

## Chitra grabbers served notice, at last

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

After over three months of inaction, Jhenidah's Kotchandpur upazila administration have finally asked four brothers of sadar upazila to remove portions of their ponds which encroached on nearly half of the Chitra river in Madhuhati union's Suti village.

A survey revealed that the four adjoining ponds, measuring a total 80 feet in length, had gone around 25 feet into the river, Madhuhati Union Land Officer Tofazzel Hossain told The Daily Star on August 12.

The brothers had been served a notice on the first week of August to remove the illegal portions in 15 days, he added.

Locals, requesting anonymity, stated that the four -- Samsur Rahman, Haidar Ali alias Toga, Motiar Rahman and Sekendar Ali -- dug the ponds in May despite their opposition while verbal complaints to the authorities concerned fell on deaf ears.

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A partial view of a pond dug through encroachment on the Chitra river at Suti village in Jhenidah. The local administration has asked the encroachers to vacate the illegally occupied part of the river. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

## No one to care for

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playing with female police members who had been looking after them.

"I had serious trouble sleeping last night as I could not stop thinking about their fate," Fatiha Yesmin, additional deputy commissioner of the centre, told this correspondent as tears welled up in her eyes.

After Asma's death, Anjuman-e-Mafidul Islam received her body as none came to receive it. The whereabouts of her late husband and his family could also not be known from any source.

Deputy Commissioner of Victim Support Centre Shamima Begum said Shahbagh police had given the two children under their custody after their mother's death. She said they were desperately looking for a legal guardian for the children but were yet to find any.

"Several people have already showed interest to adopt the children but only the court can decide whether they will be given to any foster parent or to a child care centre," she said.

Asma has one step-brother named Humayun Kabir who works as a peon at a Rajshahi clinic. He said Asma was her only family member and they had lost their parents around nine years back.

"I'm already finding it very difficult to make both ends meet. I cannot afford to raise Asma's children even if I wanted to," a downcast Kabir said.

## Tricky to decide

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three-decade investment proposal to tap 572 million tonnes of high quality coal because it was not sure of a victory in case the company turned to any international court.

"We are now examining all aspects of developing the local coal sector, not just the Phulbari mine project," said the prime minister's energy adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, Bir Bikram, adding, "Underground water is a major issue that we must understand first before going for further coal sector development."

The Institute of Water Modelling has been studying the underground water table of the northern region where all known discovered coal deposits have been found. Its report is expected to be completed within a few months.

Tawfiq added that even if the nation went for coal sector development, it had to address the challenge of installing coal fired power plants at places close to rivers.

Neither Phulbari nor Barapukuria has adjacent rivers. Therefore, the government was reviewing if coal power plants, based on locally produced coal, could be built near Sirajganj and what the impediments were to that.

Tawfiq said by undertaking a pilot open-pit mining project in the northern part of Barapukuria coal mine, the government wanted to get experience that would help it understand the realities of large-scale coal production.

Gary Lye, Asia Energy Executive Director in Bangladesh, on the other hand sees no reason for the government's indecision.

"The government's power system master plan 2010 emphasises coal usage to diversify energy sources. But the government did not do anything to diversify, except on paper [building several thousand megawatts of coal plants based on imported coal]," said Lye, adding, "Till today, the challenges of coal supply and shipping remain unaddressed."

Lye believes that the government's plans to import coal for power plants did not consider various issues of coal import. "At present, coal price is cheaper due to surplus stock, hovering around \$80 per tonne for coal of Phulbari quality in Indonesia, Australia, Colombia, etc. This price is projected to go up from next year. Then there is transportation cost,"

he said, arguing why the Phulbari mining proposal should get a go-ahead.

The government's plan for building 10,000MW coal power plant in phases by 2030 will annually need 30 million tonnes of coal through the sea and rivers, which is a huge challenge as very large ships cannot anchor in Bangladeshi waters due to low draft.

"The Phulbari mine alone could supply 15 million tonnes of coal each year, and address half of the concern," he said.

He also suggested that Baghabari in the northern region could become a power hub for coal plants. Baghabari has rail links to help transport coal regularly and it was close to the Jamuna river.

If the combined coal resource of Phulbari and Barapukuria was tapped by open-pit mining methods, these could sustainably generate over 6,000MW of electricity for 50 years, he added.

He added that he had been seeking appointments with government high officials to discuss the approval of its project but was not getting any response.

Back in 2006, Asia Energy, a British company, conducted all required studies for the project and projected that the Phulbari scheme would generate more than \$21 billion (based on \$50 per tonne coal price) in economic benefits to Bangladesh over its 30 year life and add one percent a year to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The direct effect on GDP is expected to be \$7.8 billion over the life of the project, according to a study conducted by the international professional services company GHD on behalf of Asia Energy.

"The indirect or multiplier effects are expected to be \$13.7 billion. This gives a total GDP increase of \$21.4 billion."

Over the life of the project, Asia Energy intends to spend an estimated \$3 billion in capital on the mine and power plant and an additional \$10.4 billion in operating costs.

Asia Energy will earn \$7 billion while the government will earn a royalty of \$1.2 billion, another \$2.8 billion as corporate tax.

Bangladesh railway, the Mongla port authority, the income tax division and the customs department will make another \$3 billion, it says.

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## WHO SAID WHAT AFTER AUGUST 15

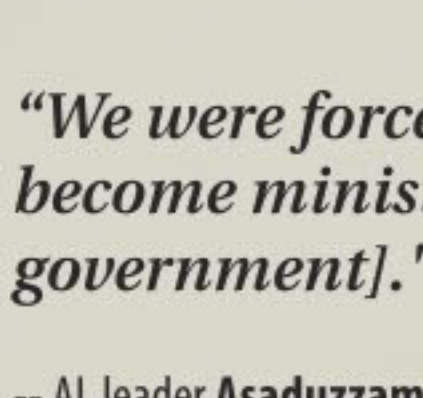
**"They are the brightest sons of the armed forces."**

-- In an address to the nation through radio on October 3, **Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed**, who had been the commerce minister of Bangabandhu government, said this to praise the killers of Sheikh Mujib after being installed in the presidency by the same killers.



**"Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed has set a great instance by handing over power [to me] despite his countrywide popularity, which is rare in any developing country and is a matter of pride for the people of this country."**

-- Chief Justice **ASM Sayem**, who was made president replacing Moshtaque on November 6 following a coup, said this in an address to the nation on November 7, appreciating his predecessor as a counter coup later that day changed the situation.



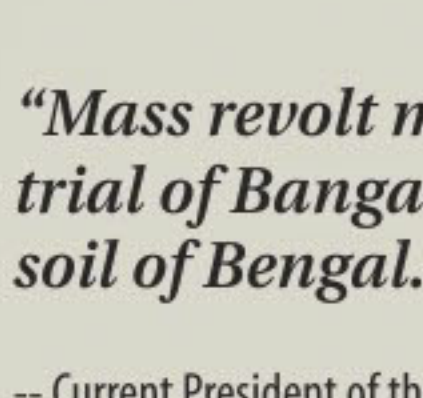
**"We were forced at gunpoint to become ministers [of the Moshtaque government]."**

-- AL leader **Asaduzzaman Khan**, then leader of the opposition, said this in parliament on April 7, 1979 after BNP lawmakers teased him saying that some AL leaders, including Asaduzzaman himself, had joined the Moshtaque cabinet after the assassination of Bangabandhu.



**"May Allah bless the President [Moshtaque] in establishing rule of law, peace and happiness in the country by uprooting corruption."**

-- **Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish**, who was AL president twice, made the wish on Aug 17, congratulating Moshtaque's takeover.



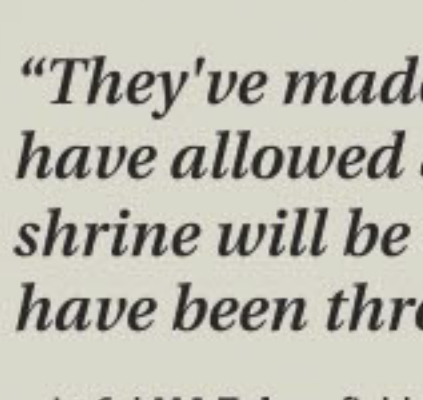
**"Mass revolt must be waged to ensure trial of Bangabandhu's killers on the soil of Bengal."**

-- Current President of the Communist Party of Bangladesh **Mujahidul Islam Selim**, who was DUCSU vice-president and a member of CPB's Dhaka city unit back then, said this at a rally on Dhaka university campus on November 4, 1975. The CPB staged several protest rallies after August 15, condemning the assassination of Bangabandhu.



**"The Pharaoh has fallen. The country has been freed from the autocrat."**

-- **Abdul Malek Ukil**, then speaker of parliament dominated by the AL, said this in London in September 1975.



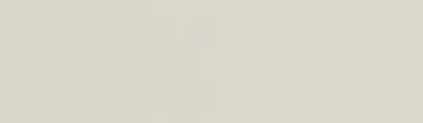
**"They've made a big mistake. They shouldn't have allowed Sheikh Mujib's burial. Now a shrine will be built there. His body should have been thrown into the Bay of Bengal."**

-- Lt Col **MA Taher**, field commander of the Revolutionary Gono Bahini of JSD, said this on August 17 when Naim Jahangir, a Dhaka University student who had fought the Liberation War alongside Taher, visited him at his residence -- according to an upcoming book of Mohiuddin Ahmed. Taher was reportedly present at Moshtaque's oath-taking ceremony.



**"In the greater national interest, the armed forces have taken over power under the leadership of Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed by overthrowing former president Sheikh Mujibur Rahman."**

-- State run news agency **BSS** reported on August 15, 1975, regarding the changeover.



Compiled by  
**Shakhawat Liton and Rashidul Hasan**

## In prison

FROM PAGE 1

expert, are still at large, causing a massive headache for law enforcers.

Against this backdrop, the government has decided to strengthen its monitoring on militant outfits. It is also looking for a way to expedite the process of executing 54 militants who are on death row.

They have been sentenced to death in different cases. But they are yet to be executed as they face several more cases.

Wishing anonymity, a senior police official said, "Execution of the condemned militants has become essential as transporting them from jails to courts for hearing in the cases is very risky."

The militants get the chance to meet one another in the courts and discuss the activities of their organisations. "They can influence others," said the official.

Moreover, no step has been taken to motivate and correct the detained militants. As a result, a significant number of JMB activists have re-engaged themselves in militant activities after getting out of jail.

Inspector General of Prisons Brig Gen Syed Iftekhar Uddin said there were no such arrangements in prison.

According to Joint Commissioner (detective branch) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police Monirul Islam, militancy is a doctrine, and it is not possible to root it out only by enforcing law.

"Militants keep faith in a distorted explanation of the Quran and the Hadith. Islamic scholars should come forward to motivate them through the right explanations of the Quran and Hadith," he told reporters at his office recently.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, State Minister for Home Asaduzzaman Khan said monitoring on all militant outfits has been stepped up.

"We are keeping track of those coming out of jails. In many cases, they are arrested so that they cannot rejoin their outfits," he said.

In the name of establishing Sharia (Islamic law), the JMB started operating in Rajshahi, Natore and Naogaon in 2004 when the BNP-led four-party alliance government was in power.

Aided and abetted by some ministers, lawmakers, four-party alliance leaders, and members in local administration and police, militant vigilantes of the JMB terrorised people in the name of ridding the north-

ern districts of outlawed Sarbahara and Purbo Banglar Communist Party. They killed at least 22 people and injured scores during that time.

The militant outfit managed to establish a strong network and carried out the countrywide bomb attacks. The network was dismantled following the arrest of its leaders and busting of dens across the country.

JMB chief Shaikh Abdur Rahman, its operations commander Bangla Bhai and four other top leaders were executed in 2007.

Identifying militancy as a social problem, the Awami League government in its previous term had launched socio-political and religious campaigns against militancy in 2009.

It believed the menace of militancy could not be uprooted with force only and such campaigns would be more effective to that end.

The National Committee on Militancy Resistance and Prevention, headed by the state minister for home, was formed to spearhead the campaign.

The committee came up with some innovative ideas such as training imams to give sermons before Juma prayers for creating public awareness about the evils of militancy.

The Islamic Foundation trained imams but there was no system to monitor whether it was doing the task accordingly.

Besides, anti-militancy short films, advertisements and documentaries have not been screened regularly at educational institutions and public places for lack of political will.

The education ministry was asked to organise discussions on the impact of terrorism and militancy in all educational institutions. Initially, there had been some initiatives but those didn't continue.

The ministry was also supposed to ensure that teachers delivered anti-militancy speeches at school assemblies. But it did not monitor whether the schools were indeed doing that.

The result was that the campaign lost momentum in 2011. After that, the law enforcement and intelligence agencies got busy tackling political violence, allowing the militant outfits to regroup.

Asaduzzaman said the committee was working on ways to stop terror financing and make people aware about the evils of militancy.

## Ripe, risky

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available in several hundreds of shops in the region," Aziz said alleging that the local agriculture officials get tips from the companies for advising the farmers to use them in fruits.

At least 45 hormones of 27 chemical companies, approved by the Field Service Wing of Khamar Bari in Dhaka, are available in local markets, sources in local agriculture officials as well as chemicals and insecticides traders said.

These chemicals and hormones are sold in the region during the growing seasons in crores of taka, they alleged.

Utpal Kumar Prodhon, assistant professor of food technology and nutritional science department of Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University, said harmful chemicals such as ethophen, ethrel, crops care, and calcium carbide were used by almost all of the local farmers for flowering, increasing size and to ripen immature fruits so that production and profits are better.

The reported chemicals are slow poisoning substances, consumption of which can cause vomiting, dizzi-

ness and long-time intake can make people vulnerable to cancer, liver and kidney diseases.

It is harmful for pregnant women and can cause mental retardation to children. The chemicals can also cause lung diseases to farmers if they spray them without wearing masks, he added.

"We have no information about the harms of using these hormones in fruits and government did not ban these," said Hazrat Ali, agriculture officer in Madhupur upazila.

He, however, admitted that the local fruit growers and traders use excessive amount of these hormones in the fruits causing them to lose their normal tastes.

Hafizur Rahman, a member of pineapple growers' cooperative association in Madhupur, said normally, pineapple starts ripening from its bottom edge around August without any chemical used. If growth hormones are not used then, the fruit turns black and its size also does not increase.

"Buyers, however, like big size and yellow pineapples," he added.

## Google

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ocean floor to connect the continents, according to Network World, which first reported the story.

It's such a problem that the company is wrapping its cables under the Pacific Ocean in a coating similar to Kevlar, the tough synthetic material used to make ballistic vests and body armor.

Google doesn't have much to say about why sharks would want to chow down on the internet. One possible reason, George Burgess of the Florida Program for Shark Research tells USA Today, is that sharks can detect electromagnetic fields. It's a talent called electroreception, which allows them to pick up on faint electrical signals that fish emit. Sharks might be confused by the signal that escapes from the cable and think it is prey.

However, Chris Lowe from the Shark Lab at California State University, Long Beach, says there's another explanation: Sharks just like to bite things. They'd probably

attack a simple piece of plastic in the shape of a cable, he tells Wired.

Whatever the reason, the problem isn't new. There have been reports of sharks attacking fiber optic cables ever since companies starting laying them in the ocean in the 1980s. According to a report from the International Cable Protection Committee, the first deep ocean fiber optic cable, built in 1989, failed on four separate occasions because of shark attack. "Bites tend to penetrate the cable insulation, allowing the power conductor to ground with seawater," it says.

Wrapping undersea cables in many protective layers is now standard operating procedure for Google, and for good reason: There's a lot of money to be made in providing faster transmission speeds to Asia. Google is currently building multiple lines to the continent, including one \$300 million cable that would connect U.S. west coast cities including Los Angeles and Seattle to Japan.