

Land grabbers gobble Bandarban town canal

Structures built on both sides

SANJOY KUMAR BARIUA, Bandarban

A section of unscrupulous people have erected structures on 2-km of Myaski canal, obstructing the free flow of water. This led to unprecedented water logging this monsoon, locals said.

Encroachments on the old Myaski canal over the years have turned the once 40-feet-wide natural canal to a 10-feet-wide drain in the tourist town, thanks to the Bandarban Municipality's indifference to its maintenance.

Army Para, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Islampur, Member Para, Officer's Club, Wapda Bridge, Bus station, Pull Para, and Army Hospital, that were free from water logging irrespective of heavy

downpour in the past, remained under waist-deep water for 15-20 days this year.

Executive engineer of Bandarban Municipality, MongSwe Khai Marma, said encroachment was one of the main reasons behind the water logging.

According to Municipality Area Plan, no structure can be set up within 15 feet of the borders of the canal area, Mong added.

Due to siltation, the canal is losing its navigability as Bandarban Municipality is not taking steps to dredge the water body, alleged the residents. "The municipality never removed silt from the canal," said Jamal Uddin of Army para and Abu Tayab of Bus station area.

Most of the residents of

those areas fear that the canal will die and water logging will become a regular feature if the grabbing continues.

At least 1500 tin-sheds and buildings were found on both banks and on the canal. The brick-built structures were established in the last five-six years while the others were built 12-15 years ago, said the residents.

The people grabbed land near the canal by 'managing' the authorities of Bandarban Hill District Council (BHDC) and Bandarban Municipality.

Nurul Islam Matabbar, 50, who has three tin-shed houses on the bank at Wapda Bridge area, said he bought the land from Bandarban Bazar Fund 13 years ago, and has been

regularly paying taxes to the Bazar Fund committee and also to the local mayor.

Similar statements were made by several other grabbers at Army Para, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Officer's Club and Islampur areas.

In addition to stopping of the malpractice, the residents demanded a permanent demarcation of the canal with walls.

Mayor Javed Reza said as BHDC leased the canal area through its Bazar Fund Administrator we could do nothing to stop the grabbing of the canal.

Contacted, Bazar Fund Administrator and also chairman of BHDC, Kyaw Shwe Hla, denied the allegation and said they allocated the plots according to the law of the Bazar Fund Manual Act.



PHOTO: STAR

Gradual narrowing of Myaski canal in Bandarban town due to illegal construction of structures causes serious waterlogging in the hill town famous for tourism during the ongoing monsoon. The photo was taken from Wapda Bridge area yesterday.

AL leader shot dead in Laxmipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A local leader of Awami League was shot dead by unidentified assailants at Chandraganj area under Sadar upazila of the district yesterday.

The deceased was Md Omar Faruque, 45, vice-president of Chandraganj union unit of AL and convener of Chandraganj Thana Santrash Nirmul Committee. He was the son of Abdul Mannan.

Quoting witnesses, police said Faruque was gossiping with locals at a tea stall beside his house at Latifpur village when

masked assailants riding on a CNG-run autorickshaw swooped on him at around 9:00am.

At one stage, they dragged him out of the tea stall and fired several shots at his chest before fleeing the spot on the autorickshaw.

Faruque succumbed to his injuries while he was being taken to Noakhali General Hospital.

Meanwhile, protesting the incident, locals and AL leaders and activists of the area brought out a protest rally demanding arrest of the attackers.

Following information, police rushed to the spot

and brought the situation under control.

Humayun Kabir, officer-in-charge (OC) of Chandraganj Police Station, said police recovered the body and sent it to Laxmipur Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Police were trying to apprehend the attackers, the OC added.

Family members of the deceased AL leader said Faruque was killed as he took a strong stance against the criminal gangs and armed cadres in his speech during the inauguration of the new complex of Chandraganj Police Station on Monday.

Fratricide

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

A man was killed allegedly by his elder brother over a family feud at Dodangi village in Manda upazila of Naogaon district yesterday.

The deceased is Ershatullah, 45, son of Lasir Uddin of the village. Ershatullah's wife Latifunnesa, who also sustained injuries during the incident, is now undergoing treatment at Manda Upazila Health Complex. Quoting victim's family members,

Mozaffar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Manda Police Station, said Ershatullah had an altercation with his elder brother Joyen Uddin,

47, over a family matter around 8:00am. At one stage, Joyen and his family members beat up Ershatullah with bamboo sticks, leaving him dead on the spot. They also beat up Latifunnesa when she tried to save her husband, the OC added. On information, police recovered the body and sent it to Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy. Latifunnesa filed a case with Manda Police Station, accusing Joyen, his wife Marzina, son Sagar and daughters Reshma and Rima.

239 tortoises seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole, Jessore

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) seized 239 tortoises worth about Tk 20 lakh at Baropota under Benapole Port Police Station of Jessore district on Monday.

Lt Col Abdur Rahim, commanding officer of BGB-23 Battalion, said on secret information, the BGB men raided the border area and seized the tortoises.



PHOTO: STAR

Teachers of Maulana Bhasani University of Science and Technology University at Santosh in Tangail form a chain on the campus yesterday protesting attack on the teachers of Shahjalal Science and Technology University in Sylhet allegedly by BCL men on Sunday.

140-KM SEGMENT OF DHAKA-PANCHAGARH HIGHWAY

Work on to reduce risk of accident at 19 black spots

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

A project of the Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges to check accidents at 19 'black spots' in 140-kilometre segment of Dhaka-Panchagarh highway from Rangpur district to Panchagarh via Nilphamari and Thakurgaon is going on in full swing, much to the happiness of passengers and drivers.

In last one-year, over 100 people died in fatal accidents in those black spots, locals and police sources said.

Following inauguration of the 'black spot improvement project' by Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader at Rangpur Medical College intersection on May 5, Roads and Highways Department (RHD) is conducting the work in the districts concerned.

Work under the Tk 25 crore project include widening of roads, making new jersey barriers (special dividers) and dense bituminous surfacing at widened parts in the 19 black spots - 11 in Rangpur district, five in Thakurgaon, two in Nilphamari, and one in Panchagarh, RHD sources said.

The most dangerous black spots are dry fish market turning point and Kamarpukur market point in Nilphamari district.

Other highly risky black spots include Rangpur Medical College intersection, Modern turning, Domdoma, Gorer Math,



PHOTO: STAR

New Jersey barriers (X marked) have been built to check accidents at Kamarpukur point in Nilphamari district, as work under an accident prevention project is progressing well at 19 such highly vulnerable 'black spots' on Panchagarh-Rangpur portion of Dhaka-Panchagarh highway.

Shothibari, Borodarga, Laldighi, Pirganj market, Ikorchali market, Taraganj market and Chikli market.

Earlier a high-powered team of RHD visited accident prone points of the highway to collect data about accidents and number of deaths.

"Construction of most of the new jersey barriers is complete. Expansion of the highway on both sides at the

black spots is going on and work of dense bituminous surfacing on expanded part will be done at the final stage," said Tanvir Siddiquee, executive engineer of RHD in Nilphamari.

Mojnu Mia, driver of a passenger bus of Nabil Paribahan group plying Dhaka-Rangpur-Nilphamari route, said,

"Driving large passenger buses through the accident prone black spots seemed a

risky job but now we are happy as the government is conducting an improvement project."

Dr Abdullah Al Mamun, executive engineer of RHD in Rangpur, said the project work is progressing well.

The project will hopefully be completed within the scheduled time (June next year), and it will help check accidents on the busy highway, he said.

Low aus price frustrates Moulvibazar farmers

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Despite this year's bumper production of aus paddy, low crop prices have farmers in Moulvibazar worried. Whereas last year the selling price per maund at local markets was as high as Tk 700, this year paddy is selling at Tk 300 - 350 per maund. Fearing financial loss, the hefty price fall has farmers reluctant even to harvest the paddy.

"We are losing money because the aus prices in the market are so low," says Kamal Uddin of Kobindopur village under Kamalganj upazila. Farmers have expended around Tk 8,000 per bigha of land in aus cultivation but the

approximately 18 maunds of paddy produced fetches at most Tk 6,000 at today's prices.

"The government is not buying aus paddy from the local market," says farmer Hafizur Rahman of Mutrapur village, "which means that private buyers can fix selling rates that are wholly favourable to themselves. Local farmers will soon lose interest in aus cultivation altogether, without government incentives such as good market prices, fertilizer subsidies and other inputs."

Kamalganj upazila agriculture officer Md Shamsuddin Ahmed says that locally, about 10,800 hectares were brought under aus cultivation this year.

Ironically production levels have been rather pleasing due to timely rainfall, he adds.

"Aus paddy has grown very well because of favourable weather conditions," says Abul Kalam Chowdhury, deputy director of the Department of Agriculture Extension's Moulvibazar office. "Besides, the use of murate of potash fertilizers has benefited farmers. It's unfortunate that in such circumstances prices have fallen so dramatically."

The dismay of falling prices in Kamalganj is shared by farmers across the district, with 42, 220 hectares having been devoted to aus paddy districtwide, only to meet similarly depressed selling rates.

5 return from Indian jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole, Jessore

Four Bangladeshi women and a kid returned home on Monday night after serving four years in an Indian jail.

Indian Immigration Police handed them over to their Bangladeshi counterpart around 8:00 pm.

The returnees hail from different areas of Satkhira, Patuakhali and Gopalganj districts.

Officer-in-charge Mominur Rahman of Benapole Immigration Police said Kolkata Police arrested them from Hawra Rail Station area nearly four and a half years ago.

Later, a court sentenced them to four years' imprisonment for crossing the border without valid documents. After serving jail terms, they were given shelter at an Indian shelter home, the OC added.



PHOTO: STAR

This bridge at Marung in Dighinala upazila under Khagrachhari district went under water yesterday, snapping road communication with adjacent Longadu upazila.