

Vanishing ponds raise fire risk in Pirojpur

Fire fighting becomes increasingly difficult as natural water sources get lost to development work

HABIBUR RAHMAN with ANDREW EAGLE

Even a decade ago, Pirojpur was a town adorned with ponds. As land prices have soared in recent years however, many of the town's ponds have been filled. Beyond the loss to aesthetics and in terms of practical uses, the lack of ponds is increasingly causing grief to the town's fire fighters.

"There used to be ponds everywhere," says denizen Ashraf Ali, 60. "Nowadays there are only a handful left, and most of those are half-empty and dirty."

"I used to enjoy pond-bathing," says local Firoj Ahmed, "But now there are hardly any ponds left. Even to reach the closest one takes time, so I don't go there. I can't remember the last time I was able to enjoy swimming in a

pond."

The price of land over the course of ten years has increased manifold, prompting a trend of continuous development at the expense of ponds, as well as canals and drains. To fill a pond with cheap sand collected from local rivers and transported by long-distance plastic pipe is a relatively straightforward endeavour. As a result, many ponds, especially those on private land, are no more.

Yet even on the premises of Pirojpur Government High School the landscape has changed. "Hundreds of people used the high school pond every day, for bathing and other purposes," recalls local Monirul Islam. "But in 2013 the pond was filled to enlarge the school's field in preparation for a visit by the Prime Minister."

All across Pirojpur people are increasingly reliant on town water supplies for domestic chores.

Of greater concern is the impact on fire fighting. "Nowadays we face trouble in responding to fires in the town in terms of collecting water," says the sub-assistant deputy director of Pirojpur's fire service and civil defence, Md Motiar Rahman. "After our own water reserves are depleted there just aren't the ponds available anymore to supply additional water."

According to the sadar upazila fisheries office the number of ponds in the upazila has actually increased, but it's a statistic that includes village fish projects. The exact change in the number of ponds within the town area isn't measured.



Like several others in the district town, a large pond on the ground of Pirojpur Government High School was filled up a couple of years ago, changing landscape of the area.

PHOTO: STAR



Workers make environment-friendly concrete ovens at Pabohati village in Jhenidah Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Fuel saving concrete oven gets popular in Jhenidah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

The people of remote villages of the district are now using a new type of oven that consumes much less fuel (wood chips) than usual and does not produce smoke.

Action in Development (AID), a non-governmental organisation in the district, is providing thousands of the concrete ovens to the people at a lower price subsidised by Infrastructure Development Company Ltd (IDCOL).

While visiting Pabohati village under Sadar upazila, this correspondent saw around 60 workers making the ovens by the side of the Jhenidah-Magura road. The workers said they can make 10 to 12 ovens between 6:00am and 6:00pm. They use

cement, sand, brick chips, iron rods, steel, thick paper and rock wool. They get Tk 280 per day as wages.

An oven costs Tk 483 per piece and is sold at Tk 300, subsidised by IDCOL.

Worker Polash Mollah said the oven needs a kind of cotton named rock wool for insulation, adding that the oven saves fuel and creates no smoke.

Hawa Bibi of Porahati village in Sadar upazila said the oven takes less time for cooking in comparison with other ovens.

Nurul Islam of Pabohati village said the oven can cook rice and curry within 45 to 50 minutes.

Assistant Project Coordinator of AID Md Shariful Islam said this pro-

ject funded by IDCOL started in July 2016 and will last till 2018, adding that they have provided 25,000 ovens in four upazilas of the district so far.

They have taken this initiative with a view to maintaining environmental balance as the oven produces no smoke and uses very little fuel, Shariful said, adding that if this oven is used in every house the area will not be polluted and it will do no harm to the users.

Technical Instructor of IDCOL Md Borhan Uddin told this correspondent that the oven is environment friendly. An earthen oven needs four kg of fuel for cooking rice and two items of curry for five to six people, while the concrete oven needs one kg for the same number of people.

Transport strike called off

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Thakurgaon Transport Owners' Association and Thakurgaon Transport Workers' Union on Monday night called off their indefinite strike on internal routes in the district following a 'fruitful' meeting with local lawmaker Ramesh Chandra Sen.

The meeting was held at the lawmaker's Collegepara residence.

Thakurgaon Transport Owners' Association and Thakurgaon Transport Workers' Union jointly enforced the strike halting services on the internal routes from Thursday morning.

The strike followed vandalism of an outpost set up for collecting toll by the Thakurgaon Transport Owners' Association in Thakurgaon bus terminal area.

Members of their rival organisations vandalised the toll outpost on Wednesday evening protesting toll connection from trucks.

Drug smugglers stab police officer in Lalmonirhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A police officer was critically injured when he was stabbed by alleged drug smugglers while trying to arrest them at Purbo Digholtari village in Aditmari upazila of the district on Monday.

A police constable and some villagers rescued the injured officer and admitted him to Lalmonirhat Sadar Hospital. As his condition deteriorated, he was referred to Rangpur Medical College Hospital, police said.

The victim is Jahid Hasan, Sub-Inspector (SI) in Aditmari Police Station.

Resident Medical Officer of Lalmonirhat Sadar Hospital Dr Azmol Haque said Jahid was stabbed in his hands, back and head.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) of the police station Horeshwar Roy said Jahid and a constable were trying to arrest drug smuggler Saiful Islam, son of Naser Uddin of the village, when six to seven cohorts of Saiful attacked Jahid. They fled the spot immediately after stabbing the police officer, the OC added.

"No one was arrested till 9:00pm," the OC said, adding that a case was lodged in this connection with the police station.



The ongoing excavation work by the Department of Archaeology has unearthed an ancient Buddhist temple along with several other relics at Boiragirbitha in historic archaeological site Mahasthangarh under Shibganj upazila of Bogra.

PHOTO: STAR

Bangla Bhai's 'aide' held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Police arrested an alleged operative of banned militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) from Par-Kasunda village in Atrai upazila of Naogaon on Monday.

The arrestee is Sekendar Ali, 42, a close aide of executed JMB leader Siddikul Islam Bangla Bhai, police said. He went into hiding during the caretaker government.

On secret information, a police team raided Sekendar's house around 2:00pm in the village and arrested him.

He is accused in four cases filed with Atrai Police Station, said Officer-in-Charge Md Badrudozza.

RMG worker burns himself to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A readymade garment (RMG) worker, who burnt himself in Sarishbari upazila of the district on February 8, died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) on Monday.

Son of Fazlul Haque of Majalia village, Ashraful Islam Ashraf was a worker of a garment factory in Dhaka.

Family sources said Ashraf got married 18 months ago. But his wife eloped with her former lover 45 days ago and since then he had been suffering from mental agony.

Recently, the wife gave a proposal to her husband to come back to continue the conjugal life and Ashraf agreed.

But his relatives and parents prevented Ashraf from doing so, triggering an altercation between him and the family members at home on February 8, said neighbour Shakil Rana, 18.

At one stage of the altercation, Ashraf set himself on fire after pouring petrol on his body, said Mohammad Nasiruddin, chairman of Doail Union Parishad.

He was rushed to the burn unit of DMCH where he succumbed to his injuries around 6:30pm on Monday, the chairman added.

Schoolteacher found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A schoolteacher was found dead in Ukilpara area of Netrakona town on Sunday.

Saifullah Jewel, 40, was an assistant teacher of Krishna Gobinda High School in Netrakona Sadar.

The victim's wife Asma Khanam found the body hanging from the ceiling of their house in the evening and informed police, said Sub-Inspector Shah Alam of Netrakona Model Police Station.

The body was later sent to Netrakona Adhunik Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

The schoolteacher had been suffering from mental disease for long, said the SI, quoting family members.

BOGRA SZMCH

Victim Rouf's father dies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

The father of the youth assaulted by some interns of Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital on Sunday died at the hospital at around 6:00am yesterday.

The deceased, Alauddin Sarkar, 65, of Konagati village under Sadar upazila of Sirajganj, was admitted to the medicine department at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital (SZMCH) on Saturday after suffering a cerebral hemorrhage. He was also suffering from asthma.

His son Abdur Rouf had an altercation with some interns over a silly matter on Sunday evening. The interns beat him and locked him up in a room. He was later rescued by the police.

Alauddin's condition worsened when he heard that his son had been beaten up. He was shifted to the ICU, where he died.

Director of SZMCH Brig Gen AKM Masood Ahsan said a medical board

ensured medical support to the patient but his condition was not good and so he died.

The interns called a strike on Sunday and demanded punishment of those who attacked them, security of doctors, 24-hour deployment of two Ansars in each department, limiting of number of visitors to the hospital and deployment of police in the hospital premises.

The interns called off the strike on Monday on assurance given by the hospital authorities that their demands would be met within seven days. However, they said they will call another strike if the demands are not met by February 27.

Such reckless attitude of the interns towards the patients and their relatives and the language in the placards carried by the human chain on Monday morning raised a storm of criticism among the locals.

A probe committee of SZMCH has been formed and it is investigating the matter, the director said.



The coastguard seizes 1600 kg of jatka (hilsa less than ten inches long) from a trawler in the Dhaleshwari river in Munshiganj yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR