

Encroachers feasting on Kaptai Lake

SHANTIMOY CHAKMA, Rangamati

Encroachment of Kaptai Lake banks goes on unabated, destroying its scenic beauty and polluting its water.

The lake is shrinking as several thousand illegal structures like hotels, business establishments, houses and slums have sprung up on its banks.

As encroachers do not face any action, illegal bus and truck terminals have been set up, creating a filthy atmosphere in the area.

Water of the lake is gradually becoming polluted as a huge quantity of waste and pollutants is thrown into the lake water daily.

The illegal settlements on slopes of the bank also accentuate landslide in rainy season, causing deaths.

Three years ago, the municipal authorities constructed a big two-storied shopping complex styled Municipal Market at a cost of Tk 1 crore on the bank of the lake.

Ignoring protests by townspeople, they also constructed a truck terminal at a cost of Tk 1.5 crore near the Old Bus Stand by filling up about 100 decimal area of the lake in 2004.

The CHT Development Board (CHTDB) has also made a big bus terminal at Chitakhola by filling up about two-acre area of the lake.

Now, a two-storied building is being constructed by the district council beside the municipal mar-

ket. The building will house a community center and the office of a contractors' association, sources said.

Many residential hotels, built by encroaching land, now dot its bank, destroying the picturesque beauty of the lake. These include Green Castle, Lake View, Hotel Anika, Arju Boarding, Amanat Boarding and Sufia Hotel.

Many slums have sprung up by encroaching banks of the lake in Reserve Bazar, police line, Tabalchhari, Parjatan Holyday Complex and Fishery Ghat areas.

Sources at Public Health Engineering Department said several tonnes of wastage are being dumped into the lake every day, polluting the water.

Worst of all are hundreds of open latrines at slums surrounding the lake.

The Rangamati unit of National NGO Forum, working for safe water in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in a recent bacteria test of the lake water found some horrifying results.

Rates of Total Coliform (TCF) and Facile Form (FCF) are 800 and 450 respectively per 100 milliliters of the lake, the tests found. TCF and FCF should be zero in safe water, said Alak Bikash Dewan, an official of the NGO Forum.

The lake water will be unfit for use and unsafe for fishes if the pollution continues at the present

rate, he told this correspondent.

Civil society leader and a member of Kaptai Lake Control Committee Kazi Nazrul Islam said immediate steps should be taken by the government to save the lake.

When contacted, Rangamati Municipality Chairman Md. Habibur Rahman said the lands where the truck terminal and the municipal market were built were leased by the Raangamati Bazar Fund authorities in 2001.

Replying in a question about encroachment of the lake, Habibur said, "We built the truck terminal and the market considering public interests and to create sources of income of our office".

Murati Sen Chakma, an official of Rangamati Bazar Fund, said lands on the lake bank were leased by the deputy commissioners' office '10 to 12 years ago when the then DC administered the Bazar Fund. Land settlement process is stopped for last seven years, he claimed.

Deputy Commissioner Md. Nurul Amin said Bazar Fund authorities leased lands so they are responsible for this situation.

He said action will be taken against encroachers on the basis of specific allegation.



Teachers of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology parading campus streets (left) and Rajshahi University students demonstrating on Dhaka-Rajshahi highway yesterday protesting Monday's police action on Dhaka University students.



PHOTO: STAR

Fresh spate of diarrhoea in Gaibandha

168 attacked

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

With the recession of flood water in Gaibandha, water borne diseases are spreading again in affected areas.

According to sources at civil surgeon's office, 168 people have been attacked with diarrhoea and other intestinal diseases in affected areas.

Worst affected Fulchari upazila topped the list with 58 people admitted to the local health complex yesterday, followed by 22

each in Shaghata and Sunderganj, 19 in Gobindaganj, 11 each in Palashbari and Gaibandha Sadar upazila health complexes and 11 in Gaibandha Modern Hospital.

The sources said a total of 5,055 people have been attacked with the diseases since flood hit Gaibandha late last month.

There were allegations that supply of oral saline and medicines were not adequate to the needs in affected areas. But this was denied by authorities at civil surgeon's office.

WATER-LOGGING

42 sued for blocking canals in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A case was filed here yesterday accusing 42 people for creating water-logging in two unions in Kaligonj upazila by creating obstruction on water flow of two canals.

The court accepted the case and ordered Kaliaganj police station officer-in-charge Nur Mohammad to probe the allegation.

Noor Islam Sardar of Gobindapur village filed the case.

The accused include Golam Rabbani, Arshad Ali, Solaiman, Yad Ali, Jamal Uddin, Abdul Hadi, Yusuf Ali, Abdul Hamid, Abul Hossain, Ansar Ali, Abdul Gaffar, Kena Moral,

Nur Mohammad, Abdur Rahim of Mukundapur and Panchbaria villages.

Plaintiff Noor Islam Sardar alleged that the accused occupied Mukundapur Dariala canal in Dhalbaria union and Panchbaria canal in Mathureshpur union through false documents and encroached the water bodies for fish cultivation, stopping their flow. This created water-logging in the area, he claimed.

These two canals are outlets for draining rainwater from over 2000 acres of land in the two unions, he said.



PHOTO: STAR

Illegal constructions along the bank of Rangamati Lake by encroaching the water body.

6X3

2X2

9X3

8X3

5X2