

Dying fishes afloat in Karatoa River

Toxic waste from two Panchagarh factories blamed

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT, Thakurgaon

A five-member committee headed by Panchagarh Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Ahmed Kabir has started investigation into death of the fishes in Nalkura and Sarogara sanctuaries of Karatoa River in Panchagarh Sadar upazila.

Around a month ago, fishes in the two sanctuaries started floating dead and the incident increased badly during the last couple of days allegedly due to dumping of wastes from two industrial units.

The district fishery department lodged a complaint to the district administration in this regard.

Visiting Nalkura and Sarogara sanctuaries in the river on Wednesday, the investigation committee members found a number of dead fishes floating on the river water which is blackish and stinking.

"We are trying to find out the cause of death of the fishes in the sanctuaries. We will file a report in this regard within two or three days," ADC Ahmed Kabir said.

"The river water has turned toxic as Panchagarh Sugar Mills Ltd and Asia Distilleries have continued dumping industrial wastes without refining. Blackish and stinking, the water is almost unusable and the pollution threatens aquatic life including fishes, especially local varieties," said Emdadul Haque, district fishery officer.

Villagers are collecting



PHOTO: STAR

Dying fishes afloat in the badly polluted Karatoa River in Panchagarh Sadar upazila. Below, liquid waste from Asia Distilleries finds the way to the river.

dead and dying fishes from the sanctuaries during the last two days, said Abdur Razzak, an employee of fishery department, who looks after the sanctuaries.

Over two hundred fishermen of adjoining villages of

the sanctuaries who live by fishing in the river are worried as the fishes are dying due to dumping of industrial wastes, said Md Ibrahim, president of Nalkura Abhoyasram Matsajibi Samity.

Contacted over cell phone, the managing direc-

tor of Panchagarh Sugar Mills claimed that the liquid waste released from the mill is not hazardous as it has no toxic element.

Shamsul Huda, an official of Asia Distilleries, said the waste released from there has no harmful element.

AL office torched

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Criminals torched a local Awami League office in Sadar upazila on Wednesday night.

The fire gutted the furniture and a television of the office worth about Tk two lakh, said police.

Mohammad Ali, president of Ward-4 of Chehegazi union under the upazila said at around 11:30pm, he was informed by the locals about the arson attack on the office.

On information, the fire fighters rushed to the spot and doused the blaze, he said.

Mohammad Ali blamed local Jubo Dal leaders for the attack as they had a picnic near the office at night.

A complaint was filed with Dinajpur police station in this connection yesterday, said Md. Altaf Hossain, officer-in-charge of the PS.

AL-BNP clash leaves 25 hurt

UNB, Magura

At least 25 people were injured in a clash between the activists of Awami League and BNP in Shabdulpur union under Sreepur upazila of the district yesterday.

Quoting witnesses, police said the supporters of ruling party leader Sabbir Hossain and BNP leader Hafijur Rahman clashed over establishing supremacy in the union.

The rival groups equipped with home-made firearms attacked each other, leaving 25 people from both sides injured. Twenty houses were also damaged and looted during the clash.

Being informed, police rushed to the spot and dispersed the clashing groups.

CASES FOR TORCHING BUS, POLLING CENTRES 32 Barguna BNP men sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At least 32 BNP men, including the party's Barguna district unit president, were sent to jail in the cases for attack on cops and torching a bus in the town on November 25 and polling centres in different areas of the district on the night of January 4.

District BNP President Mahbulul Alam Faruque Mollah, General Secretary Tariquzzaman and JCD district unit joint convenor Muraduzzaman Tapon are among the accused.

The BNP men surrendered to the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court, Barguna, at noon and prayed for bail.

Chief Judicial Magistrate Mohitul Islam Anam rejected their bail prayer and sent them to jail.

Four separate cases were filed against the BNP men with Sadar police station for setting fire to a passenger bus on Madrasa Road in the town and attack on policemen on November 25 and torching several polling centres in different places of the district on the night of January 4.

Rezabul Kabir, organising secretary of BNP district unit, said local Awami League men filed the 'false' cases to harass our leaders and activists. He demanded release of the party men.

Our Chapainawabganj

correspondent reported that a court here on Wednesday rejected bail prayers by four BNP men and sent them to jail.

The BNP men are accused in two cases-one for setting fire to the house of law-maker Golam Rabbani on December 2 and another for murder of Awami League worker Enamul Haque in Shibganj upazila on December 30 last year.

BNP men Shahjahan Mia, Shafiqul Islam, Ali Ahmed and Muktedir Khair Himel surrendered to the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court and sought bail in the cases. The court rejected their bail prayers and sent them to jail.

14 illegal brick kilns sealed off in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

The district administration in a drive sealed off 14 illegally set up brick kilns in Badarganj upazila on Wednesday.

The sealed off brick fields are BBC, RRB, TBC, BBM, KBL, ARBL, PBM, EBL, RBM, BBL, KINJ, RBL-2, RBC and BBB.

The kilns were built on the arable lands in violation of rules, polluting environment in the surrounding areas.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Md Shahidul Islam led the drive

following an order issued by the High Court.

The brick fields were also set up without obtaining any licence from the Department of Environment (DoE), said the ADC.

The court also issued a show-cause notice to another 14 kilns as they did not renew their licences, he said.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) MJ Arif Beg, Md Osman Gani, deputy director of DoE in Rangpur, police and Rab, among others, were present during the drive.

On January 21, Iqbal

Hossain, a lawyer of the Supreme Court, filed a writ petition with the HC against 37 illegal brick kilns of the upazila.

In Thakurgaon, a mobile court in a drive sealed off a brick kiln at Barunagaon village in Sadar upazila on Wednesday for violating the environment rules.

The brickfield was using illegal drum chimney, posing threat to environment, reports our correspondent.

The kiln continued running its operation without obtaining any licence from DoE, said Executive Magistrate Golam Kabir who led the court.



PHOTO: STAR

Fire Service men douse the fire of this illegal brick kiln in Badarganj upazila under Rangpur district yesterday as the High Court ordered its closure.

Criminal killed in 'shootout'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A listed criminal was killed in a 'shootout' with members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in Companyganj upazila of the district yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Shahadat Hossain alias Jasu, 37, chief of notorious Jasu Bahini.

Acting on a tip-off, mem-

bers of Rab-11 led by Major Shaheed Hasan cordoned off a garden in Uttar Urirchar area where Jasu and his cohorts were holding a meeting at around 11:00am.

Sensing the presence of Rab personnel, the gang members opened fire, prompting the law enforcers to retaliate.

Jasu sustained bullets during the gunfight and died instantly while other

members of the gang managed to flee into a deep forest.

A light machine gun (LG), a revolver, a shotgun and some bullets were recovered from the spot.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) Shajidur Rahman of Companyganj Police Station said Jasu was wanted in 20 cases, including for killing, rape and kidnapping filed with the police station.

Mentally challenged girl raped in Pirojpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Three people raped a mentally challenged homeless 11-year-old girl in Pirojpur town on Wednesday night.

The alleged rapists are Monir, 35, a shopkeeper in front of Pirojpur Lawyers Plaza, Shahadat, 60, a caretaker of a land behind Monir's shop, and Sohel, around 30, a tempo driver.

Around 11:30pm on Wednesday, Monir picked up the girl when she was sleeping beside the road near Pirojpur Central Mosque and took her to Shahadat's room, locals said.

After raping the girl, Monir and Sohel left the spot while Shahadat was found in an objectionable condition with the girl inside the room, they said.

"Informed by a boy that Monir had taken away a girl towards his shop, I told tea stall owner Miraj," said Amol, a sweeper of Pirojpur municipality.

"After hearing the matter, I rushed to Monir's shop but found none. Then I went to the room of Shahadat who

tried to prevent my entrance. After entering there forcibly, I found the girl, who had been undressed, covered with a blanket," said Miraj.

Hearing hue and cry, people gathered there and beat up Shahadat. Then policemen held Shahadat from the spot, called Monir by mobile, and arrested him too.

They sent the victim girl to Pirojpur Sadar Hospital and the two accused to jail through the court yesterday.

Sub-inspector Abdul Jalil Ahmed filed a case accusing Shahadat and Monir with Pirojpur police station under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, said Babul Sikder, assistant sub-inspector.

This correspondent contacted Abdur Razzak, officer in charge of the police station, more than once but he tried to ignore the incident.

The mentally challenged minor girl is often seen moving here and there, locals said.

Apparently homeless, she sleeps beside road at night, and often faces sexual harassment by bad characters, said a few people.

POWER OUTAGE

Tanore PDB office besieged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Several hundred farmers and deep tube-well operators of Tanore upazila besieged the local office of PDB yesterday, protesting frequent power outage and low voltage that hampered irrigation to their croplands over a couple of weeks.

Forty-eight deep tube-well operators among 200 farmers of three municipality areas joined the agitation programme.

The areas are Talondo, Gokul and Kashimbazar in the upazila, said police and locals.

Fearing humiliation by the protestors, the assistant

engineer left the office at 10:30am when they started gathering there.

However, other Power Development Board (PDB) staffs remained locked inside the office, said police and locals.

They demanded ensuring uninterrupted power supply with good voltage for running deep tube-wells.

They were not getting smooth power supply since the peak boro season began two weeks back, said Abdul Mazed, a farmer of Talondo area.

"Moreover, when there is no load shedding low voltage hampers running the tube-wells," said Rustom Ali, a tube-well operator.

"The farmers became

angry as Kashimpur Bazar feeder line was cut to provide power to another irrigation area," said Ferdous Alam, superintendent of Rajshahi divisional PDB who visited the spot.

They normally ensured power supply to different irrigation areas alternatively, he added.

"Apart from all this, if there is any system faults, it will be resolved soon", said Alam.

At 12:30pm, the law enforcers removed the gathering, said Bazlur Rashid, officer-in-charge of Tanore police station.

Additional police personnel have been deployed in the area to avert further trouble, said the OC.

Four jails in Sylhet divn overcrowded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The four jails in Sylhet division are struggling to cope with around double number of prisoners than their usual capacity.

Sylhet Central Jail and the district jails of Moulvibazar, Habiganj and Sunamganj have capacity to accommodate a total of 2,175 people but there are around 4,200 inmates.

On an average, around 150 people are sent to jails in the region daily while nearly the same number people are released, either on bail or after expiry of the term, jail officials said.

Sylhet Central Jail has to accommodate about 2,230 inmates against the capacity of 1,210. Sunamganj district jail

has the worst situation, with over 600 inmates against the capacity of 149.

Moulvibazar and Habiganj district jails accommodate 645 and 700 people against the capacity of 316 and 500 inmates respectively.

Amid less than expected facilities due to the situation, sometimes unwanted exchanges occur between jail staff and prisoners.

Md Kamal Hossain, senior superintendent of Sylhet Central Jail, said, "To cope with the increasing number of prisoners, the government decided to shift the central jail from its present location at the heart of the city to Tokerbazar on the outskirts. Construction work for a new jail there is going on and it is expected to be completed by this year."



PHOTO: STAR

Farmers besiege the Power Development Board office in Tanore upazila of Rajshahi district yesterday demanding smooth electricity supply to ensure irrigation during the ongoing boro cultivation season.