

Gazipur floodplain fish project a great success

SHYKH SERAJ

The night is dark, the weather cold. Through winter's silence, I move from Kashimpur in Gazipur towards Namabazar. The clock says it's the time when the world is supposed to rest, when people usually sleep. But with activity, Namabazar is alive. Hundreds of people work tirelessly in these wee hours. Would you believe it? They're here for one thing: fish.

ity is high, sales are good and wholesalers pay at the time of purchase. "With 8 trawlers and 2 switch gates for water control, the project has already realised Tk 2.5 crore this year and based on the remaining fish, we are hoping to make around Tk 8 crore in total."

sight is near impossible in the darkness, of added intensity away from factory glow, out on the water. Fishers like Soheli and his friends are still working hard, netting mainly small fish with the larger fish for the year having already been caught and sold. It can't be easy to work in this cold but boy, fish are aplenty!

By the time we're done the sun is rising. Local customers have started arriving at the wholesale market. An example for the many riparian lands across Bangladesh, the morning crowd is gathering in Namabazar, beside the floodplain. They're all here for one thing: fish.



Fishermen and traders sort fish at Namabazar beside a 3,000-acre floodplain fish cultivation area in Kashimpur of Gazipur district. The area sees great success in quality fish production, thanks to the initiative of 120 cooperative farmers.



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Sales down as brickfields opt for high-sulphur coal imports

KONGKON KARMAKER with ANDREW EAGLE

Usually peak season for coal sales across the country, this winter has not proved especially promising for Dinajpur's Barapukuria Coal Mining Company (BCMCL), a subsidiary of Petrobangla and the sole producer of domestic coal.

the use of imported coal is a serious health and environmental hazard because imported coal has much higher sulphur content.

It's a message that does not seem to be swaying brickfield owners who traditionally account for BCMCL's second largest customer segment, after the nearby 250 megawatt Barapukuria coal-fired power plant which consumes nearly 2,200 tonnes of domestic coal daily.

sales to brickfields, Barapukuria mine currently holds around 2.5 lakh tonnes of coal in its yard, waiting for buyers, according to a BCMCL official. This season, BCMCL could not sell even 20,000 tonnes to local kilns.

In recognition of enhanced price competition, the coalmine authority cut its sales price twice within the space of a month. Originally selling for Tk 13,600 per tonne, the rate currently stands at Tk 9,000 per tonne.

Furthermore, the rate reduction by BCMCL was implemented late. "It would have been better if they cut the price two months ago," says Avijit Sarker of Thakurgaon's Ma Bricks. "The brick burning season started then." In the interim many kilns have made other fuel arrangements.

Yet the global decline in coal prices may not be the only reason few kiln operators have purchased BCMCL coal. Allegations are rife that many brickfields are using wood fuel, with monitoring of the practice slack across the district. BCMCL officials have appealed to the environment ministry to look into the increasing tendency for kilns to use wood.

But for coal users, most significantly brickfield operators, imported coal is available for Tk 7,800 per tonne. "Our coal is better in quality than any imported coal," says Aminuzzaman, the managing director of BCMCL. "The price reflects its quality."

Due to the downturn in



A huge quantity of coal lies unsold on the premises of Barapukuria Coal Mining Company Limited in Parbatipur upazila under Dinajpur district as demand for the item in the domestic market has fallen mainly due to import of low-priced fuel.

RAVAGES BY JAMAAT-SHIBIR ON JAN 5, 2014

21 schools in Nilphamari still struggle to get back normalcy

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Twenty-one educational institutions in Dimla and Jaldhaka upazilas of the district are still struggling to restore normalcy, two years after Jamaat-Shibir men wreaked havoc on those, in desperate bid to resist the 10th parliamentary elections on January 5 in 2014.



Office documents and other valuable equipment of Satjan High School in Dimla upazila under Nilphamari district got destroyed as Jamaat-Shibir men set fire to the school that served as a polling centre for the parliamentary elections of January 5 in 2014.

The institutions, including 14 primary schools, four high schools and three madrasas are conducting regular classes as the government provided financial and technical support for the purpose.



But most of them are still facing difficulties as official records like old registers containing SSC certificates of students and MPO sheets and service books of teachers and other staff were burnt to ashes.

The 21 educational institutions in the district suffered a total loss of about Tk 1 crore, District Education Officer Shafiqul Islam said, adding that normal academic atmosphere has greatly revived with the government's financial and technical help.

There are still complications regarding drawing of salaries due to the situation.

In connection with the massive vandalism, 21 cases were filed accusing around 3,000 named and unnamed people and police so far arrested several hundred people but most of them got bail from the court, said Senior Additional Superintendent of Police Zakaria Rahman.

Science students are the most sufferers as laboratory apparatuses of those schools are either burnt or looted.

"We are paying special attention to the cases so that the culprits are brought to book," he added.

Visiting badly affected Satjan High School in Dimla upazila on Monday noon, it was found that students gathered at the school ground as new books were being distributed.

Dilruba Begum, headmaster of Phutanir Haat Government Primary School in Dimla, and Sirajul Islam, headmaster of Bogulagari Government Primary School of Jaldhaka, said they continued classes despite facing untold difficulties due to devastation by attackers.

Repair for the structural damage has been done with Tk 12.5 lakh allocated by the government, said advocate Nurul Islam, president of the school managing committee (SMC).

Class X students of the school Milon Huq, Bikash and Kozoli Rani said their teachers worked day and night to remove wreckage

"We had a school library with 2,000 books and a rich science laboratory but the attackers destroyed both.

Gas cylinder blast kills one, hurts 2

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A labourer was killed and two others were seriously injured in a gas cylinder explosion in Masterbari area under Bhaluka upazila of the district yesterday.

Man commits suicide

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daughters at a rented house on Ahsan Ahmed Road in the city.

joined work on January 3.

went to sleep.

The dead is Kubbat Hossain, 50, a labourer of Purbasha Filling Station in the area.

He left a suicide note in which he held Ashok Kumar Paul, director of INMAS Khulna branch, responsible for his death.

"Our accounts section is on the third floor. As Kamal was having difficulty going up and down the stairs following his surgery, he requested for an office room on the ground floor for three months. As per his demand, we allocated him a room there on January 4. I didn't misbehave with him," Ashoke told reporters.

As there was no response from inside the room the next morning, other family members broke open the door and found Kamal's body hanging from a ceiling fan and the body of Sumaiya lying on the bed, he said.

The injured, covered van driver Suruj Ali, 30, and his helper Azhar Miah, 26, were admitted to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital with severe burn injuries on different parts of their bodies.

"Ashok Kumar Paul is responsible for my death. As I was ill, I wanted to have my office room below the guest house [at the office]. For this, he misbehaved with me, troubling me mentally and physically. That's why I've chosen this path [of committing suicide]," the suicide note read.

Asked why Kamal held him responsible, Ashok said, "I don't know why he used my name."

On information, police went there, recovered the bodies and sent them to Khulna Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Mamun-ur-Rashid, officer-in-charge of Bhaluka Police Station, said the blast took place around 3:30pm when Kubbat was filling CNG-gas cylinder of a covered van on the filling station premises. He died on the spot.

Contacted, Ashok refuted the allegation of misbehaving and said Kamal had had a surgery in his spine last December and

Ziauddin Ahmed, assistant commissioner of Khulna Metropolitan Police, said Kamal always stayed with his daughter and looked after her. On Tuesday night, both them

Shafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Khulna Police Station, said Kamal might have strangled his daughter around 10:00pm, and then committed suicide.

Polls in Singair municipality today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Election to Singair municipality of the district will be held today. As many as 20,014 voters will exercise their right to elect a mayor, eight councillors and three women councillors (reserved).

School's land leased out to land office staff!

Students, teachers demand immediate cancellation of the unwanted lease

MD AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Surprisingly, a portion of the land of century-old RK Government High School in Gouripur upazila under the district has been leased out to two employees of local land office.

in 1911 on 11 acres of land, has reputation as a good institution in the district.

Shahwaz, also president of the school managing committee, said, "The land was leased out legally. It is a government's khas land and outside the school boundary."

The election was scheduled to be held on December 30, 2015, but it was postponed by the High Court following a writ petition concerning demarcation of the boundary of the municipality.

Demanding immediate cancellation of the lease, former students of the school formed a human chain in front of the office of the upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) and submitted a memorandum to him on Sunday.

Recently 16-decimal land of the school was leased out to Uttam Kumar Das and Mazharul Islam, two Class III employees of Gouripur land office.

On the other hand, Md Abdul Helim Fakir, headmaster (in-charge) of the school, said, "The land belongs to the school and we have valid documents regarding the claim. We met with local elites, political leaders and former students of the school and urged them to protect the school land from the grabbers."

Six candidates are contesting for the post of mayor, 33 candidates for the posts of councillors and seven candidates for three reserved women councillor posts.

Students from adjacent Pilot Girls High School and Agratun Niketan also joined the programme.

When Uttam and Mazharul went to the spot to take possession of the land on December 29 last year, locals protested it and urged the local administration to cancel the lease.

"I also urged the UNO to cancel the lease immediately for the interest of the school," said the headmaster.

Following the death of Md Jamal Uddin, a councillor candidate of ward No 1, the returning officer postponed the election for the councillor post of that ward, said Md Munier Hossain, district election officer and returning officer.

Students said they would go for fresh programmes if the lease is not cancelled.

Journalist Md Raisuddin, also a former student of the school, said it is totally unexpected to lease out school's land.

Gouripur UNO Durre