



About 60-metre portion of this Hazipur-Kotarkona road near Kotarkona Bazar in Hazipur union under Moulvibazar's Kulaura upazila collapsed due to erosion by the Manu river in the last week of July. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

MANU RIVER EMBANKMENT COLLAPSE

Road communication hampered for two months

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Vehicular movement on two road-cum-embankments along the Manu river in Kulaura upazila has remained suspended for the last two months, hampering road communication in 45 adjacent villages, claimed locals.

No repair work has been done since 60-metre portion of Hazipur-Kotarkona road near Kotarkona Bazar and 180-metre portion of Kunimara-Tarapasha road near Kawkapon Bazar under Hazipur union of the upazila collapsed due to erosion by the Manu river in the last week of July and first week of August, respectively.

Hazipur Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Abdul Bachhit Bachchu said people of about 45 villages under five unions of the upazila are facing immense sufferings for the last two months because of the embankment collapse, which is now widening.

People of these villages and nearby

border area use these two roads to go to the district headquarter in Sylhet, he said.

Locals said, they are paying higher fares for using alternative routes and means of communication.

Joynal Abedin, a resident of Pinerbazar area of Hazipur union, said he now has to pay a fare of Tk 20 to board a bus that runs on an alternative route to go to the union land office from his area.

"Beforehand, I could board a local human hauler for just Tk 5 and use the Hazipur-Kotarkona route to go the land office," he said.

Grocer Zahiruddin of Kawkapon Bazar, where the Tarapasha-Kunimara road collapsed, told this correspondent that he had to increase price of essentials in his shop because he now brings goods using the Manu river route instead of the road.

"I had to increase the price of sugar by Tk 10 from Tk 40 to cover the increased cost of transportation and risk involved in

using the river route," he said.

According to local sources, Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) in Moulvibazar had put up bamboo fence and dumped sand sacks on the embankment areas immediately after the collapse to prevent further erosion.

However, the sand sacks and bamboo pillars too were washed away by the river couple of days back, locals said.

Resident of Kotarkona village Ali Hossain said due to heavy rain during the last two months the flood control embankments at Kotarkona got damaged twice.

"We are concerned that more areas will erode in the coming days," he feared.

Villager of Kawkapon area Sadhon Das said he won't be able to make a livelihood if the embankment collapses further, eroding away two acres of his cropland.

Farmer Abdus Salek of the village said last year villagers checked the erosion by erecting corrugated tin fence and

dumping sand bags.

Hasan Ali of the Hazipur village alleged that erosion became severe because of ruthless sand lifting from the Manu river by a section of local influential people.

BWDB Executive Engineer Ranendra Shankar Chakraborty of Moulvibazar agreed that sand lifting is being done without any regards to the rules thus aggravating erosion.

Badrul Islam, who took lease of a portion of the river near Manu area, however, claimed that he has been lifting sand as per rules.

Meanwhile, the BWDB official said a Tk 1,000 crore development project will soon be proposed to build permanent boundaries around the river embankments which will contain the river in the rainy season.

"We marked 67 points which are at risk of erosion by the river in Sadar, Kulaura and Rajnagar upazilas," he added.

7 injured in blast during AL council

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kustia

Seven leaders and activists of the ruling Awami League (AL) were injured in crude bomb blasts just after the announcement of a new committee for AL Bahadurpur union in Bheramara upazila of the district on Saturday night.

Witnesses and party sources said at least 10 cocktails exploded on the ground of Bahadurpur High School around 7:30pm when Shamim Ahmed and Ujjal Hossain were declared president and general secretary (GS) of the new committee respectively.

Upazila AL president Akteruzzaman Mithu, also the upazila parishad chairman, and Shamimul Islam Chana, mayor of Bheramara municipality, and also AL general secretary of the upazila unit, were also present at the council held on the school premises.

Soon after the declaration of the new committee, Ratan Ali, an aspirant for the post of GS protested.

Later, at least 10 cocktails blasted on the spot leaving seven people including Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal Mukul, panel chairman and also councillor of Kustia Zilla Parishad, injured.

The injured received primary treatment from the upazila health complex.

Upazila AL general secretary Shamimul Islam Chana blamed GS aspirant Ratan and his brother Paban for the blasts as they failed to get the post.

However, refuting the allegation, Ratan said the committee was formed by "non-Awami Leaguer".

Confirming the incident, Sheikh Obaidullah, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Bheramara Police Station, said the situation is now under their control.

Kendua-Paishka road opened for public

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A new road was opened for public in Dhabari upazila yesterday while development works of another road started in Kalihati upazila on Friday.

Locals are extremely happy as the authorities concerned have fulfilled their long-cherished demands.

Agriculture Minister Dr Abdur Razzak yesterday inaugurated the 6.62 km Kendua-Paishka road in Dhanbari upazila.

Local Government and Engineering Department (LGED) constructed the road at a cost of Tk 4.75 crore under Northern Bangladesh Integrated Development Project (NOBIDEP).

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in Bangladesh funded the project.

Among others, Gopal Azam, engineer of LGED in Tangail, and Joynal Abedin, upazila engineer in Dhanbari, were present at the inaugural function.

Meanwhile, the development works of Suruj-Sakhipur via Rampur road in Nagbari union of Kalihati upazila finally started on Friday.

LGED is widening and repairing the road at a cost of Tk 12.28 crore under the NOBIDEP project. JICA in Bangladesh is funding the project.

Hasan Imam Khan Sohel Hazari, lawmaker of Tangail-4, laid the foundation stone of the works in the afternoon.

Among others, Kalihati upazila parishad chairman Ansar Ali, Executive Engineer of LGED in Tangail Gopal Azam and upazila engineer in Kalihati Mohammad Fazlur Rahman attended the programme.



Five of the 16 ferryboats plying Paturia-Daulatdia route across the Padma river lie anchored at Paturia terminal in Manikganj yesterday as the five vessels, too weak due to overuse for long, find it hard to move through the strong current of the mighty river during the last few days.

PHOTO: ZAHANGIR SHAH

Rape accused arrested

The arrestee earlier suffered 14 years' RI in Trisha murder case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Police on Saturday arrested a youth on charge of violating a sixth grader girl in Gaibandha.

The arrestee Mehedi Hasan Modern and his two accomplices came out of jail two years ago after suffering 14 years' rigorous imprisonment in the sensational murder case of fourth grader Trisha in Gaibandha, said Moinul Huq, additional superintendent of police (ASP), Gaibandha.

On September 11, Modern and his accomplice Sabbir Hossain Bappi abducted a sixth grader girl student in Sadar upazila on her way to home from coaching. They forcibly took the girl on a motorcycle, raped her inside a mobile servicing shop at Boali, and went away with the victim.

Mother of the victim filed an FIR with Gaibandha Sadar Police Station against Modern and some others, alleging abduction of the girl. Police rescued the victim from Rangpur town next day and a regular case was filed under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, but the accused fled away.

"Tipped off, a team of Gaibandha police arrested Modern from Dhaka on Saturday and produced him before a court in the afternoon. The court ordered sending him to jail. Drives are on to arrest the other accused Sabbir, said Khan Md Shahrar, OC Gaibandha Sadar Police Station.

"The victim told the magistrate that the criminals raped her several times. Her medical test has been conducted and sample of clothes and other things have been sent to Dhaka for DNA test," said ASP Mainul Huq.

On July 17 in 2002, Sadia Sultana Trisha, a Class IV student in Gaibandha municipality, was returning home from school when Modern and his two accomplices chased her. In fear the victim jumped into the pond adjacent to their home and drowned.

Following a case, police arrested the three young boys and the then District and Sessions Judge awarded death sentence to them.

Later following an appeal by the lawyer of the convicts, Appellate Division of the Supreme Court reduced the punishment to 14 years' rigorous imprisonment considering their tender age.

B'BARIA GOVT PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Teacher shortage bogs down academic activities

MASUK HRIDOY, Brahmanbaria

Headteacher posts in Brahmanbaria's 159 government primary schools lied vacant for years, some for as long as four years.

Moreover, more than one-tenth or 589 out of 6,137 assistant teacher posts in the schools have remained unfilled for at least 10 months.

As a result, the teacher shortage is putting an enormous strain on assistant teachers who have been filling in to take additional classes or carrying out the responsibility of the headteachers in the schools.

Many of the headteacher posts fell vacant due to scheduled retirement. But thanks to a complex recruitment procedure, those posts as well as the vacant assistant teacher posts are yet to be filled.

According to Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) in Brahmanbaria, the district has 1,105 government primary schools in its nine upazilas.

Liton Das, assistant primary education officer in the district, said Nabinagar upazila has 38 headteacher posts and 100 assistant

teacher posts vacant, Sarail upazila has 24 headteacher and 42 assistant teacher posts vacant, Nasimagar has 22 headteacher and 97 assistant teacher posts vacant, Bijoyagar has 22 headteacher and 118 assistant teacher posts vacant, Akhaura has 15 headteacher and 20 assistant teacher posts vacant, Banchharampur has 14 headteacher and 122 assistant teacher posts vacant, Kasba has 13 headteacher and 76 assistant teacher posts vacant, Ashuganj has 6 headteacher and 10 assistant teacher posts vacant, and Sadar upazila has 7 headteacher and 10 assistant teacher posts vacant.

During a recent visit to Gosalnagar Government Primary School in Nasimagar upazila, this correspondent found that only three teachers were employed at the school and they were taking extra classes for three other vacant teacher posts in the school.

Every day, the three teachers were taking all six classes -- from pre-primary to fifth grade -- at the school that has 350 students.

Mohammad Moniruzzaman, the school's acting headteacher, said, "I have to

[simultaneously] take more than one class during each period as there's shortage of teachers and the headmaster post is vacant too."

The headteacher post at Gonnay Government Primary School, with 365 enrolled students, in the same upazila has remained unfilled for the past four years and Assistant Teacher Abdul Kader has been carrying out additional responsibilities as the acting headteacher of the school.

This school is also running with only three teachers against total six allocated posts of assistant teachers.

Both the acting headteachers said their frequent meetings at education offices in upazila and district headquarters have been affecting their routine academic and administrative activities at their schools.

Contacted, Assistant Primary Education Officer Liton Das said the processes of recruiting new headteachers and promotion of assistant teachers are underway and the posts of assistant teachers will be filled from new recruits who appeared in written tests last month.



Workers form a human chain on the bank of the Jadukata river at Ghagra Kurerpar in Badaghat union under Tahirpur upazila of Sunamganj yesterday demanding resumption of sand and stone extraction work in the river.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA