



PHOTO: STAR

Victim of massive siltation, Surma River at Kazir Bazar near Sylhet town can hardly be recognised as a major water flow during this dry season.

# Major rivers in Sylhet dying for siltation

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Major rivers and their tributaries in greater Sylhet region see gradual decrease in their flow due to massive siltation in absence of planned dredging, causing a serious threat to the environment in the region.

Hundreds of shoals have emerged in Surma, Kushiya, Khawai, Dholai, Monu, Kalni and Piain rivers and their tributaries as their flow reduced drastically, said experts and officials of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB).

through Sunamganj, Habiganj, Moulvibazar and Sylhet districts have virtually turned into narrow streams.

Barak River in India bifurcates into two flows and enters Bangladesh as Surma and Kushiya at Amolshid in Jakiganj of Sylhet.

The Surma is being silted up at its starting point across the border, BWDB officials said.

It gets only 20 percent while the Kushiya gets 80 percent of the poor water flow, said Prof Zahir Bin Alam of civil and environmental engineering department at Shahjalal University of Science and

Technology.

In 2005, officials of Bangladesh and Indian state of Assam at several regional level meetings had agreed to implement a joint programme for dredging the Surma in Sylhet and the Barak in Assam to increase their flow. But the work is yet to start, BWDB officials said.

In absence of planned dredging, the other rivers and streams of the region are also facing the same fate while organised groups are engaged in illegal extraction of sand from the water bodies, causing harm to them.

"It is not possible for us to take any dredging project

locally. The plan will have to be taken at the central level as dredging is very expensive," said Shafiqul Islam, BWDB executive engineer in Sylhet.

"The underground water level also sees gradual falling in the region. If the situation continues, a desertification process will begin in the north-eastern region," he said.

Against this backdrop, India's plan to construct the proposed Tipaimukh Dam on the Barak River for implementing a hydro-electric project in Manipur state has become a cause of concern for the people of Sylhet region.

## ABDUCTION CASE Indigenous youth held in Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Police on Sunday arrested an indigenous youth in connection with the abduction of a businessman and a deputy assistant engineer from Roangchhari upazila.

The arrestee was identified as Najang Hla Kheyang.

Criminals abducted the two from Baro Para area of the upazila on December 27 morning and demanded Tk 6 lakh ransom.

Police said, the arrested youth bargained for the criminals and on receipt of Tk 6 lakh as ransom the abductors released the businessman and the engineer at 10:45 pm, about 14 hours after the incident.

In Satkhira, five fishermen, who were abducted by Indian pirates bought freedom on Sunday, reports UNB.

One of the victims, A Sattar Sheikh, 45, of Harin Nagar village in Shyamnagar upazila said he along with four fishermen went to catch fish in the Sundarbans on December 31.

Indian pirates belonging to Khora Shaikat gang kidnapped them while they were fishing in Kasikata area of the Raimongal River, he said.

The victims said the abductors set them free near Badurjhuri canal at Kalagasia on payment of ransom for each Tk 5000 on Sunday morning.

## Robbery in Cox's Bazar

UNB, Cox's Bazar

Armed robbers looted valuables from four vehicles injuring 15 people on Cox's Bazar-Teknaf highway at Thainkhalhi Dhala in Ukhiya upazila on Sunday morning.

Witnesses said a gang numbering 15/20 swooped on the vehicles, including a night coach, two goods-laden trucks and a microbus putting barricade on the road early in the morning.

Later, they took away cash taka, gold ornaments and mobile phone sets after beating the passengers mercilessly.

# Pesticides may also kill ignorant farmers

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

Farmers and workers spraying pesticides in crop fields are highly vulnerable to various diseases as the job, often done without any safety measures, make them absorb the toxic item in different ways including inhalation.

The amount of pesticide received by a person varies from 0.15 to 0.25 gram (weighed in powder form) per hour, depending on weather at the time of spraying it in a crop field.

The information came to light as Rural Development Academy (RDA) in Bogra conducted a five-year research programme in Amrul union under Shahjahanpur upazila of Bogra district in cooperation with CABI Bioscience UK.

Published about two

months ago, the research report says that all the farmers under observation lacked knowledge on technical matters and safety measures about pesticide spraying.

Farmers involved in pesticide spraying do not understand the health hazard during spray and afterwards, the report says, adding that many farmers often blow from the mouth into the spraying pipe to make it clear.

"Farmers are advised to apply a kind of 'massage oil' on the whole body to prevent liquid pesticide to harm the skin. They should also wear adequate dress at the time of spraying. As farmers generally wear short dresses, liquid pesticides affect the body directly and cause problems like uneasy feeling, vomiting and even fainting," said agriculturist AKM Zakaria, joint director of Bogra RDA

and coordinator of the research programme.

RDA scientists also invented a transparent mask to prevent pesticide inhaling by sprayers.

"Earlier I felt uneasy after spraying liquid pesticide as I did not have knowledge for spraying it safely and did not know the use of newly invented mask. Several farmers including Hamidul Haque and Jahangir Alam of the same village fainted too. Now use of the transparent mask helps us," said Md Noor-ul-Islam, 53, of Gopalbari village in Bogra Sadar upazila.

Heart and kidney trouble may occur along with other problems if one continues receiving liquid pesticide, Dr AH Sadik, former professor of medicine at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital in Bogra, said.



PHOTO: STAR

A farmer uses a transparent mask developed by Bogra Rural Development Academy to avert harmful effects of toxic pesticides.

# 5 hurt as BCL rivals at RU lock in clash

A RU CORRESPONDENT

Five activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) were injured in a factional clash on Rajshahi University (RU) campus yesterday.

Supporters of BCL leader Awal Kabir Joy-led faction beat up a canteen boy in the morning. As the activists of Majedul Islam Apu-led faction protested it, their rivals swooped on them, leaving Romel, a master's student of genetics department, injured.

Immediately after the incident, supporters of both factions, equipped with iron rods, hockey sticks and firearms, attacked each other, leaving Majedul Islam Apu and other three others of his faction--Mahub, Himu and

Sajal--injured.

On Information, RU proctor and assistant proctors along with law enforcers went to the spot and brought the situation under control.

The injured are undergoing treatment at university medical centre.

BCL RU unit General Secretary Ayeen Uddin said action will be taken against those who tried to vitiate the atmosphere of the campus.

RU Proctor Prof Chowdhury Zakaria said additional police have been deployed on the campus to avert further clash.

Meanwhile, BCL RU unit yesterday opened a website on the occasion of its 62nd founding anniversary.

## Arms recovered, three held in C'nawabganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, C'nawabganj

Rab members in separate drives in Shibganj upazila recovered three firearms and bullets and arrested three alleged illegal arms sellers Sunday night.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-5 intercepted the motorcycle of Azam Khan, 35, of the town at Durlovpur Bazaar and recovered one pistol, one revolver, five bullets and a magazine from his possession at about 10:00pm.

In another drive, the elite force caught red-handed two others - Azahar Ali and Nazrul Islam - when they were selling a pistol at Ghorapakhia Joligram at about 11:40pm.

Both the arrestees hailed from Shikhtola village under Shibganj upazila.

Rab later handed them over to police. Two cases were filed under Arms Act.

# MAWA-KAWRAKANDI CHANNEL River route shortens but fare increases

A CORRESPONDENT, Madaripur

Owners of river transport including launches, trawlers and speedboats on important Mawa-Kawrakandi river route have increased the fares although dredging work during the last one year has shortened the route by almost half and the fuel price decreased.

To reduce the distance to be plied on the route, the present Awami League-led government spent crores of taka for dredging the rivers.

But the initiative, aimed at lessening the sufferings of lakhs of passengers of 21 districts in southern region, actually benefited a few transport owners.

During the dry season last year launches and ferries

had to take 31 kilometres on Mawa-Palerchar-Mongamajhi channel, BIWTA sources said.

After dredging on two channels, the length reduced to 14 kilometres. Due to emergence of new shoals in the current dry season, the distance is 16 kilometres now, they said.

The price of diesel was Tk 48 per litre last year, which is Tk 44.50 now.

The BIWTA and district council lease fee was Tk 8 and a passenger on this route had to pay Tk 17 last year.

The present government reduced the lease fee to Tk 5 but the launch owners increased the fare to Tk 20.

On December 23, owners of speedboats that ply illegally on the route, increased

per passenger fare to Tk 120 from earlier Tk 110 under the pretext of navigability problem.

Approval of the ministry is required for increasing fare, officials said.

But owners of launches and speedboats are using the names of influential persons of the ruling party to increase fare as per their will, said several passengers.

"Length of the river route came down to almost half as the government arranged dredging at a cost of Tk 12 crore during the last one year. Dredging is still going on. So there is no logic behind increasing the fare," BIWTA Executive Engineer (Dredging Division) Masuqul Haq said.

## SNAPS AND SNIPPETS

### Young man kills father

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A teenage boy shot his father dead in the town on Sunday just for a motorbike. Victim Abul Kalam, 50, was owner of 'Book Land' bookstall at Victoria Road. His son Hridoy Ahmed, 19, a second year student of local Government MM Ali College in Kagmari, went into hiding soon after the incident. Police and family sources said, Hridoy asked his father to buy him a motorbike. As Abul Kalam refused to do so, Hridoy locked in an altercation with his father at their house at Par Dighulia area at around 4:00pm on Sunday. At one stage, he shot Abul Kalam leaving him seriously injured. He was rushed to Tangail General Hospital where the on-duty doctors declared him dead.

### Pirated CDs recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A joint team of law enforcers on Sunday recovered a huge number of pirated CDs in separate raids in Rajbari and Faridpur on Sunday. Around 8,000 CDs, seven computers and a UPS were seized and nine people were arrested. Acting on a tip-off, the team raided Haji super market in Rajbari and Kanipur Bazar and Boalmari bazaar of Faridpur and seized CDs, computers and other goods, sources said. The arrestees are Parimol Gosh, 28, Sajjan Saha, 28, Shahidul Islam, 24, Md. Imran, Narayan Chandra Saha, 27 Titas sarkar, 18 jiabi Hasan, 25 Jalal Pramanik and Subrato Karmokar 23. The arrestees and the recovered goods were handed over to Faridpur and Rajbari Kotwali police stations.



PHOTO: STAR

A group of Bangladesh Chhatra League activists chase opponents during an intra-party clash that followed a trivial matter on Rajshahi University campus yesterday.

# KIBRIA MURDER CASE Jan 20 fresh date for report on further probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A Sylhet court yesterday fixed January 20 for filing of the report on further investigation into former finance minister SAMS Kibria murder case.

Sylhet Divisional Speedy Trial tribunal had earlier fixed January 4 for submission of the report. But Judge Md Mahubul Islam re-fixed the date as court proceedings remained suspended yesterday due to a full court reference at the deaths of several lawyers in 2009, court sources said.

On March 7, 2007, Senior ASP of CID Munshi Atiqur Rahman, the then investigation officer (IO), informed Sylhet Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal about necessity of further investigation into the case. After Atiqur's retirement, CID's ASP Md Rafiqul Islam was given the task.

Former finance minister

SAMS Kibria, his nephew advocate Shah Manzurul Huda, local AL leaders--Abdur Rahim, Abul Hossain and Siddique Ali-- were killed in a grenade attack at a public meeting at Baidderbazar under Habiganj Sadar upazila on the night of January 27, 2005. CID's ASP Munshi Atique pressed charges against 10 on March 20 the same year.

Meanwhile, The tribunal yesterday deferred date for framing charges against the accused in the case for bomb attack on Awami League leader Suranjit Sengupta's public meeting to January 13.

AL activist Abdul Wahid, 45, was killed and 30 others were injured as bombs were thrown on the dais of the meeting at Derai upazila headquarters in Sunamganj on June 21, 2004.

Suranjit escaped unhurt as he along with some other leaders left the venue just a minute prior to the attack.



## Shallow engine parts seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Rab raided local Majmader Market and recovered 52 parts of stolen shallow engines and arrested one person in this connection. Arrestee Anisur Rahman is a trader. The parts of engine were recovered from his shop. Anisur confessed to Rab-8 that 52 heads of shallow machines were stolen from different plots during Boro season. He said he bought at least 10/15 heads of stolen shallow machines from local criminals.

## Five Myanmar citizens held

BSS, Cox's Bazar

BDR in Teknaf yesterday detained five citizens of Myanmar, including a member of Nasaka force, and handed over them to local police station. Lt Col Mozammel Hossain of 42 Rifles Battalion said a patrol team of BDR arrested them while they were entering into Bangladesh territory crossing the Naf River. The arrestees were identified as Habilder U Tung Tung Mathew of Mongdu Nasaka camp, labourers Nur Mohammad, 26, Abul Kalam, 25, Syed Alam, 18, and Nur Foyez, 20. Nasaka Habilder stated that they entered into Bangladesh in search of an engine boat.