

Uncertain water supply project

From Abdul Wadood

RAJSHAHI, Sept 5: Completion of works on Water Supply Project of Rajshahi City Corporation has become uncertain.

First phase of the project has been lying half-done while the second phase is yet to be started.

Sources in the local office of the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) said, the project couldn't be completed due to shortage of funds. The government is not releasing the allocated money due to some unknown reasons.

According to Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) sources, after continued persuasion, the ministry passed the Water Supply Project in the early 1995.

The Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC) approved the project on December 19, 1995 and allocated Taka 53 crore.

Works of first phase of the project started on April 1, 1996. DPHE sources said that they had formed a strong separate project committee to implement the project as soon as possible considering its importance and demand. A superintending engineer is heading the project committee.

Out of the total Taka 53 crore, Taka 20 crore will be spent in the first phase and the rest Taka 33 crore in the second phase.

Under the first phase of the project 10 production pumps for lifting underground water has already been installed. But only about 50 per cent of the targeted 120 kilometers pipeline can have so far been connected.

In the first phase, three water treatment plants are also being built. Works on construction of two water treatment plants have almost been completed. These two plants will be ready for inauguration within next three months, DPHE sources expect.

On the other hand, about 50 per cent of the works on construction of another one water treatment plant have so far been completed. The works cannot be continued as per schedule only due to shortage of funds, DPHE sources informed.

After completion of the first phase of the Water Supply Project, more than 40 per cent residents of Rajshahi City Corporation area will come under the coverage of safe and soft water.

First phase of the project was scheduled to be completed by June 1998. It has, for the latest time, been rescheduled to complete the works of the first phase by June 2001.

This latest schedule can not also be maintained, it seems to us, as

no sign of release of money is being seen yet", said a DPHE official on condition of anonymity.

Out of the total of Taka 20 crore, only Taka 11 crore has so far been released in three instalments. No money was released in the financial year of 1999-2000. There is doubt whether Taka 9 crore of the 2000-2001 fiscal year will be released at all", the DPHE official said.

DPHE sources said that they could have not paid the bills of the contractors for the works of the last year, as the government released no money.

"So we are hesitating to do any work before coming money in our hands", said the DPHE official.

DPHE Project Committee for Rajshahi City Corporation Water Supply Project is yet to do anything regarding the second phase of the project. "The second phase will be planned and designed observing the results and consequences of the first phase", the DPHE official said. It can be started late in 2002 if everything runs okay from just now, he said. For the delay, cost of the project is being increased.

The project has become a victim of ill-politics', said Entajul Alam, a Ward Commissioner of Rajshahi City Corporation for last 20 years. Another Ward Commissioner also opined in the similar manner. They observed that the government was intentionally obstructing development works in Rajshahi. "For being a stronghold of the main opposition party, Rajshahi has fallen under the grudge of the ruling party".

Crisis of safe drinking water is an acute problem in Rajshahi. Especially in the dry season, underground waterfalls much beyond the limit rendering hand tubewells useless. Supply water is the main source of safe water in the city. But about 40 per cent of the total population have remained out of reach of supply water. Besides, the supplied water contains microorganisms and many other substances like iron, manganese, chromium, magnesium and calcium in non-acceptable higher range. This water causes many health hazards like gastrointestinal diseases, falling of hair, allergic and skin problems.

Though arsenic has been found beyond the acceptable range in hand tubule water at some places in the city, supply water contains arsenic of normal range, DPHE sources said.

After completion of the water supply project, the whole population of the City Corporation will come under the coverage of safe and treated water.

Minister visits Rooppur

PAKSHI, Pabna, Sept 5: Science and Technology Minister Gen Nooruddin Khan on Monday visited the site of the Rooppur nuclear power plant and talked to the local people about the long cherished project, reports UNB.

Site inspection by the minister is a prelude to his visit to Vienna for a meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on September 21.

There he is likely to sign an additional protocol for obtaining greater assistance from IAEA to make the safeguard agreement more effective for increased use of nuclear power for peaceful purposes.

Gen Nooruddin informed the local people that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will lay the foundation of the dream project which was adopted during the Ayub regime of Pakistan in 1961. Since then project was lying unimplemented due to lack of political decision.

It will take five to seven years to complete the 600MW nuclear power plant at a cost of about Tk 6000 crore, added the minister.

General Khan was accompanied by two local MPs Shamsur Rahman Sharif and Prof Jamiatul Ferdous, secretary Dr Fazlur Rahman, Atomic Energy Commission chairman Mohammad Habibuddin, project director CS Karim and civil engineer Monirul Islam. They went round the project site.

Guabaria UP by-election on Sept 23

BARISAL, Sept 5: The by-election to the post of Chairman of Guabaria Union Parishad under Hizla upazila will be held on September 23, reports BSS.

This post fell vacant following unnatural death of UP Chairman Hasan Mahmud Sikder on May 9.

Meanwhile, four candidates have submitted their nomination papers to contest the post. They are: Nipu Sikder, brother of Upazila Awami League general secretary, Belayet Hossain Dhal, Hizla Upazila Awami League vice-president, Aminul Islam Swapani Chowdhury Upazila Chhatra League president and Muktijoddha Abu Basar Mukta.

The nomination papers were submitted to the returning officer on Tuesday, an official source added.

The last time of withdrawal of nomination papers is September 6.

Tidal surge damages trees in Kuakata

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Sept 5: Over three hundred tamarisk trees, more than one hundred coconut and date trees at Hossainpara village along Kuakata sea beach in Patuakali district were uprooted and damaged after tidal surge hit the area on Sunday.

Besides, ten shops and other structures were also washed away. The surge also left a trail of devastation in the beach area.

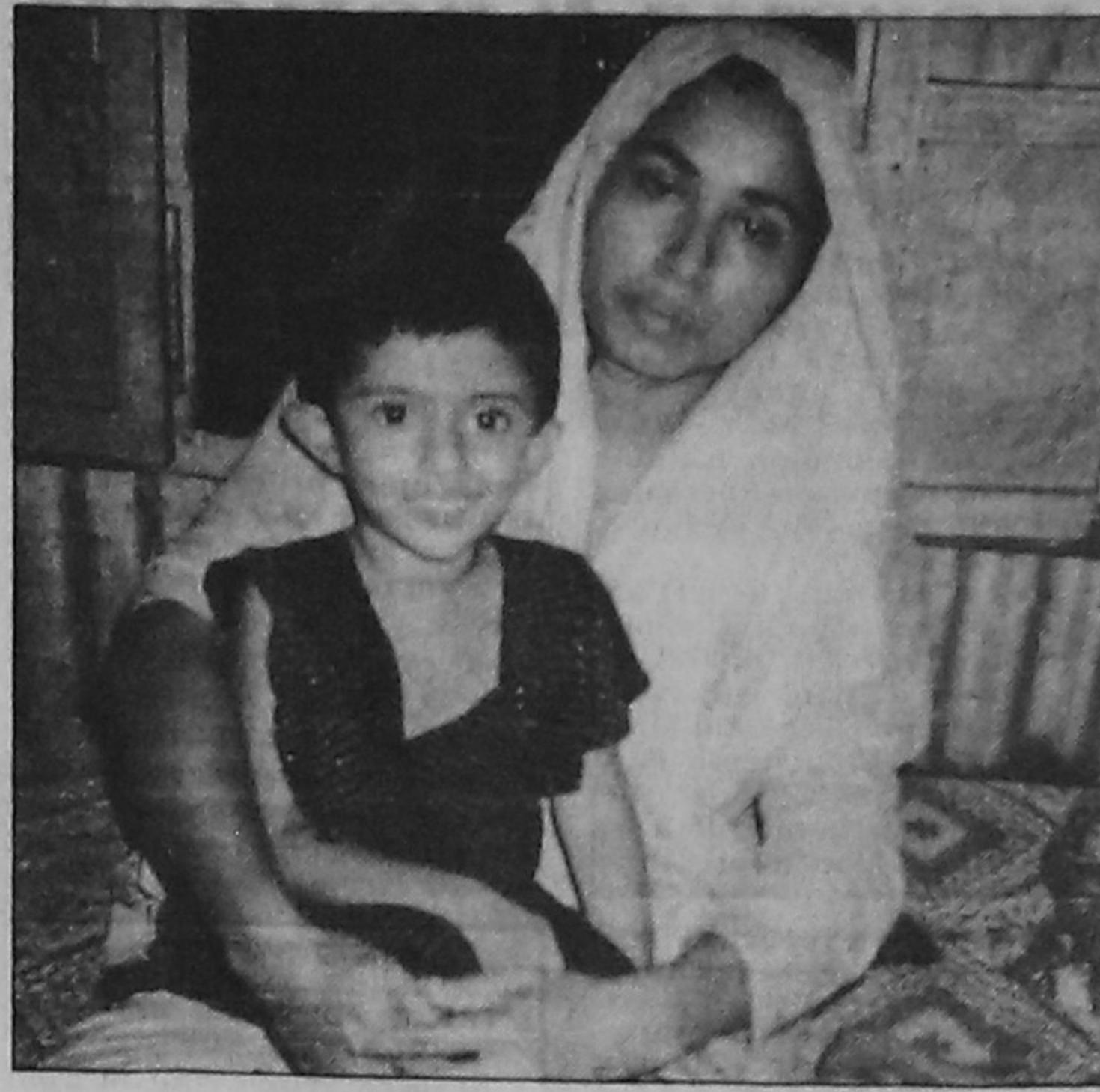
Sub-registrar posts vacant

From Our Correspondent

NETRAKONA, Sept 5: Five posts of sub-registrar in five upazilas of the district have been lying vacant for a long time, hampering registration work in the areas.

The upazilas are Barhata, Atpara, Madan, Kalmakanda and Khalajuri.

Local people said absence of sub-registrars is causing problems to buyers and sellers of land.



Innocent Moutoshi who has become an orphan following murder of her father Sayedul Amin Khokon by a group of miscreants recently is seen in her mother's lap.

-Star photo

Killers make Moutoshi an orphan

From Our Correspondent

MYMENSINGH, Sept 5: Moutoshi, a female child of three years four months old still does not know that her father had been killed by a group of miscreants on August 19.

Moutoshi, the only daughter of the victim, Sayedul Amin Khokon, 30, still ask her mother and other family members when her father will arrive to care for her. But everybody keeps mum only shedding tears as there is no answer to the question.

Family sources said that the people who came to see for the last time the slain Khokon also broke down when Moutoshi was calling her father apprehending him in sleep. Now the baby is waiting for her father's return.

Khokon, a former Vice President of Mymensingh Polytechnic Institute and a local leader of Sweschabaseb League, a front organisation of Awami League went out of the house at about 10.30 am from his residence in Bhatikeshore area of the district town towards his construction site in Mymensingh Agricultural University (BAU) area. He remained busy there till afternoon and returned in Charpara area in front of Bhal Bhali Haircutting Saloon at 4 pm boarding a private car of his friend. After departure of the private car he was waiting to have a shave at the saloon, while a group of miscreants numbering between 15-16 attacked Khokon with sharp weapons and grabbed him indiscriminately. Fatally injured Khokon was rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) where the on-duty doctors declared him dead after admission.

Khokon, son of Nurul Amin and third among five brothers and two sisters was the main source of income of the family. Now I am a pauper he said adding "I want exemplary punishment to the culprits."

Shamima Amin Rozil, the widow told this journalist that she lost her husband and in this way she lost everything she question who would take care of her child. She demanded that the culprits would be hanged for their crime. Other family members also demanded immediate arrest and punishment to those involved in the killing.

However, a case had been lodged in this regard accusing 13 people with Kotwali police station by Johirul Islam Kodia Miah uncle of the victim. But none has been arrested till August 23.

When contacted the OC of Kotwali thana Md Obeadul Hoque told The Daily Star that they have taken the case very seriously. He also said that several drives have already been conducted at different places adding the culprits would be arrested soon. The OC also told this correspondent that the murder occurred following a sequel to previous enmity.

Convictions

Different courts in the districts of Jessor, Bagerhat, Habiganj, Comilla and Kishoreganj convicted various culprits in separate cases recently, reports BSS.

A court in Jessor has sentenced one ex-Army man to seven years rigorous imprisonment in an arms case.

The prosecution, in brief, was that the accused Abdul Gani, ex-Nayek Subedar of Bangladesh Army, son of Zahur Ali of village Dohakula in Bagerpara upazila was arrested on August 26, 1999 in connection with a woman repression case.

Later, on the basis of his confession statement police recovered one set of army dress, one rocket launcher and 19 rounds of rifle bullets from his house. Accordingly, an arms case was filed with the police against him.

After examining the witnesses and records Additional Sessions and Special Tribunal Judge Belayet Hossain pronounced the verdict on Thursday.

Earlier on Wednesday five people were also awarded life term rigorous imprisonment for kidnapping a girl.

The special court of Woman and Child Repression Prevention also fined them Tk 5,000 each, in default, to suffer one year RI more.

The convicts are Jahangir Alam, Kamruzzaman Ratan, Rabil, Haroon-or-Rashid and Rina Khatun of Sarsha upazila here.

The case, in brief, was that the accused people forcibly kidnapped a schoolgirl, 15, of Dehi village of the same upazila on February 6, 1995 on her way home from the school.

The father of the victim filed a case on the same day and police after investigation submitted a charge sheet against them.

The convict was also fined Tk 40,000, in default, to suffer four years RI more.

According to the prosecution, Abul Kashem of Alai village in Laksam upazila attacked a villager Abdul Matin when he was sleeping on the bench of a shop and slaughtered him with a sharp knife as a sequel to previous enmity on May 9, 1995.

After examining 14 witnesses and records Additional Sessions Judge Mohammad Jashim Uddin awarded the punishment last week. The judge also ordered him to pay Tk 20,000, half of the fine, to the victim's family as compensation.

A court in Kishoreganj sentenced a youth to ten years rigorous imprisonment for marrying a schoolgirl forcibly after kidnapping her.

The special court on prevention of child and women repression also fined Alam Tk 50,000, in default to suffer four years more RI.

The court also sentenced three youths Montaz, Kader and Montu Miah, to 10 years RI each for abducting a woman in an attempt to violate her chastity in May 1992.

The court also fined the convicts Mukti Payik, Muju Payik, Moslem Payik, Captain Payik, in default to suffer three months more RI.

News snaps

Five roads completed

MANIKGANJ, Sept 5: Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) has completed the development work of five roads under priority project here recently, reports BSS.

These projects involving Taka 60 lakh have been completed in seven upazilas. The development work are the maintenance of Savar-Daramang road and Dhankora-Satiria road in Saturia, West Seota-Barudia road in Sadar, Ghor-Baratia road in Ghor and Shibpur-Rupsha road in Shilshala Upazila. Communication system of the areas have improved much after completion of the projects.

Woman killed in road mishap

THAKURGAON, Sept 5: An elderly woman was killed in a road mishap at post office area, 8 km off from the town on Friday, reports UNB.

Police said Jamila Khatun, 55, of village Akcha in Sadar upazila died on the spot when a microbus knocked her down. She met the tragic end while crossing the road. Another report says a mother and her son were arrested from Mitrabari area in Peerajganj on Saturday on charges of trading illegal drugs. On the same day, a schoolgirl of class VI was abducted from Dinajpur on August 1, was rescued from one Khademul Islam's house in Sarkarpura in the town. Police also arrested two youths Shafiq and Khairul from the house.

Housewife raped

BAGERHAT, Sept 5: A newly married woman was raped by her neighbour at Rayenda Tafalbari village in Sharankhola upazila on Friday evening, reports UNB.

Police said one Lutfur Rahman entered the house of the victim in absence of her husband and forcibly raped her showing a knife. However, the rapist ran away when other neighbours rushed to rescue the victim's screaming. A case was filed with Sharankhola thana.

Action committee formed

RANGAMATI, Sept 5: The non-government teachers, launching movement in support of their demands, formed a 31-member teachers' action committee with Samiran Bhattacharya and Mainuddin as convenor and member-secretary respectively in a meeting held on Monday at Rani Doyamoyee High School in the town, reports BSS.

The meeting formed the committee decided to observe human chain programme in the office of the Deputy Commissioner on August 20 next as a part of their ongoing movement to realise their demands. Teachers of non-government schools, colleges and Madrasas are observing strikes, boycotting classes to press home their demand including payment of Hill Allowance and other benefits.

Fund for health care service

RANGAMATI, Sept 5: A German-based technical development agency has expressed desire to fund Taka 10 crore to develop basic health care services in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs), reports BSS.

Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs instructed Rangamati Hill District Council (RHDC) to chalk out a plan to implement the programme as the funding agency. GTZ, expressed its intention to implement it through RDHC, official said. Implementation of development activities with the fund from abroad by RDHC will set an example as no district council in CHTs would carry out development activities with foreign fund earlier, official added.

Work completed

JESSORE, Sept 5: The construction of new buildings of 29 madrasahs in Jessor and Narail has already been completed. Facilities Department of Education Ministry Jessor Zone is implementing this project under the Development Programme of the government to expand Madrasah education, reports BSS.

The Executive Engineer of Facilities Department Jessor Zone informed that the expenditure for the work is Taka 3 crore 22 lakh 4 thousand and 5 hundred. This work has been completed by current economic year under the Selected Madrasah Development Scheme. After completion all the work of the scheme about 10 thousand students will get facilities in their education. The development work of 34 more madrasahs will be started in the following economic year, he added.

Priority on development of edn

RANGAMATI, Sept 5: Education Minister ASHK Sadeque said here on Thursday the present government allocated about Taka 5,600 crore for the development of education as it is committed to build an educated, trained and skilled generation to meet future need of the nation, reports BSS.

The present government has decided to implement recommendations of the Education Commission made during the tenure of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Rahman to restore the standard of education system in the country, the minister said. The minister was addressing as the chief guest in a views exchange meeting held at Local Tribal Cultural Institute Auditorium, which was attended by the chiefs of all educational institutions and heads of educational departments. Chairman of the Task Force on Repatriated Tribals and Internal Refugees Rehabilitation Affairs Dipankar Talukdar, MP, attended the meeting as special guest, with Deputy commissioner of the district Abu Haider Sardar in the chair.

Financial hardship of farmers

SHARIKPUR, Sept 5: Cultivation is being hampered seriously due to financial hardships of farmers and dearth of agri-inputs, reports BSS.

Local farmers alleged that they are forced to sell their products at nominal prices to repay loans to money lenders and banks and to purchase agri-inputs in the current seasons. Marginal farmers were compelled to sell their Boro crops in advance to the money lenders between Taka 150 and Taka 200 per maund to purchase necessary agri-inputs. Some of the farmers sold their bullocks at throwaway prices to purchase the inputs. Taking advantage of their pecuniary condition, unscrupulous money lenders are doing brisk business by giving loan at a high rate of interest. Due to continuous exploitation of money lenders many marginal farmers have already been rendered pauper locals said.

Man killed over land dispute</