

Silt threatens Old Brahmaputra

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Mymensingh*

The Old Brahmaputra was once a mighty river. Now it is virtually a dead river.

Many shoals have emerged in many places of the riverbed of the Old Brahmaputra for years together. The river has been silted up completely at Kusta, Ashtadhar, Bidyaganj, Begunbari, Boror Char, Char Sinta and Char Iswandia of Sadar upazila.

Now cattles graze in these shoals. Flood water inundate these shoals in May or June. A shoal in Khagdahar union is so large that the farmers cultivate groundnut, potato, vegetables and various kinds of crops. Many people have also built houses at the large shoal in the riverbed near Mymensingh town. The shoal has been turned into a playing ground.

Now there are many points where people cross the river easily.

Massive siltation in this river has also affected other small rivers of the district. For this reason, navigation is being hampered seriously throughout the district. Navigation has been hampered particularly from Kachari Ferry Ghat to Jamalpur and other remote places of the district.



PHOTO: STAR

A big shoal has emerged in the bed of the Old Brahmaputra at Ghagdahar union of Mymensingh district. Farmers cultivate various crops in this shoal.

Riverine communication comes to a total halt in dry season. As a result transport cost has been increased over the years. Meanwhile, many labourers at different ferry ghats are out of job and the boatmen are fast changing their profession.

Dumping of garbages along the riverbank and flowing of sewer line in the river of the town are also causing slow death of the river.

When contacted, an engineer working with local Water

Development Board (WDB) informed that large quantity of silt have been deposited in the riverbed because of geological characteristic of the country.

Executive Engineer of local WDB Md Azharul Islam told this correspondent that a project to dredge the Old Brahmaputra river was undertaken 25 years ago, but the plan is yet to be implemented.

Patuakhali govt girls' school plagued with irregularities

UNB, *Patuakhali*

Once reputed to be one of the best schools of the district, Patuakhali Govt Girls' High School is now grappling with corruption, irregularities and mismanagement.

The situation has reached such a stage that its students took to the street on May 2 and submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner demanding withdrawal of its Headmistress and appointment of teachers to vacant posts.

The students alleged that Headmistress Chhabi Rani Halder and another teacher Pushpa Rani, who were posted to the school 30 years ago, have indulged in corruption and failed to take any initiatives to fill up the vacant posts.

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They further alleged that no classes were virtually held in the school during the first three months of the current year due to shortage of teachers.

More worrying is that some teachers have formed a coterie and they 'induce' the students to take private coaching. They poor students who cannot afford private tuition are harassed in many ways, according to competent sources. They said Tk 85 is collected from

each student every year, which hardly goes to the school's bank account. The managing committee of the school failed to convene any meetings for a long time to resolve the problems and redress the students' grievances.

Dismissing all the allegations brought against her and her colleagues, the Headmistress blamed the present mess on shortage of teachers. She said 23 posts have long been lying vacant in the school.

About irregularities in fee collection from the students, she said the

money is spent on preparing curriculums and arranging programmes like farewell to outgoing teachers, which is duly deposited with the bank account.

She was quick to add that the money collected to accord farewell to a outgoing teacher, Mrs Nihar, is with her as the function was not held.

About private coaching, the Headmistress said she is aware of it, but took a lenient view to it as the school is running with inadequate teachers.



PHOTO: STAR

National Nutrition Day was observed in Chandpur recently. A colourful procession was brought out on the occasion which paraded the main thoroughfares of the town.

Bumper Boro expected in Comilla, B'Baria

AGENCIES

Bumper production of Boro paddy is expected in Comilla and Brahmanbaria districts while there has been bumper yield of the crop in Chandpur and Satkhira districts.

In Comilla, bumper production of Boro is expected this year.

Favourable weather condition and timely application of fertilisers contributed to the bumper production.

Meanwhile, the harvesting of the crop has started. According to local Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), 1,15,303 hectares lands were brought under the cultivation in the district during this season.

It is expected that over 4.27 lakh tons of paddy will be produced.

The prospect of bumper production of Boro in Brahmanbaria have been attributed to favourable weather condition and timely application of fertiliser and irrigation.

Local DAE source said, 88,295 hectares of lands were brought under the farming in the district during the current season.

The upazila-wise break-up of cultivation is as follows: 25,800 hectares of lands in Sadar 13,850 hectares in Nasirnagar, 15,250 hectares in Sarail, 12085 hectares in Akhaura 14,300 hectares in Nabinagar and 7,010 hectares in Banchharampur.

It is expected that over 2.74 lakh tons of paddy will be

produced in the district.

In Chandpur, farmers had a bumper IRRI-Boro harvest this year despite heavy rains.

According to DAE, about 150,000 hectares of lands were brought under IRRI-Boro cultivation during the current season in the district.

The DAE had fixed the target of per hectare production at 2.50 metric tons of paddy but the production surpassed the target. The production reached 4 metric tons of paddy this year.

Some farmers complained that the production cost of paddy was higher this year.

As there are no genuine buyers in markets the middlemen are offering lesser price. As a result, the poor farmers are compelled to sell their paddy between Tk 200 and Tk 220 per maund, much below the production cost.

In Satkhira, there has been a bumper yield of Boro paddy in the district this year.

The production target of paddy has been exceeded by 52,238 tons.

According to official sources, the production target was fixed at 142,500 tons but 174,738 ton were produced.

A total of 67,750 kg of seeds of high yielding varieties of Boro were distributed among the farmers by the government.

Transport owners' ultimatum

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Sirajganj*

Members of North Bengal Transport Owners' Association have threatened to go for greater movement if their five-point demands are not fulfilled by June 10.

This decision has been taken at a meeting of the transport owners at their Rangpur office on Monday. The meeting deplored that despite an assurance by the government to fulfil five-point demands of transport owners, these remain implemented.

The assurance was made following a meeting of transport owners with Communication Minister, Home Minister, Food Minister, Commerce Minister and other high officials of the government on June 21 in 1998. Communication Minister chaired the meeting.

The demands include reduction of toll of passing vehicles in Bangabandhu Bridge, measures to check illegal extortion in around the Bangabandhu Bridge area, stoppage of plying of shallow engine operated unregistered vehicles locally called Vutvuti and reducing prices of fuel oil, mobil, tyre, tube and spare parts.

Five murders in Feni last month

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Feni*

At least five people were murdered in Feni district in the last month.

According to police and local people, Fair Ahmed, 37, of village Bashpara under Chhagalniya upazila was killed when a bomb was hurled at a truck he was driving on Feni-Chhagalniya road on April 1.

A BCL leader, Zulfikar Ali Suman, 23, was murdered when unidentified gunmen killed him at Majumder Hat under Sadar upazila on April 15.

Unknown gunmen at Notun Bazar under Sadar upazila shot a BNP activist dead on April 4. He was identified as Abu Bakkar, 30.

A local BNP leader at Dolia union under Sadar upazila was beaten and shot dead by ruling party activists on April 15. He was identified as Serijul Hoque Suruj, 55.

Obaidul Hoque Ronny, 30, a Jubo League leader of Dolia union under Sadar upazila, was gunned down by unidentified assailants on April 24.

Separated cases were filed with respective police stations.

Tk 5cr Garib Ullah Shah Mazar Dev Project undertaken

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Chittagong*

A plan has been taken up to develop 'Garib Ullah Shah (R:) Mazar (Shrine)' in Chittagong into a modern complex with Islamic architectural design at the cost of Tk 5 crores.

The WAQ'F Estate Management Committee of the shrine and mosque took this decision at a meeting on Tuesday with its president Chittagong City Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury in the chair. The meeting approved a project plan in this regard and formed a five-member sub-committee for quick implementation of the modern complex.

The project plan has been designed to give the most ancient shrine of the port city a permanent shape in the light of religious guidance and in compliance with the tradition of Chittagong. There will be air conditioning system for preservation of deadbody, modern system for the waiting people with the deadbody, space for pre-burial prayer, conference room, Islamic library, Islamic Research Centre and modernisation of the existing graveyard.

In the meeting the management committee president and city mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury called for cooperation of all to uphold the tradition of Chittagong and preserve the Islamic heritage.

Problems grip Narail Central Public Library

UNB, *Narail*

The Narail Central Public Library has been plagued with innumerable problems, causing sufferings to users.

The problems include shortage of necessary books, accommodation, furniture and space in the reading room. Moreover, there are no tubewell, latrine and urinal facilities in the library premises.

The library was established in 1957 with the relentless efforts of the local elite with only 250 books. Late Advocate Afsaruddin of the area was the founder secretary of the library.

At present there are over 11,000 books of which 250 are as per the syllabuses of the students of

schools and colleges. At least one hundred readers visit the library every day. The library subscribes five dailies, three weeklies and five monthlies for the readers.

It remains open from 4 pm to 9 pm for all the days of the week except the weekly holiday, Friday.

There are three poor salaried employees for the library. They are working under an executive committee headed by the deputy commissioner.

Committee secretary Advocate Saiful Islam urged the authority to take steps for modernisation of the library and to increase the yearly quota of books and financial allocation for purchasing necessary articles and furniture for the benefit of the readers.

Tree plantation scheme yields profit in Sherpur

UNB, *Sherpur*

A tree plantation programme on participatory basis in Sherpur district earned huge profit this year, encouraging its shareholders for further plantation.

Forest Department planted various species of trees on about 447.77 hectares of land in its Balijhuri and Rangtia Ranges in cooperation with local NGOs during 1988-90.

The trees were sold at over Tk 1.34 crore last month through open tender. Of the amount, Tk 88.26 lakh came from Balijhuri Range and Tk 46.20 lakh from Rangtia Range.

Officials said the government received 50 per cent of the total income while the shareholders got 40 per cent. The rest 10 per cent were deposited in a fund for future plantation.

Meanwhile, agreements have been signed with the NGOs for planting various trees, including rajkarai, shlikarai, gamar, mehgoni, shishu and arjun, in the same forest ranges.

For successful implementation of the programme, Forest Department has already grown some 80,000 fruit-bearing and other tree-saplings in its nursery for selling.

Besides, some 1,100 saplings of different species of trees were planted in three Ashrayan (housing) projects in the district.

Another report from Cox's Bazar says: A massive plantation programme at Noyapara and Kutupalang Rohingya Refugee camps in the district has begun.

UNHCR country representative Machiko Kondo inaugurated the programme Thursday at the refugee camps in Teknaf and Ukhia.

Funded by UNHCR, some 10,000 fruit-bearing and timber

saplings will be planted in the two camps in cooperation with the Rohingya Refugee Rehabilitation office.

Machiko Kondo distributed saplings among the refugees of the two camps and handed over two ambulances for the refugees.

Rohingya Refugee Rehabilitation Commissioner Sheikh Shahidullah, Prof Mohammad Ali MP and UNHCR officials were present.

Some 21,156 Rohingya refugees of 3,477 families are staying in Noyapara and Kutupalang camps and awaiting repatriation.

Four Indian nationals held in Jessore

UNB, *Jessore*

Army personnel nabbed four Indian nationals while they were roaming suspiciously in the protected areas of Jessore Cantonment recently.

They were later handed over to police on charge of entering illegally the protected areas.

Police said the arrested are Sanchoy Sing, son of Madra Sing of Turpur village of Bihar, Abdur Razzak and Harilal of Arjipur village in Azamnagar district in Assam, and Parbati of Nikma village of Bihar.

Sonchoy was arrested on May 13, Razzak and Harilal on May 16 and Parbati on May 17.

Their motives of coming in Bangladesh without passports and entering the cantonment area could not be known.

A case was filed with Kotwali police.

NEWS SNAPS

Housewife chopped to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Sirajganj*

A housewife was chopped to death allegedly by his husband at Pankkhrua village in Chalanbeel area under Ullapara upazila in Sirajganj district on Wednesday night.

The victim was identified as Kurshi Begum, 30, wife of a local trader named Jonab Ali of village Pankkhrua under Ullapara upazila in Sirajganj district. Police said while the housewife was fast asleep with her four kids her husband separated her head from body by a spade. As a result she died on the spot. Police arrested Jonab Ali from his house. The cause of murder could not be known. A case was lodged with Ullapara police station in this connection.

Another newsman threatened

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Faridpur*

The Faridpur District Correspondent of Manab Jamin, Kamruzzaman Sohel in an application to the President of Faridpur Press Club stated that he had received a threat over telephone by an anonymous caller recently.

In a meeting of the local journalists at the club with journalist Jagadish Chandra Ghosh in the chair, Kamruzzaman said that a series of news items on alleged misdeeds of some local youths had been published in Manab Jamin for two or three consecutive days. This has enraged the concerned youths. So they have threatened Kamruzzaman to cut off his two legs. However, he told the meeting that the stories had been covered by a special correspondent of Manab Jamin.

The meeting expressed deep concern over the incident and condemned the threat on the innocent journalist.

Later the journalists met the Deputy Commissioner of Faridpur, Abdus Salam Khan at his office and informed him about the incident.

Tk 5cr house bldg project undertaken

UNB, *Rangamati*

Rangamati Works Department has undertaken a project to construct multistoried building for the housing of government officials and employees of the district at a cost of Tk 5 crore.

As part of converting the 61 tin-shed quarters into multistoried buildings the department has got budgetary allocation of Tk 1.0 crore initially to construct 10 buildings this year. Work order to construct four buildings has already been issued but the problems have cropped up when the ownership of land arose. The Bazar committee raised the problems and the authorities were forced to refund the money this year as the work could not be started due to the dispute.

Goods, cash looted from four trucks

UNB, *Bogra*

Armed dacoits putting up barricade on Bogra-Natore Highway on Bogra district looted goods and cash of at least four trucks and a van early hours Monday.

Police said dacoits barricaded the road at Purbokuchai in Nandigram upazila at 2:30 am on Monday and looted the trucks and van of a pharmaceutical company at gunpoint. Patrol police rushed to spot and opened fire at the bandits who managed to flee unhurt.

Uplift activities hampered

UNB, *Rangamati*

Development activities in Rangamati district are being hampered as many important posts like PIO are lying vacant.

Official sources said the post of Project Implementation Officer (PIO) in all upazilas of the district while that of District Relief Officer have long been lying vacant. They said the PIO's role in implementing development programmes like Food-for-Works and rural infrastructure maintenance programmes is vital. But there is no sign in sight to fill up the vacant posts. The post of district Relief Officer has been lying vacant since June 1999, hindering day to day works of Relief Department.