

19 Rajshahi city ponds to be conserved

BSS, Rajshahi

Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) has planned to conserve 19 ponds in the city in order to retain its surface water resources for protecting the environment from further degradation.

The city corporation has adopted a Tk 270-crore uplift project titled "Natural Water Bodies Conservation and Development in Rajshahi City" to attain the cherished goal side by side with protecting the ponds from further dumping.

Under the project, Ashraful Haque, chief engineer of RCC, told the news agency that 19 ponds will be preserved and requisite lands will be acquired for the purpose. None will be allowed to fill the ponds.

The project has provision of developing mini amusement park beside each of the ponds. Embankments of the ponds will be concretised with retaining wall besides necessary excavation and re-excavation.

In addition to bench and walkway, concrete stairs will be constructed in all the ponds to make those attractive.

Engineer Ashraful Haque said there were 729 ponds and canals in the metropolis in 2002, but the figure has come down to 393 at present due to indiscriminate earth-filling and unplanned urbanisation.

Due to abnormal declining of surface water, he said dependence on groundwater has been increasing for ensuring water supply to the city dwellers. As a result, groundwater table has been declining for the last couple of years.

The situation becomes worse during the dry season leaving most of the hand-driven tubewell inoperative. "We have no way but to conserve the surface water resources from all sorts of depletion to make the groundwater table intact," he opined.

Upon successful implementation of the project, he hoped that fish production would be enhanced together with protection of the endangered fish species from further extinction.

Besides, he viewed that the developed water bodies will help firefighters and others concerned extinguish fire in the city.

RCC Mayor Mosaddeque Hossain Bulbul said the project has been adopted to mitigate the adverse impact of climate change and hoped that it would get approval from the government as early as possible.

Workers Party

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textbooks and acknowledging the Dawra degree of Qawmi madrasas would destroy the secular image of the country.

Meanwhile, the meeting was held blocking the main road at Shaheb Bazar, creating sufferings to commuters.

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Passenger launch "MV Green Line" sinking in the Kirtonkhola river in Barisal after it collided head-on with a coal-laden cargo vessel yesterday. However, all the passengers and crew of both the vessels were rescued unhurt. PHOTO: STAR

Narrow escape for 400 passengers

Launch collides with cargo vessel in Kirtonkhola river in Barisal, capsizing the latter

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Md Moniruzzaman, a private job holder, was able to get some days off his busy schedule and went to Barisal to see his parents couple of days back.

Yesterday afternoon, the 40-year-old got on a passenger launch at Barisal river port around 2:30pm to return to the capital.

The launch, "MV Green Line", carrying 400 Dhaka-bound passengers left Barisal around 3:05pm.

The journey over the Kirtonkhola river was pleasant and Moniruzzaman knew the route quite well, as he has taken the journey numerous times.

But what he did not expect was the loud collision around 3:20pm, which suddenly threw him out of his seat, as the launch collided head-on with a cargo vessel near

Charbaria.

"The collision threw us off our seats. There was chaos everywhere. Children were crying and passengers screaming. We were scared. We thought the launch might sink any moment," he said.

"It could have turned fatal," he said. "We anchored around 15-feet away from the shore. Locals helped us reach ashore by using bamboos and logs as a bridge."

There were no immediate reports of casualties, and the passengers and crew were safely evacuated from the vessels, said witnesses and police.

But the cargo vessel "MV Masud-Mamun-1" sank immediately after the collision at Beltola point around 4:00pm, said Sub-inspector Shafikur Rahman of Barisal Naval Police outpost.

The cargo vessel, carrying around 525

tonnes of coal, was heading to Khulna.

Arman Ahmed, one of the passengers of the launch, said, "A major crack appeared at its hull right after the collision and water started entering the lower deck."

Meanwhile, another passenger, Sumon Chakraborty, alleged that even after seeing the cargo vessel coming from the opposite side, the launch kept on speeding.

Many other passengers also echoed Sumon.

When asked about the allegation, SI Shafikur said, "We are looking into it." He said the launch crew went into hiding after reaching the shore.

He said the crew of the cargo vessel also alleged that the passenger launch was heading towards them at full speed and did not maintain their designated route.

This correspondent tried to get in

touch with the officials of the "Green Line" in Barisal but they did not receive any phone calls despite repeated attempts.

The rescued passengers were sent to their destination on MV Sundarban-12, said Azmal Huda, deputy director of River Transport and Passenger Safety of BIWTA at Barisal port.

"The launch is gradually sinking and Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority salvage vessel NIRBHIK-2 is continuing its rescue operation," he said.

Meanwhile, Barisal District Administration formed a five-member probe body, headed by Additional Deputy Commissioner Md Zakir Hossain, to investigate the incident.

The probe body has been asked to submit its report within seven working days, the BIWTA official said.

PROF REZAUL KILLING

Prime accused dodging arrest for one year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A top "Neo JMB" leader, the principal accused of killing Prof Rezaul Karim Siddiquee, has remained absconding for one year.

Law enforcers believe Shariful Islam, codenamed Khaled, son of Abdul Hakim of Sreepur village in Bagmara upazila in Rajshahi, went to India just after the killing of his teacher Rezaul.

"His name is on our most wanted militants' list and we offered 1 lakh taka bounty for his arrest," said Ifte Khayer Alam, an assistant commissioner of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police.

Police visited India in August last year and interrogated an IS militant who identified Shariful and told the law enforcers that Shariful codenamed Abu Sulaiman was active in India.

Prof Rezaul, an English teacher of Rajshahi University, was killed near his home in Shalbagan area in Rajshahi on April 23 last year. He was a victim of the target killings orchestrated across the country by militants, said the police official.

Later on November 6, detectives submitted a charge sheet in the case accusing eight "Neo JMB" militants, including Shariful. Shariful, a 3rd year student of the English department, was accused for masterminding the murder.

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Alliance for Science Bangladesh, the Bangladesh chapter of US-based Cornell Alliance for Science, and Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University bring out a procession on the university campus in Dhaka yesterday, marking World Earth Day. PHOTO: COLLECTED

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Chittagong Port to have bay

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likely to sign a MoU with the German company soon.

According to CPA, now ships can anchor at the Chittagong Port at the highest depth of 9.5 metres. Once the Bay Container Terminal is constructed, ships with a length of over 190 metres will be able to anchor at the terminal at highest 12 metres of depth.

The distance of Chittagong Port from the outer anchorage is now 15km and this distance will come down to only 1km once the terminal is set up.

Besides, 35 ships will be able to anchor simultaneously from No 1 jetty to NCT while 19 ships can anchor currently.

Another ERD official said India was interested to provide around \$350 million under its third LoC to construct a multipurpose terminal at the proposed Payra Deep Sea Port.

Of the committed \$5 billion fresh loan, \$4.5 billion will be given for various development projects, including economic zones, ports and road infrastructures, and river restoration. The remaining \$500m will be made available for defence cooperation and procurement.

Earlier this month, India announced a \$5 billion line of credit to Bangladesh during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to New Delhi.

Two Bangladeshis killed

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were staying at the renovated building.

ACP Othman said continuous rain over the past few days could have triggered the landslide. The search for other victims is continuing with the help of the Kajang Fire and Rescue Department.

The case has been classified as sudden death and police have yet to reveal the identities of the victims.

Selangor Fire and Rescue Department assistant director (operations) Mohd Sani

Harul said the landslide caused two rooms at the workers' quarters to cave in.

"The victims were pulled out by their colleagues before the fire engines arrived," Mohd Sani said.

He said the incident occurred at around 2:00am but the department was notified at 4:00am.

"We have directed firemen in the area to be on standby for such disasters especially with current weather conditions," he said.

World Earth Day observed in Ctg, Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

To mark World Earth Day yesterday, 26 students of a local school took part in a cleaning campaign in Khoiyachhara waterfalls area of Mirsharai upazila in Chittagong.

The students of Khoiyachhara High School led by Baroiyadhala Forest Range Officer Basir Ahmed participated in the campaign to create awareness among people about cleanliness.

The programme was organised by Baroiyadhala (forest) Co-Management Committee (CMC) and assisted by the Climate Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods (CREL) project of the USAID.

Among others, CMC Vice-President Rokibul Islam, CREL Communication Manger Obaidul Fattah Tanvir, Chittagong Regional Coordinator Narayan Das, Communication Officer Kamrul Islam took part in the cleaning campaign.

Meanwhile, citizens and environmentalists in Sylhet organised a gathering in front of Shaheed Minar yesterday marking World Earth Day, reports our Sylhet correspondent.

Speakers at the "Anxious Citizens Gathering" claimed that the unplanned mining at Khasi Hills of Meghalaya in India causing dangerous effect on the water body of greater Sylhet basin. The gathering is jointly organised by the Sylhet chapter of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) and Surma River Waterkeeper.

Among others, Abdul Karim Kim, general secretary of Bapa's Sylhet chapter; Dr Mehedy Hasan Khan, head of Biochemistry and Chemistry department of Sylhet Agriculture University; Densil Parunye, president of Khasi Students Union; Prof Abdul Kashem of Sylhet Agriculture University; and Mishfaq Ahmed Mishu, president of Sammilito Natya Parishad; were present.

Youth sets himself on fire in front of 'ex-girlfriend'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A youth reportedly set himself on fire in front of his "former girlfriend" as she allegedly refused to restart the relationship in the capital's Sobhanbagh area last evening.

The twenty-six-year-old youth, a student of a private university, had developed a relationship with a female student of the same university around two years ago said one his friends.

At one stage, the couple had a breakup, he added.

In the evening, the two met there and the youth urged her to continue the relationship which she refused, triggering an altercation between them, he said.

Later, the youth set himself on fire after pouring kerosene on his body, said the friend, adding that the

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Man held with 7kg gold at Ctg airport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Customs officials detained a man with 60 gold bars weighing 7 kilogrammes at Shah Amanat International Airport in Chittagong last evening.

The detainee Saifuddin, 33, was a passenger of a flight that landed at the airport around 7:45pm, said Rabindra Kumar Sinha, assistant commissioner (AC) of airport customs.

Saifuddin, son of late Idris Shawadagar, hails from Dhaitanagar of Raojan upazila in Chittagong, he said.

After noticing his suspicious movement while crossing the Boarding Bridge No-1, customs officials searched his luggage and found the gold bars, said the AC.

Save Sona Dighi from grabbing

Demand Rajshahi city dwellers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Dwellers yesterday demanded that Rajshahi city's historic Sona Dighi be saved from illegal occupation.

Hundreds of people raised the demand at a human chain beside the waterbody.

They also threatened to evict the illegal occupants if they do not leave the place within a month.

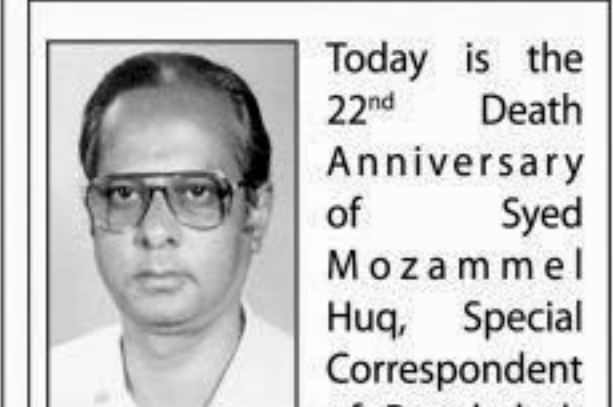
Rajshahi Businessmen's Coordination Council and Rajshahi Citizens Coordination Committee jointly formed the human chain with the council president Shamsuddin in the chair.

The agitators alleged that a developer backed by a law-maker occupied a portion of the Sona Dighi, situated on 1.45 acres of land in the city's Shaheb Bazar area.

They said the company signed an agreement with Rajshahi City Corporation in 2009 for constructing a 16-storey commercial high-rise on a land leased out by RCC beside Sona dighi and modernising and beautifying the water body.

The developer, however, is erecting the building by grabbing a portion of the water body instead of modernising it, they added.

22nd Death Anniversary of Syed Mozammel Huq



Sangbad Sangstha(BSS), says a press release.

Today is the 22nd Death Anniversary of Syed Mozammel Huq, Special Correspondent of Bangladesh

During his long journalist career, he also worked for Time Magazine and Oil and Gas Journal.

Quarankhwani and distribution of food among the poor have been arranged to mark the day.