

Bangladesh loses territory, India gains

Eight km lost in Satkhira as WDB fails to check river erosion, Indians build brick kilns on shoals



PHOTO: ABU AHMED

Newly emerged shoals in the Ichchamati river at Shamshearnagar in 24 Parganas district in West Bengal (left) and people at Komorpur village in Debhata in Satkhira dumping trees in a desperate attempt to check erosion of the river.

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Bangladesh is losing territory as lands are disappearing into bordering Ichchamati and Sonai rivers in Satkhira and shoals are appearing in the Indian side.

Satkhira's map has changed as seven to eight kilometre area in Kolaroa, Debhata and Kaliganj upazilas have disappeared over the years due to continuous erosion by the two rivers and change of their courses.

On the other hand, landmasses have been added to Indian territory following emergence of shoals on

the other side of the rivers.

The Sonai river earlier flowed through Kolaroa upazila but is a common river now as it moved inside, swallowing lands in Bangladesh and forming landmasses on the Indian side adjoining 24 Parganas district in West Bengal.

Indians have built scores of brick kilns on the newly emerged shoals in the river, which was part of Bangladesh earlier. The brick kilns are visible from this side of the river.

The Ichchamati still flows inside Bangladesh but is continuously devouring lands and forming shoals

in 24 Parganas district.

This happened as the Water Development Board (WDB) failed to check erosion because its projects were inappropriate and short-sighted, sources said. The WDB takes up projects almost every year but those are not even properly implemented due to corruption by a section of officials, they alleged.

On the other hand, India checked erosion on the other sides of rivers, which helped accrue landmasses, they said. They have implemented long-term projects which checked erosion and helped formation of shoals.

The continuous erosion by Ichchamati has now taken a serious turn in Haroddah, Komorpur, Padma Shakhra, Sreerampur and adjoining villages in the sadar upazila and at Bhatshala, Bashantapur, Sreepur and Shushilgati villages in Debhata upazila.

Komorpur and Bhatshala villages will disappear any time if the erosion by the Ichchamati continues at its present ferocity, villagers said.

The river has already devoured scores of homesteads, educational and religious institutions.

They said Shibnagar village was part of Bangladesh earlier. Most area of the village has now disappeared into Ichchamati and shoals have appeared in Shamshearnagar village in 24 Parganas district as the river is changing its course due to erosion.

People in Khanjia and adjoining villages in Kaliganj said they are panicked by the Ichchamati erosion this year.

The number of people affected by the erosion is anybody's guess. Some say it would be over 50,000.

Mohalchhari still desolate, panicky

We can not prepare list of affected people as they stay away, says UNO

MONIRUL ALAM, MONIRUL ISLAM MONU AND JOGLUL HASAN, back from Mohalchhari

Normalcy is yet to return in Mohalchhari villages 24 days after the attacks and arson.

During daytime, villagers come to guard their homesteads, but leave for relatives' houses before sunset, fearing fresh attacks as none of the attackers have been arrested even after filing of six cases so far.

Many of the villagers have moved to Rangamati and Khagrachhari towns.

A group of newsmen during a visit to the area on Friday saw a few of the affected tribesmen raising their houses anew.

At least 20 tribesmen were injured and about 400 houses gutted in the August 26 attack and arson, allegedly by Bangalee settlers. About 2000 tribesmen have been made homeless in the attacks, according official data.

"We have lost everything and got no relief to build houses, and nothing to eat", said 70 year-old Mongsha Thoai Marma at Babupara village.

"I got only 35 bamboos from Santu Larma and his party men. Is it enough for raising a house?" Santu Larma is the chief of Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS)

Two of my sons fled home fearing arrest as police filed a case against some tribesmen after the incident, he added.

Mohalchhari Upazila Nirbahee Officer (UNO) Khizir Ahmed said, majority of the affected people did not return to their homes.

"We can't finalise the list of affected people as they are still staying away," he said.

He visited the affected area on Wednesday and Friday.

At Lemochhari village, this correspondent found no member of any of the 75 families. At Babupara village, two families were seen



PHOTO: STAR

Panicked and bewildered: Two girls of a Marma family standing in front of their destroyed houses at Babupara village in Mohalchhari. Villagers come to see their homesteads during daytime and leave for relatives' houses at sunset. The photo was taken on Friday.

trying to raise thatched houses anew.

HSC (Higher Secondary Certificate) candidate Sunita Chakma was sifting through the ashes of their gutted house to find a photo of her father who died in 1995.

"How I'll buy books again?", Sunita lamented.

Sunita is afraid of settlers living at nearby Chongrachhari village. "I apprehend attack from them again".

At Lemuchhari, villagers were lazing around Potpoitya club and guarding their homesteads. They said they will return to their relatives' houses at sunset.

At the club, most of the people including some women and children were starving.

They said they are afraid as settlers are still at cluster villages in nearby hills. None of the settlers has been arrested despite filing of cases, they said.

"We will be in panic till the settlers are there", said Nituly Chakma.

Kisholoy Chakma who filed a case alleged that none of the "attackers" was arrested though a case was filed specifying names.

Meantime, two more cases one for murdering a child and the other for alleged rape of an indigenous woman have been filed against nine settlers, five persons dressed in khaki dress and one Rana Barua, police said. These raised the number of cases to six since the August 26 incident, he said.

Mohalchhari tribesmen do not come to Mohalchhari bazaar since the incident, said Belal Hossain, secretary of the traders association at the market.

An amount of Tk 30 lakh has been sanctioned by the Prime Minister for distribution among the affected people as house building relief.

When contacted, an army officer seeking anonymity said, "We hope to begin distribution of the money in a couple of day."

The UNO said the district administration has taken four months' preparation to supply rice and wheat among the affected people. The administration is distributing four kgs of rice to each adult and two kgs to others.

Pirates kidnap 3 fishermen, toss 13 into Bay

BSS, Barguna

A gang of pirates looted nets, fishes and valuables worth over Tk. one lakh and abducted three fishermen at Boya, 120 kilometers off the Patharghata coast in the Bay of Bengal on September 18.

Trawler Owners Association (TOA) sources said the pirates numbering about 20 threw at least 13 fishermen into the Bay during the heist.

The sources said the pirates attacked three fishing trawlers-FB Shahin, FB Noor-e-Taz and FB Salimar-when they were returning from deep sea after fishing.

The abducted fishermen are Aziz, Rahim and Badal and those thrown into the Bay are Chunnu, Siddique, Halim Delwar, Nuru, Yusuf, Delwar, Zakir, Nasir, Halim, Khalil, Abbas, and Salam.

3 abducted for ransom in Char Cleark

A CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Three persons including a housewife were kidnapped by jungle bandits for ransom from Char Cleark in two incidents on Thursday night.

Police said trader Mahfuzur Rahamn, 45, was kidnapped while he was returning home from market. He was taken to a forest.

Two others-- Nager Ahmed, 55 and his wife Nur Nahar, 43, were kidnapped from their house in another incident on the same night.

The kidnapers later demanded Tk one lakh ransom from their relatives over mobile phone, police said.

Noakhali Assitant Police Superintendent (ASP) Motiur Rahman said he has asked Char Jabbar thana OC Hibibur Rahman to mobilise forces and take all steps to rescue the victims.

Extortion charge

No action yet against 5 cops held from Meghna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

No departmental action was taken against the five policemen held on Wednesday by Navy for alleged extortion on the Meghna estuary. Sources said they were not taken into custody.

The Navy handed over the policemen to Ramgati thana in Noakhali. Navy official MN Islam had filed a case against the five policemen.

But Additional Superintendent of Police of Bhola Lutfar Rahman Khan reportedly went to Ramgati and brought them back to Bhola on Friday.

The five policemen were reportedly being treated at Bhola Hospital for injuries from alleged assault on board BNS Barkat after they were caught.

The policemen were patrolling the river when they were caught along with 14 people for alleged toll collection.

Sources said tension was prevailing in Bhola Police Circle following the incidents.

Bhola Police Superintendent Mallick Fakrul Islam said allegations against the policemen are being investigated and departmental action would be taken if they are found guilty.

Meanwhile, the Navy has stepped up its special operation against pirates on the Meghna.

BNS Barkat was joined by another navy patrol boat on Saturday to expedite the anti-piracy drive.

Chowmuhani Bazar to be drug-free in 3 months

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Chowmuhani Bazar, the main market in Noakhali district, will be drug-free within three month.

A joint declaration to this effect was made by the upazila Poursabha and police at a citizens' meeting held at Chowmuhani Reporter's Unity office.

Local weekly the Choloman Noakhali and the Massline Media Center (MMC), organised the meeting on September 17.

The meeting, attended by Poursabha Chairman Abdur Rahim, Begumgonj Upazila Nirbahi

Officer (UNO) Helal Uddin, Begumgonj thana OC Rabipul Islam Chowdhury, unanimously adopted the declaration and chalked out a three-month programme to make Chowmuhani Bazar drug-free.

The largely attended meeting was chaired by Mahmudul Hasan Editor of Chaloman Noakhali. Abu Naser Monju, correspondent of MMC, journalist Haralal Bhowmik, Hanif Bhagun, Mizanur Rahman, Saifulah Kamrul, SM Jamal, MG Babar and others spoke.

The speakers said they will make all out efforts to make the area drug-free and contain crimes.



PHOTO: STAR

Chowmuhani Municipality Chairman advocate Abdur Rahim addressing the anti-drug meeting held at the Reporters Unity office.

Dr. Mukharjee murder

Rally held at Jhenidah, one-hour strike at hospitals till Thursday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Wearing black badges, doctors and health workers in Jhenidah yesterday began a six-day programme of one-hour token strike daily at hospitals, demanding arrest of the killers of elderly doctor SK Mukharjee.

The programme will continue till Thursday.

On Saturday, they brought out a mourning procession at Jhenadah town and submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner to press their demand.

Dr Mukharjee, also founding member of Khulna divisional unit of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA), was stabbed to death by miscreants at his house in Jhenidah town on Thursday.

The Jhenidah district unit of Puja Udgapan Parishad and BMA have also taken up separate programmes to mourn his death and demand arrest of the killers.

Meanwhile, there has been no headway in the investigation into the killing. None has been arrested.

According to Jhenaidha Police Superintendent, there could be two reasons for the murder. One is his reported refusal to pay Tk 4 lakh toll to extremists and the other is alleged land dispute with his relatives.

But the murder is non-political, he said.

Khulna district unit of Puja Udgapan Parishad has also demanded arrest of the killers.

Oil pilferage from pipeline

Four including GTCL deputy manager suspended

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bbaria

Four officials including a deputy manager of Gas Transmit Company Limited (GTCL) have been suspended for alleged negligence in duty.

The suspension on Friday followed frequent pilferage of unrefined oil from Ashuganj section of the 175 km Koilastila-Ashuganj-Brahmanbaria pipeline of the National Grid.

The three others suspended are an engineer and two employees of GTCL, company sources said.

An organised gang had been stealing unrefined oil for long by making holes in the pipeline.

High officials of GTCL during a recent visit detected such a hole in the pipeline at Sunarapur in Ashuganj, through which 1300 litres of oil were stolen, the sources said.

From July 1 to July 6, at least 1,95,500 litres of oil worth Tk 20,52,750 were stolen.

Several cases were filed with Ashuganj and Brahmanbaria police stations regarding the pilferage, but to no effect, they said.

SNAPS

2 get 7 yrs' RI for acid attack

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two persons have been sentenced to seven years imprisonment for throwing acid on a woman.

Judge Fazlul Karim of the Metropolitan Session's Judge's Court gave the punishment to Md Ismail and Abdul Mannan for throwing acid on one Anowara Begum.

She was a witness in a case filed in connection with throwing acid on a teenager, Baby Akter.

Baby Akter later succumbed to his injury, but all the persons accused in the case were acquitted. After acquittal, Ismail and Mannan threw acid on Anowara.

Man to die for killing wife at Cox's Bazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A court here on Saturday sentenced a man to death for killing his wife.

Judge Motazidur Rahman of the Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court handed down the punishment to Shamsul Alam.

Alam, with the help of his second wife Halima Begum, beat and hacked to death his first wife Zaheda Begum at Ghonarpara in the town on July 2, 1998.

Rally at RU to press demands

A RU CORRESPONDENT

The Samajtrantik Chhatra Front (SCF) at Rajshahi University (RU) brought out a procession and held a rally in front of the Central Library on Saturday to press their ten-point demand.

The demands include construction of a 50-bed hospital for RU students, solution of accommodation crisis at halls, and purchase of new buses for students.

They submitted a memorandum to the Vice-chancellor at his office.

2 muggers, 'listed criminal' caught in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

People caught two alleged muggers, while police arrested a 'listed criminal' in the city on Friday and Saturday.

Police and witnesses said Md Ibrahim, 24, was caught by people while he was mugging at Rahatterpole under Chandgaon thana with a light gun on Saturday.

He was beaten up by a mob and handed over to police. Ibrahim's accomplices managed to flee.

In another incident, people held Abdul Aziz, 26, with an LG white he was preparing for mugging at SS Khaled Road under Kotwali Police Station on Friday night. He was handed over to police.

The Detective Branch of police in a raid arrested Md Iqbal, 25, a CMP (Chittagong Metropolitan Police)-listed criminal from Purba Madarbari under Double Mooring thana on Friday.



PHOTO: STAR

A partial view of the meeting of headmasters of school and their governing body chiefs, held at Rangpur High School.

Rajshahi Board Chairman warns at headmasters' meeting Improve or lose MPO

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

The chairman of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board, Rajshahi has warned of action against 35 high schools under the board if they do not improve their performance.

Otherwise, their MPOs (monthly pay orders) will be cancelled, Prof Nazrul Islam, said at a meeting of headmasters and governing body chiefs of schools under the Board.

The meeting was attended by at least 70 headmasters and managing committee chiefs of 35 high schools, particularly those which did miserably results in the last SSC examination. In some of the schools, only five percent of the examinees passed.

The meeting was held at Rangpur High School on Friday.

The Board chairman said the bad results are only due to negligence of the teachers. He advised them to sincerely follow some guidelines while taking classes, to take monthly or quarterly examinations and ensure academic atmosphere at schools.

He also advised the governing body members to visit schools and appoint qualified teachers.

Presided by Yasin Ali, Headmaster of Rangpur High School, the meeting was addressed by, among others, Quddus Ali, deputy director of the Board, Liakot Ali Badal, secretary of Rangpur Press Club and some of the teachers.