

Teesta Barrage Project rendered useless

Flow of river comes down to 500 cusecs

UNB, Rangpur

The newly constructed Teesta Barage Irrigation Project is rendered almost useless as the flow of the river has come down to 500 cusecs because of unilateral withdrawal of water in the upstream by India.

"We need at least 7,000 cusecs to operate the project," said officials of Water Development Board (WDB). "The flow came down 500 to 600 cusecs as recorded on February 13 at the Barrage point", they added.

The Teesta Barrage Project, the biggest in the country, and the Buri Teesta Pilot Irrigation Project were constructed by WDB spending billions of Taka to provide irrigation facilities in the northern districts.

Farmers are pestering the irrigation officials for supplying water to IRR-boro fields, which have dried up in absence of rains. Marginal farmers are facing serious problem although the big ones are managing it by sinking shallow tube-wells in the field.

The Teesta Barrage project is to provide irrigation facility to 3.81 lakh acres of land in 12 upazilas of three districts after completion of its first

phase in 1998. But so far, 32,000 acres are getting irrigation water. The areas to be covered on completion of the first phase are Sadar, Gangachara, Badarganj and Taraganj upazilas of Rangpur district, Sadar, Jaldhaka, Syeedpur, Dimla and Kishoreganj upazilas of Nilphamari district, Chhira Bandar, Parbotipur, and Khanshama upazilas of Dinajpur district.

Officials of WDB said they have plan to bring another 3.29 lakh hectares of land under irrigation in 24 upazilas of Rangpur, Gaibanda, Dinajpur, Joypurhat and Bogra districts on completion of the second phase of the Teesta Barrage Project by the year 2003. That will give an additional yield of 5.69 lakh metric tons of foodgrains annually.

They said work on the major structure of the Teesta Barrage Project has been completed. The work included 80km flood dam, 74km project road, 615 metre barrage, 610 metre flood by-pass, 33.67km main canal, 215km secondary canal, silt trap and 143 regulators.

The Buri Teesta irrigation project was constructed in 1983 at Kaliganj, Dimla upazila, and renovated at a cost of nearly Tk 10 crore in 1991-92. The project is to provide irrigation to 29,344 acres of land. As the water level declined, it could irrigated only 2,000 acres during the last two years.

Sarbahara men regrouping in S dists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

As the next general election is nearing, activists of outlawed Sarbahara Party have started regrouping themselves in the southern districts.

Sources close to the outlawed groups said during elections many candidates hire musclemen from the groups to influence the voting process. In the last parliamentary polls and Union Parishad election, the Sarbahara men were very active in the districts, the sources added.

Local people said in the violence-prone Barisal, Jhalakati, Patuakhali, Pirojpur and Madaripur districts, these armed cadres of Sarbahara Party and other underground groups actually do not have any political ideology what they had at their primary stages. Now most of them are engaged in terrorist activities, they added.

According to the sources, activists of several factions of the outlawed party are now active at Nazirpur, Manashaganj, Patarchar, Charhogla, Bhanga, Khejurtala, Chhabipur, Charpadma, Darichar and Nandibazar under Muladi upazila; Guthia, Dhamura, Jaysree, Barakota, Jalla, Harta, Otra, Sholak, Satia, Bamrail and Ramjankathi under Ujirpur upazila; Chandpasha, Manpasha, Dehergati, Kedarpur, Baherchar, Agarpur, Thakurmallick, Jahapur, Rahinganj, Tilerchar, and Islampur under Babuganj upazila; Adhuna, Sharikal, Hosnabad, Kurichar and Naichira under Gournadi upazila; Baghda, Kalkini, Ramjanpur and Kairia under Agailjhara upazila; and Baishari and Narayanpur under Banaripara upazila in Barisal district. Besides, they are also regrouping in Kuriana in Pirojpur district, in Baufal upazila in Patuakhali and Naichhiti upazila in Jhalakati.

Local people said Kamrul and Zia groups of the party are collecting huge amount of tolls from the affluent people.

Recently three Sarbahara men of Kamrul group were arrested from house of UP chairman of Sharikal union under Gournadi upazila.

Fishermen in Patuakhali said Sarbahara men are now engaged in piracy. Sarbahara activists attack fishing trawlers in Meghna and other rivers in the southern districts.

According to police, in the last two years Sarbahara men fled their respective areas following crackdown. But they are now trying to return to their places with the help of the locally influential political leaders, police said.

When contacted, Ali Imam Chowdhury, DIG of Barisal range, said outlaws are under constant vigilance. If necessary it will be intensified, he added.



PHOTO: A K M MOHSIN

Tea plantation has been going on in full swing in 17 gardens in Panchagarh district, a border area of Bangladesh. Darjeeling is situated on the other side of Bangladesh border. Name and fame of Darjeeling tea already surpassed all around the world. Soil of plain lands and climate of Panchagarh are similar to those of Darjeeling. There is a bright prospect of tea plantation in this side of Bangladesh. Considering the prospect President of Panchagarh Chamber of Commerce and Industries (PCCI) Delwar Hossain organised a tour programme for the Directors of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI). The team was led by Abu Motaleb. They are seen examining the plants.

Centenary celebration of Mritunjoy School

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Two-day long centenary celebration programme of famous Mritunjoy School in Mymensingh town concluded recently.

The programme started on February 23 and continued till February 24 night.

Chaired by Advocate Md Jahurul Hoque, a former student of Mritunjoy School, the inaugural session was addressed by Agriculture Minister Begum Motia Chowdhury as the chief guest.

The function was addressed, among others, by Rahat Khan, acting Editor of The Daily Ittefaq, also a student of this school, Principal Motiur Rahman, president district Awami League, Begum Rawshan Ershad MP, Kamrul Islam Mohan, General Manager of Petro Bangla, Mahmud-Al-Noor Tarek, Chairman of Mymensingh Municipality, Advocate Nazim Uddin Ahmed and Md Rafiqul Islam, Deputy Commissioner of Mymensingh.

Later on a colourful procession attended by the students of different ages was brought out in the town which paraded the main thoroughfares of the district town.

In the afternoon session on February 23, some eminent students of this school took part in a remembrance programme with Dejenra Kumar Goswami in the chair.

Dejendra Kumar Goswami, 69, a former student and President of Former Students' Association of Mritunjoy School in Calcutta, India. A total of 23 former students attended the centenary function from India. Dejenra Kumar told this correspondent.

The morning session on the concluding day of the two-day programme was held with Principal Matiur Rahman in the chair.

Justice Goura Gopal Saha, a student of Mritunjoy School was present as the chief guest, while district judge Md Fazlur Rahman attended the function as special guest.

The concluding session was attended among others by Rahat Khan, Azizul Hoq, with Pranesh Ranjon Chanda, Headmaster of the school in the chair.

The two-day functions also included cultural functions by the former students of this school who are the eminent artistes of the district town took part in cultural function.

Killings, rapes up in Netrakona

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Incidents of killing and rape have increased in Netrakona district. A total of 50 murder and 46 rape cases had been lodged in 10 upazilas last year.

According to police sources, two incidents of killing occurred in January, nine in February, two in March, five in April, one in May, six in June, one in August, six in September, seven in October, three in November, and eight in December last year.

At least 46 rape cases had been lodged with police last year. An unofficial sources, however, said at least 140 incidents of rape cases occurred during the period. Most of the incidents remain undisclosed as these are not registered with police.

Besides, some incidents had been settled through village arbitration.

Girl killed in road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Feni

A girl was killed in road accident in the town recently.

The girl was identified as Sargina Akter Konica, 6, daughter of Nezamuddin of village Maseempur under Daganbhuian upazila.

A truck crushed the girl when she was trying to cross Majhdee Road. She died on spot.

NEWS SNAPS

Primary students face text book crisis

UNB, Barguna

Although the new academic year began one and a half months before, primary students of Barguna district did not receive all the textbooks yet. "Only a few books reached to the students, we don't know when all the students will get all the books to start their study," said a visibly looking disappointed guardian. Besides, books of only four subjects of class IX are available in the bookstores here, which are sold at higher prices than the real price.

Guardians alleged that owners of the bookshops are forcing the students to buy lower quality notebooks with the textbooks. Some storeowners said they had to buy the textbooks of the Board at exorbitant prices and as such they are compelled to force the students to buy the notebooks.

Body recovered

UNB, Thakurgaon

Body of a missing young man was recovered from an abandoned room behind his house at Khalipur village of Baidadangi upazila in Thakurgaon district Saturday.

Debdendra Chandra, 22, son of Dinesh Chandra of the village had been missing since February 12. Autopsy of the body was performed at the Sadar hospital morgue and a UD case was filed.

Launch disasters claim 217 in one yr

UNB, Laxmipur

A total of 217 people were killed and over 150 missing in three launch disasters on Ramgati-Bhola river route in last one year. The easiest communications of Laxmipur district with Bhola and Barisal is the river route and some eight to nine launches are plying on the Ramgati-Bhola route daily. Some 25-kilometre portion of the route at the estuary of Bay of Bengal is very risky.

But most of the launches without the fitness certificates are plying with overcrowded passengers daily, locals alleged. BIWTC gave route permits to four launches of a company to ply on the route in 1994, which was expired in 1998. But the vessels are still plying with overloaded passengers without renewing the route permit.

Housewife raped

UNB, Patuakhali

A housewife was raped by a youngster at village Chhailabunia in Mirzaganj upazila on under Patuakhali district on February 13. Police said co-villager Kalam Sikdar waylaid the housewife, aged about 25, mother of a child, at gunpoint while she came out of her house at 11pm to respond to the call of nature and raped her.

Hearing her cry for help, villagers rushed to the spot and rescued the victims. A case was filed with the police.

10 injured in separate clashes

UNB, Barguna

At least 10 people were injured in separate clashes in Sadar Upazila under Barguna district on Saturday and Sunday. Witnesses said Zakir Hossain and his sister-in-law Taslima Begum of village Crook were injured in a clash with their relatives on Sunday.

Besides, in three other clashes Bilquis of Maitha village, Ferdous, Mohsin, Momtaj of Ibaria village and Nizam, Rabeya, Ayesha and Bilkis of Lakurata village were injured on Saturday. The injured were admitted to the local upazila health complex. Dispute over land and family feuds were the reasons behind the clashes.

Tk one lakh looted

UNB, Brahmanbaria

A gang of muggers raided a Girls' High School in Nabinagar upazila under Brahmanbaria district and looted Tk one lakh in cash early Monday. Police said the masked bandits tied up the guard of Ichhamati Girls' High School and best him mercilessly. Later on they broke the almira of the school open and decamped with the money at 1 am. The guard was rushed to the local health complex in a critical condition. A case was filed.

Armed robbery in Munshiganj

UNB, Munshiganj

Armed bandits looted cash and valuables worth over Tk five lakh from a house at Bawaisar village of Sirajdikhan upazila in Munshiganj district on Sunday midnight. A gang of dacoits numbering 20-25 committed robbery at the house of Ratan Baperi holding all inmates hostage on gunpoint. Bandits also beat the family members mercilessly leaving Alo Begum, 25, wife of Ratan Baperi and his sister Hasna Banu, 20, injured. They were admitted to local hospital.

5,584 certificate cases filed

UNB, Kishoreganj

A total of 5,584 certificate cases were filed to realise Tk 6.98 crore outstanding agri-loan till last December in Kishoreganj district. Of the total, 70 cases were filed for realising Tk 7.90 lakh outstanding loan of Agrani Bank, 522 cases for Tk 97.94 of Sonali Bank, 415 cases for Tk 37.40 lakh of Janata Bank and 4,577 cases for Tk 5.55 crore of Bangladesh Krishi Bank.

In the current fiscal year, Tk 27.87 lakh was realised after settlement of 73 cases filed by BKB and Tk 1.77 lakh was realised after disposal of eight cases filed by Janata Bank.

School bldg construction works delayed

UNB, Sherpur

Construction works on 37 academic buildings in Sherpur district are yet to begin even after two years of undertaking the projects by the Facilities Department.

Official sources said the department has taken up a scheme to construct some 65 academic buildings of different schools, colleges and madrasas of which works of only 16 buildings were completed and 12 were going on. Teachers and students of the educational institutions are facing problems due to delay in implementation of the work.

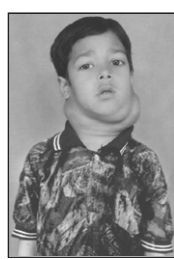
277 arrested

UNB, Pabna

Police, in special drives, arrested 277 people from different parts of Pabna district in last seven days till Saturday. Police Super M Asaduzzaman in a press release said that they arrested the people for various charges and recovered a foreign made pipe gun, eight round ammunitons, four bombs, three kg dry hemp, 66 pieces saree, 881 bottles of phensidyl and five liter liquor during the drive. He said many of them were wanted in connection with a number of criminal cases.

Appeal for help

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira



Abu Syeed

Abu Syeed, 7, son of Abdus Samad of Kamal Nagar under Satkhira Municipality has been suffering from the deadly throat cancer for the last one year.

An amount of Taka Two lakh will be required for his treatment, according to local physicians. But his father being a poor man is unable to afford the cost of his treatment. "If the treatment of my son is not done within the next six months then he will die, said his poor father to this correspondent.

When contacted with the ill-fated boy, Abu Syeed, he urged the government and the wealthy people of the country to come forward to save his life by donating generously.

Generous persons who desire to help him may send money with the Current Account No 1921, Code No 353 of Janata Bank, Main Branch situated at Shaheed Nazmul Swarani, Satkhira.

Four children rescued

UNB, Narayanganj

Four children aged 3-7 were rescued from the clutches of an organised racket in police raids on Mijmiji and adjoining areas in Siddhirganj upazila under Narayanganj district Monday night.

The rescued children were identified as Suman, Hanif, Nazir and Hossain.

Police nabbed four of the suspected traffickers red-handed for dealing in humans. They are Zubaida, Sufia, Abdus Samad and Shah Alam.

The arrested persons confessed that they had already sold Nazir and Hossain for Tk 2,000 to a middleman, Swapan.

Police said the babies Nazir and Hossain began to call Zubaida mother and her husband father in the meantime.

Fertiliser crisis in Kushtia

UNB, Kushtia

Acute shortage and price-hike of chemical fertiliser including Triple Super Phosphate (TSP) has been affecting Rabi crops farming in all seven upazilas of Kushtia district for the last two months.

Farmers said normal growth of standing crops and vegetables like Boro paddy, wheat, potato, mustard, sunflower, soybean, tomato, cabbage, cauliflower, brinjal, bean, sugarcane, pulses, maize and oilseeds is being hampered due to the scarcity of fertiliser.

They said a 50-kg bag of TSP fertiliser is being sold at Tk 700 in the market against the factory rate of Tk 330, Single Super Phosphate (SSP) at the 310 against Tk 160, Potash at Tk 370 while Gypsum at Tk 170, Magnesium Sulphate at Tk 45, Zinc Sulphate at Tk 40 per kg respectively.

To make up the deficiency of phosphorus elements in the soil, the farmers are advised to use two and a half times SSP instead of TSP. If the practice continues for a long time the soil will suffer from sulphur toxicity affecting the crop production particularly in less sulphur deficient soil, agriculture experts said.

Meanwhile, the granular and dust SSP have been imported from various countries having different percentage of phosphorus. The granular SSP is similar to that of

TSP in respect of colour and crystal confusing the farmers.

Some unscrupulous fertiliser dealers are taking advantage of the situation. The establishment of analytical fertiliser testing laboratory is essential in the district level to determine the percentage of desired elements in the compound fertiliser, experts said.

Sources in the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) told that sharp rise in prices of TSP, SSP, MP gypsum and other fertilisers has perplexed the farmers which will hamper the production on the one hand and decrease the area of Rabi crops on the other.

25 hurt in clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

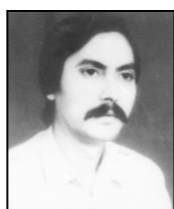
At least 25 people were injured, four of them critically, in a clash in Telkupi Kindergarten premises in Sirajganj last week.

Police and witnesses said as two rival groups locked in clash, annual sport programme, which was being held on the kindergarten premises, was abandoned.

Police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control. Critically injured were admitted to Sirajganj General Hospital. A case was lodged with police.

Anniversary of death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj



Abul Sarkar

The 13th anniversary of death of Abul Sarkar, former Kamerkhanda upazila unit commander of Muktiyoddha Sangsad

(Freedom fighters' council) and renowned social worker was observed here recently in a befitting manner.

Freedom Fighter Abul Sarkar Memorial Committee arranged various programmes on the occasion. Programmes include a milad mahfil and feeding the destitutes. The memorial committee arranged a local a discussion meeting at its office which was presided over by the convener of Abul Sarkar Memorial Committee Asik Hasan.

The speakers demanded of the authority to name any road of the town as Abul Sarkar Road. Abul Hossain Sarkar, Commander of Kamerkhanda upazila unit of Muktiyoddha Sangsad was killed by the rivals at the Bordul union Parishad election centre on February 10 in 1988.

Bank robbery in Feni

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Feni

Robbers stormed into a branch of Rupali Bank in Feni town Friday night and decamped with at least Tk 23 lakh.

According to manager of the branch on Trunk Road, a gang of robbers entered the branch breaking the backside window of the branch and confined the night guard, Hafiz Ahmed. Then they broke into the strong room and made away with 23.73 lakh taka.

Superintendent of Police and high officials of the bank visited the spot. A case was filed in this connection.

Superintendent of Police and high officials of the bank visited the spot. A case was filed in this connection. Most of the incidents remain undisclosed