

Waterlogging fear haunts Khulna city dwellers

Another rains sets in but no move yet to resume the drive to evict canal, river grabbers

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

Amid continuous encroachment on canals in Khulna city and adjacent Mayur River in absence of authorities' strong eviction drive against the influential offenders, menacing waterlogging has become a matter of serious concern for city dwellers, especially in the rainy season.

A staggering 29 out of 50 canals in the city are badly affected by illegal occupiers, making the areas vulnerable to waterlogging due to hin-

drance in the way of free flow of water during the rains.

Over one-third of 15 lakh city dwellers are directly exposed to the waterlogging problem, in addition to serious effect on the normal life and economic activities in the divisional headquarters.

About 80 percent roads of the city go under knee to waist-deep water when there is moderate to heavy rainfall.

Khan Jahan Ali Road, KD Ghosh Road, Moulvipara, Kashipur New Road,

Khalishpur BIDC Road, Sheikhpara, Sher-e-Bangla Road, Tootpara Central Road, Iqbal Nagar are some of the worst affected areas where waterlogging often continues for days.

During a drive from July 1 to July 10 in 2009, Khulna City Corporation (KCC) authorities freed 21 canals from encroachers.

But the drive faced a sudden suspension and encroachers continued erection of unauthorised structures on 29 other canals as well as Mayur

River since then.

Contacted on June 15, KCC Mayor Talukder Abdul Khaleque said that KCC will shortly resume the drive to evict encroachers from the remaining canals and Moyur River.

So far as encroachment of canals, dykes and water bodies is concerned, nobody will be spared on any grounds, he said.

KCC Estate Officer Md Nuruzzaman Talukder said the district administration is the sole 'owner' of the canals while the city corporation

only takes care of them.

Following a probe conducted by the KCC, a report submitted on February 10 of 2009 identified 81 people as encroachers of 50 canals, he said, adding that the eviction drive has remained suspended due to absence of any government nominated first class magistrate in the KCC for the last two years.

The 81 encroachers include former KCC mayor Sirajul Islam, police inspector Md Moniruzzaman, retired forest officer Md Shajahan, Sub Registrar Nurul Islam, proprietor of Ashraful Ulum Mahila Jamaat Unnayan Sangstha Arshad Ali.

Besides, a ward office, a primary school, a factory for making turmeric dust, a crematorium, a college, KDA bus terminal, truck terminal and a women's sports complex are among a large number of unauthorised structures erected on these canals during the last 10 years, the KCC estate officer said.

Besides disturbing daily activities of people, waterlogging causes damage to infrastructure and environment, said Prof Dr Dilip Kumar Datta of environmental science department of Khulna University.

He stressed the need for formulation of new policy guidelines to save important water bodies like Mayur River from pollution and encroachment to protect fish resources and biodiversity in the area.

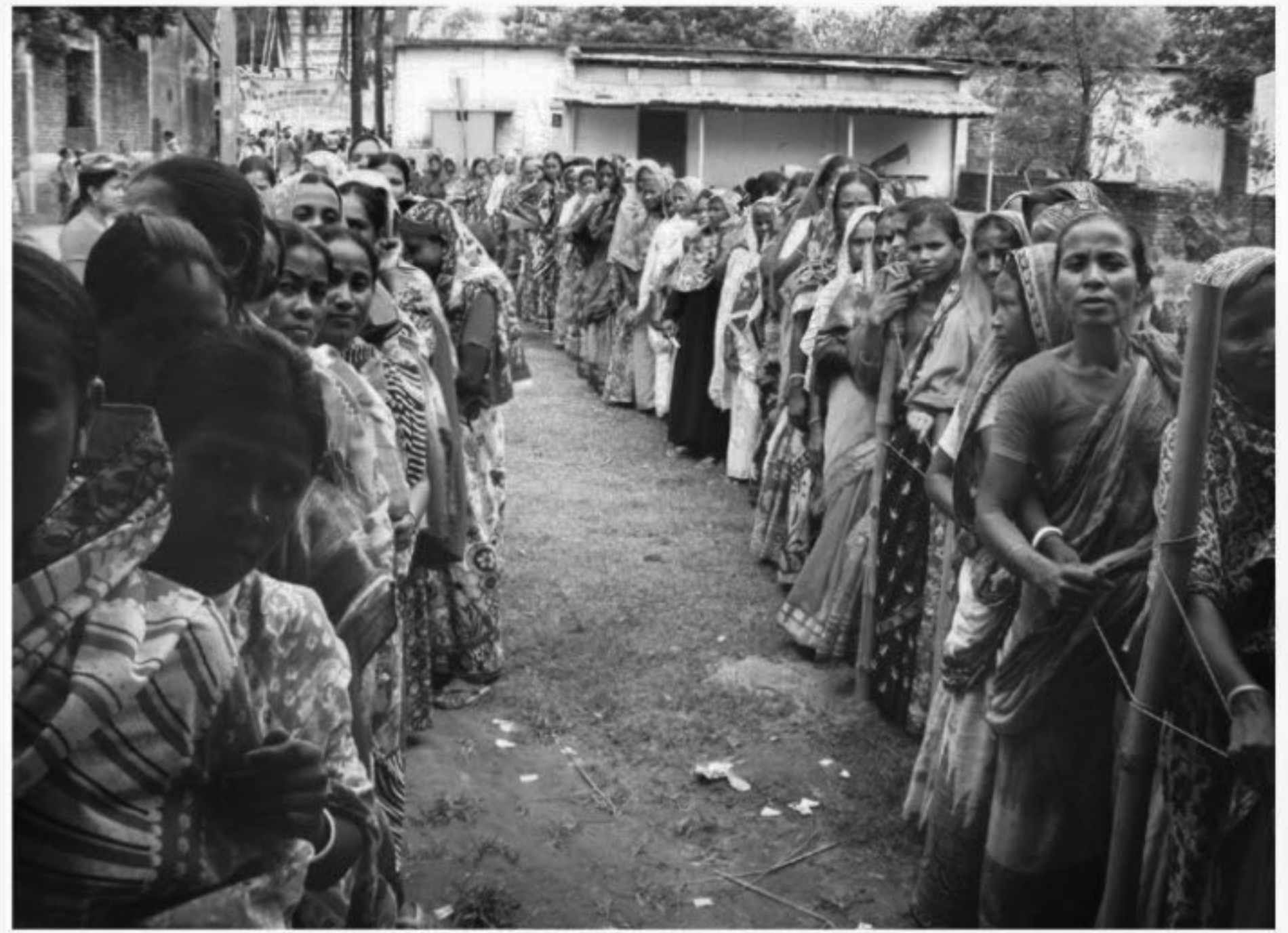


PHOTO: STAR

Women voters wait in long queues for their turn at Chehelgazi union parishad (UP) polling centre in Dinajpur Sadar upazila during the UP election yesterday.

Poll-related violence leaves 70 injured

STAR NATIONAL DESK

At least 70 people were injured in UP poll-related violence in Moulvibazar, Gaibandha, Munshiganj and Sirajganj districts yesterday and on Tuesday night.

In Moulvibazar, post-poll violence in Rajnagar upazila yesterday left at least 28 people injured.

Our correspondent quoted Rajnagar police and local people as saying that the supporters of defeated chairman candidate Kawser Uddin and chairman-elect Milon Bakht clashed at Premnagar village in Monshurnagar Union at around 10:30am, leaving at least 28 people from both sides injured.

Of the injured, 15 are undergoing treatment at Moulvibazar Sadar Hospital and private clinics while the rest received first.

In Gaibandha, at least 25 people were injured in poll-related clashes in Mahdipur Union of Palashbari upazila early yesterday.

As the supporters of chairman aspirant Touhidul Islam failed to snatch ballot boxes after counting of votes at Mahdipur polling centre on Tuesday night, they put up barricades on Dhaka-Rangpur road, disrupting traffic for four hours from 10:00pm. They also vandalised 10-12 vehicles on the road, according to UNB.

Being informed, police rushed to the spot and charged batons on Touhid's supporters, leaving 14 people injured.

In another incident, 11 people, including

cops, were wounded in a clash between police and the supporters of a defeated candidate who attacked election officials and tried to snatch ballot boxes on their way to Palashbari town after announcement of election results at Hossainpur polling centre in the same union on Tuesday night.

Our Munshiganj correspondent reported that clashes between the supporters of the elected and defeated member candidates in Char Kewra Union of Sadar upazila yesterday left over 12 people from both sides injured.

At least 10 houses at fultala and Hoglakandi villages were ransacked by the clashing groups. The injured were admitted to Munshiganj Sadar Hospital. Being informed, police rushed to the spot, dispersed the clashing groups and brought the situation under control.

In Sirajganj, at least seven people were injured in a clash between the supporters of a member candidate and police at Rashidpur centre in Hatikumkum Union.

Our correspondent quoting police and local people said around 200 people led by member candidate Liton Bhuiyan entered the centre at around 12:45pm. They locked in a scuffle with police and tried to capture the polling centre.

Police fired blank shots to disperse the unruly people and arrested five people, including member candidate Liton Bhuiyan, on the spot.

58 candidates fined, 4 jailed for violating election code

STAR NATIONAL DESK

At least 58 chairman and member candidates were fined and four others jailed for violating election code of conduct in Kishoreganj, Gaibandha and Pabna districts yesterday and the day before.

Our Kishoreganj correspondent reported that a mobile court led by Karimganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Abdullah Hakkani yesterday fined 20 chairman candidates Tk 7,000 each, 30 member candidates Tk 5,000 each and seven candidates for women reserved seats Tk 3,000 each for pasting posters on walls flouting election rules in Gundar, Joika and Niamatpur unions of the upazila.

In Gaibandha, two people were sentenced to six months imprisonment for violating code of conduct during election to two union parishads in Palahbari upazila on Tuesday, reports our correspondent.

The convicts are Shahin Sarker and Zahidul Islam. Mobile court sentenced Shaheen to six months imprisonment as he

tried to create chaos during voting at Fateypur Durgapur centre in Mohdipur Union.

Zahidul was awarded six months imprisonment by the same court as he took away sealed ballot papers from Fakirhat Government Primary School centre in Pabnapur union.

Our Pabna correspondent adds: Six people, including a member candidate were arrested on charge of violating election rules during election to Khashinathpur Union Parishad in Santhia upazila yesterday.

The arrestees are Yunus Ali, 32, a member candidate of the union, Bakul Hossain, 22, Khaled Saifullah, 30, Shahjahan Miah, 28, Polash Hossain, 25 and Md Johurul Islam, 35.

Police arrested the six in front of Abdul Latif High School centre in the morning and then produced them before a mobile court led by Executive Magistrate Md Shamsuzzaman.

The court released Yunus, Shahjahan, Johurul and Polash after realising Tk 12,000 as fine from them and sentenced the rest two to one day's imprisonment.

Bus workers block Nilphamari roads

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Bus workers here blocked Saidpur-Dinajpur and Saidpur- Nilphamari road for about four hours yesterday as battery run auto rickshaw drivers assaulted a bus driver in the morning.

Sources said, at about 8:00am, bus workers and auto rickshaw drivers locked in a quarrel over boarding passengers at EPZ bazaar point on Nilphamari-Saidpur road.

At one stage, the auto rickshaw drivers assaulted bus driver Anwar Hossain, 28, there.

Hearing the news, a large

number of transport workers gathered on the spot and looked for the auto rickshaw drivers.

Later they assembled at Wapda intersection at about 8:30 am blocking Saidpur-Dinajpur and Saidpur- Nilphamari roads. The blockade stopped movement of all kinds of mechanised vehicles on both sides of the roads.

Additional district magistrate and a police team rushed to the spot. The protesters withdrew their blockade at 12:30 pm after the ADM assured them of taking steps against the offenders.

SNIPPETS

AL leader found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kishoreganj

Police recovered the body of an AL leader hanging from a tree in Pakundia. The deceased was identified as Mohammad Shahabuddin, 55, general secretary of Pakundia Hosendi union AL and a resident of Kumarpur Purbapara village. Police and locals said Shahabuddin's body was recovered from a riverside tree in Chakdiar Shinguapar area at about 10:00am. He went missing on Tuesday night. Police could not say whether it was a suicide or murder. Earlier, on Tuesday, a Jubo League leader was murdered in Karimganj over previous enmity.

Man jailed for killing wife

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

A man was sentenced to life term rigorous imprisonment (RI) yesterday in Shajadpur upazila for killing his wife in 2005. Judge Umme Kulsum of Second Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court gave the verdict against Shafiqul Islam, 27, son of Mujibor Rahman of Binnadair village under the same upazila. The court also fined Shafiqul Tk 5,000, in default, to suffer three months more in jail. According to the prosecution, Shafiqul murdered his wife Awlyar in their village home on August 8 in 2005 after an altercation over family affairs. Victim's father Shamsul Haque filed a murder case and police arrested Shafiqul and submitted charge sheet.

Indian fishermen sent home

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

All 79 Indian fishermen who were rescued from the Bay here just after the tidal surge last week were handed over to the officials of Indian Embassy on Tuesday afternoon. Patuakhali jail authorities handed over them to Balbir Singh, first secretary of the Indian Embassy. All the fishermen were later brought to Kuakata and from there a coast guard team took them upto the boundary line on the Bay along with their five fishing trawlers.

Stipends distributed

PRESS RELEASE

Serve the People, a non-government organisation at Chakhar in Barisal has distributed stipends and crests among 20 meritorious students of the area for their outstanding results in Secondary School Certificate examination. In association with Habib-Shahzadi Foundation the NGO gave Tk 2000 and a crest to each student at a reception organised at Fazlul Huq Institution in Chakhar on Sunday. The reception was chaired by the foundation's president Begum Shahzadi and UNO of Banaripara Abul Kalam Azad attended the reception as chief guest.

20 hurt as BCL rivals lock in fierce clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Madaripur

Twenty people were injured in a clash between two rival groups of Chhatra League over admission to class eleven of Government Nazimuddin University College yesterday.

When former sports secretary of the college students union Miraz Hossain came to the admission control room of the college he had an altercation with the student union's present General Secretary Zahir Mollah, said witnesses.

At one stage the Chhatra League men got divided into two groups and engaged in a fierce clash with locally made weapons.

Police and Rapid Action Battalion brought the situation under control after about two hours.

Of the injured, Zahir

Mollah, 25, Miraz Hossain, 25, Sujon Jamadar, 24, Al Amin, 17, Masud, 22, Kanon, 23, Nishad, 17, Nannu, 18, Safa Karim, 23, Sohag, Tuhin, Hanif Sharif, 18, and Asad have been admitted to hospital.

Seeing the students engaged in a violent clash, the college authorities informed police who brought the situation under control, said college Vice Principal Zebun Nahar.

"The clash followed a feud over students' admission to class eleven of the college. When the college authorities informed me about the clash over phone I sent police to the spot and they brought the situation under control," said Superintendent of Police Md Nazrul Hossain.

The opponent student groups blamed each other for the incident.

Nine shops gutted in Sunamganj

UNB, Sunamganj

At least nine shops were gutted in a fire which broke out at West Bazaar in Doarabazar upazila headquarters early Tuesday.

Police and fire service sources said the fire originated from an electric short circuit at a shop of Kafil Miah at about 2:00am and soon engulfed eight adjacent shops.

At least 20 people were injured while extinguishing the fire.

Later, fire fighters with the help of local people doused the fire after two hours of frantic efforts.

The affected shop owners claimed that the extent of loss caused by the fire could go upto Tk 20 lakh.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Locals form a human chain standing in knee-deep water of the Halda River at Kalapani in Manikchhari upazila of Khagrachhari district yesterday demanding construction of a bridge there.