



A makeshift bamboo bridge built by villagers over a damaged concrete bridge in Char Gaytapara of Kurigram's Roumari upazila.

PHOTO: S DILLIP ROY

Roumari staggers on bamboo bridges

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Thousands of residents in Kurigram's Roumari upazila have been building and maintaining around fifty bamboo bridges for years. But their repeated pleas for safer and permanent bridges over rivers and canals crisscrossing the upazila -- on the floodplain of the Brahmaputra river -- fell on deaf ears. When the nation has been enjoying benefits of the country's steady economic progress in recent years, the agricultural community in the upazila are facing difficulties in swift transport of their goods and produce on the risky bamboo bridges, said locals. Besides, the rickety bridges pose risk to young children, the elderly and patients who are unable to

There are 14 bamboo bridges in Dantbhanga union alone, but the union parishad (UP) has no fund for such work, local UP Chairman Shamsul Haque said.

cross the bridges on foot, they also said. Jamal Uddin, an elderly resident of Harindhara village in the upazila, said public representatives had only made promises, but the inhabitants of the village had to bear the construction and repair expenses of the bamboo bridge on Harindhara canal in the village over the last 15 years. The bamboo bridge, made long

time ago by Dharmapur village residents, need costly repairs every year and it gets hazardous during the wet season, but their repeated calls to the authorities for a concrete bridge so far produced no result, said village elder Nabir Hossain. Residents of Char Gaytapara had been pleading for a concrete bridge to replace the bamboo bridge they made 17 years ago, said villager Mansur Uddin. There are 14 bamboo bridges in Dantbhanga union alone, but the union parishad (UP) has no fund for such work, said UP Chairman Shamsul Haque. On multiple occasions, he requested the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) to replace those with concrete ones, but to no avail, the chairman added.

Contacted, Sub-assistant Engineer Mezbah-ul-Alam of LGED in Roumari said bridges between the length of 20 and 600 metres are built by the LGED while the smaller ones are done under the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief. He also said that the LGED, under its plan to construct 31 concrete bridges in the upazila, has already floated tender for six. Azizur Rahman, implementation officer for Roumari, said site inspection for smaller bridges had been conducted and they now await fund allocation from the higher authorities. All the bamboo bridges in Roumari will be replaced with concrete bridges soon, assured Roumari Upazila Parishad Chairman Sheikh Abdullah.

Pest attacks worry Aman farmers in C'nawabganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Pest attack on Aman paddy fields in the district poses threat to the farmers' hope for a good yield of Aman this season. Farmers are worried that they may not get the expected production this year with just two weeks remaining before the ripening of the crop. However, the officials of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) said that the situation is not so alarming and the targeted production will be achieved. In the district, a total of 52,840 hectares of land was brought under Aman cultivation this year with a target to produce 2 lakh and 5 thousand tonnes of rice. Farmers were awaiting a bumper yield as they could make good use of this year's favourable weather, planted saplings and used fertilizer in time. But at the time when the ear of paddy is expected to come out, standing paddy plants have started turning yellowish, farmers said. Following the colour change, the affected paddy leaves are drying up. A pest called Brown Plant Hopper (BPH), locally known as 'current poka', is causing damage to the crops as it sucks the fluid of the stems, making the plants yellowish, they said. They sprayed pesticides but could do very

Shafiqul Islam of Jhinaipukur village in Nachole upazila said that he planted Aman on his 17 bighas of land. The paddy fields are turning yellowish because of the attack of Brown Plant Hopper, he said. Wahed Ali of Laxmipur village of the same upazila said, he sprayed insecticides on the field but that did not help. The pest first attacks the branches causing them to dry up slowly. He planted Aman on his 15 bighas. He said that the weather was favourable but the pest attack came as a bolt from the blue and it dashed his hopes. "I spent TK 8,000 per bigha and was expecting to get around 22 maunds of paddy per bigha but now I will get only 12 to 15 maunds per bigha because of the pest attack," he also said. They said that almost all the farmers in the two villages have been affected by the pest attack. "Less rainfall this year is the reason behind the pest attack," said farmer Ruhul Amin of Dhangar village in Sadar upazila, adding that four of his ten bighas of Aman fields have borne the brunt of the pest attack. Mohammad Nazrul Islam, deputy director of DAE, Chapainawabganj said, "We have worked in the field to advise farmers on



Aman farmers in Chapainawabganj are worried as they apprehend the expected production will not be achieved this season due to the attacks of Brown Plant Hopper (BPH). The photo was taken from Jhinaipukur village in Nachole upazila. PHOTO: STAR

little to save their paddy fields, said the farmers. Visiting Jhinaipukur and Laxmipur villages of Nachole upazila and Amnura, Bhabuk and Dhinagar village of Sadar upazila in the district recently, it was seen that many paddy fields in the areas have been partially damaged by the pest attack.

how to save their crop from pests. We have also circulated leaflets among the farmers to create awareness." He added that only a few areas of Aman paddy fields have been affected by the pest but the production target will be fulfilled this year.

NEWS

The 'dance club' racket

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Headquarters in Mirpur that the traffickers used to take the victims to bordering areas in Chudanga, Debhat in Satkhira, Benapole in Jashore, Dohogram in Lalmonirhat, Bostabor in Joypurhat, Pashchim Shilua in Moulvibazar, and Jaliapara and Golabari in Teknaf.

One group used to pose as a dance club and the other as agents for jobs in the Middle East. Officers seized 53 passports, 20 mobile phones, liquor and various travel documents during the raids.

The arrested suspects who ran a dance club are, Kamrul Islam alias Jalil alias DJ Kamrul alias Dance Kamrul, Ripon Molla, Asaduzzaman Selim, and Naimur Rahman Shamim.

The ones who posed as recruitment agents are ringleader Nur Nabi Bhuiyan Rana and his cohorts Abul Bashar, Al Imran, Moniruzzaman, Shahid Shikder, Promod Chandra Das and Tokon.

The garment factory worker's father said his daughter was introduced to Kamrul two months ago in Badda.

"She told us that there would be a dance programme in Rangpur. In her last call, she blamed DJ Kamrul, saying he was about to traffic her to India," the grieving father said.

Rab officers said there were 15-20 members in the DJ Kamrul Dance Kingdom which is in Hatirjheel area of the capital. Kamrul, who works as a dancer in Bangla films, and the members have trafficked nearly 100 women to India since 2019.

The gang used to pick victims from different districts by promising them dance lessons that would get them jobs in India. But the girls were eventually sold for large sums of money to traffickers in India who also forged the travel documents, Commander Moin said.

25 hurt in pre-polls violence

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Halim, however, alleged that Sohrab, also the incumbent chairman of Shuapur Union Parishad, and his followers attacked them when they were carrying out an election campaign in Shuapur Bazar.

He claimed at least 15 of his father's supporters were injured in the attack.

Nirmal Kumar Das, officer-in-charge (operation) of Dhamrai Police Station, said police rushed to the spot upon receiving information and brought the situation under control.

He said they would investigate the incident.

Ayesha Akter, election officer of Dhamrai upazila, said she heard about the incident, but was yet to receive any written complaint.

The Daily Star could not reach Sohrab over the phone for comments as he did not receive calls.

In Kushtia's Mirpur, the clash took place in Ektarpur village of Baruipara union around 9:30pm on Friday. The incident left

One of the victims, a 19-year-old college student, present at the Rab-4 office said she met Kamrul on Facebook and visited his club in Hatirjheel because she was looking for dance lessons.

"Kamrul then told me, 'If you go abroad, you will get a better future'. I was hesitant at first, but he convinced me.

"He gave me the number of a man named Shaimim who lives in Chudanga and said that he will 'manage' everything to send me to India."

Shamim had a den, known in trafficking circles as a safe-house, near the border in Chudanga.

Officers rescued her last week from the border area in Chudanga when she was being trafficked.

DJ Kamrul came to Dhaka from his village home in Cumilla in 2001 to make a living.

After trying different things, he started DJ Kamrul Dance Kingdom in 2019. In April 2019, he was arrested by Badda police for trafficking a woman to India and was in jail for three months, the Rab commander added.

Ripon, another arrestee, used to maintain contacts with traffickers in India and send the women's photos to them. If the latter showed interest, the women got trafficked, Moin said.

Selim, the other arrestee, used to assist Kamrul in trafficking.

The gang posing as recruitment agents trafficked young women to Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait and Egypt. It worked for traffickers located in those countries.

The gang members got hold of the victims by promising them training. "This racket trafficked 30-35 women in the last one year. They also sold the victims."

at least 10 people injured.

Mirpur Police Station OC Golam Mostafa said the clash ensued between supporters of JSD chairman candidate Saidur Rahman and AL nominee Shafiqul Islam Montu during electioneering.

He said supporters of both the chairman hopefuls beat their rivals with wooden sticks. Several motorcycles were vandalised during the incident.

A case was filed with the police station accusing over 100 unidentified people over the incident, the OC added.

Saidur is the incumbent chairman of Baruipara Union Parishad.

AL candidate Shafiqul claimed 10 of his followers were injured in the incident.

JSD nominee Saidur alleged that AL men carried out the attack on his supporters and later filed the case.

He said his supporters could not conduct election campaigns after the incident.

The second phase of the UP elections is scheduled to be held in 848 unions on November 11.

Walking

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state doesn't give preference to a particular religion.

"But we have not practiced this thought. It was an utter failure of the state... Leading political parties should be blamed for this," he said.

Rana Dasgupta, general secretary of Hindu Buddhist Christian Oikkyo Parishad, blamed what he said was a culture of impunity for the recurrence of communal attacks.

"It will not take many years for Bangladesh to resemble the Taliban-led Afghanistan if the number of minorities gradually decreases and diversities disappear," he warned.

Columnist Abul Momen said, "We have formed a state, but have not been able to transform the society... We need a social movement to change this society. We also need a cultural awakening."

Ali Riaz, distinguished professor of political science at Illinois State University, said an intolerant environment has already been created in the society where dissent voices are suppressed.

Religion becomes an important factor when the dominant class and the ruling class face a moral crisis. Ziaur Rahman changed the constitution and Ershad made Islam the state religion when they did not have moral legitimacy, he said.

Bishop Bejoy Nicephorus D'Cruze, the Archbishop of Dhaka, said communalism rises in the absence of secularism.

People who are the majority become arrogant and it turns into a disease. This hurts the minorities.

Truth, goodness, peace, equity, doing good for others, and honouring others are some aspects of the universal side of all religions, he said.

Naripokkha Executive Member Rina Roy said people of the minority communities are living in fear of attacks.

Ahrar Ahmad, executive director of Gyantapas Abdur Razzaq Foundation, said, "We left Pakistan, a religion-based state, through the liberation war. It was clear. But communalism has become a complex issue."

I am sitting on the top

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On the same day, Indira Gandhi addressed a meeting organised by the Indian League in London. She said, "I feel that I am sitting on the top of a volcano and I honestly do not know when it is going to erupt. So the question is not of how restrained we are today, but of what will happen across the border."

"We think this is the responsibility of the international community to see that a way out is found. Obviously, the best way, the most humane way, is to have a political settlement and that political settlement can only be with the elected leader of the people of Bangladesh, and with the elected and accepted representatives of that country," she added.

A letter calling on India to recognise Bangladesh was handed to Indira Gandhi. The letter was from the Action Committee for the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh in the United Kingdom.

INSIDE BANGLADESH
The Sunday Times today published a report which they claimed they obtained from East Pakistan. They didn't disclose the name of the author of the report. The report informed that an estimated 800 Mukti Bahini operating in Dhaka launched a series of daylight bomb attacks on public buildings, forcing the Pakistan Army into tight defensive positions in the city. "On October 19," the report continued "a bomb explosion at 10:57am outside the Habib

FM must withdraw 'untrue'

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said that such undesirable, unacceptable and reprehensible remarks irked the Hindu community.

It will deliver a wrong message to the people that might harm the government both at home and abroad, they said.

Earlier, in the afternoon, Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council's Noakhali unit organised a press conference in the district and demanded the minister to revoke his message.

In the message, the Foreign Minister said that some "enthusiastic" media outlets and individuals were spreading cooked-up stories about deaths and rapes of members of religious minorities.

He said that six people died during the recent religious violence including four Muslims. "Two Hindus died -- one was a normal death while the other died by drowning."

Two killed as forces fire

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protesters carrying Sudanese flags chanted in Khartoum.

Despite bloodshed throughout the week, organisers on Saturday aimed to stage a "million-strong" march against the military's power grab, similar to mass protests that led to the toppling of autocrat

Bank building in Motijheel, the city's main business centre, killed five people, injured 13 others and wrecked seven cars, one taxi and two cycle-rickshaws. Next day, another bomb exploded on the fourth-floor of the State Bank building down the road. No one was killed but the explosion rocked the building, which also houses the local offices of the World Bank.

"For its part, the Pakistan Army has considerably strengthened security measures in the city, particularly in and around Dacca Airport. These are as much a precaution against guerrilla activities as against the threat of war with India," added the report.

ON THE WAR FRONT
In the Dhaka-Cumilla-Chittagong sector, freedom fighters today ambushed the Pak troops in Bijoypur area and killed 13 Pak soldiers and injured 20. In that operation one freedom fighter lost his life and another one was wounded.

The freedom fighters today captured 12 Razakars with 9 rifles in Shahgam area in the Rangpur-Dinajpur-Rajshahi sector.

NEW TAXES IN KERALA TO MEET BANGLADESH SITUATION
The chief minister of Kerala, Achutha Menon, said today that the State Government proposed to levy additional taxes to meet the situation precipitated by the Bangladesh problem. Shamsuddoza Sajen is a journalist and researcher. He can be contacted at sajen1986@gmail.com

The minister also said, "No one was raped and not a single Mandir was torched or destroyed. However, a couple of [idols of] deities or Goddesses were vandalised."

The spate of atrocities on the Hindus started on October 13 in Cumilla after word spread that the "Holy Quran was demeaned."

Subsequently, in phases, the violence spread to other districts including Chandpur, Noakhali, Kishoreganj, Chattogram, Feni and Rangpur.

Attacks were launched on at least 70 Hindu temples across the country, while at least six people have died as a result of the violence, according to Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council.

In continuation of the communal attacks, an idol of Hindu Goddess Kali was vandalised by unidentified criminals at a temple in Bogura's Dhunat upazila on early Saturday night.

Omar al-Bashir in 2019.

The growing demonstrations occurred throughout the Khartoum area including in Omdurman and Khartoum-North, while in the Red Sea city of Port Sudan protesters in their hundreds blocked a street, according to witnesses and AFP correspondents.

Nasa probe

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primarily of hydrogen and helium, with traces of other gases. Stripes and a few storms like the Great Red Spot dominate the colorful appearance of Jupiter, the fifth planet from the sun with a diameter of about 88,850 miles (143,000 km).

The Great Red Spot is a storm roughly 10,000 miles (16,000 km) wide churning in Jupiter's southern hemisphere, boasting crimson-colored clouds that spin counterclockwise at high speeds. It is one of the marvels of the solar system and has been in existence for centuries, but scientists until now have had little understanding of what lies below its surface.

"From a scientific point of view, it's puzzling how the storm can last so long and be so big," said Scott Bolton, principal investigator of the Juno mission at the Southwest Research Institute in Texas and lead author on one of two Jupiter studies published in the journal Science on Thursday.

"It is wide enough to swallow the Earth," added Marzia Parisi, a Juno scientist from Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California and lead author of the second study.

3 found

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bodies on information. The bodies were covered in blood.

The critically injured three-year-old child was recovered from the house and rushed to Tangail General Hospital for treatment, he added.

A knife, a shallow machine's handle, a sly range and an iron rod were recovered from the house, the ASP further said, adding that all the bodies had injury marks.

Sarkar Mohammad Kaiser, superintendent of Tangail police, said the law enforcement agencies collected evidence from the spot and that they already started investigating the case.