

The 'not so modern' Habiganj hospital

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Habiganj

The word 'adhunik', meaning modern in English, is part of the formal Bangla name of the hospital -- Habiganj Adhunik Sadar Hospital.

But the ones visiting the hospital or living around its compound in Habiganj town think otherwise as every day they have to encounter foul odour emitting from a large area near its main entrance, littered with garbage.

This correspondent during a recent visit to the hospital witnessed unabated dumping of garbage in the area by nearly everyone -- hospital staffers, attendants of patients and even shopkeepers and residents from surrounding areas.

The environmental pollution had been going on for long, but no effective measures were taken despite numerous complaints to the authorities, alleged a number of concerned citizens.

Jony Ahmed Raju, district coordinator of BD Clean's Habiganj unit, quoting locals said since no one was cleaning the litterbin near the entrance of the hospital, their organisation cleaned it on August 30.

They will clean it again on September 20, he also said.

Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon's Habiganj unit General Secretary Tofazzal Sohel said not only hospital staffers and attendants of patients, but also residents of the area are using the site to dispose of garbage.

It is highly alarming that neither the

authorities of the district's main healthcare centre nor the municipality are taking any visible steps to stop this practice that is putting everyone's lives, including the patients of the hospital, at risk of contracting diseases, he added.

Monir Mia, a local residing near the hospital, said with the prevalence of dengue and other mosquito-borne diseases on the rise across the country, the authorities need to clean up the garbage bin at the hospital urgently.

Homemaker Yasmin Akhter, another resident of the area, said she and her eight-year-old daughter keep their noses plugged while passing the area every day to and from her daughter's school.

A patient's attendant, Mosabbir Ali from Chunarughat upazila, said the smell of the garbage outside the hospital building nauseated his son, who underwent treatment there for six days.

Contacted, Dr Rathindra Chandra Dev, superintendent of the hospital, claimed that it is the duty of Habiganj municipality to clean the litterbin every day, but they have not been doing their duty.

The patients of the hospital might contract other diseases if garbage remains scattered around the hospital complex, he also said.

Habiganj municipality Mayor Mizanur Rahman, however, refuted the allegation. He further claimed that the municipality cleaners collect garbage from the hospital five days a week.



The photo of the area littered with garbage near the main entrance of Habiganj Adhunik Sadar Hospital was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Pollution forces fishers to change profession

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Chattogram

Nironjon Das, a fisherman of Jele Para in Hathazari upazila, spent his life comfortably like his forefathers, by fishing for a living.

But until a few years ago, pollution in Madari canal has stripped him of his only source of income. The 56-year-old now pulls a rickshaw to feed his family of four.

The 20-kilometre-long canal where they used to fish had an abundance of aquatic life once upon a time. But now, the murky waters are devoid of any fish species owing to the release of effluents from a paper mill, 15 kilometres upstream.

Established in 2006, the Asian Paper Mills began operations in 2007. Over the years, its production increased and the water quality took a turn for the worse since 2011.

Das told The Daily Star that the number of fishes in the water have decreased gradually over the years.

"We had a happy life as we used to catch at least two to three kilograms of fish a day seven years back. Now the whole fishing community works as temporary day labourers."

About 300 people of 40 families in his village have become destitute as they could no longer live off the water bodies.

He said they witnessed caustic foam that is typically released from paper mills, in the canal waters twice a week over the years.

"The pollution not only snatched

away our source for income, but we are also suffering from various skin diseases."

Sudhir Das, a leader of the fishing community, said, "Although we reached out for help several times previously, no one was willing to help save the fishes in the water."

"There is a ban on fishing in Halda river since 2010. So, we can't fish there either."

"But now the waters are so bad that no fish can survive and we cannot even bathe in the filthy waters," he added.

Locals even formed a human chain in September this year to urge the authority to take steps to put an end to the pollution.

Amin Munna, organiser of the human chain, told The Daily Star over the phone that many farmlands along the canal have turned into wastelands due to the pollution. The canal is of no use now, he added.

Earlier in September 2017, the Department of Environment asked its Chattogram branch to take action against the polluting factories within a month.

An investigation team paid a visit to Chattogram Asian Paper Mills, but did not see any effluent being dumped by the factory touted to be a zero-discharge plant.

But even though there were no heavy industries in the neighbourhood, a stream and the Madari canal nearby were found heavily polluted by

industrial waste.

The team, led by its senior chemist Sayed Ahmed Kabir, in July 2018 found the water quality of the canal to be far below the standard level and identified Asian Paper Mill as the reason for the pollution.

The mill was finally ordered shut on August 19 by the DoE.

"We have thanked the authority for finally shutting down the paper mill. Steps should now be taken to restore the water body to its previous condition so we can return to fishing in the future," said Munna.

Professor Manzoorul Kibria, an eminent Halda researcher, told The Daily Star recently that the pollution from Asian Paper Mill has stripped the people in the area of their livelihood.

Shafiq Alam, chief engineer of Asian Paper Mills, who joined his post four years ago, said, "There have been issues with our effluent treatment plant in the last four years. I cannot comment on the situation before I joined though."

"We used to store the wastage from the plant in a pond like area inside our factory premises. There would be spillage and overflows from this area during heavy rainfall as well."

"Authorities have asked us to address these issues before we are permitted to resume operations. We have fixed all our problems and are awaiting approval from DoE now," Shafiq further said.

LAND DISPUTE

Man beaten dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

An elderly man was beaten to death allegedly by his neighbours over a land dispute in Islampur Bazar area under Rajnagar upazila of the district yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Abdus Sattar, 60.

Meanwhile, police yesterday detained four people for their alleged involvement in the murder.

Quoting locals, police said there had been a longstanding dispute between Sattar and one of his neighbours Saidur Mia, 45, over the ownership of a disputed land.

As a sequel, the duo locked in an altercation around 11:00am, Officer in Charge of Rajnagar Police Station Abul Hashem said.

At one stage, Saidur and his men beat Sattar mercilessly, leaving him dead on the spot.

On information, police went to the spot, recovered the body and sent it to Moulvibazar Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

DRIVE TO FREE OLD KHOWAI RIVER

30 illegal structures torn down

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Habiganj district administration during their second consecutive day of drives yesterday demolished 30 illegal structures on both banks of the Old Khowai river in Habiganj Sadar upazila.

Yesterday's drive, carried out from 10:00am till 5:00pm in Machulia area of Habiganj municipality, was led by Executive Magistrate Anisur Rahman Khan. A large contingent of police and officials of upazila administration assisted the drive.

On the first day of the drive, led by Deputy Revenue Collector Yasin Arafat Rana, tore down a couple of two-storey buildings and five semi-concrete buildings.

Yasin said they recovered around 200 decimals of land on the first day by demolishing the structures built illegally on the Old Khowai.

The drive would continue in other areas to save the river from fully from encroachers, he added.

Shakhawat Hossain Rubel, Habiganj upazila nirbahi officer, said influential people were behind the river's

encroachment, but the eviction drive is getting all necessary support from the administration.

Every single illegal structure will be taken down and they will not bow down to anyone, he also said.

Tofazzal Sohel, general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon's Habiganj unit, said they observed various programmes for the last 12 years, seeking action against the encroachers and the district administration has finally started the drive to free the river from encroachment.

The encroachers may reoccupy the recovered land unless the river area is demarcated immediately with permanent pillars, he observed.

Stern action would be taken if anyone rebuilds structures on the recovered land of the river, assured Yasin Arafat Rana, the deputy revenue collector.

Mahmudul Kabir Murad, deputy commissioner of Habiganj, said they would continue the drive to free a five-kilometre-long stretch of the Old Khowai around Habiganj town.



A partially demolished structure following yesterday's eviction drive by Habiganj district administration in Machulia area of Habiganj municipality.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

Woman held for killing stepson

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Police yesterday arrested a woman for her alleged involvement in killing her stepson in Morrelganj upazila the day before.

The arrestee, Ferdousi Begum, 25, was wife of Miraj Mollah of Badnibhanga village in the upazila.

Miraj got separated with his first wife and married Ferdousi when his son, slain Siam, 6, was only three-year-old.

Officer in Charge (OC) of Morrelganj Police Station KM Azizul Islam said after failing to trace his son on Monday, Miraj informed them about the matter.

On suspicion, when police questioned Ferdousi, she confessed that she strangled the minor boy to death.

Later, according to Ferdousi's confessional statement, police recovered Siam's body from the heap of garbage next to a toilet of her house yesterday morning and sent it to Bagerhat Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

Filing of a case is under process, the OC added.

BIRD KILLING IN RICE MILL YARD

DoE serves notice to mill owner, tenant fined

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

The Department of Environment (DoE) yesterday served notice to the owner of City Rice Mill and its adjacent chatal (yard for drying), where over a hundred birds of different species were poisoned to death on Saturday, to explain why the mill is running without valid document.

Earlier on Saturday night, a mobile court fined Tk 50,000 to Manik Miah, the tenant of the rice mill at Aponpara in Lalmonirhat's Kulaghat Road, for his involvement in killing the birds.

Manik, a resident of Mahendranagar village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, has been running City Rice Mill along with its chatal after renting it from owner Abul Kashem a few years ago.

Mihir Lal Sarder, assistant director of DoE in Rangpur, told this correspondent, "I visited City Rice Mill on Monday afternoon and found that it continued running without valid document for the last nine years."

"Notice has been served to mill owner Abul Kashem to explain why it is running without valid document. If no reply comes within seven days, DoE will fine the owner or seal off the rice mill," he said.

DoE did not file case against renter Manik Miah, who was responsible for killing the birds, as he was fined by a mobile court, the official added.



Some of the birds that fell dead after eating poison-mixed corns kept deliberately on the chatal (yard for drying) of City Rice Mill at Aponpara of Kulaghat Road in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila on Saturday.

PHOTO: STAR

sparrows, were poisoned to death by Manik Miah when these birds came to eat paddy on the chatal on Saturday morning.

Local people strongly protested the cruel act.

A mobile court led by Executive Magistrate TM Rahsin Kabir fined Manik Miah Tk 50 thousand in presence of police and locals, and the fine money was realised on the spot.

Contacted, City Rice Mill owner Abul Kashem declined to talk to journalists about the notice served by DoE.

Azizar Rahman, a local at Aponpara in Lalmonirhat town, said, "We were hurt to see the birds that had fallen dead due to poisoning. We demand that such bird killers be given exemplary punishment, not only fine."



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Memo No. 42.01.0000.014.07.022.19-419

Dated: 17/09/2019

Name & Address of the Procuring Entity Invitation for e-Tender

Invitation Reference No.	42.01.0000.014.07.022.19-414 Dated: 17/09/2019
Name of work	Operation & Maintenance of Internet for the Central Offices of BWDB in Dhaka City. (Tender ID No. 358162)
Invitation Reference No.	42.01.0000.014.07.022.19-415 Dated: 17/09/2019
Name of work	Operation & Maintenance of Internet for the BWDB Offices Under Eastern Region. (Tender ID No. 358212)
Invitation Reference No.	42.01.0000.014.07.022.19-416 Dated: 17/09/2019
Name of work	Operation & Maintenance of Internet for the BWDB Offices Under Western Region. (Tender ID No. 358240)

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