



With encroachment running rife on both sides, unabated dumping of waste coupled with authorities' failure to maintain it have made the Brahmanbaria town canal look like a piece of barren land. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MASUK HRIDOY

Once a canal ran through it

B'baria town's beloved canal nearly dead as encroachment, garbage dumping on

MASUK HRIDOY, Brahmanbaria

A flowing canal ran through the town of Brahmanbaria once. Now what is left of the 3.5-km-long canal is a mere stream. At places, it looks as though it is a long stretch of barren land.

Connecting the Titas river at Tan Bazar on the eastern end of the town and the same river at Gokarn on the west, it used to be a means of affordable transport for the townspeople.

Livelihoods of many also depended on it as the town's businesspeople and inhabitants alike could use large vessels on it to transport huge amounts of goods and supplies.

The water in the canal used to be so clear that it was favourite pastime of locals to sit by its banks and chatter away to each other in their free time or bathe in it to cool off in summer days. Many others considered it a blessing as they could earn a living by fishing in it.

Other than serving as a large open drain, the canal, without having any excavation

done in last 30 years, now has turned into nothing but a waste dump and a mosquito breeding ground.

A culture of encroachment and littering and especially failure of the authorities to conduct timely maintenance have been to blame for the canal's present state, alleged locals.

Although the maintenance of the canal falls within the purview of Brahmanbaria Zila Parishad, so far it did nothing visible to save the canal, they said.

To make matters worse, in 2010, the then mayor of Brahmanbaria municipality in the name of a beautification project choked up the canal at many places by constructing embankments on its sides. He also pocketed a large sum of money allocated for the project, they also alleged.

The former mayor, Hafizur Rahman Mollah, while speaking with this correspondent, however claimed that he had completed the beautification work as specified by Brahmanbaria Zila Parishad and he spent all the allocated funds for the project.

The canal is in ruins now as all the suc-

cessive mayors of the municipality failed to maintain it, he said.

Only visible maintenance done on the canal was two years back, when different voluntary organisations were brought together by Mizanur Rahman, then superintendent of police in Brahmanbaria district.

The volunteers at Mizanur's request raised funds from locals and removed some debris and aquatic plants such as water hyacinth from the canal.

Ever since, no steps were taken to stop locals from dumping garbage in it or encroaching on it. As a result, the canal has become a source of not only mosquitoes, but overpowering stench.

The situation is so severe that the revolting smell emitting from the canal might make a first-time visitor sick.

Azhar Uddin, a resident of Madhyapara in the town, said garbage from nearby restaurants, businesses and houses are dumped in the canal indiscriminately.

"We watch this mindless destruction

of the beautiful asset before our very eyes every day, but can't do anything," he sighed frustratingly.

Habibur Rahman Parvez, joint secretary of Brahmanbaria Zila Nagarik Forum, told this correspondent that at least a hundred structures have encroached on the canal in Kazipara, Moulvipara, Sarkarpara, Madhyapara and Pointola areas.

Aside from other measures, these illegal structures have to be removed to revive past glory of the canal and to ensure sufficient width for passing of vessels, he also said.

Many locals said since large trucks are off limits to the town due to its narrow roads, revival of the canal would enable them to transport large loads of cargo, especially construction materials.

Contacted, Shafiqul Alam, chairman of Brahmanbaria Zila Parishad, said, "We will take immediate action to remove illegal establishments from both sides of the canal."

He also said necessary plans will be made so there is a permanent and sufficient water flow in the canal all year long.

Kishoreganj AL faces 14 'rebels' in UZ polls

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Election to 13 upazilas in Kishoreganj will be held in third phase on March 24. Forty-two candidates are running for chairman post in 12 upazilas of the district as Awami League (AL) nominated candidate Achhia Alam was elected as chairman unopposed in Mithamoin upazila parishad.

AL-backed aspirants are facing some 14 rebel and expelled BNP candidates in the polls, party sources said.

In Kishoreganj Sadar upazila, AL candidate Sakauddin Ahmad Rajon, former president of district BCL, is facing National Peoples' Party (NPP) candidate Md Sumon Miah and three independent candidates -- executive member of district BNP Kamrun Nahar Luna, Mamun Al Masud Khan and Cap (Retd) Salahuddin Ahmed.

In Karimganj, AL candidate is Nasirul Islam Khan Awlad also upazila AL convener, and NPP candidate is Md Anwarul Kabiria while two independent candidates are Swechhasebok League leader Amjad Hossain Khan Didar and former president of Karimganj upazila BNP Md Rafiqur Rahman.

In Bhairab, AL candidate Md Saidullah Miah, upazila AL president, is facing two rebels -- upazila AL's former secretary Abul Mansur and upazila Jubo League convener Oliul Islam.

In Itna, AL candidate Chowdhury Kamrul Hasan is incumbent upazila chairman while upazila AL's secretary advocate Md Khalilur Rahman is rebel candidate.

In Hossainpur, AL candidate Md Shahjahan Parvez is facing JP's Md Abdul Kadir Swapon and independent candidate Mohammad Sohel.

In Tarail, AL candidate Azizul Haque Bhuiyan Motahar is facing JP's Md Johirul Bhuiyan Shaheen and independent candidates Israt Uddin Ahmed Babul and Md Humayun Kabir Bhuiyan and AKM Zaman Samrat. Kabir and Samrat are AL supporters.

In Katiadi, AL candidate Tania Sultana Happy is facing Jaker Party's Shahiduzzaman and independent candidates Md Ali Akbar, central leader of Tanti League Md Altaf Uddin, Dr Mohammad Mustaqur Rahman and Md Anwar Anar.

In Nikli, AL candidate is Saiful Islam while independent candidates are Md Ruhul Quddus Bhuiyan and Nasiruzzaman Aslam.

In Astagram, AL candidate Shahidul Islam is facing rebels -- Mustaq Ahmed Kamol and Mohammad Moniruzzaman Bhuiyan. In Bajitpur, AL candidate Md Sarwar Alam is facing Jatiya Party's Mohammad Aminul Islam and upazila AL's joint-convenor Md Mobarak Hossain Master.

In Pakundia, AL candidate Rafiqul Islam Renu is facing JP's advocate Md Jahangir Alam Shawkat.

In Kuliarchar, AL candidate is Yeasir Miah and Jaker Party candidate is Md Saidur Rahman while Islami Oikyajote aspirant is Abul Kashem Fazlul Haque.

Meanwhile, BNP expelled its four leaders, including two female leaders for deciding to participate in upazila parishad elections in Kishoreganj violating the party decision.

They were expelled from all posts of the party and their primary membership was also cancelled on March 11, said Md Mazharul Islam, secretary of BNP Kishoreganj district unit.

The expelled leaders are Kamrun Nahar Luna, an executive member of district BNP who is in the race for chairman post from Kishoreganj sadar upazila; and Al Mamun, secretary of Jubo Dal Bhairab upazila unit; Abul Kashem Khan vice-president of BNP's Tarail upazila unit and Asma Akter, joint-organising secretary of District Mohila Dal who are running for vice-chairman posts from Bhairab, Tarail and Karimganj upazilas respectively.

Luna is the first female candidate for the upazila parishad chairman post.

Farming suffers due to lack of embankment

HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

Thousands of farmers at two villages in Nazirpur upazila are suffering badly for lack of an embankment surrounding their croplands.

Farmers in the affected two villages said the canals, flowing beside their croplands, see a rise in the water level just before harvesting the Boro paddy every year.

Due to constant loss, many farmers at Penakhali and Chatar villages in the upazila are losing their interest in Boro cultivation.

A number of growers said as the farmlands remain under water almost all the year round and they cannot grow other crops, but Boro only.

When the water level decreases

slightly during the winter, it creates a chance for local growers to cultivate Boro, their only crop.

"Lands here are very fertile as water hyacinths and other water plants produce natural fertiliser which helps us growing Boro paddy in great amounts," farmer Shahidul Islam of Penakhali village said.

"We fell very frustrated when we see a rise in water level just before the Boro harvest every year," he said, adding that sometimes we are compelled to harvest immature paddy.

"As there is no surrounding embankment, water enters our croplands easily," said Nazrul Islam, another farmer of the village.

"Though we often count losses in

Boro farming, we keep cultivating it as we do not have any alternative way of earning," farmer Idris Ali of Chatar village said, adding that they also face labourer crisis in the harvesting period as workers are not interested working in deep water.

Nazirpur Upazila Agriculture Officer Digbijoy Hazra said around 13,250 hectares of land in the upazila have been brought under Boro cultivation this year.

While talking to this correspondent, Jagannath Biswas, assistant engineer of Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADCO) in Pirojpur, said they were aware of the situation at the two villages and will take necessary steps to construct an embankment along the cropland soon.



Like this one in picture, most of the Boro fields at Penakhali and Chatar villages in Pirojpur's Nazirpur upazila remain under water round the year as water from canals enter there in absence of embankment.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN



Ecofish-Bangladesh organises a boat procession on the Meghna river in Chandpur yesterday as part of an awareness campaign during the ongoing two-month ban on catching jatka (hilsa less than 10 inches long), meant for helping protection and proper growth of the popular fish.

PHOTO: ALAM PALASH

Sunamganj AL leader stabbed dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A union level leader of Awami League (AL) was stabbed to death in Dholairpar area of Sunamganj Sadar upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased, Joynal Abedin, 40, son of Muslim Uddin of Islampur village in the upazila, was general secretary of AL's Jahangirnagar union unit.

Meanwhile, police detained four people from Dholairpar village for their alleged involvement in the killing and recovered the murder weapon.

The arrestees are Selim Mia, Shahin Shah, Sagor Mia and Robi.

Quoting the deceased's family members, police said Joynal went out of his house on Monday and did not return home on that night.

Villagers spotted Joynal's body lying in a field yesterday morning and informed the police, who recovered the body and sent it to Sunamganj Sadar Hospital for autopsy, Officer in Charge (OC) of Sadar Model Police Station Shahid Ullah said.

In primary interrogation, the arrestees confessed their involvement in the murder, the OC said, adding that the motive behind the killing was not clear yet.

POST-POLLS VIOLENCE IN JURI UZ Three bullet-hit among 30 injured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

As many as 30 people were injured after supporters of two vice chairman candidates clashed over results of Upazila Parishad election in Juri upazila of Moulvibazar on Monday night.

Among them, Shakil Ahmed, 20, Mannan Mia, 32, and Shamu Das, 23, are undergoing treatment with gunshot wounds at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital (SOMCH).

Police and locals said Monday's election was held peacefully in the upazila. But later that night the atmosphere heated up when independent candidate Rinku Das was officially declared winner in the vice chairman post, with 1,233 votes over his closest contender Jewel Ahmed.

Jewel's supporters soon brought out a procession to protest the results and marched towards the upazila nirbahi officer's office where supporters of the newly elected vice chairman attacked them, said witnesses.

While the two groups locked in clashes for nearly two hours, police fired rubber bullets and tear gas shells to bring the situation under control.

The three bullet-hit individuals were initially taken to Juri Upazila Health Complex. But considering the severity of their injuries, they were transferred to SOMCH, said Masum Parvez, a doctor at the health complex.

Abu Yusuf, assistant superintendent of police in Moulvibazar, said there were injuries on both sides. Ten of them were taken to different medical facilities in the area, while others were given first aid treatment.

Moulvibazar's Superintendent of Police Mohammad Shahjalal visited the scene and confirmed that three people sustained bullet injuries in the clash.

Police brought in reinforcements to maintain law and order in the area.