

Civic amenities a distant dream for North Agrabad residents

DWAIPAYAN BARUA

More than one lakh residents of North Agrabad area in the port city have been suffering for long due to lack of civic amenities.

North Agrabad is a ward of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) comprising as many as 17 densely populated neighbourhoods.

Having repeatedly failed to draw attention of the authorities concerned as well as the local ward commissioner, the people here now seek intervention of the mayor to mitigate the suffering.

Crises of water and power prevail throughout the year in the ward consisted of Muhuripara, Daiyapara, Hazipara, Beparipara, Moulabipara, Lungipara, Mollapara, Mistrypara, Napitpara, Chariapara, Panwalapara, Askarabad, Mansurabad, Santibag, Shayamali, Ramna Residential



A narrow road at Muhuripara, left, and residents scramble for water at North Agrabad, right.

Area and Halishahr K-block.

The roads, including lanes and by-lanes, lie in most dilapidated condition with poor drain-

age system, rendering the people marooned even after a medium scale downpour during the rainy season.

The house owners have set up deep tube-wells to face irregular water supply only to count bills issued by Water and Sewerage

Authority (Wasa) regularly.

The house owners said supply of Wasa water remains suspended for more than a week at a



stretch at different areas of the ward very often.

Tenants' row with the house owners over water supply is a common scene in the ward, local people said.

Those living in a few buildings with deep tube-well facilities are rather lucky to have some water, leaving most of the people depended on the mercy of the owners of illegally set up pump-houses selling water at a high price.

Akter Hossain, a resident of Moulvipara, said he is to spend an additional amount of Tk 800 to buy water at Tk 60 to Tk 80 a drum for his four-member family a month despite he pays Wasa bill regularly.

"It is also not an easy task to buy water," said Akter adding, "I have to wait in a long queue for water and hire a rickshaw van the previous day carry the water."

Most of the roads developed pothole due to lack of repair work for years. Besides, digging by the

authorities like T&T and PDB worsens their condition throughout the year.

"During the rainy season suffering of the commuters, particularly that of the school children and garments workers, goes beyond tolerable limit when we are only left with the hope that an initiative to improve the roads and drainage system will be taken in the dry season, said Suman Das of Muhuripara.

But, no initiative has been taken in this regard in the last three years, he said.

Moreover, dustbins overflow with garbage and filthy items make the lives of both the pedestrians and the residents quite unbearable, said Jahid Un Nabi, a teacher of an English Medium School and a resident of Mollapara.

CCC cleaners hardly come here to clean the dustbins, he added.

Local people blamed the carelessness of the ward com-

missioner for their sufferings.

Many residents preferring anonymity said the ward commissioner hardly attend his ward office and forces the visitors to meet him at his business establishment at Muhuripara where he remains busy with personal matters most of the time.

Ward Commissioner Javed Nazrul Islam was not available at the CCC Ward Office on Sunday noon when this correspondent went to meet him.

Later, Javed talked to The Daily Star keeping this corresponding waiting at his business establishment for around two hours.

Refuting the allegations, he said he is sincerely working for the betterment of the locality and the people.

He blamed Wasa, Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) and Roads and Highways (R&H) for the suffering of the people of his ward.

Illegal logging, poaching put CHT wildlife at stake

JASIM MAJUMDER

Wild animals and birds are on the verge of extinction in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) as poaching and illegal logging are going on unabated under the nose of the administration and the forest department.

Many predators have long been selling different types of wild animals and their meat, including deer, at the local markets in the three hill districts.

Unscrupulous people with the help of a section of dishonest officials at forest department and local administrations, have damaged Pabla Reserve Forest, Hazarikhil Reserve Forest and Chunati Reserve Forest, safe

sanctuaries of over 40 kinds of wild animals and 125 species of birds, to a great extent, sources said.

Most of these wild animals and birds are in great danger losing their natural habitats.

Due to negligence of forest departments, the safe haven of wild elephant, cheetah, monkey, deer, bear, wild hog, wild hen, wild duck and birds has turned into a dangerous place as the protectors of the forests appeared as the predators in recent times, said environmentalists.

Besides killing and trafficking in wildlife, at least 150 truckloads of illegal wood find their way to over 140 brick fields and timber markets in Khagrachhari, Rangamati, Bandarban and

Chittagong districts to make the matter worse, they said.

Plundering of forest trees are going on unabated at least at 140 sites in eight upazilas of the CHT. Of them, 55 sites are located in Rangamati, 48 in Khagrachhari and 37 in Bandarban. Besides, the dishonest timber traders, in connivance with a section of forest officials, collect woods and fire-woods and supply those to brick fields in three hill districts and Chittagong.

Mong Ching Marma, a timber trader from Guimara under Ramgarh upazila, said he, like many others, is engaged in felling trees at forests, including reserve ones, almost regularly.

Abdul Jalil, another trader in Merung area in Dighinala, said

more than 140 truckloads of illegal timber leave the CHT forests daily without any obstruction from the forest department men.

He said these timbers and wood are sold to brickfields or traders. The timbers include Kona, Mehagoni, Rubber, Karoi, Chapalish, Akashi, Goda, Shal, Tick (Segun) and Jarul. One truckload of such timber is sold at Tk 30,000 to Tk 40,000, he said.

Pradip Chowdhury, programme supervisor of Centre for Sustainable Development (CFSD), said the CHT forests are disappearing as unscrupulous people log timbers with the help of a section of dishonest forest department officials. As a result, the wildlife of the forests are on the verge of extinction since they

are losing their habitats day by day.

Abu Daud Muhammad, member of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA), said they have filed several general diaries with different police stations in the CHT to protect wildlife, forest and the environment without any positive response in this regard as yet.

Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Shah-e-Alam, refuting the allegations, said he has never seen sale of meat of wild animals or birds in the local markets. He, however, blamed journalists for making 'concocted' stories in this regard.

ACCESS CONTROL TOLL ROAD OPENS



The Access Control Toll Road linking Chittagong Port with Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Kumira, Sitakunda, opens to traffic on Sunday.

the week that was

Polling centres for people with disability demanded

Different organisations working for people with disability formed a human chain in front of Sitakunda Upazila Ladies Club on Wednesday demanding disabled-friendly polling centers in the upcoming general election.

Young Power in Social Action (YPSA) and ActionAid Bangladesh jointly organised the programme.

Speakers at the programme emphasised the need for disabled-friendly polling centres and separate

booth for them to ensure their right to franchise.

They also demanded opportunity for the challenged people to choose a person for voting on behalf of them and keep their votes confidential.

YPSA Coordinator (Field Operation) Mohammed Mahbubur Rahman, Programme Officer Mohammed Harun, Sitakunda Press Club General Secretary Qaiyum Chowdhury, Mahalanga Disabled Development Organisation President Babul Nath, visually challenged Nurunnabi, Nazrul Islam and Dukhi Rani Das spoke.

Two high-rise bldgs fined

A mobile court on Tuesday fined a community centre and two under-construction high-rise buildings for pilfering and wasting water.

The court fined the concerned authorities Tk 1.25 lakh for stealing huge quantity of Wasa water through illegal pump.

The court unearthed the illegal connection at Upahar Community Centre, a 20 storied under-construction commercial building --AA Complex, and a 10 storied under-construction apartment complex -- Kearsi Mashud, in separate drives at CDA Avenue and Nasirabad areas under Panchlaish and Bayezid police stations.

The court disconnected the water line and seized the pumps and some sanitary materials. The court during its drive also found the metres out of order.

Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) Magistrate Md Munir Chowdhury, also acting as Chittagong Wasa magistrate, led the drive.

'Execution of Bush' demanded

Chittagong City Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury here on Saturday demanded execution of US President George W Bush on charge of killing former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Mohiuddin also demanded international investigation into the execution of Saddam.

He was addressing a rally organised

by Nagorik Committee, Chittagong in front of Zila Parishad Super Market protesting execution of Saddam.

Awami League Chittagong City unit General Secretary Inamul Haq Danu, CPB Chittagong unit President Mrinal Chowdhury, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal central leader Moinuddin Khan Badal, Ekramul Karim of Liberal Democratic Party and Swapen Sen of Gonotantri Party addressed the rally with Nagorik Committee Secretary General Dr Abu Yusuf Alam in the chair.

Criticising the so-called Islamist parties, he said, "The leaders of these political parties always talk about Islam but they were found mysteriously mum about the execution of Saddam."

Later, they prayed for salvation of the departed soul of Saddam and brought out a truck procession that paraded main thoroughfares of the city.

Shyamsundar - Shefali Ghosh Smriti Padak introduced

Abasar Sangskritik Goshthi will introduce "Shyamsundar Baishnab - Shefali Ghosh Smriti Padak" from this year aiming to acquaint the next generation with these singers and their songs.

The organisation announced the decision at a meeting to condole the deaths of folksong singer Shefali Ghosh and Composer Sarwar Hossain Nabab at its office.

The organisation adviser Jadu Gopal Baishnab presided over the meeting.

Prof Rita Dutta, litterateur Rama Chowdhury, Ward Commissioner MA Naser, artists Ranajit Rakshit, Aujit Kuma Ice, Biswajit Sen and Bipul Barua spoke at the meeting.

The speakers recalled the contribu-

tion of the singers in the cultural arena. Shefali passed away on December 31 last year due to brain hemorrhage.

New CPC body takes over

The outgoing executive committee of Chittagong Press Club handed over its charges to the newly elected office bearers at a meeting on Sunday.

Outgoing President Abu Sufian presided over the meeting while newly elected President Ali Abbas, outgoing General Secretary Kalim Sarwar and newly elected General Secretary Ezzaz Yusuf spoke.

Speakers promised to work together to uphold the image of the club and

welfare of its members. They sought cooperation of all in this regard.

Later, outgoing president and general secretary handed over the charges to the newly elected president and general secretary.

Poet Jasim Uddin's contribution recalled

Loko Utsab and Puratani Mela Parishad observed the 103rd birth anniversary of Poet Jasim Uddin popularly known as Palli Kabi here on Saturday.

The organisation organised a discussion on the occasion of the birth

anniversary of the poet at Chittagong Academy auditorium.

Organisation's President Dr Mahbulul Haq presided over the meeting. Poet and Journalist Arun Das Gupta, Columnist Mohammed Hossain Khan, litterateur Rama Chowdhury spoke at the discussion.

The speakers said village, human and their livelihoods were the main subjects of the poet.

They warned of the negative aspects of western culture and said if we don't take steps the flow of western culture will destroy our culture and heritage slowly.

The organisation's General Secretary Shahrir Khaled, Poet Kamrul Hasan Badal, artists Dipen Chowdhury, Kalpataru Bhattacharya, Golam Kibria, Kilol Das and Rajib Banik also spoke.



BBC organises a dialogue titled 'Bangladesh Sanglap' at Theatre Institute Chittagong auditorium on Saturday. Sitting from left are former minister Abdullah Al Noman, writer Mustari Shafi, moderator Shakil Anwar, former Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) president Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury and former minister MA Mannan.



Patha Natak Parishad, a threatre group, stages a drama on Central Shaheed Minar premises on Saturday.

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