

PA to a state minister allegedly occupies 11 acres of 4 people



OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Patuakhali

A personal assistant (PA) to a state minister has allegedly occupied 10.96 acres of land in Kuakata area under Kalapara upazila of Patuakhali district.

Land owners Ayub Ali Sikder, Ashraf Ali Sikder, Abdul Mannan Howlader and Mokbul Howlader of Panjupara area yesterday told this correspondent that Rashed Kaiser Sajol with the help of local BCL men erected fences around our 10.96 acres of land, put up a signboard there a week before Eid-ul Fitr and cultivated the land with tractors on August 30.

They alleged that a gang led by Sohag Molla, a leader

of BCL of Kalapara upazila unit, attacked the house of Mannan Howlader, one of the land owners, on September 1 and looted gold ornaments and other valuables from the house.

Over 100 local people, including the land owners formed a human chain on the land on Friday protesting capture of 10.96 acres of land allegedly by Sajol and attack on the house of Mannan Howlader.

"I did not file complaint to the law enforcers as Sajol and his men are threatening me and my family members of dire consequences," Mannan Howlader said.

Ashraf Ali Sikder, another owner of the land, said Sajol got a decree from the Sessions Judge's Court by

submitting false documents on the land.

"We challenged the court order in the High Court that (HC) ordered *status quo* on the land for six months on May 25 this year," Ashraf said, adding that Sajol grabbed the land and put up a signboard there, ignoring the order of the High Court.

Sub-Inspector Moniruzzaman, in-charge of Kuakata police camp, told this correspondent that he visited the spot and informed the officer-in-charge of Kalapara Police Station and the superintendent of police of the matter.

Contacted, Rashed Kaiser Sajol said he bought the land from its legal owners and took its possession lawfully.

"I gave all documents of the land to Kalapara OC Ishaq Ali who asked me to take possession of the land", Sajol said.

Denying Sajol's statement, the OC said he didn't ask anyone to take possession of the land.

"Sajol gave me some papers, claiming the ownership of the land and requested me to go through those papers," he said.

The OC further said no complaint regarding forcible occupation of the land and attack on Mannan Howlader's house was filed with the police station as of yesterday.

"If any complaint is filed on the two issues, we will take lawful action, the OC added.



PHOTO: STAR

Rashed Kaiser Sajol, personal assistant to a state minister, puts up a signboard on the land allegedly grabbed by him in Kuakata area under Kalapara upazila of Patuakhali, below, locals, including the land owners, form a human chain on Friday protesting grabbing of the land.

Kuakata sees few tourists this Eid for 'bad road condition'

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Patuakhali

Picturesque Kuakata sea beach sees very few tourists during the Eid vacation this time, much to the frustration of a large number of businessmen in the tourist spot.

The people concerned have blamed awful condition of the 22-kilometre road from Kalapara to Kuakata for the situation.

A good number of tourists from home and abroad visit Kuakata sea beach that enables people to see sunrise and sunset from the same spot.

Local businessmen decorate their business establishments to welcome tourists especially during the Eid holidays that offer people good opportunity to come to the scenic spot.

But this time very few tourists came here although three-day Eid holidays from Tuesday to Thursday have virtually extended to five days, including two weekly holidays Friday and Saturday.

During a visit to Kuakata on Friday afternoon, this correspondent saw that most of the benches on the beach remained empty while local markets like Jhinuk Marker and Rakhain Market had very few customers.

Md Salim, who earns his livelihood by hiring benches on the beach, said,

"Sitting on the benches, tourists like to enjoy the beauty of the sea beach, especially sunrise and sunset. We take Tk 20 per hour for use of a bench from the tourists but this year we see serious shortage of tourists although we decorated our benches on the eve of Eid."

of goods to attract the tourists, especially women. But not many tourists have come to Kuakata during the ongoing Eid holidays," said Md Ismail, a shopkeeper of Jhinuk Market where different ornaments and showpieces are available.

"I have been conducting business here for 12 years but never saw crisis of

tourists like this time. Tourists do not want to come to Kuakata due to awfully bad condition of the 22 km road from Kalapara to Kuakata. Besides, all three ferries on the road go under water during high tide. We hope that tourists will get back interest to visit Kuakata if road communication bet-

ters," said Wahiduzzaman Sohel, secretary for Kuakata Hotel-Motel Owners Association, also owner of Kuakata International.

He urged the authorities concerned to take immediate steps to improve road communication between Kuakata and other parts of the country.



PHOTO: STAR

Rows of benches, meant for relaxing and enjoying the beauty of Kuakata sea beach by tourists, lie empty even during the Eid holidays as the picturesque spot failed to attract visitors this time, below, as the awfully damaged 22-kilometre Kuakata-Kalapara road connecting the beach to other areas of the country made the journey repulsive to tourists.

4 commit 'suicide'

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Three women and a boy committed 'suicide' in Brahmanbaria and Satkhira yesterday and the day before.

A woman and her 2-year-old son allegedly killed themselves by taking poison at Amudabad village under Akhaura upazila of Brahmanbaria district early yesterday.

The deceased were identified at Bhagabati Das, 28, wife of Pramod Das and her son Tapu Das, reports our correspondent.

According to villagers, police and hospital sources, Pramod Das, 35, his wife Bhagabati Das, 28, recently had an altercation over family matters. On the fateful night when Pramod went for fishing in the Titas River, Bhagabati fed her two sons Bijoy Das, 5, and Tapu Das, 2 poison mixing it with horlicks and then herself took poison.

In the morning, they were found in a state of coma and sent to Akhaura upazila health complex where the attending doctor declared Bhagabati dead.

Bijoy and Tapu were referred to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital where Tapu died.

In Satkhira, two young women allegedly committed suicide by taking poison in Fingri union in Sadar upazila on Friday night reports our correspondent.

The victims were identified as Ambika Sarkar, 18, daughter of Megha Sarkar of village Gabha and Lipika Khatun, 21, daughter of Babul Hossain of village Jordai in Sadar upazila.

Quoting local people police said, following family feud they took poison and died at their residences.

Police recovered the bodies and sent them to Satkhira morgue for post-mortem.



PHOTO: STAR

The under-construction 150MW Combined Cycle Power Plant in Sylhet. The power plant is unlikely to be completed as per schedule in October this year.

Sylhet 150 MW power plant may be delayed

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

The 150 MW Combined Cycle Power Plant in Sylhet, scheduled to complete by October this year, is likely to be deferred due to delay in import of machinery and setting of gas metering system in the plant.

Contacted, Executive Engineer of Power station and Energyprima's 50 MW power station were handed over to the company.

However, he said, "We are trying our best to make up for the time to be lapsed in import of machinery and other things by the Chinese company. Construction of the infrastructure is going on in full swing."

On February 8 last year, Shanghai Electric Group Company Limited of China was awarded the contract for establishment of the natural gas-run plant at Kumargaon in Sylhet city at a cost of Tk 879 crore.

Consequently, a five-acre land adjacent to PDB's Kumargaon 20 MW power station and Energyprima's 50 MW power station were handed over to the company.

"Commercial operation of the plant was scheduled for October 25 this year but it will not be possible for several reasons," Project Director Khondaker Iftekhar Uddin, also superintending engineer of PDB, told this correspondent recently.

"Works are being hampered due to excessive rain. Besides, import of machinery from China and Italy and establishment of the gas regulating metering system is being delayed. We are trying our best to finish the works," he said.

MA Munim, general manager of the state-run Jalalabad Gas Transmission and Distribution limited, said, "The Singapore firm-Zicom Equipment Private limited, which was awarded the job of supplying the gas metering system has been asked to arrange shipment of equipment at an earliest. Hopefully those will reach by October and things will be ready that time."



PHOTO: STAR

Borodaha Bridge over Katakhal River in Gobindaganj upazila under Gaibandha district has remained as a mockery to the locals as it could not be completed in 15 years after starting the construction.

15 years over, will Borodaha Bridge at all be finished?

REZAUL HOQUE, Gaibandha

Borodaha Bridge over Katakhal River in Gobindaganj upazila has remained incomplete for long 15 years, despite original plan to complete it within two years from start of the project in 1994-95 fiscal year.

Both dilly-dallying by the authorities concerned and the river's repeated change in direction due to the whim of nature are responsible for the situation, said locals and officials concerned.

The Roads and Highways Department (RHD) in 1994 undertook a plan to construct a bridge over Katakhal River flowing between Borodaha and Kazla villages.

In addition to reducing the distance between Gaibandha and the capital by 18 kilometres, the bridge would help establish direct road link between Gaibandha Sadar and Gobindaganj upazilas, relieving locals of additional 22 kilometre journey via Palashbari upazila.

The authority allocated a fund of Tk 3 crore 66 lakh for construction of the four-span bridge in 1994-95 fiscal year, but the work started in 1997 due to delay in fund release.

After completion of only 30 percent work, the river widened as the water course changed its direction toward Kazla village, necessitating an immediate change in the bridge design and additional fund allocation for bank protection.

After wasting much time, RHD later forwarded a revised proposal for allocation of additional fund of Tk one crore 34 lakh, changing the design of bridge with another span in 2003-04 fiscal year. Soon after the approval of the proposal, the Katakhal River again changed its direction towards Borodaha village where serious erosion left the earlier complete three span infrastructure of the bridge in the mid-river.

Higher authorities of RHD engaged Institute of Water Modelling, a Dhaka-

based consulting firm, for a feasibility study and report on Borodaha bridge.

After survey, the firm suggested constructing an additional span at the southern part and bank protection work on both the sides. Meanwhile erosion stopped at Kazla village and a large shoal emerged on the river.

As the then existing contractor of bridge declined to start further work, the RHD cancelled the work order and called fresh tender for the bridge in 2008 with an estimated budget of Tk 12 crore 33 lakh 28 thousand.

The lowest bidder, MBEL-MSJ joint venture construction firm got the work order but the authorities recently cancelled the order as the firm did not even start the work by June 30 this year, the stipulated time for completion of the work, on the plea of high price of construction materials.

Arrangement is being made to call a fresh tender, said M M Selim, executive engineer of RHD in Gaibandha.