

Sand lifting poses erosion threat in Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Influential sand traders have allegedly been lifting sand illegally from Safurul Khal in Bhaigyakul area of Bandarban's Sadar upazila for long, causing serious erosion.

Local people submitted a memorandum to the Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), requesting him to stop the lifters from illegally extracting sand, said Md Jamal Hossain, a ward member of the area, adding that the influential people, however, continued the illegal practice.

Villagers are cultivating different crops on the filled-up river bed but they may not be able to do so in future as the nearby lands are collapsing due to sand lifting.

"Erosion due to indiscriminate lifting of sand snatched my cropland. We went several times to the local administration office but they never visited our affected area," said Shahidul Islam, a villager.

Safura Begum, another local, said villagers cannot stop the sand traders as they are local influential people having connection with powerful politicians.

Sand lifting with five dredgers has been continuing for the last few months, villagers said.

"As the area is remote, it is difficult to operate mobile court over there regularly. We have talked with the alleged sand lifters over mobile phone and told them not to lift sand from there anymore," UNO Md Noman Hossain said.



Influential sand traders are lifting sand illegally from Safurul Khal in Bhaigyakul area of Bandarban Sadar upazila for long, causing serious erosion.

PHOTO: STAR

2 injured as shop torched

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhalakathi

A grocery shop was torched by criminals on Wednesday night at Suktagar Bazar in Rajapur upazila while the owner and his wife were sleeping inside the shop.

The owner and also shopkeeper Gopal Biswas, 55, and his wife were slightly burnt and took first aid from the village doctor.

Goods worth around Tk 15 lakh were burnt, which was his total asset, Gopal said.

The criminals locked the shop from outside so that the couple would be killed when the shop was torched, according to the police of Rajapur Police Station.

They also locked other shops and houses in the bazar from outside so that none could come to rescue them, said Sabur Hossain, an eyewitness of the area.

Gopal had filed a case in 2016 against some muscle-men of the area for vandalising a memorial and yesterday was the date for argument in Jhalakathi Judge's Court where Gopal was supposed to be present.

The shop might have been torched to stop him from going to the court so that he could not be present there for the argument, said Uttam Biswas, a cousin of Gopal, adding that he (Uttam) filed a case against the same men in 2014 for vandalising a temple in the area.

"I thought we would die as we could not come out from the shop through the door. We finally came out by breaking the wooden wall of the shop," Gopal said, adding that he cried for help but none could come as their doors were locked from outside.

Police officials visited the spot and will take necessary steps as soon as they get any written complaint, said Md Jahidul Islam, Officer-in-Charge of Rajapur Police Station.

Bridge without approach roads for two years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

People of three villages in Ishwarganj upazila have been suffering for nearly two years since the approach roads on both sides of an important bridge, constructed about three years ago, were washed away within a year of its construction.

Local people said the bridge, which connects four upazilas—Mymensingh Sadar, Trishal, Gouripur and Ishwarganj—is located in remote Moricharchar area along the Old Brahmaputra river under Uchakhila union of the upazila.

In 2016, Local Government Engineering Department built the bridge spending Tk 16 lakh to ease communication between Khodaboxpur, Bhabokhali and Bhola Algi villages and the upazila headquarters after a portion of Moricharchar area was devoured by the Brahmaputra river.

However, the approach roads on both sides of the bridge were washed away by the flood the following year.

Uchakhila Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Shafiqul Islam said although villagers in cooperation with the local UP rebuilt the approach roads by filling earth and dumping sand bags, within a short time the temporary approach roads were eroded again.

Villagers later erected a bamboo-made platform connecting the bridge, which also broke down shortly after, the UP chairman said.

College student Emdadul Haque said the bridge is the only means for them to cross Moricharchar area and reach the upazila headquarters.

Though the area is famous for vegetable farming round the year, it is very difficult for thousands of farmers to carry their produce to local markets using the bridge, he added.

The bridge was built to mitigate the sufferings of the village people, but it is no longer usable for them, farmer Motiur Rahman of Moricharchar area said.

Echoing the same, a number of farmers like Nazrul Islam, Monjurul Haque, Azizul Islam and Abdul Halim of the area said they are often deprived of fair prices for their produce due to lack of direct communication to Ishwarganj upazila headquarters and Mymensingh town.

There are some five educational institutions, including a primary and a high school, on either sides of the bridge, ward member Golam Mustafa said, adding that around 400 students have to cross the bridge daily.

Ishwarganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Umme Rumana said she was informed of the matter recently, adding that necessary steps will be taken soon to mitigate the trouble.



This concrete bridge at Moricharchar village in Mymensingh's Ishwarganj upazila does not have any approach road on either side.

PHOTO: STAR

Affair with Muslim girl led to Swapan's murder

Says police investigation, the girl's parents, three neighbours arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A Hindu youth was killed over love affair with a Muslim girl, said police at a press conference in the town on Wednesday.

Parents of the girl and her neighbours are involved in the murder, said Additional Superintendent of Police Iqbal Hasan Chowdhury at the conference at Sadar Police Station.

The deceased was day labourer Swapan Chandra Roy, 25, son of Bindo Chandra Roy of Kismat Bidyabagis village in Sadar upazila.

On January 7, Swapan was stabbed to death and the body was recovered from a potato field near his house the following day.

Later, police arrested the girl's parents and her three neighbours in this connection, said Officer-in-Charge of the police station Mozammel Haque, also the investi-

gation officer of the case.

The arrestees are parents of the girl Ansar Ali, 50, former member of Barabari Union Parishad, and his wife Romiza Begum, 45, of the same village, and their neighbours Abdul Mazid alias Uri Mazid, 48, son of late Zahor Uddin, Mahbubar Rahman, 39, son of Mansar Ali and Naresh Chandra Roy, 42, son of late Jhaporu Chandra Roy.

Quoting the arrestees' confessional statements, the Addl SP said parents of the girl prepared a plan to kill Swapan with the help of their three neighbours as the youth was of a different religion.

Plaintiff of the case Govinda Chandra Roy, elder brother of the victim, said they are shocked as why arrestee Naresh was involved in the killing mission. Naresh is their relative.



Swapan Chandra Roy

3 Shibir men held with petrol bombs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Police arrested three activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir from a house in Syaderbali area of Madaripur Sadar upazila early yesterday.

They also recovered five petrol bombs, three machetes, books on jihad and four laptops from their possession, said police.

The arrestees are Zakir Hossain, 25, president of Madaripur Sadar unit of Shibir, its secretary Mazbauddin Sarder, 24, and activist Arman Khalashi, 22. They are the students of Government Nazimuddin College.

On secret information, a police team raided the house and arrested the Shibir men with the bombs, books and laptops when they were holding a clandestine meeting there to commit crime.

Three found murdered

STAR COUNTRY DESK

A man was murdered at Tikadohor village in Companiganj upazila of Sylhet yesterday, while two other bodies were found in Melandah upazila of Jamalpur and Goplaganj upazila of Faridpur yesterday and Wednesday.

The victim at Tikadohor village in Companiganj upazila was Aftab Miah, 35, son of Jabbar Miah of the village, our Sylhet correspondent reports.

Aftab's cousin Iqbal Miah hit him with a sharp weapon following an altercation over a over land dispute. Critically injured. Aftab later died at the upazila health complex," Jashim Uddin, OC of Companiganj Police Station, quoted locals as saying.

Our Jamalpur correspondent reports: A cow trader was found murdered at Ambaria village in Melandah upazila yesterday.

The deceased, Amjad Hossain alias Noba Mondal, 38, had an enmity with neighbour Mofazzal Hossain, 50, Melandah Police Station OC Gazi Sakhawat Hossain quoted the victim's family members as saying.

Mofazzal along with his son-in-law Rakib Miah, 28, called out Noba from his house around 10:00pm on Wednesday and

Noba went missing after that, the OC said.

On Thursday morning, locals found Noba's body with hands and legs tied at a paddy field, around 500 yards from his house.

Police sent the body to Jamalpur General Hospital for autopsy and detained Mursheda Begum, wife of Mofazzal, for interrogation, said the OC.

In Faridpur, police recovered the body of a three-wheeler driver from a ditch beside Dhaka-Khulna Highway at Sonasur under Sadar upazila on Wednesday night, our correspondent reports.

The deceased, Abinash Poddar, 35, of Gopalpur village under Tungipara upazila in Gopalganj, went out of his house with his easy-bike on January 6 morning. As he did not return, we filed a GD with Tungipara Police Station the next day," said Prokash Poddar, younger brother of Abinash.

"Informed by locals, we recovered Abinash's body around 8:30pm on Wednesday and sent it to Gopalganj General Hospital for autopsy. He was possibly killed by snatchers who took away his easy-bike," said Md Kaiyum Hossain, sub-inspector of Gopalganj Sadar Police Station.

'Exempt homesteads, farmlands from acquisition'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Thousands of char people, gripped with fear of land acquisition, in Mymensingh opined that their homesteads and farmlands can be saved if the newly planned Mymensingh divisional city is set up along the Brahmaputra river.

There are vast tracts of fallow and khas land on both sides of Brahmaputra river from Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) campus to Khagdahor area, they said, adding that if the new divisional city is established alongside the river it will also fulfil the prime minister's desire to build the city like London on the bank of Thames river.

They also suggested that if the khas land is used a vast tract of government land will be recovered in the process and expenditure for the infrastructure development will be less than the current estimate.

Many char people alleged that an influential quarter is active to divert the land acquisition process from the

bank of Brahmaputra to the farmland of nearby villages.

The land in the fresh acquisition list of 4366 acres is densely populated as some 20,000 families, mostly small and marginal farmers and sharecroppers live there.

The areas include Char Ishwardia, Char Anandipur, Char Gobindapur, Char Bhawanipur, Char Durgapur, Char Jelkhana and Char Laxmir Algee in Sadar upazila where different types of vegetables and other crops are cultivated round the year.

Char people have been protesting the proposed land acquisition for two years under the banner of 'Basotbitha Rokkha Committee,' demanding exemption of their homesteads and farmlands from the fresh acquisition list.

"We hope the authorities concerned will revise their decision and save farmlands and homesteads of thousands of poor char people living here for years," farmer Jamal Uddin of Char Ishwardia said.

Due to rapid growth of human

settlements and other infrastructure developments the volume of farmland is gradually declining, Joint-Convener of the committee Shahidul Islam said, adding that the authorities concerned should revise the fresh acquisition list.

Earlier, acquisition of 1220 acres of land in the first phase was scrapped and a fresh list of 4366 acres was prepared later, the leader said.

"On various occasions we urged the authorities to prepare a balanced list comprising of four unions Char Nilaxia, Char Ishwardia, Char Sirta and Khagdahor along the Brahmaputra," Convener of the committee Prof Syed Mosharraf Hossain said.

General Secretary of Mymensingh Nagarik Andolon Engineer Abul Kalam said the new divisional city should be established avoiding human settlements and farmlands.

Prof Dr Abdur Rahim, also director of Germ Plasma Centre at BAU, said as the country is based on agriculture and farmlands should not be brought under development purposes.



Large areas of farmland including this vegetable field at Char Gobindapur village in Mymensingh Sadar upazila are under fresh acquisition list.

PHOTO: STAR