

Grabbing canal for farming fish
10 dams built on Patuakhali waterbody to set up enclosures

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Some influential locals have reportedly built dams in at least 10 places of the 2.5 km Char Immersion Government Canal in Patuakhali's Rangabali upazila for farming fish.

A Patuakhali court recently directed Rangabali Police Station Officer-in-Charge Nurul Islam Majumdar to investigate and take action against the encroachers, as the canal's water flow has been disrupted.

Galachipa Senior Judicial Magistrate Md Mamunur Rahman passed the order, after a report on this matter was published in a newspaper on September 1. The court ordered that the probe report be submitted by October 13, said court sources.

The court also directed the OC to submit the names and identities of those involved in this activity in the probe report.

OC Nurul, however, said, "I didn't get such instruction from the court. I'll take necessary steps after that."

Due to encroachment, the normal flow of water has now been disrupted, said locals.

Local influentials have been cultivating fish for years by building dams, they added.

Farmer Kalam Chowkidar said when it rains, houses and arable land get submerged.

Another farmer Masum said they do not get enough water for irrigation as fish cultivators do not allow them to use the water.

Seeking anonymity, locals also said influentials, led by one Monir Howladar, are occupying the canal and building enclosures.

Contacted, Monir denied the allegations.

This correspondent visited the areas and tried to talk to workers at the enclosures, but everyone refused to talk.

Mamun Hossain, deputy assistant agricultural officer of Rangabali, said, "At least 10 dams obstruct the normal flow of water."

Rangabali assistant commissioner (land) Salek Muhid said, "We will take necessary steps in this regard."



Even with the rainfall over the last few days, dust engulfed the Agargaon area, owing to the development work of a mega project. Commuters were seen covering their faces and squinting their eyes while using the road yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

PATROKHOLA IN MOULVIBAZAR
A cemetery for all

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

If one visits Patrokhola Tea Garden in Moulvibazar's Kamalganj upazila, one will come across a serene cemetery.

Visitors would be surprised to read the names of the tombstones there. The one underneath a tree says Amina Begum, while the one next to it reads Mohon Das and another one to the right reads Philiman Biswas.

In death, religious harmony is found alive at the cemetery.

Here, the bodies of Muslims, Hindus and Christians are buried side by side, with no visible divisions.

The cemetery is surrounded by a mosque, a temple and a church. There is also a large playground in the distance where waz mahfils, kirtans and church ceremonies are held, exemplifying its non-

communal side. Such events are attended by priests of all religions.

According to elderly locals in the area, this century-old cemetery -- on a 4.94-acre or 15-bigha land -- was built by people of all religions in

The bodies of my father, uncle, my Christian friend and my Muslim neighbour all rest peacefully next to each other in their final beds. Gourab Urang, a local

1875, right when the tea garden was established.

Parul Corraya (65), union parishad member of Patrokhola tea garden, said, "Initially, only Hindus and Christians were buried here.

After independence, it was decided that Muslims too, could be buried here. There is no dividing wall in the cemetery."

Ashabul Islam Shaon, a resident of the area and local journalist, said funerals of different religions are held here at the same time. "People are invited to attend the programmes regardless of their beliefs."

Another local Pradip Paul said Muslims attending their funerals and vice versa have become a tradition in the area. "Here, we all support each other," he said.

Resident Gourab Urang echoed him. "The bodies of my father, uncle, my Christian friend and my Muslim neighbour all rest peacefully next to each other in their final beds."

Locals agreed that the cemetery had played a vital role in strengthening relations between

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Using EVMs in 150 constituencies uncertain: CEC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal yesterday said it is still uncertain that they will be able to use Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) in 150 constituencies during the upcoming general elections.

"We have taken a decision of using EVMs at maximum 150 parliamentary seats. But so far, that is uncertain," Habibur told reporters at his EC office after meeting a delegation of Election Monitoring Forum.

The Election Commission in late September sent a development project proposal (DPP) to the planning commission for a Tk 8,711 crore project to purchase two lakh EVMs and their management.

EC proposed to buy two lakh EVMs to facilitate using of such machines at 150 parliamentary seats. The EC currently has 1.5 lakh EVMs that can be used in 70-80 constituencies at one go in the next polls.

"Using EVMs at 150 seats will depend on whether the government approves the project. If the government feels that financial involvement of this project is not correct, they might not allow it," said Awal.

He said if there is no real competition in the election, then any kind discussion about the use of EVMs or ballot will be pointless.

He also said foreign diplomats did not try to influence them over any election issues.

Age limit for hajj pilgrims may be lifted next year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The age limit for hajj pilgrims may be lifted next year, paving the way for people above 65 years to attend the once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage.

State Minister for Religious Affairs Md Faridul Haque Khan came up with the announcement yesterday.

"We hope that this year's hajj will be in full scale and we will get the full ratio of pilgrims as per quota," he told reporters at a meeting of the newly-elected committee of the Religious Reporters Forum (RRF), led by its president Ubaidullah Badol and general secretary Kamruzzaman Bablu.

The junior minister also said, "Unofficial talks have been held with the Saudi government, and the issue of age restrictions may not exist next time."

Earlier, the Saudi government allowed people to perform hajj who were fully vaccinated and aged below 65 years.

This year, around 60,256 Bangladeshis performed hajj in July.

In 2019, around 1.27 lakh Bangladeshis were allowed to perform hajj. However, due to the global pandemic, the largest annual Muslim congregation was held on a limited scale in the last two years.

Rape accused held in Chattogram

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-7) yesterday arrested a man on charge of raping two women of a family and realising money through blackmailing them in Lohagara upazila of Chattogram.

The arrestee is Jalal Uddin (32).

Jalal and his friend Md Kaisar (34) raped the women and filmed the incident to blackmail them on September 25, said Nurul Absar, senior assistant director of Rab-7. They also realised Tk 8,500 from the victims.

Kaisar was arrested earlier by police on September 30 after the victims filed a case with Lohagara Police Station.

Advertisement for Dewbn Ltd. (ডকইয়ার্ড এন্ড ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ওয়ার্কস লিমিটেড) featuring a table of services and contact information.

Advertisement for the Bangladesh Government Procurement Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) listing various tender opportunities.

Zero child marriage by 2040

Says state minister for women and children affairs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Fazilatun Nessa Indira yesterday declared that the government is determined to reduce child marriage to zero by 2040 and urged everyone to work together with the government in this regard.

"Child marriage increased during the pandemic and then decreased again. If we are willing to stop child marriage, we can surely prevent it," she said.

She made the comments at a discussion meeting, prize distribution and cultural programme at Bangladesh Shishu Academy auditorium, jointly organised by National Girl Child Advocacy Forum and Bangladesh Shishu Academy marking National Girl Child Day 2022.

Bangladesh Shishu Academy Chairperson Lucky Enam said, "Girl Child Day should not be limited to a single day's celebration. We should be aware of the rights of our girl children

throughout the year," she added.

"The current government has also taken various positive initiatives to ensure the rights and opportunities of girl children. However, many other challenges remain," said National Girl Child Advocacy Forum Secretary Nasima Akhter Jolly.

Department of Women Affairs Director General Farida Parvin said her department has been working on formulating necessary laws, policies and action plan to ensure the education, nutrition and security of girl children.

"Those who want to leave half of the population behind, aim to leave the whole nation behind. We must keep a watch on them," said Bangladesh Shishu Academy Director General Shariful.

Ministry Secretary Md Hasanuzzaman Kollo, National Girl Child Forum Assistant Secretary Rabeya Begum, Samiha Jahan Sarah of Room to Read, and Farhana Khatun of Good Neighbours spoke at the event, among others.

2 dead, 3 hurt as bus hits rickshaw-van

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

Two people were killed and three were injured when a bus hit a rickshaw-van on Monday night.

The van was hired to see Durga Puja in Taraganj upazila of Rangpur on Monday night.

The deceased are Ratan Sarkar (30), and Pabitra Chandra Roy (15), son of Narayan Chandra Roy of Daspara village under Badarganj upazila.

Rezaul Karim, a sub-inspector of Taraganj Highway Police Station, said around eight people of the village hired the rickshaw-van to go to a mandap in Rangpur on the occasion of Durga Puja in the afternoon.

Rezaul, also investigation officer of the case filed in this regard, said when the van reached Taraganj around 8:30pm, a bus from the opposite direction hit it, leaving five people injured.

Upon information, members of fire service took them to Rangpur Medical College Hospital. Ratan and Pabitra succumbed to their injuries there around 11:00pm.

The other injured -- Litan Chandra (25), Bhola Chandra (29) and van-puller Saheb Ali are being treated at the hospital.

Mahbub Morshed, officer-in-charge of Taraganj Highway Police Station, said police are currently looking for the bus and its driver.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Public Works Department Office of the Executive Engineer PWD E/M Division-6, Dhaka. Memo No. 5-16/677 Date: 04/10/2022. e-Tender Notice (OTM) This is to notify all concern that the following tender is invited in the National e-GP Portal: