



Recent photo of the Buri Teesta irrigation reservoir, in Dimla upazila of Nilphamari, after unknown individuals released water from it recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Criminals drain out Buri Teesta irrigation reservoir

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Boro rice fields on about 5.5 thousand acres in Dimla and Jaldhaka upazilas will suffer without water for irrigation as sluice gates of the Buri Teesta barrage were left open several days ago.

The 91 metre-long barrage, under an irrigation project of Water Development Board (WDB), regulates water in a reservoir that is spread out on 1.2 thousand acres of land in Dimla upazila. A network of canals -- some about 30 kilometres in length -- distributes irrigation water to croplands in Dimla and Jaldhaka upazilas, according to WDB office in Nilphamari.

Unidentified criminals deliberately opened the sluice gates of the barrage at the dead of night, speculated locals.

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The activities of the project had been put on hold in the last 10 years after the High Court (HC) issued a stay order on its operations following a writ petition filed over the WDB's attempt to lease out its reservoir to a fish farm.

The WDB recently moved to upgrade the facilities and resume the irrigation project

this Boro season after the HC lifted the stay order and annulled the lease agreement with the fish farm.

A section of locals, however, has been opposing the irrigation project, claiming that they would be adversely affected by the project as it has serious design flaws.

Abdul Hannan Prodhan, sub-divisional engineer of WDB's Nilphamari division, said the sluice gates of the barrage were opened by those who illegally built infrastructures or are continuing farming activities inside the project area.

According to a proposal, the Buri Teesta irrigation project will be upgraded at a cost of Tk 120 crore and real farmers in the project area would benefit greatly as irrigation cost would be one-tenth of that is spent on operating deep tube wells and shallow water pumps, he also said.

Meanwhile, locals opposing the irrigation project formed a committee that would

press the WDB backtrack on its decision.

Badal Mia Swapan, president of the committee and a resident of Pocharhat village, said, "The age-old project is flawed. It never succeeded in providing full-scale irrigation water, as beds of some of the branch canals are higher than that of the reservoir."

"Hence, the reservoir was leased out for fish farming in 2010. But now, a section of local WDB officials have misled the higher authorities."

Farmer Moshir Rahman, from Dimla Sadar union, said potatoes rotted in his four-bigha land earlier this year when water from the reservoir seeped out and destroyed winter crops on vast crop fields in the area.

WDB filed a case with Dimla Police Station, accusing unidentified individuals for unlawfully opening sluice gates of the barrage and releasing water from the reservoir.

2005 SERIES BOMB BLAST

17 JMB militants jailed

A CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A court here yesterday sentenced 17 militants of banned outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) to different terms in cases filed over series bomb blast in five different spots in Satkhira on August 17, 2005.

Satkhira Additional District and Session Judge Shariful Islam sentenced eight of them to 13 years imprisonment and nine others to different terms.

The court also acquitted one of the accused as charges brought against him could not be proved, while another had died in 2018, during the trial of the case, Public Prosecutor Advocate Abdus Samad said.

Besides, three of the convicts -- Fakhruddin Raji, Abul Khayer and Naimuddin -- were tried in absentia, the public prosecutor added.

On August 17 in 2005, JMB men carried out bomb attacks in the town's Shaheed Razzak Park, District Court yard, Women and Children's Court yard, bus terminal and Khulna Intersection as well as in 62 other districts across the country.

Satkhira police filed five separate cases in this connection the same year. Later in 2007, the then Officer in Charge (OC) of Satkhira Sadar Police Station Golam Mohammad filed another case in this connection.

The court, however, acquitted the 23 accused in the case filed by OC Golam Mohammad, the public prosecutor said.

Man gets life term for rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A Rajbari court yesterday sentenced a man to life term imprisonment for raping a girl of a local orphanage and sexual harassing two other girls of the institution.

The convict, Rabiul Islam, 31, a resident of Madhupur village in Baliakandi upazila, was a teacher at Parijat Orphanage, Advocate Anup Kumar Das said.

Rajbari Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal Judge Sharmin Nigar also fined the convict Tk 30,000. In default, he is to suffer nine months more in jail.

According to the case statement, Rabiul raped a four-grader girl of the orphanage from September 2018 till January 2019.

He also sexually harassed two other girls in the bathroom of the orphanage. The incident came to light after one of the victims disclosed the matter to her relatives.

Later, Faruk Ahamad, vice-chairman of the orphanage, filed a case with Baliakandi Police Station against Rabiul.

Woman killed in wall collapse

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

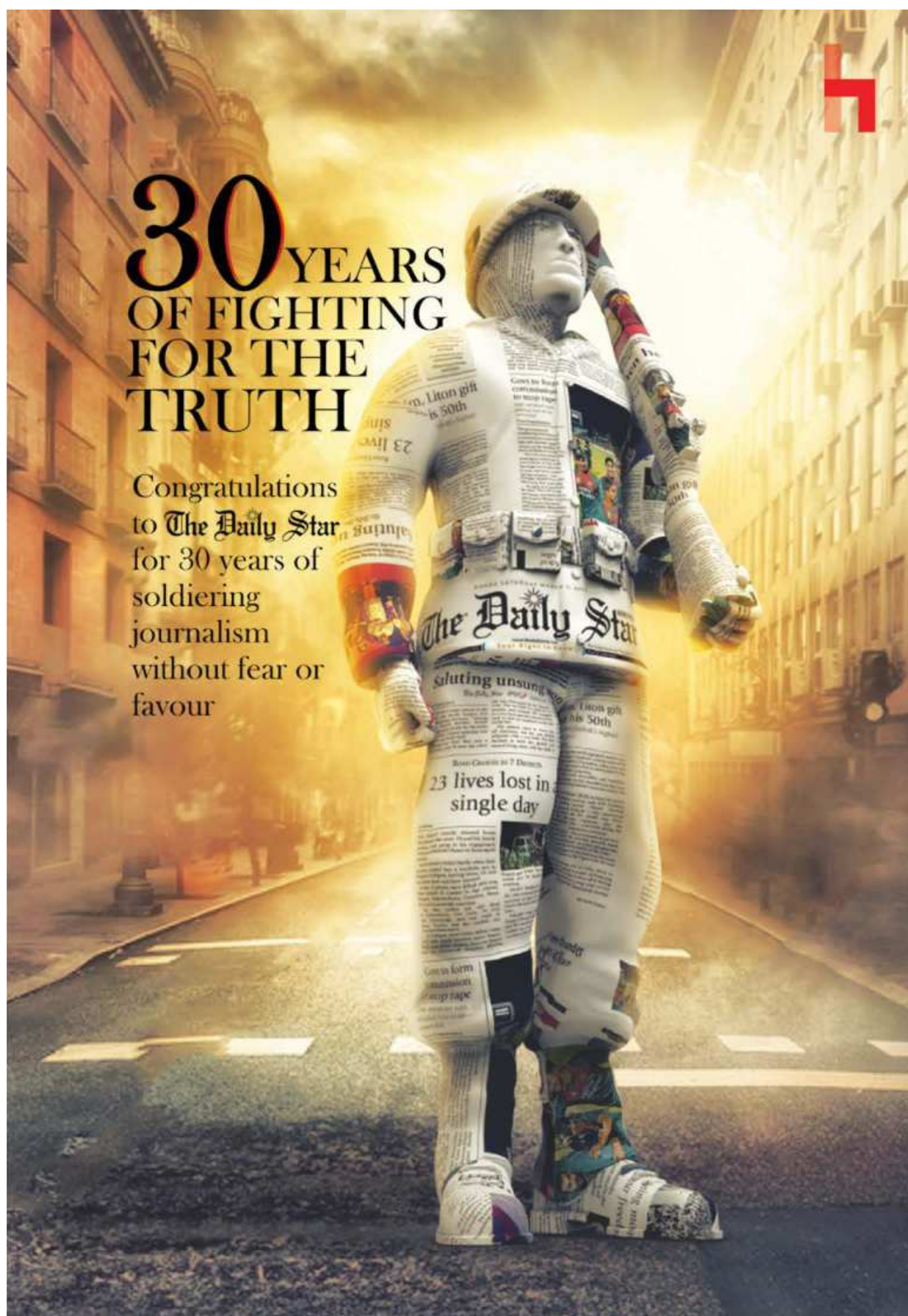
A housewife died when a wall of a clay-made house collapsed on her in Birganj upazila yesterday.

The deceased, Rahima Begum, 46, was wife of Mojibar Rahman of Boro Bottola village in the upazila.

Victim's son Abdur Rahim said some labourers were demolishing their mud-house to build a new concrete building.

The incident occurred when a wall of the old house collapsed on Rahima while she was sitting beside the wall at 1:00pm.

Family members rescued Rahima and took her to Birganj Upazila Health Complex, where the doctors declared her dead.



Labourers collecting topsoil from a farmland for making bricks at different nearby brickfields in Jashore's Chaugachha upazila.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Farmlands losing fertile topsoil to brick kilns in Jashore

Violating government rule at least 18 brick kilns running operations in Chaugachha upazila

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

The topsoil in vast areas of farmlands in Chaugachha upazila of Jashore district is being used for manufacturing bricks, leaving a harmful impact on agriculture and the environment.

Topsoil is the upper, outermost layer of soil, usually the top 5-10 inches (13-25 cm). It has the highest concentration of organic matter and microorganisms and is where most of the Earth's biological soil activity occurs.

Around 18 brick kilns have been set up in farmlands in the upazila, violating the government rule, and they all use the topsoil of the farmlands to make bricks.

In all these brickfields, hundreds of trucks and tractors are seen collecting the soil from arable land in the upazila.

Apart from this, wood is being burnt in some kilns in violation of the

law of the Ministry of Environment. Although the upazila administration has been conducting drives through mobile courts and imposing fines to the truckers for carrying soil and local sand to the brickfields but the extraction of topsoil is going on unabatedly.

Reflecting on the issue, Abdullah, a local fruit grower, said that as a result of cutting off the topsoil 5 percent of organic matter in the soil, which is essential for crop production, is becoming absent.

If this situation continues, the cultivable land will become barren land, he said.

Aminur Rahman, a farmer from Andarkota village, said the water flow was disrupted during the monsoon season as well as artificial water logging was created because of the soil extraction.

Upazila Deputy Assistant Plant Protection Officer Sheikh Shahidul Islam said, it takes several decades for

topsoil to form to a depth of 6 to 8 inches.

This level also contains most of the organic matter and humus. Most of the parasites also live in this level, which also helps plants process food.

As a result, if this level of soil is cut off, the soil becomes lifeless, he observed.

He urged the authorities concerned to take immediate steps to stop the topsoil extraction.

Roich Uddin, upazila agriculture officer, said the nature of cultivable land is changing because of topsoil extraction.

Beneficial microorganisms, including earthworms in the first layer of the soil (pauciel), are becoming extinct.

As a result, if the topsoil of the soil is cut off in this way, at some point of time, there may be a deficit in food production at the national level, he observed.