

## Ailing retired teacher 'thrown out of house by daughter'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Speakers at a human chain in Pirojpur town yesterday demanded justice for an ailing retired school teacher who they said was evicted from his house by his eldest daughter.

The human chain, formed around noon on Club Road, was participated by a number of concerned citizens of the town under the banner of 'Bibhinno Shreni-Peshar Nagorikbrindo, Pirojpur'.

Speaking at the human chain, Syeda Farhana Ferdous Moni, second daughter of Syed Nazrul Islam Kazi, 85, said her father is suffering from various diseases and lost his eyesight.

After his retirement from DRS Secondary School in Pirojpur Sadar upazila in 2001, his elder daughter Syeda Kaniz Ferdous Mukta, head teacher of a government primary school in the upazila, embezzled his lifetimes savings and drove him out of the house.

Kaniz also took possession of the house that belongs to Nazrul's wife Nurjahan Begum, a retired employee of the directorate of family planning, claimed Farhana.

After being evicted, her father had to live on alms in different parts of Pirojpur before Farhana brought him in her house.

Her elder sister also chased her out of the house when she went there to see her mother and demand her father's as well as her own rights on the property, Farhana also alleged.

Speakers at the event urged authorities concerned to take necessary steps in upholding rights of the elderly man and his younger daughter.

Among others, Monika Mondal, president of Mahila Parishad's Pirojpur district unit; Khalid Abu, general secretary of Udichi's Pirojpur district unit; and social activist Mainul Ahsan Munna also spoke.



Land grabbers construct buildings at Hetalia Badghat Bazar, below, and Gorur Badghat Bazar on the Bahalgachia canal, choking the natural waterbody flowing between Patuakhali municipality and Kalikapur union in Sadar upazila of the district. The photos were taken on December 20.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

# Once flowing waterbody at stake

Land grabbing leads Bahalgachia canal in Patuakhali to virtual death

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, PATUAKHALI

The 8-kilometre-long Bahalgachia canal, flowing between Patuakhali municipality and Kalikapur union in Sadar upazila, once served as a route for launches, cargo boats and trawlers but now it is unusable even for small country boats, thanks to the mindless encroachment for years.

Water Development Board (WDB) has recently identified 38 illegal establishments in Gorur Badghat Bazar area on the canal while several hundred establishments have been built on the canal lands, mostly in Gorur Badghat Bazar, Hetalia Badghat Bazar and Jaikathi Badghat Bazar areas.

There are four cross embankments on the canal, including one at Hetalia Badghat Bazar point through which Patuakhali-Kuakata road runs.

WDB built a one-gate sluice on each point, which is too insufficient to keep the flow smooth.

During a recent visit to the area, this correspondent found the in-laws of a Saudi expatriate constructing two buildings at Gorur Badghat on the south side of the canal.



Asked about the building construction on canal land, they claimed that they bought it around 15 years ago and it is recorded in their names.

At Hetalia Badghat Bazar, the main canal is now hardly 15-metre-wide, which was, according to elderly locals, around 300 metres some 25 years ago.

Many establishments including a mosque have been built, occupying the lands on both sides of the canal.

Locals have built over 200 establishments on both sides of the cross embankment, turning the spot into a big market, said Abul Hasan of Hetalia Bazar area.

"Around 30 years back, single-decker

launches, cargo boats and trawlers moved through the canal for plying Patuakhali-Mirzaganj, Patuakhali-Amtali and Patuakhali-Barguna river routes but now the canal is not usable even for small country boats," said Abdur Razzak of the same area.

Over one lakh people on both sides of the canal use its water for household purposes but the much narrowed flow has become too dirty, he added.

People built over 100 establishments including a few multi-storey buildings on lands on both sides of the canal at Jaikathi, said Md Ruhul Amin, a local.

The authorities concerned should take immediate steps to save the canal from grabbers considering interest of locals, said Sirajul Islam of Gorur Badghat area.

Md Hasanuzzaman, executive engineer of WDB, said, "We have already identified 38 illegal establishments in Gorur Badghat Bazar area, which will be removed soon. All the illegal structures on both sides of the canal will be demolished in phases."

Md Matiul Islam Chowdhury, deputy commissioner of Patuakhali, said, the district administration has taken a plan to conduct a drive soon to demolish illegal establishments on the canal.

## Tk 8.73 lakh fake stamps seized, 2 held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized fake judicial and revenue stamps worth about Tk 8.73 lakh from Fulshighat Bazar in Sadar upazila on Thursday night and arrested two men in this connection.

The arrestees are Saillen Chandra Roy alias Nadu, 55, son of late Suren Chandra Roy of Helencha village in Saghata upazila, and Khalequzzaman, 50, son of late Joynul Abedin Mandol of Islampur village in Sadar upazila.

On secret information, the elite force raided a shop at the bazar around 11:00pm and arrested the duo with the fake stamps.

The arrestees were later handed over to Sadar Police Station, said Munna Biswas, company commander (in-charge) of Rab-13 in Gaibandha.

Later, a case was filed in connection with the incident, said the Rab official.

## Nine burglars arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Police arrested nine alleged members of an inter-district burglary gang from Bagerhat early yesterday.

They also recovered 17 stolen mobile sets, a battery-run easy-bike, a rickshaw-van and a bicycle from their possession.

Superintendent of Police (SP) Pankaj Chandra Roy confirmed it at a press briefing in his office of the district town at noon.

The arrestees are Md Sahidul Maghi, 29, Nayim Hossain, 24, Badal Sheikh, 24, Rakibul Islam Babu, 19, Tufan Mollah, 22, Monirul Islam Manik, 28, Jewel Sheikh, 23, Suman Sheikh, 20, and Masud Rana Forkan, 23, of different areas in the district.

There are 20 active members of the gang and of them, three are now in jail, said the SP.

Police were raiding different areas to arrest other members of the gang, said the police official.

# Two govt depts trade blame

Questions arise on how the first floor of Dristinandan Government Primary building was constructed in 2015 even though the land was acquisitioned in 2011

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Two government departments have been commissioned the same piece of land that houses a primary school building at Sonarai Bazar in Domar upazila. However, one was assigned to develop it, while the other is going to knock it down.

With the primary education department's consent, the Dristinandan Government Primary School was restructured by the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) from a one-storey building to a two-storey in 2015-16 at a cost of Tk 33.5 lakh.

The one-storey building was situated on two decimals of land, while the school premises spans one acre of land. There is a playground and an old tin shed structure on the rest of the land where classes are also held.

However, that two-decimal piece of land was acquired by the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) in 2011 to widen the adjacent Nilphamari-Domar regional highway.

Kamini Kanta Roy, sub divisional engineer of Nilphamari RHD, said, "We have started work on

the 23-kilometer long Nilphamari-Domar road."

"To widen the road, we launched eviction drives in the first week of November, and the Dristinandan Government Primary School building will be demolished soon as it sits on acquisitioned land."

Abul Kalam Azad, Sonarai upazila chairman, said, "The primary education department and LGED are blaming each other, as questions now arise on how the first floor of the building was constructed, even though the land was acquisitioned."

The school has 550 students and 14 teachers and about 50 students get GPA-5 in the Primary Education Completion Examinations on average a year, according to the school's Had Teacher Shajneen Ara.

Two decimals of school land, where the building stands, was acquisitioned in August 2011 at a cost of Tk 9.07 lakh by RHD, she added.

The illegal construction took place when Golam Faruk, now retired, was the headmaster and Monjurul Huq was president of the school managing committee (SMC), she informed.

Golam Firoz, the current SMC president, said,

"Demolition of the school building cannot be averted. It will be difficult to continue education for a scarcity of classrooms as school activities will have to continue in the old tin-shed structure."

Both the primary education department and LGED are at fault here, he believes.

The education department thought the roads and highways department would change the road plans to save the school building, he added.

The then SMC president Monjurul Huq said, "LGED just wanted to spend the funds under the Primary Education Development Program III, which funded the renovation works."

District Primary Education Officer Osman Gani said, "It is mandatory for LGED to verify land documents before any construction but they didn't do and so they should be blamed."

Masudur Rahman, senior assistant engineer of Nilphamari LGED, said, "The school authority and education department officials will select site as per valid land documents and LGED will construct building accordingly. But they hid information about land acquisition and for this, they must bear responsibility."



Local Government Engineering Department constructed the first floor of Dristinandan Government Primary School Nilphamari's Domar upazila in 2015 though Roads and Highways Department acquisitioned the school land (market in red arrow) in 2011.

PHOTO: STAR



A large number of people block now inoperative Tilagaon railway station in Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar from 10:00am to 1:00pm yesterday demanding reopening of the station with arrangement of stoppage for trains on different routes to facilitate locals' journey. The agitation caused immense sufferings for passengers of two trains, one heading for Chattogram and the other for Akhaura, as they remained stranded for long. PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

# Land grabbers seek to drive Koras out of country

Sultana Kamal says after visiting affected village of the community

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Eminent rights activist Sultana Kamal yesterday said a section of influential people want to drive the Kora community out of the country, from their homes in Haljha village of Dinajpur's Biral upazila, in order to encroach on their land.

She made the remark at a press conference held at Dinajpur Press Club, following her visit to Haljha village.

Sultana Kamal, convener of National Advocacy Platform, led a team of rights activists from Dhaka to the village, where only a few remaining Kora families in the country still reside.

Before holding the press conference in Dinajpur, the members of the visiting team along with Sultana Kamal spent several hours with members of the Kora families.

While speaking at the press conference, Sultana said now there are only 22 Kora families living on 15 acres of land in the area where at least 300 of them used to live on around 52 acres of land.

The decline in the number of Kora population in the country is due to illegal occupation of their land by influential locals, she said, adding that during their visit to the village, they noticed that a brick wall has been



Sultana Kamal and her team of rights activists among a few members of the Kora community, during their visit to Haljha village of Dinajpur's Biral upazila yesterday.

built there in a bid to occupy more land belonging to the Koras.

The members of the Kora community are living in fear since March 6, when a number of them were hurt, while many of their houses were damaged in an attack, allegedly by the influential locals.

PHOTO: COLLECTED