

Volunteers clean up a portion of dying Batiaghata

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

The Batiaghata canal in Khulna's Batiaghata upazila has long been choked with silt and water hyacinth. Once vital for irrigation and transport, the 200-foot-wide, 8km canal had lost its natural flow and had been near dead for nearly 15 years.

Yesterday, more than 600 volunteers from BD Clean, supported by local development organisation LoCOs, launched a clean-up drive to restore it. In the first phase, they cleared a 1.5km stretch.

Ahmed Ziaur Rahman, former Batiaghata UNO and now deputy secretary at the Energy and Mineral Resources Division, coordinated and funded the initiative using a research grant from his PhD studies.

"While working here, I saw how essential the canal was and how neglected it had become," he said.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension, the canal's revival will help several thousand farmers by improving irrigation in the dry season and storing freshwater during monsoon. Restored flow is also expected to ease seasonal water shortages.

Batiaghata UNO SM Mustafizur Rahman, along with local residents, officials, and police, supervised the effort.



Over 600 volunteers from BD Clean, supported by local development organisation LoCOs, launched a clean-up drive to revive a portion of the dying Batiaghata canal in Khulna's Batiaghata upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

RABNABAD RIVER IN PATUAKHALI

Sand lifting spree worsens erosion

Move to lease out three container terminals protested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A coalition of different political, social and cultural organisations yesterday afternoon staged demonstration at Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka in protest against the government's actions to lease out Laldiya Char, Pangaon and New Mooring container terminals to foreign companies.

The protesters also held rally and torch procession as a part of Bondar Rokkha o Corridor Birodhi Andolon (Port Protection and Anti-Corridor Movement).

They demanded cancellation of long term lease agreements involving major port facilities.

The demonstrators called for scrapping the 33-year lease of Chattogram's Laldiya Char and the 22-year lease of Pangaon Container Terminal in Keraniganj to a Danish company. They also demanded reversal of the decisions to lease out the New Mooring Container Terminal and the Bay Terminal of Chattogram Port.

The rally was presided over by Dr MA Sayeed, former president of Doctors for Health and Environment.

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, *Potuahali*

Illegal sand extraction continues unabated along the Rabnabad River in Patuakhali's Kalapara upazila, accelerating erosion and putting embankments and nearby settlements at grave risk.

Although the government has designated "Khajura" in the Andharmanik estuary as the only legal sand quarry, influential groups have long been lifting sand from other parts of the river, particularly at night.

Locals say the unauthorised dredging, ongoing for nearly eight years, has earned these groups crores of taka while depriving the state of significant revenue.

The impact has been severe. Homesteads, croplands, mosques and roads have disappeared as the river continues to consume its banks.

Nearly half of a 10-kilometre

stretch of embankment from Debpur to Karamjatola has already collapsed.

Multiple emergency protection measures using

embankment.

Md Rezaul, a shopkeeper in Karamjatola Bazar, said around 400 feet of embankment, including recently installed



PHOTO: STAR

geo bags and geo tubes have failed within months, and over 400 families have lost their homes and agricultural land. Residents fear there is no land left to construct an alternative

geo-tubes, were washed away four months ago.

"Water is now entering through the broken embankment and we are in danger again," he said, blaming

continuous sand lifting for the worsening erosion.

The Water Development Board's Kalapara office confirmed that the entire 54/A polder embankment along the Rabnabad River is eroding every year.

Despite the ban, sand continues to be transported for various projects. Md Auwal, a staffer of the vessel MV Hojrat Ali, said they have been unloading sand near Dhankhali since September 17 for a Payra Port Road project, with each trip carrying about 3,000 cubic feet of sand.

Kalapara Assistant Commissioner (Land) Md Yasir Sadek said, "Khajura is the only permitted quarry, generating around Tk 68 lakh annually. Any sand extraction elsewhere is illegal."

UNO Kawsar Hakim said he has instructed the AC (land) to take action against those extracting sand beyond the leased area.

Late referrals driving

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"Some die within hours of arrival. They often come in profound shock -- almost no blood pressure, no pulse, cold limbs, and fluid in the chest. By then, treatment makes little difference," he said.

He said patients from districts like Barishal, Pirojpur, and Barguna often begin travelling in pre-shock and reach Dhaka in full shock due to the long journey.

That is why deaths are highest at the DMCH, where many such patients are referred, he added.

Nazmul also pointed to a lack of proper dengue management training for doctors outside Dhaka, leading to fluid mismanagement and preventable deaths. Limited resources in smaller hospitals add to the challenge.

Public health expert Mushtuq Hussain stressed the need for early detection and decentralised healthcare.

"If people could test for dengue near their homes at low cost, cases would be identified earlier," he said. "Patients now have to come to large hospitals and wait long hours. By the time they arrive, the fever often subsides -- but the critical phase begins after the fever ends."

He suggested offering dengue tests at community clinics, similar to COVID-19 testing, to reduce pressure on large hospitals.

"Dhaka has almost no primary or secondary care -- only tertiary hospitals. Rural facilities exist but are poorly equipped. Strengthening care across the country is essential," he said.

PRAYER TIMING
NOVEMBER 22

| | | | | |
|-------------|-------|------|---------|------|
| Fazr | Zohr | Asr | Maghrib | Esha |
| AZAN 5-05 | 12-45 | 3-45 | 5-21 | 7-00 |
| JAMAAT 5-40 | 1-15 | 4-00 | 5-24 | 7-30 |

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Man abducted near Rohingya camp

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Cox's Bazar*

Misceants attacked a house near the Rohingya camp in West Leda of Hnila union, Teknaf, and abducted a man named Nurul Islam, 50.

According to police, armed locals and Rohingyas stormed Nurul Hasan's home around 9:00pm on Thursday. Police exchanged heavy gunfire with the attackers as they fled.

Inspector Shahiul Islam Raju, APBn in-charge of camp 24 in Leda, said, "APBn fired about 61 rounds. The attackers eventually escaped."

Kamal Hossain, Nurul's son, said miscreants fired shots when they found the door locked, then they broke through the roof and door, dragged his father out, and took him towards the hills. "They carried heavy weapons, and the shell casings recovered at the spot appeared to be from foreign-made guns," he said. The attackers also beat up family members and looted valuables.

As of last evening, APBn and Teknaf police were conducting a joint operation to rescue Nurul.

Quake jolts country

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Later, RU authorities decided to relocate the students to another dormitory, he added.

In Noakhali Science and Technology University, a chunk of plaster in a student dormitory fell off the roof following the earthquake.

However, no one was injured, said the university's Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr Mohammad Ismail.

In Chattogram city, a six-storey building -- Mostafa Hakim Star Bhaban -- in Mansurabad area tilted and leaned onto adjacent Ashraf Mansion following the quake, triggering panic among residents and prompting an immediate response from fire service

officials.

Abdullah Ashraf, owner of Ashraf Mansion, said, "The Star Bhaban was old and already slightly tilted. The quake caused its top three floors to lean onto my building. We informed the fire service and police immediately."

Fire service official Md Hanif Mia said, "We are inspecting the structure. About 10-12 families live in the tilted building. We will provide further details after the assessment."

[Our correspondents from Narsingdi, Narayanganj, Noakhali, Rajshahi University, and staff correspondent from Chattogram contributed to the report.]



Authorities conduct a drive against illegally operated battery-run auto-rickshaws in Dhaka's Science Lab area yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

A city left in panic

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In Dhaka's Khilgaon, a brick from an under-construction building fell onto a nearby two-storey structure, injuring one person. Locals assisted, and fire service units did not need to intervene.

A fire broke out at a residence in Baridhara Block-F, Road-5. Two units from the Baridhara Fire Station were deployed to extinguish the blaze. It remains unclear whether the fire was related to the earthquake.

In Swamibagh, an eight-

storey building near Mitali Bidiyapith was reported to have leaned against another structure. A fire service team from the Sutrapur station went to inspect the site.

There were also reports of damage at the office of the Chief Adviser. A team from the Satellite Fire Station visited but found no significant damage.

At Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA), plaster from the driveway in the departure area fell off during the tremor, HSIA Executive Director SM Ragib Samad told The Daily Star.

In Kalabagan, residents reported that a seven-storey building had tilted.

One unit from the Mohammadpur Fire Station responded. Officials later confirmed the building was structurally sound, and no injuries were reported. Residents had called the force in panic after the quake.

Residents across the city also shared their experiences in replies to a post on The Daily Star's Facebook page.

According to readers, a building tilted in the Mugda

Madina Bagh area, and another in Shanir Akhra was also reported to have tilted.

Readers additionally reported cracks in buildings in Kalyanpur, Bonoful Housing on Road No 1, Kusumbagh in Mirpur-1, the NAC building of North South University, a house on New Eskaton Road, several buildings near Bashhtala Mosque in South Badda, Bhuiyapara, Sipahibagh, Banasree, Boishakhi Mor in Dakshin Khan, West Rampura, Niketan, and multiple locations in Arambagh.