

Fraudster steals from family of martyred student CID arrests one

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Nuruzzaman's son, Sifat Ullah, was killed during the anti-discrimination student movement on August 5 in Gazipur's Mauna. Recently, the family became victims of fraud, losing over Tk 1.5 lakh.

Nuruzzaman, a madrasa teacher from Pakundia in Kishoreganj, had received around Tk 3 lakh as donations from two political parties.

This financial support helped him treat his wife and daughter, who fell ill after Sifat's death, with the remaining amount deposited with his elder brother.

On October 6, while visiting a local bazar, Nuruzzaman received a phone call from a man claiming to be from the finance ministry. The caller said the government had decided to donate Tk 5 lakh to each martyr's family and asked for his bank details and a picture of his ATM card.

Since Nuruzzaman did not have a bank account, he passed the call to his elder brother, Aminul Haque, who, in good faith, provided his account details and ATM card information.

The family trusted the caller claiming to be a government representative because the display picture on his WhatsApp number showed the logo of the finance ministry. The fraudster then called again,

A CID press release said during interrogation, Bepari admitted that their gang, consisting of 14-15 members, had been extorting money through fraud for a long time.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Paddy fields buried under sand

Post-flood silt deposits render Feni croplands unfit for cultivation

MOSTAFA SHABUI, back from Feni

Thousands of farmers across Feni were devastated by the recent flood between August 16-26 following heavy rains and onrush of upstream water from Tripura.

Even though the floodwaters receded in a few days, its aftermath is likely to leave a prolonged impact on the district's agriculture as a deep layer of sand and silt got deposited across vast stretches of croplands, a problem never witnessed by the farmers there before.

Visiting different areas under Parshuram upazila of the district recently, this correspondent saw around 1,500 bighas of Aman paddy fields buried under several feet of sand and silt.

According to the upazila agriculture office, sand and silt got deposited across more than 4,000 hectares of agricultural lands with different crops in

Parshuram, as well as numerous ponds and waterbodies, hundreds of fish farms, roads and houses.

"My 10 bighas of cropland went under five feet deep layer of sand deposited by floodwaters after the Muhuri river embankment broke," said Solaiman Ali, 55, of Aloka village in the upazila.

According to Water Development Board in Feni, three kilometres of total 122km embankments on Muhuri, Kohua, and Silonia rivers in Fulgazi and Parshuram upazilas got damaged in 95 places, which resulted in the flood.

Farmers and officials opined that it will not be possible to cultivate paddy on the affected lands for three to five years.

"We used to cultivate Boro, Aus and Aman paddy on these lands, which are all now buried under sand. We are worried how we will make a living if we cannot cultivate the lands due to sand,"

said Nazmul Hossain, 50, a farmer of Niz Kalikapur village in the upazila.

"We do not know how to remove this sand from the crop fields. On the other hand, it is also illegal to sell sand from croplands. So, we urge the administration to help us overcome this problem," he said.

Many farmers called upon the government to introduce ration to help them survive till the lands become cultivable again.

"Around 17,000 farmers have been affected in Parshuram, while crops on total 4,209 hectares of land got destroyed," said Sifat Hasan, upazila agriculture officer.

"Farmers can cultivate different types of vegetables on the lands, and other drought-tolerant crops. Doing so, as well as applying enough organic fertilisers on the sandy topsoil will gradually prepare the lands for paddy cultivation over time."



Rowers race each other, hoping to take the lead in this "nouka baich" (boat race). This traditional race, which has been taking place for over 200 years, is being held on the Ghaghar River in Kaliganj, Gopalganj, as part of Lakshmi Puja celebrations. Hundreds of spectators, of all ages, gather from nearby villages to watch this race. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

NABAGANGA RIVER IN NARAIL

Bridge work drags on for six years

PARTHA CHAKRABORTY, Bagerhat

The construction of Barai Para Bridge on Nabaganga river in Narail's Kalia upazila has been dragging on since 2018.

The Roads and Highways Department initiated construction of the 651.83-metre-long and 10.25-metre wide concrete girder bridge to enhance road connectivity between Narail and other neighbouring districts including Khulna, Bagerhat and Gopalganj.

However, after extension of deadline twice, alongside multiple setbacks, as well as a revision of the original plan, the project remains incomplete even after more than six years, while the cost escalated from Tk 72 crore to Tk 135 crore.

After the construction work began, it continued at a slow pace until it remained halted amid the pandemic. Till then, only 15 pillars and 11 spans were installed.

Once the work resumed, a major design flaw came to the light, thereby requiring a revision of the original plan. This eventually led to substantial delay to the project.

The work also faced multiple setbacks, including collision of a barge with the ninth pillar in June 2020 and a recurrence of the same event in September 2021. The



incidents led to severe damages to the pillars, causing further delays.

As the contractors tasked with the construction work, Jamil Iqbal and Moinuddin Bashi, could not complete the project, the work was handed over to Concrete and Steel Technologists Ltd.

Meanwhile, the project's deadline was extended twice, with the latest deadline being set for June 30, 2025.

The remaining work includes installing three spans and reinforcing the pillars. Process is currently underway to import a massive 86.73-metre-long steel arch span from abroad.

The delay in implementing the project has frustrated the locals.

"If completed in time, the bridge would have eased a lot of our troubles with commute, alongside better

access to the neighbouring districts," said Moynal Sheikh, a local resident.

Ruhul Amin, another local, said as the bridge remains incomplete, it has been difficult to commute between the two sides of the river, especially in case of emergency situations.

Md Nazrul Islam, executive engineer of RHD, said the delay was partly due to a reclassification of Nabaganga river, which led to the change of original plan.

"The BIWTA initially classified the river in 'C' grade, but later we found that it is a big river. As such, significant design changes were required for the bridge," he said.

"The revised design was approved by Ecneec in 2023. We expect the construction work to be completed by June 30, 2025 under the new contractor," he added.

Man killed in road accident Locals torch bus in protest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

A man was killed as a bus hit him on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway in Gazipur's Basan area yesterday.

Protesting the accident that took place around 12:30pm, locals set fire to the Ajmeri Paribahan bus, said Tushar Miah, sub-inspector of Basan Police Station.

The identity of the deceased could not be determined immediately, he said.

The accident took place while the man was trying to cross the road.

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