

SNAPS

Water crisis at Halishahar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg
About 20,000 residents of Halishahar L and K blocks have been suffering from acute crisis of water for the last few weeks.

Social Welfare Committee leaders here on Monday threatened to lay a siege to Chittagong WASA office on March 15 when its new chairman takes over.

"We are now forced to buy WASA water in voucher where one has to pay a higher amount to the concerned staff and vehicle driver," Welfare Committee President Golam Kibria told this correspondent.

2 cops sued for 'snatching' Tk 5.25 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi
A Union Parishad member on Sunday sued two policemen of Puthia thana for allegedly Tk 5.25 lakh.

The accused, Sub-inspector Alik and constable Murad, can not be traced since filing of the case, according to Puthia thana Officer-in-Charge (OC) Anisur Rahman.

Abdur Rahman, a member of Monigram UP in Bagha upazila and businessman, filed the case with Puthia thana. He alleged that the policemen waylaid his employees Abdus Salam and Mamtaz Ali at Jhalmalia and snatched the amount from them.

11 highwaymen held in Comilla

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Comilla

Eleven highwaymen were caught red-handed on Dhaka-Chittagong highway by a hotel employee in Jour Kanon area here on Monday.

According to police and locals, a group of highwaymen numbering 11 put up a barricade on the highway near Jour Kanon Hotel. They caught a highway bus passenger named Rakesh Biswas, 28, son of Topan Kumar Bishwas of Lal Dhigirpar, Chittagong and beat him up. They also tried to whisk him away by a microbus, but Rakesh shouted and rushed to the hotel. A hotel employee and the hotel manager came out and caught them.

Arrested highwaymen are Kalimullah, Akramul Haque, Sawar Kamal, Helal, Delowar, Elias, Anwar, Jayad, Rashed Khan, and Eusuf.

Rampal Jubo Dal leader arrested from Rupsha

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A Rampal Jubo Dal leader was arrested from Rupsha on Saturday night.

The arrested is Monir Talukdar, 30, general secretary of Rampal Jubo Dal. He is a FIR-named accused in Jamaat leader Moulana Abdul Wahab Siddique murder case.

Most of the 25 accused in the case are associated with BNP and front organisations.

So far, four persons were arrested. Of them, Monir Talukdar and Humayun Kabir were remanded.

Shukhjan Bibi, the lone eyewitness of bomb attack on the Jamaat leader is being grilled by police for information about killers. She was accompanying the slain leader in the same rickshaw van where the murder was committed.

PDB's costly equipment free for thieves!

Tk 10 cr towers, equipment stolen from Horogram-Godagari power line: 48 staff for maintenance but no case filed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Towers, poles, heavy wire and other costly equipment worth over Tk 10 crore have been stolen from the unused 30-km Horogram-Godagari power line in Rajshahi.

There are 48 Power Development Board (PDB) employees including six engineers for maintenance of the line, sources claimed.

The pilferage was done in last

several years but no case was filed, the sources said.

A section of Rajshahi Power Development Board staff is involved with local gangs of miscreants in the pilferage, it is alleged.

Sources said there were about 90 kms of heavy metallic wire (conductor) worth about Tk six crore in the power line. But nothing is left now.

Besides, all fittings including thousands of costly disk insulators,

pin insulators, nuts and bolts have been stolen.

In mid-2002, PDB in a survey found only 85 metallic poles and 30 towers out of total 300 towers and poles. A metallic pole costs Tk 20,000 and a tower Tk 80,000.

In early January this year, PDB invited a tender to dismantle the remaining poles and towers (85 poles and 30 towers) to avoid further pilferage.

But the authorities delayed a

year to issue the work order. More 38 poles and 17 towers were missing when the work order was given on January 26.

On February 19, PDB conducted another survey and found only 47 poles and 13 towers.

This correspondent during a survey of about 15-km section of the power line from Horogram saw only one tower and three poles against 150 towers and poles earlier.

The power line was set up in 80s. Since 1994, it was not used but kept standby after setting up of the 132 KV Hariপুর-Chapainawabganj power line.

Some local people at Rajabari, Premtoli and Hariপুর talking to this correspondent alleged that PDB staff themselves dismantled the towers and poles.

Rajshahi PDB Superintendent Engineer Nurul Islam Mondol said he was unaware of the pilferage. But he said local people used to chase and beat PDB men when they went to dismantle the towers and poles.

Chief Engineer Mosharraf Hossain said he was informed of the pilferage. But they (staff concerned) never filed any case or general diary in this regard, he said.

Contacted on phone, Executive Engineer Mahfuzur Rahman said, "Action will be taken against the persons responsible".



APDB tower (left) with the wire stolen at Premtali and remains of another stolen tower, right. PHOTO: STAR

A private initiative benefits thousands of farmers

Half a kilometre dyke makes 5000 acres flood-free in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

People of 10 villages in Assassuni upazila are now alive with new hopes following reconstruction of about half a kilometre embankment along the Kholpetua river at Balabaria village.

They can now raise crops after seven years. Many villagers who had left homes are now building houses anew.

Vast croplands were under water even in dry season since the embankment collapsed in 1995. Many had left homes and had taken shelter on high lands, roads and at the upazila headquarters.

Since 1995, the embankment was reconstructed thrice but it collapsed during flooding seasons.

About 5000 acres of land is now flood-free, which will benefit over 10,000 people, local people told this correspondent during a recent visit.

This year, the embankment has been built at the initiative of Seaborne Shrimp, a local fishery company.

But it is not for free. The company has leased about 500 acres of land from farmers for four years for shrimp cultivation at the rate of Tk 3000 per bigha per year. They will pay the farmers for three years. There will be no lease money for the first year.

The company spent Tk 2.50 crore for reconstruction of the embankment, its spokesman Mohammad Abdul Hai told this correspondent.

According to Water Development Board sources, the

embankment had collapsed on May 16, 1995. The WDB reconstructed it in August that year at a cost of Tk two crore. But it collapsed again that year.

In 1998, WDB reconstructed eight kilometres of embankment in the area at a cost of Tk 7 crore. But the half-a-kilometre collapsed embankment at Balabaria village could not be reconstructed due to strong current of water.

More than 2000 families in four villages had become homeless as their houses were damaged completely.

The company started the reconstruction work in October 2002 and completed it in January this year.

Kartik Mondal, Abdul Jalil, Monoranjan Dhali, Santosh Mondal, Abdur Rashid of Balabaria village said they will now go back to their ancestral homes and grow

crops again on their lands as those are flood-free now.

While talking to journalists, parliament member from the area Maulana Riasat Ali said the initiative by the Seaborne Shrimp is praiseworthy as the Water Development Board failed to do the job.

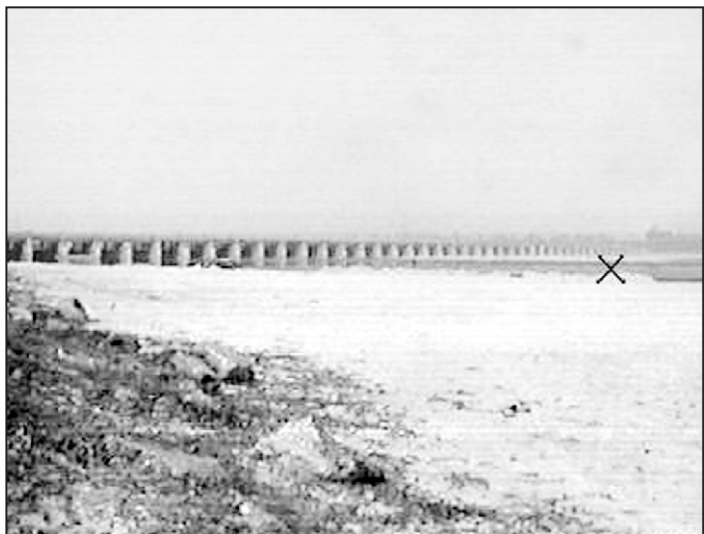
Besides benefiting the affected people, it will also earn foreign exchange, he said.



People taking a break while giving finishing touches to the reconstructed embankment at Balabaria in Satkhira. The dam brought new hope for them. PHOTO: STAR

'Realise water share from India before starting Teesta Project-2'

Project -1 irrigates only 30,000 hectares against targeted 1,11000, experts say



The cross mark shows the narrow stream in the Teesta near Teesta Barrage. The vast dried up areas on both sides are covered with sand. The photo was taken on Sunday. PHOTO: STAR

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Work on the second phase of Teesta Irrigation Project begins soon with a question mark from water resources experts.

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) allocated Tk 11.67.66 lakh for the project in January. Water Development Board (WDB) sources here said they are going to start the project work soon.

But water resources experts say, Bangladesh's due share of Teesta water should be ensured from India before that.

Construction of the Main Teesta Barrage started on December 12, 1979 and it was inaugurated on August 5, 1990 after completion.

The project targeted to bring under irrigation five lakh 40 thousand hectares of land in 33 upazilas in Nilphamari, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Gaibandha, Bogra and Joypurhat districts.

The project was completed by

Bangladeshi engineers with financial assistance from Saudi Development Fund and Islamic Development Bank.

But after completion of the barrage at Doani on the border between Nilphamari and Lalmonirhat districts, India constructed Gogaldoba Barrage 80 kms in the upstream and started withdrawing water, making the Teesta virtually a stream in dry season.

Taking into consideration the financial aspect, the WDB decided to implement the rest of the project in two phases. Construction of the first phase was completed in 1996 with a target to irrigate one lakh 11 thousand 406 hectares of land.

But actually irrigation can not be provided to more than 30,000 hectares due to less flow in the Teesta, the experts said.

In the last couple of years, the Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) held meetings but Bangladesh's share of the Teesta water could not be settled, they said.

3 killed in clash over land in Bhola, Bakerganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Three persons were killed and six injured in clashes in land dispute in Bhola and Bakerganj upazila in Barisal on Monday.

In Charfession in Bhola, seven persons were injured in a clash between two groups led by Abul Hossain and Anwar Hossain. One of them -- Amir Hossain, 59 -- died while being taken to hospital. The rest six were admitted to Charfession Hospital.

Police arrested four persons.

One Hasan Howladar, 60, was killed in the other clash at Awaliapur village in Bakerganj upazila.

24 kg hemp seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

BDR seized 24 kilograms of hemp and 11,000 tablets used as drug from bordering areas of the district during a recent anti-smuggling drive, BDR sources said.

Demand for Padma bridge at Daulatdia Half-day hartal in Manikganj, barricade on highway today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

A half-day hartal has been called today in Manikganj district in demand for the proposed Padma bridge at Daulatdia.

The Dhaka-Aricha highway will also be off-limits to transports today.

The programme was announced at a rally on the premises of Manikganj Bar Association office on Monday. It was addressed by local leaders of all political parties.

With former parliament member Abdul Wahab Khan in the chair, the rally was also addressed by, among others, Mohammad Shamsul Hoq, Nurul Alam, former

MP Nasirul Hoq Sabu, BNP leaders advocate Jamilur Rashid Khan, advocate Asad Hossain Khan, Shamsul Alam, Manikganj Press Club President AFM Nurul Alam Bazar, its secretary Golam Sarwar Sonu, Jubo Dal central member SA Kabir Zinnah, Manikganj Jubo Dal president Motalib Hossain, secretary SMM Iqbal Hossain, Manikganj Truck Owners Association President Khairul Alam Chowdhury, former Manikganj Pourashava chairman and Awami League leader Romjan Ali, Ward Commissioner Roton Mojumdar, Manikganj Jatiya Party President Abdul Aziz and acting secretary Abu Hanif Kadir. They are all leaders of the newly formed Committee for Padma Bridge at Mawa.

Clash with ferry, transport men 50 PSTU students, teacher hurt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

At last 50 students including some girls and one teacher of Patuakhali Science and Technology University (PSTU) were injured yesterday in a clash with transport and ferry workers at Dopdapia ferry terminal, four miles from Barisal city.

Two university buses and one pickup in which they were coming to Barisal were damaged.

Four of the injured students have been admitted to Barisal

Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital. They are Md Rafiqul, Bazlur Rashid, Kazi Zakir and Mehedi Hasan.

Assistant Professor AKM Mostafa Jamal, who is convanor of the PSTU Teachers Association, is among the injured, police and witnesses said.

About 450 students and some teachers were coming to Barisal in seven vehicles to form a human chain in front of the Town Hall for removal of PSTU Vice-chancellor Prof Abdul Hannan.