

Encroachers turn Bamondanga River into a narrow canal

EAM ASADUZZAMAN,
Nilphamari

Once mighty 'Bamondanga' river flowing by Nilphamari town now appears like a narrow canal as encroachers filled up most of its bed to construct buildings for business and residential purposes.

Amid fear of disappearance of the last signs of the watercourse and massive waterlogging due to hindrance to flow of rain and drainage water, local municipality authorities recently intervened and stopped construction of

buildings on the river land.

According to 'Nilphamarir Itihas' (history of Nilphamari) written by local historian Nasiruddin Ahmed, the town of Nilphamari developed centring famous 'Sakha Macha' bazaar situated on the Bamondanga River, a branch of Jamuneswari River.

"During my boyhood, I saw strong current in the river. Many people caught fish in the river. Now the river is hardly recognisable as constructions have filled up its bed," said local resi-

dent Lokman Hossain, 75, also a freedom fighter.

To build up a good drainage system in the town, the municipality authorities took steps to save the river from the encroachers in 2007, said Md Kibria, panel mayor of Nilphamari municipality.

"To our wonder, we noticed that the encroachers are showing ownership documents for the lands that are part of the river. We also found that the land record of 1940 gives no indication of the river and its existence was not shown in the map of the con-

cerned mouja. The encroachers in collaboration with a section of dishonest land officials recorded their names as owners of the river land," he said.

Local sources said to avoid any complexity, the municipal authority arranged a discussion with the encroachers. It was decided that municipal authority would dig and use only 40 feet width in the river channel for passage of drain water. The river thus took the shape of a canal, informed locals.

Visiting the river on

Wednesday, this correspondent found that the encroachers are engaged in a sort of competition to occupy even the 'settled' 40-foot-wide channel.

It was also seen that a big automatic rice mill has been built on the river land. Waste materials and ashes are regularly thrown into the channel, making it almost filled.

In Baroipara area of the municipality, men of one Abdul Kuddus Choudhury recently started filling the river and constructing concrete pillars to build a big building.

Following complaints from local people, the municipality authorities stopped the construction.

When contacted, Abdul Kuddus Choudhury said, "It is not a river at all. If it were a river, its land would be recorded as 'khas' land. I have genuine land documents. I am making concrete pillars for my boundary wall."

"The work is temporarily stopped now as the municipality chairman gave objection. It is a canal and I have told the municipality authorities that I shall give some of my land for the canal," he said.

Nilphamari municipal Mayor Dewan Kamal Ahmed said, "We will not allow further encroachment on the river. Even 25-30 years ago, I saw the river flowing with strong current. There are 7-8 concrete bridges over it in this municipality area. But for mysterious reasons, there is no indication of this river in official land records. It will be a long legal battle if

UNO could stop it for a few hours only

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Pabna

Parents of a 14-year-old girl at Narikelpara village of Chatmohar upazila under the district married her off on Wednesday night although the upazila administration had stopped the child marriage earlier on the day.

Marriage of the girl, Shakila Parvin, daughter of Md Jaidul Islam of Narikelpara village, was held in presence of advocate Eti Hossain Swapna, wife of Chatmohar upazila parishad Chairman Shamsuddin Khabir.

Shakila, also a class seven student of Chatmohar Pilot Girls' School, went to her father-

in-law's house the same night.

"Shakila Parvin's parents arranged her marriage with Abdus Subhan, son of Bokul Hossain of Ankutia village in Chatmohar upazila, on Wednesday noon. Hearing the matter, I informed the upazila nirbahi officer. He along with us rushed to Shakila's home to stop the early marriage," said Chitra Rani Saha, Chatmohar upazila women affairs officer.

"In response to our request, Shakila's father assured us not to marry off the girl at such an early age," Md Firoz Shah, upazila nirbahi officer of Chatmohar, told this

correspondent.

"But the child's parents completed her marriage rituals in presence of advocate Eti Hossain Swapna, wife of Chatmohar upazila parishad chairman, on Wednesday night. Tk 2 lakh and one was fixed as denmohar (dowry to be paid to the bride). Assistant kazi (marriage registrar) Ismail Hossain registered the marriage," Chitra Rani said.

Asked about the matter, advocate Eti Hossain Swapna said, "I did not lead Shakila's marriage. I went to attend the ceremony as an invited guest. The girl's family arranged her marriage



PHOTO: STAR

Structures like these on the remaining part of the once mighty Bamondanga River flowing by Nilphamari town bear testimony to a section of people's mindless occupation of the land of the natural watercourse, reducing it to a narrow canal with scanty flow.

Hilsa fishing resumes today as 7-month ban ends

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Barisal

Ban on hilsa fishing to protect uninterrupted development of *jatka* (young hilsa less than 9 inches long) ended yesterday.

The Directorate of Fisheries imposed the ban on hilsa catching across the country for seven months from November 1, 2011.

Sources in the district fisheries office said the government provided rice for families of 26,211 fishermen for four months from February to May. During the period each of the families received only 30 kg of rice per month, sources added. A large number of fishermen in the coastal areas were seen preparing yesterday to go for fishing hilsa in rivers, estuaries and deep sea with trawlers.

Bankim Chandra, assistant director at Barisal office of the fisheries department, said hilsa fries develop 2-2.5 centimetres in length per month and



move towards the sea after reaching 15-17cm in length.

When they reach 25-28cm in length with 300-450 grams in weight, they start returning to sweet water rivers for laying eggs, he added.

Wahiduzzaman, district fisheries officer, said they could not impose restriction on netting of *jatka* in all areas properly due to fund constraint, lack of manpower, loopholes in law and

other logistic support.

Fisheries officials said the government steps, including year-long ban on the use of current nets, seven months (November-May) ban on *jatka* catching, two months (March-April) ban of hilsa fishing in four sanctuaries and ten-day (October 15-24) complete ban on hilsa fishing in 7,000-km areas, are contributing to increasing the stock of the popular fish in

Stale food still being served at RU halls

A. M. JAHID, RU Correspondent

Resident students of Rajshahi University are being served 'unhygienic and substandard' foods in the dining halls allegedly due to indifference of the authorities.

Students allege that stale foods, dusts and insects are often found in the dining halls, posing serious health risk.

Despite repeated complaints, the authorities concerned did not pay heed to the problems, a number of them said.

The female resident students of Rokeya Hall recently confined the university proctor and the hall provost after more than 30 fell sick following intake of unhygienic food at the dining hall.

Most of the victims were admitted to the university medical centre.

Later, the angry students vandalised the provost's office,

Students allege

demanding investigation into the incident and improvement of the standard of foods.

A number of students alleged that the dining halls of different dormitories have turned into haven for rat, cockroach and other insects due to their unhygienic conditions.

Enayet Karim, a resident student of Sher-e-Bangla Hall, alleged that remains of a rat were found in the curry on December 7, 2010.

Following the incident, Motihar police arrested two employees of the dormitory, said another resident student Abdul Matin.

Protesting the food situation, the resident students of 11 male dormitories in 2010 also boycotted the dining halls for a week.

Following the boycott programme, the authorities

increased the meal charge by Tk 5 in the name of serving quality food, but no major change took place in this regard as yet, alleged students.

Sources said the meal charge at dining halls of all the 16 dormitories is now Tk 20 at noon and Tk 16 at night.

Refuting the allegations, Jamal Uddin, dining hall manager of Shaheed Habibur Rahman Hall, said they always tried to keep healthy atmosphere there.

"We can not serve the quality foods always as the meal charge is not enough for that purpose," he added.

Dr Mirza Wajed Hossain Baig, chief of the university medical centre, said a number of students who come to the centre often suffer from various food borne diseases.

Prof Shahid Iqbal, convener of RU hall provost council, said the authorities would take steps to improve

50 injured as villagers clash in Habiganj

UNB, Sylhet

At least 50 people, including women, were injured in a fierce clash between two rival groups of people over previous enmity at Noagaon village in Ajmiriganj upazila of Habiganj district on Wednesday.

Locals said three years ago, Renu Mia and Zaher Ali's son Saifur Rahman of the village locked in an altercation over a trifling matter and, at one stage Renu stabbed Saifur indiscriminately, leaving him dead on the spot.

Later, Saifur's brother Sajidur Rahman filed a murder case against 30 people including Renu with Ajmiriganj PS. Since then Renu and his men started

putting pressure on Sajidur to withdraw the case which he refused.

On Wednesday morning, Renu and his supporters attacked and vandalised the house of Sajidur and looted valuables.

Later, both the groups equipped with sharp weapons attacked each other, leaving 50 people from both sides injured.

On information, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Of the injured Mukta Bibi, 50, and Ziaur Mia, 30, were rushed to Sylhet Osmani Medical College Hospital in critical condition while others to Ajmiriganj upazila health complex and Habiganj Sadar Hospital.

Acid attack on housewife

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Saitkhira

A housewife received serious burn injuries as criminals threw acid on her at Pirojpur village in Kaliganj upazila on Wednesday night.

The victim, Fatema Khatun, 35, wife of Sheikh Nuruzzaman, is now under going treatment at Upazila Health Complex.

She filed a case with Kaliganj Police Station yesterday accusing four people, including Ansar Ali, 40, of the same village.

In the case statement, Fatema alleged that Ansar Ali, 40, son of Omar Ali, and his accomplices hurled acid as her when she came out of their house in response to the call of nature at around 11:45pm.

Police quoted locals as saying that Ansar gave her an indecent proposal a few days ago and she disclosed it to her neighbours.

To take revenge on Fatema, Ansar and his accomplice threw acid on her, locals said. She received burn injuries in her face, hands and chest.

Hearing screams, neighbours rushed to the spot and took Fatema to the local health complex.

Police could not arrest any of the accused as of 6:00pm yesterday as they had gone into hiding soon after the incident.

Contact, Officer-in-Charge (OC) AKM Ali Nur Hossain said they have already launched a drive to arrest the culprits.

Tortoises seized from night coach, one fined

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Kurigram

Police seized 16 tortoises from a Dhaka-bound night coach in Kurigram town on Wednesday night.

They also arrested a man named Raju Chowdhury, 35, as he was carrying the tortoises in a cage.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team led by Sub-Inspector Waheduzzaman went to the bus stand and

raided a Dhaka-bound night coach at around 8:40pm.

They found 16 tortoises in a cage and shrimps in five other cages. The law enforcers seized the tortoises and arrested Raju, an assistant of fish trader Palash of Shakari Bazar of Narayanganj.

They took the arrestee and the tortoises to Kurigram Police Station and informed the Sadar

upazila nirbahi officer, also the executive magistrate, of the matter.

Being informed, the UNO went to the police station and fined Raju Tk 5,000. After taking the money from Raju, the UNO released him.

He (UNO) took the tortoises to his office and later released them in the pond of the upazila parishad.



FILE PHOTO: STAR

Students of Rokeya Hall of Rajshahi University confront the university proctor on March 13 as 16 residents fell sick after taking meal at the dormitory. Serving of unhygienic and substandard food in the dining halls has continued despite repeated complaints to the authorities, students alleged.



PHOTO: STAR

Local journalists form a human chain in front of the deputy commissioner's office in Pataukhali town yesterday demanding punishment of the attackers on newsmen in different places of the country.