



A section of locals have continued encroachment on Zia Khal in Jhenidah's Moheshpur upazila. A major portion of the canal has been filled up with garbage.

PHOTO: STAR

Canal-grabbing goes on

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

A group of local influential people have continued to grab Zia Khal (canal) in Moheshpur upazila headquarters although it plays a vital role in the lives of the residents of nearby villages.

The villages include Kanaidanga, Rakhlabhog, Fatepur, Krishnochandrapur, Purandapur, Saratala and Goalhuda.

The grabbers have built a number of structures by occupying different parts of the 100-km-long canal.

A local influential person named Sazzad Hossain has recently built a house and

sawmill by grabbing a portion of the canal, alleged villagers.

Although local administration, on information, demolished the establishments, Sazzad continued dumping garbage into the canal to grab it, they said.

Meanwhile, Fatepur area is being polluted too as the nearby villagers dump household wastes into the canal.

Locals said the canal was dug from Fatepur to the Kadobak river in the upazila. The then president Ziaur Rahman inaugurated the canal and since then it has been known as Zia Khal.

During monsoon, rainwater of the villages falls into the river through the canal, they said.

If the canal is filled up with tonnes of garbage, flow of water is badly disrupted and due to this, the croplands in the areas remain submerged during the rainy season, causing immense sufferings to farmers.

At present, a group of local influential people have built a mosque on the canal, said the villagers, adding that a major portion of the water body have also been brought under cultivation by the grabbers.

Arafat Hossain, a resident of Saratala village, said the

land grabbers have continued to occupy the canal but the authorities concerned are yet to take any major steps to stop grabbing of the water body.

Sazzad said no establishments were built on the canal after the house and sawmill was demolished by local land office.

He will remove the garbage from the area soon, said Sazzad.

Sirazul Islam, an official of Fatepur union land office, said they have stopped construction of the illegal structures on the canal.

If anybody tries to build any establishments on the canal, they will take action, he said.

Tea seller Bishal: An unstoppable

The 11-year-old boy secured GPA 5 in the PEC exams

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A tea seller has got grade point average (GPA) 5, obtaining 529 marks out of 600 in this year's Primary Education Completion (PEC) examinations.

Md Bishal Mia, son of Liakat Mia, took part in the PEC exam from Sahera-Gafur Government Primary School in Dakkhin Mourail area of Brahmanbaria town.

The tremendous result has amazed people of his locality as the boy, who has to work at the tea stall of his father from 5:00pm to midnight every day, was rarely seen to manage time for his study.

Hailing from Araisdha village in Ashuganj upazila, Liakat, father of three children, has been struggling to run his five-member family with his small income from the tea stall. He runs the tea stall at the platform of Brahmanbaria railway station from 5:00pm to 12:00am every day.

Of the children, elder son Evan is

now doing his diploma at Brahmanbaria Polytechnic Institute, daughter Tarin Akter is a Class VII student of local school and Bishal achieved GPA 5 in this year's PEC exam, said Liakat.

Bishal said earlier Evan helped his father. He is now working at the tea stall since his brother got chance in the polytechnic institute two years ago.

"Every night I studied for two hours after returning home from the tea stall. I hardly could manage time for private tutoring," said Bishal.

Bishal dreamt of becoming a cricketer or engineer in his life.

School Managing Committee President Golam Mohiuddin Khan Khokon said 36 students, including Bishal, got GPA 5 from the school. Bishal was also the first boy in Class III and IV.

Poverty cannot bar anyone from achieving his or her success, he said.



Bishal works at his father's tea stall at the platform of Brahmanbaria railway station.

PHOTO: STAR



A beekeeper inspects a bee colony in one of the hives he set up in Taltala village under Sadar upazila of Faridpur. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Beekeepers flourish around mustard fields

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Different areas near mustard fields in Faridpur Sadar upazila are now teeming with beekeepers from neighbouring districts.

In Charnadhabdia union, several beekeepers from Rajbari has set up their man-made hives on open land near mustard fields where the honeybees forage for nectar.

Beekeeper Arman Mandal, an 18-year-old from Goalanda upazila in Rajbari, told this correspondent that this year he came to Taltala village and set up bee colonies in 100 hives.

"My father has been doing this work for 16 years and I've been doing this for five years."

He has been extracting eight to ten maunds of honey from the bee colonies every week and the prices he was getting for each maund ranged between Tk 14,000 to Tk 16,000.

Almost half of his earnings is spent on his

daily expenses during the extraction period and feeding of the bees in the off-season, he added.

Mokter Mondal, another beekeeper this correspondent met in the village, said the weather condition this year has so far been favourable for harvesting honey and he was collecting about five to seven maunds of honey each week from 80 bee hives he set in the area.

"I'm getting good price for it too," the man said happily.

Contacted, deputy director of Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Faridpur, Kartik Chandra Chakraborty, said mustard is being cultivated on 8,305 hectares of land in nine upazilas of the district this year.

He also said the department has been providing all sorts of support to the beekeepers and according to their estimation, about 14 tonnes of honey would be harvested in the district this year -- one tonne higher than that in last year.



Bridge not rebuilt in 31yrs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

People of nine villages in Nasirmagar upazila have been suffering much for years for want of a bridge on a canal in Khagalia area.

Especially schoolchildren are the worst sufferers due to the communication problem.

Despite repeated pleas, the authorities concerned are yet to take any steps to build a bridge there, said villagers.

The villages include Bholakut, Kandipara, Bholakut-Kandi, Kahetura, Tekanagar, Nasirpur, Balikhola and Durgapur.

Taru Mia, an elderly villager of Khagalia, said in 1986, Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) built a bridge on the canal, connected to the Meghna river to ease communication in the area, but it was washed away by floods of 1988. Five pairs of pillars of that bridge are now seen there only.

Since then no new bridge was built there, leaving thousands of commuters in great trouble, said Taru.

Mohammad Rubel Miah, chairman of Bholakut union parishad, said around 1,200 people live in Khagalia village. Two government primary schools, two madrasas, a community clinic, a century-old mosque and two markets lie there.



The bridge was destroyed by floods of 1988 and since then no new bridge has been built there, leaving thousands of commuters in great trouble of Brahmanbaria's Nasirmagar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Abu Ishak Al Mamun, headmaster of Khagalia Government Primary School, said during the monsoon months the canal overflows. Even after the rainy season, there is water in the canal for five months.

During the time, the school sees poor attendance as the students have to cross the canal by country boats amid risk and

due to this, the guardians do not want to send their kids to school, said the headmaster.

Masud Rana, assistant engineer of LGED in the upazila, said as construction of a road between Nasirmagar upazila and Chatolpar union has already been started, a bridge will also be built there.



Children browse through the new books given to them during the government-sponsored Textbook Festival across the country on the New Year yesterday. The photo was taken from Achaipara Non-government Primary School at Perachhara union in Khagrachhari Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: SAIKAT DEWAN