

'Dredge Khawai for yr round flow'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

People in Habiganj at a rally yesterday demanded punishment to those who grabbed rivers and built structures on the Khawai and Sutang rivers.

They held the rally in Khawai Mukh area under Habiganj district town with a slogan dredge the Khawai for water flow year round (Khawai Nodi Khonon Chai, Sara Bochhor Pani Chai).

Habiganj unit Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (BAPA) and Khawai River Waterkeeper organised the rally.

They also symbolically floated paper boats on the river.

Khadija Akther of Dhulikhel area said the river has become very narrow and dirty, adding that one cannot walk near it due to the bad odour from the garbage. Anyone swimming in the river will suffer from water borne diseases, she said.

Tofazzal Sohel of Khawai River Waterkeeper said farmers in the nearby villages have abandoned paddy farming due to irrigation problem and switched to vegetable cultivation, but that is also hampered in the dry season due to lack of water.

Pollution has taken a serious turn as chemical wastes from small industries on or near the banks of Khawai and Sutang rivers are thrown into the rivers, he said.

Member Secretary of Nodi O Jolasoy Rokkha Andolon Ahsanul Haque Suja told this correspondent that lack of garbage management system in Habiganj town is the major cause of pollution in the Khawai and Sutang rivers.

Human wastes also find their way into the river through drains and canals, he added.



People symbolically float paper boats on the Khawai river in Khawai Mukh area under Habiganj during a protest rally with the slogan 'Khawai Nodi Khonon Chai, Sara Bochhor Pani Chai'.

PHOTO: STAR

Hospital without OT facilities for 30 years!



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Problem-ridden Gournadi Upazila Health Complex in Barisal. Right, the out of order sole X-ray machine.

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Gournadi Upazila Health Complex in the district has been running without operation services for the last 30 years, depriving the patients of surgery for lack of an anesthetist and equipment.

Besides, the problem-ridden health complex faced shortage of physicians, beds and medicines, lack of modern diagnostic facilities, ambulance service and absence of isolation ward.

The hospital was set up in 1987 with 32 beds and upgraded to a 50-bed one five years ago.

On average, 100 to 150 patients come to the hospital from far-flung areas of the district daily, but they do not get proper treatment and facilities. Critical patients are

referred to Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMCH) in Barisal city. Patients who need surgery have to go to another hospital or a private clinic due to lack of equipment in the complex.

The hospital has two operation theatres but they are not functioning, said Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Dr SM Kabir Hasan, adding that there is no diathermy machine and the only X-ray machine is damaged.

Even the doors and windows of the operation theatres have remained broken for many years, he added.

There is no anesthetist in the hospital, so we have not been able to perform surgery for 30 years, Dr Kabir added.

There are only 10 physicians out of 21 posts, and only two specialist doctors out of seven posts, he said, adding that the posts of surgical consultant, anesthetist, cardiologist, dermatologist, eye-specialist, ENT specialist and child specialist have been lying vacant for a long time. There is no orthopedic surgeon here, he said.

Patients coming to the hospital for surgical treatment are advised to go to SBMCH or to a clinic due to lack of surgical consultant in the hospital, said Kazal Das Gupta, a patient.

"We have sent a proposal to the health ministry to activate the operation theatres soon," Kabir said.

FOUR-DAY BHABADAH MARCH ENDS

Next rally in Dhaka Dec 22

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Speakers at a rally in Jessore town yesterday said they will form a human chain at Shahbagh in Dhaka on December 22, demanding immediate solution to waterlogging in Jessore's Bhabadah area.

They will also submit a memorandum to the officials of Water Development Board in this regard the following day, said Iqbal Kabir Jahid, adviser to Bhabadah Movement Committee.

The announcement was made at the rally in the town before the affected submitted a memorandum to the deputy commissioner in Jessore.

The committee ended its four-day march after submission of a memorandum to the DC.

On way to the office premises of the DC, marchers held rallies at Bhabadah, Nawapara industrial town and Sundali in

Announce new wage structure

Demand sugar mill workers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Several hundred workers of Rangpur Sugar Mills in Gaibandha brought out a protest procession demanding declaration of the new wage structure for them.

They also staged a sit-in agitation at the main entrance of the mill yesterday.

Organised by Rangpur Chittikal Sramik-Karmachari Union, they brought out an agitation rally, hoisted banners, festoons and placards and paraded Mohimaganj-Gobindaganj road.

Speakers at the programme said the authorities concerned are paying them only Tk 4,200 against eight-hour shift, which is too little to maintain their families these days.

They said due to increasing prices of essentials, the poorly paid workers most of the time struggled to maintain their livelihood let alone afford treatment cost.

Workers of four industrial sectors across the country have been demonstrating for declaration of a new wage scale.

Abhoynagar upazila and Kalibari, Monoharpur, Konakhola and Shyamnagar under Monirampur upazila and Charsa in Sadar upazila of Jessore. Thousands of villagers in Bhabadah area, including Abhoynagar, Monirampur and Keshabpur upazilas of Jessore and Khulna's Fultala and Dumuria, are suffering due to waterlogging.

On October 24, the committee announced the road march programme towards the office of the DC from Bhabadah from November 16 to 19 to press five-point demand.

The demands include inauguration of tidal river management programme before Maghi Purnima, ensuring food security to the affected people with subsidy and rehabilitation, removal of silt from the river Upper Bhadra and Buri Bhadra and freeing all the recognised canals from grabbers.

PHOTO: RABIUL HASAN



Coriander farming gets popular in Chapainawabganj

RABIUL HASAN with ANDREW EAGLE

Since the Neolithic age, peoples across Asia and Europe have enjoyed eating coriander. Recently the staple herb of South Asian cuisine has proved a particular blessing for Chapainawabganj farmers. With its low production cost, relatively trouble-free cultivation, reliable demand and good prices, coriander is increasingly a crop of choice.

"I grew coriander on twenty five bighas of land this year," says farmer Sohel Ali from Chanbhassa village in Charbagdanga union. "I started a few years ago with only three bighas, but have since leased more land for the crop since it is profitable."

"I leased four bighas of land for coriander," says another farmer, Torikul Islam, from Bagdanga village in Sundarpur union. "I paid Tk 20,000 per bigha for the lease, but I expect to

make a profit of up to Tk 70,000 when the coriander is sold.

Previously grown in family plots on a small-scale, commercial coriander production in the region has taken off over the last decade. Currently, over 5,000 farmers are involved in the enterprise, especially in Sadar and Shibganj upazilas. On the river shoals where coriander will grow well, the herb has improved the lot of many.

"There will be handsome profits this season," says Mohammad Alam, a farmer from Chanbhassa who grows coriander on six bighas. "A few days ago I sold a maund of coriander leaves for almost Tk 15,000. Now the rate is around Tk 7,000, which is still quite good."

Local farmers report that it costs around Tk 6,000 per bigha to grow coriander, which will produce up to 20 maunds of leaves. Better still, each bigha can be cultivated with coriander

repeatedly, up to six times during the life of a typical lease.

Production rates region-wide average 5,000 maunds per day, meeting local demand and sold across the country, especially in Dhaka. A mango orchard in Pathan Para of the district town has become the place where coriander crops arrive from several shoals and other areas to be sold to wholesalers. A maund of coriander leaves there will sell for up to Tk 8,000.

"Coriander is grown widely between October and February," says the Deputy Director of Department of Agriculture Extension in Chapainawabganj, Monzurul Hoda. "Around 175 hectares, mostly on the sandbanks which are well-suited to coriander, were dedicated to the crop's production this year and it is increasing every day."

GANG RAPE, MURDER BCL man on remand

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court in Barguna's Patharghata yesterday granted one day remand for a local Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leader in a case for killing a girl after rape around three months ago.

The court gave the order after police produced Patharghata College unit BCL Organising Secretary Mahidul Islam Rayhan before it, seeking five-day remand, police said.

On Saturday, the law enforcers produced Patharghata College unit BCL President Ruhi Anan Danial and General Secretary Saddam Hossain Chotto before the court with seven-day fresh remand prayer. The court fixed November 23 for hearing the petition.

On November 12, the law enforcers arrested Rayhan, Ruhi, Saddam and Assistant Secretary of Patharghata upazila unit BCL Mohammad Mahmud in the case.

Police then produced the four before the court with a five-day remand prayer for Ruhi and Saddam. Later, the court granted a two-day remand for each of them.

Missing youth found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Comilla

A 25-year-old youth was found dead in a pond beside the Daudkandi Upazila Bazar Road yesterday, three days after he went missing.

The deceased was Sumon, son of Md Mannan of Sobikandi village in the upazila.

Victim's elder brother Shahin said his brother was missing for the last three days and a complaint was filed with Daudkandi police station in this regard.

Daudkandi Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Mizanur Rahman said Sumon's body was found floating in a pond beside Bazar Road on Saturday night.

Local farmers report that it costs around Tk 6,000 per bigha to grow coriander, which will produce up to 20 maunds of leaves. Better still, each bigha can be cultivated with coriander

Rape victim fails to attend exam for pregnancy complications

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

The traumatised rape victim in Sadar upazila failed to appear for the Primary Terminal Examination that started across the country yesterday as her anxious mental condition did not let her sit for the examination.

Parents of the 12-year-old victim said their daughter was raped allegedly by one of their neighbours Shahjahan, 40, father of three, a couple of months ago.

The girl disclosed the matter to her parents and later doctors at a private clinic in the town confirmed her six-month pregnancy.

Her parents said following complications from the pregnancy and severe mental turmoil their daughter decided not to sit for the exam this year.

They said Shahjahan took the girl to his house, raped her there and threatened her with dire consequences if she told anybody.