

Muroichhara is dying

Once a lifeline, the river is now a victim of pollution, encroachment

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Muroichhara river, known as the lifeline of Moulvibazar's Kulaura upazila, is on its deathbed.

Alongside an absence of dredging initiatives, pollution, encroachment and illegal sand extraction are contributing to the river's impending demise.

The hilly stream, flowing down from Karmodha-Prithimpasha union on the south-east of the upazila and joining the Muroichhara spring on Luthi hill at the western foot of Kalaigiri hill, defines the boundary between the country and India.

However, a significant portion of the waterbody from Luthi Hill to Belratal point, especially the lower plains in Muroichhara New Slum, Shikaria, Kamlatila to Alinagar areas, have already disappeared.

According to local land surveyor Nazim Uddin Babul, the river is 15-16 feet wide and about 10-12km long in records. It is among the 69 transboundary rivers between India and Bangladesh, apart from the 54 officially recognised ones, read a Riverine People study.

In 1982, the Water Development Board constructed a sluice gate on western side of Dem Beel in Alinagar for irrigation and Boro paddy cultivation. The river, which has not been dredged for many years, dries out completely during dry seasons, only coming back to life during monsoon, said Shattar Ali, a farmer.

"Sometimes, it erodes the banks," he added.

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The meadows and croplands in these photos were once the Muroichhara river. Lack of dredging efforts, rampant pollution, illegal sand extraction, and encroachment is gradually pushing the waterbody, once known as the lifeline of Moulvibazar's Kulaura upazila, towards extinction.

PHOTO: STAR

BNP trying to foil national elections

Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP is trying to foil the upcoming national election by hook or by crook, Law Minister Anisul Haque said yesterday.

He came up with the remark while addressing the extended meeting of the Akhaura Municipal unit of Awami League at the upazila parishad auditorium in Brahmanbaria's Akhaura, around noon.

"Bangladesh is now in a prestigious position in the world due to the continuous development of the present government. But BNP Jamaat can't tolerate the success of the government. So, they are trying to foil the upcoming national election by hook or by crook," Anisul said.

The minister said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is committed to hold a fair and impartial election in January 2024.

"If someone wants to thwart the election, then the law enforcers and the people will not sit idle. They will be given a befitting reply."

He said the BNP doesn't want the development of the country. So, people have no alternative except re-electing AL.

"It's not a big deal who will take part in the election or who won't. [We] need to ensure security to people so that they can go to the polling station to elect their representatives. But those who love Pakistan will not do anything for the development of the country. So, people have no choice except Awami League," he said.

Two killed in accident

BSS, Satkhira

One motorcyclist and his pillion were killed in a head-on collision between their bike and a bus on the Satkhira-Assasuni highway road in Kalerdanga area under Sadar upazila of the district yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Moez Hossain, 22, and Mohin Hossain, 23.

The accident occurred when they were going to Brahmarajpur Bazar, said police.

The motorcycle collided head-on with a bus around 12.30pm, leaving the two dead on the spot, said officer-in-charge of Satkhira Sadar Police Station Mahidul Islam said. A case was filed.



After waiting for decades, the residents of south Chattogram will finally have access to pure drinking water from this December, thanks to Chattogram Wasa's Bhandal Jhuri Water Supply Project. The plant, stretching across 41 acres along the banks of the Karnaphuli, will cater to around 35,000 people living in Patiya, Anwara, Karnaphuli and Boalkhali upazilas of the district.

PHOTO: STAR

DRUG TRADE IN BARISHAL DIVISION

Masterminds UNTRACEABLE

Cops clueless in probes; charge-sheets accuse only carriers

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and SUSHANTA GHOSH

Investigation into drug cases in Barishal have so far failed to yield any information regarding the masterminds of narcotics trade and smuggling.

The law enforcers often arrest the carriers with smuggled drugs, but thanks to loopholes in investigation, the masterminds have always remained out of reach.

A total of 2,293 narcotics cases were filed between July 22 last year and September 23 this year, according to the office of Deputy Inspector General of Police, Barishal Range.

Of those, investigators already submitted charge sheets in 1,829 cases. However, analysing the charge sheet reports, the Daily Star found that all the accused mentioned in the charge-sheets are drug carriers, and none of them ever mentioned any names of the masterminds behind the smuggling racket.

Similarly, the Department of Narcotics Control has filed around 108 narcotics cases and arrested around 152 carriers from August 5, 2021 to February 28 this year. However, the DNC investigations were also unsuccessful at tracing the masterminds.

On January 19 last year, Minjar Hossain, a drug trader, was arrested by the DNC with 5,000 yaba pills from the Kazipara area of Barishal.

Investigation revealed that Minjar had been responsible for distributing these illicit consignments to an individual named Saiful Islam in Bakerganj upazila, who was also subsequently arrested.

Four months later, the DNC on May 14 filed a charge-sheet against the two, who are now out on bail.

In a separate incident, DNC arrested a narcotic trader - Rafiqul Islam - with 10,000 yaba pills on the way to Patuakhali from

Barishal on January 9 this year, and submitted a charge-sheet against him on March 14.

However, in both the cases, the DNC's investigation failed to detect or identify from whom Minjar and Rafiqul had collected the yaba pills.

DNC inspector Md Ishtiaq Hossain, who submitted the charge sheet against Rafiqul, said they had interrogated Rafiqul for two days to learn about the masterminds, but the accused did not disclose anything.

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All accused mentioned are drug carriers

Police and DNC officials said narcotics cases are very sensitive.

"We cannot interrogate the accused properly. They are mostly addicts who often fall ill at the slightest questioning," said a police official requesting anonymity.

"Unless a narco carrier reveals the mastermind's name in a confessional statement to court, we cannot arrest or interrogate anyone. That is why, the charge-sheets are limited to showing the carriers as accused," he added.

Bijoy Krishan Mallick, additional superintendent of police in Patuakhali (Kalapara Circle), said the carriers would rather die than say a single word about the

network.

"Almost all of them came up with the same version - an unidentified person handed over the package to them and they did not know what was inside," said the officer.

Rezwan Ahmed, additional superintendent of police of the Detective Branch in Barishal district, said they are now trying to confiscate the carriers' wealth to make them talk about the masterminds of the network.

The smugglers also use women as carriers to escape the law enforcers' eyes.

On August 13 this year, police arrested Halima Begum and two others with 8,926 yaba pills from Barishal's Gaurnadi. Two weeks later on August 29, police arrested another carrier named Hira Majhi with 303 yaba pills and 10 bottles of phensedyl.

Afzal Hossain, officer-in-charge of Gaurnadi Police Station, said they were not able to find out the masterminds or the source of these narcotics. "We are preparing to submit the charge-sheet with the carrier's details only," he added.

Mohammad Shahidullah, additional DIG (crime and ops) of police (Barishal Range), said they have a deadline of only 52 days to submit charge-sheets, which is why the investigations fail to delve deep to identify the godfathers of drugs trade.

Enayet Hossain, DNC assistant director, said the masterminds remain out of reach as they use cut-of tactics, leaving one part of the syndicate with no knowledge about the other.

The carriers get huge financial benefits for carrying the drugs consignments from one place to another, which is a major reason why they do not question the suppliers about their identities.

Jamil Hasan, DIG of Barishal Range police, said, "We are doing our best to detect those behind the syndicate and take lawful actions against them."

SCC plan to segregate waste at source fails

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

The Sylhet City Corporation's plan to segregate household waste at source failed due to lack of awareness among people and poor monitoring by the authority.

As a result, SCC's initiative to run a modernised sanitary landfill for organic waste disposal remains non-functional since last year, and its contract with Geocycle, a concern of LafargeHolcim Bangladesh, for disposal of non-organic solid waste got stalled.

The city corporation now plans for mechanical segregation of wastes at the landfill and has purchased required machineries to this end.

According to the SCC, the city with over 10 lakh population generates an average of 300 tonnes of waste daily.



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For decades, the SCC's waste management operations have been in the traditional way - collect from households to landfill, then dump and dispose of the waste.

However, this way of waste disposal has been detrimental to the environment, by polluting the surrounding wetlands and farmlands as well as the air.

Given the situation, the corporation developed a modernised sanitary landfill spending Tk 85 crore, funded by the World Bank, to manage organic waste.

The project, however, ended last year. Meanwhile, on September 14 last year, the SCC signed an agreement with Geocycle to dispose of non-organic solid waste.

In a bid to collect and dispose of the waste sustainably, the city corporation in January 2020 initiated a project to segregate waste at source.

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Access to safe drinking water by Dec in south Ctg

SIFAYET ULLAH, Ctg

The residents of the southern parts of Chattogram district will finally have access to pure drinking water from December, thanks to the Bhandal Jhuri Water Supply Project.

The region, home to 35,000 people employed in multiple industries, including the state-owned Chittagong Urea Fertilizer Limited, and export processing zones, has seen a crisis of drinking water for decades.

Since its inception in 1963, Chattogram Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (CWasa) has so far failed to take effective measures in this regard due to various reasons and kept its operations limited to catering to the needs of Chattogram city.

Many tubewells in the southern part of the district became dysfunctional due to depleted groundwater reserves as a direct consequence of over extraction for industrial use. Around 500 tube wells are lying abandoned in Anwara alone, according to the public health engineering department.

Stretching across 41 acres of land on the bank of Karnaphuli river in Boalkhali, the Tk 1,036 crore BJWSP project was initially approved by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council on January 5, 2016 to address the water crisis. The project was slated for completion by September 2020.

However, CWasa failed to implement the project

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