



A number of such bamboo-made enclosures are erected at different points of Kageshwari-3 Canal, flowing through Pabna's Santhia and Bera upazilas, blocking the natural flow of the important waterbody. The photo was taken from Talpatti area in Santhia upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

## Bamboo barriers block flow of canal

*Cultivation of winter crops on 20,000 hectares of land in Pabna's Santhia and Bera upazilas greatly hampered due to prolonged waterlogging*

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Fishermen have set up a number of barriers blocking the natural flow of an important canal crucial to agricultural activities on about 20,000 hectares of land in two upazilas of Pabna.

Flow of some 20 waterbodies have been blocked in Santhia and Bera upazilas because of 10 enclosures built with materials like bamboo, polythene and cotton net through which water cannot pass.

Fishermen backed by local political leaders, businessmen carried out the misdeed in the last couple of weeks, according to the local office of Water Development Board (WDB).

Water in some 21 kilometre of Kageshwari-3 canal are now stagnant, much to the inconvenience of farmers, who, otherwise, would have harvested paddy or cultivated onion at this time of the year.

"Paddy and onion are the key crops here. Due to prolonged waterlogging, farmers are not being able to harvest paddy or sow onion seeds," Santhia Upazila Agricultural Officer Sanjib Kumar Goswami told this paper.

"Cultivation of winter crops might also be greatly hampered if prompt steps are not taken to resume the water flow," he said, adding that authorities concerned including the upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) and the deputy

commissioner (DC) had been informed about the situation.

"Water flows to 15 to 20 waterbodies in Santhia and Bera through Kageshwari-3. Fishermen backed by influential people halted the flow by setting up illegal bamboo enclosures," said Abdul Hamid, executive engineer of WDB (Bera Circle).

"Rainwater usually recedes at this time of the year but as the fishermen had illegally built the structures using shuti (cotton) net, the water could not pass. Through microphones, we have been urging them to remove the enclosures but to no avail," added the official.

Rayeez Uddin of Afra village in Santhia

upazila has lost Aman paddy that he had cultivated on five bighas of land.

"I am unable to harvest now as my crops have been submerged," said the distressed farmer.

Vast tracts of croplands along Muktar Dhar, Shonaidaha, Ghighudaha Beel, Jamaidaha Beel, Boro Gram Beel, Kholsha Beel, Katidi Beel in Santhia and Kalkuzra Beel, Shikor Beel, Etekata Beel, and Dhalpura Beel in Bera upazila have gone under water.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found six to seven bamboo enclosures set up at several points, including Shamikjani, Dattapara, Talpatti and Satanir Char, in the two upazilas.

## Two to die for murder after rape in Pabna

*Another gets death for same crime in Kushtia*

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Three people have been sentenced to death in separate cases for rape and murder of two women in Pabna and Kushtia.

A Pabna court yesterday sentenced two people to death on charge of killing a girl after rape, reports our correspondent.

District and Sessions Judge Mohammed Waliul Islam, also judge of Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal, Pabna, pronounced the verdict in presence of the convicts -- Md Iqbal Hossain, 37, of Darial village in Bagerhat, and Azim Uddin Pramanik, 38, of Nirog Bonogram village in Pabna's Sujanagar upazila.

According to the case statement, the convicts brought the victim, Kakoli Akter, 30, of Kalukhali in Rajbari district to Pabna's Sujanagar following an affair through conversation on mobile.

The convicts then raped and killed the woman and left the body at a field of Ramjibpur village in Sujanagar upazila.

Police recovered the victim's body (then an unidentified one) on September 4 in 2012. After investigation, police submitted charge sheet accusing Iqbal, Azim, Rubel and Easin Miah.

"According to the witnesses' statement and pieces of evidence, Iqbal and Azim

were found guilty of raping and killing the woman," said Advocate Abdus Samad Khan Ratan, public prosecutor of Pabna court.

The court also fined the two convicts Tk one lakh each, he said, adding that two others were acquitted from the charge.

Our Kushtia Correspondent reports: The District and Sessions Judge's Court sentenced a man to death for rape and murder of a girl in 2013.

The convict is Robiul Islam alias Robi Ghorami of Baromile area under Bheramara upazila in Kushtia.

According to prosecution, Robiul abducted Shapla Khatun, 17, daughter of widow Shana Khatun of the same village, from her home in absence of Shana around 8:30pm on April 21 in 2013.

Robiul took Shapla to a local brick kiln and killed her after rape.

Shapla's body was recovered from there the next morning and a case was filed with Bheramara Police Station without naming anyone.

After three months of investigation, police arrested Robiul and produced him before the court as a convict in the murder case on August 1, 2013.

After examining the records, District and Sessions Judge Arup Kumar Goshwami pronounced the verdict.



Without any proper equipment provided for the task, a worker uses a household bowl to scoop out water from a large pothole near Ghatail bus stand on the Elenga-Jamalpur highway, being converted into four lanes. People are being subjected to health hazards as well as rampant accidents on the highway as the contractors are not following standard safety practices. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## FOUR-LANE CONVERSION OF ELENGA-JAMALPUR HIGHWAY

## People's safety, sufferings being neglected

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

While the widening work of the national highway between Elenga and Jamalpur continues at a snail's pace, no one seems to care about the health hazards as well as rampant accidents people are being subjected to.

The situation turned for the worse after Wahid Construction Limited and Jamil and Company -- the two contractors liable for the four-lane conversion work of the highway -- suspended their work for the last two months.

During the period they left large ditches, excavated on the sides of the highway for the widening work, unmarked and exposed to oncoming traffic as well as to pedestrians.

Apart from that, as they made one side of the highway off-limits to vehicles at different points, the other side developed numerous large-sized potholes due to an

extra load of traffic on the portion of the road.

Vehicles moving over the potholes are kicking up huge clouds of dust, posing health risks for everyone on the road, while the potholes and the unmarked ditches are turning into death traps when those remain hidden under water after rain.

As accidents and vehicle breakdowns have been frequent, drivers are having to drive at a reduced speed on the road, causing traffic congestions almost all throughout the day.

Locals, especially students, who live on both sides of the highway are the worst sufferers as they have been enduring the dust pollution and all the other hazards every day.

Transport workers frequenting the highway said over a hundred people were injured, many of them seriously, since the work started on the road.

The contractors, under the supervision of Roads and Highways Department (RHD), started work on the Tk 489.82-crore four-lane project of 77.60 kilometres of the highway in February this year.

Approved by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council on April 3, 2018, the project has an implementation deadline of June, 2020.

Saiful Islam, a driver of a bus transport service on Tangail-Jamalpur route, said the potholes on the road as well as the ditches on the sides pose serious safety hazards to moving vehicles and passengers in those.

The potholes are also causing expensive damage to the vehicles, he also said.

Atiqur Rahman, a rights activist from Ghatail area, said although people have been suffering immensely due to the poor condition of the road, no one

from the two contractor firms were seen at the site for the last couple of weeks.

Asked, Assistant Engineer Mozammel Haque of RHD admitted that the contractors suspended the work for the last two months.

Claiming that he was not aware of the reason for the suspension, he, however, said the work resumed several days ago after the RHD pursued the matter with the two firms.

A joint secretary from the ministry also came to see the work a few days ago and he warned the contractors saying that the deadline to complete the project would not be extended in any way, he added.

Project Manager Hafizur Rahman of Wahid Construction Limited said, "The work has resumed already and it will be completed by the deadline."



Illegal structures on the premises of Mymensingh railway station being torn down during a drive by railway authorities. The photo was taken on Tuesday.

PHOTO: STAR

RIFAT MURDER CASE

## Next hearing

### Nov 28

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A Barguna court yesterday fixed November 28 for hearing on charge framing against 10 accused in the much-talked-about Rifat Sharif murder case.

Barguna District and Sessions Judge Md Asaduzzaman of the court fixed the date after ending hearing from both state and defense sides.

Earlier on Monday, Barguna juvenile court fixed January 8 for hearing on charge framing against 14 accused in the same case.

During the hearing, the court also rejected bail prayers of Al Kaiyum alias Rabbi Akon and Mohiminul Sifat and asked the authority to send all the accused to Barguna jail, Mojibur Haq Kislu, lawyer of the plaintiff, said.

Aysha Siddika Minni, wife of slain Rifat Sharif, came to the court with her father while police brought other accused to the court from Barguna jail.

Then the court fixed the date November 28 for framing on charge against the 10 accused in the case, the lawyer said.

The 10 accused are Rakibul Hasan Rifat Faraje, 23, Al Kaiyum alias Rabbi Akon, 21, Mohiminul Sifat, 19, Rejwan Ali Khan alias Tiktok Hridoy, 22, Md Hasan, 19, Md Musa, 22, Aysha Siddika Minni, 19, Raful Islam Rabbi, 20, Md Sagor, 19, and Kamrul Islam Saimun, 21.

Of all the accused in the murder case, the 14 are now in Jashore juvenile correction centre, eight in Barguna jail and Aysha Siddika Minni is now on bail while accused Musa still is absconding and court already issued arrest warrant against him.

On June 26, Rifat Sharif, 25, an internet service provider, was hacked to death in broad daylight in front of his wife Minni in Barguna town.

In a CCTV footage, Minni was seen screaming and trying to save her husband from the attackers.

Police arrested Minni on July 16. The following day, a Barguna court placed her on a five-day remand. Three days later, the court recorded her statement under section 164.

On August 29, the High Court granted bail to Minni on conditions that she cannot talk to media and she will remain in her father's custody.

On September 1, police pressed charges against Minni and 23 others for their alleged involvement in the murder of Rifat Sharif.

The name of the prime accused Sabbir Hossain Nayan alias Nayan Bond has been excluded from the charges as he was killed in a "gunfight" on July 2, six days after the murder.