

Fishing along embankment threatens Bangabandhu Jamuna Bridge

From Akhteruzzaman Bablu

SIRAJGANJ, Feb 15: Fishermen have been endangering the embankment built at the cost of crores taka to protect Bangabandhu Jamuna Bridge.

This is because they have been using the embankment for fishing purpose daily defying the ban to enter such security zone. Common people are also seen enter the area. The trespassers have already removed many stones placed on the embankment. As a result now the bridge has been threatened.

This embankment was constructed to protect the Bangabandhu Jamuna Bridge by South Korean Hyndal Company. Hyndal engineers advised to treat this embankment a security zone area always. Replacement of stones from the embankment will threaten the bridge, Korean engineers cautioned. Because if it happens the current of the river will directly hit the embankment endangering the bridge.

After the commissioning of the bridge the responsibility of its maintenance fell on the relevant bridge authority. Two police stations were also established to protect the embankment areas on both sides of the main bridge. But at present the area remains entirely unprotected. But the security personnel are not allegedly serious enough to do their duties properly. Because they allow people specially the fishermen to enter the security zone area easily to enter the area.

When this correspondent visited the area recently he found a group of fishermen numbering 50 led by Binod Halder of Dashshika village under Kalihatti thana of Tangal district were fishing in the river along the embankment. They allegedly managed their entry by bribing the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority, JOMAC, police and local administration. This correspondent saw them fishing Hilsa fries named 'Jarka' including big Hilsa, Ruli, Pangash, Boal and Katla using 70 to 90 feet long nets.

The fishermen were found drawing nets in the area resulting in replacement of stones of the embankment.

When contacted with Binod Halder, he informed this correspondent that they were fishing here for 13 days. Binod also revealed that they had appeased the JOMBA, police and some of JOMAC members. Binod also told this correspondent that the police personnel had been protecting them.

When contacted with the Officer-in-Charge of Bangabandhu Jamuna Bridge West Police Station Nazir Hossen and the local security officer of JOMAC, they allegedly blamed each other. When contacted, the Project Director Tevor Powell of JOMAC, he replied in the affirmative. When asked whether the embankment area was a security zone or not, he also replied in the affirmative. He



Unabated fishing along the Jamuna embankment which was built to protect Bangabandhu Bridge. — Star photo

also confirmed that the embankment would be damaged, if any stone was replaced.

When contacted with the Additional Police Super of Sirajganj, Awrangzeb Mahubud id-

mitted the fact and told that the fishermen were fishing with the written order of JMBA. Locals

have demanded full protection of the embankment area for the greater interest of the nation.

News snaps

Red Crescent ad hoc body

BRAHMANBARIA, Feb 15: An ad hoc Executive Committee of Brahmanbaria Red Crescent Unit was formed by the chairman, in-charge of Brahmanbaria Red Crescent Society Sheikh Kabir Hossain for three months, reports BSS.

The ad hoc committee consisted of 10 members having Lutful Hye Sahebu and Jaydul Haque of its Chairman and Secretary respectively. The term of the committee is three months. It will reconstitute the unit executive committee for 2000-2002 through election within 30th April 2000.

Eviction drive

BARISAL, Feb 15: A magistrate was held by an angry mob for about an hour as he went to evict illegal occupants from F-10 bus stand in the town on Monday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said angry people enfolded magistrate Ghulam Mostafa as soon as he arrived in the terminal to demolish illegal shops and establishments at about 11am. Police later rescued the besieged magistrate.

Spice farming scheme

MAGURA, Feb 15: Agriculture Extension Department has brought 925 hectares of land in four thanas of Magura district under spice cultivation, reports UNB.

Of the land, onion will be cultivated on 500 hectares, garlic on 350 and chili on 75 hectares, official said. They said the department was supplying high yielding variety of seeds and agri-inputs to the farmers and has taken steps for their training. Meanwhile, 17 onion and 10 garlic demonstration farms were set up in the areas to familiarise the farmers with modern cultivation methods.

Massive Boro farming scheme

SHARIATPUR, Feb 15: Reluvenated by the prevailing fair weather, farmers have embarked on a massive Boro crop farming, bringing some 15,000 hectares of land under cultivation, reports UNB.

According to Agriculture Extension Department, the beleaguered farmers have bounced back following adequate winter rains. Agriculture officials expect a bumper production this season if things go well.

Sanction for health clinics

MAGURA, Feb 15: Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) has sanctioned Tk 30 lakh for setting up of six community health clinics in six unions of Sadar thana this fiscal, reports UNB.

The unions where the clinics will be set up are Kuchiamura, Raghubadair, Hajipur, Hajrapur, Beroil and Gopalgram. Works on the project undertaken with financial assistance from IDA will begin in March and is likely to be completed by June next. Some 60,000 people in the six unions are expected to be benefited upon completion of the project.

Rice price down in Netrakona, Narail

NETRAKONA, Feb 15: With the arrival of new harvest, price of rice has registered a slight fall here, reports UNB.

Market sources said the price will come down further after adequate supply of new rice in the markets.

They said coarse variety of rice is now selling at Tk 12 per kg as against Tk 13.50 two weeks ago while fine variety at Tk 15 as against Tk 18 a month back.

There has been a good harvest of Aman paddy this year here in spite of various difficulties faced by the farmers.

The growers were hit hard by seed and fertilizer crisis. But it was the weather that did the favour.

Another report from Narail adds: As the new harvest hit the market, rice price in Narail district continued to show a downward dampening the enthusiasm of farmers.

The fine variety of rice is

selling at Tk 16 per kg in the wholesale market against Tk 17 one month back.

They said price of coarse variety of rice ranges from Tk 12 to 13 per kg in the wholesale market while it is selling at Tk 13-14 in retail market.

There has been a good harvest of Aman paddy in the district this season, tanks to the fair weather.

Prices of vegetables have also come down remarkably in the district with the arrival of winter vegetables in the market.

Tomato is selling at Tk 8-10 while cauliflower at Tk 5-7 per kg. In the wholesale market, old variety of potato is available at Tk 6-7 per kg while the new one at Tk 8-10 per kg. Papaya is selling at Tk 7-8, brinjal at Tk 8-9 and ginger at Tk 12-14 per kg.

Traders said prices of rice and vegetables will come down further with the increase of their supply in the market.

Blankets distributed among FFs

SATKHIRA, Feb 15: Red Crescent Society of Satkhira district unit has distributed blankets and biscuits among 37 old freedom fighters in seven thanas of the district recently, reports BSS.

Saiful Alam, Deputy Commissioner of Satkhira, distributed blankets and biscuits at a function.

It was addressed, among others, by deputy director of Red Crescent Society, Satkhira Unit Abul Hasan and its executive members Sleiikh Abu Nasim Moyna, Advocate Iftekhar Ali and Ekramul Haque, deputy director of District Muktiyoddha Sangsad Enamul Haque Biswas and Thana Commander Mahabur Rahman.

Another report from Rangamati says: Rangamati Hill District Council (RHDC) and Rangamati unit of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society distributed relief in cash and kinds among the fire victim shopkeepers of Kachalong Bazar in Baghaichhari thana of the district recently.

These shopkeepers were badly affected by a devastating fire in Kachalong Bazar in the early hours on January 14.

Chairman of RHDC Ching Kew Roaza disbursed Taka 73,000 among 146 fire affected shopkeepers of Kachalong Bazar in Baghaichhari thana while visiting the gutted shop-

ping centre.

Ching Kew Roaza, who is also the President of Rangamati unit of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, also distributed 146 blankets and rice among the affected keepers as preliminary relief.

Councillor of RHDC Sushanta Chakma and Baghaichhari Thana Nirbahi Officer Jyotirmoy Samaddar were present on the occasion.

The devastating fire which gutted 146 shops at Kachalong Bazar, also killed one shopkeeper and injured 20 more, damaging properties worth about Taka two crore, officials quoted the victims as saying.

On way back to Rangamati, Ching Kew Roaza laid the foundation stone of Rabeta Model College in Langadu thana of the district in an informal ceremony as the chief guest.

Thana Nirbahi Officer of Langadu, Mainuddin Kazal was, among others, present in the ceremony.

Another report from Naogaon says: Shahina Monwara MP distributed warm clothes among destitute prisoners in Naogaon Jail recently.

She distributed 50 pieces shirts, 16 pieces jackets, 35 pieces lungis, 12 pieces sweaters, 6 pieces saris, 5 pieces blouses and 15 pieces wrappers.

4 'corrupt' WDB officials sued

THAKURGAON, Feb 15: Water Development Board (WDB) has filed cases against its four officials for their alleged involvement in corruption, reports UNB.

Police said the four officials — Mofakkarul Islam, Ziauddin Bablu, Azizul Huq Dulal and Chakramohan Sarkar — embezzled Tk 68,000 of Palli Bidyut Samity.

They said the money was deposited by farmers as electricity bills under North-Bangladesh Deep Tubewell Project.

But the officials pocketed the money instead of depositing it in the concerned bank, leading to the disconnection of power lines to 341 deep tubewells of the project.

Meanwhile, Padma Petroleum Corporation has suspended fuel supply to the depots as it has become difficult to carry fuel with barges.

The sources said navigability in some specific points of the Jamuna, including Baghabari area, has reduced abnormally threatening the

current IRRI-Boro cultivation.

A report from Manikganj says: Quick fall in water levels of rivers Padma and Jamuna, has threatened the ferry services on Aricha-Daulatdia-Nagarbari routes.

Sources in BIWTA here said ferry services on the routes face closure due to rapid loss of navigability and emergence of shoals in the rivers.

They said 21 small and large ferries run on the routes maintaining-traffic link of the capital with 21 southern districts.

In its desperate bid to keep the river traffic uninterrupted BIWTC has started dredging the beds of the Padma and Jamuna rivers.

Even then it will be difficult to maintain ferry services if the water level in the rivers continues to fall at the present rate, experts said.

Another message from Shariatpur says: River traffic

Siltation: Baghabari River Port on verge of closure

SIRAJGANJ, Feb 15: Siltation in the Jamuna river has brought the fuel depots set up in various areas of gasoline-starved northern region, including Baghabari River port, to the verge of closure, reports UNB.

According to competent sources, fuel supply from the floating oil depot in Byangmara to various northern districts, including Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Rangpur and Nilphamari, has been suspended due to quick

loss of navigability of the Brahmaputra river.

Meanwhile, Padma Petroleum Corporation has suspended fuel supply to the depots as it has become difficult to carry fuel with barges.

The sources said navigability in some specific points of the Jamuna, including Baghabari area, has reduced abnormally threatening the

from and to the district is seriously being hampered due to rapid fall in water levels and emergence of shoals in rivers Padma and Meghna.

Many shoals have emerged in the rivers making the movement of river vessels risky and time-consuming on different southern routes linking the district.

BIWTA sources said over 150 launches and other vessels ply on Shariatpur-Dhaka, Shariatpur-Barisal and Shariatpur-Madaripur routes everyday.

But many vessels run aground on the routes due to the emerging shoals inflicting sufferings on passengers and hampering trade and business activities.

According to Water Development Board, the water levels in the two rivers were much lower than their normal trend during this dry season due to siltation.

Govt officials asked to help implement uplift works

MYMENSINGH, Feb 15: State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism, Syed Ashraf Islam called upon the government officials to deploy their all-round efforts for implementation of the development works which were taken, by the present government during the last three and a half year's tenure, reports BSS.

He was speaking in a meeting for exchanging views with the officials in the Conference Room of the Deputy Commissioner on Tuesday last.

The State Minister said that the present government is firmly determined to implement the commitment given by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

'The Public Safety Act' will ensure security, human rights and free movement of the people, he added.

Presided over by the Deputy Commissioner Rafiqul Islam the meeting was addressed, among others, by Shamsul Haque MP, Police Super Shah Alam Sikder, District Awami League General Secretary Nazimuddin Ahmed, Chairmen of municipalities under this district, TNO's of Bholuka and Muktagacha on behalf of all the Thana Nirbahi Officers (TNO) of the district.

Later, the State Minister met the leaders and workers of the rural areas sowed onion seeds earlier with a hope to get good price in the season. But due to natural calamities those fields have been damaged completely. As such a severe crisis of onion seeds are prevailing.

Farmers began to collect seeds in packets sealed well from local markets at higher

prices. But most of the so called high quality seeds were adulterated and smuggled from the neighbouring country. A section of dishonest seed traders cheated the innocent farmers. Thus the farmers began to collect onion seeds at higher prices up to Tk 700 to Tk 800 per kg. Actually, those seeds are being collected from the smugglers at rates between Tk 850 and Tk 900.

On the other hand the imported and good quality local onion seeds are being sold at rates between Tk 1,100 to Tk 1,200 per kilogram.

Affluent farmers are also being cheated by purchasing low quality smuggled onion seeds thinking those of high quality at higher rates.

Small and marginal farmers are looking for the cheaper seeds.

It may be mentioned here that local markets are flooded with low quality Indian onions for the last three months and the commodity is selling at a rate of Tk 25 per kg.

of 510 metric tons of wheat has been allocated for implementation of the projects, aiming to support poor people during the off season and improve rural communication network.

Of the total wheat, 124 metric tons have been allocated for implementing 55 schemes in Sadar thana, 118 mts for 66 schemes in Kalkini, 106 mts for 72 schemes in Rajoir and 141 mts for 69 schemes in Shibchar thanas.

Besides, 14 mts of wheat have been allocated for six projects in Madaripur Municipality, five mts for five schemes in Shibchar Municipality and two mts for two schemes in Kalkini Municipality.

A report from Khulna says: Greater Khulna Development Coordination Action Committee is trying to make their various programmes successful after realisation of different demands of the people which include 'Save Mongla Port' and 'Give us Rupsha bridge without further delay'.

On 16 February the committee will bring out procession, hold meeting and protest against the authority's reluctance in solving the problems of Mongla port and construction of Rupsha Bridge. The programmes also include 'Stoppage of all works for certain minutes on the day by all sections of people, government and non-government.



K M Shamim Osman MP from Narayanganj-4 constituency laying the foundation stone of the building of Narayanganj district unit of Bangladesh Photo Journalists' Association on Loyal Tank Road recently. Narayanganj district unit president Taposh Shaha, general secretary Motiur Rahman Sentu, president of Narayanganj Press Club Habibur Rahman Badal, editor of The Daily Khaborer Pata Mahabubur Rahman Masum, president of Krishok League Chandan Shil, noted social worker Al-Joynal, student leader Saidul Hassan Bappi along with advisors and general members were present on the occasion. — Star photo

11 with arms arrested

CHAPAINAWABGANJ, Feb 15: Police arrested 11 people along with 13 sophisticated firearms from different parts of the district last year, reports UNB.

The seized arms include two revolvers, five pistols and two pipe-guns. Police said 30 people were also arrested along with drugs worth about Tk 47,000 from the district during the period.



Rajshahi University Ladies Club president Kamrun Nahar Khan distributing prizes among the winners of a children's hand writing competition arranged by the club on the university campus recently. — Star photo

420 projects implemented

NARSINGDI, Feb 15: A total of 420 projects were implemented under rural infrastructure development programme in Narsingdi district during 1999-2000 fiscal year. About 714 tons of wheat were sanctioned for the project, reports BSS.

Meanwhile, the work of 179 rural infrastructure development project under Food for Works Programme in six thanas are progressing satisfactorily and expected to be completed within April. A total of 1941 tonnes of wheat were sanctioned for the project. The projects included construction and reconstruction of roads, earth work for construction of different educational and religious institutions.

Scarcity of seeds hampers onion farming in 2 dists



A farmer working in his onion field in Jamalpur. — Star photo

JAMALPUR, Feb 15: Shortage of seeds is adversely affecting the cultivation of onion.

Non-availability and high price of good quality onion seeds and low quality smuggled Indian seeds have imperilled the onion cultivation here. Besides, heavy rain fall and depression of Bay in November last year and thick fog with cold wave seriously damaged onion field where sowing was done earlier along with winter vegetables.

According to sources in the Department of Agriculture Extension, a target of producing about 2,500 tons of onion from 250 hectares of land has been fixed this year. Some affluent and enthusiastic farmers in the rural areas sowed onion seeds earlier with a hope to get good price in the season. But due to natural calamities those fields have been damaged completely. As such a severe crisis of onion seeds are prevailing.

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prices. But most of the so called high quality seeds were adulterated and smuggled from the neighbouring country. A section of dishonest seed traders cheated the innocent farmers. Thus the farmers began to collect onion seeds at higher prices up to Tk 700 to Tk 800 per kg. Actually, those seeds are being collected from the smugglers at rates between Tk 850 and Tk 900.

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It may be mentioned here that local markets are flooded with low quality Indian onions for the last three months and the commodity is selling at a rate of Tk 25 per kg.

UNB from Narail says: An acute scarcity of onion seeds is prevailing, obscuring the prospect of this year's onion output.

Onion seeds were now selling in local markets at Tk 30,000 per maund as against Tk 15,000 last year.

If the situation continues, farmers apprehended, onion production will definitely fall far short of target.

Months of Foush and Magh of the Bangla calendar are considered to be the peak season for onion cultivation. Although the peak period has almost run out, growers could not yet sow seeds on their lands.

A farmer said frequent hailstorms and foggy weather last year damaged huge onions just before harvest creating an acute seed crisis.

According to agriculture officials, over 100 hectares of land have been brought under onion cultivation this season with a production target of 10,000 mts.

But the production target is unlikely to achieve the target.



Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (FEMA) arranged a discussion meeting titled 'Functioning and Election of Union Parishads' recently at Gaibandha Zilla Parishad Auditorium. Gaibandha district committee vice-president Gobinda Lal addressing, while additional district magistrate Sudev Chandra Sarkar was also present there. — Star photo