



Filling of a pond continues in Court Road area of Brahmanbaria town, defying the notices served by the Department of Environment and the district administration.

# Waterbodies disappearing in Brahmanbaria town

Three-fourths of over 200 ponds filled to build houses, business structures in last 35 years

MASUK HRIDOY, Brahmanbaria

Once known as a 'town of ponds', Brahmanbaria now hardly retained only one-fourth of its 200 natural water bodies.

Filling up of the natural water bodies started, especially after Brahmanbaria was upgraded into a district in 1984, for construction of residential buildings, markets, bus-truck terminals, and other commercial establishments but the environmental issues were grossly ignored, said environment activists.

"Targeting a pond, the syndicate men dump garbage in it and at one stage the water body loses its utility. Then they start filling it up with sand or mud in the dead of night. The practice has been going on in this town for the last 35 years," said Nasir Mia, a lawyer of Brahmanbaria Bar.

Once famous Ram Thakur Asram

Pukur, a large pond in the town's East Paikpara area, is now a part of history as a big market was constructed after filling it.

Scores of age-old ponds of different sizes have disappeared from the town due to unplanned urbanization and lack of monitoring by the authorities concerned.

Currently, an influential quarter is filling up of a pond in Court Road, a posh area of the town, defying the notices served by the Department of Environment and the district administration.

A month ago, a group of influential people led by Ali Ahsan Kawser, a councillor of ward No 5 under Brahmanbaria Municipality, filled up a pond in Modhyapara Border Bazar area. Afterwards, a mobile court fined its owner Tk 2 lakh and ordered him to remove the earth and sand from there, which was carried out within a couple of days.

According to the statistics of the

district's fisheries department, there were more than two hundred ponds in 22 mouzas of Brahmanbaria when it was a sub-divisional town but only 47 of the water bodies in the municipal area have survived till date.

Md Runaet Amin Reza, research officer of Brahmanbaria Department of Environment, said they filed 13 cases against pond filling and fined a number of pond owners in last eight years.

"Yet, pond filling can't be resisted as ruling party men at different times have supported the callous act to gain financial benefit.

"When we go to save a pond from fillers, they give threat to us. We work amid limitations like lack of magistracy power, vehicles and armed security personnel. Due to lengthy official process, it takes one week to 15 days to make a notice reach an illegal occupier. By the time, the offenders

can get their work done," he said.

If the trend goes on, the town's map will be without any pond in future, he said in tone of regret.

The town sees increase in waterlogging due to filling up of the water bodies, said Ashraful Imam Rana, convener of 'Committee for Protection of Town Ponds'.

Tanharul Islam, deputy assistant director of Brahmanbaria Fire Service, said, previously firefighters used water from adjacent ponds to douse fire but now they face problem to collect water during fire incidents.

Contacted, Brahmanbaria Deputy Commissioner Hayat-Ud-Dowllah Khan said, "The Department of Environment files cases when receive any information about pond filling. We also conduct mobile courts to thwart pond filling."

He also urged common people to come forward in this regard.

## ENCLAVES EXCHANGE

### 4th anniversary observed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

The residents of 36 former enclaves in Panchagarh have observed the fourth anniversary of the historic deal on the exchange of enclaves between Bangladesh and India, which ended the virtual statelessness of these people.

The celebration programmes including a procession, a discussion, and cultural events were held in the last two days.

On the midnight of July 31 in 2015, 51 Bangladeshi enclaves inside India and 111 Indian enclaves inside Bangladesh were attached to the respective countries.

With this, about 40,000 people living in the Indian enclaves got Bangladeshi identity, access to government services as citizens of this country, and eventually a chance of a better life. The 111 former Indian enclaves were located in four districts -- 36 in Panchagarh and the rest in Kurigram, Lalmonirhat and Nilphamari.

On the occasion, the former enclave people demanded declaration of July 31 as "Enclave Exchange Day" and enrolment of the teachers of the enclaves' educational institutions in the government's monthly pay order or MPO scheme.

They included their demands in a memorandum submitted Wednesday to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina through Panchagarh Deputy Commissioner Sabina Yasmin.

Earlier in the day, they gathered at Sher-e-Bangla Park in the district town, brought out a colourful procession and paraded different streets before ending it at the DC office.

On the afternoon, a discussion and a cultural function were held on Mofizar Rahman Degree College premises at Grati village (a former enclave village) in the sadar upazila. Later, the residents placed floral wreaths at Shaheed Minar on the college ground on the eve of the anniversary -- at 12:01am on Thursday -- and lit candles there.

## Newly-wed girl killed in Kishoreganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A newly married girl was killed allegedly by her husband over a family feud at Alinagar village in Astagram upazila of Kishoreganj on Wednesday.

The 18-year-old victim China Akter, was daughter of Akkas Mia of the village.

After the incident, China's husband Fayeze Mia, 24, who used to live at his in-laws' house since the marriage, fled the area to avoid police arrest.

Quoting the victim's family members, Officer in Charge of Astagram Police Station Mohammad Kamrul Islam Mollah said China was married to Fayeze, a day labourer and son of Samir Uddin of the village, on July 8.

The couple went to bed on July 30 but their door remained closed till the following noon.

Later, failing to find any response despite repeated knocks, family members entered the room by breaking open the door and found China's body on the bed, the OC said.

Being informed, police went to the spot, recovered the body and sent it to Kishoreganj General Hospital for autopsy.

Police suspect that the girl might have been killed by her husband as her body bore marks of injuries on the neck and right hand, the OC added.

Victim's father filed a case with Astagram Police Station accusing Fayeze the same night, he said, adding that they were conducting drives to arrest Fayeze.

## ATTACK ON BUSINESSMAN Half-day strike observed in Tangail Sadar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Businesses in Charabari market area of Tangail Sadar upazila yesterday kept their store shutters closed for half a day in protest at attack on a local trader on Wednesday.

The traders along with locals also formed a human chain in the same area around noon.

Speakers at the human chain demanded immediate arrest of Motiar Rahman Polu and his henchmen, who around noon on Wednesday attacked Mizanur Rahman, 35, a construction materials trader, in Belta area and injured him severely with sharp weapons.

During the time of the attack, Mizanur was going home on his motorbike after collecting payments from his clients.

Before leaving the scene, the criminals also snatched Mizanur's motorcycle and the cash.

Locals rushed him to Dhakil General Hospital, from where he was later sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital as his condition deteriorated.

Condemning the attack on the businessman, speakers at the human chain warned of launching a tougher agitation unless the perpetrators of the attack are arrested immediately.

Labu Miah, chairman of Dainna Union Parishad; Abdul Aziz, president of Charabari Market Association; Chan Miah, vice-president of the association; Shafiqul Islam, its general secretary; and Saiful Islam, joint secretary of the association; also spoke at the human chain among others.

## Two siblings electrocuted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Two siblings died from electrocution in Kaliganj upazila on Wednesday.

The deceased are, Mafizul Islam, 21, an Intermediate student at Chaparhat Degree College, and his younger brother Shakil Islam, 15, a Class IX student at Shialkhawa School and College, sons of Abdul Gafur and Sahera Begum of Nithok Thingirpar village.

Quoting the villagers, Chalbala Union Parishad (UIP) Chairman Mizanur Rahman said the two brothers were trying to connect a cable to an electricity pole nearby their house.

At one stage, Mafizul came in contact with a live electric wire and died instantly on the spot. Shakil also got electrocuted while trying to save his brother.



Fish farmers in Gaibandha, left, and Pathailkandi area of Tangail's Kalihati upazila, right, had set up nets around their ponds to contain the fish inside. But surging floodwaters washed away the fish, inflicting severe damage to the farmers.

PHOTO: STAR

## IMPACT OF FLOOD IN GAIBANDHA, TANGAIL

# Fisheries damage to exceed Tk 30cr

STAR COUNTRY DESK

The floods this year have inflicted a severe blow to fish farms in affected districts including Gaibandha and Tangail where partial damage estimation so far amounts to around Tk 30 crore.

According to fisheries department in Gaibandha, fish from as many as 6,290 ponds and hatcheries were washed away by the flood, causing Tk 26.84 crore worth of damage to farmers in six out of seven upazilas in the district.

The total number of affected farmers is no less than five thousand, as per an estimate by the department.

With water flowing a record 150 centimetres above danger mark in more than 400 villages of 49 unions, including two municipalities, the flood also damaged crops and dwellings belonging to thousands of inhabitants as well as infrastructures including roads and embankments.

Losing their crops and fisheries, a large number of the affected people took refuge at nearby shelters.

There were 6,290 ponds and hatcheries on 760 hectares of land in the six upazilas and an

estimated 2,060 tonnes of fish and around 1.11 crore fish fries from the fisheries were washed away by floodwaters, fisheries department officials said.

The department also estimated that Tk 2.06 crore worth of infrastructural damage has been sustained by the fisheries in the upazilas.

Budharam Das, a fish farmer in Gajaria union of Pulchhari upazila, said fish from his two ponds escaped into overflowing floodwater before he was able to take any steps to contain the fish inside the ponds.

The onrush of floodwater inundated the ponds so fast that the fish farmers did not even get any time to catch their fish. Although a few of the farmers set up nets around their ponds, the nets could not withhold against the strong current, he also said.

Anil Chandra Das from Bhasarpara village in the same upazila said all the fish he had been rearing in three ponds for the last six months were washed away by the flood.

Gaibandha Fisheries Officer Abud Daiyan recommended fish farmers to seek advice from fisheries

department on how to properly treat the flooded fish ponds before cultivate fish in those again.

He also assured that the government would provide necessary assistance to the affected fish farmers.

Fish farmers in Tangail's six upazilas -- Bhuapur, Kalihati, Sadar, Basail, Nagarpur and Dhanbari -- also incurred huge loss after the flood inundated their fisheries.

Fisheries department in Tangail in a primary estimation found that 240 fish farmers in the six upazilas sustained around Tk 4 crore worth of damage as the flood inundated 786 ponds belonging to them.

Bhuapur upazila saw the highest devastation, with 185 fish ponds, belonging to 55 farmers, washed away by floodwaters.

Many of the farmers said after losing their fish to the flood, they no longer have the capacity to repay the loans they took from banks and moneylenders.

Fish farm owner Shamsur Rahman from Solimabad in Nagarpur upazila said he borrowed Tk 1.5 lakh from a moneylender and invested it to rear fish in his pond on two bighas of land. But

the flood has taken that all away. "Now I'm devastated. I have no idea how I would recover the loss and repay the loan."

In mid-July, nearly 40 farmers under an association invested in a 42-bigha fish enclosure at a local waterbody in Dhokerkhal village of Dhanbari upazila.

All the farmers lost their investment after surging floodwaters damaged the enclosure and washed away around Tk 35 lakh worth of fish and fish fries from it, said several of the farmers.

Nurul Islam, fisheries officer in Tangail, said they were visiting affected areas to prepare a detailed list of fish farms affected by flood in Tangail.

During their visits, they have been providing advice to farmers regarding preparation of ponds for fish cultivation after the floodwater recedes.

There will also be post-flood rehabilitation programmes, under which the affected fish farmers will be provided with necessary assistance including the supply of fish fries, he added.

Our correspondents in Gaibandha and Tangail contributed to the story.



Holding a placard, Saiful Islam Shanti, a final year student of Marketing Department at Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University in Dinajpur, on July 21 started walking from Tetulia to Teknaf to create awareness against spread of rumour and question paper leaks. He reached Bogura yesterday. The photo was taken from Satmatha area in the town.

PHOTO: MOSTOFA SHABUI