



Locals rescued two schoolgirls and a guardian as the motorbike carrying the trio fell into the water from the rickety bamboo bridge over Chandra Kura Canal in Nilphamari Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Thousands suffer for want of permanent bridge

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

On Saturday morning, grocery shop-owner Moshir Rahman, 45, was taking his daughter second grader Imu and her classmate Shahnaz to the Barogharia Government Primary School on his motor bike along the Darwani-Khansama road in Nilphamari Sadar upazila.

While crossing a narrow, makeshift bamboo bridge over Chandra Kura Canal at Joychandi village under Sonarai union of the Sadar upazila, he lost control and the three riders as well as the vehicle fell into the water.

Elderly Nolini Roy, who was cutting paddy in a nearby field, came to the rescue. The victims with minor injuries and the motor bike were pulled out of the water.

The water-level in the canal remains low in winter, about five to six feet under the bridge. Therefore, the victims were lucky enough not to get drowned, said Nolini, whose house is near the bridge.

He claimed that such accidents occur almost every day when people of surrounding villages use the bamboo bridge to cross the canal.

According to the Chairman of Sonarai Union Parishad Golam Mostafa, more than 10,000 people of 11 villages use the bamboo bridge, the only one in the union that connects Khansama upazila with the Sadar upazila.

Work order to construct a 33-foot long and 18-foot wide concrete bridge over Chandra Kura Canal along with 1800-meter approach road was awarded to Messers Shah Anwar Construction last year in July, 2018 at a cost of Tk 1.53 crores, informed Saiful Islam, engineer of Nilphamari Sadar Upazila Local Government and Engineering Department (LGED).

He said, the contractor was supposed to complete the work by July this year, but till date only 20 percent of the work has been completed.

"We are concerned because the scheduled time for completion of the project expired five months ago," he said.

Executive Engineer Belal Hossain of district LGED informed that they issued two notices to the contractor at the end of July and September warning work order cancellation, and forfeit of the security money deposited by the contractor if the work is not completed within a couple of months.

Contractor Shah Anwar told The Daily Star that they stopped the work a year ago.

"It was not possible to continue the work as the canal is very deep and the water level was high. Once the water-level goes down we will restart construction," he said.

Villager Potish Chandra Roy, 42, alleged that the contractor shifted his men and equipment to a bigger work site, a year ago, causing the locals extreme sufferings.

When this correspondent visited the bridge on Saturday, he found rusted iron

rods sticking out of the water on one side of the bridge from an incomplete cut off wall, meant to prevent waterflow.

Shah Ahsan Habib Babu, president of a local voluntary organisation alleged that a worker of Uttara Export Processing Zone (EPZ) near Shongalshi, Nilphamari fell in the canal with his motor bike a month ago and became seriously injured as the some of the iron rod pierced through his belly.

Students of five educational institutions situated on both sides of the canal and workers of Uttara EPZ east of the Chandra Kura use the risky bridge every day, he claimed.

Md Nurunnabi, 35, of nearby Darwani village informed that before the government approved the construction of a concrete bridge, locals would voluntarily build a makeshift bamboo bridge every year to cross the canal. But the bamboo structure is so narrow that even rickshaws can't ply over it.

Two murdered in Jashore, Jhalakathi

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Two people were killed allegedly by their rivals in Jashore and Jhalakathi yesterday and on Friday.

Our Benapole correspondent reported that, rivals hammered a man to death allegedly over a land dispute in Barandi Mollapara area of Jashore town yesterday morning.

The deceased, Abdur Rahman, 40, who used to sell cosmetic and makeup products, was son of Habibur Rahman of the area.

Deceased's younger brother Zakir Hossain said Rahman had a conflict with Abdul Kuddus of the village since the latter forcibly tried to occupy his brother's land recently.

As a sequel to the rivalry, Kuddus and his men waylaid Rahman, while he was going to the district headquarters on a bicycle yesterday morning, and hit him on the head with a hammer, leaving him critically injured.

Local people rescued injured Rahman and took him to Jashore General Hospital, where the doctors declared him dead, Zakir said, adding that Kuddus went into hiding soon after the murder.

Officer in Charge of Kotwali Police Station Moniruzzaman said a case was filed with the police station yesterday, but they are yet to arrest any of the accused of the case.

Away in Jhalakathi, a youth was killed in an attack allegedly over a trifling matter in Sadar upazila on Friday, reports our correspondent.

The victim, Zahidul Islam, 25, son of Jalal Khan, was a resident of Deuri village under Ponabalia union in the upazila.

Five others, including deceased's father Jalal and uncle Shahjahan Khan, also sustained injuries during the attack.

The injured were rushed to Barisal Sher-E-Bangla Medical College Hospital, from where critically injured Shahjahan was shifted to a hospital in Dhaka for better treatment.

GANG RAPE OF NINTH GRADER

2 arrestees sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A Dinajpur court sent two youths, including the key accused arrested on Friday in connection with a case for raping a schoolgirl on December 16, to jail after police produced them before it yesterday.

The arrestees are Mokshedul Islam Tuku, 31, son of Lal Mohammad, and Masud Rana, 24, son of Rafiqul Islam, of Sundara village in Dinajpur Sadar upazila.

A team of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-13) in Rangpur, acting on a tip-off, raided Mongla Government Primary School compound at Sundara village on Friday night and detained the two culprits. Major Syed Imran Hossain of Rab-13 said.

During primary interrogation, both the arrestees confessed their involvement in the gang rape incident, the Rab official said.

According to the case statement, the victim girl, a Class X student at a local school, was on her way home after attending a cultural programme on the occasion of the Victory Day around 10:00pm on December 16.

On her way back home, three youths intercepted her, took her to a nearby pond and raped her there.

At one stage, when the girl lost her consciousness, the trio threw her into the pond and fled the scene.

After gaining consciousness, the girl returned home the same night and disclosed the matter to her parents, who admitted her to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital the following day where she is still undergoing treatment as of filing this report around 9:00pm yesterday.

On December 18, mother of the victim girl filed a rape case with Sadar Police Station accusing three people.

Sandy char lands offer eye soothing greenery

Bumper yield delights peanut farmers in three Tangail upazilas

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Bumper yield of peanut has brought smile to farmers in different char areas of the Jamuna and Dhaleswari rivers in Tangail.

The sandy chars of the rivers have turned green this year with the promise of peanuts. In the village after village, land that sometimes hosted tobacco but was often unfarmed, is proving ideal for peanut production.

Peanut, also known as groundnut, is vitamin-rich, a good source of protein, and helpful in reducing the risk of both heart disease and gallstones, experts say.

This year peanut was cultivated on 2272 hectares of land in Bhuapur, Gopalpur and Nagarpur upazilas with a target to produce 3044 tonnes of peanut, said Shariful Islam, sub-assistant agriculture officer of Department of Agricultural Extension

(DAE) in Tangail.

Azmat Ali, a farmer of Gabsara Char in Bhuapur, said he has cultivated BARI-8 hybrid varieties of peanut on his five bighas of land this season.

He is expecting at least eight to ten maunds of peanuts from per bigha of land, said Azmat.

"Current prices of per maund of raw (kacha) peanuts are Tk 1400 to Tk 1600 while the dry (shukna) peanuts are Tk 1800 to Tk 2200 at local markets," he said.

"I hope I can earn a profit of Tk 12,000 to Tk 15,000 from per bigha of land after excluding the production costs," said Azmat.

Grower Hossain Miah of the same village said local farmers are now showing interest to cultivate peanut as cultivation costs of peanut are less than other crops like paddy or tobacco.

Apart from this, it earns good

profit, he said.

There is no need of extra irrigation as well as nursing in the cultivation, said Hossain.

Tangail DAE Deputy Director Abdur Razzak said the sandy soil of the char (landmass emerging from riverbed) areas is favourable for peanut cultivation.

Local farmers are getting interested in peanut cultivation due to its lower production cost, he said.

To help peanut growers, they have been teaching them modern farming techniques, including how to apply balanced fertilizers like urea, potash and gypsum, and when to spray insecticides, said the DAE official.

"The yield is looking better than last year. We hope more than 1000 farmers of three upazilas in the district will get good profit this time as market prices of peanut are good," he added.



Members of a poor tea worker's family warm themselves burning rubbish wastes. The ongoing spell of the cold wave across the country has brought daily life of residents of Lakhai Tea Garden in Moulvibazar's Sreemangal upazila almost to a standstill.

PHOTO: STAR

Ghastly attack on rly staffers

They informed authorities of a gang that steals railway property from Teesta Rail Station

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Three railway staffers on Thursday evening came under vicious attack of a gang of criminals against whom they complained at a day-long workshop organised at Kurigram rail station earlier that day.

During the assault at Teesta rail station in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, the attackers also squished testicles of the three men and tied one of them to a tree near the platform of the station.

Locals later rescued the three injured men -- Jewel Miah, gatekeeper; Anwarul Islam, way man; and Nur Mohammad, night guard -- and took them to Lalmonirhat Railway Hospital where they remain under treatment since Thursday night.

Lalmonirhat railway police station Officer-in-Charge Rezaul Karim said a case was filed with the station on Friday night in this connection, against three named individuals -- ringleader Maha Alam, 38, from Teesta Shamutari village; Mamun Islam, 27, from Tokdartari village; and Dulal Miah, 34, from Teesta Chawratari village in Lalmonirhat Sadar -- and two to three other unnamed ones.

Gatekeeper Jewel Miah said Maha and his accomplices tied him to a tree near Teesta rail platform and beat up three of them as they, during the workshop, informed the rail authorities of theft of railway property by the Maha gang.

He also said the attackers took away everything, including cash, from them.

The rail employees and locals are afraid of the ruthless thugs who would launch violent assaults on anyone for creating obstacles to their criminal activities including theft of fuel and property belonging to the railway, said night guard Nur.

Divisional Engineer Anwarul Islam of railway in Lalmonirhat said he asked rail police to take necessary steps for arresting the attackers and putting a stop to plundering of railway properties at the Teesta rail station.

Dr Anisul Haque at Lalmonirhat Railway Hospital where the three injured are being treated, said they have injuries all over their bodies including in the head and testicles.

The injuries in their groin area are quite serious, he also said.

Rally demands speedy trial of Sumona's killer

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Local people, including students and teachers, held a rally in the town yesterday, demanding speedy trial of the alleged killer of a minor schoolgirl who was murdered after rape.

The victim was Sumona Aktar, 9, a Class III student of Thakurgaon Government Girls' High School.

Police recovered her body from an under construction building in the town on Friday, four days after she had gone missing.

Superintendent of Police Md Moniruzzaman said prime accused Reaz Mahmud Kanon, 15, son of Yasin Habib Kanon of Goalpara area, and also the student of Class IX at Thakurgaon Government Boys' High School, confessed that he killed the girl after rape.



Farmers take care of a peanut field at Gabsara Char in Tangail's Bhuapur upazila.

PHOTO: STAR