

Dev projects threaten Chalan Beel

Construction works obstruct water flow, say locals, experts

BULBUL AHMED, *Nature*

Development projects around Natore's Chalan Beel, a significant freshwater reservoir, are obstructing its natural water flow, leading to waterlogging and harming agriculture, according to locals and experts.

The ongoing construction works include a hi-tech park, Sheikh Kamal IT Training and Incubation Center, Technical Training Center (TTC), Technical School and College (TSC), and plans for a mini stadium, as per officials.

"Water of Chalan Beel used to flow down through two channels. One of the channels has been blocked due to construction of the hi-tech park," said Abbas Ali, a resident of Sherkol area in Chalan Beel.

"As a result, vast areas of croplands remain waterlogged for prolonged time, causing difficulty in cultivation," he said.

Around 1,500-2,000 bighas of land in Chakpur, Teligram, Sidhkhali, Bamunhat, Raninagar, Bamanhat, Boktarpur, Goalbathan, Bilvarat and Bhanagarkandi villages get waterlogged, said Manik Islam, a resident of Teligram village.

"I planted paddy saplings in around 28 bighas of land in Sherkol and Teligram area. But I had to spend over Tk 1 lakh to clean moss and weeds from the land which grew

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The various development projects around Natore's Chalan Beel is obstructing the natural flow of the waterbody, leading to frequent waterlogging in its neighbouring areas. Locals and experts alleged that the projects are poorly planned and will harm the ecological balance of this natural freshwater reservoir.

PHOTO: STAR

Won't let anyone create chaos
Says info minister

BSS, Ctg

Information Minister Hasan Mahmud yesterday said any attempt to create chaos in the country in the name of movement will be dealt with iron hands.

"You should hold peaceful rallies; administration will help you. But if any attempt is made to create chaos, it will be dealt with iron hands with public support," he said.

Hasan, also Awami League joint general secretary, said this while addressing a grand rally at KEPZ ground in Anwara in Chattogram on the occasion of the inauguration of the country's first ever underwater tunnel -- "Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Rahman Tunnel".

Referring to BNP's rally at Nayapaltan in the capital, he said, BNP has been given permission to hold a rally. "It would be a mistake if they take it as a weakness," he said.

Noting that BNP did not allow AL to hold rallies when the party (AL) was in the opposition, Hasan said, "We were beaten with sticks, senior politicians like Matia Chowdhury were assaulted".

"Now they hold programmes almost every day," he said, adding, "After the programmes such as street processions, sit-ins and running, they may announce a 'crawling programme' in the days to come."



The radiotherapy machine remains packed in a box for over a decade in front of the radiotherapy and oncology department at the Khulna Medical College Hospital, causing cancer patients to suffer.

PHOTO: STAR

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Champa Begum travelled between Khulna and her hometown in Narail several times for radiotherapy at the Cancer Institute of Khulna Medical College Hospital, but she had to return home every time without the therapy she desperately needed, as the radiotherapy machine there was not functional.

"I underwent four rounds of chemotherapy after being diagnosed with breast cancer, and now I need to get radiotherapy. The doctors suggested I go to Dhaka for radiotherapy," said the 35-year-old.

"It is quite impossible for me to go to Dhaka or India. It will cost around Tk 80,000 to do it. Where can I get so much money?" she asked.

The radiotherapy machine owned by the Radiotherapy and Oncology Department of KMCH's separate cancer unit has been lying abandoned inside a box for

Hundreds of cancer patients

II years due to a lack of necessary equipment and skilled manpower.

As the authorities concerned have not taken any steps to make it functional, thousands of patients like Champa are not getting the desired service.

A 6 MV linear accelerator (Linac) machine -- used in radiotherapy for treating cancer patients -- was purchased for around Tk 10 crore for National Institute of Cancer Research and Hospital in 2011. However, it was sent to KMCH in 2012, as there was no bunker at NICRH.

KMCH's radiotherapy department also did not have a bunker, so KMCH authority didn't receive the machine formally. Since then, the machine has been under the supervision of Trade Vision Limited, the local representative of the supplying company.

The doctors concerned think the device is no longer functional, and the after-sales service for this device has also expired.

According to KMCH, a delegation from Varian Medical Systems, a US company that supplied the machine, visited the

from Khulna and Barishal divisions come to KMCH, but they get deprived of proper treatment for the lack of a radiotherapy machine.

Visiting the radiotherapy department, it was seen there was an empty space in front of the unit's entrance gate, and a huge wooden box was kept there.

Altaf Hossain, indoor doctor and cancer expert of Radiotherapy and Oncology Department, said, "KMCH did not have a bunker with eight feet thick walls for radiation safety to accommodate the machine when it was sent here. We have no idea why it was given here."

"Almost all cancer patients require radiation therapy. There is no such machine anywhere in Khulna and Barishal divisions, so we have no option other than asking the patients to get treatment in Dhaka or anywhere else," he said.

"We sent several letters to the health ministry to remove the device," said Niaz Mustafi Chowdhury, director (in charge) of KMCH.

hospital in 2015 and said making a bunker and installing the machine would cost Tk 7 crore.

The health ministry, however, did not want to spend the money and wanted to take the machine back to NICRH, but the cancer institute never took the machine back.

Assistant Professor of the Radiotherapy Department Md Mukitul Huda said, "As far as I know, the machine was sent from the cancer hospital in Mohakhali, despite no demand letter being issued from here. The hospital does not have the infrastructure needed to install this highly powerful radiotherapy machine."

It would cost crores of taka to buy its other parts and software, and the skilled manpower required is not available in Khulna as well, he added.

"I try to take inspiration for my pieces from the things I see around me, such as speed boats, national flag, aircrafts, trawlers, boats, deer and fish, etc."

DENGUE OUTBREAK

10 more die, 1,800 get hospitalised

STAR REPORT

Ten more deaths were reported from dengue in the 24 hours till yesterday morning, raising the fatalities from the mosquito-borne disease in Bangladesh to 1,327 this year.

During the period, 1,800 more patients were hospitalised with the viral fever, reports UNB citing DGHS.

Of the new patients, 407 were admitted to hospitals in Dhaka and the rest outside the capital.

A total of 7,091 dengue patients, including 1,975 in the capital, are now receiving treatment at hospitals across the country, reports UNB.

So far, the DGHS has recorded 265,862 dengue cases and 25,444 recoveries this year.

HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, said of the four types of dengue strains, Den-2 serotype is mostly active this year and has a high severity. This is a reason for so many deaths this year, he said.

Around 87 percent of the patients were infected with serotype 2, according to a recent study of Bangladesh Shishu Hospital and Institute on dengue serotypes, Nazmul said.

"Serotype sequence is another factor. If a patient, who was infected with one serotype earlier, gets infected again with a new serotype, then its severity will be more, especially if the second infection is from serotype-2," he said.

"Another reason is high rate of infection among high-risk group patients -- elderly, infant, obese, pregnant women and patients with comorbidity like diabetes, high pressure, heart, kidney, lung and liver problems," said Nazmul.

Also, many patients are coming to the hospital late, which is another factor for the high number of deaths this year, he noted.

Many patients are coming from outside of Dhaka, he said.

"It takes several hours for a patient to reach the capital, during which they don't get enough fluids. Thus, many patients die even before they are admitted to hospitals," Nazmul said.

NOTHA AUNG KILLING

Rakhine community demands justice

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

People of the Rakhine community formed a human chain in Taltali, Barguna, yesterday, demanding a speedy trial of the case filed for the killing of Notha Aung.

They said Notha Aung, 75, was killed by his rivals following a land dispute in 2017. However, even after six years the investigation remains incomplete.

They alleged that a local influential group has been threatening members of the Rakhine community in various ways to grab their land, including graveyards and croplands. Consequently, many Rakhine people have left the country with their families, and many of them live in a state of insecurity.

The hour long programme, chaired by Rakhine Social Development Organization General Secretary Mongchin Thanh, was addressed, among others, by Jowen Joy, the case's complainant, Kheching Mong and Mong Thanh Cho.

On June 22, 2017, police recovered the body from Notha in Namishepara, Taltali upazila. Two days later, his granddaughter Jowen Joy filed a murder case with Taltali Police Station, which was later transferred to the CID for investigation.

Contacted, Abul Kalam Azad, additional superintendent of police (CID) in Barguna, said the investigation will be completed soon.

200 items," he said.

Zakir has a small yard at his house where he works with wood in his free time, using basic tools to carve those into various items including airplanes, trawlers, boats, deer, fish, etc.

He aspires to use his skills further, and sell his works to be able to

Fisher by profession, artist by passion

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, from Barguna

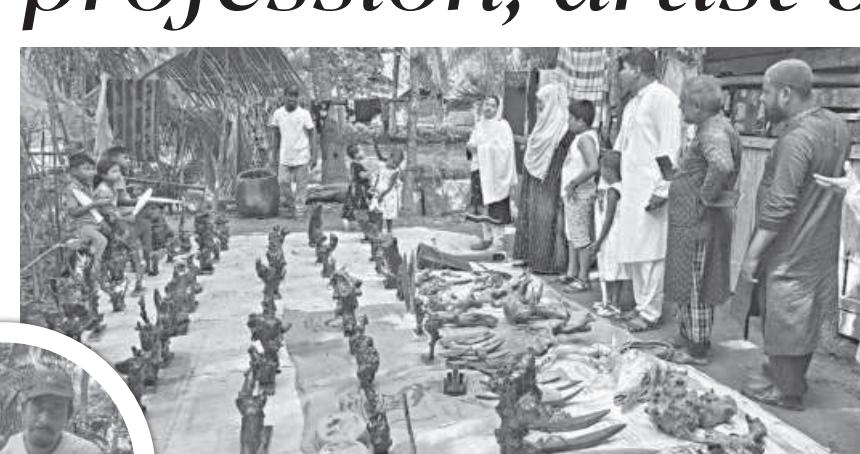
Art has no limit, and Zakir Hossain Munshi, a fisherman by profession, is an example of this statement.

The 54-year-old from Rubita village in Barguna's Patharghata upazila, makes his living by venturing into deep sea on trawlers to catch hilsa and other fish in the bay.

Beyond this, he is a self-taught woodcarver, creating intricate collectible showpieces from wood.

"To catch fish, we often have to go along the Sundarbans. From there I collect roots of dead trees and woods that are washed away from the forest. I used to make wooden shelves with the wood and sell those in the village for around 13 years. Over time, I learnt woodcarving to make

showpieces, and have so far made over



contribute more for his family. However, that requires patronage.

A nature lover, Zakir has also played a role in the conservation of animals by rescuing and releasing more than 300 snakes so far.

Panu Chaparashi, a local resident, said Zakir's woodworks are intriguing, and many people come to see his works.

"I come from a poor family, and

only managed to study till fourth grade. Since my childhood, I have been fishing with my father in the Baleshwar river and Bay of Bengal. I learned woodcarving all by myself out of sheer curiosity," Zakir said.

"I try to take inspiration for my pieces from the things I see around me, such as speed boats, national flag, aircrafts, trawlers, boats, deer and fish, etc."

"Locals often come to see my artworks and if they like them, I give them away for free. Many tourists also come here, especially in winter. They also appreciate my work. Last year, a tourist from Dhaka bought some of my artworks for Tk 22,000."

"I want to take my artworks to be exhibited... on behalf of the coastal people to whom I belong," he also said.

Alamgir Hossain, chairman of Patharghata upazila parishad, said, "We will provide him with full support to hone his skills and showcase his works."

Md Roknuzzaman, Patharghata upazila nirbahi officer, echoed him.