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Atir Khal almost gone for realtors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Atir Khal, once a brimming canal serving thousands on its course in the western fringe of the capital, looks doomed, as a real state developer has totally filled it up at Waaspur end.

The total area filled up of the 10-kilometre-long canal measures at least two acres.

The Waaspur Garden City Cooperative Society with about 50 members has also demarcated a large area of the canal beneath Looterchar bridge with a view to filling it up.

They claim that Atir Khal has never been a canal and the area belongs to hundreds of people who were rightfully taking possession of their plots.

In June 2009, as soon as the filling up of the canal started, The Daily Star reported about it with several follow-ups in the following month. The Dhaka deputy commissioner's office, responsible for the protection of the canal, has so far taken no action whatsoever to save the age-old Atir Khal although each time the officials said they would seriously look into the matter.

Additional Commissioner (Land) Fouzia Begum told The Daily Star that she would look into the matter. "Even if it is a private property, the wetland protection laws strictly prohibits filling it up," she observed.

Shahina Khatun, UNO of Keraniganj, said with twelve unions and three major rivers flowing through it, Keraniganj land administration office is grossly understaffed. "With three field-level land officers for hundreds of housing projects in the area, governance becomes too tough if not impossible," said the UNO.

Meanwhile, M Masud Karim, additional deputy commissioner (Revenue), told The Daily Star that he was not aware of the matter.

"As far as I can remember, we have been using Atir Khal for commuting and transporting," said Abdul Basset, a 70-year old farmer of Ghatarchar.

Rahom Chaan Mia, 75, of Ati Bazar area said, "Since boyhood, I have been depending on Atir Khal for irrigation, commuting and transporting farm products to the city. Now, most of the low-lying areas, including canals, have become the target of a land hungry section. How can just someone come and claim the canal to be their property?"

"With land price rocketing and the demand for land rising by the day, the government has to be much more strict to save our canals and rivers," said Rahom Chaan.

The officials of Waaspur Garden City Cooperative Society said they have legal documents dating back to the British era for the land



Huge pipes are being used by a real estate developer to dredge silt and fill up Atir Khal at Waaspur on the outskirts of the capital. The photo was taken earlier in the week. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Khaleda meets OIC secretary gen in Jeddah

UNB, Jeddah

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, who is now in Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah, called on the Secretary General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Dr Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu in Jeddah yesterday.

During the meeting, Begum Zia and Dr Ihsanoglu apparently discussed on various issues of relevance to the OIC in particular, and the Muslim Ummah in general.

The meeting took place at the OIC Headquarters in Jeddah starting at 1:55 pm local time with a 20-minute one-on-one session between

Little progress in St Martin's biodiversity project

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

The St Martin's Biodiversity Conservation, Establishment of Marine Park and Eco-Tourism Improvement Project has reached a woeful ending as its officials squandered the total amount of Tk 13 crore without making any headway.

Not a single objective was achieved under the project to save biodiversity of the coral-enriched island over the years, government's performance audit report of the project said. The entire project activities have been proved unworthy due to ineffective project components and unnecessary spending.

The project officials showed all money spent in the official documents without improving its environment, promoting

eco-tourism and encouraging the local inhabitants about natural resource management.

Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) office prepared the report in 2007, which was published online recently. It observed the project totally failed to conserve coral resources and turtles. It was also ineffective in founding a marine park and a research centre although those were core components of the project.

The St Martin's Island is the home to 182 land and marine species including mammals, reptiles, birds, turtles, snails, oyster, fish, squid, crab and snake.

Conservation of this 823 acres small island is very important, as it is the breeding centre of three kinds of endangered turtles, Irrawaddy dolphin and hump-

back whale. Deputy Chief of Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) Kazi Monirul Islam said upon receiving the complaint about the project, the ministry has formed an investigation committee to find out the reasons behind the failure.

The investigation team already visited St Martin's to assess the real status of the project implementation, said the head of the investigation team and Joint Secretary of the ministry Nasir Uddin, adding the team members also met with the officials of the project.

"We will find out the range of corruptions and the officials involved," added Nasir Uddin.

The MoEF undertook the project

569 sub-inspectors await promotion

Move to strengthen police stations

KAILASH SARKAR

A total of 569 sub-inspectors will be promoted to inspectors and then posted at different police stations by the first week of next month, police headquarters officials said.

"The sub-inspectors have been selected for promotion on the basis of seniority," Atiqul Islam, assistant inspector general (AIG-Recruitment and Management), told The Daily Star on Friday.

The police department recently decided to post two inspectors at each police station to improve services, reduce workload, and ensure quality investigations of cases, said the officials.

The senior inspectors in a station will serve as the officer-in-charge (OC) and monitor crimes and police operations while the second will monitor investigations.

Currently, there are 610 police stations in the country and only one inspector at each PS is carrying out both responsibilities.

AIG Atiqul said the 41 other SIs will also be promoted gradually so that they can be sent to the police stations with one inspector.

Arms seized in Meherpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) recovered five shutter guns, ten bullets and ten bombs in Gangni upazila of Meherpur yesterday in two separate raids.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab led by Meherpur Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Sheikh Jahidul Islam raided the house of one Hasmot Ali alias Hasmot Dakat at Harabhang village around 4:30am and recovered the arms and ammunition.

They raided the house on information that the criminals were holding a secret meeting there, said the ASP adding the

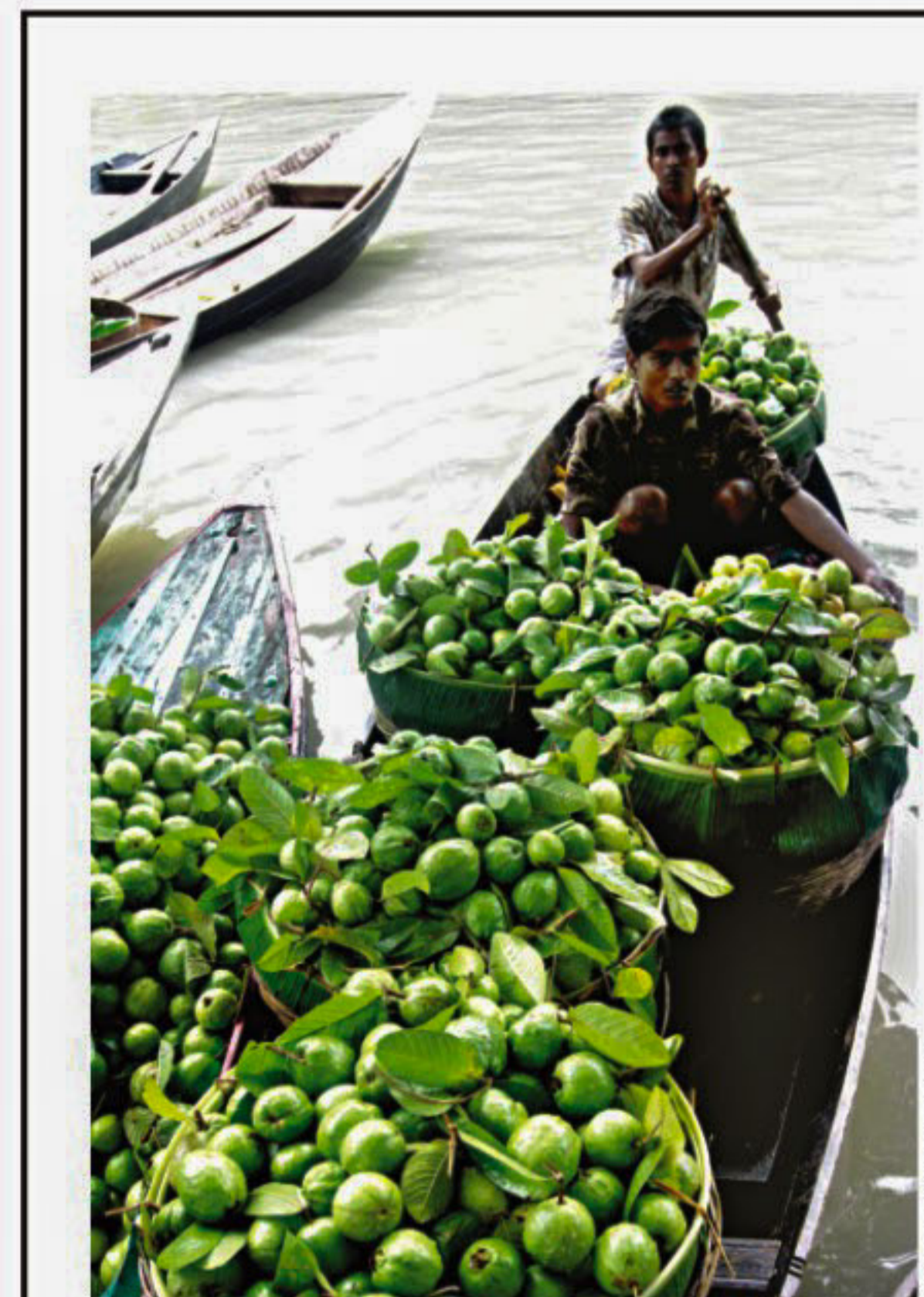


PHOTO: SHAWKAT JAMIL

NEGLECTED GUAVA

Farmers use Kuriana canal in Pirojpur to get to floating markets with their boats loaded with guava. During the monsoon boats are often used to harvest the fruit as well.

Kuriana is one of the 49 villages in Barisal, Pirojpur, and Jhalakathi that come up with 80 percent of Bangladesh's guava production. Hundreds of people of those villages have seen financial independence cultivating guava on 30,000 acres of land.

The farmers identified a dearth of proper preservation techniques, and marketing and communication tools as reasons for getting less-than-expected price for their produce. They get between Tk 120 and Tk 180 for a maund of guava, sometimes they even get as less as Tk 40 to Tk 50.

Setting up of cold storages, and easy availability of short-term loans could boost production, and make way for jam, jelly and juice industries, the farmers said.



60 killed as Pak army jets pound militant targets

AP, Peshawar

Pakistan army jets and helicopters targeted militant hide-outs near the Afghan border, killing 60 people identified as insurgents or their family members, including children, security officials and a witness said yesterday.

The deadliest strikes hit an area where army fire had killed 60 civilians earlier this year. Accounts of civilian casualties in army airstrikes make it harder for the military to win the support of local tribesmen in the border region, something crucial to flushing out al-Qaeda and Taliban militants who have found sanctuary there.

The attacks occurred Tuesday and Wednesday in different parts of the region.

There was no independent confirmation of the casualty figures because the area is too dangerous for outsiders to visit.

The raids Tuesday took place in several villages in Teerah

OnlinePoll ✓

Do you think the joint initiative with Delhi to set up a 1,320 MW power plant will help reduce the power cuts in the country?

Yes (49.2%)
No (49.2%)
No Comments (1.6%)

Total votes: 699

TODAY'S POLL

Do you think BCL leadership will expel the wrongdoers following the prime minister's strict warning against its offences?

Please cast your vote at www.thedailystar.net

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Iftar & Sehri timing for Dhaka & neighbouring areas

Today's Iftar 6:19 pm

Ending time for tomorrow's sehri 4:20 am

Prayer Timing September 2

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-20	4-30
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-19	6-29
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

the STAR Eid in Wonderland

The Star brings you a special fun-filled Eid issue on September 3 that includes satirical pieces on political figures, news stories and quirky social trends. An exclusive interview with filmmaker Mostafa Sarwar Farooki, Sharier Khan's cartoon strip and much more are part of this issue.

Don't miss your copy!

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