

Bhaluka factory waste poses health hazards to villagers

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Untreated water discharged from industries in Bhaluka is polluting the environment and affecting agriculture and fishery.

The polluted water in rivers and water bodies has also posed a health hazard to people.

According to sources, the industries including a good number of dyeing factories are running without proper water treatment plants though setting up Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) is mandatory for factory that discharges toxic water.

As most of the factories do not maintain the ETP technology, toxic water released by factories easily get into different water bodies, mainly in the rainy season creating environmental hazards.

There are at least 20 big industries including some dyeing units in Hobirbari union in Bhaluka upazila. The coloured toxic water released by these industries flow into Lautir Khal (canal) and then croplands in Paragaon village.

The canal is now virtually an outlet for toxic waste and its water is harmful for people and other living beings. Its coloured and stinky water can not be used even for washing, locals told this correspondent during a visit. However the level of toxicity could not be officially confirmed.

Janab Ali, 60, a farmer at Paragaon village, said, "Toxic water enters into our croplands in rainy season affecting paddy and other crops".

Janab Ali said there were plenty of fishes in Lautir Khal five to six years ago and people of Paragaon, Kachina, Gazipur, Hobirbari, Labonkhota, Naulakuri and Aulatali villages used to catch those. Now, even frogs is not seen in the canal due to pollution, he said.

Abdul Majid, 70, of Naulakuri village said, "The present situation is beyond our imagination and if such a trend continues, the area will become unfit for human habitation".

Richshawpuller Md. Akhtar of Lobankhota and village police (village defence party member) Noor Mohammed of Hobirbari union also echoed the same sentiment.

Some families have shifted their houses from near the Lautir Khal as the bad smell from the canal water made living there impossible.

Carpenter Md. Rafiqul Islam said he shifted his houses away from the canal to avoid the pollution.

Talking to this correspondent, young farmer Md. Ramzan Ali of Paragaon village wanted to know whether industries have the right to drain out toxic water

complaint against a knitting and a dyeing factory at a monthly meeting with Bhaluka Upazila Nirbahi Officer. We do not want factories that destroys the ecology."

Pointing his finger at ML Dyeing, Square Fashion Lt., Square Nit Fabrics, Arif Textile and FM Dyeing, UP chairman Nizam Uddin alleged that they are mainly responsible for pollution in the area and this should be checked as early as possible.

meter per hour.

He claimed that his industry is the lone unit in Bhaluka industrial zone that possesses a biological plant.

He also said that the water is drained out into the Lautir Khal after proper treatment.

Asked why the released water is coloured after treatment and whether it is safe for environment, Rafiqul claimed that the colour does not matter if the

every industry to avoid the pollution, Rafiqul said.

The polluted water can seep into tubewells and endanger health of villagers.

A few of the industries have chemical ETPs but those are not operated regularly, some sources alleged while talking to this correspondent. The owners keep the ETPs inoperative for most of the time as maintenance cost per unit is Tk 1,00,000 to Tk 1,50,000 per month. They do this to increase profit, the sources claimed.

Ahsan Habib Mamun, In-Charge of Arif Nit Spin, said as they use cotton, so they do not have to use water. But Arif Nit Spin has already set up an ETP as production of Energy Dyeing, a sister concern of Arif Nit Spin, will start soon, the official added.

Md. Shafiqur Rahman, Assistant General Manager of ML Dyeing, said they have an ETP (chemical) and the water discharged by ML Dyeing is safe.

Md. Yunus Ali, Factory Manager of Baly Yarn Dyeing Ltd. at Labonkhota said they run a ETP (chemical) to treat the water and the water is drained out into the Lautir Khal after proper treatment.

But during a visit the ETP at Baly Yarn was found to be ineffective and obsolete.

In other industries, this correspondent was not allowed to see ETPs.

Meanwhile, joint forces have served notices on 41 industries in Bhaluka to submit papers including certificate of the Department of Environment and what measures they have taken to treat toxic water. The industries have submitted their papers to joint forces and teams of the joint forces will visit these industries soon, according to sources. There are some 100 big and small industries in Bhaluka upazila as the area is flood free and has good communication with the capital and rest of the country.

On contact, Bhaluka UNO Rezaul Kabir said some factories may have ETPs but these are not used regularly and waste water is released from those without treatment.

This is affecting agriculture and fishery as the toxic waste gets mixed with waters of different water bodies. Environment protection rules should be maintained very strictly to protect the ecology, the UNO said.



As monsoon is approaching, a resident of Paikpara in Narayanganj town is taking home a boat from market. Many areas of the town go under water in monsoon.

PROBE INTO SUST IRREGULARITIES

Teachers, officials submit evidence to UGC team

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The University Grants Commission (UGC) probe into alleged irregularities in Shajalal University of Science & Technology (SUST) during the past government will continue today.

The 3-member committee led by Prof Mohammad Mahbub Ullah came to Sylhet Saturday morning and talked to the VC and other officials. Two others in the team are UGC member Md. Sultan Hossain and Deputy Director Prof Dr. Mizanur Rahman.

The team worked till midnight Saturday night and called files from different departments yesterday, sources at SUST said.

Till yesterday afternoon, about 40 teachers, officials and employees from rival groups aligned with the two major political parties met the probe committee and submitted documents and newspaper clippings in support of their allegations.

Some newsmen of national and regional newspapers also meet the team members and handed over newspaper clippings to substantiate different allegations of corruption and irregularities against the

former administrations of the university, the sources said.

An eight-member team of SUST Teachers Association (SUSTA), a five-member team of pro-BNP teachers led by Prof Habibul Ahsan and an eight-men team of pro-Awami League teachers led by former president of SUST Prof Akhtarul Islam met the committee separately, the sources said.

They raised different allegations of corruption and irregularities against SUST administrations at different times.

Some of the teachers and employees demanded punitive steps against Musleh Uddin in alleged irregularities done during his tenure. They also handed over documents in support of their statements, the sources said.

When contacted, the UGC team leader declined to say anything about the complaints.

"We are getting complaints and evidences while receiving statements", Prof Mahbub Ullah said.

"We will have to thoroughly check all those. It is not at all possible to make any comment till we finish our work. We will continue till Monday", he said.

In September 2002, a probe committee led by UGC member Prof Dr. AKM Muhsin detected several irregularities in purchase of Tk 2 crore books for the varsity library and certificate forgery. Some of the allegations were sent to the then Bureau of Anti corruption for further investigation and action, but the matter ended there, sources said.

There were allegations of irregularities against the immediate past VC Prof Musleh Uddin Ahmed. He was appointed Pro VC of the university on February 14, 2002 and made VC within a few months.

Before he was compelled to resign, Prof Musleh Uddin appointed 155 teachers, 51 officials and 134 employees during his 18-month tenure, sources said.

Prof Musleh Uddin was forced to leave the campus after signing his resignation letter in the afternoon of May 14, 2006 in the face of students' agitation following the death of SUST student Mosharrar Hossain Shamim in police firing. The unrest began following a clash between students of the varsity and a nearby private medical college.

CLOSED-DOOR MEETING

No headway on reopening of 8 jute mills

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The six-member BJMC team led by its chairman yesterday held a meeting with high officials of eight laid-off state owned jute mills in Khulna-Jessore industrial belt.

The meeting, held at BJMC zonal office at Charerhat in Khalsipur began at 10-30 am and lasted till 1-30 pm.

Officials of the mills included their general managers, DGMs, project directors, chief account officers, production managers, sales officers and engineers.

The closed-door meeting discussed the running capital to be required for reopening laid-off mills, maintenance cost of outdated machines, severe power crisis, payments to those who would go on voluntary retirement and the recent labour unrest in the industrial belts.

No decision was taken at the meeting whether the laid-off mills would be reopened or not. A final decision will come shortly after reviewing the report to be submitted to government by BJMC chairman, said its zonal coordinator Shamim Ahmed.

Members of the team will visit all eight state-owned jute mills today before returning to Dhaka.

Meanwhile, leaders of Khulna regional committee of Patkal Sangram Parishad (PSP) yesterday reiterated their demand for payment of arrears wages and salaries of workers and employees.

Shamim said there is little hope of reopening the laid-off mills unless at least fifty per cent of the workers are sent on voluntary retirement.

2 SIs jailed for taking bribe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rajshahi Speedy Trial court yesterday jailed two sub-inspectors (SI) of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police for taking bribe.

They are SI Modasser Hossain and SI Sohel Rana. Each of them were jailed for two years. Magistrate Fazlul Karim also fined them Tk 5,000 and Tk 1,000 respectively.

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested them from Boalia police station on March 21. They also recovered Tk 15,000 in cash from their possession.

SI Modasser caught a man with five passports from Dhaka bus terminal. Modasser promised his release on payment of Tk 30,000. The man's relatives paid him Tk 15,000, but the policemen were insisting for the rest amount. SI Sohel was carrying the money with him.

ARRESTED MILITANTS TELL POLICE

Teesta shoals used to train JMB men

RAFIQUE SARKER, Rangpur

The arrested JMB militants, now on remand disclosed that Joyprotag Madrasa in remote shoal area of Teesta river in Pirgachha upazila was used as a JMB militant training camp.

Two militants back from Afghan war--Abdul Quddus Khan Salafi and Abul Kalam Azad--trained a large number of newly recruited JMB members there who came from adjoining districts, police sources told this correspondent. Abdul Quddus is on remand and Abul Kalam is on the run. Most of the newly recruited JMB members were madrasa students, they told police during interrogation.

Rangpur Police Superintendent Hasif Aziz said, "We are almost sure that Salafi is a returnee from Afghan war. He used to train JMB militants in the remote Teesta shoals. A large number of JMB militants received training there"

He said police are not yet sure if Salafi had connection with al-Qaeda. He is being quizzed.

Police sources said, police is hunting for Abul Kalam Azad who had been at large following country-wide bomb blasts on August 17, 2005. He is still visiting different clandestine JMB training camps in the northern districts.

He visited Protapjyess Madrasa at Annadanagar in Pirgachha upazila a few days before the four

JMB cadres were arrested, police said.

Rangpur DB police arrested Abdul Quddus Khan Salafi, Rubel Hosen, Mohidul Islam and Anisur Rahman from different areas of the district on Thursday. Rubel was a member of Islami Chhatra Shibir, a police official of Pirgachha thana said.

Police sources said, at least 10 training camps were run in remote shoal areas of Teesta and Brammahputra in Rangpur and Kurigram districts.

Madrasas and mosques in those areas were chosen for training camps to avoid attention of the law and order enforcers.

Detention of

6 Pabna BNP, AL leaders extended

A CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Detention order of six out of nine front ranking BNP and Awami League (AL) leaders here has been extended by another 90 days.

Home Ministry has issued the order, court sources said, adding the order reached the Deputy Commissioner's office last week. The arrestees were informed about the order, court sources said.

Earlier, joint forces arrested nine AL and BNP leaders on April 10 and 11 on charge of corruption and patronising criminals. They were sent to jail with 30 days' detention on April 21. Their detention ended yesterday.

Names of the leaders who got fresh detention are Pabna district BNP president and former lawmaker Shirajul Islam Sarder, Pabna municipality chairman and Pabna district BNP organising secretary Kamrul Hassan Mintu, Ishwerdi Pourasava chairman and BNP leader Mokleshur Rahman Bablu, Central vice president of Bangladesh Shramik League Rashidullah, Bharara Union Parishad (UP) chairman of Sadar upazila and district AL leader Abu Sayed and former UP chairman of Hemayetpur union and influential BNP leader Alauddin Malitha.

On contact, Jailer Bodrudoza of Pabna jail confirmed it saying he got the fresh detention order earlier.

However, the rest three including an immediate past lawmaker will remain in jail as they are accused in some other cases.

They are Pabna district AL president and immediate past lawmaker from Pabna-4 constituency Shamsur Rahman Sharif Dilu, President of Sonali Bank CBA Abul Ehsan Bappi and former UP chairman Shafiqul Islam Shafi.

Jailer Bodrudoza said they will remain in jail although there is no fresh detention order against them but they are accused in other cases.

However, no case was filed against the nine till now. A court source said the authorities are taking preparation to file case against them.

Earlier, the arrestees submitted statements of their assets also to joint forces.



Cashing in on city fathers' indifference...Some boatmen have innovated a unique way to earn money by making a 'boat bridge' on a canal near Fishery Ghat in Chittagong city. They realise Tk two per head for crossing the 15-year canal.

COMBATING MONGA

Hundreds to get jobs at DEPZ, BGMEA units

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

The authorities of Dhaka Export Processing Zone (DEPZ) and Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) have taken a move to combat *monga* (feminine-like situation) in five northern districts.

Under the programme, hundreds of poor people of Rangpur, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Gaibandha and Nilphamari will be employed in DEPZ and BGMEA factories.

Rangpur Deputy Commissioner (DC) Khandker Atiar Rahman said the BGMEA and DEPZ authorities agreed to employ them in jobs from this month. They have agreed to do it in response to a request of the army authorities in Rangpur Cantonment. Civil administration and army personnel of the concerned districts are engaged in the selection process, the DC said.

He said a large number of

monga affected families in Rangpur have shown interest to do jobs in BGMEA and DEPZ factories.

Initially, DEPZ and BGMEA authorities will employ 360 people this month. About 285 *monga* affected people, mostly women, will be appointed in the DEPZ factories as apprentice.

A process is going on to select 50 people of the aforesaid districts for appointment in different BGMEA garment factories next month. The employment process will continue each month.

Rangpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Mostafa Azad Choudhury has lauded the steps of DEPZ and BGMEA. He said in any entrepreneurs have shown interest to set up garments factory in the *monga* affected districts, but they could not proceed further due to lack of gas and skilled manpower.

He said, "We hope gas would be supplied to Rangpur through pipeline soon".

Woman files GD against ex-Jamaat MP

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A woman who earlier filed a cheating case against former Jamaat lawmaker Riasat Ali, his son Zulfikar Ali and three others lodged a general diary (GD) with Sadar Police Station last night seeking protection.

In the GD, Maleka Khatun of Pratapnagar village in Assassuni upazila, alleged that she and her family members are being threatened for filing the cheating case.

Maleka, who now resides at Rajabagan in the town, filed the cheating case with a First Class Magistrate court here on May 8. Soon after filing the case, Riasat Ali and his son Zulfikar Ali threatened her, family members and witnesses of the case to withdraw the case or 'face the dire consequence,' she said.

She urged the authorities concerned to take measures against the accused and ensure security of their lives and property.

First Class Magistrate Hemayet Hossain ordered an investigation into the incident and asked Assassuni Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Shah Jahan Siraj to do the needful.

However, when this correspondent contacted Riasat Ali, he denied the allegations saying neither he nor his son threatened her.