



A major part of this Rakhine burial ground in Kuakata's Latachalee area remains encroached by local influentials in the name of tourism expansion. Not just this one, many such lands belonging to the indigenous community in Kuakata and Barguna have suffered the same fate.

PHOTO: STAR

# Rakhines cast aside for tourism conquest

Authorities turn a blind eye to indigenous communities' protests

ASIFUR RAHMAN and SOHRAB HOSSAIN,  
Back from Kuakata

Kuakata, the country's second largest sea beach, is being turned into a tourist destination without a structured plan, kicking out the native Rakhine population in the process.

Since December, in several visits to Patuakhali's Kuakata, The Daily Star found that influential people are building different structures, grabbing the indigenous population's living space, temples and even burial grounds.

Rakhines have lost 70 percent of their burial grounds and 50 percent of temples in the past three decades, according to a non-government organisation's survey.

Locals said it was the result of

**According to the Integrated Community Development Project, only 22 burial grounds remained intact in 39 Rakhine villages in Patuakhali and Barguna. The rest are either grabbed or encroached.**

administration's failure as they didn't consider the Rakhine people in the planning process.

Kuakata was announced as a tourist spot in 1998, according to the Kuakata municipality. The authorities said the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) approved a master plan in 2013, but they couldn't start its implementation till now.

"We couldn't start the implementation as we're yet to form a Kuakata Development Authority like Cox's Bazar," said Harun Or Rashid, executive engineer of the Public Works



Department (PWD) of Patuakhali. The Housing and Public Works Ministry formed a five-member Patuakhali Development Authority in 2011. The following year, PMO instructed the district commissioner (DC) saying, permission from the DC's office is a must to build structures, sell or buy land in Kuakata municipality, Latachalee, Kawar Char, Gangamati and Char Chaplee villages.

The ministry issued another gazette in 2016, forming a nine-member committee headed by the divisional commissioner of Barishal. It said this committee will approve all the establishments and land related issues in those areas.

"As many as eight buildings in Kuakata took approval from this committee till 2019," said Md Anwar Hossain, mayor of Kuakata municipality, recently.

The Daily Star found hundreds of newly built constructions in the

municipality area and at least 10 under construction buildings.

According to locals, there are at least 123 hotels, 3,000 business establishments and over 3,000 residences built since 2010.

Last February, Luma Rakhine, a rights activist, complained to the DC that an influential group is building establishments by grabbing a portion of Rakhine land in the Keranipara area.

The DC directed Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Abu Hasnat Mohammad Shahidul Haque to investigate.

Contacted, the UNO said he asked for all the documents from both the parties. "After checking the documents, we will move forward," he said.

The UNO said the same group made a "Coffee House" by grabbing a portion of sea beach, which was government property. "We will evict the establishment soon," he said.

This newspaper visited six Rakhine villages including Kuakata's Kalapara

and Keranipara, Latachalee union's Misreepara, Mithaganj Union's Tulatalipara and Madhupara, Tiakhali union's Choyanipara and Choyapara recently and found several such allegations.

The Rakhine burial ground in Kalapara's Nachnapara area, was trashed with garbage. The front portion of the land was blocked by some tin-shed shops and a madrasa.

"Once we had over 30-decimal land here which has now become only five decimals. We can't follow the proper rituals in such a small place," said Koa Koa Moug, a member of the Rakhine community. He said by dumping the garbage here, some are violating the sanctity of the place.

The Daily Star talked to two shopkeepers Idris Mia and Chand Miya, and Muhtamim of the madrasa Mawlana Al Amin. They claimed that the place is not owned by the Rakhine.

"It's a khas land," claimed Al Amin. When asked if they have any permission from the government, he said, "No, there's no practice of such a permission to build madrasa."

According to the Integrated Community Development Project (ICDP), working for land, education and cultural rights of the Rakhines since 2007, only 22 burial grounds remained intact in 39 Rakhine villages in Patuakhali and Barguna. The rest are either grabbed or encroached.

At least a dozen villages do not have any burial ground at all. Only 20 of the 39 Rakhine villages have their temples while the rest 19 villages lost theirs.

The Misreepara Buddhist temple authority rented out a portion of land for shops about 20 years ago.

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## The road of suffering

Battered clay road causes public woes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

The only road connecting Chulabar Bazar from Sagardighi Rupali Hall intersection in Ghatail, Tangail has become dilapidated, causing immense suffering to locals.

The 6-kilometre clay road becomes unusable even after moderate rain with the authorities concerned taking no action to ease the public woes.

Hundreds of families living at Jalalpur, Pagariapara, Guaripara, Chulabor and Malirchala villages in Sagardighi union have no alternative to the earthen road plied by battery-run auto-rickshaw, rickshaw-van and horse cart.

Presently, no vehicles can move through the road as it became too muddy to use.

Locals said if they want to urgently take a patient to a hospital in Tangail town or Ghatail



upazila headquarters, they need to walk all the way. In this case, there's a possibility of the patient dying before reaching the destination.

Farmers also face difficulties to transport crops to Sagardighi market.

The battered road has brought a lot of sufferings to students as well. Liton Sarkar, a school student from Sagardighi, said they can't attend school on time as the large section of the road remains impassable.

Expressing anger over the problem, Shafiqul Islam Joy from the same area, said they want the authorities concerned to pave the road to minimise the suffering.

Contacted, Waliur Rahman, upazila engineer of Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) in Ghatail, said a project proposal will be sent to the higher authorities in this regard.

## Brood fish release sample eggs in Halda



STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Brood fish in the Halda have released sample eggs – indicating full spawning – since Saturday night at various points of the river.

Egg collectors got 200-500 grammes of eggs on average since Saturday night from the river.

Ashu Barua from Madunaghat area, a seasoned egg collector, told The Daily Star that they started coming across the eggs since Saturday night and hope to see full spawning soon.

Professor Manzoorul Kibria, an eminent Halda researcher, told The Daily Star that these sample eggs are laid by brood fish in preparation for a full spawning.

## 3 of family die as tractor hits bikes in Rajshahi

Woman dead, son hurt in Dhaka road crash

STAR REPORT

Akter Hossain from Niamatpur upazila in Naogaon was taking his wife and four-year-old daughter to Rajshahi for their treatment yesterday.

But fate had something else altogether in store for them as they fell victim to a fatal road accident on their way through Rajshahi-Naogaon highway.

Akter, a deed writer, perished along with his wife Bithi Khatun (33) and daughter Moriam Jannat.

The accident occurred at Nawhata in Paba upazila, Rajshahi at 10:30am when a mud-laden tractor rammed two motorcycles – Akter's and another Abdul Mannan's – while taking a turn from the opposite direction, said police and eyewitnesses.

Mannan, who was going to attend a marriage ceremony in Naogaon, also lost his life, said police.

The tractor ran over Mannan first and hit Akter's motorcycle while trying to flee

the scene.

Akter's daughter and Mannan died on the spot and Bithi was declared dead when she was taken to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

At 4:00pm, Akter was announced dead while he was undergoing treatment at RMCH.

Police seized the tractor, but could not arrest anyone.

Meanwhile, a woman died and her 16-year-old son suffered injuries after a truck hit them in Dhaka's Turag yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Ambia Begum (48), wife of Mozammel Haque from Chandpur.

The accident occurred around 6:30am at Kamarpara when Ambia, her husband and two sons were walking to a nearby bus stoppage.

"We were walking along the road to catch a bus to go to our village home. Suddenly, a truck hit my mother

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Holding candles and incense sticks, children pray at Nandankanan Bouddha Bihar in Chattogram on the occasion of Buddha Purnima. The biggest religious festival of the Buddhist community was celebrated across the country yesterday amid festivities after two years of Covid-induced restrictions. Buddha Purnima marks the birth, enlightenment and death of Gautama Buddha.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## 'Unite against Farakka barrage'

46th Farakka Long March Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The 46th Farakka Long March Day Celebration Committee in Rajshahi yesterday called upon people to unite to demand demolition of Farakka barrage and asking India to compensate for the damages the barrage makes every year.

Addressing a press conference in the city, the committee convener Mahub Siddiqui said Bangladesh is losing Tk 5,000 crore a year due to water retrieval by India through the Farakka barrage.

Reading out a statement, he said some 20 million people in northern

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