



Vast areas have gone into the Padma due to the untimely erosion by the river in Sara area of Pabna's Ishwardi upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

# Padma erosion devours fresh areas

Over 500 bighas of cropland in Pabna's Ishwardi upazila lost to the river in few weeks

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Sudden erosion by the Padma river has devoured fresh areas in Ishwardi upazila in the last few weeks, much to the worries of the local people.

Over 500 bighas of cropland have gone into the mighty river due to the untimely erosion by the river near Sara Ghat area in the upazila.

The fresh erosion that started in the middle of last month is also threatening the newly built river protection embankment, known as Ishwardi Town Protection Embankment, in Sara.

Locals alleged that rampant sand lifting from the river is the main reasons behind the untimely erosion.

Rashidul Islam, a resident of Sara Ghat area, said although there is not much pressure

of water in the river, the sudden erosion, which started in the middle of November, has devoured hundreds of bighas of cropland along the mighty river.

Over 500 bighas of cropland have already gone in Sara, he added.

Locals said due to frequent by the Padma there is no sign of the previous river terminal in Sara.

Several hundred homesteads, many schools and mosques have been washed away by the mighty river in the last couple of decades, they said.

Assistant Director at Pabna Water Development Board (WDB) Mohammad Mosharaf Hossain said they have constructed an eight-kilometre-long river protection dyke on the right bank of the river in Sara ghat area to protect Ishwardi town and Natore's Lalpur

upazila.

Construction of the embankment that cost Tk 226 crore started in 2013 and completed in 2017, he added.

"If the erosion continues, people living along the river bank will be affected more," housewife Sobura Begum said.

Many locals alleged that after completing the construction of the town protection work the authorities concerned did not dumped the sand bags properly which causing the sudden erosion.

Pabna WDB Executive Engineer Mohammad Rafikul Alam said there is no fault in the protection work.

Large shoals in the middle of the river is increasing the pressure of water in the river bank that causing the sudden erosion, he added.

# Mandarin cultivation ebbing in Moulvibazar

Farmers fear loss as the local variety tastes sour causing a dwindling demand

MINTU DESHWARA

Due to the availability of high-quality varieties, Malta cultivation is increasing in the Sylhet division. However, the farmers of Sylhet are losing interest in Mandarin orange (*Citrus reticulata*) cultivation and business.

Locally produced mandarin orange does not have any demand in the market as it is sour compared with the imported varieties of orange.

On the other hand, the citrus fruit imported from foreign countries has taken over the market as they are delicious.

Around 19 years ago, Murshed Mia and his wife Swapna Begum's fate changed when they started cultivation of Mandarin orange in Juri upazila of Moulvibazar.

Murshed's farming has turned out to be a success for him as well as for many others in Juri upazila.

"It tastes sour and the fruits are getting smaller in size. The traders are not interested to buy the fruits from us. As a result, I am fearing loss this year," he said.

Not only Murshed but also hundreds of farmers in Juri upazila are losing interest in farming Mandarin orange fearing loss.

Jasim Uddin, agriculture officer in Juri upazila, said, "On the dry soil of hilly areas, growing pineapple and other crops do not bring much profit and that's why farmers focused on Mandarin."

If Mandarin is cultivated properly on hilly lands, the government can lessen the import saving foreign currency and rely on the local production, he added.

Umed Mia, a fruit trader who came from Bhairab, said that he collects Mandarin from different hilly orchards in Juri upazila but this year the quality of the fruit is not good as it does not taste as good as mandarins imported from abroad.

According to agriculture officials, the upazila has 812 mandarin orchards across the six unions, occupying about 93 hectares of hilly areas.

Kazi Lutful Bari, deputy director of the Department of Agricultural Extension in Moulvibazar, said it may be mentioned that mandarin is cultivated in 12 upazilas of Sylhet division. Mandarin has been cultivated in 365 hectares of land in 12 upazilas this season. Beanibazar, Jaintapur, Gowainghat and Companiganj upazilas of Sylhet are some of them. On the other hand, Barlekha, Kulaura, Juri, Srimangal, Kamalganj and Sadar upazilas of Moulvibazar district and Chunarughat upazila of Habiganj have got the best yield of mandarin.

MHM Borhanuddin Bhuiyan, scientific officer of the citrus research centre in Jaintapur, said mandarin has been cultivated in the soil for a long time. That is one of the reasons behind the low yield of the fruits as cultivating the fruit on the same soil lowers production. Because the soil has a deficit of nutrients causing the fruits taste sour to eat and become smaller in size.

If the soil is properly treated with a sufficient amount of manure, the yield will be good again, he added.

He said that the new variety of mandarin was introduced in 2017. "That is the most updated variety but we have not yet been able to distribute it properly to the field level," he added.



PHOTO: STAR

Due to cultivating Mandarin orange on the same field time and again, the fruits are becoming smaller and sourer. The photo was taken from Lalchhara area in Juri upazila of Moulvibazar recently.

Murshed, a small trader from Lalchhara village under Juri upazila, decided to plant the mandarin orange saplings on his land to grow the fruits after learning that chemically treated fruits pose threats to human health.

With that in mind, he planted Mandarin orange saplings. Now all the Mandarin trees are bearing fruits.

"I have already sold 12 to 13 thousand Mandarin oranges for Tk 1,30,000 to the wholesalers," Murshed said.

He planted 800 saplings of "Mandarin Bari" variety on his five acres of land investing Tk 50,000. Now, he is planning to plant 300 more saplings on additional three acres of land.

## 2nd highest infections among kids

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Dr Michelle Groome, also from the NICD, said more research would be done to investigate the reasons behind this phenomenon.

"It is still very early on in the wave. At this stage, it has just started in the younger age groups and we will know more (by) monitoring this age group in the coming weeks."

Dr Ntsakisi Maluleke, an official of the health department in South Africa's Gauteng province, however, told Reuters in an interview: "We are comforted by clinicians' reports that the children have mild disease."

Scientists were investigating what was driving the increased admissions in younger ages and were hoping to provide more clarity in the coming two weeks, she said yesterday.

Dutch health authorities said yesterday the final tally of passengers on two flights from South Africa last week who had tested positive for the Omicron coronavirus variant was 18.

The Netherlands' Institute for Health (RIVM) added in a statement that its investigation on

passengers on the two flights has now been wrapped up, reports Reuters.

Outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel yesterday urged Germans to get vaccinated against Covid-19 to help turn the tide on a fourth wave of cases that she said had become "dramatic" in parts of the country.

"We are in a very serious situation. In some parts of the country you can only describe it as dramatic: overfilled intensive care units, severely ill people who have to be flown across Germany to get the care they need," she said.

South Korea reported a record daily 5,352 new Covid-19 infections and 70 deaths, while a nationwide total of nine cases of the Omicron variant have been confirmed, the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) said yesterday.

**'ULTIMATE EVIDENCE'**  
The head of the Red Cross said on Friday that the emergence of the Omicron variant is the "ultimate evidence" of the danger of unequal vaccination rates around the world.

## Suhrawardy's 58th

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separate messages yesterday paid rich tributes to the memory of Suhrawardy on the occasion of his death anniversary.

Terming Suhrawardy "the champion of democracy", the president and the PM prayed for eternal peace of his departed soul.

To mark the day, different political and socio-cultural organisations have drawn up various programmes including placing wreaths at the grave of the great leader in the morning, holding discussions, offering Quran Khawani and arranging milad and doa mahfil in the capital and elsewhere in the country.

The Awami League will pay tributes to the late leader by placing wreaths at his grave

adjacent to the High Court at 9:00am.

Suhrawardy was born in a respected Muslim family at Medinipur of West Bengal, India on September 8, 1892.

In a statement yesterday, AL General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader paid deep homage to the memory of Suhrawardy.

The extraordinary strength, perseverance and qualities of his leadership had guided the nation on the right path, Quader said.

He called upon the leaders and activists of the AL and its affiliated bodies to observe Suhrawardy's death anniversary with due dignity and maintaining health safety rules.

## Russia vetoes troop-pullback

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the situation" in the Indian subcontinent.

**INDIRA'S LETTER TO NIXON**

In a letter, dated December 5, 1971, Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi urged US president Nixon to "persuade Pakistan to desist forthwith from the policy of wanton aggression and military adventurism which it has unfortunately embarked upon". She requested Nixon to exercise his "undoubted influence" with the government of Pakistan to "deal immediately with the genesis of the problem of East Bengal which has caused so much trial and tribulations to the people not only of Pakistan but of the entire subcontinent".

**ON THE WAR FRONT**

The important town of Akhaura was captured today by Mitro Bahini. An Indian defence ministry spokesman said that the Pakistani defences were stormed at 6:30am and all resistance was knocked out with one blow. Heavy fighting continued in Cumilla and Laksham. The enemy forces sneaked out of Feni and freedom fighters immediately entered the town. The capture of Feni severed all overland

connections between Chattogram and the rest of Bangladesh.

The advancing columns of Mitro Bahini made a further thrust down towards Jashore after capturing the railway station at Kotchandpur. They cut through the Pakistani defence position at Khanpur in Dinajpur district and made a forward thrust towards the headquarters town Dinajpur.

In Sylhet area, Munshinagar fell to the hands of Mitro Bahini.

The sky belonged to the Indian Air Force (IAF) today. They had severely damaged all the airfields and runways in East Pakistan. Pak forces could not get an opportunity to repair any runway as the IAF kept up relentless pressure.

US secretary of state William P Rogers complained today to Lakshmi Kant Jha, the Indian ambassador to the United States, that an Indian air attack had been made on one United States merchant vessel and that an Indian naval vessel had intercepted another within the last 36 hours.

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## Babar, Azhar put

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continued post-tea due to insufficient light.

Players of both sides had walked out to the field after tea but umpires deemed the light to be insufficient when Bangladesh skipper Mominul Haque wanted to resume the final session of the day with a pacer. According to the officials, only spinners were allowed to continue bowling in such conditions.

Earlier, Pakistan opener Abid Ali (39 off 81) and Abdullah Shafique (25 off 50) had provided the visitors with a solid start after electing to bat. However, left-arm spinner Taijul Islam, who had troubled the Pakistani batters throughout by getting significant purchase off the pitch, removed both openers to help the Tigers finish on a high before lunch.

But the second session belonged to Pakistan entirely as Babar notched his 19th Test fifty and Azhar, despite a few close calls, showed grit and determination to carry on. Both the batters saw Pakistan amass 83 runs in the 26 overs that were bowled in the second session.

If the weather and light permit, the game will begin at 9:30am today, 30 minutes earlier than the scheduled time, to make up for the time lost yesterday. A total of 98 overs are scheduled to be bowled today.

## Shringla due on Dec 7

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also have the scope to raise unsettled issues," a foreign ministry official told this correspondent yesterday, confirming Shringla's visit.

Officials in Dhaka and Delhi said this year is important for both countries, who will also celebrate 50 years of diplomatic relationship.

India actively supported Bangladesh during the Liberation War and recognised the country on December 6 in 1971. Marking the occasion, the two nations are also going to celebrate the day in 18 other countries.

While celebrating 50 years of their relationship, Bangladesh and India want to take the friendship to a new height by settling unresolved issues, including common river management, border management and finding new areas of cooperation in trade, connectivity, climate change and people-to-people contacts.

A diplomatic source in Delhi said Harsh Vardhan Shringla may also carry the invitation letter, inviting Hasina to the Republic Day of India on January 26.

## AK Azad Noab president

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Hossain, editor of Ittefaq, MA Malek, editor of Dainik Azadi, Mozammel Hoque, editor of Karotoa, M Shamsur Rahman, editor and publisher of The Independent, Tarik Sujat, managing director at Mediascene Ltd that publishes daily Bhorer Kagoj, Dewan Hanif Mahmud, editor and publisher of Bonik Barta, and Altamash Kabir, editor and publisher of Sangbad.

Senior journalist Reazuddin Ahmed, chief of the election board formed by Noab to form the committee, announced the names of the new committee members during Noab's annual general meeting yesterday.

AMM Bahauddin, editor and publisher of Inqilab, and Shah Husain Imam, editor of the Financial Express, were the two other members of the three-member election board.

## Won't accept 'red lines'

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"Since the beginning of this administration we have demonstrated that the United States and our allies are willing to use a number of tools to address harmful Russian actions," a senior US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said when asked about the plan Biden is developing. "We will not hesitate from making use of those and other tools in the future."

White House press secretary Jen Psaki told a briefing that security assistance for Ukraine is under consideration.

**BIDEN-PUTIN CALL**

Ukrainian tensions set the backdrop for the first call in months between the US president and his Russian counterpart as soon as next week. Officials have been negotiating terms of the call after Putin and Biden last spoke in July.

The Kremlin said on Friday that Russia and the United States had a tentative date and time for the video summit in the coming days, but that Moscow was waiting for Washington to finalise it. The White House said only that it is "engaged" in talks for a possible call.

Biden imposed sanctions on Russia in April and has left open the possibility

of more. But Washington hopes that continued direct engagement will lower the temperature at a time when relations are at their lowest level since the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union.

"We want open lines of communication with the Russians," said one senior State Department official, speaking on condition of anonymity. "Especially in times of tension, it's important that we have these channels of dialogue."

A glimpse into what a Biden-Putin call might look like was offered by a meeting among lower level officials on Thursday.

In Stockholm on Thursday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken warned Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov that there would be "severe costs" if Moscow escalates conflict, a message Biden appears prepared to reiterate.

Blinken told the Reuters Next conference on Friday that Biden would tell Putin about the country's "determination, not as a threat, but simply as a fact, to stand up resolutely against any reckless or aggressive actions that Russia may pursue and also to defend the territorial integrity, the sovereignty, the independence of Ukraine."

## 9 Kuet students suspended

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announced work abstention seeking a fair investigation into the death.

The next day, the university was declared closed till December 13.

The nine suspended students are: Sadman Nahyan Sejan and Riyaz Khan Niloy of computer science and engineering department, Sadman Saqib and ASM Ragib Ahsan Munna of leather engineering department, Tahmidul Huq Ishraq and Mahmudul Hasan of civil engineering department, Md Kamruzzaman and Faisal Ahmed Rifat of mechanical engineering department, and Naimur Rahman Antu of materials science and engineering department.

Sajen is the general secretary of Kuet Chhatra League while the others are

activists of the unit, said campus and BCL sources.

Sejan dismissed the allegations of torture. He claimed that they had gone to Prof Hossain's office to "discuss events" for Victory Day celebrations.

The syndicate meeting on Friday also formed a five-member committee to look into Prof Selim's death.

The committee was asked to submit its probe report within 10 days. Mohiuddin Ahmed, professor of electrical and electronic engineering department, was made its chief.

Another three-member inquiry committee was formed on Tuesday night.

No case has been filed in connection with the teacher's death.

## Scientists find strange

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end of their tails, said the researchers, including Alexander Vargas from the Universidad de Chile.

In the research, scientists assessed well preserved and mostly complete fossils pertaining to the late Cretaceous period - around 71.7 million to 74.9 million years ago - which were unearthed in the Magallanes province in Patagonia, Chile's southernmost region.

The findings provide fresh insights into the origin and early evolution of armoured dinosaurs such as stegosaurus that had tail spikes and ankylosaurus whose tails had heavy clubs at the end.

The newly discovered species had distinctive skull features similar to those seen in other ankylosaurus. The rest of its

skeleton, however, was largely primitive, with some properties resembling stegosaurus, according to the scientists.

"Stegosaurus shows ankylosaurian cranial characters, but a largely ancestral postcranial skeleton, with some stegosaurus-like characters," they wrote in the study.

The research particularly highlighted the dinosaur's large tail weapon composed of seven pairs of flattened, bony deposits fused together in a structure that resembled a frond across the outer part of its tail.

"Stegosaurus elengassen gen. et sp. nov. evolved a large tail weapon unlike any dinosaur: a flat, frond-like structure formed by seven pairs of laterally projecting osteoderms encasing the distal [outer] half of the tail," the study noted.