



Extraction of silica sand from within 500 metres of this railway bridge over the Barachhara canal in Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar poses threat to the important structure on Sylhet-Dhaka route. A nearby road bridge (not in the picture) also faces risk due to the unscrupulous act.

PHOTO: STAR

Two Moulvibazar bridges under threat as silica sand lifting on

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

A railway bridge and a road bridge over the Barachhara canal in Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar faces risk due to large scale extraction of silica sand within half a kilometre of the important structures.

The callous act, conducted in broad daylight, also affects the cultivable lands and irrigation wells, and poses the threat of a serious havoc during the coming rains but the government officials and public representatives hardly pay attention to it, locals said.

During a recent visit to the spot, this correspondent found silica sand extraction from near Barachhara Railway Bridge on

Sylhet-Dhaka route and in Barachhara Bridge on Sylhet-Bramanbazar road.

Four rickshaw-vans were being loaded with sand and three others were in wait for the same purpose.

Fifteen to twenty rickshaw-vans take sand from the spot daily, said a few workers seeking anonymity.

"The silica sand lifting and movement of sand-laden vans affects kilometres-long areas along the Barachhara canal. The two bridges will be under risk due to erosion in the banks, especially when there is heavy rain and onrush of water from the hills," said Abu Yusuf, a resident of Baramchal area.

Locals have recently met the upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) of Kulaura and

demanding immediate steps to stop the silica sand lifting for saving the two bridges and areas along the canal, he added.

Badrul Huda, assistant director at the Department of Environment in Moulvibazar, said, "To save the environment, the High Court earlier ordered stopping the lease for sand extraction 51 spots in the district, including Barachhara canal area. But some local influential people are lifting sand, defying the rule."

Abdul Karim Kim, executive member of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon, said illegal sand lifting poses various hazards but the government authorities and local public representatives do not seem to realize the

adverse effect of the ill practices.

Amid laxity of the authorities concerned, sand traders are lifting large quantities of sand even at the sensitive spot, where an important railway bridge and a road bridge are situated, he added.

ATM Farhad Chowdhury, UNO of Kulaura said, "As the sand lifting poses threat to two bridges over the Barachhara canal, I conducted a mobile court drive and seized a van with silica sand a few days ago from the same spot.

Instructions have given not to extract sand from there."

"If there is further occurrence of the unscrupulous act, we will take necessary measures," he added.

Muggers

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The 42 arrestees were caught red-handed or found in possession of mugged items, the additional commissioner added.

Officers recovered 74 mobile phones, a tab, a laptop and sharp weapons from the arrestees.

AREAS MOSTLY TARGETED

The muggers mostly target people near midnight and early morning. Most of the victims are pedestrians or people on rickshaws, officials said.

The places where most of the incidents occur are Satarasta, Nabisco, Mohakhali Bus Terminal, Mohakhali level crossing, Banani, Gulshan-1, Gulshan Link Road, Rampura Bridge, Dhanmondi, Bangshal, Chawkbazar, Kalabagan, Gulistan, Jatrabari, Sayedabad, and New Market, and Sadarghat Launch Terminal.

People are also targeted on poorly lit streets and quiet alleys, Baten said. WHAT HAPPENS TO MUGGED PHONES

"The muggers often do not sell the phones in one piece. They tear down the phone and sell its parts separately to repair shops and discard the motherboard which contains an IMEI number," the official said.

Mugged phones are also sold in different shopping malls, especially in mobile servicing shops, he said.

Many of the shops are selling unauthorised phones, and police will launch a crackdown on them soon.

Citing another recent example, Baten said detectives investigating a case tracked down a stolen phone in Narayanganj. But it turned out that the man who was using the phone bought it from an e-commerce website.

VICTIMS DO NOT REPORT

According to DMP, around 900 mugging cases were filed at different police stations in the capital in the last five years. Officials said many more instances of mugging had not been reported during the period.

"It is not possible for police to stop such crimes if no case is filed. If your local police station does not want to record cases, inform us. We will take action," Baten said.

Normalcy returns

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exams there will be held at a later date. People were seen searching frantically for their loved ones at the Guru Tegh Bahadur hospital.

Forty-eight-year-old Madeena, whose son has been missing since Tuesday following the violence, was seen running to police stations to find if he was still alive.

My country is irrevocably

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the national interest of the two countries. The Soviet Union will build its relations with Bangladesh on the principles of complete equality, mutual respect for sovereignty and independence and non-interference in the internal affairs of each other, he adds.

Bangabandhu in his speech says, "My country is irrevocably committed to democracy." He also says, "We are fully aware that a developing country like Bangladesh with the tremendous pressure of a growing population can't flourish if the vital sectors of the economy were not brought under social control."

He adds, "We are confident that the economic policy we have adopted will

ensure not only a rapid growth of our economy but also the equitable and fair distribution of benefits of such growth."

SPECIAL AGENCY TO PROBE WAR CRIMES

A special agency has been appointed by the Inspector General of Police to investigate the crimes committed by the personnel of the Pakistan Armed Forces during the occupation in Bangladesh. According to official sources, over 1,000 public complaints against the personnel including Yahya Khan, Tikka Khan, Niazi, Rao Farman Ali have been registered so far in different police stations in Bangladesh.

9,000 BANGLADESH RIFLES MEN FOR BORDER OUTPOSTS

About 9000 personnel of the Bangladesh Rifles under the police directorate would take up positions in 300 border outposts to check smuggling and other crimes in bordering areas.

POLICE STATION IN EVERY UNION

The government is working on a plan to set up one police station in each of the country's 4,000 unions. The plan which involves an approximate expenditure of about 40 crores of rupees includes a suggestion to raise the present strength of the police personnel to one lakh.

SOURCES: March 2, 1972 issues of Dainik Bangla, The Daily Ittefaq, Azad, Morning News, The Bangladesh Observer and Purbodesh.

US, Taliban sign historic peace deal

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thousands of Afghan troops, Taliban fighters and Afghan civilians. "We're seizing the best opportunity for peace in a generation," Pompeo told a press conference.

President Donald Trump, who has promised to finish America's "endless wars", urged the Afghan people to embrace the chance for a new future.

The Taliban's chief negotiator Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai hailed another "day of victory" in Afghanistan's long history of repelling foreign powers.

"This is the kind of day that our ancestors celebrated after they defeated the British and the Soviets," he said as he and other jubilant Taliban members took part in a march in Qatar, in a video shared by Taliban sources.

The Doha accord was drafted over a tempestuous year of dialogue marked by the abrupt cancellation of the effort by Trump in September.

But the position of the Afghan government, which has been excluded from direct US-Taliban talks, remains unclear and the country is gripped by a fresh political crisis amid contested election results.

The signing comes after a week-long, partial truce that has mostly held across Afghanistan, aimed at building confidence between the warring parties and showing the Taliban can control their forces.

The US, which currently has between 12,000 and 13,000 troops in Afghanistan, will draw that number down to 8,600 within months of the agreement being signed.

If the Taliban abide by the terms of the accord, the US and its partners "will complete withdrawal of all remaining forces from Afghanistan" within 14 months.

The two sides also agreed to swap thousands of prisoners in a "confidence building measure".

Ekushey book fair ends

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expressed satisfaction over the overall management and environment of the fair.

"Book fair has now turned into a festival. For further improvement of the fair, the organising committee should pay more attention to well-established publishers in the future," said Osman Gani of Agamee Prakashani.

Shahadat Hossain of Annesha Prakashon and Aditya Antor of Ittadi

Grantha Prokash said many "seasonal" publishers set up stalls at the fair to sell pirated books.

Celebrated Indian poet Rudra Goswami told The Daily Star that the love of Bangladeshi people for books, book fair and language was unparalleled.

"This book fair is a universal one. This provides me with an opportunity to meet the readers; and their praises and criticisms help me correct myself," he said.

This year, Kotha Prakash received the Chittaranjan Saha Memorial Award for publishing the highest number of quality books, while three publishing houses -- Prothoma Prakashan, Journeyman Books, Bengal Publications -- received the Munier Chowdhury Smriti Puraskar 2019 for their creative and quality publications.

Panjeri Publications received Rakanuzzaman Khan Dadabhai Smriti Purashkar-2019 for publishing quality books.

Schoolgirl hurt in ceiling plaster fall

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

An 11-year-old girl was injured as chunks of ceiling plaster fell on her in a classroom of a government primary school in Debidwer upazila yesterday.

The victim, Noor Jahan, a Class V student at Daraipur Government Primary School, is now undergoing treatment at Debidwer Upazila Health Complex.

The minor girl, also daughter of Alamgir Hossain of Dariapur area in the upazila, sustained severe injuries on the head.

Head teacher of the school Rebeka Sultana said they are compelled to hold classes at the risky school building as they have no alternative.

Such accident can happen in future as condition of the existing schoolhouse is very vulnerable, she added.

Friendship Health Clinic opens in Mongla

STAR REPORT

A healthcare clinic for the rural people affected by climate change was inaugurated in Bagerhat yesterday, says a press release

Friendship, a non-governmental organization (NGO), opened the hospital in Mongla upazila for the people, who often finds it hard to reach proper healthcare facilities, in remote areas.

The upazila, consisting of six unions, has a population of around 150,000.

Deputy Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Habibun Nahar inaugurated the healthcare clinic yesterday afternoon.

Among others, Runa Khan, founder and executive director of Friendship, Namita Haldar, member of Human Rights Commission, Bagerhat deputy commissioner and Bagerhat civil surgeon were present on the occasion.

Speakers said Friendship Health Clinic will provide full-fledged medical service under specialist doctors, modern equipment and has a team of experts to help patients with maximum care.

Friendship is already operating more than 20 satellite clinics in different rural areas across the country.

RAPE OF MINOR GIRL

Accused lands in jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A Sirajganj court yesterday sent a man to jail in connection with a case for raping a minor girl in Enayetpur upazila on Thursday.

Earlier, police arrested, van puller Jahidul Islam, 21, of Sayedpur village, on Friday evening after mother of the four-year-old victim filed a case with Enayetpur Police Station the same day.

Police said, Jahidul forcibly raped the girl when none of her family members were present at home on Thursday.

The victim is now undergoing treatment at a local hospital, police said.

A bloody day on roads

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On information, police and fire service personnel from Durgapur and Mymensingh rushed to the spot and recovered the bodies.

Police also seized the trucks and arrested one of the drivers while the other managed to flee.

Md Anwar Hossain, chairman of Gouripur union parishad, said most of the victims belong to Shalihor village under the union, adding that he visited the spot soon after the incident.

In Rajshahi, seven people, including six of a family, died as a private car carrying them hit a roadside tree and turned turtle in a roadside ditch in Karipur area under Godagari upazila around noon.

They were all going to a wedding ceremony.

The dead were identified as Hosne Ara Khatun, 32, her husband Mosabbir Hossain Akash, 35, their four-month-old son Adib Al Hasan, seven-year-old daughter Mufsira, Hosne's younger sister Ashia Begum, 28, and cousin Atia Akhter, a student of Rajshahi Women's Polytechnic Institute and the car driver Mahbubur Rahman Rajib, 40.

Three others were injured. Four were residents of Debishingpara of Rajshahi city, while Ashia lived in Dhaka.

Quoting the victim's family members and witnesses, police said the victims started from Rajshahi city and were heading towards Mohislabari area under Godarigari upazila to attend a family member's marriage ceremony.

At around 12:30pm in Kazipur area, the driver suddenly lost control of the car and it hit a roadside tree, before falling into a ditch.

After the accident, firefighters from Godagari Fire service unit rescued the victims and took them to hospital. Of them, Rajib, Akash and Asia died on the spot, while four others succumbed to their injuries in Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH).

Iftekhayer Alam, additional superintendent of Rajshahi District police, said, "We're still investigating the accident."

Meanwhile in Cumilla, three men were killed and some 15 passengers injured when the driver of a Dhaka-bound bus lost control of the vehicle and ran over a wayfarer and fell into a roadside ditch at Jinlatoli of Daudkandi on Dhaka-Chattogram highway at around 7:00am yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Shahid Ullah, 65, son of late Mofiz Uddin of Chandara of Daudkandi Cumilla and two passengers Shafikul Islam, 31, son of Shahalam of Dhaka's Keraniganj and Ramjan Ali, 40, son of Abu Taher of Kathaltoli of Sirajdikhan

of Munshiganj.

Sergeant Alamgir Hossain, of Daudkandi Highway Police Station, said, "A picnic bus returning from Cox's Bazar was being recklessly driven when the driver lost control and ran over a passerby before falling into a roadside ditch.

"Daudkandi Highway Police, along with firefighters and locals, rescued the injured passengers and send them to Daudkandi upazila health complex in Gouripur. The bus was recovered from the ditch after a couple of hours and the bodies were handed over to relatives."

In Manikganj, a motorcyclist was killed when a bus hit his motorcycle from behind at Falsatia Bus stand area on the Dhaka-Aricha highway under Shivalaya Upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Masud Rana Jibon, 25, a resident of Karchabanha village under Manikganj sadar upazila.

Police said the victim was going to Paturia Ghat when the speeding bus hit his motorbike around 10:30am leaving him dead on spot.

The body was recovered and sent to the District Sadar Hospital for autopsy. Police seized the bus, but its driver and his helper managed to flee, said Basudeb Sinha, in-charge of Balgail Highway police outpost.

(Our Rajshahi, Cumilla and Manikganj correspondents contributed to this report.)

Will the real

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of popular Russian-language Internet searches including "Putin double proof".

"Are you real?" the interviewer asked.

"Yes," said Putin. He said he has never had a double but when asked if the idea had ever been discussed, he confirmed it had.

"I refused to have doubles," Putin said. "It was during the hardest times of the fight against terrorism."

Putin as prime minister and then president oversaw the second war against separatists in Chechnya from 1999 to 2000.

After Russian armed forces claimed victory, Islamist insurgent attacks became frequent in the North Caucasus while suicide bombers targeted Russia's main cities.

"Was that in the early 2000s?" asked interviewer Andrei Vandenko, who is doing a series of interviews with Putin to mark 20 years since he became president.