

# Encroachers turn Louhajang river into a narrow stream

MIRZA SHAKIL, TANGAIL

The Louhajang river flowing through Tangail town has turned into a narrow canal due to encroachment of its bank and shoreline by land grabbers.

Demand by different citizens' organisations and environmentalists for long to save the river went in vain as the authorities turned a deaf ear to the issue.

Originating from Dholeshahi, a tributary of mighty Jamuna, the Louhajang river flows through Tangail town and falls into Banshai.

Launches and big boats carrying merchandise used to anchor at the town only three decades ago. Traders from northern districts would also come to the town Tangail using the river route. "Big boats with mangoes from Rajshahi anchored in the small town. A road at College Para was named 'Amghat' as mangoes were unloaded there", an elderly citizen said while talking to this correspondent.

Besides, the river linked shoals in the western part with rest of the district.

The river started dying after the Water Development Board (WDB) constructed a sluice gate near the confluence of Louhajang and Dholeshahi rivers in 1992 under its 'Flood Action Plan (FAP)-20' project. Boat stopped plying the route since then as the river lost navigability.

In the following years encroachment added to this, land grabbing reduced the breadth of the river in the town and at many points. In fact land grabbing increased in the middle of 90s, which continued unabated, sources in the district land settlement office said.

This correspondent while visiting 10 kilometers of the river banks from Balmile in Dainna union in Tangail Sadar upazila to Kagmari area in Tangail town saw villagers occupying the river by felling earth on both sides. They have also built houses, raised banana orchards and vegetable gardens on encroached lands.

Illegal concrete structures were seen on encroached banks in many areas including Kagmara, Dhulerchar, Stadium, West Akur Takur Para, Beradoma, and Kagmai.

in the town.

Effluents released into the river from homestead built illegally are also polluting its water. At least 980 homesteads in the town are releasing sewage into the river through pipes, according to a survey by Tangail unit of Paribesh Sushasan Committee.

While talking to this correspondent, a member of the committee said the environment is being polluted in the area due to release of human waste into the river.

"We requested the district administration and the municipal authorities to take steps against land grabbing and pollution of the river but to no effect", said its convener Mohsin Sikdar.

The indiscriminate land grabbing is also causing drainage problem in the town, including water-logging in many areas, he said.

Mohsin Sikdar claimed that the authorities did not take any step to evict the encroachers and recover the lands.

Advocate Zafar Ahmed, panel chairman of Tangail pousarabha, said Louhajang river is vital to save

the environment in the town. As the outlets have been clogged, the drainage system has collapsed, he said.

"I raised the issue at a meeting but there was no result", he added.

When contacted, Additional Deputy Commissioner (revenue) Mohammad Abdul Mannan, said the Assistant Commissioner of Land in Tangail Sadar upazila has been directed to identify the land grabbers.

"The grabbed lands along the river will be recovered after the AC (Land) gives a report after investigation", he said.

Haider Ali, A C (Land) in Tangail Sadar upazila, said work on identifying the grabbed lands will be started soon.

Somnath Lahiri, an official of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) in Tangail, said land grabbers are also defying the River Reservation Act.

BELA will take legal steps if the authorities do not take steps to recover the grabbed lands, he said.

## Top Khulna outlaw murdered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Sonadanga police yesterday morning recovered the bullet-hit body of a top outlaw from Pujakhola area in the city.

Later, the body was identified as that of Wahid Murad alias Bihari Muna, 35, 'operation commander' of Janajuddho faction of Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBBCP), who was in charge of Khulna city.

According to DB police, the slain outlaw was wanted in seven criminal cases recorded with Khulna and Sonadanga police stations. Besides, he carried a conviction of 14 years in another case filed with Sonadanga thana on March 19 in 1995 for rape.

A notorious terrorist listed with the Special Branch of Khulna Metropolitan Police, Bihari Muna was involved in regrouping cadres of Janajuddho under the of its founder Abdur Rashid Malitha alias Dada Tapan.

Bihari Muna served as a peon in the KD Ghosh Road branch of Janata Bank. He was dismissed in 2002 after he was charged in a rape case.

## Police hunt for top outlaw 'Dada' Tapan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A security blanket has been thrown in Khulna city following an intelligence information that founder of PBBCP Janajuddho Abdur Rashid Malitha alias Dada Tapan has been staying here in disguise to raise funds for his underground party by collecting toll from rich businessmen.

Intelligence sources said law enforcers and fanned out in the city on uniform and in plainclothes to arrest the Janajuddho founder who is on top of the list of most wanted terrorists in the country.

Tapan who escaped from police custody in Khulna judges' court in January 2002, reportedly held two secret meetings last week with newly recruited cadres to make them ready for carrying out destructive missions in the city and elsewhere in Khulna district.

All police stations in Khulna city and neighbouring upazilas have been put on high alert, according to sources in the intelligence wing of Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP).

Searches are being carried out every now and then in suspected hotels and houses, they said.

## Freedom fighter laid to rest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Freedom fighter Md. Mozahar Ali, 60, killed in a road accident in Natore on Thursday was laid to rest on Saturday in Dinajpur.

Quoting family members police said Mozahar Ali was killed while he was going to see his ailing mother-in-law in Natore.

The body was brought to Dinajpur yesterday afternoon and buried at Sheikh Jahangir Graveyard here.

Deputy Commissioner (general) M Abdur Rahim, Dinajpur district commander of Freedom Fighters Association Md. Mossadeque Hossain Labu, officials and local elite attended the Janaza and burial. Thousands of people from all walks of life paid their last respect. Mozahar Ali is survived by his wife and two sons.



PHOTO: STAR

Crisis of pure water in Sylhet city is mounting day by day as the authorities fail to meet the increasing demand. City dwellers line up in front of a tap in Sobhanighat in the city. Flooding of low-lying areas deepened the crisis.

## A decade-long demand falls on deaf ears

Bridges linking Durgapur yet to be completed

JAHANGIR ALAM, Netrakona

Durgapur, a tourist spot in Netrakona having mineral deposits, is virtually isolated from the rest of the country as construction of two vital bridges could not be completed in over 11 years and two others damaged by last year's flood are yet to be repaired.

It is a surprise to local people why construction of the two bridges could not be completed in so many years and there is no move to repair the damaged ones.

A frontier upazila near the Garo hills, Durgapur is inhabited mostly by indigenous people. It has deposits of China clay, coal and other minerals.

The biggest China clay mine in the country is in Bijoypur in Durgapur upazila. A ceramic industry based on the clay has been set up in the area.

At least 40 tonnes of coal are collected every day from Sumeswary river bed and supplied to other districts.

Durgapur is also known for the Birishiri Tribal Cultural Academy

there, the lone centre for tribal cultural activities in greater Mymensingh. Famous communist leader Moni Singh was born in Durgapur and the Tanka monument was also launched there.

Durgapur supplies fruits like banana, pineapple but traders from other districts have to make a tedious journey and face so many hurdles to reach growers.

Durgapur upazila headquarters is only 45 km from Netrakona district town. Construction of Suknakuri and Sumeswary bridges was started in 1995 and 1998 respectively by the Roads and Highway Department (R&H) at estimated costs of Tk 7.50 crore and Tk 9 crore. But they are yet to be completed.

About 40 per cent work of both the bridges were completed earlier, Netrakona R&H officials said.

There is no initiative to repair the damaged Gujalikanda bridge in Purbadhalia upazila and Janzai bridge in Durgapur upazila.

Talking to this correspondent, M A Karim Abbasi, lawmaker from Durgapur-Kalmakanda constituency

ency, said Durgapur has great potentials for development but it is neglected. Besides minerals, the area can be developed into a tourist spot. It can also make enormous contributions to the national economy. But everything depends on good communication system, which is lacking.

"I am trying my best to develop the road communication. People's life in the area can be changed radically only if the upazila headquarters can be linked with the district headquarters with a good road", he said.

Dr. Mohammad Ali, lawmaker from Purbadhalia-Dhoba constituency, said he contacted higher authorities in R&H for repair of Gujalikanda bridge, damaged last year. He said he got a positive response.

When contacted, R&H Executive Engineer in Netrakona said construction of Suknakuri and Sumeswary bridges was stopped only for lack of funds.

About reconstruction of the two other bridges, he said proposals for those are yet to be submitted.

**Outlaws moot new plan at 'secret' meets in Khulna**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Top leaders of four underground parties held two secret meetings in last 15 days inside a state-owned jute mill at Khalishpur.

The leaders who attended the meetings were founder of Janajuddho faction of Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBBCP) Abdur Rashid Malitha alias Dada Tapan, Pulok of PBBCP Lalpataka faction, Dr Tutul and Madhu Babu of Chinnamul Communist Party and two leaders of Sramajibi Mukti Andolan.

At the meeting they decided to work together for a common goal in the name of 'Naxalite Movement'.

They had a threadbare discussion on the modus operandi of the proposed Naxalite Movement. But they did not take any decision about their role during rule of the next caretaker government and which of the

political parties to be supported in the next general election.

Dada Tapan reportedly told the meetings that Khulna city Awami League president Manjurul Imam and Dainik Janmabhumi Editor Humayun Kabir Balu were killed by some expelled cadres of PBBCP for their personal gains. PBBCP Janajuddho never wanted to kill the AL leader and the journalist, he said. Dada Tapan was in Khulna since the last week of June, the sources said.

The source said leaders of the four underground parties unanimously decided to take revenge against "killing" of their party cadres in crossfire.

The parties have started recruiting more members and collecting funds and will start "operations" after takeover by the caretaker government, the sources said.

## Topple protectors of militants

Dr. Kamal tells rallies in Manikganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

politics if we really want to do good to the people", he added.

Earlier on the day, he addressed public meetings at Dhamrai, Dhankora and on Balaiti Prasad premises.

Dr Kamal said Islamist militancy started in the country under the protection of a partner in the ruling alliance. It will not stop till their godfathers in the government are arrested, he alleged.

The objectives behind opposition's demand for reforms in the caretaker system and Election Commission is to hold a free and fair election to free politics from black money and musclemen and reduce corruption, he said.

He was addressing a public meeting held at Patilapara Abdur Rahman Khan High School ground in Saturia Saturday evening. It was organised by the Manikganj unit of Gono Forum.

Dr. Kamal said the main goal of the BNP-Jamaat government is to retain power to plunder resources. "We all have to shun this types of

politics if we really want to do good to the people", he added.

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