

Killing of 5 villagers by BDR men Judicial enquiry commission report yet not published

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Mar 29: Neither the report of the Judicial Enquiry Commission formed following killing of five persons by the BDR firing in July, 1993 has yet been published, nor the government has taken any step to implement the recommendations though more than one and a half years has already passed.

On July 26 1993 thousands of villagers from different adjacent villages went to the bank of Telikhal embankment to cut the key-points of the river bank for saving several thousand acres of cropland from inundation. They claimed that the authorities were reluctant to give proper attention to the long-standing demand for years which forced them to cut the key-points, only to save the huge croplands.

On the very day of July 26 1993, a number of BDR personnel from the nearby border outpost went to the embankment site, and opened fire on the villagers without any provocation. Four persons died on the spot while another succumbed to his injuries in the hospital.

The killings caused much sensation in the district. The government on the next day formed a judicial enquiry commission with Anwarul Haque, District and Sessions Judge, Kishoreganj as its Chairman and asked him to submit its report within a month. The Commission accordingly, submitted its report to the government in September with certain recommendations.

The people of the area have demanded for immediate publication of the report and for early execution of the recommendations.

It is mentionable here that, the swelling waters from the hilly areas across the Indian borders cause massive damage to the standing crops on thousands of acres of lands and human lives in Jakiganj Beani-bazar, Biswanath and Balaganj thanas of Sylhet district and considerable areas in the neighbouring Sunamganj district every year.

The situation goes abnormal when the hilly waters cause breaches at points through the Kushiyara Dyke built by the Bangladesh Water Development Board inundating large number of villages in different thanas. Erosion in the rivers also attribute much to the situation.

Almost all the starting points of the canals which start from the river Kushiyara have been blocked through construction of the embankments during the last few years. These unplanned embankments though brought some areas under pisciculture, but blocked the way of outlet of waters especially during the monsoon. It leads to overflowing of the river on both sides. Besides, thirty thousands acres of land in the low-lying areas have been suffering from stagnancy of water. Of this, 15 thousands acres of land have totally become unfit for cultivation of any crop, it was learnt from the local farmers.

Every year, additional crop-

lands are becoming uncultivable as the stagnancy of water has been extending to the adjacent areas every year.

The common farmers prefer to cut the key-points on the embankments to save their land from the clutches of floods. Due to this, they have to face clashes with a small number of fishermen group, almost every year.

The agitation among the people went extreme following the killing of five villagers by the BDR firing. The situation was brought under control as the government assured the people of taking necessary steps for opening the key-points of canals on the embankments.

All these problems were discussed in number of meetings at Jakiganj Thana Development Council. All the chairman from union parishads expressed that, faulty and unplanned construction of the dyke and embankments have caused the situation due to which water stagnant areas were increasing and floodings of the areas have become a regular affair, they added.

They also maintained that with a view to avoiding the untoward incidents in the future, immediate steps should be taken for cutting the key-points of canals on the embankments before the start of monsoon. They also called for construction of dyke, embankments with proper planning and for dredging of the rivers.



SHERPUR: Farmers are planting rice but not very sure of the return. The underground water level on an average has fallen by a metre affecting hundreds of deep tubewells which supply water for irrigation. — Star photo

Hurasagar Project in Sirajganj remains suspended

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, Mar 29: The Hurasagar Project in Shahzadpur thana of the district taken up in 1985 with an aim of saving more than one and a half lakh of farm land from annual floodings and water loggings still remains in suspended stage, allegedly due to faulty construction of the embankments.

It is learnt that the Hurasagar Project was taken up by Sirajganj Operation and Maintenance (O&M) Division of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) to save crops on 1.5 lakh acres of land of 40 Mouzas of Rupbati, Kaizuri, Gola, Porzonia, Khukni, Habibullahnagar and Beroil unions under Shahzadpur thana in 1985. Accordingly, 16 kilometre long embankment from Ishwardia to Bherakhola was constructed by the eastern side of the river Karotoa and northern side of the river Baral. Construction works of nine-kilometre long road was also completed by the southern side of river Hurasagar. The eastern side of the project is covered by the Brahmaputra Flood Control embankment. Three flashing gates and two regulators were set up for easy passing of floodwater inside the project area.

The World Bank sanctioned Taka seven crore for implementation of the project. The project also included construction of a pump house at the confluence of rivers Hurasagar and Jamuna and excavation of silted up Hurasagar river to store water for irrigation purpose round the year.

It is gathered that due to alleged faulty construction of the embankment, during the rainy season, breaches developed at Bherakhola, Andhermanik, Nudah and Ratanandi points. Entrance of flood water through the breaches damaged huge crops in the project area. The BWDB later started repairing works of the breaches, flash gates and regulators but the works were suspended before completion due to unknown reasons. Due to suspension of the repairing works, crops on vast tracts of land in the project area are damaged by entrance of flood water and water-logging every year.

When contacted, a source of Sirajganj O&M Division of Bangladesh Water Development Board informed this correspondent that due to fund constraints, the projects could not be implemented.

Bumper potato output likely in Chandpur

From Our Correspondent

CHANDPUR, Mar 29: Bumper potato production is expected this year in Chandpur district, according to official sources. The harvesting of potato has already begun.

Over forty thousand metric tons of potato worth Tk twenty crore is expected to be produced during the current season. About twenty thousand hectares of land were brought under potato cultivation during the current season.

According to Agriculture Extension Department sources seed and fertilizer were distributed and used in proper time.

Encouraged by good price of potatoes last year the potato

growers increased the cultivation areas to about ten thousand hectares during the current season. But the potato growers sell the produce below the production cost, it was learnt. The price of potato in the wholesale market now ranges between Tk 100 to 120 per maund. But the production cost of a maund of potato is about Tk 120. The growers cannot hold their produce for better price because they are to repay their loans to the money lenders.

The middlemen buy potato in bulk at a low price during the harvesting season and store them in the cold storage.

50pc deep tubewells out of order!

From Our Correspondent

NATORE, Mar 29: The irrigation at Lalpur thana of the district, a less rainfall area of the country, has been greatly hampered as 50 per cent of the deep tubewells are lying out of order.

It is reported that out of 61 deep tubewells at the thana at least 30 are now lying out of order.

There are about 40,000 acres of cultivable land in the thana. But only 4,000 acres of land have been brought under irrigation facilities.

Total population of this thana is two lakh 13 thousand. In comparison with other districts the cultivation and production of paddy and sugarcane are not adequate. About 40,000 people of the thana have no land of their own. The quantity of food deficit here is 10,111 metric ton.

North Bengal Sugar Mills is situated at Lalpur. This is why growers are more eager to cultivate sugarcane than paddy. But due to lack of proper care, about 15 per cent of the harvested cane are damaged every year. On the other hand, the production of cane remains 25 per cent less than the target fixed every year for want of irrigation facilities. It is reported, the farmers of the thana have urged the authorities concerned to give proper attention regarding the matter.

Anti-smuggling drive geared up in Satkhira

From Our Correspondent

SATKHIRA, Mar 29: The jawans of 21 rifles battalion Satkhira have geared up anti-smuggling drive throughout the bordering areas of Satkhira district.

When contacted Lt Colonel Ashikur Rahman Khan, Commanding Officer, 21 rifles battalion told this correspondent that during the period of last 14 months commencing from January 1, 1994 to February 28, 1995, the jawans of the different Border Observation Posts (BOPs) arrested 82 alleged smugglers and managed to seize smuggled goods worth about Taka 9.76.03.627.

As many as 73 cases have also been registered with the respective police stations, he added.

First of its kind in the country

From A Monayem

COX'S BAZAR, Mar 29: Bangladesh has great potential for increasing irrigation facilities by conservation of river water through constructing rubber dams at selected places. This was said by the Chief Engineer of LGED, Quamrul Islam Siddique recently.

The LGED Chief Engineer pointed this out to the journalists Friday at a press conference after visiting the two rubber dams being constructed in Cox's Bazar district.

Two rubber dams, first of its kind in the country, are being constructed on Bakkhali and Idgaon rivers at a cost of four crore taka.

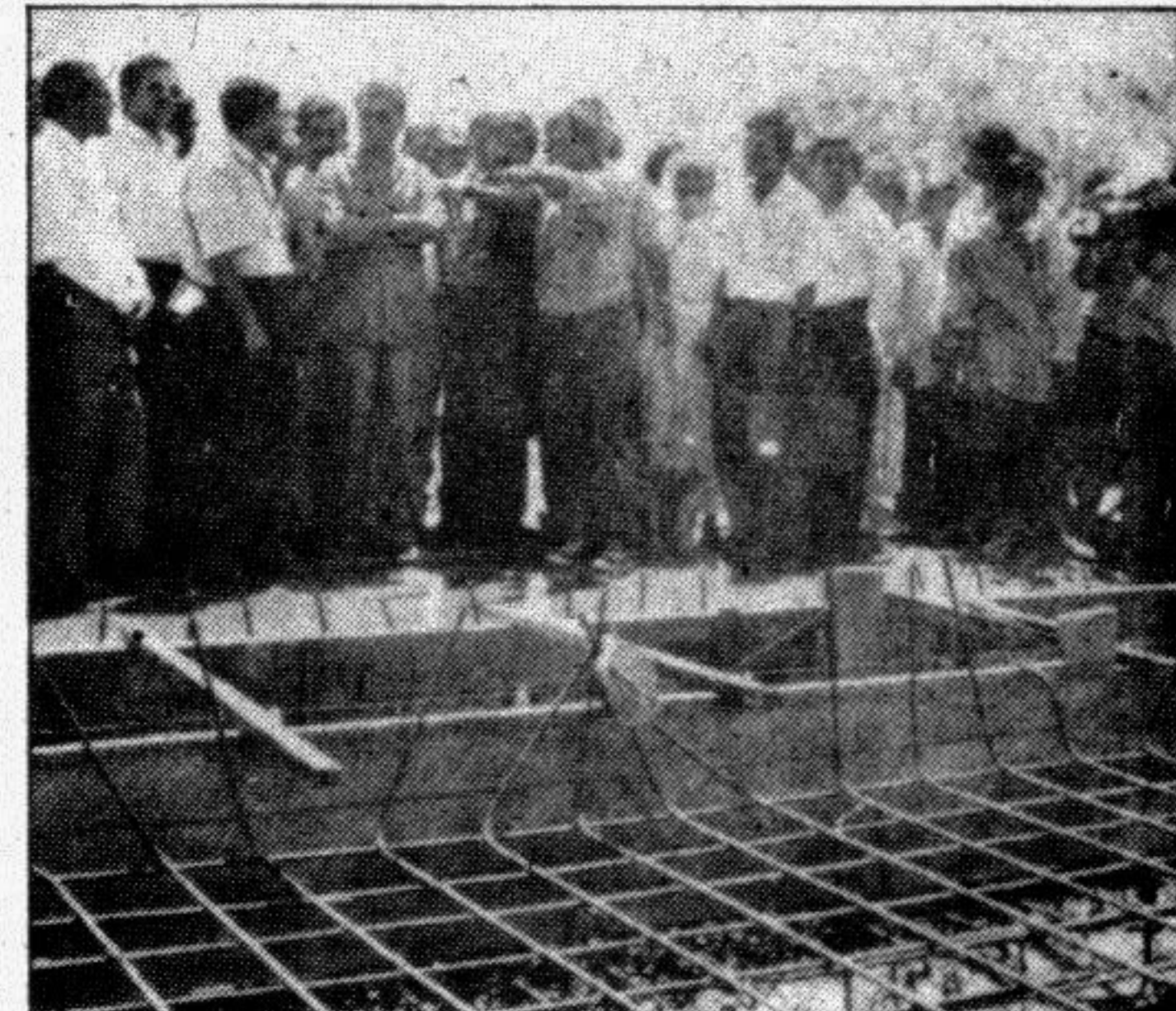
Seventy per cent construction work of Bakkhali rubber dam and 40 per cent of Idgaon rubber dam have already been completed, the Chief Engineer said.

The rubber dams, a soft

dams will be cheaper and has certain advantages compared to the rigid dams and has gate water regulating structures. China constructed its first rubber dam in 1966 and since then developed commendable expertise in design, manufacturing models and construction of rubber dams.

Finding it cheaper and easy to operate the LGED has taken up two pilot projects one on Bakkhali river at the cost of Tk 2.5 crore and another on Idgaon river at the cost of Tk 1.5 crore, both in Cox's Bazar. Performance of the structures (dams) in Bangladeshi climate and their social acceptability will be assessed through the pilot projects. The projects are being financed by the Prime Minister's canal digging programme.

About 20 thousand hectares of land in Cox's Bazar



COX'S BAZAR: The Chief Engineer of LGED, Quamrul Islam Siddique visiting the construction site of the rubber dam at Bakkhali river in sadar thana. — Star photo

shell hydraulic structure, can allow the flood water and conserve water for irrigation and other uses at the same time. The dam which can be inflated and deflated quickly, was first developed in USA in early 60s. At present the dams are being used in the USA, Canada, Australia, Japan, China and Thailand.

The LGED Chief Engineer added that, the use of the thana will be brought under cultivation scheme by constructing the rubber dams. Quamrul Islam further said spontaneous participation of the local people demonstrate the rubber dam project is badly needed.

Cox's Bazar pourashava chairman Nurul Absar and local LGED Executive Engineer Sorwar Jahan were also present in the press conference.

Farmers not getting fertilizer

A grave situation prevails

From Meherullah

JAMALPUR, Mar 29: Acute scarcity of urea fertilizer has been persisting in the district threatening the IRRI-boro crop cultivation during the current season.

The district Agriculture Extension Department (AED) sources said about 5.5 lakh acres of land in the district have been targeted to bring under IRRI-boro cultivation during this season. Some 70,000 metric tons of urea fertilizer is required for the successful implementation of the programme, sources added.

But the supply of fertilizer in the local market is apparently low in comparison with the demand, according to unofficial sources.

Taking advantage of the situation, a section of traders have reportedly started hoarding fertilizer in their godowns well ahead of the planting season for earning windfall profit. As a result, the price of the fertilizer bags has shot up abnormally causing untold sufferings to the farmers.

All classes of farmers, particularly the marginal ones, have become desperate to procure fertilizer. There are reports of clashes occurring in different parts of the district among fertilizer traders, dealers, farmers and some opposition party workers.

Reports of processions, sit-ins and demonstrations demanding proper supply of fertilizer and other agri-inputs at fair prices are also pouring in from different places of the district.

Many farmers have been forced to plant paddy saplings without or applying smaller quantity of fertilizer.

Despite some measures taken by the government, including arrangement of distribution of fertilizer through office of the deputy commissioner or selected dealers at retail prices, the situation has not yet improved.

It is widely alleged that the selected fertilizer dealers are also selling fertilizer on black market for earning maximum profit.

In rural markets urea is being sold between Tk 500 and Tk 700 against the fixed price of Tk 230 a bag containing 50 kg of urea fertilizer.

Now there seems to be no mechanism of the government to control the fertilizer market following handing over of the distribution system to the private sector. The district and thana administration has virtually nothing to do with the price hike of fertilizer, knowledgeable sources said.

Reliable sources said, fertilizer bags are also stock-piled in different private godowns in Jamalpur, creating artificial crisis in the market.

When contacted, the Managing Director of Jamuna Fertilizer Factory informed this correspondent that at present the factory is capable of producing 1000 metric tons of urea fertilizer against the actual production capacity of 1,700 metric tons every day.

Md Akhter Hossain Khan,

Deputy Commissioner of Jamalpur, told this correspondent that Jamalpur district was worst hit by the present fertilizer crisis adding that, the supply of urea fertilizer from Jamuna Fertilizer Factory (JFF), has also been hampered due to shortage of transport and diminishing output capacity. He said that the fertilizer bags are distributed among the farmers of the seven thanas of the district through the government fixed price at Tk 230.

The farmers of the rural areas are not even getting the fertilizer even though they are ready to pay any price, it is alleged. Many farmers cultivate IRRI-boro without applying chemical fertilizers.

It is learnt that some dishonest fertilizer traders have been creating artificial crisis by hoarding and then selling at much higher rates. This situation occurred especially at the beginning of the current IRRI-boro season.

When contacted some fertilizer traders told this correspondent that government trade policy and open market sale system are the root causes of the much talked about crisis of fertilizer. But according to other sources, the evil desire to make undue profit is the main cause of the crisis.

The angry farmers continued demonstration, procession, road and rail line barricades demanding proper distribution of fertilizer.

Another source said urea fertilizer is exported to Nepal from Jamuna Fertilizer Factory.

Towards productivity

Barriers breaking down: Women taking more interest



SHERPUR: In a recent unofficial survey it was revealed that there are about 30,000 child labourers and 50,000 women workers in Sherpur district alone. The pictures taken from different areas of three thanas of the district show women labourers operating the bamboo-made pedal irrigation pumps. Women labourers in the district have considerably increased over the years. — Star photos

Bangladesh Bank
Engineering Department
Head Office
Dhaka

Re-tender Notice

No. 55/1994-95

01.	Name of the work	Additional/alteration work of south (front) side boundary wall of newly constructed building of Bangladesh Bank, Chittagong.
02.	Estimated cost	Tk 2,87,068/- (Taka two lac eighty seven thousand sixtyeight) only.
03.	Earnest money (in the form of Bank Draft/Pay Order only)	Tk 5,750/- (Taka five thousand seven hundred fifty) only.
04.	Time allowed for completion of the work	03 (three) months from the date of issue of work order.
05.	Eligibility for participation in the tender	Enlisted contractor/firm of PWD R&H or any other Govt./Semi-Govt./Autonomous organization/firm who has successfully completed civil work similar nature of work in a single tender whose estimated cost put to tender/tendered value or executed value is not less than Tk 1,25,000/- (Taka one lac twentyfive thousand) only during the last five years.
06.	Performance certificate form (proof of eligibility).	Intending tenderers must procure performance certificate (in duplicate) from the concern officer of the organization not below the rank of Executive Engineer in standard proforma (available free of cost in the Engineering Department) & submit the same to the Engineering Department for scrutiny and orders along with the attested photostat copy of (a) Renewed enlisted papers (b) Renewed trade licence & up to date income tax clearance certificate (c) VAT Registration certificate (d) Upto-date bank solvency certificate.
07.	Cost of tender schedule other terms & conditions etc	Tk 400/- (Taka four hundred) only. (Non-refundable).
08.	Office of selling of tender schedule & other terms & conditions etc.	Administration & Expenditure Department (BPD), 5th floor, Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka.
09.	Last date of selling of tender schedule & other terms & conditions	15-04-95 up to 12-00 Noon.
10.	Place of receiving tender	Office of the Executive Director-3, Room No. 10, 3rd floor, Main Building, Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka.
11.	Date & time of receiving the tender	16-04-95 at 12-00 Noon.
12.	Date & time of opening the tender	16-04-95 at 12-15 hours.

PRPB-48/95-470
No-36(29/3)
D-324

Md Sharfuzzaman Bhuiyan
General Manager (Engg.)