

GATES OF GOJALDOBA BARRAGE IN INDIA OPENED
Thousands marooned as
Teesta crosses danger mark

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

At least 10,000 people have become marooned in Teesta shoals and low lying areas of Dimla and Jaldhaka upazilas as the river swelled following opening of all gates of Gajoldoba barrage in the upstream in India.

The river started swelling Wednesday when the gates were opened to release water of rein-fed rivers across the border. Water Development Board officials in Dimla said.

Indian authorities did not give any prior information to Bangladeshi officials at Dalia before opening all the gates of Gajoldoba barrage, they said.

The river was flowing 3 cm above the danger mark at Teesta barrage point yesterday, WDB Executive Engineer in Dalia Atiqur Rahman said.

With the rise of Teesta, all its tributaries in Nilphamari including Charal Kanta, Deunai, Buri Teesta, Buri Khora, Jamuneswari and Panga have also swelled, inundating vast areas.

The worst affected villages are Purba Kharbari, Char Khari Bari, Kisamot Chhatnai, Doholpara, Baishpukur, Bhasanir Char, Fakrater Char, Jharsingesswar in Dimla upazila and Bhavan Chur and Gopaljhar in Jaldhaka upazila.

Most of the houses in those areas have gone under 2 to 3 feet

water, local officials said.

The heavy current of water has made the Teesta embankment vulnerable at Bhavan Char and Gopal Jhar points in Jaldhaka upazila, WDB officials said.

The main embankment is also being affected at Jharsingesswar village in Dimla. Concrete blocks are being dumped to protect it, they said.

If the embankment is damaged, more areas in Jaldhaka and Dimla upazilas will go under water.

About 200 families have shifted to safer places on the right embankment of Teesta river and to nearby schools and madrasahs, upazila administration officials said.

Crisis of drinking water and food

is prevailing in the affected areas. The government has allotted 10 tonnes of rice for the affected people but it is yet to be distributed, they said.

Dimla Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mezbahul Haque visited the affected areas and told the affected people that all possible steps would be taken to help them.

Atiqur Rahman said that there is no possibility of the Teesta barrage being effected by the sudden onrush of water.

Other sources however said the remote controlled automatic switching system to regulate gates of the Teesta barrage is out of order for long. These are being regulated manually, now.



PHOTO: STAR

An affected family moving to safety as Teesta flooded Dimla and Jaldhaka upazilas in Nilphamari.

SSC EXAM
Patuakhali tops
the list in
Barisal board

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Patuakhali topped the list in this year's Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination from Barisal Education Board.

According to gazette of the board, 6,075 examinees passed in the examination and the percentage of pass is 61.25 in the district.

Barguna secured second position where 3,026 examinees passed and the pass percentage is 58.70. Barisal obtained third place where 12,431 examinees passed and the pass percentage is 58.68. A total of 4,528 passed from Pirojpur district which secured fourth place. The percentage of pass is 58.20. Bhola and Jhalakathi obtained fifth and sixth places having percentage of pass of 58.02 and 55.02 respectively.

No water supply in Patuakhali town for 10 days

Load shedding, low voltage keep pumps inoperative

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

About 70,000 people are suffering a lot as there is no water supply in the town for the last 10 days.

The generator of the main water pump has become inoperative due to lack of supply of adequate power from the national grid, pourasabha sources said. The Danida-assisted main water pump installed on the pourasabha office premises remained stopped from June 20. The auto-generators became inoperative for failure of the Power Development Board (PDB) to supply adequate power required for the purpose.

Usually, water is stored in the overhead tank with a capacity of 7-lakh litre from the pump although the tank supplies only two-thirds of water in the town areas.

Nazrul Islam, a pump operator, said that 360 voltage power is required for operating the main pump but due to poor power supply the pump could not be operated.

This has resulted in sufferings of people living in Pura Bazar, Kathpatti, College Road, Muslim Para, Munsef Para, Nabab Para, Shimulbagh, Adalat Para, Chalk Bazar and Sabujbagh areas. The people are now collecting drinking

water from deep tube-wells installed in different schools and colleges.

PDB sources said, 'We get only 10 megawatt of power in Patuakhali town although there is a demand for 27 megawatt of power.' 'Because of low voltage, people's sufferings increased manifold for the last 10 days,' he said.

On contact, an official of Patuakhali Pourasabha Water and Sanitation Department said 'We do not supply water in the town on emergency basis as we have no water van.' 'This has multiplied sufferings of 70,000 out of one lakh people living in the town', he added.

Attack on
newsmen
protested in
Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Bangabandhu Shishu Kishore Mela held a protest rally and formed a human chain in front of the Deputy Commissioner's (DC) office here condemning attack on 20 journalists including The Bangladesh Observer editor Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury by the ruling party cadres in Kushtia recently.

The rally was presided by Shishu Kishore Mela president Monsur Ahmed while former lawmaker and district Awami League (AL) president Dipankar Talukder was present as chief guest.

Speakers vehemently condemned the heinous attack and demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment to the culprits. They alleged that the ruling party cadres launched the barbaric attack by order of a lawmaker in a pre-planned way after publication of several stories on his misdeeds. They vowed to fight with their pens against terrorism and corruption in future.

Among others, Awami League leader Md Kamal, Rangamati Press Club president Sunil Kanti Dey, The Daily Giridarpan editor AKM Moksud Ahmed, educationist Dr Alo Rani Aich and Advocate Poritosh Kumar Datta addressed the rally.

Toll demanded
from two high
officials in
Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Outlaws belonging to Janajuddho faction of Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) have demanded tolls from two high ranking government officials in Khulna city.

The outlaws have threatened to kill the officials for failing to pay demanded tolls.

According to police, PBCP operatives demanded Tk 5 lakh from Assistant Director of Manpower Bureau, Md Shaheb Ali. They demanded the toll over telephone at 9-30 am Thursday and threatened him with death if the amount is not paid by Friday night.

The Executive Engineer of Bagerhat PDB office Shaikh Ahmed Faruque Hossain who resides in Khulna city received death threats thrice on Thursday over land and cell phones for not paying Tk 5 lakh as toll demanded on the night of June 27.

He filed a general diary with Khulna thana on Wednesday night seeking security of his life.

Tolls are being demanded on pretext of providing treatment to PBCP cadres injured in encounter with police in different areas of south-western districts, police said.



PHOTO: STAR

Bangabandhu Shishu Kishore Mela held a rally in Rangamati on Thursday protesting the attack on newsmen in Kushtia recently.

Rangpur sugar mill reopens
tomorrow after two years

REZAUL HUQ, Gaibandha

Rangpur Sugar Mills in Mohimaganj, the lone heavy industry in Gaibandha district, will reopen tomorrow after closure for about two years.

The decision was taken at a high profile meeting held at the head office of Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation in Dhaka, official sources here said.

The meeting decided that skilled workers will be recruited and those who lost job due to closure or were retrenched will be given preference in fresh recruitment, Managing Director of the mill Mahfuzul Aziz told this correspondent.

Initially, about 100 skilled workers will be recruited for doing preparatory work for opening, he said.

"It would not be possible to go into production now as a lot of things

have to be done. Production will resume in next crushing session", he said.

But work to assist and motivate cane growers under a 'cane development assistant (CDA)' programme will start soon after reopening, he said.

The mill will need a total overhauling of machines as those remained inoperative for two years and regular maintenance of equipment was absent. All these will be started this month, the MD said.

The government closed the mill on March 31, 2004 due to recurring losses and placed it under the disposal of the Privatization Board for sale. But no private entrepreneur came forward to buy it.

After its closure, jobless workers and sugarcane farmers staged demonstrations for its reopening. They held rallies, brought out pro-

cessions and staged hunger strike. The news of its reopening created a great enthusiasm in the area and people brought out processions hailing the decision.

The mill's closure made about 1200 workers unemployed and over 25,000 farmers abandoned sugarcane cultivation.

It was a conspiracy to close the mill, said Abdul Matin, president of the workers union of the mill while talking to this correspondent.

Farmers were eagerly awaiting reopening of the mill, Jinnath Ali, president of cane growers association said.

"I am very happy that the mill is being reopened", said Shamim Kaiser Linkon, lawmaker from Gaibandha-4 constituency.

Ruling alliance plans
presidential form
of govt: Nasim

A CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Former home minister and Awami League (AL) leader Mohammad Nasim yesterday said there will be no election in the country without reforms to the caretaker system and the election commission proposed by the opposition.

"The BNP-Jamaat alliance government has adopted a dilly-dally tactics regarding reform talks with a view to holding the next parliamentary election without reforms just to cling to power", he said.

The 14-party opposition alliance will not allow holding of polls without reforms as those are now people's demands, he said. Awami League will not betray with the people, he said addressing a public meeting at Shatbaria College ground in Sukanagar upazila.

The front ranking AL leader also claimed that he ruling alliance is planning to switch over to presidential system of government to cling to power because they know people will not vote them in next polls.

The election commission is adamant to update the voter list

without going house to house because it has tacit approval of the government on the issue.

"A voter list prepared thus will be fake. This is part of a conspiracy to hold a farcical election. We, taking the people along, will resist the evil move", Nasim said.

Talking on the issue of Islamist militants, the former home minister said the arrest of Shaikh Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai is an eyewash because their godfathers in the government are untouched.

The rise of militants started in the country after takeover by the BNP-Jamaat government.

Awami League on several occasions pointed to the rise of militants but Jamaat leaders brushed aside those, saying Basnla Bhai was a creation of the media.

With Sukanagar upazila AL president Md Abul Kashim in the chair, the meeting was also addressed by Dr Abul Barakat, Secretary of Bangladesh Economic Association, Mirza Abdul Jalil, president AL's peasants front Krishok League, and Pabna AL secretary Shamsul Haque Tuku.

FISHERY DEVELOPMENT
Workshop on
media role held
in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A two-day workshop 'Role of media in expanding fish farming', organised by Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute (BFRI), Mymensingh, concluded here on Thursday.

Over 40 journalists took part in the workshop.

Speaking at the concluding session, BFRI Director General Dr. MA Majid said fish production can be doubled in Mymensingh if scientific methods are applied and all the water bodies are utilised. With this end in view, BFRI is training fish farmers in large numbers every year.

Response from farmers is encouraging as pisciculture is more profitable than growing crops. Fish farmers should be given assistance by the government, he said.

The workshop was also addressed by BFRI Director Dr. MG Hussain, Dr Mohammed Noorullah, Dr Md Shaha Ali, Md Lokman Ali, Md Jaher, Dr Aminur Rahman, Dr AHM Kohinor, Mymensingh Press Club Secretary Ataul Karim Khokon and journalist Mosharraf Hossain.

They said Mymensingh region is a prospective zone for fish culture because of a large number of natural water bodies.

11 get life in Pabna
double murder case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rajshahi Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal sentenced 11 persons to life term imprisonment in a double murder case of Ataikula in Pabna.

Saiful Biswas Mantu, Hedayet Ullah, Khalek, Nazrul Islam, Siddik, Bhola, Shafi, Lokman, Mahtab, Golzar Hossain and Barek were convicted for killing BNP leader Habibur Rahman Bulu and Ayub Ali at Ataikula on May 12, 2004. Of them,

Mantu and Bhola are absconding. Bulu's son and BNP Ataikula thana convenor Rabiul Islam filed a case while police framed charges against 30 persons.

The court asked the convicts to pay fines, in default, to suffer imprisonment for more than three years each.

Tribunal judge AFM Aminul Islam delivered the judgement on Wednesday. He acquitted 19 accused.

Tk 80 lakhtrees sold
at Tk 9 lakh in Bogra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Some officials of forest and roads and highways (R&H) departments have illegally sold a large number of timber trees in Bogra, said a district administration official.

Deputy Commissioner Abdul Manna formed a three-member committee headed by Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) to probe the alleged irregularities.

Shafiqul Islam, sub-divisional engineer of Bogra Division R&H said, some officials of arboriculture wing of the department sold several thousand timber trees along the Bogra-Chandaicona road to some contractors with out any tender.

Shariakandi Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Ferdus Alam, said at least 8,500 timber trees of forest department in Dhara Borasha Char in the upazil, worth about Tk 80 lakh were sold to some influential people at only Tk 9.65 lakh.

A member of the probe committee seeking anonymity said most of the trees were over 12-year old.

Sources at the R&H office said that at least 7,000 timber trees were cut along the 34 kilometre Bogra-Chandaicona road illegally in connivance with some officials of the arboriculture wing while a tender was floated few days ago to sell only 500 dead trees.

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