



After parts of the under-construction embankment collapsed at several points in Chattogram's Banshkhali, thousands of farmers in the upazila are fearing that the Bay of Bengal and Sangu River will erode their homesteads. Locals alleged that corruption and use of substandard materials are to blame for this situation. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR



Elocutionist Partha Ghosh passes away

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Eminent Bangla elocutionist Partha Ghosh, known most for his memorable rendition of Rabindranath Tagore's "Karna Kunti Sangbad," died of a cardiac arrest at a hospital in Kolkata yesterday.

The 83-year-old is survived by his son. His wife and fellow elocutionist Gouri Ghosh died on August 26 last year.

Ghosh was awarded the "Friends of Liberation War Honour" for his contribution to the 1971 Liberation War.

He underwent throat surgery at a private hospital in Howrah. He complained of chest pain and uneasiness on

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BANSHKHALI IN CHATTOGRAM

Under-construction dyke already falling to pieces

SIFAYET ULLAH, Ctg

Different parts of the under-construction embankment in Chattogram's Banshkhali have collapsed. Locals allege that use of substandard materials and irregularities are to blame.

Locals said the whole 14-kilometre-long dyke in the coastal area could collapse at any moment, resulting in the upazila being flooded with seawater of the Bay of Bengal.

Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) has been conducting works for the project, which has a budget of Tk 293 crore, since 2016.

BWDB said due to the heavy flow of water, a part of the dyke collapsed, but locals pointed to substandard construction materials as the reason.

Monirul Islam, a local, said poor quality of construction led to the collapse.

He is worried about the after-effects in monsoon season and possible environmental damage in the area.

During a recent visit, this correspondent spotted at least seven to eight places where large cracks developed and concrete blocks either came loose or fell into the water.

Thousands of farmers in the upazila are fearing that the Bay of Bengal and Sangu River will erode their homesteads, after parts of the embankment collapsed at

several points.

If immediate steps are not taken to save the embankment, a large part of Banshkhali will be at risk of flooding due to tidal surges, said Abu Bakkar Babul, a local.

"Pieces of land on the bank of Sangu

The country's embankments are not sustainable for various reasons, including use of low-quality raw materials and design defects. Besides, dykes collapse due to lack of supervision after construction.

MD SAMIUN BASIR
Assistant Prof of Department of Water Resources Engineering at CU

River are very fertile, as water hyacinths and other water plants produce natural fertiliser, which help us grow Boro paddy in great amounts," farmer Amzad Hossen of Khankhanabad union told The Daily Star.

"We get very frustrated when we see the

water level rising just before Boro harvest every year," he said.

"Sometimes, we are even compelled to harvest immature paddy," he further said.

Meanwhile, experts said errors in design or use of substandard materials can lead to breach of embankments.

MD Samiun Basir, assistant professor of Department of Water Resources Engineering at Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology, told The Daily Star that the country's embankments are not sustainable for various reasons, including use of low quality raw materials and design defects.

Besides, dykes collapse due to lack of supervision after construction, Samiun Basir added.

Chattogram Water Development Board Executive Engineer Nahiduzzaman Khan acknowledged that a part of the dyke collapsed, but denied allegations of corruption and use of low-quality materials.

He said they have taken initiatives to investigate the collapse.

On May 19, 2015, the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecnc) passed the project for the dyke.

But the project's time-frame and cost have already been revised several times. The latest deadline is June this year.

Once a dumping ground, now a recreational spot



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The once useless canal in the Patuakhali town's B-type area has now turned into a prominent recreation spot. It's in transition of becoming a beautiful lake. These days, the walkway along the banks decorated with colourful lanterns attract many visitors every afternoon.

According to Patuakhali municipality sources, the canal was filled and turned into a garbage dump, turning it into a mosquito breeding ground. It has been re-excavated and turned into a soothing lake under the Municipality Infrastructure Development Project of 2020-21 fiscal years.

At present, the beautification work is ongoing. There will be hanging bridges, pedal boats and paved benches on both sides of the lake.

Patuakhali Mayor Mohiuddin Ahmed said 70 percent of the renovation work of the 2km lake

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SUNDARBAN'S KARAMJAL

33 rare 'Batagur Baska' turtles hatched



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Thirty-three babies of Batagur Baska, a critically endangered riverine turtle species, were born yesterday at Karamjal Wildlife Breeding Centre in the Sundarbans in Bagerhat.

Of the total 34 eggs which were laid by one Batagur Baska on the edge of a pond at the wildlife sanctuary on March, 33 hatched, said Azad Kabir, officer-in-charge of the centre.

With this, a total of 264 offspring of endangered turtles were hatched at the centre. At present, it has a total of 387 turtles of different ages.

"The babies started hatching from dawn and continued till 9:00am. They were picked up from the sand beach and placed in a pan of the centre. After rearing in the pan, they will be released in a pond in the centre," Azad Kabir said.

In 2000, wildlife researchers believed that the Batagur Baska no longer existed. Later, in 2008,

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'Officials come and go, bridge remains incomplete'



S DILIP ROY, Lalmoinirhat

People of Mogholhat union in Lalmoinirhat Sadar upazila have been aggrieved over the authority's failure to complete the bridge over the Ratnai river for a long time.

If the construction work is incomplete, they have to suffer in the coming monsoon, they said.

Locals say the circumstance doesn't change due to the negligence of the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) authorities and contractor.

Quader Ali, a 60-year-old farmer from Megharam village, said, "The LGED engineer comes, assures us that the bridge will be completed this month, then the next, but even after years went by, the bridge remains incomplete," he said.

Monindra Nath Roy (65), a farmer from Durakuti village, echoed the same. "We've been hearing that the bridge would be completed soon for the last six and a half years but it is still

under construction."

Mogholhat UP Chairman Habibur Rahman told The Daily Star that the work is now getting delayed to complete the road connecting the bridge.

Although three LGED executive engineers have been transferred, the bridge has not yet been made operational, he said.

Contacted, Manjur Quader Elahi, executive engineer of Lalmoinirhat LGED, said construction of the 120-metre-long and eight-metre-wide bridge began in September 2016 at a cost of Tk 6.20 crore. A contract was signed to complete the bridge by May 2018.

The contractor has so far missed 10 deadlines, he informed.

"Construction of the bridge's main infrastructure was completed in November 2021," he said.

"We are trying to construct a connecting road to make the bridge work complete before monsoon," he said.

Tourists just can't get enough of Kuakata

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Even after days since Eid celebrations, Kuakata is still crowded with tourists at present. Since Eid day morning, tourists have been thronging the Lemur forest, Gangamati Char, Char Bijoy, Bauli forest, Tengragiri, Fatra forest, estuary of three rivers, Sreemangal and Buddhist temple, Misripara Rakhine village, Kuakata Rakhine women market, dry fish market, and eco-park.

Tourists were seen on the beach, spending their afternoons idly with their loved ones. Some were taking photos while others took selfies to keep as a memento.

Children were playing around on the beach with their parents watching them closely.

With such an upsurge in tourist activity, smiles have returned to businesspersons' faces after the pandemic.

Most of the hotels, motels, cottages, markets and restaurants had been decorated with lights before Eid to attract visitors.

Kawsar Hossain, who sells snacks such as fuchka-chatpoti, said, "Our businesses suffered for being closed the past two years. There were no tourists during Ramadan as well. But now sales have peaked due to Eid."

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