

Influentials grab railway lands in Rajshahi

From Abdul Wadood

RAJSHAHI, Jan 14: Lands owned by Bangladesh Railway alongside the rail track from Bhadra to Rajshahi Court Station in the city are being grabbed by a section of influential people.

According to locals, the lands became valuable when the Department of Roads and Highways built Rajshahi Greater Road alongside the rail tracks in 1962. Since then many people have been grabbing the low-lying lands. Many illegal structures have been erected on the lands.

After promulgation of Martial Law in 1982, the Deputy Commissioner of Rajshahi asked the

illegal occupants to withdraw themselves. The illegal occupiers withdrew themselves but applied to the then District Martial Law Administrator and the Railway authorities to give them the lands on lease.

Later the Railway authorities endorsed a plan for use of its fallowlands. And under the plan, the authorities issued licences for use of the lands.

Railway authorities have issued at least 300 licenses for building shops on the fallow lands from Bhadra to Court Station area. Licences were issued for eight feet by eight feet

and 15 feet by 22 feet plots.

But most licence-holders have occupied lands beyond allocations. Besides, lands also have been illegally occupied by non-licence-holders, depriving the Railway of a huge amount of revenue.

Recently Bangladesh Railway, Western Zone has launched an initiative to recover the illegally occupied lands and asked the occupiers to withdraw themselves. But the illegal occupiers are, however, refusing to withdraw and demanding lease of the lands.

50,000 homeless families yet to be rehabilitated in Faridpur

MADARIPUR, Jan 14: Although the government occasionally announces plans for protecting riverside villages, the number of landless people is rising in five districts of greater Faridpur due to unabated erosion by five rivers, reports UNB.

The rivers Padma, Kumar, Arialkhan, Madhumati and Chandana run through Rajbari, Faridpur, Madaripur, Gopalganj and Shariatpur have been wrecking the livelihoods of poor people.

Official sources said some 50,000 families lost their homesteads in river erosion in the districts in last few years. But the government could not yet take any measures for their rehabilitation, according to the affected people.

Apart from washing away 11 children, the mighty Padma left some 15,000 families homeless in Shariatpur district in last three years.

According to the officials, hundreds of acres of croplands

in Bhedorganj upazila of Sariatpur district were devoured by the Padma.

Vast tracts of lands, including households, schools, a launch ghat and roads, at Char Atra, Noapara and Gharishar areas in Naria upazila of Shariatpur district were eroded away by the Padma.

The Padma also left hundreds of families of 12 villages in Jazira upazila in Shariatpur district homeless during the period.

During the period, the rivers Padma and Arialkhan devoured croplands and dwelling houses of 20,000 families at Madbarer Char, Chharia, Chharia, Chandarkhola, Duttapara, Bashkandi and Shannashir Char in Shibchar upazila in Madaripur district.

Hundreds of people on the bank of the Padma from Koujuri ferryghat to Godar Bazaar in Rajbari Sadar lost their homestead by the mighty river.

Some 35 villages in Akhat,

Nasirpur, Manair, Diara, Dheokhali and Narkelbari areas of Sadarup upazila and Char Harirampur and Char Jhoukanda in Char Bhadrashan upazila of Faridpur disappeared into the Padma and the Arialkhan.

Around 1,000 families at Panchkhola, Shilarchar, Kalikapur, Rasti, Dhurail, Bahadurpur, Jhaudi, Moisher Char and Khoazpur in Madaripur sadar upazila were left homeless by the Arialkhan.

In the district, the Arialkhan caused damage to about 700 families at Bashgari, Shahebrampur, Enayetnagar and Alimnagar in Kalkini upazila. The Madhumoti river displaced over 1,000 families in a number of villages of Kashiani upazila in Gopalganj district.

Meanwhile, one-fourth of the erosion victims have either moved to slums in Dhaka or taken shelter on dams, high roads or other safer places in the greater Faridpur district.



Cold has been intensified in recent days in Sirajganj district. Cold stricken people have been thronging the shops of old warm clothes on the footpath near Sirajganj Sadar Court area in greater number. Taking advantage of the situation the old cloth sellers have shot up prices of their items. As a result poor people have become the worst sufferers. --- Star photo

Massive post-flood rehabilitation programme for Satkhira dist

SATKHIRA, Jan 14: The government has been implementing a massive post-flood rehabilitation programme in five flood-affected upazilas and one municipality of the district, reports BSS.

The five flood-affected upazilas are Kalaroa, Satkhira Sadar, Tala, Debhata and Assasuni and Satkhira Municipality.

The government has distributed 1,08,573 VGF Cards among the flood-affected families of the five upazilas and one municipality.

According to District Relief Office sources, of the total VGF cards 40,902 cards have been distributed in Satkhira Sadar, 32,088 cards in Kalaroa, 5,395 cards in Tala, 7,728 cards in Debhata, 2,656 cards in Assasuni and 19,808 cards in Satkhira Municipality.

Each card holder is getting 10 kgs of rice per month from Bangla month of Kartik to Poush. A total of 3,257 tons of

rice have been distributed against 1,08,573 VGF cards. The distribution of rice through VGF cards for the month of Poush has already been completed.

The government has also distributed Taka 3 crore 71 lakh as house building grant among 37,100 homeless people of 32 unions under five upazilas and one municipality. Each person got Taka 1,000 at the first instalment.

Of the total amount Taka 1,62,64,000 has been distributed among 16,264 people of 11 unions of Satkhira Sadar, Taka One crore 42 lakh among 14,200 people of thirteen unions under Kalaroa, Taka 36,06,000 among 3,606 people of two unions under Debhata, Taka 6,21,000 among 621 people of four unions under Tala, Taka 18,39,000 among 1,839 people of two unions under Assasuni and Taka 25,70,000 among 2,570 people of nine wards of Satkhira Municipality.

On the other hand, the Local

Government Engineering Department (LGED) has also taken up a massive post-flood rehabilitation programme in the five flood-affected upazilas at a cost of Taka 89 lakh 39 thousand. Under the programme LGED will implement 22 schemes in four upazilas. The four upazilas are: Kalaroa, Satkhira Sadar, Tala and Assasuni. Of the total schemes eleven schemes will be implemented in Kalaroa, five schemes in Satkhira Sadar, two schemes in Tala and four schemes in Assasuni.

According to Satkhira LGED sources, the undertaken schemes include reconstruction and rehabilitation of 35 culverts, nine roads, two approach roads and six drains in four upazilas.

One the other hand, Satkhira District Disaster Management and Relief office has been implementing 482 schemes under Test Relief Project and 1,940 schemes under Food-for-Work Programme.

Dilly-dallying attitude of WDB!

From Our Correspondent

MOULVIBAZAR, Jan 14: In a bizarre instance Water Development Board (WDB) of Moulvibazar circle office is yet to pay a bill for a work which was completed 19 years ago.

Of Moulvibazar circle office is yet to pay a bill for a work which was completed 19 years ago.

The WDB floated a tender on February 19, 1981 to reconstruct a portion of Kushiara River embankment at the mouth of the Machhuakhali canal near Monumukh area under Sadar upazila.

Abdul Bari Chowdhury, an enlisted contractor of WDB, obtained the permission to reconstruct the embankment on March 23, 1981.

The contractor had completed his work by June 1982 as per schedule. During the construction period, the contractor received three running bills.

But after completion of the work remaining bill amounting to Taka one lakh and seventy thousand has not been paid to the contractor.

Abdul Bari Chowdhury, also a local leader of National Awami Party (Mujaffar), has urged the authorities concerned to pay his bill several times over the years.

Latest on December 18 last year, the present superintendent engineer issued an official order asking the executive engineer to enquire about the work which was completed 19 years back.

One killed in Netrakona road accident

From Our Correspondent

NETRAKONA, Jan 14: A man was killed and 15 others were injured in a road accident at Kajanchi on Netrakona-Madan road in the district last week.

Police said the accident occurred when driver of the Netrakona-bound passenger bus lost control over the steering. The bus fell into a roadside ditch.

The dead was identified as Jasimuddin, 45, of village Mangalsidkha under Atpara upazila of the district.

The injured were admitted to Nerakona Sadar Hospital and Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.



A farmer at village Satpoua under Sarisabari upazila in Jamalpur district takes care of his wheat field. --- Star photo

Wheat farming may fall short of target

From Our Correspondent

JAMALPUR, Jan 14: Wheat production in all the seven upazilas may fall short of target due to short supply of quality seeds and adequate of agricultural loans.

Against a total requirement of 2,000 tons of wheat seeds only 12.5 tons reached the district so far, said officials of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE).

A senior official of the Department told that DAE have taken up a programme of bringing nearly 15,500 hectares of land under wheat cultivation in seven upazilas. The main wheat producing upazilas are Jamalpur sadar, Sarisabari and Islampur where wheat on 7,200 hectares are being cultivated.

The department has set up a production target of 1,500 tons of wheat.

Encouraged by the last year's yield, DAE expected to bring 15,500 hectares under wheat cultivation. This year in Jamalpur sadar 2,600 hectares of land, Sarisabari 2,200 hectares, in Malendah 2,400 and in Islampur 2,400 hectares, in Dewanganj 2,400 hectares, in Maderganj 1,400 and in Bakshiganj 2,100 hectares of land have been brought under wheat cultivation this year.

Depression of the Bay during last November damaged the main crop of the area leaving a vast tracts of land uncultivated which could be brought under wheat cultivation. Most of the waterbodies remained filled to the brim due to abnormal rain-

town hall premises during the nine-month war and freedom fighters released 50 women from the confinement in the town hall soon after the victory.

The government has recently identified 44 Baddhyabumi across the country and took various steps to preserve those. Local freedom fighters, political leaders and members of Projanma 71, an organisation of the children of freedom fighters, expressed their surprise, as none of mass killing grounds of the district was included in the list.

They demanded proper preservation of these killing grounds.

fall in November last year. The farmers could easily use the water in their fields for wheat cultivation. Sonali, Manika, Akbar, Balaka and other varieties of wheat are being cultivated in Jamalpur.

Several farmers alleged that they are not getting adequate seeds and farm loan on time.

Restaurants pose threat to public health

KISHOREGANJ, Jan 14: Mushroom growth of unhygienic restaurants in all the 13 upazilas of the district is posing threat to public health, reports UNB.

Customers alleged that most of the restaurants are dirty and unclean and food is being prepared and stored in most unhygienic way.

The local people said despite repeated complaints the district and upazila administrations are not taking any action against the owners of these restaurants.

It is also alleged that some dishonest health officials after taking bribe allow the owners to run their business.

Besides, an organised gang of unscrupulous traders in selling adulterated soybean oil, ghee and coconut oil to the wholesalers, which are being used in different restaurants.

Local leaders have urged the authorities concerned to look into the matter and take necessary action without further delay.

News snaps

No hospital near Sundarbans

SATKHIRA, Jan 14: Though the government has been earning about Tk 16 crore yearly from over about lakhs of Bawalis, woodcutters, fishermen and tourists of the Sundarbans there is no hospital for them, reports UNB.

Official sources said the Bawalis and woodcutters collect golpata and firewood respectively and fishermen catch fish from the Sundarbans every year paying specified revenue to the government. Of the 5,77,285 hectares Sundarbans area, 4,01,600 hectares are forest and rest are rivers. Apart from the Bawalis and woodcutters, a large number of government employees including police, BDR, coast guards, employees of Forest, Water Development Board, Mongla Port, Khulna Newspaper Mills, Khulna Hardboard Mills visit the Sundarbans every day. Considering the above circumstances and demand from the Bawalis the government decided to set up three 10-bed hospitals around the Sundarbans in 1993. The sites were also selected at Burigolani in Satkhira, Dakope in Khulna and at Sharrankola in Bagerhat. But after the expiry of eight years the projects could not see the light of the day and remained shelved due to reasons unknown.

Robbery in launch

COX'S BAZAR, Jan 14: Pirates looted cash and valuables worth over Tk one lakh from the passengers of a launch in the Moheshkhali Channel on Saturday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the armed robbers, numbering 15, boarded the Cox's Bazar-bound SL Taher from Matarbari in the guise of passengers and swooped on the passengers when it reached midway. They looted valuables from the passengers and got down from the launch at Mudirchhara in Moheshkhali with the booty. The dacoits beat up the passengers during the robbery, injuring 15 of them, including launch employee Nurul Alam.

Allowance distributed among FFs

COMILLA, Jan 14: As part of the countrywide programme, authorities distributed Tk 4,87,800 as allowance among 271 distressed Freedom Fighters (FFs) in Choudhagram and Sadar upazilas on Sunday, reports UNB.

Officials said Tk 2,41,200 were distributed among 134 freedom fighters in Choudhagram at a simple ceremony at the upazila parishad. Jatiya Sangsad Whip Mujibul Haque Mujib, MP was present in the function as chief guest with UNO Gokul Chand Das in the chair. Besides, Tk 2,46,600 were distributed among 137 freedom fighters in Sadar upazila at a function at the DC office. DC Chowdhury Golan Mowla distributed the allowance with UNO Tapan Kumar Banik in the chair. Awami League leader ATM Mahbubur Rahman and district freedom fighters' commander Shadiul Ahmed Babul were present.

19-kg tumour removed

COMILLA, Jan 14: Doctors at a private clinic here removed a 19-kg tumour from the ovary of an elderly woman on Wednesday, reports UNB.

Clinic sources said the patient, Joydon Bibi, 80, of Ashra village in Chandina upazila was admitted to the clinic with a complaint of severe pain in her abdomen. After various tests, doctors detected that the old woman had developed a huge tumour. They successfully operated upon her on Wednesday and removed the tumour. Joydon, who had been carrying the tumour for the last 21 years, was doing well after the operation.

Cauliflower farming popular

NARSINGDI, Jan 14: Vegetable farmers in six upazilas prefer cultivating high yielding variety of cauliflower due to better output, reports UNB.

Morsheda Begum of Shibpur upazila is one of them. She cultivated HYV cauliflower on all her croplands this season although he used to cultivate vegetables like cabbage, radish, pumpkin and bean. Morsheda said her earning from cauliflower would go up to 35,000 this season as she has already sold cauliflower worth Tk 25,000. Inspired by Morsheda's success, many farmers of her neighbourhood like Abu Taher and Farid Miah brought over 5.5 acres of land under cauliflower cultivation this year with assistance from the Department of Agriculture Extension. The department provided agricultural inputs like fertiliser, pesticides and seeds to them. They said it costs Tk 6,000 to Tk 7,000 in cultivating cauliflower on one acre of land.

Smuggled goods seized

JOYPURHAT, Jan 14: BDR jawans in separate drives seized smuggled goods worth over Tk 1.5 lakh from different frontier areas of the district on Thursday night, reports UNB.

The seized goods include Indian sugar, salt, sarees, winter clothes, different spare parts of machinery and fruits. They also recovered 265 bottles of Indian phensidin from Basudevpur and Mongla areas of Panchbibi upazila on the same night.

Boy burnt to death

MANIKGANJ, Jan 14: A little boy was burnt to death at Boalee village in Shibhalaya upazila on Friday, reports UNB.

The mother and grandmother of the victim also suffered burn injuries. Witnesses said one and a half year-old boy Jahangir died and his mother Angur, 30, and grandmother Halimona, 50, suffered burn injuries when they were burning straws in order to protect themselves from winter. A sexagenarian also suffered burn injuries at Bhoia village in Saturaia upazila on the same day.

20 hurt by rabid dog

KHAGRACHHARI, Jan 14: Twenty people were injured when attacked by a rabid dog at Panchhari upazila Sadar on Tuesday, reports UNB.

The dog also bit Dr Anwar Hossain, health officer at Panchhari upazila Health Complex while he was returning after attending a dog bitter woman at her house the same day. Local people killed the dog on Wednesday.

Man killed in road mishap

JOYPURHAT, Jan 14: A man was killed and five others were injured when a shallow engine driven tempo overturned at Raghobpur in Kalai upazila on Panchsira-Matrai road on Monday, reports UNB.

The dead was identified as Abdus Samad, 45, of Gaibandha district. The injured were admitted to the upazila health complex. The mishap took place when the driver of the Kalai upazila bound vehicle from Matrai Boiragirhat lost its control at the point. Police seized the tempo, but its driver managed to escape. A case was filed.

Housewife killed by husband

KURIGRAM, Jan 14: A housewife was strangulated to death allegedly by her husband at Char Harikesh village in the municipality area on Thursday, reports UNB.

The dead was identified as Halima, 25, mother of four children. Police said the victim's husband Sohrab Ali went to the house of his father-in-law and took his wife to a nearby field and strangled her to death there over a family feud. Police recovered the body from the spot on Friday and sent it to the hospital morgue for autopsy. Acting on a tip-off, later police arrested the killer husband from a village here on Friday.

Four killed in road accident

TANGAIL, Jan 14: Four people died and 40 others were injured, 15 of them critically injured in a road accident at Babukhola on Tangail-Dhaka Highway on Wednesday, reports BSS.

The accident occurred while a bus bound for Dhaka from Tangail skidded off the road into a roadside ditch. Four passengers of the bus died on the spot. Forty others received injury. The critically injured persons were admitted to Tangail General Hospital and others were released after giving first aid locally. The identity of the victims could be ascertained. A case was registered with Basail police in this connection.

Shortage of sugarcane

KUSHTIA, Jan 14: Kushtia Sugar Mills will not be able to fulfil its target due to non-availability of sugarcane, reports BSS.

The target for producing sugar was 9,920 metric tons and recovery was 8 per cent. But till 4,500 metric tons of sugar have been produced by crushing 70,000 tons of sugarcane. The percentage of recovery is 6.70 per cent only. According to a responsible officer of Kushtia Sugar Mills the production of sugar mills will come to an end within the month of January due to shortage of sugarcane. He said at least seven hundred power crasher machines are used for crushing sugarcane daily in sugar mill zone area which is illegally producing molasses. District Administration is not taking steps to stop these sugarcane growers are supplying sugarcane to molasses producers as they are getting more benefit. Now the mill is expecting to produce not more than 6,000 metric tons of sugar.

Tragic tale of a poor boy

NILPHAMARI, Jan 14: "I am not a thief. Do not beat me," eight-year-old Ali Hossain made a passionate appeal when the villagers caught him red-handed while attempting to lift cattle, reports UNB.

"They make small hole for my entry into houses and ask me to quietly open the door," weeping Ali told of an organised group of thieves who brought him in their fold under duress.

Ali and another youngman, Dilip, aged about 21 years, were caught when the thieves were attempting to lift cattle from the railway station area here on the night of January 10. Others managed to flee.

Angry villagers gave them a good beating and handed them over to sadar thana police the following morning.

The boy narrated his plight and the story of joining the group of cattle lifters. Ali said he comes from Mahiganj, an impoverished area in Rangpur district. His father, Atiar Hossain, is a carpenter. They are six brothers and three sisters. Poor as they are, his mother can hardly give them two meals.

About two months back, Ali left home by train for Parbatipur where his elder brother works. He got down from the train at the fall of night and failed to locate his brother's residence. After several futile attempts, he returned to the platform of Parbatipur railway station. Hungry and shivering in cold the poor boy was sitting in a corner.

And then came four or five people. They gave bread to Ali and assured him of taking to his brother's house in the morning.

But, Ali said, they took him to a house in a remote village. The group asked him to obey their orders. Showing him a sharp big knife, they threatened to kill him if he ever tried to disclose their activities to anyone.

"Since then, I am with this group of thieves and lifted 33 cattle from 25 houses," said Ali. "We have stolen goods and valuables from other houses also."

"Senior members of the group would make a hole below the fence of a house, ask me to go inside through the opening and quietly open the door for their entry. This way, they commit theft and lift cattle in different

villages," the little boy added.

Police sent Dilip to jail hayat. But they treated Ali with affection, gave him warm clothes and kept the boy on the first floor of the police barrack. Police got from him all information about the group of thieves.

Police sub-inspector Lutfar Rahman informed that a message has been sent to Ali's father, Atiar Hossain to take his son back.

Theft in Sirajganj

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, Jan 14: A theft was committed in broad day light at Borogola Patti in the town recently.

Police said a gang of robbers entered a house at about 10 in the morning in the area and decamped with nine 'vari' gold ornaments and Tk 41 thousand in cash.

Inmates were out of the house during the robbery. A case was lodged in this connection.



Press mark, a by-product of sugarcane industry has gained popularity as fuel among the villagers who live near the Rajshahi Sugar Mills at Hariyan in Rajshahi. Wastes of the mills which is similar to cow dung are used as fuel after attaching those with jute sticks. Then the sticks are dried up in the sun. This type of fuel is called Nanda. Two women are seen preparing Nanda. --- Star photo

Killing grounds of '71 in Rangpur need proper preservation

RANGPUR, Jan 14: Nearly a dozen of killing grounds (Baddhyabhumis), where hundreds of Bangladeshes were massacred by the Pakistan occupation forces during the War of Liberation in 1971, have been lying neglected even after 29 years of the independence of the country, reports UNB.

No government and non-government initiatives are visible to protect, preserve or renovate these killing grounds.

One of the main killing grounds of the district is

Debiganj Swashan Ghat Baddhyabhumis in the town. The Pakistan army with the help of their local collaborators killed 11 innocent people on April 3, 1971.

On May 1, 1971 the occupation army killed 19 more Bangladeshes and buried them at Shaheganj in Sadar upazila. The spot is locally known as Shaheganj mass grave.

Hundreds of people were brutally killed on March 28, 1971 by Pakistani army when they laid siege to Rangpur Cantonment with stick, bow and

arrow and others traditional weapons.

Some 14 Bangalee members of the then East Pakistan Rifles were killed and buried at Ghagot killing ground on the west side of cantonment in May, 1971.

On May 7, 1971, the intruders killed 32 Bangalees at Laherehat Baddhyabhumis in Sadar upazila.

On May 30, the occupation forces killed a number teachers and students, including Prof Sunil Baron Chatarjee of Carmichael College. Pakistani soldiers brought 84

Bangalees, including one MNA and Awami League leader Jikrul Haq, at Balarkhail situated at the southwest side of the cantonment, and massacred them on April 12, 1971.

At Nabdiganj mass grave in Pirgacha upazila the occupation forces buried 11 Bangalee EPR personnel on April 13.

The occupation forces carried out their worst massacre in the district at Jarueve beel in Ramnatpur union of Badarganj upazila where over 1500 Bangalees were killed and buried

on April 17, 1971.

They also killed 26 people at Joyram Anwar village in Mithapukur upazilas and local people buried the bodies.

Local collaborators killed over 50 people, including prominent Hindu leaders Ela Dutta, Shoilien Dutta, Adv. Puna Chandra Sarkar, Shankarlal Banik, Adv. Bijoy Chandra Moitra, in the town on May 27, 1971.

They also killed 24 Bangalees at Zafarganj killing ground in Sadar upazila on June 10, 1971.

Hundreds of women were raped, tortured and killed at the