



PHOTO: STAR

(L) Two flood control embankments in Gowanighat of Sylhet district are threatened due to continued extraction of stones for a long time, (R) people collecting stones indiscriminately by digging lands illegally in the same upazila.

Fund shortage hampers work on Panasi project

UNB, Pabna

The fate of Pabna-Natore-Sirajganj (Panasi) project hangs on a knife-edge due to inadequate allocation and delay in releasing fund.

The government took up the gigantic project, comprising 24 upazilas of the three districts, in 1998 at a cost of Tk 102 crore, aiming to develop the socio-economic condition of the local people by boosting agricultural production, creating job opportunities and protecting the ecological balance.

Under the project, food production will be boosted by bringing some 68,000 acres of land under an integrated irrigation network.

The irrigation network will be developed through preserving surface water in different canals and khas ponds after re-excavating them. The old and inoperative deep tube-wells of the district will be re-installed.

As a result, some one lakh mts of additional paddy worth Tk 63.75 crore are expected to be produced, benefiting about 81255 families.

The project envisages to alleviate poverty by creating job opportunities for the unemployed people, including 20,000 distressed women, through pisciculture and poultry and dairy farming. Saplings will be planted to protect the eco-systems.

To gear up development activities, power connections will be given

at union-level under the project.

The Executive Committee of National Economic Council approved the five-year project on August 26, 1998 involving Tk 102.27 crore.

Although work on the project began in 1998-99 fiscal, only Tk 36.20 crore was released till

Hand made paper production plant set up

UNB, Tangail

A handmade paper production plant was established at Adalatpara in Tangail town recently.

'Upama', a non-government woman development organisation, set up the plant with the financial assistance from German embassy in Bangladesh.

The waste recycling based handmade paper production plant went into operation on January 18. German Ambassador Ube Sharm formally inaugurated the plant.

The raw materials of the plant are waste paper, water hyacinth, pine-apples leaf, and waste of garment factories and fibre of banana trees.

The paper of the plant would be used in making Photo Album, Gift Bag, Notebook, Diary, Visiting Card, canvas sheet etc.

BDR, NASAKA exchange fire

BSS, Cox's Bazar

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Myanmar Border Security Force, NASAKA, exchanged several rounds of fire for about an hour when BDR men chased a trawler loaded with smuggled goods coming from Myanmar on Thursday, BDR sources said.

They said the shootout began when a BDR patrol team, led by Captain Ferdous, challenged the trawler that tried to enter the Bangladesh territory through the Naf River at about 12 noon.

The sources said the trawler ignored the BDR signal and tried to flee towards Myanmar.

The NASAKA men from Myanmar side first opened fire on the BDR team that was chasing the escaping trawler.

The BDR team returned fire after necessary permission from the higher authority but the trawler managed to escape under the covering fire of NASAKA force, the sources said.

During the hour-long encounter, NASAKA fired over 100 rounds of shots while BDR returned 69 shots, the sources said, adding that there was no casualty on the BDR side.

AL declares its MP persona non grata in Barguna

UNB, Barguna

An extended meeting of upazila Awami League of Amtali yesterday declared party MP Mujibur Rahman Talukder persona non grata in the constituency, Barguna-3.

Some 250 councilors of Amtali thana Awami League at the extended meeting took the decision unanimously and urged the party chief not to give him nomination in the next general election.

The allegations brought against Talukder include hatching conspiracy to separate Amtali from Barguna district, giving shelter to anti-liberation elements and behave indecently with party colleagues.

4 children hurt as bomb explodes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Four children were injured, two of them seriously, when a bomb exploded at Shahapur under Motihar police station in Rajshahi city Wednesday.

Two of the children were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) in a critical condition. They are Mintu, 12, and Sharif, 10. The rest were given first aid at RMCH. Locals said the bomb exploded when the children were playing unknowingly with the bomb, found in an abandoned condition. A case was filed with Motihar in this connection.

Police station besieged

Hundreds of people of Chanlai village under Godagari upazila in Rajshahi district laid a siege to Godagari police station on Thursday protesting the frequent illegal and anti-social activities in the village by a section of hoodlums. The villagers in a procession led by the local UP Chairman Mostafa Hossain went to the police station and besieged the police station. They held a two-hour sit-in in front of the police station. During the sit-in they also held a meeting, protesting the anti-social activities in their village. The speakers in the meeting demanded immediate stoppage of the unabated crimes and arrest of the criminals. Later they handed over a memorandum to the officer-in-charge (OC).

Measures sought to protect river banks in Gowainghat

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Continued collection of stones from different quarries alongside two flood control embankments in Gowainghat upazilas of Sylhet district for the last few years may cause serious river erosion in the areas, it is widely apprehended. Organised groups usually become very active during the winter seasons.

Initiatives by the local administration, Water Development Board (WDB) officials, BDR, even by the local MP yielded no result. As a result such irregularities, are going on unabated.

Officials sources informed The Daily Star that with a view to protecting the area from recurring floods and erosion, Water Development Board (WDB) constructed about 2,700 metres embankment on both sides of the Plain river from Gowainghat to Ballaghat at an expenditure of Taka 80 lakh in 1981.

But, some organised gangs with the help of poor labourers of the locality have long been lifting stones from, the quarries under the nose of administration, endangering the embankments. What is alarming is that lands along the Bangladesh territory are disappearing into the rivers along the borders while a vast track of land is surfacing in the Indian territory.

A number of people living in the areas said that Sangram Punji, a locality of Khasia tribes and some other villages including a tea garden may go into the gorge of the river at any time.

The WDB officials said that the board took initiatives last year and a number of GD were registered with the local police. The matter was discussed with the BDR several times. But if gave no result. BDR men posted at the nearby border outposts demarcated some area and clamped some temporary bamboo posts for protecting the area. But, these steps also could not be strictly maintained, local people alleged. The law enforcing members expressed their inability to nab the floating people who are involved in the practice.

Some experts said that the river is being widened day by day due to indiscriminate lifting of stones and earth and it might cause devastation for about 10 to 15 villages located in the vicinity. Stones from over 200 metres area of the Indian river Dauki's right side embankment have already been lifted away, threatening the nearby villages.

Immediate steps should be taken for protecting the vast river banks as well as the adjacent areas located in the important border region.



PHOTO: RAJAT KANTI GOSWAMI

This shot was taken from a remote village Katajury under Rajnagar upazila in Moulvibazar district. This big arch was built on the occasion of the marriage ceremony of a family member of an American immigrant. Owner of the decorator who built the arch revealed that he would receive an amount of Taka 42,000. This is a usual practice of any foreign immigrant to spend a lot of money in such a lavish manner. But the amount of money is quite sufficient for the marriage ceremony of any member of a poor family. This is indeed an irony of fate!

Separate incidents kill two in Sirajganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Two people were murdered by miscreants in Tarsah and Belkuchi upazila of Sirajganj district in two separate incidents recently.

Police and witnesses said because of enmity, a group of miscreants entered into the house of Thandumondol of North Baniagati under Belkuchi upazila and beat him up while he was asleep. The miscreants left the scene after the incident. Afterwards the victim, Thandumondol, 52, was admitted into Belkuchi Health Complex where he succumbed to his injuries.

In another incident, which occurred at village Goarok under Tarash upazila recently, a 35 year old man named Akkas Ali was chopped to death by miscreants numbering eight to 10 out of past enmity. Police said they attacked him in a deep tube well area with a sharp weapon killing the victim on the spot.

Two separate cases were lodged in the connections.

Another report says: Mokbul Hossain Chowdhury, expelled Sirajganj Sadar upazila BNP President, Saidur Rahman Bachchu, Chhatra Dal leader and Ebadur Rahman Niru, former

President of the district Jubo Dal in separate statements said that they were the ardent supporters of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman. "So the question of abandoning their party-BNP does not arise at all", they said to this correspondent in response to a rumour about their possibility of joining the ruling Awami League in near future.

However, Mokbul Hossain Chowdhury said in another statement that they might field independent candidates in the next parliamentary elections if BNP factions do not get united soon in Sirajganj.

Prisoner escapes from court

UNB, Khulna

An under-trial prisoner managed to escape from the toilet of Court Hajat in Khulna on Tuesday afternoon.

Alfaz Howladar, 32, facing trial in an arms case, was brought to the court from jail. He was allowed to go to the toilet under guard of a constable when he managed to escape at 5pm.

Constable Akmal Hossain was immediately suspended.

NEWS SNAPS

Hoodlum kills widow

UNB, Rangamati

A hoodlum killed a 35-year old widow at Baro Dulu in Kaokhali upazila in Rangamati district early Friday failing to rape her. Police recovered the body and sent it to hospital morgue for autopsy. A case was filed with local police.

In another incident, police recovered a decomposed body of an unidentified man from Kaptai Lake Thursday evening. A case was filed with Kotwali police.

Body of youth recovered

UNB, Bagerhat

The body of a youth was recovered from a safety-tank of the house of Haren Mondal of Ghoshgati village in Mollahat upazila of Bagerhat district on Friday.

The victim was identified as Salam Sheikh, 30, who has been missing since March 25. Soon after recovery of the body by police, local people went on rampage and looted valuables and 11 cattleheads from 10 houses, including the house of Haren. Additional police were deployed in the area to fend off further trouble.

Fratricide

UNB, Munshiganj

A man was killed by his elder brother at Rajanagar village in Sirajdikhan upazila of Munshiganj district Thursday. Police said Mizanur Rahman hit his younger brother Monir Hossain with a rod following a quarrel between their wives.

Later, seriously injured Monir succumbed to his injuries on way to hospital. The victim's wife Ayesha Khatun filed a case with the police in this regard.

Two die of poisonous gas

UNB, Gazipur

Two people died of poisonous gas while, another fell sick at Bidadia village in Kapasia upazila of Gazipur district on Saturday. The victims were identified as Abdus Sattar, 35, a teacher of Kalameshwar High School and his neighbour Anwar Hossain, 40.

Local people and hospital sources said the schoolteacher died of poisonous gas while working in a hole connected with a latrine. Two other people fell sick when they got down into the hole to rescue the teacher. Of them, Anwar, died later while Rashid was admitted to a local hospital.

Mugger beaten to death

UNB, Narayanganj

An alleged mugger was beaten to death in Sonargaon upazila in Narayanganj in the early hours of Tuesday.

Police said truckers caught Mobarak, 22, son of Manik Mia of Barogaon village in the upazila, when he stopped a man to mug on Dhaka-Chittagong highway near Lati bridge at about 2.30 am and soon engulfed the nearby 22 shops. These shops include six cloth stores, seven grocery and stationary shops and two CI sheet shops.

While trying to extinguish the fire 10 people, including traders Khalilur Rahman, Nazrul Islam, Manik Gazi, Sobhan Mollah, Rob Majhi, Monir Gazi, Rabul Chowdhury were injured. Locals said they could not call the firefighters, as there is no telephone connection in the bazaar, situated 7-km off the town. Local UP Chairman and Bazaar committee president Ilyas Bacchu said the loss in the fire is estimated at 60 lakh.

Another worker Bahar who suffered injuries at the incident was rushed to Noakhali General Hospital in an unconscious state. Meanwhile, burglars entered into local Power Development Board (PDB) office breaking open the doors of eight rooms, but failed to loot anything. The robbers numbering about eight, confining the night guard in a bathroom of the office, broke 18 steel and wooden almirahs and drawers. A case was filed with local police.

Construction worker electrocuted

UNB, Noakhali

A construction worker was electrocuted and another survived with severe injuries while working in an under-construction house in Noakhali town Friday. Hospital sources and witnesses said Kiron, 40, was electrocuted as he came in contact with a live electric cable.

Another worker Bahar who suffered injuries at the incident was rushed to Noakhali General Hospital in an unconscious state. Meanwhile, burglars entered into local Power Development Board (PDB) office breaking open the doors of eight rooms, but failed to loot anything. The robbers numbering about eight, confining the night guard in a bathroom of the office, broke 18 steel and wooden almirahs and drawers. A case was filed with local police.

22 shops gutted

UNB, Patuakhali

A devastating fire at Sreerampur Bazaar in sadar upazila of Patuakhali district gutted 22 shops Thursday midnight. Witnesses said the fire originated from a cloth shop of Dulal Gazi at 2 am and soon engulfed the nearby 22 shops. These shops include six cloth stores, seven grocery and stationary shops and two CI sheet shops.

While trying to extinguish the fire 10 people, including traders Khalilur Rahman, Nazrul Islam, Manik Gazi, Sobhan Mollah, Rob Majhi, Monir Gazi, Rabul Chowdhury were injured. Locals said they could not call the firefighters, as there is no telephone connection in the bazaar, situated 7-km off the town. Local UP Chairman and Bazaar committee president Ilyas Bacchu said the loss in the fire is estimated at 60 lakh.

Valuables worth Tk 2 lakh looted

UNB, Khulna

Armed robbers looted valuables worth about Tk 2 lakh from two houses at Dolkhola area in Khulna city Friday.

Witnesses said a gang of masked bandits stormed into the houses of Babul Lal and Rathindranath Biswas and looted the belongings, including cash and gold ornaments at gunpoint. A case was filed with police in this connection.

Canadian national arrested

BSS, Bandarban

A Canadian national was arrested in Alikadam area of Bandarban district recently.

According to police, David Bably, 48, was working with an Irish NGO, Ifor, for a long time. He had neither passport nor other valid documents. He was produced before the court. The court sent him to jail.

Memo handed over to Sujanagar UNO

UNB, Pabna

A representative group of people belonging to the Tantibandh union Tuesday laid siege to the Sujanagar UNO office protesting inclusion of their union with the newly created Ataikula upazila. They handed over a memorandum to the UNO threatening legal action against the decision, which they said, had been taken at the instance of a minister. Earlier they held a rally at the Purandanga High School ground with Sujanagar AN College Principal Abdul Halim in the chair. They demanded immediate withdrawal of the decision.

Railway station demanded

UNB, Tangail

Local people have demanded establishment of a railway station at Karotia in Tangail district a place of commercial and educational importance. Karotia UP chairman Khalequzzaman Chowdhury Maznu at a recent press conference put forward the demand and announced a series of programmes to realise it.

The programmes include road blockade, human chain and all-party processions. A railway line is now under construction between Bangabandhu Jamuna Bridge to Joydevpur via Tangail, Karotia and Mirzapur.

Clash leaves 50 injured

UNB, Bagerhat

A clash between the people of two villages in Mollahat upazila of Bagerhat district on Tuesday left at least 50 people injured. Witnesses said the trouble ensued when the people of Udoypur and Golargati villages were locked in a clash over screening a film on Video Cassette Recorder at a house belonging to Munir Kazi.

Earlier Kazi of Golargati village refused an offer of some youths of Udoypur to screen the film of VCR Monday night. The injured were admitted to the upazila health complex. Conditions of 10 of the injured were stated to be critical.

Four-day agriculture fair in Narsingdi

BSS, Narsingdi

A four-day agriculture fair organised by district Agriculture Extension Directorate was held in Narsingdi Sadar Upazila's office premises. Musleuddin Ahmed, Director field service, Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) Dhaka, inaugurated the fair on Tuesday as the chief guest with a call to the farmers to improve the quality of their agriculture products. Presided over by the Deputy Director of Agriculture Extension Directorate Narsingdi, the inaugural function was also addressed, among others, by Mohiuddin district Fishery officer, Rounok Jahan, Sadar Upazila Nirbahi officer, Abdul Mannan, Additional Police Super Narsingdi and Masbah Uddin, Block Supervisor AFD, Sadar.

Bumper wheat harvesting expected

BSS, Thakurgaon

Bumper wheat production is expected this year in Thakurgaon district. Favourable weather condition, application of balanced fertiliser and timely irrigation contributed to the luxuriant growth of wheat crop.

An Agriculture Extension Directorate source said that 70,000 hectares of land were brought under wheat cultivation here this year. During the cultivation session, 754 metric tons of wheat seed were sold. Of which BADC supplied 612 metric tons.