

Portion of Sirajganj town protection dam collapses

Erosion threatens Chandpur

By Staff Correspondent

Erosion by major rivers has taken serious turn in Sirajganj, Chandpur, Bogra, Shariatpur and Satkhira districts with water levels rising sharply.

Our Sirajganj correspondent says: The Jamuna has devoured 600-metre portion of Sirajganj town protection embankment at Sonatoni Bazar under Shajadpur upazila.

Local people said the erosion started on Thursday and continued until Friday night, destroying at least 75 shops and 200 houses in Sonatoli, Kozure, Gola, Porjona, Jalalpur and Beltoli unions.

Crops on about one lakh acres of land were also damaged in the areas.

The road communications between Shajadpur upazila headquarters and affected areas were also cut off following the inundation.

Local people blamed the local Water Development Board (WDB) authorities for the collapse of the portion of the embankment, saying the officials concerned failed to take precautionary measures.

When contacted, Abul Hashem, the executive engineer of WDB, said sandbags were dumped in sensitive areas, but the embankment eventually gave in to pressure of water.

However, no relief material has so far reached the affected areas. Flood hit people are passing hard days mainly due to lack of drinking water and food. Local people have urged the district administration to send relief materials to affected areas.

UNB from Chandpur reports: Chandpur town is threatened again as the embankment protecting it started giving in under pressure of floodwater flowing down from across the country.

A deluge of rain and hill waters from different parts of the country is rolling down the mighty rivers Padma, Meghna and Dhakatia flowing through the district.

A 30-metre-long and 15-metre-wide portion of the town-protection embankment, southeast of Gazir Astana here with a few hundred CC blocks collapsed into the confluence of the rivers on Friday night.

"People panicked as the devastating erosion started," said officials and locals.

The officials and Water Development Board people rushed to the spot immediately and started dumping CC blocks to check the erosion.

Till filing of the report on Saturday night, some 300 concrete blocks had been dumped to protect the river front town from the gorge of rivers.

The Deputy Commissioner of Chandpur along with other officials also visited the scene on Friday night and took necessary steps to contain the erosion.

"Erosion of the riverbanks in several areas has also taken a serious turn since Friday night due to rise in water levels in the rivers," witnesses said.



Clouds of doom: A farmer of village Khordo Kasundi in the Sadar upazila of Magura district sitting beside the River Modhumati which devoured his croplands completely turning him landless. Now he faces a grim future. — Star photo by Hossain Seraj

Amid the flood havoc, the Meghna-Dhonagoda Irrigation Project and some other flood-control embankments have been under serious threats.

Police were deployed in erosion-affected areas with red flags to keep people on high alert in the wake of possible calamity.

UNB from Bogra says: Six villages in Dhunoi upazila disappeared into the gorge of the River Jamuna in last 15 days.

Witnesses said an under construction flood protection dam has also been threatened due to the unabated riverbank erosion and it may collapse anytime unless necessary steps are taken to protect it.

They said a 3-km riverside area from Shimultali to Barital has become vulnerable to erosion, forcing the people to take shelter in safer places.

Some 300 erosion-hit families are now passing their days under open sky on the embankment.

The affected villages are Shimulbari, Saorabari, Bani-azhan, Koigar, Baroitoli and Kachugari.

Another three riverside villages were inundated as the river burst its bank amid heavy rainfall.

BSS from Shariatpur says: Erosion by the River Padma has taken a serious turn and devoured 50 villages causing untold sufferings to the people.

The river has already devoured a large number of educational institutions, mosques, huts and bazaars, three cattle markets, five police camps and about 10,000 acres of cultivable land.

The river also swallowed eight kilometre long Raita Mohikandi Flood Protection Em-

bankment constructed in 1972 by the Water Development Board (WDB).

About one lakh people of Naria, Bhederaganj and Jalra upazilas have lost their homesteads due to the erosion by the River Padma during the last 28 years. Many people shifted their homesteads three to four times and some other left the area.

The villages, which perished from 1971 to March last are — Dhalikandi, Munshikandi, Shikderkandi, Momirhossain, Baperikandi, Babuchar, Rab Baperikandi, Latif-Bandakachir, Kandi, Madbar-erkandi, Tattikandi, Ismail Baperikandi, Tapadirikandi, Halkimbaperikandi, Paikpara, Dulachar, Kalmirchar, Kasemkhakandi, Kalubaerkandi, Khejurtala Kandi, Padekandi, WAPDA, Sarkerkandi, Mollakandi, Malatkandi, Mollikkandi, Hajikandi, Ananda, Mollikkandi, Bosakerkandi, Sripur, Charjajira, Charmohan, Char Sureswar, Bogramara, Ada, Monirabad, Sureswar, Tarabuniachar, Gorishar, Naoduba, Charagali, Fokirkandi and Chanpar.

The uprooted people do not get money or have no source of income to maintain their families. They have no jobs at the moment. The erosion victims are seeking different professions like rickshaw pulling, plying of push carts and other odd jobs.

Some aged and disabled persons have reportedly started begging for mere survival.

The affected people have been passing their days in different places and on the embankments in sub-human condition.

Another report from Satkhira says: Thousands of houses and several hundred acres of land of 16 villages in three upazilas here have gone under river due to erosion by the border river Ichhamati during the last few years.

The erosion-hit upazilas are: Debhata, Kaliganj and Satkhira Sadar. The villages are: Bhatsala and Charbhatsala in Shakhipur Union, Komorpur and Shakra Komorpur in Parulia Union, Noapara, Chutpur and Nangla in Noapara Union, Shirnagar, Shushilgati, Town-Sripur, Jahapur and Debhata in Debhata Sadar Union under Debhata Upazila, Harddaha, Radhanagar and Shakra village in Bhomia Union under Satkhira Sadar Upazila and Haroldaha in Mathureshpur Union under Kaliganj Upazila.

A large number of families became homeless due to the erosion. Most of the families of the erosion-affected areas have shifted their houses inside, at least on four to five occasions.

An old villager, Abdur Rashid of Haroldaha village, has already lost all of his 12 bigha land in the river bed.

Besides, Shakra BDR Border Outpost, Komorpur, Kaderia Jame Mosque, Kaderia Forkana Madrasa and grave of Hafez Syed Kayet Jamal (RA), a renowned Muslim saint, have also come under threat of erosion.

Executive Engineer of Satkhira WDB, Division-1 Nurunnabi Chowdhury, informed that a protective project at a cost of Taka five crore has been taken up by the Water Development Board to control erosion by the River Ichhamati. Work of the project has already been started, he added.

Agri block supervisors demand 2nd class status

From Our Correspondent RANGPUR, July 2: Agriculturists who are now serving as block supervisors in Agriculture Departments have urged the government to elevate their status as second class officers.

The agriculturists, who obtained diplomas from various institutions, reiterated the demand at a press conference here recently.

Abdul Jalil, president of the Diploma Agriculturists' Association, said both the diploma agriculturists and diploma engineers have obtained diplomas from Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB), but it is unfortunate that only diploma engineers are given second class officer status and enjoying promotion facilities.

The diploma agriculturists join the Agriculture Department as block supervisors and go into retirement from the posts without any promotion, he lamented.

The press conference was told that a 6-member inter-ministry committee was constituted on April 1, 1998 to review the demand, but nothing has been done in this regard.

The agriculturists further called upon the central leaders of the diploma agriculturists to unite together sinking their difference to realise the just demand.

Office bearers of Cox's Bazar BMA

From Our Correspondent COX'S BAZAR, July 2: The biannual election of Cox's Bazar unit Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) was held here recently.

All the office bearers excepting the president have been elected unopposed.

Md Rezaul Karim (Monno) and Arup Dutta Bapty were elected president and general secretary respectively of the organisation.

Other office bearers are vice-presidents- Md Sarwar Hossain and Md Rafiqul Hasan, joint secretary- Mububur Rahman, treasurer- PU Shaw Nu, organising secretary- Shah Alam, scientific secretary- Sunayam Barua, cultural and social welfare secretary- Shafiqul Islam, publicity and publication secretary- Nasim Hyder, office secretary- Abul Hasnat and Wahidul Haque and members- AKM Sirajul Haque, G Mobin Uddin Mahmood, Jamila Begum, Md Jamal Uddin Ahmed, ANM Abdul Hye, Dulal Chandra Paul, Dulal Chandra Paul, Jalal Ahmed, Farid Uddin, Md Osman, Sarwar Mahubub and Md Moniruzzaman.

Armed in 500 tubewell waters in Netrakona

From Our correspondent NETRAKONA, July 2: Arsenic content has been detected in tubewell waters of 10 upazilas here recently.

The affected upazilas are Netrakona Sadar, Atpara, Madan, Kendua, Mohanganj, Barhatta, Kalmakanda, Durgapur, Purbadhala and Khalajura.

According to the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), about 500 tubewells of the aforesaid upazilas are arsenic affected. The department has confirmed about arsenic contamination following examination of tubewell water samples in these upazilas.

Kasheem Ali of Kalmakanda complained that his children and neighbours have been suffering from skin diseases while some other people of Durgapur upazila have also been suffering from arsenic related diseases.

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Experts said salvaging the sinking handloom sector means checking the unbridled smuggling

Some weavers complained that a section of bank officials sanctioned loans to a good number of fake weavers instead of the genuine ones only to make their conditions worse.

According to the sources, the government in an attempt to revamp the sector had distributed loan totaling Tk 101.74 crore to weavers over the last 16 years.

Four national banks had distributed the loans among 3,500 weavers associations under the programme. But in most cases the loans had gone to wrong persons due to corruption.

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News snaps

Teen rescued
BAGERHAT, July 2: A teenaged girl was rescued from a whorehouse in Mongla on Monday, reports UNB.
Police sources said a brothel woman had picked up the girl, hauling from Mehendiganj upazila of Barisal district, from Khulna city on June 8 and sold her to a policeman. The policeman later resold the girl to another sex worker at Banishanta brothel, who had coerced her into prostitution. The policeman was learnt to have been closed from the concerned police station.

Two with heroin arrested
RAJBARI, July 2: Police arrested two people along with 500 grams of heroin from a village in Sadar upazila on Wednesday, reports UNB.
The arrested were identified as Aslam Patwary of Darpa Narayanpur village in sadar upazila and Mokhles of Daphadia village in Pangsha upazila. Acting on a tip off, police raided the house of Aslam and arrested him with his accomplice and seized the contraband item from kitchen packed in a bag. A case was filed with the police in this connection.

Freedom fighter killed
CHANDPUR, July 2: Unidentified assailants killed a freedom fighter at Kaladi village in Matlab thana on Monday night, reports UNB.
The deceased was identified as Ashok Kumar Poddar, 50, deputy commander of District Muktiyoddha Sangsad and Convenor of Hindu-Buddha-Christian Association. Local people said he was killed by the miscreants on his way back home from his shop at about 8 pm. The reason behind the killing could not be known immediately. His body was recovered from a ditch at Sardarbari in same thana on Tuesday. Police arrested a health assistant of Matlab Health Complex Montaz Begum in connection with the killing.

Thunderbolt kills 4
COMILLA, July 2: Four persons including one woman were killed by thunderbolt in Honma Upazila on Saturday, reports BSS.
Police sources said, ill-fated persons are Omar Faruq, 26, son of Ali Hossain village Ofarchar, M Shahin, 15, son of Abdur Rashid village Mathabhianga, Abdul Awal, 55, son of late Mohar Ali village Shayampur, Rahima Begum, 26, daughter of Abdur Barez village Raghunathpur in Honma upazila.

Indian phensidyl recovered
FENI, July 2: Chhagalnaiya Thana Police recovered 450 bottles of Indian phensidyl syrup from a microbus on the old Feni-Chittagong road near the Upazila Complex and arrested five persons in this connection, reports BSS.
Acting on a secret information, police raided the bus and arrested Nur Mohammed, Zahangir, Mofiz, Jashim and Mohsin with phensidyl and seized the microbus. Police forwarded the arrested persons to the court and a case has been lodged in the thana. Earlier, 850 bottles of phensidyl syrup were also recovered by the same police team on Mahuriganj road of the thana from another microbus and arrested one person.

Abductor gets life term
NOAKHALI, July 2: A court here sentenced a man life-term rigorous imprisonment for abducting and marrying an adolescent girl forcibly, reports UNB.
The accused was identified as Shahadat Hossain alias Shah Miah of Purbachal village in Raipur upazila. According to the prosecution, Shahadat Hossain abducted Beauty, daughter of Ali Ahmed and a Madrassa student of the same village, and married her without her will on March 5, 1998. After examining the documents and witnesses, the special judge of Women and Children Repression Court pronounced the judgement recently.

Dishonest traders penalised
JOYPURHAT, July 2: Local administration penalised 119 dishonest traders and realised Tk 31,700 as penalty from them through five mobile courts since April this year, reports UNB.
Police said, the mobile courts filed 119 cases against the shop-owners for different irregularities like selling of non-iodised salt and adulterated foods and carrying out business without license. One first class magistrate, district marketing officer, technical officer of BSCIC and sanitary inspector conducted the raids in the local markets.

Smuggling of fabrics takes toll on handloom industry

NATORE, July 2: The livelihoods of thousands of weavers in northern region are now at stake as unbridled smuggling of Indian fabrics has cornered the country's handloom industry, reports UNB.

According to sources, it has become difficult for the local weavers to compete with the Indian products as prices of dyes, yarns and chemicals have doubled over the last few years.

There are over 1.5 lakh handlooms in Pabna, Sirajganj, Natore, Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat and Nilphamari districts.

Sources at Bangladesh Handloom Board (BHB) said once there were over 1.5 lakh handloom factories in the country's northern region and now the number had reduced to 50,000 factories, throwing some 2,50,000 weavers out of job.

Weaving is no longer as paying as before. Once our products had good demands. But now Indian clothes have sidelined our items," said Bimol Bhoumik, a weaver-turned-rickshawpuller.

Official sources said there is a good number of weavers in the region whose lives have been wrecked by certificate cases filed by various national commercial banks on charge of loan default.

Some weavers complained that a section of bank officials sanctioned loans to a good number of fake weavers instead of the genuine ones only to make their conditions worse.

According to the sources, the government in an attempt to revamp the sector had distributed loan totaling Tk 101.74 crore to weavers over the last 16 years.

Four national banks had distributed the loans among 3,500 weavers associations under the programme. But in most cases the loans had gone to wrong persons due to corruption.

The genuine weavers who received the loan now are unable to repay it as their business went down the slope due to price hike of necessary inputs and unbridled smuggling of Indian goods.

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Office bearers of Faridpur Press Club

From Our Correspondent FARIDPUR, July 2: Syed Immanuel Azam Abdur Rab and Md Habibur Rahman have been elected president and general secretary of Faridpur Press Club for the tenure of 2000-01.

The election was held in the club premises recently. Other office bearers are: vice-presidents- Abdul Majid Mia, Md Kabirul Islam Siddique and ASM Munjur Murshed; assistant general secretary- Ashokesh Roy; finance secretary- Nirmalendu Chakravarty Shanker; office secretary- Monjur Kader Choudhury; publication and publicity secretary- Amaresh Roy; literary and cultural secretary- Md Moshirur Rahman Khokan; sports secretary- Sajjat Hossain Roni; library secretary- Gantanu Dash; and members- Mahfuzul Alam Milan, Mouzu Ara Swapna, Belal Chodhury, Abdul Wajed Mia, Kamaluddin Ahmed and Mijanur Rahman.

Three held in Ctg

From Our Correspondent CHITTAGONG, July 2: Police in separate drives on Sunday three people, including a convict, and recovered firearm and contraband in the city.

Panchlaha police arrested an absconding convict accused from Firingee Bazar area. The convict was identified as Abul Hossain, 40, who was awarded life term for killing his brother.

In another raid, police terrorised Md Sohel, 25, with a firearm from Badurtola area. Police arrested a woman and recovered 42 bottles of phenidyl syrup from her possession from Badurtola area. The woman was identified as Monowara Begum, 40.

A noble initiative

COMILLA, July 2: Five kids, who were languishing with their convicted mothers in the district jail, have been sent to a juvenile rehabilitation centre thanks to Dhaka Women Lawyers Association (DWLA) for taking the initiative, reports UNB.

The kids — Amjad, 6, Jhuma 6, Nahi 6, Lipi 8, and Hasina 7 — have been taken to the juvenile rehabilitation centre in Dhaka under the supervision of DWLA.

DWLA came forward in aid of the kids following a request by local committee of Bangladesh Social Rehabilitation.

President of the committee Dr Jobeyda Hannan, along with other women leaders visited the jail on May 6 and found the kids languishing with four convicted mothers, who were serving 30 years jail term in a murder case.

Dr Jobeyda wrote to DWLA to take steps for immediate rehabilitation of the kids at the request of the ill-fated mothers.

Later, Advocate Rebecca Sultana and Rehana Sultana of DWLA met the Deputy Commissioner of the district on May 30 to release the kids from the jail.

On June 4, Dr Jobeyda Hannan received the five kids from the jail authorities and sent them to DWLA the following day.

DWLA will now look after the kids.

Pirates-villagers clash leaves 2 missing, 20 hurt in Sirajganj

From Our Correspondent SIRAJGANJ, July 2: Two persons remained missing while 20 others injured in a clash between villagers and pirates at Char Barakandir under Shajadpur upazila in the early hours of Sunday.

Police and witnesses said armed pirates numbering 25 to 30 looted 16 cattle on gun point at the aforementioned village on the fateful night. The villagers challenged the pirates and engaged in clash with them for one hour. At one stage the pirates gave up and jumped over the river. Two of them remained missing while other pirates fled away.

Angry villagers caught red-handed the gang leader of the pirates, Aatur, 30, son of Sowdagar Sheikh of village South Kungram under Doulatpur upazila in Manikganj district. They beat him mercilessly.

However, police recovered him and sent him to Chowhall Health Complex. A case has been lodged in this connection with the respective police station.

Outbreak of filaria in C'nawabganj

CHAPAINAWABGANJ, July 2: An alarming outbreak of filaria, a disease characterised by chronic inflammation of the limbs, has affected a large number of people here, reports UNB.

According to a survey by an NGO, over 2,000 people have been suffering from the disease in remote areas, including Bholaha and Shibganj upazilas.

Doctors attributed the outbreak of disease to bite by a particular type of mosquito called Culex Anopheles. The symptoms of the disease are tingling of the skin and fever.

UP chairman, 4 others held on different charges

NAOGAON, July 2: A UP chairman was arrested for being drunk on Tuesday, reports UNB.

Police said the chairman of Nazirpur Union Afzal Hossain Latim was taken into custody when he became rowdy after taking alcohol.

In another incident, local people caught four young men along with firearms as they attempted to kill the former chairman of Bhimpur Union in Mohadeb upazila on Friday.

Police said that Swajan, 25, Sumon, 25, Suruj, 28, and Akram, 28, hurled bombs at Ataul Haq, 30, while he was returning home on a rickshaw van at night, leaving him seriously injured.

Shortly after the attack, pedestrians swooped on the attackers and caught them red-handed. They also recovered firearms and ammunition, including a shutter gun, one knife and two cocktails from their possession.

BCL wins college polls in Pirojpur

PIROJPUR, July 2: Ruling party-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) swept in the students union election of Pirojpur Government Suhrawardy College bagging all but one post in the election held on Thursday, report UNB.

Syed Imran Uddin Ahmed was declared Vice-President securing 444 votes while his nearest rival JCD candidate Rezaul Islam bagged 344 votes.

Manun Shikder of BCL was elected GS with 465 votes while Jis nearest rival JCD candidate Mainur Rahman Milon got 291 votes.

Out of 17 posts, BCL bagged 16 posts while the post of the Indoor Sports (male) went to independent candidate Wahidul Islam.

Of the 1120 voters, 808 cast their votes.

Although the election was held in a peaceful manner, bomb explosion during a chase and earlier chase between JCD and BCL activists left two people injured at a nearby bus stand.

Smuggling of fabrics takes toll on handloom industry

NATORE, July 2: The livelihoods of thousands of weavers in northern region are now at stake as unbridled smuggling of Indian fabrics has cornered the country's handloom industry, reports UNB.

According to sources, it has become difficult for the local weavers to compete with the Indian products as prices of dyes, yarns and chemicals have doubled over the last few years.

There are over 1.5 lakh handlooms in Pabna, Sirajganj, Natore, Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat and Nilphamari districts.

Sources at Bangladesh Handloom Board (BHB) said once there were over 1.5 lakh handloom factories in the country's northern region and now the number had reduced to 50,000 factories, throwing some 2,50,000 weavers out of job.

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