

Tk 180 cr Flood Action Plan taken up in Jamalpur dist

From Our Correspondent

JAMALPUR, July 29: A five year flood action programme has been taken up by Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) at an estimated cost of Taka 180 crore to save Jamalpur district and its adjoining areas from erosion, flood, water logging and for dredging of the river Brahmaputra and Jamuna. A total of 631000 people of the district will benefit from the project, it is learnt.

The execution of the project will start from the current fiscal year 1994-95 while French government and European Economic Commission (EEC) are likely to provide funds for its implementation.

The project, covering an area of 92,000 hectares of land of Madarganj, Melanda, Islampur, Dewanganj, Sarishabari and Jamalpur sardar thanas, will protect from flooding of irrigation facilities to 66000 hectares of crop land and generate fisheries development projects.

Three thanas of Phulchhari in Gaibandha district, Sariakandi in Bogra district and Kazipur in Serajganj district would ultimately be included in the project, according to the official sources.

The project includes pilot irrigation project on 5000

hectares of land, 108 kilometres of grain irrigation project, 125km long control dam, four main project structures, 55 project structures, 70 controlling structures, 150 culverts and 50 rehabilitation structures.

The plan will generate employment opportunities to 631,000 local people particularly the distressed women and the poor. In the project areas, arrangements will be made for cultivation of vegetables and poultry farming for the landless people.

With the implementation of the project, the physical condition of the area will be developed to a great extent and massive tree plantation and afforestation programme will be taken up to maintain ecological balance.

Meanwhile, measures have been taken up to protect several important markets, Zeal Bangla Sugar Mills, Jamuna fertilizer factory, Bahadurabad ghat, Sirajgang railway ferry ghat, Jagannath railway ferry ghat from erosion of the rivers.

The executive engineer of BWDB, Tangail Zone told this correspondent that protection structures would be built in the areas. Implementation of the scheme would remove the threat of erosion in the district, he added.

The main land area of the

project includes 123,000 households which are likely to be protected through construction of the embankments under the project.

About 50 per cent people of the project area have no land while some 37 per cent have less than one hectare to earn their livelihood. The labour force has been estimated around 230,000 of whom 22 per cent have work while 48 per cent are underemployed throughout the year.

A drainage system will be developed in the main land of the project area with the Mardardha Chatal rivers acting as main drain connecting a number of secondary natural drains located in the eastern part of the project area.

The fisherries sector will have an important role in the economic context of the Jamalpur flood control action programme. The various water resources will be utilised for fish production.

The site of flood protection embankments is planned such a way as to protect a maximum percentage of the agriculture land, villages, railway lines. However placing of the embankment near the Jamuna river and the old Brahmaputra will have limited risk of bank erosion due to the shifting of the major flood channels and creation of new channels.

Cattle diseases break out in Jamalpur

From Our Correspondent

JAMALPUR, July 29: Different kinds of cattle diseases have broken out in the district. Many cattle have been attacked with these diseases in all the seven thanas of the district. The badly affected thanas are: Islampur, Dewanganj, Melanda, Madarganj and Sarishabari.

According to an unofficial source, at least 250 cattle died of the diseases locally known as "golafula, khura and badeera" which has broken out in an epidemic from the disease cripples the cattle due to infection in jaws and hoofs.

About 3000 cattle are suffering from these diseases in different villages of the district.

Most of the cattle died due to wrong treatment by unqualified veterinary doctors, compounder kabiraj and field assistants of health department, it is alleged.

Farmers alleged that local livestock department did not take any measures in this regard.

The field staff of local livestock department, however, said that the farmers were unwilling to vaccinate their cattlehead.

On the other hand farmers alleged that field assistants were reluctant to vaccinate cattle or poultry birds without payment.

Emphasis given on female education: Sircar

KERANIGANJ, July 29: The present government has given emphasis on female education and already launched stipend programme for female students at secondary and madrasa levels, said Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar here on Tuesday, reports UNB.

He also said, the present democratic government is implementing a gigantic programme for overall improvement of the education system of the country.

The Minister was addressing as chief guest at a fresher's reception and farewell function of Keraniganj Mohila College.

Presided over by chairman of college's Managing Committee and DUCSU VP Amanullah Aman MP, the function was addressed, among others, by

Redigging of two canals ends in Barisal

BARISAL, July 29: Re-digging of two canals in two thanas of Barisal district was completed at an allocation of about 316 metric tons of wheat in the last fiscal year, reports BSS.

According to an official source, 75 per cent of the work was done on the basis of Food-for-Work Programme and 25 per cent on the basis of voluntary mass participation of the people.

JCD leader Nasiruddin Pintu, teacher of the college Rebeka Sultana, president of thana BNP Nazimuddin Ahmed and secretary Wahiduzzaman Miski and secretary of Dhaka BNP Prof Mohiuddin Ahmed.

Referring to the government steps towards reaching the opportunity of higher education to the door-steps of the rural people, the minister said, a programme has been taken to develop 16 education institutions by 1994 in each thana of the country.

He also said, BNP government has already fulfilled 80 per cent of its election commitments and created a new chapter in the history of development. He said some political parties are trying to hinder the uplift and democratic process through creating issues in the name of so-called care-taker government.

He said, the concept of care-taker government is contradictory to democracy and constitution. He called upon the students, teachers and guardians to forge greater national unity for consolidating democracy.

Later, the minister inaugurated college road from Zinjira to Mollarhat and visited Zinjira PM Girls' High School, said an official handout.

During the visit, the minister assured of providing necessary help to construct science building of Zinjira Mahila College and develop the Zinjira PM Girls' High School.

District roundup

LALMONIRHAT

One electrocuted

July 29: A boy of Mohishkhocha village in Aditmari Thana met the tragic end of his life on July 20 while he was going to enjoy a show on VCR at a nearby house, reports UNB.

Police said the victim, Matiar Rahman, 12 died on the spot when he came in contact with a live electric wire lying near a room. A group of youths arranged the VCR show taking illegal connection from the nearby electric line.

Meanwhile, police recovered body of an unidentified young woman from a jute field of Bhadai village in the same thana on the same day.

CHANDPUR

35 electric connections snapped

July 29: Mobile Court of Power Development Board of the district has snapped 35 illegal electric connections and filed cases against 10 people and arrested one person for illegal use of electricity, reports UNB.

The worst affected thanas are Katia, Pakundi, Sadar, Karmang and Hossainpur. Official sources confirmed that crop on about 707 hectares of land have been damaged by pest invasion, locally known as Mazra, Pamri, and Bichha till July 15.

NARAIL

Hundreds attacked with viral fever

July 29: Viral fever has broken out in an alarming form and attacked hundreds of people both in the rural and urban areas of the district causing panic among the people, reports UNB.

Everyday patients from flung areas of sadar, Lohagora and Kalla thanas are pouring to the thana health complexes and hospitals for treatment.

Local physicians said there is no medicine for the fever which makes the patients physically weak.

KESHOREGANJ

Crops affected by pest attack

July 29: Standing jute and aus crops on about 4000 hectares of land in ten thanas have been seriously affected due to sudden attack by pest creating panic among the farmers, reports UNB.

The worst affected thanas are Katia, Pakundi, Sadar, Karmang and Hossainpur. Official sources confirmed that crop on about 707 hectares of land have been damaged by pest invasion, locally known as Mazra, Pamri, and Bichha till July 15.

poor as to require production of a second crop. However, BARD's irrigation programmes proved that the vast tract of land left unutilised were worth using during the dry season. Use of deep tubewells produced bumper IRRI paddy. The economic condition of the farmers changed overnight. A gap was prevailing among the villagers. Communication hardly played any role. To close this gap the concept of cooperatives came into being. It started with a simple idea of doing anything collectively having mutual understanding. The farmers in the rural areas mostly faced fund constraint which also stood in the way of large-scale production. Agricultural loan did not exist then. The idea of cooperatives gave a new life to agriculture. Farmers accumulated money by making weekly savings of their own. An idea of common welfare was created. This became very popular and it soon spread in the neighbouring villages.

The village cooperatives set in motion the gradual disappearance of the moneylenders or *mahajans*. The method of farming also changed. With large fund in hand the farmers introduced mechanised farming. The socio-economic condition of the villagers changed with the introduction of village cooperatives. Today these cooperatives are not confined to farming. Rural education on health and nutrition, youth programmes, family planning, childcare, women's uplift, poultry and dairy farming and school works programme are some of the projects developed by BARD.

Rural development has taken a new shape. Most of the programmes implemented are aimed at generating employment. Many non-government organisations (NGOs) are, in fact, implementing these BARD programmes. BRAC, CIDA, SIDA, OXFAM, DANIDA, PROSHIKHA are some of the leading NGOs which are implementing rural uplift programmes throughout the country.

The Comilla Academy will continue to benefit people like Shahera Akter and Papiya Sarker and BARD's contributions in the field of rural development will be recalled in many ways.

Contributions of BARD in poverty alleviation

By Naimul Haq

When the action programme gives encouraging results pilot projects are initiated for further experiments in a few more areas. If the pilot projects produce successful results a model is prepared to be replicated elsewhere in the country.



Shahera Akter joined the cooperative in late 1993 in Shahpur village which had already some 230 members. Her samity started with only 41 members but has now 346 members. Each week the members gather to review progress of the ongoing projects and discuss new ideas. Each member has to deposit five taka every week to the samity account as part of compulsory saving. "We have collected so far over Tk 1,90,000. We now have Tk 85,000 in our bank account, the rest of the money was given to members."

Agriculture was identified as the base through which rehabilitation of landless people in the rural areas was possible. So, agro-based work or projects were taken up by the academy. This was identified as BARD's prime area of activity.

Her family members asked her not to get involved in out door work as she was still single. Akter strictly followed "purdah" while attending weekly meetings of her samity. This way, gradually, she was able to convince her family members and neighbours that she was doing nothing wrong.

Papiya Sarker, 27, a neighbour of Shahera Akter, also became an active samity worker. Sarker did not have to face too many social barriers because she was a Hindu. However, in a Muslim community she still had some obstructions. Many did not like the idea that Sarker work as a community social worker because she had four young daughters to look after. Sarker, however, got support from her husband. Looking after her four daughters while she was away was made easier for her by her sister-in-law agreeing to shoulder the responsibility.

Sarker became interested in the samity work when she saw the other members, especially the poor women, standing on their own. She

joined the cooperative in late 1993 in Shahpur village which had already some 230 members. Her samity started with only 41 members but has now 346 members. Each week the members gather to review progress of the ongoing projects and discuss new ideas. Each member has to deposit five taka every week to the samity account as part of compulsory saving. "We have collected so far over Tk 1,90,000. We now have Tk 85,000 in our bank account, the rest of the money was given to members."



Increase in unemployment rate was seen to be the prime cause of this mass movement. BARD came forward to devise a rescue solution. An institution for rural development was in shape. A new era of changes in the country

Kotbari. It realised that to implement projects villagers should be acquainted well with them. Members of the academy started to visit the villages and discussing and observing the problems of the people. Such discussions and observations provided valuable data on the village situation. Their findings gave BARD information on the problems of even an individual. It was felt that unless problems were solved or some kind of system evolved it could be difficult to train the trainees on the field and in class-rooms. Observation and survey works were initiated for deeper understandings. Research was considered as one of the pillars of BARD's work plans.

Research directly helped in BARD's training programmes. Data collected

portions. Evaluative research involves finding out the impact of development programmes and, finally, action research or pilot experimentation works for finding out appropriate institutional and administrative models for effective coordination and improved method of production. All these types of research are conducted to identify the strength and weakness of a programme.

One of the simplest rules of science is to precisely follow laboratory test results. On such tests or experiments BARD designs models. Experimental project, are the most difficult part of BARD's programmes. Test results may not come out as expected or sometimes may end up in failure. However, risks are minimised as the projects are supported by extensive research work. Failure of any one project does not harm many as the test area involves limited land and people.

When the action programme gives encouraging results pilot projects are initiated for further experiments in a few more areas. If the pilot projects produce successful results a model is prepared to be replicated elsewhere in the country.

During the sixties pilot projects resulted in the development of some important models which have been widely replicated throughout the country. Rural Works Programme (RWP), Thana Irrigation Programme (TIP), two-tier Cooperative and Family Planning and Population Control, are some of the examples which later became known as the Comilla Approach. A few more pilot projects included rural education, women's development, rural health and nutrition programmes.

The models once ready, were forwarded to the Planning Commission to be implemented in other parts of the country. To transfer the blueprint of the models to other areas training was given at BARD. Originally BARD trained only the government officials to run rural administration. Gradually policy of training changed. Today, many non-government personnel take part in the academy's training programmes.

The nature of training vary.

Classroom study, lectures, group discussions, case studies and guided readings are some of the theoretical training. Practical training includes field observation and exercises. These are intended to make training more realistic.

The principles of training were simple — transferring technology for development to the target groups. Obviously the villagers were the centre of all concern. The educated and influential groups were selected so that they could easily pick up the message and transfer it to those who were less fortunate and had a lot of potential. Training had to

be rich in educational aids to become effective in communication.

What Dr Akhter Hameed realised was the need for rehabilitation of the rural people. This was not easy. He had suggested decentralisation of the local level government bodies. This meant that villagers could not be interfered in their work but must be guided.

Today BARD's formulas have contributed to massive rehabilitation programmes in the countryside. People everywhere are found engaged in some work or the other and not sitting idle any more. This was the idea — mobilising the rural resources and forming a strong base of production.

Two thirds of our population which live below poverty line stood and still stands, directly or indirectly, in the way of progress. Most of the programmes taken up by BARD are aimed at removing poverty. Many non-government organisations were formed in the early seventies and eighties to help start development projects along with government initiative. The purpose of this idea was to address the rural poverty. This was not an

easy job. The majority of the illiterate people do not absorb things so easily. However, the poor were found to be the most efficient workers given the right environment. They share things in systematic way and show more interest on anything that is good for them. Unfortunately the local resources were not properly utilised.

Thakurgaon project was one such example. The farmers there were satisfied with one crop. They were not so



Front view of BARD at Kotbari, Comilla.

culture in Bangladesh and it was one of the outcomes of the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) later designated as Bangladesh Rural Development Board. It was clear from the IRDP lesson that technology was badly needed to be transferred to promote and strengthen rural organisations. BARD's programmes started a process of institutional development which contributed to rise in production, mobilising the local resources and creating employment. Most of the IRDP plans borrowed from outside were rich in technology and ideas. They were put to test and studied. This was the stage when models came into being. BARD believed in continuous searching and evaluations on the existing programmes to finally adopt a programme which could change the socio-economic condition of the rural people. Comilla Models were later accepted by the government for widespread replication.

During the sixties and early seventies migration of rural population into urban areas was greatly noticed. Seminar on local level planning and management at BARD.

Participants of a training programme visiting Bijoypur pottery.