



Patients being treated on floors of Patuakhali General Hospital due to bed crisis.

Toxic water from dying units polluting rivers, canals

Fish resources, crops and greenery threatened in Bhaluka

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Untreated toxic fluids released from several dying factories in Bhaluka upazila is polluting rivers and canals, posing environmental and health hazards.

The pollution which is going on for several years is threatening fish resources, crops and the greenery.

There are at least six big textile dying factories are operating in the upazila without any provision for waste treatment.

They release toxic water which flows into the waterbodies, sources said.

The water of Khiru river and canals flowing through the upazila is getting polluted by the coloured toxic water, local people alleged during a recent visit to the area by this correspondent. The water also affects crops and land fertility, they said.

Alal Uddin of Ashka village near Khiru river said that in dry season, the river water becomes colored and emits bad smell. Fishes die in the river and they can not use the water for irrigation because crops turn yellowish, he said.

Abu Hanif of the same village said he fielded a deep tubewell this year for irrigation instead of drawing water from Khiru river.

Falak Kumar of Kathali village said he cultivated Boro paddy beside Betia Mangun canal this year but the crop was partially damaged by the toxic water.

Some other farmers including Khorshed, Quddus, Omar and Azim of the village also experienced the same fate, Falak Kumar said.

The locals said that in the rainy season, the untreated toxic water gets mixed with different waterbodies, which poses a threat to the environment.

According to Fishery Department officials in Bhaluka, release of toxic water must be stopped to save fishes cultivated in waterbodies in the upazila. Fish is now being cultivated in 329 waterbodies (beels) covering about 16000 hectares. Of

these, 5350 hectares are connected with canal or rivers.

The authorities of the factories claim that they are treating toxic water before release and that it is not harmful for the environment. But at the same time, they also blame each other for polluting the environment.

Shepherd Yarn Ltd is at Bhaluka upazila headquarters on the bank of Khiru river. When contacted, its Deputy General Manager (DGM) AKM Firoz claimed that they set up a treatment plant at a cost of Tk 1.5 crore when the mill was set up in 2001 and obtained a certificate from the Directorate of Environment. He claimed that the coloured toxic water released into the river is treated and not harmful for the environment. The tenure of the certificate expired on May 23 this

year, he said.

When asked why the water released was coloured even after treatment, he asserted that it is 'totally safe though slightly coloured'.

About earlier newspaper reports on death of fishes in Khiru river and bad effects on croplands nearby, he said, "It is bogus".

"We did not get any complaint from farmers", he noted.

Ali Hossain, in-charge of K and K Tops Textile, claimed that the hot water of the factory is cooled and treated for about four hours in the factory compound before being released. So it is safe.

"We use various toxic chemicals for dying yarns but the toxic waste water is not harmful as it is treated properly, claimed Ali Hossain.

But it was gathered from sources that the factory is running for about 10 years without any treatment plant.

During a visit to Amart Dying Ltd, this correspondent saw that coloured water was flowing into the Betia Mangun canal directly from the factory through drains and pipes. Some palm trees are withering away at the spot where the water falls into the canal. Some local people told this correspondent that their palm trees are dying due to the industrial waste.

When contacted over cell phone, General Manager (GM) of Amart Dying Ltd. Sabir Ahmed said they have to work with some problems but the waste water released into the canal is not harmful. He however avoided a reply when asked whether the water was treated or not.



PHOTO: STAR

Untreated toxic water released from a dying factory in Bhaluka flowing into a canal.

Patuakhali General Hospital plagued with problems

MD SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Hardly 40 per cent of the patients who come to Patuakhali General Hospital every day get treatment and the rest leave disappointed after waiting for hours because of acute shortage of doctors and other staff.

This was gathered from different sources at the hospital during a visit there by this correspondent on Thursday. On an average, 400 patients come to the outdoor every day but more than half leave without meeting a doctor, they said.

Though the 100-bed hospital was upgraded to a 250-bed one, the manpower remains as before.

Out of 432 posts, the hospital has a total staff of only 140 including 10 doctors. There are 33 sanctioned posts of doctor.

Twenty-three posts of doctors are vacant for long at the lone government hospital for about 16 lakh

Only 10 doctors against 33 posts: Patients leave without treatment

people in the district.

A doctor has to do different types of work attending patients at the outdoor, emergency and in wards, performing routine office work, autopsy of bodies etc. So, it is difficult for the doctors to properly attend all the patients who come to the hospital every day, they said.

The 250-bed hospital is plagued with problems, causing suffering to patients. The problems include inadequate doctors, other staff and beds, shortage of medicines and equipment, water crisis and loadshedding of electricity.

There is had any space on floors

of the medicines from local markets, many of them told this correspondent.

The hospital was set up in 1979 with 50 bed on 12.44 acres of land at Kalikapur in the district town. Latter the beds were increased to 100 in 1989 and to 250 in February this year. But the number of doctors and other staff has not been increased.

Civil Surgeon (CS) Dr Nurun Nahar who is also the Superintendent of the hospital, said the organogram was sent to the health ministry four months ago, but to no reply yet.

There is no generator to perform emergency operation when electricity goes. The lone generator bought long is out of operation. The sources said the hospital authorities can not provide fuel for its operation.

work under the Urban Development Project funded by ADB (Asian Development Bank).

Municipal Sub-Assistant Engineer Yousof Shahi, who is supervising the work at a spot said he started the work a fortnight ago as the work order was given in May this year.

He had no answer when asked why the work was started in with the advent of monsoon.

In many areas shopping centers

are closed as people or vehicles can not approach them due to ankle deep mud and piled up construction materials.

Some shop owners along the Station Road said they have kept the shutters down as there is little possibility that the stagnant water and mud on the road would be cleared off soon.

The condition of other roads in the town is also similar for lack of renovation for long.

On the other hand, the landless people are also determined to hold their programme.

On contact, Kaliganj thana OC confirmed the separate programmes by the rival organisations and said police will be deployed to avoid any untoward incident.

Tension in Kaliganj as rivals call programmes on same spot

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A tense situation is prevailing in Kaliganj upazila as two organisations announced their separate programmes for tomorrow at the same venue.

"We should take lessons from this", he said while speaking as chief guest a memorial meeting arranged to mark the 5th death anniversary of Shamsur Rahman.

But the murder of Shamsur Rahman has not been tried even in five years. New names have been included in the charge sheet to save the killers, he said.

Addressing the meeting, BFUJ (Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists) President qbal Sobhan Chowdhury said, over a dozen journalists have been killed in the South-Western region but fair trial of any of the murders has not been made.

There is no possibility of getting justice as criminals backed by ruling party men were involved in the murders, he alleged. DUJ (Dhaka Union of Journalists) President Altaf Mahmud was also present at the meeting held at the Shilpakala Academy auditorium here.

A rally was also brought out in the town in the morning on the occasion. The journalists offered Fleha at the grave of slain journalist Shamsur Rahman.

Presided over by Jessoro Journalists Union (JJU) President and brother of Shamsur Rahman Shajed Rahman Bokul the meeting was addressed by, among others, BFUJ central leader Farazi Ajmol Hossain, Prof Afsar Ali, Jessoro Press Club Secretary Zahid Hasan Tukun, former AL MP Khan Tipu Sultan, Mobin Islam, Ashoke Sen and Sukumar Das.

The law-enforcers recently started a special drive in the region with a fresh list of 500 criminals and their godfathers in hand, sources

said. A large number of outlaws are still evading arrest in the region, especially in Kushtia district.

He also directed stern action against drug trading in southwestern districts. Sources said at least 2000 cadres of seven outlawed parties are still active in Kushtia. The parties are Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBPC-ML), PBPC-Janajuddho, Biplobi Communist Party (BCP), New Biplobi Communist Party (NBPC), Banglar Communist Party (BCP-Laltu), Gono Mukti Fouj (GMF) and Jashod Gono Bahini (JGB).

At least 72 alleged members of these outlawed parties were killed in Kushtia, the highest in the southwestern districts, since June last year.

All of them died in 'crossfire' in encounters with law enforcers. Twenty-six died in encounters with Rab and the rest with police.

The sources said hardened outlaws including several ringleaders are still at large. Some of them have crossed the border and some are sheltered allegedly by political leaders, the sources claimed.

Try 'real' killers of Shamsur Rahman

Journalists demand in Jessoro

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessoro

Dr AAMS Arefin Siddique, President of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA) yesterday said journalist Shamsur Rahman laid down his life for truth and honesty.

"We should take lessons from this", he said while speaking as chief guest a memorial meeting arranged to mark the 5th death anniversary of Shamsur Rahman.

But the murder of Shamsur Rahman has not been tried even in five years. New names have been included in the charge sheet to save the killers, he said.

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Go all out against criminals, outlaws

Rab DG orders in Kushtia: 500 on a fresh list

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Director General (DG) of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) Abdul Aziz Sarkar has ordered an all out drive to nab criminals including outlaws in southwestern districts, a crime prone area in the country.

The Rab DG issued the order at a close-door meeting at Rab-6 camp here during his short visit to Kushtia on Saturday.

High officials of Rab and police attended the two-hour meeting that began in the evening. The officials attending the meeting included Rab-6 (Khulna) Acting Commanding Officer Maj Kausar, Kushtia Police Superintendent Masud-Ul-Hasan and Rab-in-Charge in Kushtia Capt Arefi, meeting sources said. The Rab chief has ordered the elite anti-crime force to intensify the ongoing operation in the region and to take special measures against outlaws, the sources said.

The law-enforcers recently started a special drive in the region with a fresh list of 500 criminals and their godfathers in hand, sources

said. A day-long advocacy meeting on polygamy and early marriage was held yesterday.

It was organised by the South Asia Partnership (SAP) Bangladesh, an NGO.

Ruhul Amin Reya, chairperson of SAP's Justice Facilitation Committee, presided over the meeting while Abu Hossain Abu Mia was the chief guest.

It was addressed by, among others, schoolteacher Sanowar Hossain, Hasina Begum, Ali Hossain, Mostafizur Rahman, Imam of a mosque Abu Zafar and marriage register Khalifur Rahman.

The said early marriage is the root of incidents of violence in family life in rural areas. They called for creating awareness among people against polygamy and early marriage.

Workshop on early marriage in Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

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2 killed, 25 hurt in Tangail road mishap

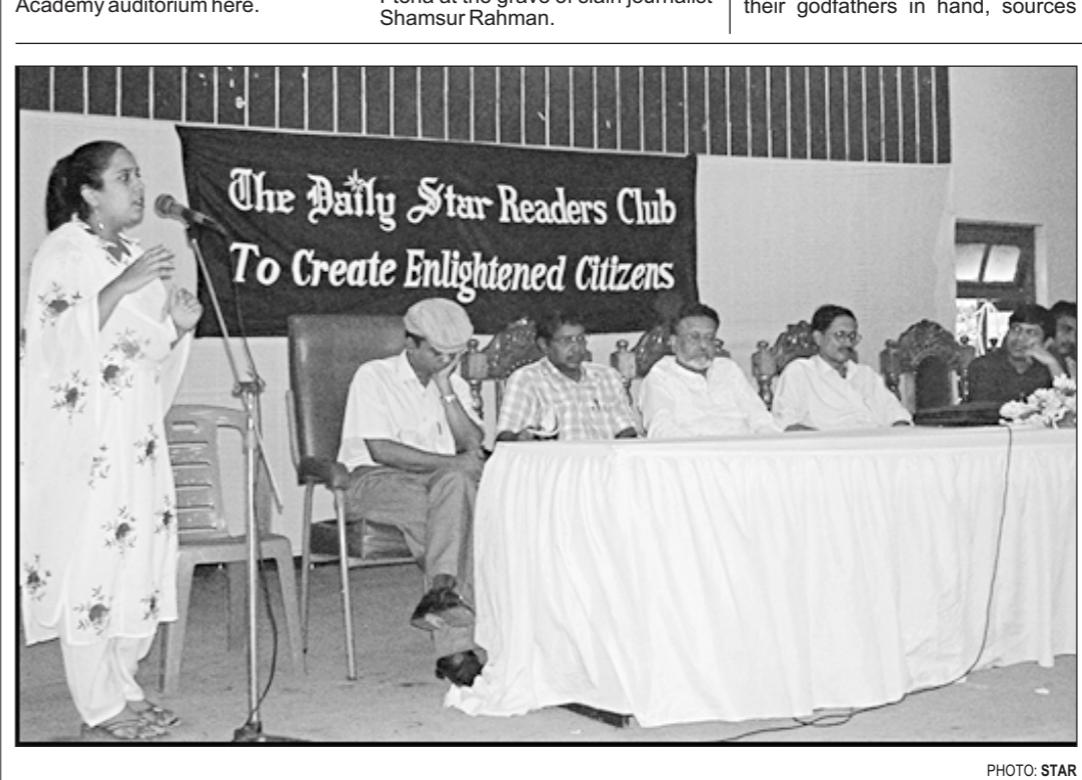
A CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Two persons were killed and 25 people injured when a Dhaka bound night coach from Pabna skidded off the road and fell into a ditch at Hatia near Jamuna Bridge in Kalihati upazila in Tangail Friday night, police said.

Local people and highway patrol police immediately started rescue operation.

Eleven of the injured people were admitted to Tangail General Hospital while 14 others were given first aid there.

The identity of the people who were killed could not be known but all were aged between 30 and 35.



A student of Government Azizul Haq College in Bogra speaking at a discussion meeting organised by the newly formed The Daily Star Readers Club on Friday.



PHOTO: STAR

A road with stagnant water leading to the railway station (above) and the Gourangabazar road blocked with construction materials in Kishoreganj town.