



Worried farmers hold paddy destroyed by rats in Islampur union under Sadar upazila in Sunamganj Haor area.

PHOTO: STAR

Rat invasion worries Haor farmers

The menace seems unstoppable in Sunamganj Sadar upazila

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Sunamganj

Thousands of farmers in Sunamganj are worried as rats are eating up their paddy at Jahangirnagar union under Sadar upazila in Sunamganj Haor area.

Mizanur Rahman, a resident of Islampur village, said paddy on his five kiar (one kiar = 30 decimals) of land has been destroyed, adding that farmers are afraid of taking their crops home. The rats destroy almost every edible thing in the infested localities, he said.

Paddy on Mizanur's neighbour Abdur Matin's six kiar, Shahjahan's five kiar, Emran Hossain's five kiar, Manjil Hossain's four kiar, Shah Alam's four kiar, Siddique Mia's two kiar, Hanif Molla's six kiar, Hekim Mia's 20 kiar, Mizanur's five kiar in South Para of the village, and Sujon Mia's 15 kiar in Purbapara have been ruined.

The affected farmers said agricultural officials did not visit the spots even for one day.

He has never seen such a threat, said Shamsul Haq, 55, of Mangalkata village.

"I sell pesticides, including Ujjala rat killer and Hindustani rat killer, but they are not working, said Mujibur Rahman, a pesticide trader in the local Mangalkata market.

Abdur Rob, convener of North Surma Development Council, said around four hundred kiars of paddy lands have been destroyed. The numerous rats cannot be killed or controlled, he said, adding that they cannot seek suggestions from the agriculture officials and field workers as they are not visiting the affected fields.

However, agriculture officials refuted the allegation and said they are giving advice to the affected farmers on how to check the problem.

The cost of paddy cultivation has increased due to use of pesticides, but those have failed to check the attack, several farmers said.

Jahangirnagar Union Parishad Chairman Moksed Ali said many villagers in his union are

passing days amid hardship as they are facing serious losses due to the problem. It is important that the agriculture department looks into the matter seriously, he added.

Syed Imran Hossain, sub-assistant agriculture officer of Mangalkata block of Sunamganj Sadar upazila, claimed that the allegation is not true. "We have distributed leaflets in many places on how to prevent the attack by rats. Those who did not get it may have complained," he said.

They are advising farmers to use Zinc Prospect and Lanirat to get rid of the rats, he added.

Sadar Upazila Agriculture Officer Salah Uddin Tipu said the attack by rats on Aman paddy increased due to less rainfall, adding that the number of rats will decrease if it rains. An agricultural sub-assistant of another block will be recruited on an urgent basis for the Mangalkata block, he said. They are telling farmers to use certain medicines, he added.

He said Aman paddy was cultivated on 11,000 hectares in his upazila.

Roadside garbage brings woe to Tangail townspeople

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A huge amount of garbage is being dumped beside important roads in the town for a long time, creating pollution and causing sufferings to commuters and locals.

Tangail municipality, established in 1887, has no waste management system. As a result, garbage is dumped at different points under the open sky.

Private hospitals and clinics also dump their medical wastes besides the roads, polluting the environment and spreading diseases.

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw garbage being dumped beside the road at Rabna area, one of the main entrances to the town, by garbage carrying trucks of the municipality and also vans of private organisations.

Besides garbage, bodies of dead animals were also dumped beside the important road, spreading bad smell and making the lives of commuters as well local people miserable, said Rafiqul Islam, a resident of Rabna area.

The pile of garbage spreads on the road during rain and the vehicles and pedestrians are forced to move on the garbage, he said.

Moreover, poisonous smoke is released when the garbage is burnt, polluting the environment and spreading diseases among local residents, he added.

"The situation turns more serious when vehicles get stuck just beside the garbage dumping area and a traffic jam is created in Rabna bypass area," said Badal Miah, driver of a passenger bus.

Saifuzzaman Sohel, panel mayor of Tangail municipality, admitted the sufferings of the people due to dumping of garbage in the area.

"But what can we do? Where can we dump the huge amount of garbage of the town? There is no place for it," he said.

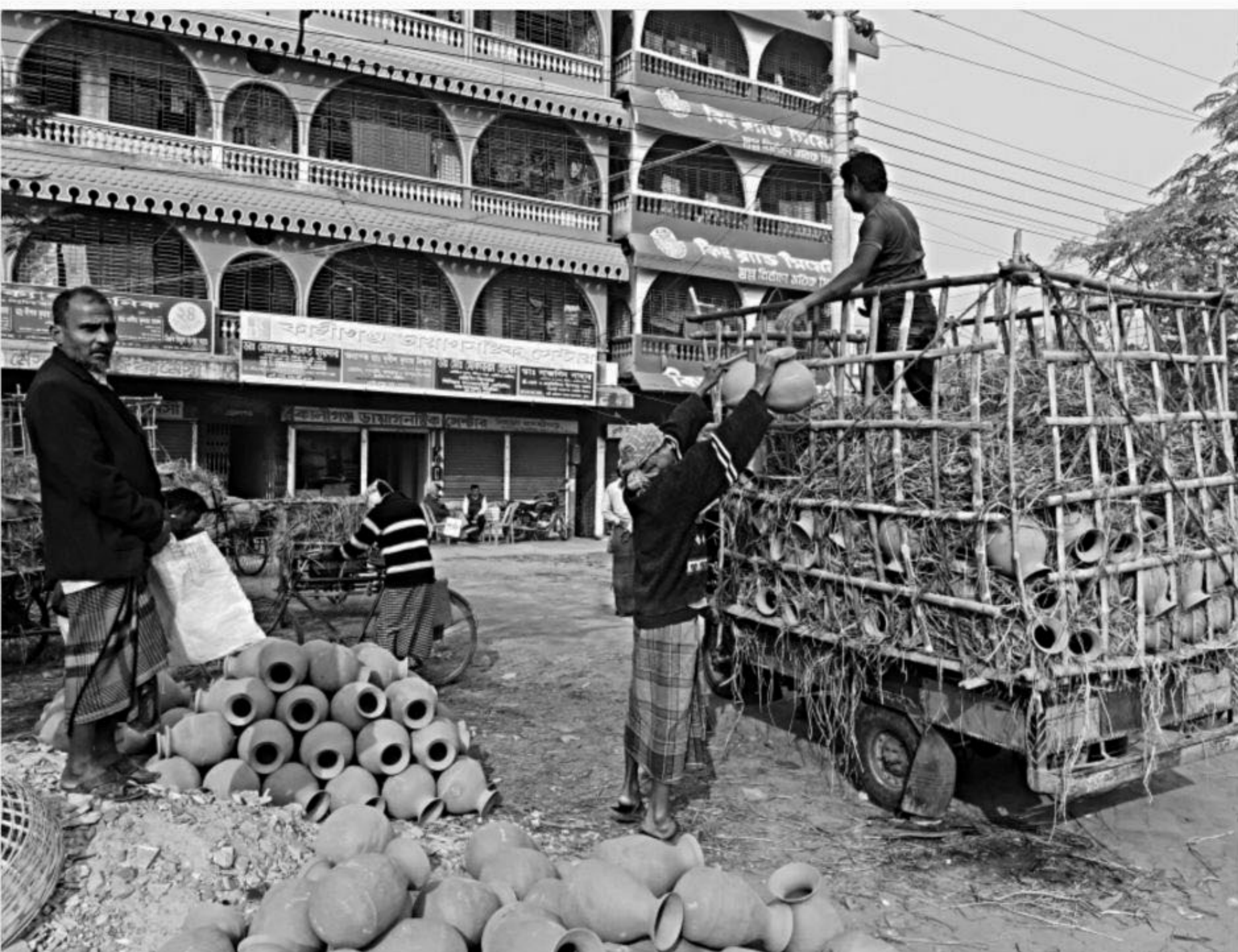
He said the municipality will spread bleaching powder in the areas regularly so that the bad smell goes away.

He also said he will take necessary steps so that bodies of died animals are not dumped on roadsides and the garbage cannot spread on the road.



Garbage being dumped beside an important road in Tangail town, causing environment pollution and sufferings to locals as well as commuters.

PHOTO: STAR



Workers load earthen pots on a truck for sending them to a market in Jhenidah Sadar upazila as the item sees a boost in demand during the date juice collection season.

PHOTO: STAR

Heyday for potters in Jhenidah

Earthen pots on high sale during date juice collection season

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Hundreds of potters in the district famous for date juice production are earning well during the ongoing winter season as earthen pots, used for collection and storing of date juice and molasses, sees a high demand.

Around 10,000 owners of date trees in six upazilas of Jhenidah are now engaged in collecting date juice, said officials at the Department of Agriculture Extension.

Farmers start collecting date juice in late November and it continues till mid March. They need a good number of earthen pots during the season.

They sell the delicious item for good prices and earn a handsome amount during the season.

Potters have to remain busy to meet the demand as many earthen pots break while handling.

Farmer Arman Hossain of Enayetpur village said, "I have 35 date trees. I have already purchased 40 earthen pots for collecting date juice. I will need more pots for storing of molasses."

The earthen pots see higher prices during this season.

Shukumar Biswas, a potter of Shibnagar village under Kaliganj upazila, said he sells a pair of earthen pots at Tk 60 during November to March while the price is Tk 40 in other times of the year.

"Our earning doubles this season due to higher price and boost in sale of earthen pots," he added.

Ranjan Paul, another potter at Shingi Bazar in Kaliganj upazila of Jhenidah, said he sells earthen pots worth Tk 45 thousand per month during this season as the items sell like hot cakes.

GANG RAPE IN NOAKHALI

Criminals' death penalty demanded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Local people, including the fathers of two of the nine accused in the case for gang rape of a housewife in Subarnachar upazila, yesterday demanded death penalty to the culprits.

The demand came at a protest rally organised by NGO Nijera Kori at Pangarbazar in Subarnachar.

"Not only the rapists, but also the masterminds who incited them, should be awarded with death penalty," said Baigon Ali, father of an accused Hanif.

Tofail Ahmed, father of another accused Mosharraf, also made the same demand.

Relatives and family members of all the nine prime accused were present at the rally chaired by Sirajul Islam, president of upazila landless people's association.

Nijera Kori Coordinator Khushi Kabir and women's rights activist Advocate Salma Ali attended as chief guest and special guest.

Some Awami League men gang-raped a mother of four on December 30, allegedly for not voting for 'boat' symbol.

The incident sparked huge outrage across the country.

The victim's husband filed a case accusing nine people. Later, police added four more names after interrogation of some of the accused and ten people have so far been arrested in this connection.

Man held on rape charge

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Police arrested a man from Mirzapur village in Chatmohar upazila under the district on Sunday on charge of raping a woman.

The arrestee is Manik Hossain, 35, of the village, said Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Chatmohar Police Station Sheikh Nasir Uddin.

Manik was produced before a Judicial Magistrate's Court in Pabna, which sent him to jail yesterday, said the OC.

The accused along with his two accomplices forcibly picked up the 28-year-old woman when she was going to her home in the village on Saturday evening.

They later raped her.

The victim filed a case on Sunday night, accusing Manik Hossain and two unidentified people, the OC said, adding that police arrested Manik from the village.

The victim was sent to Pabna General Hospital for medical examination, he said.

Two other accused have gone into hiding, the official added.

Villagers' bid to save crematorium

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

The people of seven villages in Sadar upazila started working voluntarily on Sunday to save a crematorium from erosion.

They are collecting money from every family in the seven villages and buying bamboos and wood for constructing a barrier against erosion.

Golabari crematorium is located on the banks of the Chengi river in ward No 9 of Khagrachhari municipality. Golabari area is one of the old settlements in Khagrachhari. At present, it is divided into seven villages. They are Youngdha Bouddha Bihar, Ruikoi Chowdhury para, Aparna Chowdhury para, Rajya moni para, Mongmong member para, Kaladeva and Battoli villages.

The only crematorium in these villages is in Golabari. At one time, the crematorium covered more than one acre, but erosion by the Changi river has reduced the area.

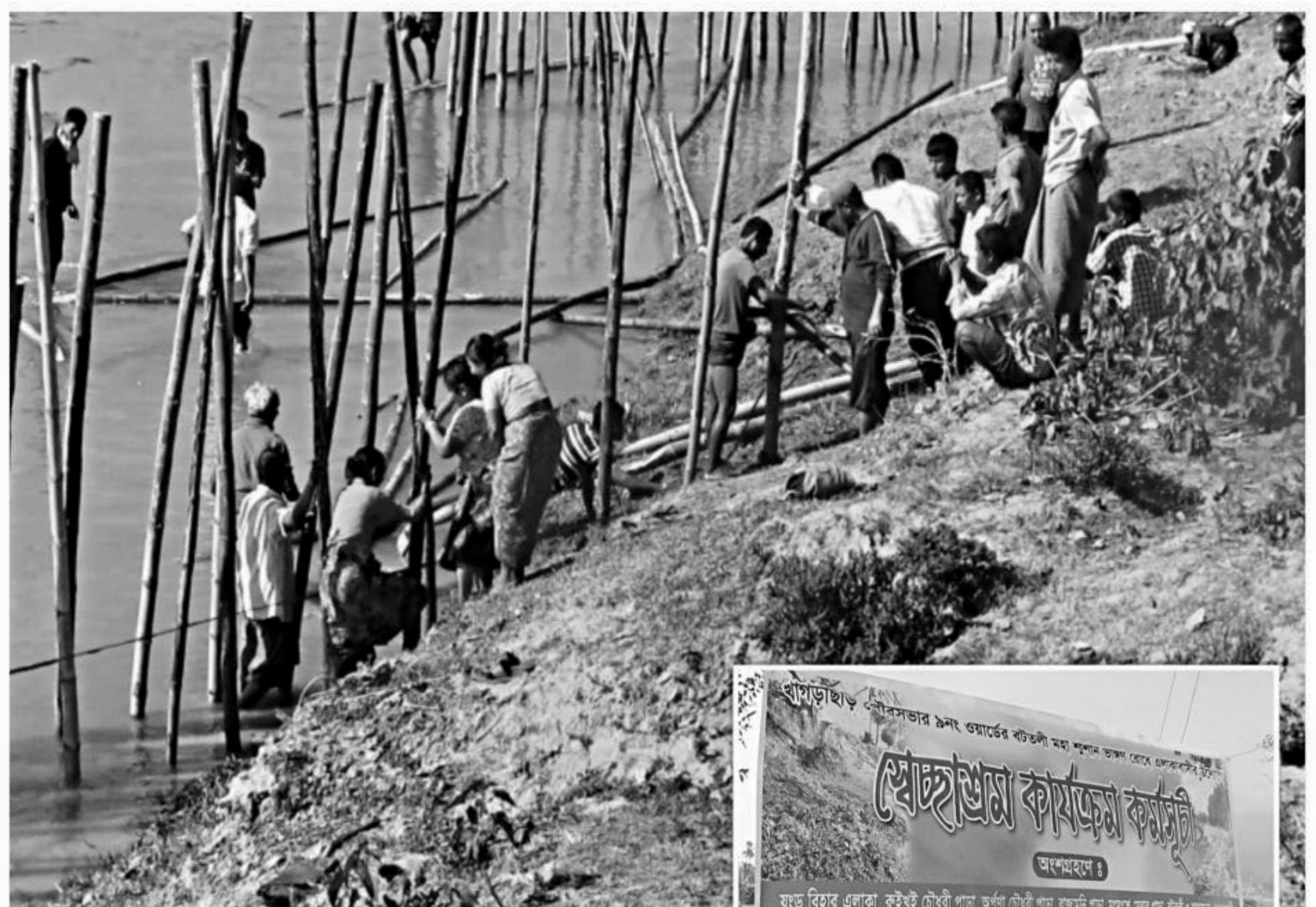
Crematorium Managing Committee General Secretary Mangpru Marma said they informed different government departments concerned about the situation and requested them to take steps to protect the crematorium, but to no avail.

So, not waiting for the government's decision, the villagers are raising money and building a temporary fence to protect the cremation ground.

Mongtowai Chowdhury, an elderly person of the village, said a wall of the crematorium was constructed with the help of Khagrachhari Hill District Council but that is also under threat of erosion. He sought cooperation of the Water Development Board (WDB) to protect the cremation ground.

Uthan Chowdhury, a social worker in Kaladeva village, said the Kaladeva-Battoli road passing through the cremation ground is also threatened by erosion.

Khagrachhari WDB Sub-Assistant Engineer Nikhil Chakma said they have sent a plan for protection of various spots in Khagrachhari from erosion, but the crematorium is not on that list. It will be included in the new Direct Plan Project, he added.



People of Golabari area in ward No 9 of Khagrachhari municipality are voluntarily erecting a temporary fence to protect the crematorium from erosion by the Chengi river.

PHOTO: STAR