

A Correspondent

Brahmanbaria: Extraction of sand from the Titas river in Sadar upazila goes on unabated intensifying threat of erosion in the nearby villages.

People of the villages are now passing their days amid fear that their homesteads might go into the river due to sand extraction.

Besides, due to the callous act, Akhaura Railway Station and the under-construction second bridge over the Teesta River may be affected.

Sources concerned said work is going on to build the Second Titas Bridge in Brahmanbaria on the Dhaka-Chittagong and Dhaka-Sylhet rail routes.

Though the construction firm concerned is supposed to purchase sand for the purpose of the bridge construction, sand is now being lifted from the river illegally without taking permission from the authorities concerned.

An influential quarter is involved with the illegal sand lifting which is being done in the name of river dredging.

Locals said while dredging work is done in the river, earth or sand is extracted from a large portion of the river and added that extracted sand or earth are kept on the riverbank.

But, sand is now being lifted from one point of the river day after day using high-powered dredger, they said, adding that a huge amount of sand is extracted at night.

It was found that a dredger in Akhaura part of the river near Syamnagar village of Sadar upazila.

With the dredger, sand is being lifted and dumped beside Titas Railway Bridge, the site selected for the Second Titas Bridge.

Locals said though people concerned are requested not to lift sand, they are paying no heed to that.

Director of sand lifting firm DN Com Ltd Engineer M Khorshed Alam said they have taken verbal permission from the authorities concerned for extracting sand from two kilometers area of the river.

He also said they are trying to get written permission in this regard.

However, the agitated locals on June 25 this year staged demonstration against sand extraction in Akhaura and lodged complaints to the Akhaura municipality mayor.

A resident of the municipality Tareque Hossain Bhuiyan said the width of the river near Titas Bridge is 120 feet, adding that if sand and earth are removed from foreshore or middle of the river, several villages in the vicinity of the river might be eroded into it.

General secretary of Akhaura Upazila unit Awami League M Monir Hossain Babul echoing Tareque Hossain said Akhaura Railway Station and the under-construction Second Titas Bridge will be affected by the unplanned sand extraction.

The ruling party leader said they, along with general people, are preparing to wage movement against sand lifting.

Mayor of Akhaura Municipality Takzil Khalifa Kajol said they have received letter from the deputy commissioner's office seeking their opinion about dredging in the Titas River.

The mayor said they will answer to the letter urging the DC not to allow sand extraction causing damage to the villages along the river.

Asked whether sand is being lifted legally, Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) M Khurshid Shahriar said they once stopped sand extraction from the river for not having permission from the

authorities concerned.

“I don’t know whether permission to extract sand was given later,” he added.

Contacted, DC Dr M Mosharraf Hossain said earlier Water Development Board planned to excavate Titas, adding that if the dredging work is done through the ongoing sand lifting, the government will be benefited.

He mentioned that sand is now being lifted from the river on test basis.

The DC also stressed the need for extraction of sand as per the WDB’s design so that people do not become affected by it.