



As the Dhalai River is drying up at the onset of winter, the white stone tourism hub under Sylhet's Companiganj upazila is starting to find itself in trouble. Although boaters are trying their best to navigate through the shallow waters, travel time has still increased by a good threefold, which is adding to the costs of both tourists and boat owners. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

MUNSHIGANJ RIVERS

Top grabber let
OFF THE HOOK

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Two years after labelling a shipping company as the district's top river grabber, Munshiganj district administration has taken a U-turn on that revelation.

On May 6, 2019, the administration declared that Three Angle Marine Ltd was responsible for grabbing parts of Meghna and Fuldi rivers in Munshiganj's Gazaria upazila.

But now, the same administration is saying that the company has neither grabbed rivers nor filled up any canal, but is only responsible for grabbing a little bit of farmland.

Such backtracking of the government body has drawn widespread criticism from citizens and environmentalists, who labelled this a strategy to protect the company's interest.

In a circular published in 2019, the district administration said the company occupied 4.31 acres of low-lying lands and canals and almost one acre along Fuldi and Meghna in Nayanagar Mouza, drawing media attention.

Following news reports of various media outlets, National River Conservation Commission (NRCC) directed the administration to investigate the matter.

Later in September last year, the administration asked Gazaria UNO Ziaul Islam Chowdhury to start the investigation. Across September and



An aerial view of a shipbuilding yard built by grabbing parts of the Meghna and the Fuldi rivers in Munshiganj's Gajaria upazila.

FILE PHOTO

October, a probe body led by the UNO conducted the inquiry.

The report was submitted to the office of the district's deputy commissioner (DC). Subsequently on October 20, DC Kazi Nahid Rasul forwarded the report to NRCC.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the probe report, which said the information stated in the 2019 circular regarding river-grabbing by the shipping company was "untrue".

Though the company has illegally occupied around 34 acres of land to set up its factory, it was not involved in river

grabbing, the probe report said. The probe body talked to several villagers during the investigation.

However, talking to The Daily Star, locals said the company has occupied around 60 acres of land belonging to around 120 farmers, and grabbed a portion of Meghna and Fuldi rivers.

Besides, the company has also filled up two canals, Kumira and Borocharal, they said, adding that ever since its construction work began at the upazila's Nayanagar in 2010, it has been continuously gabbing riverbanks.

Meanwhile, villagers have claimed

that the probe report is riddled with irregularities.

Mir Md Ferdous, a resident of Nayanagar village, who filed a petition with the High Court in 2020, seeking government measures to end the river grabbing, was one of the locals who was interviewed by the probe committee.

In the report, the probe body said it asked Ferdous to place his written statement before it, but Ferdous did not do so.

However, when contacted, Ferdous denied the claim and said, "I had given a written statement before the High Court when I filed the petition. I requested the probe body to attach that statement. But it did not do it."

Another villager, Akhter Hossain, said although he talked with the UNO on September 14, when he tried to place his written statement several times later on, the UNO did not receive it.

Gazaria union parishad chair Md Abu Taleb Bhuiyan, who also faced the probe body, said, "The probe report is faulty. We want impartial investigation."

Gazaria upazila parishad chairman Amirul Islam has alleged that the company has influenced the administration with "underhanded dealings".

Contacted, Gazaria UNO Ziaul Islam Chowdhury said the investigation was done following the guidelines. "We have found that neither any river nor canal has been grabbed," he said.

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When waste
piles up

Khulna city marred by uncollected garbage

DIPANKAR ROY

Almost 400 tonnes of waste remain uncollected in Khulna City Corporation (KCC) streets and drains every day, causing health risk and environmental hazards for city's 1.7 million dwellers.

Everyday these areas generate approximately 1,200 to 1,250 tonnes of solid waste including 4.5 tonnes of clinical waste, according to KCC.

Lack of carrying capacity, negligence of authorities concerned, illegal dumping of waste and reluctance of putting garbage inside designated dumpsters are the main causes, according to city dwellers.

This correspondent visited at least eight points, including Nirala Mor, PTI Mor, Gallamari bridge area, KDA avenue, Boyra Mor, Notun Bazar Mor and Notun Rasta area last week, and saw trash piled up in all of them.

In some places, wastes were scattered across portions of the road and nearby areas — emitting a horrible stench. Pedestrians and commuters were seen passing the spot after covering their noses. Many were forced to use alternative roads.

Abdur Rob, a resident of Bastuhara of ward- 9, said locals throw trash on Bastuhara Link Road as there is no waste bin for around half a kilometre.

"Around 50 shopkeepers of Bastuhara Kitchen Markets throw garbage and waste in nearby drains and roads," he added.

"KCC built the kitchen market on April, 2012.



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

There are 74 shops including 40 vegetables, 14 groceries, 10 fish, five chicken and meat shops. We do not have any designated area for disposing our trash," said Imamul Azam Mashuk, a resident of Mujgunni area.

Like him, many complained about the stench and alleged that the city corporation's workers don't collect garbage regularly.

Md Abdul Ahad, principal of Khulna Medical College, said waterborne diseases like diarrhoea, dysentery, jaundice and skin diseases are spreading after the uncollected waste mixes with rainwater and surface water.

"Open dumpsters can lead to respiratory diseases," he said.

Contacted, Md Abdul Aziz, chief conservancy officer of KCC, said the city corporation now collects around 800 tonnes of solid waste and dumps it in an open field in Rajbandho area, eight kilometres away from the city.

The rest 400-450 tonnes don't even reach the dumping ground, due to lack of logistical support and manpower, he said.

"We collect 95 percent of waste from selected areas or secondary transfer stations twice a day, however, almost all uncollected wastes go to drains or wet land," he added.

"In addition, 710 employees and cleaners, including 198 permanent ones, are working to remove waste from 31 wards of Khulna city," said the chief conservancy officer.

Besides, they will initiate a waste management project next year to mitigate the crisis, he added. City dwellers must practice putting their garbage inside bins, he further added.

ROAD TRANSPORT NETWORK

Tk 2,490.97cr project approved for Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The government has taken a Tk 2,490.97 crore project to develop Chattogram's road transport network and solve the port city's traffic congestion.

Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) yesterday approved the project, the biggest for the Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) in recent times.

CCC will implement the project between March 2022 and December 2024.

Under the project, the government will construct 600 metres of overpasses on Airport Road, 38 foot-over-bridges of 1,520 metres, 14 bridges of 224 metres, 22 culverts of 87 metres, 10 roundabouts and develop different city roads with a total length of 769 kilometres, according to the project document.

The project also includes the purchase of a jeep and 15 pieces of construction equipment for the CCC.

The project document also said the port city's transportation network needs to be developed since goods-laden vehicles from the port use the city roads to reach different destinations of the country.

Feasibility study of the project was done by Centre for Innovation Studies.

At a press briefing following the Ecneec meeting, Shamsul Alam, state minister for planning, said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina directed the new CCC Mayor Rejaul Karim to ensure quality and timely completion of the project at the meeting.

The PM has also instructed the CCC to develop its own fund for maintenance and urged to increase earnings for funding such projects in future.



While installing a deep tube-well at Khulna's Batiaghata area, locals discovered a natural gas source. Not to let it get to waste, they got down to trying to harness it for everyday use. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

GRABBING GOVT LAND

ACC sues 'Golden Monir'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday filed another case against Monir Hossain alias "Golden Monir" and eight others, including Rajuk officials, for their alleged attempt to grab government land.

ACC Deputy Director Md Shafiullah filed the case with the commission's integrated district office of Dhaka.

The other accused are Rajuk's office assistant Parvej Chowdhury, retired assistant director Nasir Uddin Sharif, deputy director Didarul Alam, office assistant Anwar Hossain, accounts assistant SM Touhidul Islam and work supervisor Alauddin Sarkar; as well as two civilians, Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Nasir Uddin Khan. According to the case statement, the accused, in collaboration, stole documents from Rajuk between December 2017 and October 2019.