

Erosion threatens Barisal town

BSS, Barisal

Barisal town is now under threat of erosion by the river Kirtonkhola. Deputy Commissioner's Ghat and its adjoining areas including a mosque, slum areas and BIWTA marine workshop are facing severe threat.

The river Kirtonkhola eroded about 50 dwelling houses of the slum areas in the last one year.

The BIWTA officials wrote several times to the higher authorities in this respect but nothing is being done to resist the erosion.

If the erosion continues, the Deputy Commissioner's Ghat, Mosque, dwelling houses of the slum areas and the BIWTA workshop will go down into the bed of the Kirtonkhola River soon.

The people of the slum areas are passing their days in uncertainty.

Nurul Alam, 30, and Kabir Sikder, 35, inhabitants of the areas, said the municipality commissioners and chairmen candidates, assure dwellers of taking measures to stop erosion before the election, but nothing has been done in this regard till now.

UNB from Sirajganj adds: The mighty river Jamuna engulfed about 42,500 hectares of land in eight upazilas of three districts Sirajganj, Bogra and Tangail in last 10 years.

Of the land, some 28,500 hectares were eroded in Sirajganj district while 9,500 hectares in Tangail and 5,500 hectares in Bogra district.

Homesteads, roads, educational institutions, mosques and temples and other infrastructures along the banks of this river were devoured, rendering hundreds of people home-

less.

According to official sources the eroded land in upazilas of Sirajganj district is: Kazipur 8,500 hectares, Sadar 6,500 hectares, Belkuchi 4,500 hectares, Chowhali 4,000 hectares and Shahjadpur 5,000 hectares.

An estimated 4,500 hectares of land in Bhuapur upazila and 4,000 hectares in Kalihati upazila of Tangail district and 5,500 hectares in Sariakandi upazila in Bogra district were also engulfed by the river.

Losing homesteads and cultivable lands, most of the homeless erosion-hit people took shelters in the shoals of Jamuna or roadside khas lands while many other migrated to nearby towns.

The destitute people have urged the government to take initiatives for their early rehabilitation.



PHOTO:STAR

Flouting traffic rules passengers travel on rooftops of buses in Sirajganj district as elsewhere in the country. The malpractice, which draws little or no attention from the authorities concerned, is one of many reasons of highway mishaps.

Soil fertility declining in Jamalpur

MUHAMMAD ALI, Jamalpur

Continued irrigation, round the year farming, absence of crop rotation and unrestrained use of chemical fertilisers have resulted in a sharp decline in the mineral constituents of soil, affecting its fertility in Jamalpur district.

According to the experts with the Agricultural Extension Department (AED), continued irrigation in the same plot keeps its soil wet. Water fills the pores of soil and replaces oxygen, depriving the plants of nutrients like zinc and sulphur. In consequence, the soil gets harder and more compact.

Explaining the adverse impact of continued irrigation, Abdullah Al Amin, an agriculturist and horticulturist in the Agriculture Extension Department, said zinc and sulphur contents of soil had declined to a

great extent due to long-continued wetness. He added that indiscriminate use of urea, TSP and potash without maintaining the approved ratio increases the compactness of soil. As a result, the roots of crop plants could not penetrate deep into soil.

Production of the same crop without any rotation is also affecting the soil properties adversely. Since the crop roots remain at the level of soil, the exhaustion of certain inorganic nutrients from that level render the soil infertile.

The field workers of the Agriculture Extension Department informed that cultivators are not interested in adopting scientific method of cultivation and hold on to the age-long practice left behind by their ancestors. Cultivators, by contrast, alleged that they did not see any field worker of AED,

although they had heard much about them and also their activities popularising the modern technology in agriculture.

There is allegation against the field staff of AED that they do not make "field trips" to evaluate the yield of crops and the condition of soil. The field workers do not suggest any effective measures the farmers take to solve the problems.

In the neighbouring countries, the mobile soil-testing laboratories are working to impart knowledge to growers. But such facilities are not offered in our country and farmers use fertilisers indiscriminately only to do harm to soil, local people said.

Farmers should be trained at the grassroots level by the Agriculture Extension Department to use pesticides and eradicate weeds properly, they added.

Rivers face ruin due to silt in Chuadanga

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chuadanga

All the five rivers that flow through Chuadanga district face ruin due to deposition of silt.

The Mathababha, the Chitra, the Bhairab, the Nabaganga and the Kumar have lost depth. The rivers cannot hold much water during the rainy season, causing flood.

Riverbeds are gathering silt every year because of disappointing fall in the river currents. At some places the rivers can be crossed on foot and at some other places paddy and jute are being cultivated.

According to experts, the dredging of these rivers on a regular basis

are needed for keeping their flow normal and also for increasing the capacity to preserve more water during flood.

Thousands of acres of croplands go under floodwater every year in the district, causing huge crop loss.

Besides, the nearly dried-up rivers fail to provide irrigation facilities to arable lands. Moreover, they have edged towards a desert-like barrenness, threatening cultivation in the district.

According to an official source, out of about 92,233 hectares of arable lands in Chuadanga, about 50 thousand hectares have been brought under irrigation facilities.

Over 400 deep tube wells, 10,000 shallow tube wells and 50 low lift pumps are being used to irrigate the land.

In order to bring the rest 40,000 hectares of land under irrigation facilities another 4000 deep tube wells, 10 thousand shallow tube wells and 50 low lift pumps are required. Meanwhile, the underground water level has declined abnormally. If the water is further used for purposes like irrigation, it is feared that it would hardly bring any good result. There are about 20,000 hand pump tube wells in operation in the district to supply pure drinking water.



PHOTO:STAR

A woman takes care of two cows at a village Panchpakha under Shailakupa upazila in Jhenidah district. She bought the cows after she received loan from a local NGO, Unnayan Dhara, under income generating programme launched by the organisation. These days cow rearing is gaining popularity among village women in the district.

Tk 44cr schemes implemented to supply power in Bandarban

UNB, Bandarban

In a bid to ensure power supply in rural areas, the government implemented a number of projects in Bandarban district in last four years costing Tk 44 crore.

Sources at Power Development Board (PDB) said a 67-km 11-KV electricity line and a 62-km low tension (LT) line were installed in the district while the process to install another 39-km 11-KV and 58-km LT line is underway.

Meanwhile, some areas from Khanshapara to Baghmara to Ntarpura, from Goaliakhola to Raichha, from Kemlong to Dholupara, from Shualok to Sultanpur, from Majherpara to Amotlipara and from Parjatan Complex Meghla to Sadar upazila have been brought under power supply network.

Some other areas brought under the electricity supply network include Edenpara, Bethlpara, Ruma Residential School in Ruma upazila and Horinjhiri, Burirmukh, Notunpara and Chakmanara in Lama upazila.

The areas where electricity will be supplied soon include Faruquepara, Sharanpara, Lympara, Kuhlalong and Rajbala union in Sadar upazila, Paglachhari in Roangchhari upazila, Gozalia, Faitong, Rajbari, Rupshipara, Baishari, Gorjantoli and Kumari Yanchha in Lama upazila.

Another report from Habiganj says: People of Habiganj district are hoping the ambitious 'Gungajuri Haor Multipurpose Development Project' will be implemented soon.

With the implementation of the project, some 33.75 lakh maunds of paddy worth about Tk 100 crore could be produced on 25,000 acres of land every year, officials said.

The croplands will be brought under diversified crop cultivation programme, it the scheme is implemented, they added.

There are 25,000 acres of cultivable land in the 42-square mile haor wet land comprising Sadar, Bahubal, Nabiganj and Baniachan upazilas.

Meanwhile, the Planning Commission, in its meeting on November 26 last year, has sanctioned Tk 1.12 crore to conduct the feasibility study.

The Tk 60-crore project proposal, made by noted agronomist Noman Chowdhury, was placed to the Finance Ministry in 1997. Later it was sent to the Water Resources Ministry.

The project works include construction of cross dam, pumping station, rubber dam, irrigation infrastructure, bridges and roads.

Seven of a family arrested on charge of robbery

UNB, Barisal

Police arrested seven members of a family and two others on charge of robbery and seized huge looted goods as well as arms and explosives in separate drives in Barisal and Patuakhali districts on Sunday.

The arrested are Masum, his wife Nazma, three brothers Liton, Gani and Alauddin and their parents Ratan Mia and Fulnesa Begum, and Masud and Abdul Jabbar.

Police said all the arrested were involved in the robberies committed in the house of a police super at Banosree and another house at

Mohakhali in Dhaka on January 24 and February 16 respectively.

Informed by the concerned police stations in Dhaka about the suspects, Barisal Kotwali thana police raided the house of one Khwaja Mia at Vatikhana in the town and arrested his tenant Masum and his wife Nazma.

During the raid, police recovered six petrol bombs, four toy pistols, two knives, one 'kirich', four mobile phone sets, one colour TV, five cameras, gold ornaments of 75 tolas, cash Tk 10,000 and foreign currency of same amount.

According to the confessional

statement of the arrested couple, police later nabbed speedboat driver Masud from Launchghat area and Jabbar from Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital on the same charge.

On the same night, police conducted a raid at the village home of Masum of Hosnabad in Baulal upazila of Patuakhali district and arrested his parents and three brothers also suspected to be involved in the dacoity.

Police also recovered gold ornaments of 22 tolas, foreign currency and other valuables from the house.

53 deep tube wells to be installed in Khulna

BSS, Khulna

Khulna City Corporation has taken up a programme to install 53 deep tube wells in the city during the current season to ensure supply of safe drinking water.

About 564 lakh taka will be spent for the purpose. Work of the project has already begun and is expected to be completed by June next.

After completion, about five lakh people will get supply of safe drinking water.

Besides, one thousand and four hundred projects are being implemented under Food for Work Programme in nine upazilas of Khulna district during the current financial year.

Two thousand five hundred and twenty two metric tons of wheat will be spent for the purpose.

The projects include construction and reconstruction of roads, bridges and culverts and development of educational institutions.

The projects are expected to be completed by June next.

UNB from Chapainawabganj says: Work on 514 schemes under Food for Works and Test Relief programmes has been progressing fast in the district costing 1,795 metric tons of wheat.

District Relief and Rehabilitation Department of Disaster Management and Relief Ministry is implementing the schemes.

Official sources said work on 110 rural infrastructure renovation schemes under Food for Works programme is running well costing 1,220 mts wheat, which includes construction and renovation of rural kutcha roads.

Under the Test Relief, work on 404 rural infrastructure development schemes is also progressing fast, which includes development of rural kutcha roads, schools, colleges, madrassahs, mosques, temples and graveyards.

Aristo Pharma manager robbed of Tk 5.83 lakh in Ctg

BSS, Chittagong

A group of muggers looted Tk 5.83 lakh from an assistant manager of a pharmaceutical company in Mehdiabagh Goalpaha area at Panchlaish in the port city on Sunday.

Ilias Badal of Aristo Pharma Ltd was carrying the money to deposit in a bank at Chakbazar when the muggers, numbering eight, intercepted the car and took away the purse containing the money at gunpoint, police said.

Police in co-operation with local people arrested one mugger, identified as Nurul Huda, 22, and recovered one light gun and four cartridges when their auto-rickshaw turned turtle near Panchlaish police station. However, the other seven muggers and driver of the auto-rickshaw managed to flee the scene.

A case was filed under PSA in this connection

NEWS SNAPS

Clash leaves 12 injured

UNB, Munshiganj

A clash between people of two villages in Mirkadim in Munshiganj left 12 people including two women injured Monday.

The feuding groups used sharp knives, crackers and brickbats against each other. Police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control. The clash ensued as a villager of Chandantala was held and beat up by the people of Kagzipara. Later the people of Chandantala also held a villager of Kagzipara. Police, however, rescued both the men after the clash.

Cinema manager held

UNB, Bogra

Police arrested the manager of Madhuban cinema in Bogra town Sunday night for screening obscene films.

Informed by district officials, police raided the cinema while screening blue-film at night and arrested the manager Jatish Chandra Roy. Police also seized 10 rolls of obscene films and filed a case against the cinema owner. The cinema was sealed by local administration.

Timber seized

UNB, Barisal

Coastguards and forest officials in joint drives recently seized timber worth about Tk seven lakh from different canals, rivers and jungles in Swarupkathi upazila in Barisal.

Sources said an organised gang had long been cutting trees from the Sundarbans and adjacent area and smuggling out through Kalibari, Boya, Bharasakati and Inderhat areas.

FFs get allowances

UNB, Brahmanbaria

The distribution of allowances among insolvent freedom fighters of the district began here Sunday.

Advocate Saedul Haque MP formally inaugurated the programme by handing over allowances to 20 distressed freedom fighters of Nasimagar upazila. Under the programme, a total of 1,398 freedom fighters of the district will get the allowances. Beside the 20 of Nasimagar, 298 of Sadar, 155 of Banchharampur, 30 of Nabinagar, 321 of Kasba, 129 of Akhaura, 50 of Sarail and 115 of Ashuganj upazila will get the honorarium.

Distressed people receive allowances

UNB, Chapainawabganj

Elderly people, widows, abandoned women and helpless freedom fighters here are getting monthly government allowances through Social Welfare Department.

According to officials, some 4,230 elderly people are getting Tk 100 per head every month while 2,115 widows and abandoned women receiving Tk 100 each per month and 420 freedom fighters Tk 300 per head a month as allowance. The old age allowance was introduced in July 1998, while that for widows and abandoned women in July 1999 and for distressed freedom fighters in July 2000.

National Children Day observed

BSS, Chuadanga

The 'National Children Day' was observed in Chuadanga in a befitting manner on Saturday.

In connection with the observance of the day the Chuadanga District Shishu Academy took out a programme which included rally and procession of the children, essay, recitation, patriotic song, extempore speech and painting competitions, discussions and cultural function.

The children's procession began from the office premises of the Deputy Commissioner paraded the main streets of the town. The essay, recitation, patriotic song, extempore speech and painting competitions were held in local Shishu Academy auditorium and the discussion and cultural function in local Sree-monto Town Hall.

8,360 farmers get loans

UNB, Chapainawabganj

Different banks so far disbursed over Tk 15.28 crore as agriculture loan among 8,360 farmers in five upazilas of Chapainawabganj district in the current fiscal year.

Official sources said the government has fixed the target to disburse over Tk 33.97 crore as farm-loan in the district this year through Sonali, Janata, Agrani and Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Banks and BRDB. The loans are being disbursed for purchasing agricultural inputs, pisciculture, poultry farming, cow fattening, dairy farming and vegetable and IRR1-Boro cultivation.

Red Crescent workshop

UNB, Bandarban

A five-day workshop on Development of Chittagong Hill Tracts concluded at the Horticulture Centre at Balaghata in Bandarban recently.

Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, Bandarban District Unit, organised the workshop. A total of 30 workers took part in the workshop. Officials of the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) conducted the training programme.



PHOTO:STAR

A colourful procession parades a street in Mymensingh town on Saturday. The procession, organised by district administration, was brought out on the occasion of 81st birth anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and National Children Day.