

Chitra now merely a canal

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

Chitra river, flowing through the country's southwestern districts, is now on the verge of extinction due to rampant encroachment.

The river now looks like a narrow canal as several hundred structures have been set up on the banks on both sides of the river.

The 170-kilometre Chitra originates from Chuadanga's Darshana upazila and joins with Nabaganga River in Narail's Gazirhat.

The 57-kilometre part of the river is located in Jhenidah, said officials of Water Development Board (WDB).

Some people have excavated ponds, many built concrete structures, while others created farmlands on both sides of the river in Jhenidah.

Eighty-five year old Akbor Ali, a teacher of Government Naldanga Bhushan Pilot High School in Jhenidah's Kaliganj upazila, said, "Chitra used to have strong currents and much depth. Large boats used to ply the river, which used to get full to the brim during monsoon."

"Now even a small boat cannot go through it," he added.

Toybur Rahman (88), a resident of Kaliganj area, said, "We used to travel through this river on large boats when we were young. Many commercial boats used to ply the river as well."

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw that the riverbanks in Ganna bazar, Kaliganj upazila headquarters, Chaprai Bazar and Mongolpoyeta Bazar have been occupied by grabbers.

According to a government survey, the river was around 150-feet wide in Kaliganj.

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Due to rampant encroachment, the mighty Chitra river, flowing through the country's southwestern districts, now looks like a narrow canal. Some people have excavated ponds, others have built concrete structures and created farmlands on both sides of the river in Jhenidah.

PHOTO: STAR

Man, nephew killed in Thakurgaon road accident
Madrasa teacher dies in Panchagarh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A man and his nephew were killed as their motorbike was hit by an oncoming bamboo-laden rickshaw van in Thakurgaon on Thursday night.

The accident happened around 11:00pm on Baliahdangi-Thakurgaon road in front of Keya Brick Field at Barodhali village, said police.

The victims were identified as Shahidul Islam (28) of Barunagaon village in Sadar upazila; and his nephew Md Payel (18).

Shahidul and Payel, who was a salesman of his uncle's cotton shop, died on the spot.

The two were returning home on the motorbike, Baliahdangi Police Station Officer in Charge Khairul Anam said, quoting the fire service personnel and locals. On information, fire fighters rushed to the spot and sent the bodies of the two for autopsy.

A case was filed with the police station, the OC said.

Meanwhile, a female madrasa teacher died after she fell from a motorcycle on Panchagarh-Banglabandha highway in front of Bhajanpur Degree College in Tentulia upazila in Panchagarh district yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Anwara Khanam Anu (40), a resident of Shalbahan village and assistant teacher of Shalbahan Dakhil Madrasa in the upazila.

Quoting locals, Tentulia Highway Police Station OC Md Jakir Hossain Mollah told the newspaper over the cellphone that Anwara was going towards Panchagarh on her husband's motorcycle.

When they reached near the madrasa, Anwara fell on the road as Jakir lost his control over his bike, after a goat suddenly walked across the road.

Jahir with the help of locals took her wife to Panchagarh Sadar Hospital where she was declared dead, the OC said.

An unnatural death case was filed with Tentulia Police Station in this connection.

PRAYER TIMING
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Sylhet far from a digital city

Free Wi-Fi connections inactive, CCTV cameras non-functional

DWOHA CHOWDHURY

The initiative to upgrade Sylhet as the country's first digital city was praised, and the introduction of free Wi-Fi and surveillance cameras to detect crime was widely applauded.

However, both services installed under the "Digital Sylhet City" project are in shambles, while authorities concerned are struggling to keep the initiatives operational.

People can still connect to the free Wi-Fi connection -- Digital Bangladesh -- from 126 access points in the city with the password "joybangla", but they will not be able to use the internet.

Sylhet Metropolitan Police (SMP) is also struggling to keep the surveillance cameras operational, as 80 out of the 110 cameras were damaged before the inauguration in 2019.

SMP with its budget repaired some cameras. Now, around 80 cameras are operational, but the licence of the face and number plate recognition software has expired.

Another component of the project -- Health Information Management System of Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital -- is still in the software development stage. The project is now rescheduled to be completed by June 2024.

With a budget of Tk 30.20 crore, Bangladesh Computer Council (BCC) initiated the project in November 2017 with a target of completing 111 initiatives.

However, with intervention from higher authorities, most components were dropped from the project. Only three remained -- the health information management system of Osmani hospital, IP camera-based

Under the project, BCC installed 126 Wi-Fi hotspots in 64 areas of the city with 10-Mbps dedicated bandwidth at each access point.

For the last two months, the service remains completely unavailable, as internet service providers cut connections because SCC did not pay bills.

surveillance system development and Wi-Fi hotspot in Sylhet and Cox's Bazar.

Under the project, BCC installed 126 Wi-Fi hotspots in 64 areas of the city with 10 Mbps dedicated bandwidth at each access point.

The Wi-Fi service was officially handed over to Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) on March 21 last year. Over time, it kept deteriorating;

either connecting to the internet was difficult or internet speed was slow.

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For the last two months, the service remains completely unavailable, as internet service providers cut connections because SCC did not pay bills.

Ruhul Alam, SCC executive engineer (electrical), said, "The city corporation does not have sufficient budget allocation to pay the bills, for which these Wi-Fi access points are now without internet."

"We have sought quotation from internet service providers, and they said it will cost Tk 2.52 lakh to 8.82 lakh per month to ensure connectivity for these access points," he said.

BCC had installed 110 CCTV cameras for face and number plate recognition.

In June 2019, Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for ICT, inaugurated the surveillance system, and its control station was set up at Kotwali Police Station.

SMP Commissioner Md Nisharul Arif said, "During the unofficial handover of the cameras, 80 of them found to be non-operational, because the cameras' fibre cables

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Chattogram zoo got 12 new additions all the way from the Netherlands -- six kangaroos and six llamas -- yesterday morning. The animals were revealed to the public at 10:00am.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Commuters bear the brunt

Bus strike enforced ahead of today's BNP rally in Khulna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Commuters have been suffering due to a two-day suspension of bus services on 18 routes from Khulna city which began yesterday, ahead of a BNP rally.

While visiting Phulbari Gate, Daulatpur, Notun Rasta Intersection, Ferry Ghat, Royal Chittagong Gollamari and Sonadanga Bus Stand in the city, this correspondent found no buses plying on streets. Also, most of the bus counters remained closed.

Imran Sheikh Munna, a ticket seller at Seba Green Line at Sonadanga Bus Terminal, said

yesterday, "None of our buses will leave and enter Khulna for the next two days. There is a possibility that buses could leave the city after 5:00pm tomorrow."

"Our buses only go to Abdullaipur in Dhaka from Khulna," he said.

Md Laylu, a manager of Seba, told The Daily Star, "We have halted bus services as per the authorities' instructions."

When asked who are the authorities, he replied, "The bus owners' association." Thakur Prasad Roy, a fish trader, went to a bus counter at Sonadanga to travel to Jashore but could not

board any buses. "I need to go to Jashore anyway," he said.

A policeman was seen trying to get bus ticket at a counter to go to Magura.

"I know bus services are halted. But I needed to try my luck out anyway."

"I have been posted in Magura. So I need to be there at any cost," he said.

Khulna District Bus-Minibus Owners' Association has announced the closure of public transport ahead of the BNP rally to be held today at the city's Dakbanga. The association

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