



MONGLA (Bagerhat): These children are catching shrimp fry from the shore of Rupsha river. Everyday hundreds of men, women and children from nearby slum areas collect shrimp fry this way which are sold in exchange for a small amount of money. — Star photo by A K M Mohsin

Tk110cr rural electrification plan in Kurigram, Lalmonirhat

KURIGRAM, Jan 28: The government has taken up a comprehensive rural electrification programme costing at Tk 110.27 crore with a foreign exchange component of Tk 65.83 crore to electrify nine thanas of Kurigram and Lalmonirhat districts, says BSS.

Under the programme, over 1720 kilometres of distribution lines will be constructed to provide electricity to over 35,000 rural consumers of Kurigram sadar, Rajarhat, Ulipur, Vageshwari, Hurugamari, Phulbari and Chilmari of Kurigram district and Lalmonirhat Sadar and Aditmari of Lalmonirhat district under Kurigram-Lalmonirhat Pally Bidyut Samity. The programme will be completed by 1999.

This was disclosed by Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain while unveiling the foundation stone of the headquarters of Kurigram-Galmanirhat Pally Bidyut Samity and its pole raising ceremony at Kurigram Thursday, an official handout said.

The energy minister said, the government has set a target to bring over 2000 villages

under rural electrification network by constructing 7300 kilometre of distribution lines during the current fiscal. He said, over 1400 villages have been connected with rural electricity across the country through constructing 7200 kilometre of distribution lines against the target of 5800 kilometres during the last fiscal.

Dr Mosharraf Hossain said over 14,500 villages of the country have so far been brought under the rural electrification network since its inception. He said, rural electrification programme which was launched by Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman has become as part and parcel of

Armed attack on shrimp enclosure, two seriously hurt

KHULNA, Jan 28: At least two people were injured seriously and three missing after an armed attack on a shrimp enclosure at village Ginerabad in Batiaghata thana Thursday, police said, reports UNB.

socio-economic development process of the rural areas. He referred to a survey made by BIDS which showed that an electrified village advances by over 27 per cent than an un-electrified village.

The energy minister said the present government has streamlined the rural electrification programme in the country to achieve the overall improvement of the villages. He said, the present government, for the first time, has allocated Tk 100 crore from its revenue budget during the last fiscal year and it has increased to Tk 200 crore this year for expanding rural electrification network in the country.

"The development budget in rural electrification programme has also been increasing every year," he said adding, allocation in the programme in 1991-92 was Tk 221 crore. In 1993-94 Tk 358 crore and in 1994-95 it has been raised to Tk 509 crore.

Former minister Moyedul Islam lauded the role of rural electrification programme and said Kurigram-Galmanirhat Pally Bidyut Samity will play an important role in improving the socio economic condition of the areas.

220 km long electricity lines in Kapasia soon

KAPASIA (Gazipur), Jan 28: Government will establish 220 kilometres electricity lines in 11 unions of Kapasia thana under rural electrification programme, reports UNB.

Jute Minister A S M Hannan Shah disclosed this while inaugurating the programme here on Thursday.

A total of 43,000 households, 2,000 commercial units and 700 irrigation pumps of the district will get power connection under this programme.

Addressing a public meeting after the inauguration the minister said introduction of rural electricity in the area is a fulfilment of government's commitment to the local people.

He said present government is determined to ensure electricity in the rural areas to boost rapid economic development in the country.

The function was also addressed by former MP Dr Sanaulah, member of the Rural Electrification Board M A Wadud and some other local elite.

Special training for flower cultivators

PABNA, Jan 28: Government will provide special training for the enthusiastic flower cultivators through the forest department, Environment and Forest Minister Akbar Hossain said here Thursday, reports UNB.

The minister announced this while speaking at the closing ceremony of the six-day Abu Zafar Flower Exhibition '95, said an official handout.

He said: "Flower is not merely a symbol of beauty but it also has a role in the economic emancipation of the country."

The minister later distributed prizes among the winners of the exhibition.

Anup Kumar Ghosh was elected as the best flower cultivator among the 24 participants in the exhibition.

Flowers like rose, dalia, chandramallika and ganda were displayed in the show.

Tk 8 crore uplift works to be implemented in Faridpur zone

FARIDPUR, Jan 28: Facilities Department, Faridpur zone has taken up 105 development schemes at an estimated cost of about Taka 8 crore in greater Faridpur area, reports BSS.

According to an official source, pucca houses will be built for 900 non-government secondary schools and 15 madrasahs each costing Taka 7 lakh 81 thousand. According to the source, of the total schemes, 23 schemes are being funded by Asian Development Bank (ADB) amounting to Taka one crore 80 lakh and the rest 83 schemes are being funded by government.

According to the source, 26 secondary non-government schools and 4 madrasahs are in Faridpur district, 14 non-government schools and 5 madrasahs in Rajbari district, 17 schools in Madaripur district, 12 schools and 3 madrasahs in Gopalganj district and 11 schools and 3 madrasahs in Shariatpur district. Work on the projects would start soon.

More than 45 Posts of government officials remain vacant in Sylhet

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Jan 28: Official works is being hampered badly as a good number of posts in almost all the government departments have been lying vacant for long time in eleven thanas of the district.

The posts of Assistant Commissioner (Land) have long been lying vacant in six thanas out of the eleven causing sufferings for the people and hampering the normal official works. Six posts of Education Officers have been lying vacant while 4 posts of Social Welfare Officers, 4 posts of Thana Food Controllers, 4 posts of Thana Fishery Officers, 8 posts of Women Affairs Officers, 9 posts of Youth Development Officers, 3 posts of Project Implementation Officers, 3 posts of Statistical Officers, 2 posts of Livestock Officers, and one post of Thana Engineer, Accounts Officer, Ansar and VDP Officer, Sub-Registrar, Public Health Engineer and Officer-in-charge of Police Station each have been lying vacant in the district.

According to the official sources, of the total, in Gowainghat thana eight posts

have been lying vacant. These are: Assistant Commissioner (Land), Education Officer, Youth Development Officer, Statistical Officer, Social Welfare Officer, Livestock Officer, Project Implementation Officer and Women Development Officer.

In Companyganj thana, eight posts of Assistant Commissioner (Land), Sub-Registrar, Thana Engineer, Education Officer, Youth Development Officer, Food Controller, Fishery Officer, Women Affairs Officer are vacant. In Kanaighat, 6 posts of Assistant Commissioner, Youth Development Officer, Accounts Officer, Social Welfare Officer, Food Controller, and Women Affairs Officer are vacant. In Fenchuganj thana 6 posts of Assistant Commissioner, Education Officer, Youth Development Officer, Project Implementation Officer and Women Affairs Officer have been lying vacant. In Jakiganj, 7 posts of Assistant Commissioner, Education Officer, Social Welfare Officer, Youth Development Officer, Food Controller, Women Affairs Officer, Statistical Officer and

Sub-Assistant Engineer, Public Engineering Department have been lying vacant for long.

Five posts of Education Officer, Project Implementation Officer, Youth Development Officer, Statistical Officer and Women Affairs Officer have been lying vacant for long in Jaompatra while the number of vacant posts of officers in Golapganj thana stands at five. These are: Assistant Commissioner, Youth Development Officer, Livestock Officer, Fishery Officer and Women Affairs Officer. In Balaganj thana the number of vacant posts of officers is 4. These are Officer-in-charge of police station, Food Controller, Youth Development Officer and Women Affairs Officer. Three posts have been lying vacant in Biswanath. These are Ansar & VDP Officer, Fishery Officer and Youth Development. The post of Education Officer in Beanibazar and the posts of Youth Development Officer and Women Affairs Officer have been lying vacant in the Sylhet sadar thana.

The vacant post should immediately be filled up, it is widely felt.

KUSHTIA, Jan 28: About four crore people of the country in south western and north western part are facing environmental hazards as a result of the dehydrational impact of the river Ganges, or better known as the Padma.

A silent ecological devastation as well as slow almost inexorable process of desertification is being felt in the northern part while southern region is experiencing increasing salinity. Underground water level is going deeper and deeper and most of the small rivers are becoming dry. Existence of small rivers is very hard to find. The once mighty Padma has lost its navigation.

The once two miles wide Padma has been reduced to less than one mile near Hardinge Bridge point and emerged as vast char over which vehicles run every day. The Bheramara Paksey ferry ghat has been dredged at a cost of huge amount of money by Roads and Highways department for smooth plying of vessels to keep the communication between Mongla Port and northern part of the country steady. Paksey Paper Mills has been facing water crisis hampering production and their efforts in taking water from the river has become very costly.

A major river, the Goral, is almost dead while the huge Ganges-Kabodak Irrigation Project, which pours fresh water into the dry croplands of Kushtia, Chuadanga, Jhenidah, Magura and Jessore districts faces closure.

Some 1.2 lakh farmers living in the GK Project command area have lost two successive Aus crops and this year too they have little hope because water level in the river Padma near Hardinge Bridge point has gone further down making the GK Pump House quite inoperative.

"We are more or less certain that no water will be available in the coming kharif season (Aus) as a result of severe water shortage in the Padma, said a GK high official.

He also said that country lost Taka 100 crore in each season during last two years as GK Project failed to irrigate Aus seedlings in time. In terms of money the loss this year will be another Taka 125 crore, the official informed. The farmers have been hard hit economically. Beneficiaries of the Ganges-Kabodak Project covering 3,50,000 acres in Kushtia, Chuadanga, Jhenidah, Magura and Jessore have been passing very hard days as they have no alternative way to cultivate Aus crop.

The main pump house of GK Project situated in north west of Bheramara with its three main pumps having diverting capacity of 1300 cusec of water and 12 other subsidiary pumps each with 125 cusecs capacity remain silent.

Earlier, during dry season, the GK pumps diverted water from the Padma through a 200 kilometre main canal and 1518.33 kilometre secondary and tertiary canals bringing smiles to the beneficiaries.

Now, water flows a little above 14 feet, less than the minimum water level necessary to switch the pump on during dry season, officials of WDB said.

"We have no alternative. We can not operate these pumps with the water level below 17 feet," said one WDB Engineer.

The consequences of the acute water crisis have already

Dehydrational impact of Padma A silent ecological devastation

From Our Correspondent

Health officials of the district said the people of Batiaghata, Dakop and Paikgachha areas have developed acute diarrhoea because of regular saline water consumption.

Saline water is a safe haven for the diarrhoeal germs, the officials pointed out.

With dwindling discharge of fresh water caused by unilateral withdrawal of Ganges water through Farakka Barrage there has been a build up of salinity in 16 south western coastal districts over the past ten years.

Latest figures available from Irrigation Ministry show that with increasing diversion of water at Farakka the salinity front has moved 220 kilometres in-land.

Due to high salinity in the river Bhairab, the 48000 ton production capacity Khulna News Print Mills has to spend about Taka two crore every year for bringing fresh water from 30 miles upstream. The Mills requires about 400 tons of water a day, according to a report received here. Extra charge is levied on production cost.

Fresh water is also brought for the Goulpara Thermal Power Station from the northern areas to keep the plant in operation.

The Sundarbans, the world's largest estuarine swamp, is also threatened by high salinity with the tops of the Sundari trees of the forest wilting.

Home of the endangered Royal Bengal tigers, the 6000 square kilometre Sundarbans provides half of the country's forest products, besides being used a critical wild life sanctuary.

About 20 per cent of the total Sundari trees in the aquatic forest have already fallen victim to the top-dying syndrome, one forest officer said.

In this way Bangladesh incurred loss of Taka 50 thousand crore during last 19 years when India started withdrawing Ganges water unilaterally from April 21, 1975. Till today problem has not yet been solved.

All these have reduced the moisture of land covering 50 lakh acres. Direct result of this phenomenon only is the loss of Taka 500 crore every year in agricultural products while indirect effect due to this will be about 2000 crore.

Open water fishing has been seriously affected in all the rivers in Khulna Division because of low flow in the Bhairab, Passur and the Goral rivers.

Production of fish in the Ganges-dependant areas has reduced from 277000 metric tons in 1974 to 185000 metric tons in 1991. The loss is estimated at one-four billion during the period.

The fishing season has also been squeezed from previous May to February to current May to December period as per reports available here from Fisheries department.

Every year drought has been prevailing due to depletion of soil moisture causing delayed planting for want of rain water and these are sure signs of desertification already set in motion in this part of the country which is mostly due, directly or indirectly, to the barrage at Farakka.

"We must check present rate of population growth"

SHIBPUR (Narsingdi), Jan 28: Food Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan emphasised the importance of taking concerted efforts to contain population explosion and said that no development planning will be successful if the present rate of population growth could not be minimised, reports UNB.

The minister was speaking as chief guest at the foundation laying ceremony of Putia Union Health and Family Welfare Centre in Shibpur thana on Friday.

"The present government laid emphasis on enhancing the service of health and family planning and for that has given highest allocation in the health sector after education sector in the current budget", Mannan said.

He asked the concerned officials to speed up the construction work of the health complex.

After completion of the health complex at a cost of Tk 20 lakh, thousands of people of the locality will get the health and family planning services simultaneously, said an official handout.

Earlier, the Minister laid the foundation stone of the new building of Khorla High School to be constructed at a cost of Tk 9 lakh.



JHENIDAH: An abandoned quarter of GK project at village Siddi in Saikupa thana of Jhenidah district. — Star photo

More than 100 twin quarters of GK project remain abandoned

From Delwar Kabir

JHENIDAH, Jan 28: About 100 twin quarters of Ganges-Kabodak (GK) Irrigation Water Development Board (BWDB) lying abandoned for last 24 years in different sites of the project command area.

According to a source, more than one hundred twin quarters were constructed at very cheap price for the interest of the employees and local farmers as the farmers of concerned areas may get proper advice from the GK project.

But most of the employees are not interested to live in rural areas as there is no proper environment of education and other facilities. Rather the employees are living in divisional or sub-divisional headquarters. The official disclosed further, that an additional of Taka five crore will be required to make the quarters serviceable.

required the same to make the quarters fit for living. Since then the twin quarters have remained abandoned.

Talking to an official of Ganges-Kabodak (GK) project it was learnt that the buildings were constructed at very cheap price for the interest of the employees and local farmers as the farmers of concerned areas may get proper advice from the GK project.

RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY: Professor M Yousuf Ali Vice-Chancellor of RU handing over certificates among meritorious student of the university recently. — Star photo

About one lakh people in char areas of Chandpur suffer from goitre

From Our Correspondent

CHANDPUR, Jan 28: About one lakh people have been suffering from goitre in seven thanas of the district.

It is reported that the people of char areas of the district are the worst sufferer. The main cause of the disease is the lack of iodine in food and water. Rectified iodine is the preventive drug for goitre to some extent but the poor people of the district can not afford it due to poverty.

Women, children and pregnant mothers are generally affected by goitre. The disease starts from the early stage up to the old age of the people for iodine deficiency. Women give birth of dead child, physically

handicapped, mental obstruction, undersize etc due to want of iodine.

For want of iodine the formation of brain of the babies are hampered. Despite physical hazards the goitre patients are subjected to social apathy.

Sometimes children feel frightened to see their swelling neck. They are generally isolated from their families and take recourse to begging for livelihood.

UNICEF has undertaken a scheme to iodised all salt mills. But many salt mills are yet to be iodised. So, a large number of people cannot purchase iodised salt in rural areas.

Afforestation on 61000 acres of land completed

BHOLA, Jan 28: Afforestation on about 61,000 acres of charland has been completed in the seven thanas by the Forest Department during the last 12 years, reports UNB.

According to the Divisional Forest officials, the government has taken similar afforestation programme in the newly emerged charlands of the coastal areas of the Bay of Bengal.

Under this programme the department has started afforestation at the isolated and rural areas of Monpara, Sonar char, Charpatali, Char Jaeshe, Dhal Char, Char Kukri Mukri and Char Jhiruddin.

Besides, the department has also started planting of trees in both sides of 480 km embankment road and 204 km highways under the cooperation of the Roads and Highways department.