



Railway workers take a look at the cracks that developed in one of the piers of the century-old Bheramara rail bridge, inset, over the Ghaghot river near Gaibandha rail station. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: STAR

Two rail bridges in Gaibandha need urgent repair

KM REZAUL HOQUE, Gaibandha

At least two century-old rail bridges on Santahar-Lalmonirhat rail tracks, which connects the capital with cities in northern districts, continue to be in service despite their ramshackle state.

On the same tracks, there are six other run-down bridges, also built during the British era, that require immediate attention of the authorities.

Among the two risky bridges, one is located in Bheramara over the Ghaghot river near Gaibandha rail station's south outer signal. The other one is at Badiakhali rail station. The last one sustained heavy

damage during the recent flood.

As many as 14 trains including four intercity express trains pass the bridges every day at an exceedingly reduced speed as a cautionary measure.

Abul Kashem, station master of Gaibandha rail station, told this correspondent that the rail authorities deployed a watchman at the Bheramara bridge to ensure the trains slow down while crossing it due to its appalling shape.

The bridge near Badiakhali rail station in Gaibandha is also in a deplorable condition. A section of it was washed away during last flood, suspending rail

communications for three weeks.

The bridges were built with lime and brick dust during the British rule, nearly 120 years ago. Cracks have developed in a number of bridge piers and many of the wooden slippers and metal parts on the bridges have worn out, the station master also said.

A frequent train traveller and a private firm employee, Monwara Begum, said train passengers spend nervous time in their seats while the train moves on the bridges at a snail's pace.

Atwar Hossain, a signal man at the Bheramara bridge, said before an approaching train gets on the bridge,

he stops it by waving a red flag. He then gets signature of the train driver before allowing the train to cross the bridge at a speed of 10 miles per hour.

Bangladesh Railway's Sub-Assistant Engineer Afzal Hossain at Bamondanga rail station said there are eight large and small bridges along the route and out of those, the ones in Bheramara and Badiakhali need immediate repair as those are in a vulnerable state.

Anower Hossain, divisional railway engineer in Lalmonirhat Division, said they already floated tender for complete overhaul of the bridges and the works will start soon.

Video on torturing mentally challenged youth goes viral

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

An appalling video of a mentally challenged youth being tortured by a union level leader of Awami League (AL) in front of his mother went viral on social media.

The shocking incident took place at Kaziatol Purbopara village in Muradnagar upazila of Cumilla.

The tortured victim, Rajib Chandra Biswas, 18, is son of Rakhal Chandra Biswas of the village.

Sajal Chandra Biswas, elder brother of the victim, filed a case against the alleged culprit Abu Taher with Muradnagar Police Station over the incident yesterday.

"My brother was working as a goldsmith at Tatibazar of Dhaka. Recently his mental health deteriorated so we brought him back at our village home. On Wednesday, Rajib ransacked our home and broke the showcases, so we tied him at our house yard. He was shouting at random towards the passer by and one of them happened to be Taher," Sajal said.

Hearing Rajib's racket Taher came to our yard and tortured him by kicking in the face, chest and back despite repeated plea from my mother."

Mentionable, Taher is a union level leader of the ruling AL, also an ameer of the same union unit of Islami Sashontantra Andolan (ISA).

Officer in Charge of Muradnagar Police Station AKM Manjur Alam said Taher has gone into hiding after the incident and drives are underway to arrest him.

Elderly woman burnt alive

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A 70-year-old woman was burnt to death as a fire broke out at her house in Senua Bazar area in Pirganj upazila of the district on Wednesday night.

The deceased was identified as Rojina Bewa, wife of late Sirajul Islam of the area.

Quoting deceased's family members, Officer in Charge of Pirganj Police Station Prodip Kumar Roy told this correspondent over phone that Rojina kept some burning coal in an earthen pot underneath her bed in a bid to keep her room warm.

At one stage, the mosquito net, set around her bed, caught fire and soon engulfed the entire room.

Rojina was burnt alive as she could not come out of the house due to her old age complications.

On information, fire fighters went to the spot and doused the fire after an hour of frantic effort.

Woman murdered by son

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

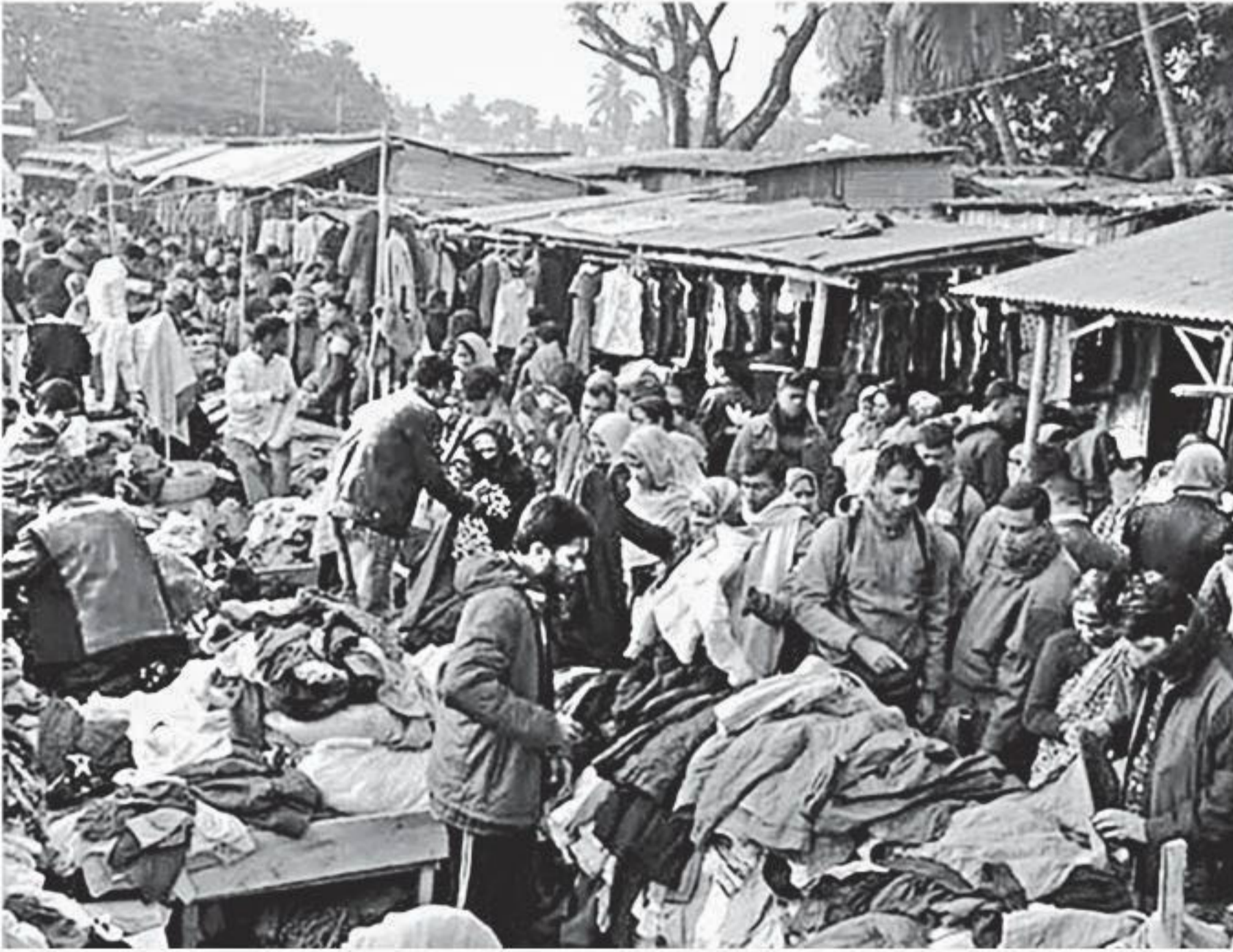
An elderly woman was killed by her son allegedly over a family feud in Sarishabari Upazila of the district on Thursday morning.

The deceased, Saleha Begum, 62, wife of late Hatem Ali, was a resident of Doail Purbopara village in the upazila.

Quoting the deceased's family members, Officer in Charge of Sarishabari Police Station Majedur Rahman said Saleha's younger son Masudur Rahman, 25, had an altercation with his mother over different family issues on Wednesday evening.

As a sequel, angry Masudur swooped on Saleha and slit her throat with a knife at her room around 7:00am, leaving her dead on the spot, the OC added.

Being informed by locals, police went to the spot and detained Masudur soon after the murder, the OC said, adding that the body sent to Jamalpur General Hospital for autopsy.



Low income group people throng roadside shops in Jashore to buy warm clothes. PHOTO: STAR

CHILLING WEATHER

Sale of warm clothes gets momentum in Jashore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Sale of second-hand warm clothes peaked at different roadside makeshift shops and Nixon Market in Jashore amid the biting cold sweeping over the district.

The temperature ranged between 8 to 9 degrees Celsius in Jashore in the last few days while it was 15 degrees yesterday, said an official of the Met Office in the district.

The cold wave may continue for a week, said the official.

A large number of cold-hit poor people have been suffering immensely due to shortage of warm clothes.

Especially children and elderly people are the worst sufferers of the chilling weather, said locals.

Many low-income group people from different areas in Jashore have thronged the makeshift shops to buy second-hand warm clothes like sweater, coat, trouser, jacket, muffler and old blanket.

The areas include Benapole, Navaron, Jhikorgacha, Keshabpur, Bagharpara,

Monirampur and Avainagar.

The roadside shops and the market remain busy from morning to night with the presence of customers of low-income group.

On the other hand, solvent people are gathering at different shopping malls to buy warm clothes, said townspeople.

Prices of the second-hand warm clothes at the makeshift shops and market are much higher compared to the last year's, said traders and buyers.

Mamun Mia, a trader of second-hand warm clothes in Nixon Market, said sale of winter clothes has increased in the last few days due to the chilling weather.

Demand for used warm clothes is much higher than the new ones, said Mamun.

Bokul Hossain, a day labourer of Natun Haat area in Jashore, said he has no ability to buy new warm clothes due to his poverty.

Sharsha Upazila Nirbahi Officer Pulok Kumar Mandal said they are distributing warm clothes among the cold-hit poor people.

Injured rare great bittern rescued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A Eurasian great bittern, locally known as Bagha Bogla, is currently undergoing treatment after it was rescued in a critical condition on Tuesday night in Sreemangal upazila.

Members of Bangladesh Wildlife Service Foundation (BWSF) rescued the injured rare bird from local fishermen in Atghar area of Pachaun haor under Mirzapur union.

Swapnil Deb Sajal, director of BWSF said "We rescued the bird from them on Tuesday night. It's now undergoing medical treatment as a fishing hook was found stuck in its neck."

BWSF rescued another injured



great bittern in 2010 and released it in Hail haor after it made recovery, he added. Bangladesh Bird Club founder

and renowned bird researcher Enam Ul Haque told this correspondent that great bittern, scientific name Botaurus stellaris, is a nocturnal bird.

In Bangladesh there are four species of the bird -- black, cinnamon, yellow and Eurasian bittern. The last one among the four is very rare, he added.

The secretive bird, seldom seen in the open, prefers to skulk in reed beds and thick vegetation near water bodies. Its presence is apparent in the spring, when the booming call of the male during the breeding season can be heard. It feeds on fish, small mammals, fledgling birds, amphibians, crustaceans and insects.



Many locals, including women and children, are seen collecting dead fish after a section of unscrupulous people killed different species of fish in Matamuhuri river in Bandarban's Lama upazila recently. PHOTO: COLLECTOR