



PHOTO: STAR

A local ruling party man running sand trade in the common playground of Balapukur High School and non-government primary school in Aditmari upazila of Lalmonirhat district, depriving students of both the institutions of recreational facilities.

Kids watch TV as playground made sand trading spot

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Students of Balapukur High School and Balapukur Registered Non-government Primary School in Aditmari upazila under the district are deprived of recreational facilities as a local leader of the ruling party has been using the school playground for sand trade for three months.

Nazrul Islam, general secretary of Aditmari upazila Awami Swechhasebok League, has continued the callous act despite repeated requests from headmasters of the two schools, students and local guardians, locals said.

"Nazrul Islam has been running sand trade in the common ground of the high school and the primary school at Balapukur village for the last three months, depriving the students of playing there. Now students often

go to watch video at local tea stalls for spending their leisure period," said Mobarok Hossain, a local guardian.

Asadul Islam, a class nine student of Balapukur High School, said there are different kinds of sports items in the school but they cannot use them as the school playground is under occupation of a ruling party man for his sand trade.

The school playground is getting damaged due to movement of sand carrying trucks, said Ariful Islam, another student of the same class.

Many students go to local tea stalls to watch video during the tiffin period as they cannot play in the school playground, said Foridul Islam of class five.

"On several occasions during the last three months I asked Nazrul Islam to free the playground from his sand trading, but he is yet to do it," said Jagodish Chandro Roy, acting

headmaster of Balapukur Registered Non-government Primary School.

Nazrul also ignored request from the school managing committee men to free the field, said Enamul Haque, headmaster of Balapukur High School.

Contacted, Awami Swechhasebok League leader Nazrul Islam said, "I have kept some sand, lifted from a nearby pond, at the school playground for a few days. I do not trade sand in the playground. I will take away all the sand from there within three or four days."

Aditmari Upazila Nirbahi Officer Rezaul Alam Sarker said, "I didn't take any step regarding the matter as I was unaware of it and nobody of the two schools informed me about it before. I will take proper initiative to free the school playground from sand trading if the sand trader fails to do it himself."

15 injured as police, men of Islamist leader clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kurigram

At least 15 people were injured in a clash with police when supporters of an Islamist leader laid a siege to Nageshwari police station early yesterday.

A local leader of Chhatra Dal was also arrested during the clash.

According to superintendent of police Mahbubur Rahman, police arrested Abul Kashem Sarker on charge of delivering anti-state and provocative sermon Friday night.

After his arrest, the supporters of Kashem laid a siege to the police station around 1:00am demanding his release. At one stage, they started to hurl brick chips at the police station.

When Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) of Nageshwari Rafiqul Islam rushed to the spot, he also came under attack. The agitators also injured his driver.

At this, police fired 15 blank shots and five tear gas shells to disperse the agitating demonstrators and bring the situation under control.

Six police personnel including Delwar Hossain, the officer-in-charge of the police station, were also injured during the clash. Several supporters of Kashem were also hurt.

Police arrested Main Uddin, secretary general of the upazila Chhatra Dal, as he was allegedly instigating people to join the siege.

Kashem however, refuted the allegation of delivering any anti-state sermon. He also claimed that he had no link with any political party.



PHOTO: STAR

Stones are being lifted from Goneswari River in Kolmakanda upazila of Netrakona district by using a dredger and workers (inset) are engaged in loading trawlers with stones to send the construction material to different places including capital Dhaka.



Rampant stone lifting from river poses erosion threat

JAHANGIR ALAM, Netrakona

Rampant stone lifting from Goneswari River in bordering Kolmakanda upazila under Netrakona district puts the adjacent villages and farmlands under serious risk of erosion.

A group of local influential people allegedly belonging to ruling Awami League (AL) have continued the unscrupulous act for over a month.

Stone quarries in different areas of the country are under government control and nobody is allowed to dig riverbeds without government permission.

However, stone lifters in Kolmakanda seem to have got a sort of exemption in this regard as 15-20 dredgers are engaged in digging the river day and night apparently without any interference from the upazila administration and police.

Common people and local public representatives protested the act in the beginning but the perpetrators are too strong and arrogant to care it.

Locals alleged that a Lengura union parishad (UP) member who is also union AL activist, general secretary of Lengura Jubo League, two Jubo League activists and a few other ruling party men have formed a syndicate for illegal stone lifting.

While visiting the area a few days ago, this correspondent witnessed around 15 dredgers digging the river to lift stones in two kilometre areas of Goneswari River. After being separated from mud and brought to the river bank by using large pumps, the

stones are loaded in engine-driven trawlers to carry up to Lengura Bazaar for sending to different places including capital Dhaka for use in construction of houses, roads and bridges.

Jubo League activist Abdul Majid of Fulbari told this correspondent that he was collecting stones for over three weeks days with the help of a dredger but has not sought permission for it from anybody.

"I gather stones on the river bank with the help of a dredger and other machines and sell it to the buyers coming from different places. Nobody forbade me to do it. Lots of people are lifting stones. I am just one of them. If the government prohibits, I shall stop the act," he said.

"Stone collectors do not care protests from locals. Sands are washed away as dredgers are digging deep into the riverbed. So, erosion is inevitable in the coming rainy season," said Lengura UP member Nur Hossain, also a leader of local AL.

"If stone digging continues in this manner, erosion will wipe out the villages beside the Goneswari River and we will become homeless," said Syed Ali of Kalapani village. Locals have urged government interference in this regard.

Additional Deputy Commissioner of Netrakona Anwar Hossen Chowdhury said he has heard the matter unofficially.

"I have decided to take legal steps after discussion with Kolmakanda upazila nirbahi officer," he said.

Severe hailstorm lashes 36 villages in Tangail: Houses, crops damaged

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

At least 20 people were injured while around 400 houses and crops including irri-boro paddy on vast tract of lands were damaged as a severe hailstorm lashed 36 villages in Sakhipur and Ghatail upazilas early yesterday.

In Sakhipur, at least 15 people were hurt and around 300 houses and crops of 28 villages in four unions damaged during the storm that started at around 2:45am, locals said.

The worst affected areas in the upazila are Mohanandapur, Jiteswari, Toildhara, Gorbari, Surirchala, Bagherbari, Indrajani, Kaxmirampur, Bailapur villages under Kakrajan union; Kalomegha, Talepabad, Atia Salonga, Rangamatia, Fuljhuri, Nagerchala, Beltoli villages under Kalomegha union; Gazaria, Kirtankhola, Kalia para, Protima Bonki Purbo Para, Chhoto Pasharpur under Gazaria union; Kachua, Basharchala, Sarashia, Kadernagar under Kalia union and Kaharta and Ramkharpara under Sakhipur municipality.

Big chunks of hails, some weighing around 3-4kg, during the storm and rain



PHOTO: STAR

Big chunks of hails, some weighing 3-4 kg, during yesterday's storm damage roofs of scores of houses in Sakhipur and Ghatail upazilas of Tangail yesterday. Photos show a perforated tin roofs (top) and uprooted and damaged trees in Sakhipur.

left scores of houses damaged. Moreover, hundreds of trees and many electric poles were also damaged or uprooted during the hailstorm, said Sakhipur upazila parishad (UP) chairman Shawkat Sikder who visited the affected villages.

A number of poultry farms and a many banana orchards were also badly damaged in the storm, he added.

Upazila Agriculture Officer Azharul Islam Siddique told this correspondent that irri-boro paddy on around 4000 hectares of land, vegetables on 500 hectares, mango orchards on 100 hectares, jackfruit orchard on 100 hectares, jute on 50 hectares and chilli on 30 hectares were partially damaged by the hailstorm.

The losses were primarily estimated at around Tk 25 crore, he added. Schoolteacher Shamsul Haque, 50, of Mahanandapur village in the upazila said he never witnessed such devastating hailstorm in his life.

In Ghatail upazila, the hailstorm blew away around 100 houses and damaged crops including irri-boro paddy in eight villages of Dhalapara union during the same time.

The hails also hurt at least five people in the area during the storm, locals said.

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