

ILLEGAL SAND LIFTING FROM MEGHNA, TITAS IN B'BARIA River shape changing, bridge threatened

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Illegal sand lifting from Meghna and Titas riverbeds in Shahbajpur, Nabinagar, Asuganj and Brahmanbaria sadar upazila areas is changing the shape of rivers, increasing erosion and possibility of more flooding.

The Shahbajpur Titas Bridge will be threatened if this continues, local people said.

The government is also deprived of a huge amount of revenue from sand lifts.

A vast chunk of land and some homesteads have already eroded into the Meghna at Charfapang village in Nabinagar Upazila, local people said.

West Nabinagar Union Parishad Chairman Md Culam Kibria said he has appealed to authorities for relief for the victims.

The illegal work is going on in collaboration with a section of corrupt officials, it was gathered.

Unscrupulous sand traders are lifting sand from the Meghna near Ashuganj, Kederkhola and Daskandi and from the Titas near West Uzanishar, Islampur, Budhumti, Shabbazpur, Rajabariakandi, Gukama Ghat and Chandura areas.

The traders claim that they obtained permission from "higher authorities", but the district administration, when contacted, said sand lifting is banned except from six selected spots in the district. These are Lohor Nadi Balumahal, Dharkhar Mauja Titas Nadi Balumahal, Chinai Nadi

Balumahal, Haura Nadi Balumahal, Bijoy Nadi Balumahal and Bijani Nadi Balumahal. None of these spots has been leased to any trader, they said.

But sand is being lifted from dry riverbeds indiscriminately all along the riverbeds.

During a visit to the area on Tuesday, several hundred labourers, engaged by groups of traders, were seen lifting sand from Titas riverbed in Islampur, Chandura, Rajabariakandi and Shahbajpur.

They were digging the riverbed up to 100 metres or above at places without considering the impact of banks. Local people said this will cause a massive erosion in Shahbajpur, Rajabaria Kandi, Budhumti, Islampur and Chandura areas in Sarail and Brahmanbaria Sadar upazilas in the coming rainy season.

The illegal sand lifting is not new. The unscrupulous traders play cat and mouse with the administration and law enforcers. They 'manage' a section of policemen and continue the illegal work, the local people alleged.

In Ashganj, the illegal work is going on in Shahbajpur and Gupan Ghat areas.

Talking to this correspondent, villagers Sadekur Rahman and Ashrafal Karim alleged that they complained to the administration, but to no effect.

Big boats were seen carrying sand lifted from Ashuganj Meghan Ghat, Shalgong Ghat, Kalishima Giral, Titas Ghat and Kurulia.

Mahbub Hossain, manager of Ruma Al Farook Dredger, said they

were lifting sand with permission from the authorities. He said the sand lifting was not cause any harm to the river bank.

But Brahmanbaria Water Development Board Sub-divisional Engineer Md Kazem Ali said they have no plan to dredge the rivers in Brahmanbaria. He said he does not know who allowed the traders to lift sand.

Sources at Deputy Commissioner's office said they received several complaints from villagers about illegal sand lifting and

asked the upazila administrations to stop it.

Police Superintendent ATM Tareque said police, on information, had gone to several spots but the sand lifters showed permission from higher authorities.

While contacted, Deputy Commissioner Md Jahirul Haque said step have been taken to stop illegal sand lifting. Immediate action will be taken if any complaint of illegal sand lifting is received, he said.



Illegal sand lifting from the Meghna river bed at Ashuganj ghat goes unabated. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

My daughter was murdered

Cadet Polin's father claims in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Father of Sharmila Shahrin Polin, 18, whose death raised a controversy, on Tuesday claimed that her daughter was killed.

He demanded a probe by the army.

The body of Polin, a student of

Class XII at Mymensingh Girls Cadet College (Cadet No 1145), was found hanging from a shower pipe in a bathroom at the college hostel at about 11 am on February 11.

Polin's father M A Bashar Patwari, a retired Flight Sergeant of Bangladesh Air Force, at a press conference here alleged that

autopsy of the body was done "hurriedly without permission from him or any other legal guardian" and they are yet to receive the autopsy report.

"We have objection about the (autopsy) report as an abnormal death has been handled abnormally to conceal facts", said Bashar.

Polin, a brilliant student who

obtained GPA-5 in SSC (Secondary School Certificate examination) was also hopeful of another bright result in HSC (Higher Secondary Certificate examination).

"If she had in mind to commit suicide, she could do it at night. Why she did it in the morning?" Bashar posed the question.

"Polin, a champion prize winning player, played matches in the afternoon of February 10 and prepared her lessons at night.

"Is it believable that she went to bed but later committed suicide?" There was a black mark on the left side of her neck and bruises from pressure of nails on her cheeks, which do not suggest that she hanged herself, he said.

"I had to wait for about two hours at the college after receiving a telephone message from Adjutant of the college to know that my daughter committed suicide", Bashar told the press conference. Polin was fit physically and mentally and so it is unbelievable that she committed suicide.

He alleged that the "attitude of the college authorities and controversial statements of the staff raised suspicion in his mind that her daughter was killed and they were trying to hide facts.

"I was not allowed to go to the spot of occurrence and talk to Polin's classmates", the father alleged.

Asked about the inquiry body formed by the college authorities, Bashar said he has no faith in it. "It will not be an impartial probe".

Polin's uncles Khorshed Ahmed and Kamrul Ahsan, who were allowed to visit the place of occurrence, told newsmen that the shower pipe was six feet above the floor while Polin was five feet six inches in height and there was no supporting thing inside the bathroom for hanging.

"Any illegal approach or being witness to something harmful for any quarter can be the reason for her murder", Polin's father said.

He said he is preparing for legal action and demanded proper investigation.

SNAPS

Abandoned guns recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Paikgachha police on Monday recovered six abandoned guns and seven live cartridges from a spot near to a sluice gate on the bank of the Shibsha river. Three of the guns are homemade, according to the Superintendent of Police of Khulna. The recovered guns were seized as abandoned property, Paikgachha Police Station Officer-in-Charge told this correspondent.

OMS of rice in Bogra from today

BSS, Bogra

Open Market Sale (OMS) of rice begins in Bogra today. Food Department sources said the price of the rice under the programme has been fixed at Tk 14.50 per kg. Each buyer will be allowed to purchase three kilograms at a time. Each enlisted OMS dealer will be allocated one metric ton of rice on every alternate day. The dealers will buy the rice at the rate of Tk 13.50 per kg. Rice of different categories are being sold in the district between Tk 16 and 20 per kg.

Piracy forces fishermen to give up fishing

6 killed, 900 hurt, 445 trawlers looted in 6 months in coastal areas, Meghna estuary

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Piracy of fishing trawlers by organised gangs is going on unabated in the Meghna estuary and coastal areas of Bay of Bengal, making fishing risky. Many fishermen have left their traditional profession and many others are passing hard days as they can not go for fishing.

At least six fishermen were killed and 900 injured in last six months as armed pirates looted at least 445 trawlers and fishing boats and hijacked another 700 in Patharghata and Taltali coastal areas in Barguna district and in the Sundarbans coast.

Fishes and equipment worth over Tk 8 crore were looted during the period, they said.

The desperate fishermen on Monday attacked the the Upazila Nirbahi Officer's office and the police station in Char Tojumuddin demanding steps to

stop piracy. At least 50 people were injured in the violence. Police had to open fire to quell the violence.

Pirates, after looting trawlers and throwing fishermen into water, take the hijacked vessels to their dens in remote areas of Sundarbans and send messages over mobile phones demanding huge amounts of money, food, cigarette, wine and mobile phone cards as ransom.

The pirate gangs equipped with firearms use speedy water transports like speedboats. They regularly stalk the fishing areas in search of targets.

Emergency steps including regular patrol by Navy and Coastal Guard and coordinated inter-district anti-piracy combing operation are needed to ensure safe fishing on the eve of Hilsa season, sources in trawler owners and fishermen's associations in Barisal told this

correspondent yesterday.

The Navy and the Coast Guard sometimes launch operations to nab the pirates. This ensures safety, but only for a few days when the law enforcers patrol the areas.

When they leave a certain area and go for patrol elsewhere on the sea, the pirates return. The pirates play a hide and sick with the law enforcers, the sources said.

An effective way to stop this would be a well-coordinated joint combing operation by all the police stations in the coastal areas, they said.

Piracy in the coasts and on the Meghna estuary has increased as many hardened criminals, chased by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), have taken shelter in remote shoals and in inaccessible areas in the Sundarbans, they said.

3 newsmen threatened in Moulvibazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Three journalists in Moulvibazar were threatened in cell phone messages on Monday.

They are Bokshi Iqbal Ahmed, Moulvibazar Press Club President and Editor of local daily The Banglar Din; Press Club Joint Secretary and Jugantor Correspondent M A Muhit and The Daily Star Correspondent Rajat Kanti Goswami.

The messages sent from cell phone No. 0176011860 between 11:30 and 12 noon said: Wait for final notice.

The sender identified himself as an activist of Janajuddha (ML), Sylhet Zone.

The three journalists called on the Deputy Commissioner and the Police Superintendent and informed them about the matter.

They said they will probe the matter and advised the journalists to record a general diary with police.

As per their advice, Bokshi Iqbal Ahmed recorded a general diary (GD) with Moulvibazar police on behalf of the three journalists.

Jubo Dal leader expelled for 'snatching'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

Two Jubo Dal leaders of its Kaliganj upazila unit in Jhenidah district have been expelled from the party for their alleged involvement in snatching money from a Jessore businessman.

They are upazila Jubo Dal President Arif Ahmed and party activist Mahabub. The decision was taken at a party meeting on Monday, party sources said.

An armed gang allegedly led by Arif and Mahabub on gunpoint snatched Tk 2.60 lakh on Saturday from Arjun Saha, a flour mill owner in Jessore when he was standing near Dhansiri restaurant at Kaliganj upazila headquarters after collecting the money from the retailers, police and witnesses said.

A case has been filed in this connection with Kaliganj police station accusing Arif, Mahabub and another person.

Police on Sunday recovered Tk 47,000 from family members of Arif and Tk 1.17 lakh from Mahabub's family. They however could not arrest them.

BELAL KILLING Slow progress in investigation deplored

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Journalists on Tuesday at a condolence meeting held at Khulna Press Club deplored slow progress in the investigation of journalist Belal murder case.

Khulna Metropolitan Union of Journalists (KMUJ) organised the meeting which was presided over by its acting president Md Anisuzzaman.

While demanding arrest of culprits, the speakers expressed their firm determination to continue their war through their writings without fear or favour against the grenade and bomb attackers. 'Guns and bombs can not silence our spirit', they reiterated. They also condemned the lip service of police officials in this regard.

ATTACK ON UNO OFFICE Cases against 900 fishermen in Tamujuddin

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Two separate cases were lodged on Tuesday in connection with fishermen's attack on the Upazila Nirbahi Officer's office and the police station in Char Tamujuddin on the previous day for steps to stop piracy in the Bay and the Meghna estuary.

The cases were filed with Tamujuddin police station in Bhola district.

Char Tamujuddin UNO Nischinta Kumar Poddar lodged one of the cases stating that about 500 fishermen attacked his office and damaged his official vehicle. But the did not name any accused.

Tamujuddin police lodged the other case accusing 400 fishermen and naming 12 of their leaders for attacking the thana.

Police arrested 14 fishermen till filing of this report yesterday morning. The police have launched a hunt for fishermen, which has created a panic in the area, sources contacted over phones said.

The 14 arrestees are Sadek, Khorshed Alam, Abu Taher, Shahabuddin, Faruk (1), Faruk (2), Faruk (3), Kamaluddin, Hare Krishna, Wazullah, Nurul Amin, Nurunabbi, Abdur Rahman and Jebul Huq.

But the piracy did not stop after Monday's incidents.

In the early hours of Tuesday, at least four fishing trawlers were looted and 13 fishermen abducted in separate incidents in the Meghna estuary, the sources claimed.

Tk 12.98 cr uplift projects for Moulvibazar town

Town dwellers to be provided with civic amenities including safe water

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Moulvibazar town dwellers await implementation of a massive development work which will provide them basic civic amenities including supply of safe water.

An amount of Tk 12 crore 98 lakh has been sanctioned for the project. Of the entire amount, Tk 9.98 crore has been sanctioned under the Town Infrastructure Development Project and Tk 3 crore under the City Operation and Infrastructure Development Project, according to

municipality chairman Fayzul Karim.

The work will start this month. Under the project, two five-storied buildings will be constructed in two kutcha bazaars, a by-pass road will be constructed to ease traffic jam and footpaths will be built along the main streets of the town for the pedestrians. A water treatment plant will also be constructed to ensure pure drinking water supply for the residents. The plant is expected to be completed by June this year, he told this correspondent. On its

completion, pure drinking water will be available to hundred per cent town dwellers.

When asked to tell about his plan to solve the perennial problem of stagnation of rainwaters in the town each monsoon, Karim told The Daily Star, Kudali Chhera canal flowing through the town would be re-excavated. The pourasabha already undertook a project with the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) to construct pucca banks on both sides of the canal, he informed.

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