

DEFYING DoE ORDER

# Influential man filling up pond

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Defying an order by the Department of Environment (DoE), a pond is being filled up illegally to make way for a two-storey building in Sreemangal upazila headquarters.

A few months ago, local influential person Sawkat Ali and his son Rahmat Ali Shuva constructed the building after filling up a major portion of 27 decimals of the pond in Birahimpur, alleged residents of the area.

The two continued filling up the pond to make way for the building, they said, adding that DoE, however, issued an order on January 22 and asked Sawkat and his son to stop filling up the water body.

Earlier, locals submitted an application to the DoE seeking a ban on filling of the pond.

Rahman Mizan, a resident of Birahimpur area, said some local influential people have been occupying three sides of the pond for long. Another portion of the pond is attached to a road.

Shah Shaheda Akther, divisional coordinator of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), Sylhet unit, said according to the Wetland Protection Act, 2000, filling up of any pond or water body with permission is prohibited and considered as a punishable offence.

Freedom fighter Md Ali Mumin, another resident of the area, said a section of local people have continued garbage dumping in the pond to grab it.

This mindless garbage dumping is also posing health risks to locals, he said.

During the rainy season, it becomes almost impossible to live in the area due to the floating garbage, said Mumin.

Another dweller Md Sahed of Birahimpur said they have recently submitted a memorandum to DoE in Moulvibazar to stop filling up the pond but it still continues as the land grabbers are very powerful.

Jabed Bhuiyan, joint convener of Lawachhara Bon O Jibaboichitra Rokkha Andalan, said the encroachment by land grabbers had narrowed the width of the main pond. Several illegal bamboo structures were seen on the pond.

The grabbers have already occupied a major portion of the pond due to negligence of some government officials, he added.

Badrul Huda, assistant director of DoE in Moulvibazar, said during a recent visit to the area, it was found that pond grabbing continued.

On January 22, they issued an order and asked Sawkat and his son to stop filling up the pond, he said, adding that on that day, police went to the spot and stopped filling up of the water body.

Sawkat Ali, however, denied the allegation of defying the DoE order.

"The land where the pond is located is my property. I began filling up some portions of it to make a way for the building," he said.



A two-storey building was constructed after filling up a major portion of the pond in Birahimpur area of Moulvibazar's Sreemangal upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

# Potters leaving trade as demand of earthenware shrinks



A pile of clay-made cooking utensils kept on the premises of a potter's house at Gangasagar Palpara in Harirampur upazila of Manikganj. Right, a potter makes an earthen pot in the area.

ZAHANGIR SHAH, Manikganj

Traditional potters in the district, once valued as suppliers of essential household items like plates, jars and cooking utensils, are now struggling for survival.

Besides the home items, potters make a variety of earthenware including toys, flower tubs, idols and statues.

During this correspondent's visit to different areas of the district, potters told stories of their suffering amid the dwindling business.

"People across the country used earthenware for their daily work since time immemorial.

But now things made of plastic, melamine, metal and porcelain have taken their place both in city and rural areas, putting our job

under threat," said Nimai Pal, 61, of Gangasagar Palpara in Balla union of Harirampur upazila.

"Traditionally kumars [potters] played an important role by meeting people's requirement of daily household items. But the profession is no longer a desired one," said 81-year-old Jatin Pal.

"I am still clinging to my ancestral trade, despite odds. But my two sons Narayan Pal and Kanai Pal have left the profession as it no longer gives financial security, let alone honour. They are now doing gold business," he said.

Dinesh Chandra Pal, 61, who learnt pottery from his father Jatin Chandra Pal in his early youth, said, "I and my family members make different items with soft clay, including

plates, flower tubs, dolls, and statues. Then these are burnt and given finishing touches, often with colour."

"Now nobody sees any good prospect in the trade as the money from selling the earthen items hardly covers the production cost," he said.

Sudeb Pal's wife Kabita Pal said her husband's brother is now doing gold business, having left pottery due to poor return from the trade. "Of the 70 families once engaged in pottery here, only 15 families have maintained the tradition, mainly out of love for the ancestral profession," said 66-year-old Kalachan Pal.

Potters of different areas of the district have similar tales to tell.



PHOTO: ZAHANGIR SHAH

# Chalan Beel fishers cash in on dried fish prospect

BULBUL AHMED, Natore

Despite good catches after a day's hard work, fishers in Natore's Chalan Beel region often had to dump the unsold fish. A little thinking outside the box has changed all that.

It made a difference when many of them started to make the best use of the unsold fish by turning those into shutki or dried fish -- a popular food item in different parts of the country.

Encouraged by its good demand, some of the locals also started getting into the business of drying fish.

Shutki varieties made out of fish caught in Chalan Beel region are quite popular across the country for their taste and quality, said the locals.

Abdur Razzak, who used to struggle to make a living as a fisherman in Chalan Beel's Dahia area under Singra upazila, said, "After netting a huge amount of fish in the rainy season, there were days when a good amount of those had spoiled after going unsold at local markets."

"But now, we dry the fish in the sun and sell the shutki at good prices," the man said happily.

Shaidul Islam, a local, is in the business of drying and trading of fish. He said the prime time for drying fish is between October and February.

Dried fish is gaining popularity day by day all over the country and the dried fish from Chalan Beel is getting popular in

India as well, he added.

A dried fish trader at Ningoin Shutkipolli in the upazila, Rashedul Islam Nayan, said dried fish prices vary between Tk 500 to Tk 1,200 for each kilogram -- based on its quality, the variety of fish and its size.

The price of a kg of Shoil shutki now ranges from Tk 800 to Tk 1,200, Bowal from Tk 800 to Tk 1,000, Gunchi Tk 700, Loitka Tk 600, Kachki Tk 600, Sati Tk 500, Chingri Tk 500 and Chanda Tk 300, he also said.

After buying fish from the fishers, the fish is sliced up and covered in salt after its internal organs are disposed of, said local dried fish producer Abdus Salam, adding that salt is used to preserve the meat.

Dried fish produced in Chalan Beel area is high in demand across the country, especially among the residents of Saidpur, Rangpur, Brahmanbaria, Sylhet and Kishoreganj, Salam said.

Ningoin resident Abdur Razzak said, "The dried fish of Chalan Beel are tastier than dried sea fish. I often buy shutki from Singra Shutkipolli because it's fresh, hygienic and processed right before our eyes."

While speaking with this correspondent, Jahangir Alam, fisheries officer in Natore, said, "We keep a close eye on the entire process to ensure that no harmful chemical is added [in the dried fish]."

He also said their dried fish production target of 317 tonnes, worth Tk 13 cores, might be exceeded this year.



A smiling worker displays fish being dried in Chalan Beel's Ningoin area under Singra upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

# Bangladeshi murdered in South Africa

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A Bangladeshi youth, who was shot dead by unknown criminals in South Africa on January 29, was laid to rest at family graveyard in Madarganj upazila yesterday.

The body of Mohammad Bayezid of Tartapara village was brought back to the country and then taken to his native village on Saturday midnight.

After holding his namaje-janaza Bayezid was buried yesterday afternoon.

Deceased's cousin Abul Kalam said, Bayezid, second of three siblings, was shot dead by a gang at his grocery shop in Potchefstroom city around 8:30pm on January 29.



Sewage from an overflowing drain covers part of this road in Satmatha intersection area of Bogura town. The photo taken yesterday gives a typical picture of the awful drainage system in the important area under the municipality, thanks to the callousness of the authorities concerned.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

# Runaway Indian buffalo kills woman

7 other injured admitted to hospital

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A Bangladeshi woman was killed and seven others sustained injuries when an Indian buffalo romped into Bangladesh territory and attacked people of a bordering village in Kasba upazila yesterday.

The deceased, Safia Begum, 65, was wife of Muktar Hossain of Gourangola village in the upazila.

Identities of the injured victims, who were admitted to different hospitals in Cumilla for treatment, could not be known immediately, Officer in Charge (OC) of Kasba Police Station Lokman Hossain quoted villagers as saying.

A runaway buffalo from India entered into Bangladeshi territory through Putia border yesterday morning and started attacking the villagers in Gourangola area, leaving eight people including Safia injured, the OC said quoting villagers.

Family members took injured Safia to a hospital in Cumilla where she succumbed to her injuries the same noon, he added.

Angry villagers later caught the buffalo, slaughtered the animal and distributed the meat among the victims' families, Mamun Bhuiyan, a local union parishad (UP) chairman, said.