

Canal under threat of disappearance

Once around 100 metres wide, Rajapur canal is now only 10 metres

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhalakathi

Widespread grabbing over the last several years has put a canal in Rajapur upazila of the district under threat of disappearing. About four kilometres on both sides of Rajapur canal have been grabbed. The grabbers apply a unique technique to grab the canal's land so that no one can notice it, locals said.

They build an enclosure with bamboos on the canal's bank and fill it up by dumping waste and rubbish into it, they added.

"The canal was around 100 metres wide a decade ago when it is now only 10 metres," said Jasim Uddin of Rajapur Bazar.

"I used to catch fish in the canal when I was a college student around 12 years ago, but now that is only a memory as it has become a narrow drain due to the grabbing," said Bholanath Chakrabarty, who lives near the canal. He said he feels sad when he sees the tragic condition of the canal.

"A good source of fish only two decades ago, the canal is now barren as it has lost its width and depth," said fisherman Shahidul Islam.

Waterlogging has become a common problem in many areas of Jhalakathi Sadar upazila in the rainy season due to grabbing of the canal, locals said.

A 'canal protection committee' has been formed recently led by the assistant commissioner (AC land) in Rajapur upazila to save the canal from encroachment, but it is inactive, said Rahim Reza, a member of the committee.

"We are working for demarcation of the canal though it is going at a slow pace. After demarcation, we will conduct drives against the illegal structures on the canal's land," said Upazila Nirbahi Officer Afroja Begum Parul.

Parul said the canal protection committee could not work properly as the AC was transferred as soon as the committee was formed.



Grabbers set up illegal structures encroaching on Rajapur canal in Rajapur upazila of Jhalakathi. The photo was taken a few days ago.

PHOTO: STAR

JSTU BCL man arrested with arms, expelled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) yesterday expelled a leader of Jessore Science and Technology University unit for breaching disciplines, reads a press release issued by the organisation.

The expelled BCL leader is Hossain Isad, organising secretary of Shahid Mashiur Rahman Hall unit of BCL.

Earlier, on Friday night police detained Isad from the university campus and seized a pistol and ammunition from his possession.

Officer in-Charge of Jessore Detective Branch (DB) of Police Moniruzzaman said, a police team, acting on a tip-off, arrested Isad with a pistol, four bullets and a magazine from in front of the academic building.

Extra-marital affair's victim?

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Police on Friday recovered the throat-slit body of a teenage boy from a litchi orchard in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila.

The deceased, Antar Islam, 18, a pick-up van driver, was son of Nur Islam and used to live at his maternal uncle's house at Munshipara village in the upazila.

Meanwhile, following a case filed by deceased's mother Afroza Begum with Sadar Police Station, police detained Antar's aunt Lutfa Begum, 29, her alleged boyfriend Rafiqul Islam, 47, and driving instructor Mohammad Shaheen.

According to the case statement, Rafiqul and Lutfa had been in an illicit relationship for quite sometime. After Antar came to know the matter few weeks ago, Rafiqul decided to kill the boy and accordingly made a plan.

As per the plan, Rafiqul in cooperation with Shaheen phoned Antar and asked him to come to the orchard on Thursday evening.

When Antar reached the orchard the duo took him tactfully inside the orchard and killed him there at night.

Police said they are interrogating the arrestees to find out the motive behind the murder.

FARIDPUR DOUBLE MURDER Five of 68 accused held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Sixty-eight people have been sued on charge of killing two siblings.

The victims were Edrish Mollah, 48, and his brother Lablu Mollah, 42, of Sotrokanda village in Boalmari upazila.

The two died of injuries at Faridpur Medical College Hospital on Thursday night, around two hours after they were hacked by unidentified criminals in Barasori Shoshanghat area in Alfadanga upazila.

Abul Kahsim Mollah, elder brother of the deceased, yesterday filed the murder case, accusing 41 known and 27 unknown people, said Shahab Ali, sub-inspector of Alfadanga Police Station.

On Friday midnight, police arrested five out of 68 accused in connection with the double murder. Later, the arrestees were produced before a court that sent them to jail, said the SI.

Locals suspected that Edrish and Lablu were killed over a longstanding political rivalry between Md Israfil Mollah, chairman of Shakhor Union Parishad, and Abul Kalam Azad, member of Faridpur Zilla Parishad. Both Israfil and Kalam are vice presidents of Boalmari upazila Awami League.

Edrish was the vice president of Shakhor union AL and Lablu was the vice president of Shakhor union Jubo League. The two siblings had businesses of garment products and furniture at Alfadanga bazar.

The deceased were supporters of Israfil.

Cry for bridge over Nilphamari river

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

People of 11 villages in Sadar and Kishoreganj upazilas of the district are suffering much for want of a concrete bridge over Charalkata river.

Locals had, at their own expense, built a makeshift 220-foot-long and five-foot-wide bamboo bridge on floating empty drums as the old one was swept away in the flood three months ago.

Locals said people use the bridge to go paddy and cattle markets like Jadurhat and Dhelapirhat and also to the district town.

"People make the bamboo bridge at their own cost every year as it is their main way for carrying out economic activities," said Chapra Union Parishad member Khaliqul Islam.

Even small vehicles cannot cross the bridge, compelling farmers and traders to carry goods by mini-trucks or three-wheelers using a longer route," said trader Zearul Islam.

Manik Das said he maintained his family by catching fish and selling those at Jadurhat market on the other side of the river crossing the bamboo bridge, which sometimes gets damaged.

UP Chairman Khalilur Rahman said, "People need the bridge for going to markets, hospitals and educational institutions as it is the shortest way."

Jubo Club President Sirajudoula Chowdhury said before every election, candidates pledge to build the bridge if elected, but forget it after being elected.

Sadar upazila Chairman Abujar Rahman said he asked the Local Government Engineering Department officials to take steps for construction of a bridge.

Upazila Engineer Saiful Islam said, "We have sent a project proposal regarding construction of the bridge."

RAPE OF 13-YEAR-OLD GIRL 70-yr-old sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A Faridpur court yesterday sent a 70-year-old man to jail when police produced him before it on charge of raping a 13-year-old primary schoolgirl in Sadar upazila.

He was arrested on Friday after the villagers handed him over to police.

Victim's mother filed a case with Sadar Police Station against the elderly man on charge of raping and two youths for filming the incident on their cellphones.

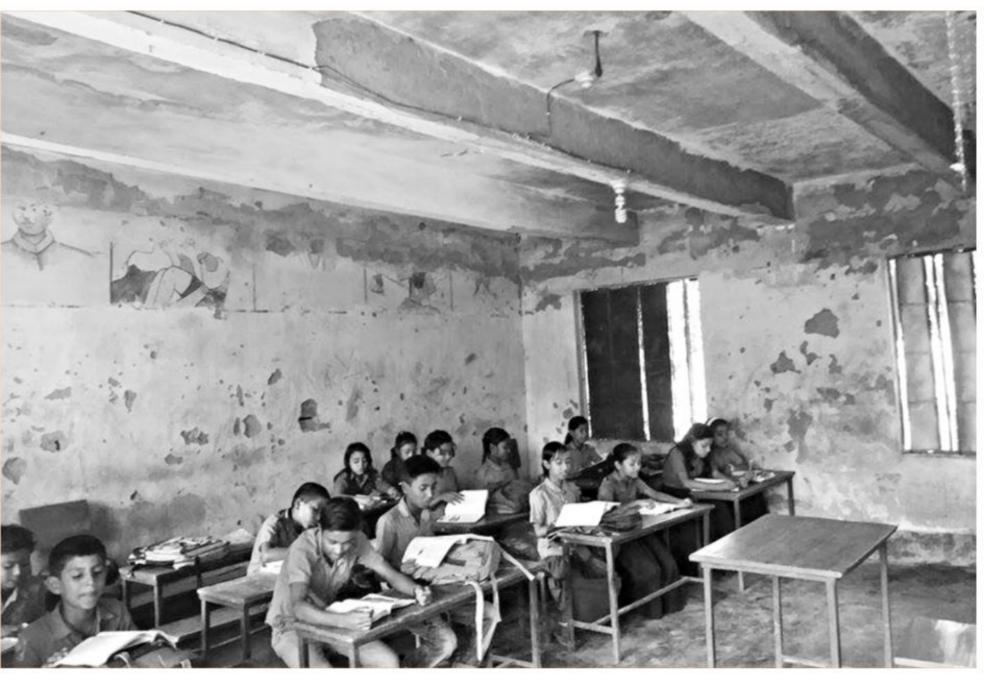
The accused are Kalu Sheikh, 70, Md Mujahid, 22, and Md Milon, 23, of Gopalpur village in the upazila, said Sub-Inspector Md Jahangir of the police station.

The agitated villagers caught Kalu around 9:30am and handed him over to police, said Jahangir.

Locals said father of five, Kalu, raped the girl, a student of Class-III of Ishan Gopalpur Government Primary School, in the afternoon around 15 days ago when she took her goat to a field for grazing.

Incidentally, the youths were in the vicinity at that time and filmed the whole incident on their cellphones, they said, adding that later the two blackmailed Kalu for money. Initially, Kalu gave them Tk 700.

The youths spread the video among the villagers through Bluetooth as the old man refused to give them more money.



Students of Nalua Government Primary School in Tangail's Delduar upazila attend class in the dilapidated building amid risk of accident.

PHOTO: STAR

99 risky schools in a single upazila

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

As many as 99 government primary school buildings in Delduar upazila have become dilapidated and risky due to lack of maintenance and renovation for long.

The institutions include Nalua Government Primary School, Aloa Tarini Government Primary School, Baropakhia Rothindrapara Government Primary School, Atia Haji Pashan Ullah Government Primary School and Agg Elasin Government Primary School.

However, students are attending classes in the risky buildings amid risk of accidents, said guardians and locals.

The school buildings were constructed under the supervision of Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) about 10 to 15 years ago.

As low quality materials were used in the construction work, the buildings became vulnerable within a short time, alleged locals.

Nalua Government Primary School has

three classrooms and one office room in its only building.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found students attending classes amid risk of accident as chunks of plasters are falling off the ceiling of the classrooms.

"Terming the building risky, Upazila Engineer Mir Ali Shakir during his recent visit to the school urged us to stop taking classes in it," said Headmaster Sheikh Nur Mohammad.

Mohammad Shawkat Akbar, headmaster of Jangalia Government Primary School, said the condition of the schoolhouse is so risky that guardians are very worried about the safety of their children.

Tanbir Siddique, guardian of a student, demanded construction of new building in place of the vulnerable one.

Upazila Education Officer Gour Chandra said they have already informed the ministry concerned about the matter but a response is yet to come.

Kuakata hotel owner jailed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A mobile court in Kuakata yesterday sentenced a hotel owner to 30 days' imprisonment for dirty environment and not having any service chart of the hotel.

The convict is Md Shahjalal Mia, owner of Hotel Sunrise, a residential hotel.

The court also fined him Tk 30,000. In default, he is to suffer another seven days in jail.

Executive Magistrate Khondakar Rabiul Islam, also assistant commissioner (land), led the court.

They conducted the drive under Consumer Rights Protection Act, said magistrate Rabiul Islam.

Some irregularities were also found in other hotels at the tourist spot, he said.

The convict was sent to jail, said the magistrate.

UNION DIGITAL CENTRES Directors demand job nationalisation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Directors of Union Digital Centres under five upazilas of the district yesterday demanded nationalisation of their job.

Under the government's Access to Information (A2I) programme, 95 entrepreneurs of 45 unions in the district came up with the demand at a human chain programme in front of Lalmonirhat Press Club.

Demanding immediate nationalisation of their jobs, speakers at the rally said although they have been providing digital services to the villagers for the last seven years to build a digital nation, their job is not included under the revenue budget.

Pest attack on cauliflower worries Jhenidah farmers

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

Cauliflower growers in the district are worried that they will incur heavy loss this year due to the early pest attack on their fields.

District Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) Deputy Director (DD) GM Abdur Rauf said 325 hectares of land have been brought under cabbage cultivation and 275 hectares under cauliflower in six upazilas of the district. Of them, 30 hectares are under cabbage and 110 hectares are under cauliflower in Kotchandpur upazila.

Farmers said pests have attacked cauliflower fields at Bhomradanga village in the upazila. Cauliflower was cultivated on around 300 bighas of land in the village this year. Most of the fields were attacked by pests and growers will incur loss this year. Production has decreased to a great extent, farmers said.

Visiting the village last Sunday, this correspondent found that farmers are selling immature cauliflower from their fields fearing total damage. It costs Tk 25,000 to Tk 30,000 to grow cauliflower on one bigha of land, which they sell for Tk 70,000 to Tk 80,000, but they will get only Tk 30,000 to Tk 40,000 this year.

Farmer Bablur Rahman of the village said they cultivated Ninja and Hotline varieties. All on a sudden pest attack spread all over the village. Leaves of the plants are drying and falling off, and the weight of the vegetable is decreasing. He cultivated the vegetable on five bighas this year and expected to get around Tk 4 lakh, but he will get only around Tk 2 lakh.

Khabir Uddin said cauliflower farming is very profitable. He cultivated Ninja variety on 15 bighas this year, but will incur loss due to pest attack.

Forman Ali said each cauliflower weighs only 400 grams to 500 grams which is much less than that of previous years. He has taken loan from Krishi Bank, he said, adding that he does not know how he will repay it.

DAE DD Rauf said he joined recently and has visited the spot, adding that they are taking steps in this matter.



Bablur Rahman in his cauliflower field, which has been attacked by pests, at Bhomradanga village in Kotchandpur upazila of Jhenidah.

PHOTO: STAR