

DRIVE TO STOP STONE EXTRACTION FROM 3 RIVERS

Admin in a fix as info getting leaked

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Patgram*

Local administration in Patgram upazila of Lalmonirhat is in a tight spot as information is getting leaked regarding its drives against stone extraction from three rivers in the upazila, allowing the offenders to continue the illegal activity without worrying about consequences.

A report titled "Illegal stone extraction resumes despite ban", published in The Daily Star on September 5, revealed that unlawful stone-lifting from Dhara, Sanijan, and Shingimari rivers in the upazila resumed in full swing after a six year pause, resulting in erosion due to massive damage caused to the water bodies.

In this connection, Nurul Islam, Patgram upazila nirbahi officer, had said raids were underway to stop the illegal stone extraction from the rivers.

Locals, however, alleged that the upazila administration and police are not properly conducting operations.

Stones are being lifted from the rivers with dredger machines at night, causing loud noise while roads are getting damaged as stones are transported using trolleys, locals said.

They also said they are unable to



protest as ruling party men are allegedly involved in illegal stone extraction from the rivers.

According to the upazila administration and police sources, about 300 dredger machines are operational in 40 villages under five unions in the upazila to extract stones from the three rivers.

Badiul Islam, 65, a farmer in Dhabalsuti Majhipara area, said their arable lands

were lost to the river due to erosion caused by the illegal stone extraction.

Locals alleged that Molazzal Hossain Lipu, vice president of Patgram Upazila Parishad and president of the upazila unit of Svechchasebok League, is involved in the offense.

Contacted, Lipu denied the allegation against him.

"I don't know who are lifting stones from

the rivers. I heard that stone extraction was going on but it is now stopped because of the administration's drive," he said.

Ferdous Wahid, officer-in-charge of Patgram Police Station, said, "While we are regularly conducting drives, it is not always possible for police to reach the remote areas where the dredger machines are set up. That's why stone extraction is still going on."

Patgram UNO Nurul Islam said information regarding the local administration's drives against stone-lifting is getting leaked somehow prior to conducting the drives.

"As a result, we are unable to detain those involved even after going to the spot. From now on, we will apply different strategy to our operations for better outcomes. Meanwhile, stones lifted from the rivers have been piled up at various places. We have decided to seize and auction off these stones according to the rules," he said.

He, however, did not elaborate on the measures they will take to stop the stone extraction over security concerns.

Ruhul Amin Babul, chairman of Patgram UP and general secretary of the upazila unit AL, said all out efforts must be taken by the administration to stop this menace.

Some gold traders in Ctg, Dhaka involved with smuggling racket DB probe into 9.5kg gold seized in port city reveals

F MIZANUR RAHAMAN, *Ctg*

Several gold traders of Hazari Lane and New Market areas of Chattogram city, and Tanti Bazar in Dhaka are directly involved with a racket that smuggles gold from Myanmar to India via Bangladesh.

The information came to light after two carriers involved in gold smuggling gave their confessional statement before a magistrate in a case filed with Karnaphuli Police Station recently.

Law enforcers seized a consignment of 9.5kg gold and arrested four persons at a police check post in Karnaphuli upazila on June 16 from a passenger bus coming from Cox's Bazar.

The four were bringing the gold consignment to Chattogram city from Teknaf of Cox's Bazar. Police later lodged a case with Karnaphuli Police Station on June 17.

The four accused are: Bashundhara Dhar, 34; Krishna Dhar, 40; Nayan Dhar alias Narayan, 38; and Tipu Dhar, alias Alok, 24. Among them, Tipu is a goldsmith in Cox's Bazar and the others are his family members.

Smuggled gold from Myanmar was initially kept hidden in the Riajuddin Bazar and New Market areas of Chattogram, before being transported to India through Dhaka's Tanti Bazar with the assistance of local gold traders.

Following their arrests, Tipu and Nayan named two gold traders, Bidhan and Krishna, in the Hazari Lane and New Market of Kotwali areas of the port city, who are members of the syndicate. The Detective Branch (port zone) of CMP is currently investigating the case.

Investigators said Rohingyas brought gold consignment from Myanmar and later handed it over to a local agent who then hired the four carriers to send it to the port city.

Several CMP officials seeking anonymity said smuggled gold from Myanmar was initially kept hidden in the Riajuddin Bazar and New Market areas of Chattogram, before being transported to India through Dhaka's Tanti Bazar with the assistance of local gold traders.

The gold traders in Cox's Bazar and Chattogram used to work as mediators.

According to the confessional statements, Bappu Dhar, a gold trader from Cox's Bazar and a syndicate member, instructed the four arrestees to travel to Cox's Bazar and transport the gold bars.

They followed these instructions and were on their way to Chattogram to deliver the shipment to Bidhan and Krishna Karmakar, individuals they had previously worked with multiple times.

For their services, the carriers typically received cash amounts ranging from Tk 15,000 to Tk 20,000.

Meanwhile, the PBI wanted to take over the case, but CMP rejected the request, citing ongoing progress in the investigation. SI Robiul Islam of DB, the current IO, declined to comment on the matter.

Deputy Commissioner Mohammed Ali Hossen of DB (port zone) said, "We have cracked the case and uncovered valuable information. Our efforts are focused on arresting the two primary gold smugglers and identify the others involved."

Invest in climate resilient projects

Speakers tell event

UNB, *Dhaka*

Entrepreneurs can take policy support through investing in climate resilient projects in line with the government's target to generate 40 percent of the energy from renewable sources, said special envoy to prime minister Saber Hossain Chowdhury.

He said this while speaking at a conference.

International Centre for Climate Change and Development organised the forum titled "Preserve Planet Earth, Dhaka-2023", at Independent University Bangladesh (IUB).

The lawmaker was the chief guest at the event where climate parliament vice-chairperson Waseqa Ayesha Khan was special guest.

"Bangladesh is only contributing 0.48 percent of the global emission. Thus, we are in dire need of this transitional shift. We are at ground zero for climate change. And Bangladesh will be the global leader in this role," Chowdhury added.

Ayesha Waseqa Khan said there are 30 renewable energy projects under active progress of which 24 power plants are funded by the private sector and 65 more projects are being considered.

About 44 youth organisations and university clubs joined the conference as "Youth Engagement Partner".

AL office caretaker sued in rape case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Jamalpur*

A case was filed against the caretaker of Awami League party office in Jamalpur's Melandah upazila yesterday for allegedly raping an 8-year-old boy.

No arrest has been made in this regard so far.

The victim's father filed the rape case against the caretaker, Bishu Miah, 45, with Malandah Police Station, said Officer-in-Charge Delawor Hossain.

According to the case statement, the victim, a student of a local madrasa, was playing near the AL party office at Malonch around 4:30pm when Bishu called him to his office.

When the boy entered the office, Bishu raped him.

Hearing his screams, locals rushed to the office but the perpetrator fled the scene, said the OC.

The boy was undergoing treatment at Jamalpur General Hospital.



PARTHA CHAKRABORTY,
Bagerhat

27 UP buildings at risk in Bagerhat



Around five lakh people go to these buildings to receive services.

In Badal UP of Kachua Upazila, a long line of people can be seen waiting to avail services. Everyone is afraid the building will collapse, but due to there being no alternative, they have no other choice but to come here.

Minara Begum, who also takes services from Badal Union Council, said, "Our union council building is dilapidated. We are always worried that the building might collapse."

Solaiman Hawlader, a local who visited Badal UP building of Kachua Upazila to take TCB products, echoed her.

Badal UP Chairman Nakib Faisal Ohid said, "My Union Parishad building is in a state of disrepair. As there are no other buildings nearby, we have to continue our activities here. Those who come for services every day also come at their own risk."

Similarly, in Teligati of Morelganj upazila it was seen that the UP office was in a bad condition. Plasters were falling off from different parts of the building and the roof was also cracked.

Morshed Akhtar, UP chairman of Teligati, said, "We also face problem while offering services due to the derelict condition of the building."

Bagerhat LGED Executive Engineer Md Sharifuzzaman said out of 75 union councils in the district, new buildings have been constructed for 48 in the first and second phases.

"Due to lack of funds, the construction work for Jhiudhara UP building in Morelganj upazila is halted. We have sent the list of these buildings to the ministry concerned. If the project is approved, the new council buildings will be constructed soon."

Bagerhat District Commissioner Khalid Hossain said the construction of new buildings will be initiated soon to reduce public sufferings.



PHOTO: STAR

JHIKARGACHHA UPAZILA OF JASHORE

People suffer due to delay in bridge work

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Benapole*

February 14, 2022 and was slated to be completed by August 8 this year.

Thousands of people are suffering due to delay in construction of a 30-metre girder bridge in Jhikargachha upazila of Jashore.

The bridge, being constructed over a canal on Srirampur Road connecting Jhikargachha and Kayemkola, is jointly funded by the government and World Bank.

The Local Government Engineering Department took the initiative to construct the bridge at a cost of Tk 3.48 crore, and tasked two Jashore-based contractor firms -- ICL and MMT -- with the work.

The construction began on

facing immense sufferings to commute through the area.

Visiting the construction site recently, this correspondent saw no one from the contracting firms there.

Talking to this correspondent, locals complained that accidents often occur while crossing the makeshift wooden bridge, which is in a dilapidated condition at present.

"I regularly transport passengers on this road. In front of this makeshift wooden bridge, I have to drop the passenger and somehow move the easy-bike over the bridge

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