



PHOTO: STAR
Sand extraction from 30 to 40 feet depth of a pond, consequent creation of vacuum and collapse of this surface drain at Munshipara in Saidpur municipality in Nilphamari district led to pollution of underground water, causing tube-wells in the area to draw dirty and unusable water.

Pollution of tube-well water poses health risk

Drain collapse due to sand extraction blamed for the nuisance

TEAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Pollution of underground water affecting tube-wells at Munshipara of Saidpur municipality under the district poses serious health hazard for about five hundred families.

The situation has arisen as unauthorised sand extraction with dredgers made Bangladesh Railway owned Jorapukur pond 35-40 feet deep and the consequent vacuum under the ground led to the collapse of the main surface drain in the area.

The dirty drain water mixed with the pond water and it affected the area's tube well water.

Locals said Ahidul Islam Batu, relative of the local lawmaker, continued sand extraction from the pond for

the last couple of months.

When polluted water of a too deep pond reaches the same level of underground water the tube wells of the surrounding area draw the polluted water and it is happening in Munshipara area, said Abdul Gafur, assistant engineer of upazila public health department.

Visiting the affected area on Tuesday noon, it was found that about 25 metre portion of the drain along with 3-4 houses has been damaged and locals tried to prevent falling of dirty drain water into the pond by putting sandbags and earth on the drain's broken part.

Several locals including Hyder Ali, 60, Murad, 35, and Wahab, 40, said dirty and stinky water coming out of their tube-wells poses

health hazard.

Rokhsana Begum, 55, a housewife of the area, said her three children are suffering from intestine diseases and scabies, obviously due to drinking of water from the tube-wells.

"As we started agitation, the powerful sand extractor, who is also cousin of the local lawmaker, called police, bringing a false allegation against us. The law enforcers, however, returned when they found our demand logical," said Nur Hossain, a local.

Abu Musa Md Jongi, upazila nirbahi officer of Saidpur, said, "I received complaint from locals regarding the matter. As the pond belongs to the railway department I requested their authorities to take necessary action about it."

Monwar Hossen, sub

assistant settlement officer of Bangladesh Railway in Saidpur, said his office never gave permission to anybody to extract sand from Jorapukur pond.

Contacted, local lawmaker Shawkat Chowdhury said, "My relative Ahidul Islam Batu extracted sand from the pond to increase its water reserve capacity. It is a part of my plan to make a tourist spot centring the pond with the consent of the railway minister."

Sand extractor Ahidul Islam Batu said he had stopped sand extraction a few days ago as water storage capacity of the pond increased tremendously.

Terming the allegation of causing water pollution against him as 'false', he said the drain collapsed due to poor construction work by the municipality.



PHOTO: STAR
Thousands of people of 10 unions of four upazilas under Bogra and Gaibandha districts have to use this risky wooden bridge over the Bangalee River at Char Modhupur in Sonatala upazila of Bogra district as locals' demand for construction of a concrete bridge there has remained unmet for long.

500 students suffer as meals stop at PUST hall canteen

Huge unpaid dues allegedly from BCL men lead to the situation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Students of Bangabandhu Hall of Pabna University of Science and Technology (PUST) staged demonstration and besieged the provost's office as meals at the dormitory canteen stopped the day before due to huge unpaid dues allegedly from a few students belonging to Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL).

"Since opening of the hall canteen in March this year, we are struggling to meet illegal demands of a few Chhatra League leaders

whose unpaid dues have stood around Tk 12 thousand. They often misbehave with us if we ask them to pay the dues," said Azmat Ali Bishwas, leaseholder of the hostel canteen.

Now five hundred students residing at the hall have fallen into trouble due to stoppage of meal at the canteen.

Earlier the quality of food at the canteen saw deterioration day by day, students alleged.

This correspondent could not talk to hall

Provost Rashed Kabir as he did not receive the phone.

Contacted, Awal Kabir Joy, proctor of the university, said yesterday afternoon, "We have already discussed with general students, BCL leaders and hall dining authorities regarding the matter and hope to solve the problem quickly."

Asked about the allegation of huge unpaid dues from BCL leaders, the organisation's PUST unit president Shahed Siddique Shanto said, "It is true that some students

fail to pay hall charges and dining charges timely due to shortage of money. But it is not a problem as everything will be paid eventually."

On the other hand, BCL's Bangabandhu Hall unit president Chowdhury Asif denied the allegation of unpaid dues for the dining and said, "The dining authorities provide poor quality food for the students. When we pressed them to develop the quality of food they stopped the meal arrangement."

Five UPDF men held with arms, ammo

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Five activists of United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) were arrested with arms and ammunition by joint forces yesterday afternoon.

M o h a m m a d Shamsuddin, officer-in-charge (OC) of Sadar Police Station, said joint forces, acting on a tip-off, arrested Ziko Tripura, 36, Pratim Chakma, 40, Swapan Chakma, 30, Ranju Chakma, 30 and Nikat Chakma, 19, from Khabongpuriya area in the hill town at around 2:00pm. They also seized two guns, eight bullets and Tk 89 thousand from their possession.

The arrestees were interrogated by joint forces and later handed over to police, the OC said, adding that a case will be lodged with Sadar Police station under the Arms Act and for their involvement with extortion.

Pradipan Khisha, organiser of district UPDF, said the arrestees were innocent. He demanded immediate release of the party men.

Robbers loot three houses in Magura

UNB, Magura

Robbers looted valuables from three houses at Kisundi village in Sadar upazila early yesterday.

Police quoted victims as saying that around 15 robbers, split into three groups, stormed into the houses of Sunil Das, Ramen Das and Raghunath Das at the village around midnight.

They tied up the members of the three families in their houses at gunpoint and looted Tk 2 lakh and 15 tolas of gold.

The gang members also beat up some members of the families during robberies that continued till 4:00am.



PHOTO: STAR
A fire badly damaged this sugarcane field near Sundarpur union parishad in Kaharol upazila under Dinajpur district around 1:30pm yesterday.

SPECIAL DRIVES

47 BNP-Jamaat men among 63 held in 5 districts

STAR COUNTRY DESK

At least 47 BNP and Jamaat-Shibir men among 63 people were held in Chapainawabganj, Naogaon, Kushtia, Meherpur and Magura districts yesterday and the day before.

Police in separate drives arrested 30 people including 14 leaders and activists of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami in different upazilas of Chapainawabganj in last two days, reports our correspondent.

Of them, five BNP and one Jamaat activists are from Sadar upazila, six BNP and one Jamaat activists from Shibganj and one BNP leader from Gomostapur upazila in the district.

The arrestees include Anarul Islam Bidyut, secretary of Gomostapur upazila unit of BNP, and chairman of Alinagar Union Parishad, said Golam Mortuza, officer-in-charge of Gomostapur Police Station.

The 30 people were arrested in several cases, said

sources at police superintendent's office.

Meanwhile, three activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir were held at a mess in Naogaon district town early yesterday.

The arrestees are Alimuddin, 18, Jasimuddin, 17, and Ripon Pramanik, 18. They are students of Naogaon Polytechnic Institute.

They were arrested on charge of planning subversive activities, said OC Zakirul Islam of Sadar Model Police Station.

According to our Kushtia correspondent, police arrested seven women activists of Jamaat from Baradi area in the district town on Wednesday.

The arrestees include Ferdousi Begum, 35, Ranu Khatun, 28, Aklima Khatun, 40, Aleda Khatun, 32, Seti Begum, 30, and Mohona Biswas, 29.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team raided a house in the area and arrested the seven when they were holding a clandestine meeting

there around 8:30pm, said Obaidur Rahan, sub-inspector of Kushtia Model Police Station.

On the other hand, at least 22 BNP and Jamaat activists were held in two upazilas of Meherpur districts the same day.

Of the arrestees, eight Jamaat activists are from Gangni upazila and 14 others from Mujibnagar upazila, said OC Akram Hossain of Gangni Police Station.

In Magura, police arrested a local Jamaat leader from Arpara Bazar in Shalikha upazila of the district on Wednesday.

The arrestee is Abdur Rashid, secretary of Shalikha upazila unit of Jamaat, reports UNB.

Officer-in-Charge of Shalikha Police Station Abu Jihad said on secret information, a team of police conducted a drive in the area and arrested Rashid in the afternoon.

Rashid was wanted in several cases, including one for sabotage, said the OC.

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