



This might look like a vacation or recreational spot on the bank of the Surma river, but it is actually a bathroom cum rest area for the fish traders of Kazirbazar area under Sylhet city, which was not only built upon the river land but also polluting the river since the human waste directly goes to the river through pipes. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

# Toilets occupying river land a new way to kill Surma

MINTU DESHWARA, Sylhet

Taking a stroll along the banks of the Surma river with the sun on your back amid hills and trees on its both sides is a unique experience that even compels one to hold their breath for a while to appreciate the river's beauty.

But, these days, the holding one's breath part has literally come true, not because of the splendour, but rather the stench that comes out of the newly built toilets on the ground floor of an under construction two-story building on the east side of the Surma river, near the Kazirbazar bridge in the area under Sylhet city.

There are eight such toilets and the waste is directly released into the river through pipes.

The toilets have been built by Kazirbazar Fisheries Agent Association (Kazirbazar Matsya Arotard Samity). The association leaders said they have built the toilets

for the wholesale fish traders who sell fish near the area, so that they can take breaks in between work.

They also claimed they are constructing the building and the toilets on their own land.

Protesting, the green activists said the river banks cannot be sold. As per the Land Management Manual, no one is allowed to construct a building on the river banks let alone toilets, they said.

Surma is already under constant threat of grabbing and pollution, said the green activists, adding, if buildings like these keep on mushrooming -- it will be the end of the river.

The spot is less than half a kilometre away from the Sylhet City Corporation, though they did not take any initiative regarding the matter, locals alleged.

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw that the construction of the toilets has almost been completed and are already in use for

over a month.

"The illegal occupiers encroach upon the river banks, which not only impede the water flow but also can trigger waterlogging," said Tareq Ahmed, a resident of Kazirbazar.

"Before the air used to be filled with fish smell, and now the stench of human waste..." said Raihan Ahmed, his younger brother.

Ramjan Ali, a day labourer of the area, said, "We take baths in the river everyday, but the water is getting dirty."

But, fish trader Monem Ahmed, whom this correspondent met in the area after he got out of the building using the toilet, said, "This place is helpful for us. We can use the bathrooms whenever we want and take rest on the second floor."

When asked about the river pollution due to the human waste he did not answer.

Contacted, Jahangir Alam, general secretary of Kazirbazar Fish Traders' Association, said the land

belonged to the association and they have constructed the structure with their own funds. He also claimed that the SCC was informed.

But he failed to show any legal documents regarding the ownership of the land.

A city corporation official, seeking anonymity, said they were not informed about the matter. He said in 2013 they took an initiative to construct some public toilets on the river banks but due to protests and objections from the residents they did not.

"The SCC should take necessary measures to stop this atrocity," said Abdul Hye Al Hadi, chief coordinator of Save the Heritage and Environment.

Abdul Karim Kim, the Surma river keeper and general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Adolon, Sylhet chapter, said, it was illegal to obstruct the natural flow of the river.

He also demanded that the corporation take quick action under the

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## Fire guts fuel pump, 50 shops in Bogra

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A petrol pump and around 50 shops were gutted in a fire originating from the pump "Nowser Enterprise" at Kichok Bazar in Shibganj upazila of Bogra last night.

Originating from the fuel pump, the fire engulfed the adjacent shops, said locals and fire service sources.

Police and fire service said six fire extinguishing units doused the blaze after a hectic effort.

The cause of the fire has not been determined as yet, said Yunuch Ali, senior station master of Bogra fire service and civil defence.

Contacted, Amanur Rahman, Shibganj upazila nirbahi officer, said the owner of the petrol was running it without authorisation.

## ABT man held in Cox's Bazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A member of banned militant outfit Ansarullah Bangla Team was arrested from his Moulvibazar residence in Teknaf of Cox's Bazar yesterday.

M Ali, 40, is the son of Dubai expatriate Kabir Ahmed.

"Police had long been searching for Ali who was plotting to carry out subversive activities ahead of the Eid-ul Azha," Md Abdul Mazid, officer-in-charge of Teknaf Model Police Station.

He was accused in several cases, added the OC.

## India says it

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yesterday. He said the ICT process to bring the perpetrators of war crimes to justice has wide popular support in Bangladesh, although it is an internal issue of the neighbouring country.

## NEWS IN brief

### Schoolteacher held for torturing wife, demanding dowry money

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

The headmaster of a high school was arrested for torturing his wife and demanding dowry money in Amjuwan village in Ranishankoil upazila of Thakurgaon yesterday, according to the case statement.

The arrestee is Ekramul Haque, 45, headmaster of AB Phulbari High School.

Police said Ekramul's wife Kulsum filed the case on Wednesday against him.

### Vehicle loaded with gas cylinders for illegal sale seized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A mobile court of the Chittagong district administration seized a covered van with 141 gas cylinders while those were being sold illegally in Syedbari area of Rangunia upazila yesterday.

Executive magistrate Forkan Elahi said the people who were involved in the gas selling fled the scene.

On September 7, the court jailed two people for three months for selling gas illegally in the same area and seized another covered-van loaded with gas cylinders.

### Essay contest on Taqi Oct 28

A CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Marking the 21st birthday of Tanwir Muhammad Taqi, a national essay and drawing competition will be held on October 28.

Santras Nirmul Taqi Mancha organised the contest titled "Jatiya Taqi Chitrankon o Rachana Protijogita-2016", said Halim Azad, member secretary of the mancha in a press release.

The first winner will be given "Taqi Padak-2016", the second and third special crests and certificates while the ten people will get certificates and crests.

Essays and artworks are requested to send to taqi06032013@yahoo.com within September 28.

Taqi went missing on March 6 in 2013 and his body was found on the bank of the river Sheetolakhya two days later.

### Md Fazle Selim passes away

CITY DESK



Md Fazle Selim, director of Ranks Telecom & Ranks IT, died at Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore on Tuesday. He was 64.

He was the brother of Dr Fazle Rabbi, a martyred intellectual. He left behind his wife, two daughters, sons-in-law and four grand children.

## Robber suspect in custody uses phone

He is wanted in over a dozen cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A robber suspect was seen talking over cellphone in police custody while he was undergoing treatment with bullet wounds in the left leg at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital yesterday morning.

Samaddi alias Kanu, 30, of Shibganj in Chapainawabganj, who is an accused in over a dozen of criminal cases, was arrested during a "gunfight" between police and a robbery gang in Niamotpur of Naogaon on September 3, said Niamotpur police.

The phone belonged to his wife, said Rimon Rahman, a local journalist, who was taking photographs during the incident.

Two Rajpara police constables, who were supposed to be on guard, were not found there at that time, said Rimon.

The constables were not available for comments.



The accused took advantage of the indifference of the policemen scheduled to be there, said Iftekhar Alam, an assistant commissioner of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police, adding that actions would be taken after an inquiry.

An accused in custody cannot use a mobile as per law, he added.

Later in the afternoon, Samaddi was seen under strict police escort. Assistant Sub-inspector Monirul Islam, an on-duty officer, said they warned Samaddi about it.

## Low supply, high

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reports: Dumbas are being smuggled into the country through different border points in Lalmonirhat.

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) men of Mogholhat camp seized five dumbas along the border while being trafficked into the country on Wednesday.

Nazrul Islam, 53, a cattle trader at Islampur border of Patgram upazila, brought six dumbas from India a week ago, and sold them for around Tk 1.3 lakh each to a cattle trader of Dhaka.

BGB sources said they have a strong vigilance on dumba smuggling, but sometimes smugglers still find ways to smuggle those.

**PABNA CATTLE MARKETS UNDER MONITORING**

The livestock officials have kept the cattle markets in Pabna and Sirajganj under strict surveillance to monitor whether the animals were fattened by using drugs, reports our Pabna correspondent.

"Our experts are checking the animals to make sure they are not drugged," said Dr Md Abdul Gafur, district livestock officer of Pabna.

Three-member livestock monitoring team headed by a veterinary doctor is working at each of the 58 cattle markets in Pabna and 57 in Sirajganj since Tuesday, he said.

(Our Lalmonirhat and Pabna correspondents contributed to this report).



An artisan busy making idols in a puja mandap in Sylhet city's Dariapara Kalibari yesterday ahead of Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of the Bangalee Hindus, the celebration of which is scheduled to start on October 6.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

## Woman found dead in in-laws' house

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A woman was found dead in her in-laws' house in Fatehpur village under Chatkhil upazila of Noakhali yesterday.

Shahnaj Akter Topu, 21, wife of Omar Farooq Shipon, a Saudi expatriate, called her parents around 9:00am and asked them to take her or she would be killed by her brothers-in-law and their wives, claimed her parents.

Around 10:00am, members of her in-laws informed them that Topu committed suicide, they said, adding, they found Topu's hanging body after reaching her in-laws' house.

Topu's parents claimed that they wanted to file a case but police denied to take it. After the incident, they were absconding. Nasim Uddin, officer-in-charge of Chatkhil Police Station, said they will not take any case without getting the autopsy report.

## Eleven Asian nations agree to

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of adolescents not getting enough of it.

The regional committee meeting also passed a resolution on strengthening health workforce, which is vital to achieving universal health coverage, a key part of the Sustainable Development Goal, leaving no one behind.

At present, the density of health care providers in the region is 12.5 per 10,000 population, which is less than the WHO recommended minimum 44.5 per 10,000 population.

Khetrapal said while countries are trying to achieve expanding health workforces across the region, increasing staff retention particularly in rural areas and providing further training to enhance skills are also important.

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