

AL leader blamed for lifting sand from Jamuna

Erosion may worsen as a result, fear locals

MIRZA SHAKIL, *Tangail*

Influentials with political support are extracting sand illegally from raised shoals of Jamuna river in Tangail's Bhuanpur upazila, alleged locals.

Excavators were being used to extract sand indiscriminately, especially at night, from at least 10 points on the shoals in Jagatpura, Kuthiboyra, Dakshin Jagatpura and Nalin areas under Arjuna union of the upazila, by coercing the local administration, alleged locals.

Sand is also being lifted from a shoal adjacent to a dam of Bangladesh Water Development Board stretching from Nalin to Kuthiboyra area. After extraction, the sand is carried to a part of the embankment using trucks, by cutting a part of the embankment.

In some places, the sand traders are also extracting sand and soil from cultivable lands by paying a nominal amount to the land owners.

Hundreds of truckloads of sand are being sold every day.

Locals fear the unabated illegal sand lifting will eventually worsen Jamuna river's erosion in the monsoon.

According to the Sand Quarry and Soil Management Act 2010, no underground sand or soil can be lifted by pumping

or dredging or any other means. Sand mining is prohibited near bridges, culverts, dams, barrages, embankments, roads, highways, forests, railway lines and other important public and private structures or within a minimum of one kilometre from residential areas.

Violations of the laws are punishable with imprisonment or fine or both, while dredgers, trucks and other related materials used in the offence are supposed to be seized by the authorities concerned.

"Every year, these sand lifters extract sand from the shoals. If someone does not want to give their land then they would forcibly extract sand from his land," alleged Manzur Ashraf of Jagatpura village.

"Later, during monsoon, severe erosion occurs in these areas. However, the authorities seem to have turned a blind eye to this menace," he added.

Mofazzal Hossain Sarkar of Arjuna area said, "Due to the indiscriminate sand lifting, Bhuanpur-Tarakandi dam is under threat. Some local Awami League leaders are managing the authorities concerned to carry on this sand trade worth crores of taka."

Sanwar Hossain of Jagatpura village echoed them.

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Sand being extracted illegally using an excavator on the shoals of Jamuna in Arjuna union of Tangail's Bhuanpur upazila. Locals say a group of influential people is lifting sand at nine more points in the area. PHOTO: STAR

Ctg electronics market fire under control

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A fire that broke out at the Rifle Club Electronics Market in Chattogram's New Market area yesterday evening was brought under control following three and a half hours of efforts.

Four fire engines were engaged to douse the blaze, according to Chattogram Divisional Fire Service Headquarters.

Assistant Commissioner (Kotwali Zone) Atanu Chakrabarty of Chattogram Metropolitan Police told The Daily Star, "The fire was brought under control around 10:30pm."

Witnesses said the fire originated at the UCB Bank Rifle Club branch office on the ground floor of the four-storey building around 7:00pm.

The Chittagong Rifle Club building houses hundreds of electronics shops. The reason behind the fire could not be known immediately, he added.

No casualties were reported so far.

Formulate intestate property law

Hindu community leaders urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the Hindu community yesterday reiterated their demand for eliminating discriminatory laws and formulation of Intestate Property Conservation Act.

They also demanded freeing Dhakeshwari National Temple's land from occupation at the inaugural session of the biennial national conference of Bangladesh Puja Ujapan Parishad on the Dhakeshwari temple premises.

The parishad's new committee was formed for the next two years, with journalists Bashudeb Dhar and Santosh Sharma elected president and general secretary, respectively.

Addressing the discussion, Rana Dasgupta, general secretary of Bangladesh Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikya Parishad he urged the Awami League government to fulfill the demand as the party had included the matter in their election manifesto.

AL general secretary Obaidul Quader said, "It is true that many of your demands have not been met. However, we promised to fulfill those in our election manifesto. I will

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Delay in dyke construction threatens Boro harvest

Farmers in Sunamganj say only 60pc work completed despite extended deadline, BWDB denies claims of anomalies

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, *Sylhet*

Farmers in the haor (wetland) areas under Sunamganj district have alleged that the government has failed to complete the construction and repair works of dykes for protecting croplands on time.

As a result, flash floods may cause significant damage to their Boro harvest again.

According to the officials of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), 90 percent construction and repair works of crop protection dykes were completed by the February 28 deadline and 98 percent by the extended deadline on March 7.

However, farmers and rights activists observed that only around 60 percent works have been completed by March 7, bringing allegations of negligence and low-quality work.

They also said that the government had also failed to complete the works even after extended time in the previous two years.

According to the BWDB, 591 kilometres of dykes at 38 haors in Sunamganj are being constructed and repaired under 735 projects, with an estimated budget of Tk 125 crore.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension in Sunamganj, Boro paddy is estimated to be cultivated on 223,245 hectares of land in the district this year — including 165,350 hectares in low-lying haor areas.

Located at the foothill of India's Meghalaya state, Sunamganj has a unique ecosystem due to the haors, which allow irrigation water for Boro paddy cultivation during the dry season, before being harvested within April-May.

However, excessive rainfall in Meghalaya often triggers flash floods during the harvest season, damaging the crops.

To address this, the government started constructing dykes to protect the Boro crops.

After the flash floods of 2017 that revealed the anomalies and corruption in dyke construction, the government revised the "Kajer Binimoye Taka (Kabita)" rules, dictating formation of project implementation committees by November 30 every year to

build or repair the dykes.

The new rules also stipulate that the work must be started before December 15, and completed by February 28.

Talking to this correspondent, at least 10 farmers from Dharmapasha, Madhyannagar, Jamalganj and Jagannathpur upazilas of the district said most of the dykes were not constructed or repaired timely this year.

"It has become a common practice that they

budget this year was the highest compared to previous years, the works are marred with anomalies and irregularities," said Bijon Sen Roy, general secretary of Haor Bachao Andolon's central unit.

"Visiting the dykes, we have found that the compaction is not correct, the grass is not planted, important closures are vulnerable and many other anomalies. We will take legal action against those responsible," said Bijon,



would fail to complete the work on time and get easy extension. No matter what happens, no one has ever been held accountable for such negligence," said farmer Jyotimohon Das from Jamalganj upazila.

Since December 15 last year, many allegations of anomalies in forming project committees, intentionally delaying works, and using substandard materials have surfaced.

"On field observation by our members at every ward suggest that only around 60 percent of works have been completed within the extended deadline. Given that the

also a member of the district committee for construction and repair of the dykes.

However, Mamun Howlader, executive engineer of BWDB in Sunamganj and member secretary of the district committee, refuted the allegations.

"Around 98 percent works has been completed while the finishing touches like grass plantation, correcting compaction and strengthening important parts are on progress," he added.

He also termed the allegations of irregularities baseless.

AL leader hacked to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barishal*

A local Awami League leader was hacked to death in Barishal's Hizla upazila yesterday. Police recovered the body of Jamal Majhi from a soybean field in the area.

He was the acting president of Ward-7 of Dhulkhola union Awami League.

Hizla Police Station Officer in Charge Zubair Ahmed said the body was recovered around 12:30pm.

"He was hacked to death. We can say who did it after an investigation," he added.

The OC said Saydur Rahman, another local AL activist, was assaulted on Friday night, allegedly by Jamal Majhi's son and his associates. Saydur's wife subsequently filed a complaint at the police station regarding the assault. This incident has sparked tension between the two parties since then.

Driver dies after truck rams into another

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

A truck driver died after his vehicle crashed into a parked truck in Dinajpur's Birampur upazila yesterday morning.

Shahin Hossain, 25, of Taleborpara village under Parbatipur upazila, was on his way to Dhaka on his potato-laden truck. He rammed into the parked vehicle on Dinajpur-Gobindaganj regional highway at China Mor in Birampur, said Subrata Kumar Sarkar, officer-in-charge of Birampur Police Station.

Critically injured, he was rushed to Birampur Upazila Health Complex where he succumbed to his injuries, he added.

3 brick kilns fined for using topsoil

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

A mobile court yesterday fined three brick kilns in Phulbari upazila of Dinajpur for manufacturing bricks from the topsoil collected from arable lands.

The court, led by Muhammad Zafar Arif Chowdhury, assistant commissioner (land) in the upazila administration, raided the brick kilns and fined them Tk 5 lakh.

Rahman Bricks and M Islam bricks were fined Tk 2 lakh each while Amin Bricks was fined Tk 1 lakh.

The court also suspended the brick baking at the kilns for not having the DoE certificates.

Three robbers held in Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Patuakhali*

Police arrested three robbers while they were preparing to attack a house in Nachnapara village of Patuakhali's Kalapara upazila early yesterday.

Following a tip-off, a police team raided the spot and arrested Jamal Akon, 45, of Kalapara's Chungapasha village; Shanu Howlader, 60, of Laukathi village in Sadar upazila; and Hanif Howlader, 49, of Jamura village, said Ali Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Kalapara Police Station.

They were gathering near the bamboo fence of one Zakir Khan's residence around midnight, said the OC.

Two local sharp weapons, the wooden body of an engine-run trowler, and an iron cutter were also recovered from their possession, the OC mentioned.

The arrestees are active members of an inter-district robbery gang and are accused in multiple robbery cases. They were presented before a court which sent them to jail in the afternoon, he added.



Abdul Sobhan and his wife Moyna Begum are busy making 'muri', an essential item for iftar. Like them, most households in Timirkathi of Jhalakathi's Nalchhiti -- a place known for its hand-fried puffed rice -- produce the food item during Ramadan.

PHOTO: TITU DAS