



PHOTOS: COLLECTED

‘THIS IS A BLESSING TO US ALL’

Stars express their joy and hope for the Padma Bridge

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Yesterday, the dream of a nation was finally fulfilled. After many years of anticipation, the Padma Bridge has finally been opened to the public.

Alongside everyone, celebrities have also expressed their own thoughts and opinions on the opening of this wonderful bridge. All of the celebrities expressed their joy at the Padma Bridge's inauguration, and gave credit to the Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for accomplishing the dream of a nation.

The Padma Bridge is a blessing to us all: Jaya Ahsan

If I had to express my feelings in one word, it would be pride. In the same manner that we should pride ourselves as Bengalis, we should also be proud of the Padma Bridge. Because of this bridge, the world will get to know Bangladesh better.

The Padma is the queen of rivers in Bangladesh. I have many memories that are intertwined with the Padma River. My grandfather's house was in Gopalganj, so whenever I visited him, I would have to cross the Padma River. There are many memories from my childhood that are centred around the Padma River. I distinctly remember its

beautiful waves, which I would see on my way to Gopalganj, and then on the way back to Dhaka. I had not seen the sea as a child, so I would think that this river was the sea.

The Padma Bridge will not only be a blessing on the lives of people from the Southern districts of the country, rather it will be a blessing on all our lives.



Fahmida Nabi reminisces childhood memories of crossing the Padma River

My grandfather was settled in Khulna's Phultola, and *abba* used to take us there once or twice a year, to visit them. We used to go there by crossing the Padma River, using the ferry. Those memories are still so fresh to me. On the ferry, we used to have lots of fun, we would have lunch with rice and hilsha, which I will always remember fondly.

Little did we know, that a bridge would ever be built on this river. As a Bangladeshi,

I feel extremely proud to have witnessed the creation of this bridge. I have voiced a song about the Padma Bridge, and have also performed on BTB's live programme during the inauguration ceremony.

Padma Bridge gives me hope: Rozina

People of 19 districts, who live on the other side of the river, have always dreamt of having easy access to cross this river. There were many hurdles before the construction of this bridge, such as traffic, extreme weather conditions, lack of transport facilities, etc. Now that the bridge is here, it will be a lot easier to travel.

Omar Sani recounts his travels across the Padma

Due to this bridge, the people of Barisal and Khulna will be benefited greatly. In the past, fish from Bhola would rot on its way to Dhaka. Now, it will no longer be the case. I am from the Barisal region, and in the past, I've had to cross the Padma River to get home. At times, I would have to spend hours upon hours at the docks. Now, this scenario will not happen anymore.

A tale of pride and glory: Riaz

The Padma Bridge was built using our country's money. What can be a greater tale of pride and glory than this? I have many memories of crossing the Padma River. Whenever I crossed the river, I would put my hand in the water, out of my childlike curiosity. It was since my childhood, that I have a deep love for the Padma River.

IPDC ‘Amader Gaan’ season 4 kicks off

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

IPDC Amader Gaan's season 4 was launched yesterday with "Padmar Dheu Re", a well-known song by Kazi Nazrul Islam through the voice of emerging singer Jakir Hossain, popularly known as Bibagi Limon.

Apurba and Keya Payel pair up for ‘Aponjon’

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK



Popular on-screen pair, Ziaul Faruk Apurba and Keya Payel will be seen together in the upcoming Eid drama "Aponjon." The drama revolves around the death of an expatriate and how his untimely demise affects his dear ones.

Apurba will be playing the role of an expatriate, Kamrul, while Keya Payel dons the role of his lover. The drama will be available on CMV's YouTube channel this Eid.

Shah Rukh Khan drops first look of ‘PATHAAN’

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK



Bollywood superstar, Shah Rukh Khan shared the first look for his character in the upcoming film "Pathaan" through his social media account.

SRK is seen sporting a long hairdo while holding a gun in his hand. There are traces of blood all over his face. The video ends with SRK declaring that everyone will get to meet the "Pathaan" soon.

COUNTRYWIDE

Payra erosion threatens Barguna villages

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Thousands of villagers in Barguna's Taltali and Amtali upazilas are worried about losing their belongings to continuous erosion of Payra river. The erosion has taken a serious turn recently posing threats to six villages in the upazilas.

The affected villages are Tetulbaria, Sobahanpara, Ankujanpara and Jayalbhangra in Taltali upazila and Baliaatali and Baithakata in Amtali upazila.

According to the locals, the flood control dyke at Tetulbaria village in Taltali upazila has collapsed recently exacerbating the flood situation.

The inhabitants of Sobahanpara, Ankujanpara and Jayalbhangra villages are spending sleepless nights in fear of erosion.

Fear of losing all their belongings has gripped around 10,000 people of these villages.

Locals said that after the devastating cyclone Sidr in 2007, the dyke has not been repaired much. At least 3,000 people of these areas have been rendered homeless and they have been relocated to Barguna, Barishal and Dhaka.

Locals said that after the devastating cyclone Sidr in 2007, the dyke has not been repaired much. At least 3,000 people of these areas have been rendered homeless and they have been relocated to Barguna, Barishal and Dhaka.

Emadul, a victim of river erosion of Tetulbaria village, said that he has lost three bighas of land to an eroding Payra. He has also lost his house to erosion.

Fisherman Hamed Ali said, "All of my lands except my dwelling house have been washed away by the river."

"Where will I stand with my family if I lose the shelter?," he questioned.

On the other hand, about 500 metre stretch of the flood control dyke at Baliaatali village in Amtali upazila has been damaged due to erosion of Payra.

Although a ring dam was built here by Water Development Board (WDB) last year, it is now under threat of erosion, villagers said.

Barguna Water Development Board Executive Engineer Nurul Islam said necessary steps will be taken to curb erosion at Jayal Bhangra point in Taltali and Tetulbaria village. Proposals have been sent to the higher authorities to prevent further erosion in Baithakata and Baliaatali villages.

Time to rebuild

FROM PAGE 14

"It has been raining non-stop [until yesterday] and our bedding is drenched. It gets extremely cold at night when the winds blow," said Khanoma.

A short boat ride away lay the ruins of Fakhruddin's house.

"We had escaped to the madrasa when the flood waters came. When we came back and saw what happened to the house, my wife fell to the floor crying. Our home, our bed, everything was destroyed or washed away."

The fisherman estimated that it would take him at least a year to give his family even a little comfort.

Meanwhile, the ruins of Chandoin's house float above the floodwaters providing a strip of dry platform for the haor's ducks to roost on.

Far away from the haor, Daulatpur's low-lying Shattish village is dreadfully water-logged. With no way out, the flood waters have comfortably settled in, turning the whole village into a fetid swamp.

Battered by the floods, the tin walls of fisherman Monjur Ali's home now continues to rust in the stinking waters.

Ali, who catches small fishes from canals and streams, has a slim chance of being able to rebuild his home.

Visiting Sherpur area in Moulvibazar's Sadar upazila yesterday, a reporter of this newspaper saw 25 makeshift shelters made of plastic sheets line the side of the road in Hamorbura village.

Each shelter is the size of a bathroom and houses up to two families. However, as it began raining in Sylhet a few days after the flood, they found little respite there as the shelters offer

no protection from rain.

Khushban Begum's shelter was washed away and now the ruins stew in tepid water.

"Every time it rains, everything gets drenched. We can only save our heads," she said.

After the flash flood hit the Sylhet division on June 15, 4.04 lakh people took shelter at 1,474 shelter centres in four districts by June 21.

After the flood situation started improving, people started returning to their houses, only to find them lying in ruins.

According to Sylhet district administrations, 22,150 houses were destroyed in Sylhet district alone till Friday, while data from three other districts are still being collected.

Tahmilur Rahman, upazila nirbahi officer in Sylhet's Gowainghat, said, "Besides the government, people from all walks extended their support with food relief for the flood-affected people. But as the situation improves, these people now need assistance to rebuild their houses."

"We are collecting data on the damages so that the government as well as the non-government organisations can help those in need."

Md Mosharraf Hossain, divisional commissioner of Sylhet, said, "The government helps them [people whose houses are damaged] in two ways — supporting with corrugated tin and cash for those whose houses are completely damaged, and cash for those whose houses are still standing but need repair."

"Once we have the list [of those who need help in rebuilding and repairing], being prepared by the local administration, we will be sending it to the ministry

[of disaster management and relief]."

IMPROVING BUT SLOWLY

The flood situation in the division is stalled as all major rivers are still flowing above the danger level.

However, as rainfall started again in many areas of the division, many flood-affected people remain in fear.

According to the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC), the water level of the Surma was still flowing 81cm above the danger level at the Kanaighat upazila point in Sylhet yesterday at 3:00pm, while the river is right at the danger level at the Sylhet city point.

The Kushiara at the same time was flowing 177cm above the danger level at Amolshid point in Sylhet's Zakiganj upazila and 64m above at Sheola point in Beanibazar upazila.

The Puratan Surma was also flowing 36cm above the danger level in the district's Derai upazila.

However, the FFWC report, circulated by its Executive Engineer Arifuzzaman Bhuiyan, stated that the flood situation in the division will improve in the next 24 hours till this morning.

DEATH TOLL NOW 82

Floods claimed nine more lives in different parts of the country in the 24 hours till yesterday morning, raising the fatalities to 82, reports UNB.

Five of them died in Mymensingh division and four in Sylhet division, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

Of them, seven died by drowning and one from a snake bite.

The number of deaths was recorded from May 17 to June 25.

Many in north

FROM PAGE 14

and the others have shifted to their relatives' homes.

The flood situation may improve in the low-lying areas of northern districts — Kurigram, Gaibandha, Bogura and Sirajganj — within the next 24 hours, said a forecast of Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre yesterday.

In Kurigram, the Brahmaputra devoured around 500 houses of 85 families on Porar Char, a remote island in Sadar upazila, said locals.

They are now residing on boats.

"I had a large home and around 15 bighas of farmland. But everything has gone into the river," said Mansur Ali, 76, imam of the Porar Char mosque.

Another victim, Jalal Uddin, 65, of the same area, said, "I saw my house, arable land, fences around the house, furniture and everything going into the Brahmaputra."

Over 700 houses have so far been eroded by the Jamuna in Chowhali and Shahzadpur upazilas of Sirajganj.

"We were well off even two weeks ago. We have house and farmland. But everything has been devoured. Now we have taken shelter in a relative's house," said Ambia Khatun, of Hatpachil village in Shahzadpur upazila.

Locals demanded government measures to stop erosion.

"After our house was destroyed, we took shelter in a relative's house that was also damaged by the river a few days later," said Azizul Haque, of Bamangram village.

In Bogura, erosion by the Jamuna has rendered over 700 families homeless in Sariakandi upazila in the last 15 days.

[Our correspondents in Lalmonirhat, Pabna and Bogura contributed to this report.]



Around 10,000 inhabitants of six Barguna villages have been spending sleepless nights as erosion of Payra has taken a serious turn. The photo was taken from Tetulbaria village in Taltali upazila.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN