

Bagerhat areas submerged

BAGERHAT, Sept 4: Low lying areas in four upazilas continued to be inundated with the rise of river water and breaches in a cross dam marking the deterioration of flood situation, reports UNB.

Due to the heavy downpour for the last three days river waters swelled further and submerged the low lying areas in Rampal, Swarankhola, Mongla and Morolgan upazilas.

Sources said a breach was developed in Swarankhola Berabeka cross dam on Friday that rendered 4,000 people of Southkhalia union marooned.

Official sources said huge shrimps in shrimp enclosures and sweet water fishes were washed away causing huge loss to the fish farmers.

Water level of most of the rivers including Poshur, Boleshwar, Bhairab and Panchhari rose on an average by six feet during last three days.

Number of voters up

From Our Correspondent

NATORE, Sept 4: The number of voters has increased in six upazilas here by 1,56,892, according to the rough voters' list.

The male voters have increased by 80,462 while women by 76,430. The District Election Office sources said, there were about 7,64,731 voters in the district in accordance with the voter list made in 1995. This year, the rough voter list shows the number of voters are 9,21,621. Out of the total, female voters are 4,57,064 and males are 4,64,559.

Diploma engs to observe hanger strike

From Our Correspondent

MOULVIBAZAR, Sept 4: Diploma engineers working in the district will observe token hunger strike in front of the office of the Deputy Commissioner on September 13 demanding introduction of four-year diploma engineering courses in institutions.

Leaders of the Bangladesh Diploma Engineering Students, Teachers and Professionals Action Council of Moulvibazar district unit announced the programmes in a press conference recently.

Diploma engineers said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had declared the government decision of introducing four-year diploma engineering course, but a "vested quarter" is trying to thwart the decision.

Replying to a question, they blamed graduate engineers for creating obstacles to the implementation of the decision.

Truck stolen in Sirajganj

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, Sept 4: A truck was stolen from Bazar Station area here in the early hours of Monday.

Owner of the Tata truck Paresh Nath Chowdhury said the vehicle was parked in the area.

The vehicle, which was purchased recently, was not recovered till Tuesday.

The town, however, has no truck terminal.



Scarcity of fish is acute throughout the country. In some rural markets common fishes have already disappeared. In such a period of fish crisis dry fishes are used as substitute. Kuakata in Patuakhali district is famous for its sea beach with enchanting scenic beauty. Sea fishes are available here in large number and many people depend on fishing for their livelihood. Photo shows fishes being dried by some fishermen.

—Star photo by A KM Mohsin

Erosion onslaught in 3 dists

Erosion by rivers has taken alarming turn in Tangail, Faridpur and Bogra districts, causing concern among people, report agencies.

In Tangail, erosion by the River Jamuna has devoured homesteads of over a thousand people since the advent of the rainy season in three upazilas.

Over 500 acres of arable lands are also eroded in the district particularly in Katuli, Kakoa and Huga villages of sadar, Solla and Durgapur villages of Kalihati and Arjuna, Gabsara and Nikrail villages of Bhupur upazila.

Meanwhile, the erosion-affected people formed a Jamuna River Erosion Protection Committee and held a number of meetings urging the authority concerned to take necessary measures to check the erosion.

They also demanded of the authority to take steps for their early rehabilitation.

Faridpur district is under threat of erosion by the mighty rivers Padma and Arial Khan.

The local leaders said the situation was turning grave as no proper steps have yet been taken to combat the menace.

The Padma devoured 190 villages of 18 unions in Charbhadrans, Sadarpur, Bhanga and Sadar upazilas, rendering about 10,000 families homeless in last five years.

People here have expressed resentment against the willful indifference of the concerned authorities to protect the district.

They alleged that Water Development Board (WDB) spends crores of taka in Faridpur zone every year in the name of protecting the area but the existence of the district is at a stake as erosion continues unabated in the absence of a proper plan.

The WDB spent Tk 180 crore in 55 projects during fiscal 1999-2000, but there was no allocation for flood protection embankment.

Erosion by the Padma damaged three km areas

from Dikrichar union in Sadar upazila to Gazirtek union in Charvadrashan upazila of the flood control embankment this year.

A five-km alternative flood protection embankment, costing Tk 2 crore, was constructed here which is considered as faulty.

Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak inaugurated the embankment on August 11 and announced an allocation of Tk 15 crore to protect the dam.

Experts, criticising the allocation for the faulty dam, emphasised the need for river training to protect the district from the recurring erosion.

According to an earlier report, three upazilas of Bogra district have come under threat as the mighty Jamuna poised to inundate the area any time following some breaches in a flood protection embankment.

The 2-km embankment, constructed at a cost of Tk 65 lakh last fiscal year (1999-2000) to protect Dhunot, Sariakandi and Sonatola upazilas, developed breaches at eight points.

These are Devbhanga, Hasnapara, Kutubpur, Borokandi, Kornibari and Chandaish of Sariakandi upazila, and Soharabari and Banijan of Dhunot.

A source at the Water Development Board said they have informed the matter to the higher authorities, and continued piling and placing sand-filled bags on the breached points.

He, however, admitted the measure is not sufficient to protect the embankment.

Another source said similar breaches also developed last year as the construction was done during the rainy season, leaving the embankment weak to resist the onslaught of the swelling Jamuna.

Last year, erosion of the Jamuna grabbed 22 villages in Sariakandi, 16 in Sonatola and six in Dhunot and the affected people have been living an inhuman life on the embankment.

Women play major role in Garo families

From Jahanagir Alam

NETRAKONA, Sept 4: The Garo community live in Meghalaya of India and in Haluaghat, Dhubaura in Mymensingh, Madhupur in Tangail, Kalmakanda, Durgapur upazilas in Netrakona and bordering area of Sherpur and Sunamganj district in Bangladesh.

In tribal Garo society women make the decision. A Garo woman does not leave her family after marriage. Daughters, not sons inherit the family's property.

Garo women are hardy, but Garo men are lazy. They always depend on women. From generation to generation Garo women maintain their living.

Once Garo women are happy with their sufficient croplands. Then they had to depend on cultivation. They cultivate their croplands and produced sufficient crops. But now they are landless. The landless Garo women are now compelled to sell their labour in other people's field.

Poor Garo women survive by hard work says Ranita Kubi, a 45 year old Garo woman of Durgapur.

She said, loss of land has encouraged many Garo women to

take up the jobs of labourers this is one of the factors which encouraged Garo people to send their children to schools. Previously Garos were happy with their lands.

Illiterate Garo women work in the fields or collect fire wood for sell, while the educated one's take up jobs offered mainly by the NGOs. Lack of farm lands is forcing Garo women to take up jobs elsewhere. In providing jobs to the Garo people CARITAS and World Vision are playing a leading role. Even though Garo women get priority, Garo men are also welcome for the jobs.

Woes of paying bed patients

From Abdul Wadood

RAJSHAH, Sept 4: In spite of paying the due fees, patients of the paying beds in Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) are not getting the expected services.

According to RMCH sources, a patient has to pay an amount of Tk 480 for the first seven days and another amount of Tk 55 for the next three days for a paying bed in the hospital. It usually takes four to 10 days for a patient of medicine wards to get release after cure, while a patient of surgical and gynecological problems usually has to remain in the ward from 10 to 21 days. So a paying-bed-patient spends much money, but gets no additional facility for that. Even the beds are not at all better than those of non-paying ones.

RMCH sources said that all the beds of the hospital had been non-paying since the inception of the hospital in late 50s. The government suddenly created some paying beds in late eighties.

Actually no new bed was added, but some of the non-paying beds were declared paying ones," said a seminar RMCH official on condition of anonymity. "These beds are not at all different or superior to the non-paying ones in terms of quality, cleanliness and service," he said.

In some wards, the paying beds have been separated from the non-paying ones by a five inch thick wall, while in some other wards the paying beds have remained in the same row.

To explain why the patients choose paying beds when there is no extra facility, the RMCH official said that the patients chose the paying beds only to have a bed, to avoid flooring.

The beds of the wards always remain occupied and some patients are always have to take their beds on the floor in the face of short number of beds in comparable with excess number of admitted patients. So a newly admitted patient is to do flooring for several days prior to taking a bed.

On the other hand, paying beds are usually always available. So a patient who has the minimum financial ability, hires a paying bed to avoid flooring. This is the only advantage.

"This is nothing but one kind of black-mailing," the RMCH official said adding, "Taking the advantage of shortage of beds some people are being forced to hire a paying bed without offering any extra facility to them."

Another RMCH official said that the target of the government had been to earn some revenue from the wealthy persons. "But those who are wealthy in true sense do not usually come to the hospital, rather they go to the private clinics, he said. If any wealthy person come to the hospital, he/she hires a cabin, not a paying bed, he further said. So the burden of the paying beds is borne by the people of low-income group who cannot afford to take service from the private clinics or cabins and do not get non-paying beds at the time of getting admission to RMCH.

The paying beds have been placed adjacent to the toilets. The toilets are not cleaned regularly and properly. Bad smell evolves always from the toilets creating sufferings to the paying bed patients and their attendants," said Aminur Rahman, a guardian of a paying-bed patient in a surgical ward.

Expressing grave anger, he opined that the hospital authorities should give the minimum facilities to the paying-bed patients from whom they took some money.

RMCH authorities acknowledged the observations and informed that the some situation had been prevailing in all the medical college hospitals. "We have nothing to do with it. The issue should be considered in the policy making level of the government," said the RMCH official.

Jamrul disappearing

From Our Correspondent



A demonstration plot of fruit bearing jamrul tree at a horticulture centre in Mymensingh.

—Star photo

MYMENSINGH, Sep 4: Jamrul, a traditional rainy season fruit, is disappearing gradually. Indiscriminate felling of trees, especially fruit-bearing ones, in rural areas has been attributed to the decline in production.

The small greenish-white juicy fruit was once available here like other places in the country. Jamrul cannot be seen easily in markets these days, said Abdur Rahman, an elderly man in the town.

However, Mymensingh Horticulture Centre (MHC) has taken steps for the development of the fruit. The centre has been distributing seeds and saplings of hybrid variety of jamrul among people in a bid to expand the cultivation of the traditional fruit.

Usually the colour of the fruit is white, but the improved variety, developed by the centre, is white and pink in colour, said Zakia Begum, assistant horticulturist of the centre. The new variety has gained popularity among farmers, she added.

The fruit is enriched in Vitamin-B, Vitamin-B2 and Vitamin-C, said Md Rafiqul Islam, horticulture specialist of local Agriculture Extension Department (AED).

News snaps

Construction work progressing

COX'S BAZAR, Sept 4: Construction work of the first phase of Cox's Bazar Cultural Centre is progressing fast at a cost of Taka five crore, reports UNB.

The centre on two acres of land will have 500-seated auditorium, a museum of traditional folk culture and system for imparting training to the artists and finding talent. State Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs Obaidul Quader visited the construction site on Friday and expressed the hope that the centre would play an important role in attracting domestic and foreign tourists. He instructed the concerned authorities to complete the first phase of work by next May.

Two unnatural deaths

PATUAKHALI, Sept 4: Two unnatural deaths were reported here on August 30 and 31, reports UNB.

Police said unidentified assailants slaughtered Hemela Begum, 18, wife of Jahangir of Uttar Hazikhal village in sadar upazila by a sharp weapon while she was sleeping with her husband on August 30. Police arrested Jahangir in this connection. The body was sent to the morgue for autopsy. In another incident, police recovered the body of Tara Bhami, wife of Hanif, from Dakkhin Sabujbag area of the town on Thursday. Local people said family feud might be the reason behind the killing. Hanif and his family members are absconding. Separate cases were filed.



There is no proper time for cleaning garbage in Sirajganj town. As a result the town dwellers have to suffer a lot. Usually the local municipality staffers remain busy in cleaning wastes during busy time of a day. This picture has been taken from Barabazaar area where an unhygienic environment has been created by the sweepers during peak hour of trading at the bazaar.

—Star photo

Poor HSC result

COMILLA, Sept 4: Only 16 students out of 1,768 appeared from Nangolkot centre came out successful in this year's HSC examination, reports UNB.

The students appeared in the examination from eight colleges. Of the successful candidates, 10 (out of 989) were from Nangolkot Hassan Memorial Degree College while three (out of 206) from Nather Petua College. One each student passed from Homakhal Bazar High School and College, Bhulain High School and College and Chalon College. But, not a single student could pass from another three colleges: Hosnabad College, Banggoda Badsha Mia College and Dr Zobaidda Hanan High School and College.

Erosion threatens homesteads

NETRAKONA, Sept 4: Erosion by the River Dhanu has intensified threatening several hundred homesteads in Khalazuri upazila, reports UNB.

The worst affected villages are Banlapara, Banihati, Kurihati, Barohati, Chhotahati, Dighalhati, Asadpur and Jagannathpur. Apart from the erosion, big waves created due to high winds and plying of cargoes, launches and steamers round the clock are also eroding out soils of the houses of the villages. A number of government offices along the River Dhanu have also come under threat. Local people said the government is yet to take measures to protect their homesteads along the river.

JCD wins in college union poll

JOYPURHAT, Sept 4: Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student wing of opposition BNP, swept in the Joypurhat Government College Students' Union election, reports UNB.

At Amin Sabuj of Chhatra Dal was elected as vice-president while A S M Muktarid Titas of Jatiya Chhatra Samaj as general secretary in the election held on Thursday. BNP-backed Sabuj-Bidyut panel bagged 14 seats, including that of vice-president, out of 18 posts while Biplab-Dablu panel of pro-Awami League Chhatra League three seats, including the post of AGS. A total of 1,006 voters out of 1,254 cast their votes in the election.

Man convicted in arms case

SYLHET, Sept 4: A local court has sentenced a man to 10 years rigorous imprisonment (RI) in an arms case, reports UNB.

According to the prosecution, police recovered a pipe gun along with two cartridges from the house of Abdur Noor of Bade-Deuli village in Fenchuganj upazila on August 18, 1996. Later, police filed a case against the convict. Solaiman alias Chumma Mia on charge of possession of the firearm. After examining the records and witnesses, Additional District and Sessions Judge Shamsul Alam Khan handed down the punishment on Tuesday.

Dacoits kill jewellery shop-owner

COMILLA, Sept 4: Armed dacoits killed a jewellery shop-owner after looting 50 tolas of gold from his shop at Banggoda bazaar in Nangalkot upazila on Sunday, reports UNB.

Police said the robbers picked up Tazul Islam from his shop at gunpoint, looted the gold ornaments and killed him beside a nearby road. Police recovered the body from there and sent it to the hospital morgue for autopsy. Father of the victim Ali Ahmed lodged a case with the police in this connection.

Safe haven of drug traders

JAMALPUR, Sept 4: Chhontia bazaar and its adjacent areas have become a safe haven of drug traders due to lack of police action, reports UNB.

Local people alleged that various drugs, including hemp, fermented liquor, phensidyl and rectified spirit are being sold overtly among the people, including youths, at the bazaar and Bhanpara area. Dishonest traders in collusion with the local terrorists are carrying out the drug business, gambling and other anti-social activities. Police maintain indifference in taking action against the terrorists or unscrupulous traders as they are being paid tolls regularly, it was learnt. Local people urged the authorities concerned to take proper action against the drug traders to prevent the youths from drug addiction.

Rape incidents on rise

BENAPOLE, Sept 4: The number of rape incidents is on rise in the five southern districts in absence of punitive actions against the rapists, reports UNB.

According to competent sources, at least 85 women and children were allegedly raped in last seven months. Of the total, 42 women and children were raped in Jessore, 19 in Satkhira, 12 in Jhenidah, seven in Narail and five in Magura districts. A number of insane women also fell prey to the rapists in the five districts, mainly in Jhenidah. Three mad women were raped at Haigopur, Keshabpur and Shyamipur in Jhenidah and Jessore districts from May-July. The number of rape incidents is increasing as most of the rapists go unpunished, sources said adding that most of the accused in rape cases this year were not arrested.

Devastating fire

KHAGRACHHARI, Sept 4: A fatal fire broke out at a Cotton Mill in Dighinala upazila on Sunday. The mill has been totally burnt into ashes in the fire, reports BSS.

According to Dighinala police source, the incident occurred early in the morning from a cigarette butt and it was brought under control within an hour with the help of local people.



(Left) Kacharibari of the Royal estate (Middle) Main entrance of Chowgram Royal Palace (Right) Old temples in the palace area

—Star photo

Chowgram Palace needs renovation

From Anwar Ali

NATORE, Sept 4: The tiny northern district of Natore is not only famous for its Kanchagolla (a kind of sweet) and Banolota Sen, but it is also famous for several royal palaces of historic importance.

Besides the two most remarkable royal palaces of Queen Bhabanee and Uttara Gonobhaban, there is the 17th century old historic archaeological monument Chowgram Royal Palace at Shingra upazila, 25 km northwest of the district town. As a result of apathy on the part of the concerned authorities, the palace is ruining.

The Chowgram royal dynasty ruled the vast areas of Rajshahi division covering 4,607 square miles including 65 estates for more than 220 years (from 1720 to 1947).

King Rashique Roy, an upper caste Hindu Zamindar is believed to have founded the dynasty in 1720. Rashique Roy's son and heir Krishna Kanta built the panoramic palace in Chowgram village in

1740. The king of Natore Ram Jiban adopted Ram Kanta, the youngest son of Rashique Roy following a premature death of the Natore King's son Kalika Proshad in 1724. King Ram Jiban bestowed Chowgram and Rangpur 'parganas' to Rashique Roy for allowing him to adopt his son. The yearly revenue of these two parganas was Taka one million. The financial position of Chowgram dynasty began to improve following control of these two parganas.

Rashique Roy's and heir Krishna Kanta built the Chowgram palace, a fine work of architecture on about 35 acres of land in 1740. A large kacharibari, now in ruins, was on the south of the two-storied magnificent main palace.

At present the ground floor of the palace has sunk and gone under earth. The main gate of the palace is now on the verge of collapse. The entire palace and other establishments of the palace are encircled with deep water trench.

By generations, King Rashique Roy, King Krishna Kanta, King Rudra Kanta, King Rohinee Kanta, King Ramane Kanta and Rajesh Kanta governed the Chowgram Roy state from 1720 to 1917.

Soon after the death of Krishna Kanta his only son and heir Rudra Kanta claimed the throne. King Rudra adopted Rohinee Kanta as his heir because he had no son. Soudamini, wife of Rhinee Kanta adopted little child Ramanee Kanta, son of Kripanath Moltra of Patul village under the sadar upazila following premature death of her husband Rohinee Kanta. As Ramanee Kanta was still a little child the state went under the court of wards.

After obtaining degree from Calcutta University Ramanee Kanta took the charge of the state. He earned reputation for excellent and good governance and his state's jurisdiction was extended. A total 48 parganas of Rajshahi division was under his kingship.

King Ramanee Kanta had sincere dedication for

education. He established a good number of schools, makhtabs and madrassas. He established Chowgram Secondary English School in 1910. This 90-year-old worn out school with more than 750 students (at present) has been spreading the light of education among the people of Chowgram and its adjacent areas till today.

Ramanee Kanta had three sons Rajesh Kanta, Rabindra Kanta and Romendra Kanta.

The oldest son Rajesh Kanta inherited the kingdom after Ramanee Kanta's death in 1942. Rajesh Kanta was the last king of the Chowgram dynasty. Immediately after partition of India in 1947 almost all the family members of late Ramanee Kanta and Rajesh Kanta went to Calcutta abandoning their kingdom and none of them returned.

If the worn out 'puja mandap, monasteries, large, wide and deep dighis' in the Chowgram palace areas could be preserved and renovated. They can be turned into a magnificent tourist spot.