



A woman sells singara at her shop in 'Women's Corner' of Satbaria Bazar in Pabna's Sujanagar upazila.

PHOTO: AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

A good initiative failing

'Women's Corner' in Pabna's Sujanagar UZ market faces odds

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

The Women's Corner at Satbaria Bazar in Pabna's Sujanagar upazila, aiming at encouraging rural women traders, is about to be closed amid lack of sufficient backing.

The Local Government and Engineering Department (LGED), aided by non-governmental organisation CARE Bangladesh, made 12 shops at the corner at a cost of Tk 29 lakh 15 years ago and each of the 12 allottees, all poor women in the area, received Tk 5,000 to start their business.

Only two of the shops are now run by women, two or three others have been rented to male traders for storing goods,

while the rest are virtually abandoned. "A few of the female allottees never came to the market. Some influential male traders in the market then started using the shops for storing their goods," said Md Samsul Islam, chairman of Satbaria Union Parishad.

"The allottees were supposed to pay a minimal monthly rent to the UNO, through the union parishad, which could have been used for maintenance but nobody do this. Many shops are on the verge of ruin," he added.

Several local female traders said they are unable to compete in the market due to shortage of capital and non-cooperation from male traders while their

male counterparts said women's lack of experience and interest in business is responsible for their failure.

During a recent visit to Satbaria Bazar, this correspondent talked to Pila Rani, who runs one of the small shops with her husband, selling mostly singara, for over a decade.

"The shop is in a poor state as no repair work has been done since it was first built," she said.

Hena Rani, the other female trader at the Women's Corner, said, "Satbaria Bazar is a rich rural market with many big set-ups. It is difficult for small traders with a meagre capital to survive here. Besides, the Women's Corner is at an odd place of

the market, where only a few customers come."

Talking to The Daily Star, Md Abdur Rashid, president of Satbaria Banik Samity, acknowledged the problems faced by female traders.

He, however, claimed that female traders who earlier got allotment of the shops left shortly afterwards as they did not have perseverance enough to build up business.

Over 200 other shops at Satbaria Bazar are running smoothly, he added.

The initiative to encourage female traders did not succeed due to a lack of sufficient support from locals, said Sujit Debnath, Sujanagar upazila nirbahi officer.

DINAJPUR DIABETES HOSPITAL

Patients to get treatment free of cost

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Dinajpur Diabetes and Swasthoseba Hospital has introduced facilities of diagnose and treatment of the patients with diabetes retinopathy, an eye disease among children and elderly people, for the first time.

Patients, age between 1-day to 26 years, will get the service at the hospital, the only reliable treatment centre for high glucose patients in the northern districts for years, free of cost.

Orbis International, a New York based non-profitable organisation, which is dedicated to fight blindness across the globe, came forward with their support under a project titled 'Model for Children with Diabetic eye disease in Bangladesh.'

President and Chief Executive of Orbis International Bob Ranck inaugurated the service as the chief guest on Wednesday.

Among others, Dr Munir Ahmed, country director Orbis International, and former lawmaker and President of Diabetic Association in Dinajpur (DAD) Advocate Abdul Latif were also present during the inauguration ceremony.

In his speech, Bob Ranck said uncontrolled diabetes can causes heart, kidney and eye related complications and children are not out of risk as well.

"One should take care of his vision for his family, society and for the nation," Bob Ranck said.

General Secretary of DAD Shafiqul Haque said different diagnostic devices and other materials have already been installed at the hospital.

Founded in 1979, the hospital has around one lakh registered diabetes patients and 17 specialised doctors.

Trader killed by rivals

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

A man was killed allegedly by his rivals over previous enmity in Singair upazila yesterday.

The deceased, Ripon Hossain Lebu, 49, a sand trader, was son of Moslem Uddin of Jamalpur village in the upazila.

Baira Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Dewan Jinnah Lathu said some unidentified youths stabbed Lebu behind the union council office with sharp weapons around 11:00am and fled the scene.

Locals rescued injured Lebu, also assistant treasurer of Manikganj district unit of Jatiyatabadi Swedchhasebok Dal, volunteer wing of the BNP, and took him to Singair Upazila Health Complex, where the doctors declared him dead.

Medical Officer at Emergency Department of the hospital Dr Sayeeda Bin Khan said Lebu was brought dead at the hospital around 11:30am.

Deceased's brother Saiful Islam Babu said a gang of 10 to 12 people, Dewan Haidar Ali, son of Jonab Ali of Baira village, stabbed his brother to death over previous enmity.

Babu said there had been a feud between slain Lebu and AL activist Haidar over getting the road construction work stretching from Baira Bazar to Shibpur recently.

Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police (Singair Circle) Alamgir Hossain said, they were investigating the matter, adding that, police recovered the body and sent it to the hospital for autopsy.



Excavators lie idle in Ramnagar area of Faridpur's Sadarpur upazila where re-excavation work of a seven-kilometre-long canal remains suspended for over a week.

PHOTO: STAR

AL leader leads claim on vital canal, stops excavation work

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Re-excavation work of a seven-kilometre-long canal remains suspended after the vice president of Charbhadraran upazila unit of Awami League raised objection to the work in Ramnagar area of Sadarpur upazila.

On January 29, when the AL leader, Abul Kalam Azad Khan, who is also the chairman of Harirampur Union Parishad, and his men stopped the work, 1.5 kilometres of the canal -- connecting the Padma and Arial Khan rivers -- was already excavated.

As part of the Delta Plan adopted by the prime minister, contractor firm Noor Enterprise commenced the Tk 4.31-crore excavation work on December 25, 2019, said Water Development Board (WDB) officials in Faridpur.

Nasir Mollah, an excavator operator of the contractor, said, "In January, Abul Kalam Azad Khan and his supporters came to us and ordered us to stop the work. They also threatened to beat us up unless we stopped digging."

Firm owner Iqbal Hossain said they had rented five excavators for the work, but with all those now sitting idle, they have been counting Tk 3.5 lakh in rentals every day.

Worried about the timely delivery

of the project, Iqbal also said the excavation work has to be done during the dry season and unless the work is completed within the next two months, before the upcoming monsoon, the work completed so far will be in ruins.

Rebutting the accusation raised against him, Abul Kalam Azad Khan claimed that "the High Court has ordered to stop the work."

The canal that used to run through the area no longer exists and at least 77 acres of the land, where the excavation work was being carried out, belongs to different people, he further claimed.

"We don't have any objection to the excavation work of the canal, even though it will not help the farmers and locals. But we want compensation for the land that we own," the AL leader said.

Sultan Mahmud, WDB executive engineer in Faridpur, said Abul Kalam Azad Khan along with 20 others had filed a writ petition.

The secretaries to the land and water resources ministries, WDB executive engineer in Faridpur, the deputy commissioner and additional deputy commissioner (revenue) of Faridpur were made respondents in the petition.

On January 29, the bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahsan and Justice KM

Kamrul Quader asked the land and water resources ministries to resolve the matter without involving the court any further, Sultan said, adding that although the court did not order to withhold the excavation work, Abul Kalam Azad stopped the work the same day unilaterally, without holding any discussion with any party concerned.

Moslem Uddin Khan, a former member of Harirampur Union Parishad, said, the excavation work of the canal, vital canal for locals and farmers, started after a long delay.

But some people with vested interests have stopped the work, he added.

Farmer Shamsul Bapari from Harirampur said the farmers of the community will reap tremendous benefits once the canal is re-excavated. "The farmers will also be able to transport their goods through the canal at a nominal cost."

Mohammad Aslam Mollah, the additional deputy commissioner (revenue) in Faridpur, said if necessary, one may complain to the authorities concerned. But "no one can stop government work".

The High Court did not suspend the canal excavation work, he said, adding that they were investigating as to why the excavation work was stopped.

350 fishermen families in dire straits

They are unable to catch fish as Kumirdaha Beel has been occupied

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Around 350 families of fishermen community are passing miserable life as they were obstructed from catching fish in Kumirdaha Beel of Saghatra upazila.

In 2010, a group of local influential people forcibly took position in the water body in Guridaha union and since then the fishermen cannot catch fish due to the repeated threat from the grabbers, said local fishermen.

Due to this, many fishermen have already changed their ancestral profession. They are now taking up jobs of rickshaw-van pulling and farm labourers for earning their livelihood.

Three decades ago, the Bangalee river has turned into beel on 13 acres of land after it dried up.

They have been obstructed from catching fish in the beel for long, but the authorities concerned are yet to take any steps in this regard despite repeated pleas, said the affected fishermen.

Joshna Chandra Das, president of Kumirdaha Matshajibi Samity, said in 2015, they filed a case against the influential persons and got court order in their favour, but they are to get possession of the marshy land.

Joshna Chandra further said earlier in 2014, they deposited Tk 1.80 lakh to the government to take lease of the land and the district administration allocated a portion



Local fishermen cannot catch fish in Kumirdaha Beel of Gaibandha's Saghatra upazila as some local influential people grabbed it.

PHOTO: STAR

of the beel to them.

But they are yet to get possession of the open water body, said Joshna.

They have recently submitted a memorandum to deputy commissioner demanding possession of the allocated water body, but any initiative is yet to be taken in this regard, said Joshna.

Sharif Hossain, one of the existing possession holders, said they have 65 heirs of the 13-acre land.

"Many of us are still engaged in the fishing profession, but no such water body is available nearby," said Khagendra Nath Das, a fisherman.

Bashanti Rani Das of Kumirdaha village said as it is difficult to run the four-member family with the little

earning of his husband, she now works as domestic help.

Some solvent fishermen have been engaged in selling fish bought from pond owners of distant areas, but the poor fishermen were compelled to change their profession, said Sudharam Das, a fisherman of the area.

They are now taking up jobs of rickshaw-van pulling and farm labourers for earning their livelihood, he said.

Sakil Ahmed, assistant commissioner (Land) in Saghatra upazila, said the beel is situated on government khas land. So, the matter of leasing out the water body to the fishermen is under consideration.



Agriculture Minister Dr Abdur Razzak, also a freedom fighter, places wreaths after inaugurating the newly constructed memorial built in honour of the Liberation War martyrs, who were killed by the Pakistan occupation army in 1971 at the killing ground of Zila Sadar Water Tank area in Tangail town yesterday. Inset, a terracotta picture representing a scene of the Liberation War.

PHOTO: MIRZASHAKIL