attacked the workers in the cane fields and lifted fishes from the farm's ponds on various occasions, said the speakers.



Lalmonirhat Zila Parishad recently felled four large healthy trees beside Mahendranagar-Barabari road in Burirbazar area under Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila. The parishad ordered to fell the trees for wood needed in renovation work of zila parishad auditorium. Green activists and locals alleged that a council member, who is also a ruling party leader, is behind the anti-environment move.

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