

Monument to poor planning

Newly-built bus terminal abandoned due to lack of approach roads

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An apocalyptic atmosphere pervades the bus terminal in Char Sujanagar village of Pabna's Sujanagar upazila. Overgrown with grass, strewn with rubbish and cow dung, the hoped-for transport hub was built at a cost of Tk 1.74 crore by Sujanagar municipality, with construction completed in 2016. But the brand new terminal has never seen a bus. For want of approach roads it remains abandoned.

"We have already taken the initiative to make a two-kilometre concrete road to link the terminal with the upazila headquarters," says the local mayor Md Abdul Wahab. "The municipality has acquired two acres for the purpose. At a cost of Tk 3.3 crore, road construction will soon begin."

Yet the terminal building has been neglected for so long that repairs will also be

required before any potential opening, locals say. The main gates of the complex made of heavy iron have already collapsed, and in some places the plaster and tiles in the building are dilapidated and damaged.

The municipality told The Daily Star that any repair work is the responsibility of the construction firm since they are yet to take charge of the building. "Tk 30 lakh is yet to be paid to the construction firm. They have to hand over a building that is ready to use, and that includes repair work," says the mayor.

In the meantime the project's mishandling is a source of frustration for locals. "It is ridiculous that we have a newly-built terminal abandoned and on the verge of destruction while the people of this municipality still endure the traffic jams caused by buses being stranded in the upazila headquarters," says one resident, Md Sadek Ali.



The new bus terminal at Char Sujanagar village in Pabna's Sujanagar upazila remains a mockery to stakeholders for the last two years as vehicular movement to and from the station is yet start due to lack of approach roads.

PHOTO: STAR

Police yet to arrest rapist of schoolgirl

The kid was violated on May 12 in Melandah upazila

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Although a week has already passed, police are yet to arrest the lone culprit involved in violating a 13-year-old schoolgirl in Melandah upazila of the district on May 12.

Father of the victim, a Class V student of a local kindergarten at Bongshi Beltoil village in the upazila, filed a rape case with Melandah Police Station against their neighbour Monwar Hosain, 22, on Friday night.

Quoting victim's family members, police said Monwar, a first year honours student and private tutor of the victim, lured the girl to his house on May 12 and raped her there.

The following day, the girl disclosed the matter to her mother after she felt serious pain in her genitals, Officer-in-Charge of Melandah Police Station Azizur Rahman said.

Later, Monwar with the help of some local influential people tried to settle the matter by marrying the girl but went in vain after the local marriage registrar declined to register the marriage as the girl is aged below 18 years, the OC said.

Following the filing of the case, a three-member team headed by gynaecologist Fakria Alam yesterday conducted the victim's medical test at Jamalpur General Hospital, the OC added.

Schoolboy found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

The body of a schoolboy was found in Sezamura area under Bijoyagar upazila of the district yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Abdul Mannan, 16, son of Abdul Karim of Kalachora village, and a Class X student of Kalachora High School.

Quoting family members, police said Mannan didn't return home after harvesting paddy from a field near the Rupa river on Friday afternoon.

Mannan drowned in the river due to onrush of water, said Md Ali Arshad, officer-in-charge of Bijoyagar Police Station.

Informed by locals, police recovered the body from the area yesterday morning and sent it to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy, said the OC.

Forced settlement!

Rape of class V girl was settled for Tk 20,000 in Habiganj's Chunarughat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A Class V girl student, raped allegedly by a neighbour on May 2 and 3 at her house in Habiganj's Chunarughat upazila, is undergoing treatment at hospital while the accused remained scot-free after paying Tk 20,000 in an out-of-court settlement mediated by a local councillor.

The victim's father filed a case over the incident on Wednesday night, naming Ujjal as the prime accused.

He alleged that police have not arrested Ujjal although he is moving freely.

The girl's parents left for a wetland area in search of work on May 2, leaving the girl alone at home.

Taking the opportunity, a neighbour named Ujjal Mia, 37, drugged and raped the child for two consecutive nights.

Locals learned about the incident as the victim suffered severe physical complications including bleeding following the abuse and her parents also returned

home after being informed.

Annika Das, organiser of Brac's social empowerment programme, arranged the girl's admission to Habiganj Sadar Hospital.

"Ujjal is known as a miscreant in the area and two of his three wives left him," she said.

Although the minor girl suffered serious physical injuries due to brutalities by Ujjal, local councillor Kajal Mia arranged a so-called settlement of the matter through a salish (village arbitration), asking Ujjal to pay the victim's family Tk 20,000, said Tofazzal Sohail, former organising secretary of Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation's Sylhet divisional unit.

Asked about the matter, Kajal Mia said, "The girl's family is poor. They will not be able to go through with the legal process. So, the matter was settled by making Ujjal pay a compensation of Tk 20,000."

Police said they are trying their best to arrest the rapist, who went into hiding.

Miners reject talks offer, continue strike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Bangladeshi miners at Barapukuria Coal Mine Company Ltd (BCMCL) and villagers affected by land subsidence nearby continued their indefinite strike yesterday as no effective steps have been taken to resolve the ongoing crisis.

Due to the strike, coal production remained suspended for the seventh consecutive day yesterday, BCMCL Managing Director (MD) Habib Uddin Ahmed said.

The agitating miners and affected villagers encircled the BCMCL complex from outside and resisted movement of about 150 Bangladeshi officials and 300 foreign nationals. But the confined officials were allowed to buy food, medicines and other essentials under police protection on Friday night.

MD Habib said BCMCL authorities requested the agitating miners and villagers to sit for talks with Petrobangla chairman to reach a solution in this regard, which the latter rejected.

BCMCL Miners and Workers Union President Rabiul Islam and its Secretary Abu Sufian at a press conference in front of the coalmine compound yesterday said they won't be sitting with anybody unless the four cases, including two in 2014, filed against them are not withdrawn immediately.

Around 1,000 miners and villagers affected by land subsidence in Parbatipur went on the indefinite strike on May 13 demanding implementation of their 13-point and six-point demands respectively.

Meanwhile, the agitating miners demanded removal of BCMCL MD Habib Uddin, Secretary Kashem Prodhania and GM (Admin) Masudur Rahman.



Curious tourists throng Kuakata beach in Patuakhali yesterday to see the dead whale.

PHOTO: STAR

Whale found dead in beach

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A whale was found dead in Kuakata beach yesterday.

Local fishermen found the 45-foot-long and 20-foot-wide marine mammal near the Kuakata eco-park area on the beach early in the morning.

Local fishermen thought the fish might have died about two weeks ago and it came to the shore with tidal surge on Friday midnight.

As the news spread, many locals and tourists rushed to the spot to see the giant creature.

Nasir Uddin Bilop, president of Kuakata Press Club, urged the authorities concerned to preserve the dead whale as tourists can see the marine fish.

It might be another attraction for tourists or marine researchers, he said.

Md Kamrul Islam, Kalapara upazila fisheries officer, said Kuakata beach management committee will take necessary step over the matter as it is dead.

Kuakata Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Tanveer Rahman, president of Kuakata beach management committee, said they are trying to preserve the marine mammal as local people have great interest over the matter.

Savagery on animals

10 dogs beaten dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A group of youths have set a gory example of cruelty to animals, beating dead ten dogs in Nazir Shankarpur area of Jessore town on Friday.

Owner of one of the dogs, Kodbanu Bibi filed a complaint with Kotwali Model Police Station accusing Tikli Babu, Raju, Jewel and Jahangir.

The youths led by Raju hit the dogs repeatedly with sticks and spears, keeping them confined inside the boundary walls of a school on Thursday and Friday, goes the complaint filed by Kodbanu.

"As I protested the brutal act, the youths verbally abused me. Then they took away my pet dog and killed it too," Kodbanu said.

OC Azmul Huda of the police station said, "The killed dogs have been buried. None has been arrested yet."

Storm-hit farmers cry for help

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Several hundred farmers in Domar upazila, who were hit by a nor'wester on May 10, formed a human chain and arranged a roadside meeting yesterday, urging the government to provide them help.

The speakers at the meeting at Bamunia Kachari Bazar area beside Domar-Chilahati road, urged the government to give them either free rice under vulnerable group feeding (VGF) programme or sell rice to them at subsidised rate of Tk 10 per kg as they were passing their days unfed under the open sky.

They also demanded exemption of electricity bill used for running irrigation pumps in Boro season, and suspension of payment of installments of bank and microcredit loans until next Aman harvest was completed.

They also urged the government to supply them with seed, fertilizer and pesticide under agri-rehabilitation programme on emergency basis for cultivating upcoming Aman season.

Earlier, lawmaker from Nilphamari-1 constituency Aftabuddin Sarker, at a press conference, asked the government to declare Domar upazila a disaster-hit area.

Youth held with 15kg hemp

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Officials of Narcotics Department arrested a youth with 15kg of hemp worth Tk 2.80 lakh from a Dhaka-bound coach in Joypurhat district town yesterday morning.

The arrestee is Sayed Ali, 30, son of Mahatab Ali of Kashaykali village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

Acting on a tip-off, a team, led by Shakib Sarkar, SI of Joypurhat Narcotics Department, raided Shyamoli Paribahan at Pachurmor yesterday morning and arrested Ali.

They also seized the hemp from his possession, said the SI.

Later, a case was filed with Joypurhat Sadar Police Station in connection with the incident.

Rain, water from hills trigger flash flood

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Hundreds of farmers in Kalmakanda upazila of Netrakona are facing great trouble in harvesting their Boro crops after the embankment of a beel has broken down due to heavy rain and onrush of water from hills across the border.

The farmers in eight unions also faced disaster due to flood last year, but this year they are facing sudden flood and heavy rain, locals said.

Boro paddy on around 28 hectares of land went under water as the embankment on Mandaura Beel, a local water body in Pogla union, broke down on May 12, and around 120 farmers were affected, said Kalmakanda Upazila Agriculture Officer (UAO) Abdullah Al Mamun.

There are around 150 hectares of land in the area and crops on 122 hectares have been harvested, he added.

Locals claimed that nearly 50 per cent of the standing crop in the beel area was affected in the flood, and the farmers are still struggling to harvest their produce. They added that adjacent unions were also affected.

Now, it has become difficult to harvest the paddy from knee and ankle deep water, farmers said.

"The rate of day labourers has also gone up in recent days, making it more difficult for us," said Abdus Salam, a farmer of Munshipur village.

"The situation has put us in critical condition as the price is not reasonable and the NGOs are putting pressure on us to repay the loans," said Phool Banu, a farmer of the same area.

Rajab Ali, a marginal farmer of Medhikanda village, said he cultivated Boro on one acre of land and the production was good, but the price is not fair.

The farmers are being forced to sell their produce at throwaway prices, the UAO said, adding that one maund of paddy is being sold at Tk 500 to Tk 650, which is much lower than the government rate of around Tk 1,000 per maund.

Around 21,380 hectares of land were brought under Boro cultivation in the upazila this season, he said.

Pogla Union Parishad Chairman Md Rafiqul Islam said Boro crop was inundated in the flash flood, but the water has



Farmers harvest Boro paddy in a submerged field at Mandaura Beel in Kalmakanda upazila of Netrakona.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

started receding and the farmers are harvesting the paddy.

The production was good but recent heavy rain and flood have upset the

farmers, the chairman added.

Kalmakanda Upazila Nirbahi Officer Arifuzzaman said he visited the affected areas and asked the authorities con-

cerned to support the farmers.

Repairing of the embankment with sandbags and bamboos started a couple of days ago, he added.