

JUTE PACKAGING

A ray of hope for Rohingya women

SIFAYET ULLAH, *Ctg*

A small factory in Cox's Bazar, situated in camp number 5, is employing 150 Rohingya women, to produce eco-friendly jute bags.

The bags are being used as an alternative to polythene, which was previously distributed in the camps by donor groups, contributing to environmental pollution.

The factory was launched in 2020 under the Rohingya Livelihood and Skill Development Project, with only 30 employees. It has since expanded and now produces 6 lakh jute bags per year. Workers earn Tk 200 per day for 4 hours of work,

The centre prioritises the employment of victims of sexual abuse, widows, and physically challenged women. The project is supported by the NGO Forum and UNHCR, and six similar centres are operating in the camp under UNHCR's livelihood and skill development project, employing around 1200 Rohingya, mostly women.



Mizanur Rahman, refugee relief and repatriation commissioner, said the government is developing a vocational training framework for the life skills of Rohingya and allowing development agencies to work in the camps to improve the skills of the Rohingya community.

Take the case of Halima Begum, 32, for instance. Displaced from Myanmar, she arrived in the Cox's Bazar camp in 2017. The factory gave her the chance to make extra money and become self-sufficient when all hope seemed lost.

"I have been working in this factory for two years. First, I received 40 days of training in producing jute bags. Now I earn Tk 200 every day, after only 4 hours of work."

Renuara Khatun, 28, is a Rohingya woman whose husband was shot dead by the Myanmar army in 2017. She too has been working as a labourer in this factory for two years.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

WDB digs canal, 'AL leaders sell earth'



MASUK HRIDOY, *Brahmanbaria*

Let's start with why canals are excavated. Excavation project of a canal involves digging and removing soil and rock materials from the ground to create a trench or channel. The excavated soil is then used to form the embankments or sides of the canal. The purpose of this project is to create a waterway for transportation of goods, irrigation, and drainage.

Keeping this in mind, the Water Development Board started a project to excavate Nurpur canal in Brahmanbaria's Akhaura a year ago.

But rather than using the excavated soil to expand the canal's bank, the earth is being transported to different areas of the district by tractors, and being sold!

Locals have alleged that Awami League leaders are involved with this trade.

WDB started digging the 2.2km

canal from Nurpur graveyard to Titas river under Dharkhar union of Akhaura at a cost of Tk 1,28,69,000.

According to a work order given on April 6 2022, Chattogram based contractor firm Yunus & Brothers Private Limited has won the tender to dig the canal.



But they subcontracted the work to one Mustafizur Rahman, a Brahmanbaria-based contractor, and the work resumed recently, scheduled to be completed within June this year.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found many tractors

parked in the project area. Rather than dumping the excavated soil on the canal's bank, it was being loaded in those trucks. The tractors were then seen carrying away the excavated earth elsewhere along the road, adjacent to the canal.

Selim Miah, a labourer engaged in the project, said the soil was being loaded into the trucks on instructions of AL leaders Aktar Hossain Bhuiyan and Rasel Mia.

Locals, seeking anonymity, also said a syndicate led by Dharkhar union unit AL president Aktar Hossain Bhuiyan, Jasim Mia, Musa Mia, Rasel Miah and Nurul Islam is involved in selling soil in collaboration with contractor Mostafizur Rahman.

Contacted, Aktar said, "We are using soil from the project for the village graveyard. I am not selling those."

When this correspondent told him that legally he cannot do that,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Two students among five killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Five people were killed in road accidents in two districts yesterday, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Bhola, three people -- including two college students -- died after a bus rammed a battery-run auto-rickshaw in Daulatkhan area.

Among the deceased, Rima Akter, 17, and Shima Begum, 17, were students of Halima Khatun Mohila Mohabiddalay. Another victim was identified as Abdul Kalam, 55.

The accident took place around 9:15am on Bhola-Charfesson road in Banglabazar area.

The three were heading towards Banglabazar on the auto-rickshaw when a bus from the opposite direction hit the vehicle. They died on the spot, said Assistant Sub-inspector Md Ahsan, also the duty officer of Daulatkhan Police Station.

The auto-rickshaw driver was rushed to a local hospital with critical injuries.

The two students were going to their college to attend a programme there, Jakir Hossain, a sub-inspector of Banglabazar Investigation Centre, told The Daily Star.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

8 held while trying to loot Rab vehicle

UNB, *Narayanganj*

Eight members of a robbery gang have been arrested while trying to loot a Rab vehicle in Narayanganj.

Rab-II Company Commander and Deputy Director Monirul Alam confirmed the information at a press conference at its local camp in the city's Kalirbazar area yesterday afternoon.

"Two teams of Rab-II were on patrol duty on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway in plainclothes on Thursday night. At that time, one team got stuck in traffic in the Char Bausia area in Munshiganj," he said.

"Armed robbers, thinking the Rab vehicle to be a normal passenger car, surrounded it. At one stage, they attacked the car. Rab members then arrested eight people, including the gang's leader," he said.

"Several locally-made weapons were seized from the robbers and legal actions are underway."



Khowai: a river or dumpster?

A story of neglect and pollution

MINTU DESHWARA, *back from Habiganj*

Abdus Salek, a 62-year-old resident of Habiganj town's Khowai Mukh area, used to spend his childhood fishing in the Khowai river. However, he no longer visits its banks as it has now turned into a dumping ground for household and commercial waste.

"Four decades have passed since authorities took action to protect this river. The waterbody changed in a lot of ways during this time. Encroachments now endanger the river's existence. Khowai, which was once a natural treasure for the locals, has now become a social concern for the town's residents," said Tofazzaul Sohel, the river's waterkeeper.

The pollution in Khowai not only affects its marine life but also degrades the living condition of the town's residents.

Saiful Islam, a master's student of Vrindavan Government College and resident of the town, said, "I used to bathe in this river about a decade ago. Now, because of the stench of rotting waste dumped on the banks, we can't even seek refuge from the smell even while staying indoors, keeping the doors and windows closed."

Husna, a house help in Shyamoli area, was found dumping household waste near the river. Asked why



she was polluting the river, Husna said, "Not just me, everyone throws waste here, even the municipality's garbage workers."

Most of the canals are blocked with waste dumped by locals or garbage collectors, while sewerage drains have also been connected to the river. Disposal of untreated waste further worsens the river's water quality, said activists.

"The townspeople are not just exposed to waterborne diseases, mosquito infestation and other pests are also worsening living conditions. We have been trying to save the river for a long time, but it seems that the authorities have turned a blind eye

to this issue," said Tahmina Begum Gini, vice president of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon's Habiganj unit.

The municipality's conservancy workers and locals are reportedly often seen dumping waste collected from the town into the river, despite having an allotted dumping ground located about four kilometres away from the main town.

Contacted, Habiganj Municipality Mayor Ataur Rahman Selim said, "I have strictly forbidden the locals and conservancy workers from dumping waste by the river. However, there are some who are still not following my orders. The garbage in Khowai Mukh will be removed very soon."

The townspeople are not just exposed to waterborne diseases, mosquito infestation and other pests are also worsening living conditions. We have been trying to save the river for a long time, but it seems that the authorities have turned a blind eye to this issue.

TAHMINA BEGUM
Gini Vice President Bapa, Habiganj

Brooksfield

3-BEDROOM APARTMENTS

at Block-G, Bashundhara
Near 300 Feet Avenue

Call: 16687
01713046689
01711426855
01711694343

Asset DEVELOPMENTS
Asset Developments & Holdings Ltd
91 Gulshan Avenue
www.asset.com.bd

BEATING OUR OWN SCORES

ON THE NOTE OF
KEEPING PROMISES...
6 MONTHS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

Sorrento

CHATTOGRAM

16604
www.btibd.com

bti