



The Sutang river, once a source of living for hundreds of locals, has now turned into a cesspool of diseases and stench. This is because factories set up around the river have been directly discharging toxic waste into the river over the last decade and most of them don't have effluent treatment plants (ETP).

PHOTO: STAR

Sutang in death grip

River's water is so polluted that stench emanates, water-borne diseases occur

MINTU DESHWARA

The Sutang river, which was a blessing of nature for the people surrounding it, has now become a curse due to extreme pollution.

Many people living on the bank of Sutang used to earn a livelihood by fishing in the river. But now its water has turned into a source of disease and germs.

Even, crops are affected, if the river water is used for irrigation. Humans and cattle are infected with different types of diseases if they consume or use the river water. Stench emits round the clock, said locals.

The Sutang is a transboundary river shared with India. Its length is around 82 kilometres in Bangladesh part. It goes through three upazilas in Habiganj. Its average width is around 36 metres, according to environmentalists.

The reason for this is that several hundred factories have been set up on

the bank of the river over the last decade, mainly contributing to polluting the river by discharging toxic wastes. Most of the factories don't have effluent treatment plants (ETP), said locals.

Villagers alleged that the administration turns a blind eye to the nuisance.

A recent study by Rivers and Delta Research Centre (RDRC) has found that at least 56 rivers flowing through different parts of the country are suffering from extreme pollution during the lean period – when the natural flow of rivers is at its lowest.

The Sutang has a dissolved oxygen (DO) level of 0.4 when the standard is 4.5 to 8 mg per litre, according to the study.

Environmentalists and locals say the lives of two lakh people of more than one hundred villages in Habiganj will be endangered.

"Once, the river was filled with different kinds of fish. Many people mainly depended on the river for their livelihood. But now the river has become so toxic that no fish can survive here," said Md Shafiqur Rahman, 65, a resident of Uchail village in Habiganj Sadar upazila.

"Even, we get infected with different types of skin diseases, if we use the water," he added.

Md Ershad Miah, a farmer of Paschim

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Five BNP men held while protesting price hike of essentials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police arrested BNP's Rajshahi district unit convenor Abu Sayeed Chand and four other party activists yesterday afternoon while they were protesting the spiralling price of essentials.

The police arrested the five BNP men on charges of creating public suffering by an illegal gathering and obstructing government services, said Rafiqul Alam, an additional deputy commissioner of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police.

As part of their countrywide programme to protest unbearable prices of essentials, the city and district units of BNP jointly brought out a procession from the city's Sagarpara area at 3:45pm.

Police intercepted the BNP activists 15 minutes later when the BNP procession ended and the protestors began holding a street rally in the city's Gonokpara Mor.

As the chief guest, former lawmaker Harun-ur Rashid began addressing the rally.

At that point of time, police dispersed the rally using batons and caught five BNP men from the scene.

Plying the roads despite HC ban

Battery-run rickshaws cause traffic jams, power outages in Tangail

MIRZA SHAKIL

Several thousand battery-powered rickshaws are causing unbearable traffic jams in Tangail town, despite a ban from the higher court. Residents are struggling with regular traffic jams due to the large number of illegal vehicles on the roads.

Furthermore, these vehicles are required to be charged, which in turn causes frequent power outages. The owners and drivers of these rickshaws claim that they are operating legally after obtaining licences from the municipal authorities.

According to the licencing department of Tangail municipality, there are 5000 licensed pedal-operated rickshaws in the town. However, almost all the rickshaws seen on the streets are battery-operated. The municipal authority claims that battery-run rickshaws are plying with the licence of pedal-operated rickshaws after adding batteries.

However, rickshaw pullers and owners claim that they paid a large sum of money to the municipality's licencing section to get approval for their battery-powered vehicles.

Tangail Municipality set the licencing cost for a pedal-run rickshaw at Tk 1,000. However, the officials charged from Tk 10,000 up to Tk 25,000 per rickshaw, alleged battery-run rickshaw

owners. According to them, the extra money was taken as bribes to disregard these rickshaws that already had batteries installed.

The one-year licenses signed by the current mayor of Tangail Municipality SM Sirajul Haque Alamgir were approved in 2021 in the first phase. This means some

"First the authorities confiscated our rickshaws. Then they made us pay a fat amount of money as licencing fees. I paid Tk 12,000 to get my vehicle back," said rickshaw driver Jasim Miah of Akurtakurpara.

Hazrat Ali, another rickshaw driver from Basakhanpur area,

normal due to the large number of vehicles plying the roads. However, they have not got any instructions from the relevant authorities to seize these vehicles, said Tangail traffic inspector Delwar Hossain.

"The previous mayor of the municipality had given licenses to 4,000 battery-operated easy

The previous mayor of the municipality had given licenses to 4,000 battery-operated easy bikes illegally. The current mayor is continuing the trend. These vehicles have caused regular gridlocks and power outages in the town, making our life unbearable.

ARMAN KABIR
Resident of College Para area



rickshaw licences have already expired. The rickshaw licenses signed in the second phase in 2022 are valid till June 2023.

Similar anomalies have been alleged in licencing of battery-powered easy bikes (three-wheelers). Battery-powered easy bike owners have claimed that although the licencing fee for a three-wheeler is Tk 10,500, the municipality has taken Tk 1 lakh to 1.5 lakh from them. However, easy bike licencing was done under the previous municipality authority.

said, "I have got the licence by paying Tk 20,000 as easy bike was written in the licence book."

These battery-powered vehicles are causing acute traffic jams in many areas of the town, including the Main Road, Baby Stand, Shantikunja Intersection, Nirala Intersection, Parkbazar Intersection, Capsule Market, Old Bus Stand, Supari Bagan Intersection, Kumudini College Gate, and New Bus Terminal areas.

The traffic police department is struggling to keep traffic in the city

bikes illegally. The current mayor is continuing the trend. These vehicles have caused regular gridlocks and power outages in the town, making our life unbearable," said Arman Kabir, a resident of College Para area.

The municipality mayor, SM Sirajul Haque Alamgir, claims that he has not issued any battery-powered rickshaw licenses.

"Earlier, when we seized these battery-run vehicles, we had to release them on request of the higher authorities."

Drug dealer accused of stabbing DB police arrested in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Drug dealer Abdur Rob, an accused in the case filed over the stabbing of a DB police in Barguna's Patharghata, has been arrested from Chattagram in a joint drive by Rab-7 and Rab-8 on March 31 from the Patia-Anwara link road, while he was going to his rented house in Chattagram from Cox's Bazar.

Later, he was handed over to the Patharghata Police Station yesterday afternoon, confirmed Patuakhali Rab-8's company commander and assistant Superintendent of Police Tuhin Reza.

He said although Abdur Rob's house is in Barguna's Patharghata, he lives in a rented house in Chattagram's Steel Mill area. He is one of the members of the gang who collects drugs from Chattagram and Cox's Bazar and sells it at various places in Barguna and Barisal divisions.

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Tk 750cr project for irrigation launched in Barguna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A Tk 751 crore project has begun in Barguna to facilitate agricultural activities, including irrigation to a large extent in the area.

Bangladesh Water Development Board has initiated the project in Amtali upazila, to ease sufferings of locals including farmers.

Local lawmaker Dharendra Debnath Shambhu inaugurated the work on March 24 in presence of WDB Southern Region Chief Engineer and Project Director, Mojibur Rahman.

Amtali Municipality Mayor, Matiar Rahman, was the special guest at the inaugural session.

Under the project, four dams constructed on

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Fatehpuri unveiled a new horizon of stone inscription

Say speakers at memorial meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Maulana Muhammad Nuruddin Fatehpuri will be admired forever for his memorable contributions to deciphering ancient stone inscriptions, said discussants at a programme yesterday.

He could reach an unparalleled height by works in deciphering Arabic, Farsi and Urdu inscriptions. His demise is an irreparable loss for the nation, they viewed.

They were speaking at a meeting commemorating Nuruddin Fatehpuri, who breathed his last on January 17, at the Kobi Sufia Kamal Auditorium of the national museum in Dhaka, organised by Dhakar Sthapatya Bishayak Grantha Pronayon

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IFTAR AT DMCH

Patients find strength in shared devotion

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and ARAFAT RAHAMAN

It was a Friday evening, and the atmosphere at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) was one of serenity and devotion. The patients and their attendants were breaking their fasts together.

Among them was seventy-year-old Harun-Or-Rashid, hailing from Kaptai in Rangamati. He had been admitted to DMCH for urology problems and was waiting alone with a bowl of food, counting down the minutes until iftar.

Harun spoke with a sense of calm and determination. "Doctors said they will conduct an operation in the coming week, so I am observing fast till then," he explained. Despite the hardship he was going through, he was determined to continue fasting until his operation.

His family could not stay with him due to financial constraints, so he broke his fast alone. However, he was not truly alone as other patients and their attendants were also fasting and breaking their fasts together.

DMCH provided basic breakfast items such as eggs, bread, and bananas, which patients and attendants stored for iftar. Rice was provided for their sehri and dinner.

The hospital was buzzing with activity during iftar time. Patients and their attendants were seen sitting together in groups,

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Despite being away from home, patients and attendants at DMCH come together to break their fast during Ramadan every evening. In this photo, they gather on the floor in front of a ward to share iftar meals, provided by the hospital and brought from outside vendors. Many of them are facing financial struggles and health issues, but the spirit of Ramadan unites them in their observance of the holy month.

PHOTO: STAR