

## 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.

## Armed gang abducts man near Rohingya camp

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Miscreants 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 Shafiqul 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.



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

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Potuakhali

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 Yasin 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 Quake leaves a trail

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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

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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.

## 3 DU students injured

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one building in the Shamsunnahar Hall was found partially separated, according to students.

Many residents of different halls rushed downstairs in panic during the tremor.

Following the earthquake, a group of students from Haji Muhammad Mohsin Hall surrounded the 20-storey Swadhinata Bhaban, the residential building constructed for Dhaka University staff, demanding that it be allocated for students. They alleged that the existing residential halls are in such a vulnerable condition that their lives are at constant risk. They even issued an ultimatum to the vice-

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.]

chancellor in this regard.

A student leader representing the demonstrators said, "If the VC sir does not come in time and allocate Swadhinata Bhaban to us, we will move into every room of the building on our own."

Mohammad Saifullah, social welfare secretary of the Mohsin Hall Students' Union, said, "We had to jump from the fifth floor just to save our lives. We have repeatedly urged the university authorities to take action, but nothing has been done."

"If a disaster like Rana Plaza happens, will the university administration simply offer condolences and avoid responsibility?" he further questioned.



The authorities conduct a drive against battery-run auto-rickshaws that were being operated illegally in Dhaka. The photo was taken near Dhanmondi yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## A city left in panic

FROM PAGE 3

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 Kallyanpur, 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.

## Intensify efforts to protect migrants

### UN human rights experts urge Bangladesh, Malaysia

UNB, Dhaka

UN human rights experts yesterday urged both governments of Bangladesh and Malaysia to intensify their efforts to ensure that migrant workers are not criminalised or re-victimised and that fraudulent recruitment agencies and other responsible actors are held accountable.

The experts expressed renewed concern about the continued exploitation, deception, and deepening debt bondage of Bangladeshi migrant workers in Malaysia.

They urged Bangladesh to strengthen the oversight of recruitment agencies, possibly through a centralised job portal, and prohibit the collection of fees from migrant workers.

"We are deeply troubled that fraudulent recruitment and the exploitation of migrants remain widespread and systematic in Malaysia," the experts said in a statement issued from Geneva.

"These practices continue to cause significant human rights harms to affected workers and their families," said the experts who have been in contact with the governments of Malaysia and Bangladesh on these issues.

The experts are Tomoya Obokata, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences; Gehad Madi, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants; P i c h a m o n Yeophantong (Chairperson), Damilola Olawuyi (Vice Chairperson), Fernanda Hopenhaym, Lyra Jakuleviciene and Robert McCorquodale, Working Group on business and human rights.

**We are deeply troubled that fraudulent recruitment and the exploitation of migrants remain widespread and systematic in Malaysia.**

The experts noted that, according to information received, thousands of workers recruited through the Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services (BOES) remain stranded in Bangladesh or face exploitation risks in Malaysia after paying recruitment fees reportedly exceeding the official fees by more than five times.

Allegations also include confiscation of passports by employers, false job promises, discrepancies between contracts and promised employment packages, the publication of workers' passport numbers and other personal information without their consent, and the lack of access to support from responsible government agencies.

"Some migrants have reportedly been asked to make additional payments, while others have been reassigned to jobs without their consent. We have also been informed that a small number of recruitment agencies operate as a closed syndicate sustained by corruption, lack of transparency, and systemic exploitation," the experts noted.

They also received reports of workers being pressured to sign or record false declarations stating that they had only paid official fees shortly before departure.

The experts reiterated that the governments of Bangladesh and Malaysia have an obligation to ensure that labour migration is governed in a rights-based, transparent, and accountable manner.