More areas flooded in Sylhet region

Surma, Kushiyara swell further : Water resources minister visits Sunamganj today: Floods in B'baria, Netrakona

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Flash floods inundated more areas in Sylhet, Sumanganj, Moulvibazar districts as the Surma and the Kushiyara rivers continued to rise yesterday.

Floods triggered by rain also damaged vast IRRI-Boro lands in Brahmanbaria, Netrakona and Habiganj.

Our Staff Correspondent in Sylhet reported that at least 60 per cent IRRI-Boro croplands have reeled under water in Sylhet, Sumanganj Moulvibazar as waters were gushing out through several breaches in embankments of the Surma and the Kushiyara. The two rivers rose further yesterday at all points amid scattered intermittent rains.

More areas have gone under water in Jakiganj, Kanaighat, Gowainghat, Beanibazar, Jaintapur, Companiganj and Golapganj upazilas. In Gowainghat upazila, at least 80 per cent paddy has been damaged.

Educational institutions have been closed in Jakiganj upazila.

Water Resources Minister Hafij Uddin Ahmed is likely to visit the flood affected areas of Sunamganj today, said an official.

The Sylhet bound inter-city train Jayantika Express from Dhaka was detained at Lauachhara between Srimangal and Bhanuigachh stations for about six hours since 7 PM Monday as landslide and trees uprooted by storm blocked the track.

Train movement resumed at about 1 AM Monday after the track was cleared, railway officials said yesterday.

Inter-city Udayan Express and others trains were also detained at different stations for several hours due to the disruption.

The swelling Surma was flowing five centimetres above the red mark in Sylhet city, 207 centimetres at Amolshid in Jakiganj and 149 centimetres above the mark at Kanaighat yesterday noon.

This is the highest rise of the river at this time of the year in several years, Water Development Board (WDB) officials said.

The Kushiyara was flowing 83 centimetres above the mark at Sheola in Beanibazar upazila.

In Jakiganj, floodwater is gushing out through several breaches in embankments of the Surma and the Kushiyara. Local people when contacted claimed that there have been about 40 breaches in the embankments in the upazila.

The Executive Engineer of WDB told The Daily Star yesterday afternoon that the rivers breached embankments at Atgram, Manikpur, Shah Sharif Majar and several other points.

The WDB Chief Engineer visited the affected areas in Sylhet on Sunday.

The situation is more precarious in Sunamganj as flood waters engulfed more areas in 24 of the 28 big haors and damaged ready-for-harvest crops. The worst affected areas are Jamalganj and Tahirpur upazilas.

Water is flowing through at least 40 breaches in embankments of haors in Derai, Shulla, Dharampasha and Chhatak upazilas.

A WDB official said the average height of embankments in Sunamganj haors is 7.5 metres, which can not sustain the pressure of rolling water.

Ruling party Whip Fazlul Haque Aspia visited some flooded haors in the district.

The Sunamganj Deputy Commissioner when contacted said flood waters will touch homesteads if the rise continues. Boro paddy worth over Tk 400 crore has already gone under water in the district, he said. Boro is the main cash cropo in the low lying region.

The floods have stopped extraction of stone and sand in all the quarries in the district, making at least over 60,000 labourers unemployed, he said.

Our Brahmanbaria correspondent Reports:

Paddy on at least 5,000 acres is low-lying areas of Nasirmagar and Nobinagar upazilas of the district have gone under water following downpours on Saturday and Sunday.

On Sunday, a storm battered Nasirnagar damaging houses and uprooting trees and two electric poles. Power supply was snapped.

Our Netrakona Correspondent reports: IRRI-Boro paddy on at least 30,000 hectares have gone under water due to flash flood in Khaliajuri and Mohongonj upazilas, caused by onrush of hill waters from across the border and three days' rains, officials said.

Water levels of Donu and Kongshu rivers have recorded sharp rise.

Breaches in dams at Asharkona and Kirthonkola have inundated Boro fields in Pangasha, Kotichapra, Kirtonkola, Nayabanda, Sonatala and Lakmipasha areas.

Water from Kongshu river inundated at least 15,000 hectares in Dubail and Mardia hoars in Mohongonj upazila

A Correspondent in Habiganj reports:

IRRI-Boro crops on at least 20,000 acres have beern damaged in Habiganj, Nabiganj and Banjachang upazilas in the district due to rains in the last four days, officials said.

The Khwai is swelling at all points due to onrush of water from across the border.

Lemon of bnight future

Ibrahim earns Tk 30,000-35,000 a month from small investment

MD AMINUL ISLAM, *Mymensingh*

Ibrahim Sarker had planted some lemon saplings in the courtyard out of curiosity and fun. But he could not imagine some day this would earn him fame, fortune and a national award.

A footballer in his youth, Ibrahim now earns a net profit of Tk 30,000 to 35,000 a month from his lemon garden at Raghurampur village in the Sadar upazila. He employs seven labourers to nurse his six-acre garden and gives them Tk 22,000 salary a month. He oversees their work. Seventy-four year-old Ibrahim is now well known in the area.

He earned the National Award for Agriculture in1998.

An incident in 1994 changed his life. He had gone to Dhaka to see his daughter. He carried some lemons in his bag, grown without care in the courtyard. On way, in the city, he saw lemon selling at very high price. To his surprise, he sold two for Tk 16.

Back home, he cleared the entire courtyard of scrubs and weeds and planted 36 more lemon saplings.

"Being influenced by Block Supervisor Abdul Aziz of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), I gave more time and labour to nurse the plants. The courtyard turned into a lemon garden in 1996," said Ibrahim.

DAE officials came to visit his garden. They encouraged and assured him of assistance. In the same year he expanded the garden to three acres in the adjoining high lands.

Next year, Ibrahim earned Tk 50,000. This was beyond his imagination. Price was higher in that year.

He turned into a full time lemon farmer.

In 1998, Ibrahim Sarker got the National Award for Agriculture.

"It is a memorable event in my life. My name was printed in newspapers as a model farmer", an all smiles Ibrahim told this correspondent during a recent visit to his garden.

"I am very proud to get the recognition", he said.

Lemon cultivation needs small investment but returns are big, he said.

Some 1400 lemon plants can be grown in one acres of land. Each plant gives 1000 to 1200 lemons every season.

Ibrahim uses cow dung, TSP, potash and urea in the garden.

Ibrahim said local variety of lemon named elachi is in good demand for its scent and taste.

He says he faces problems in transporting the lemon to market from the remote area.

The profit would be more if he could transport his lemon to markets in Dhaka, he said.

PHOTO: STAR

Ibrahim Sarker tends to his lemon garden last week.

'Raise India's river inter-link plan at int'l forums'

Political parties' role vital to mobilise public opinion, meeting told

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Gaibandha*

Speakers at discussion meeting on "Indian Mega River Inter-linking and Bangladesh" called upon the government to raise the issue at international forums and to take steps to mobilise world opinion in favour of Bangladesh.

The massive project will turn Bangladesh into a desert and cause havoc to the ecology and environment. Even Indian water resources experts and environmentalists are opposing the project because it will destroy the ecological balance and displace millions of people there, they said.

They said the world opinion will respond favourably if the government can project the issue properly.

A local NGO--Gano Unnayan Kendro-- and Oxfam jointly organised the meeting, held at Gaibandha Public Library Hall on Sunday.

Gibandha Deputy Commissioner Tapon Chandra Majumder was the chief guest while engineer Mohammed Helal Uddin, Chief Director of Angiker, another NGO, was the resource person.

Presided over by Commodore (Rtd) Shafiqur Rahman, the discussion was participated by political leaders, representatives of professional groups, NGOs, civil society leaders, cultural activists and students.

They highlighted different aspects of the project and its disastrous effects on the two neighbouring countries.

Under the mega project, 15000 feeder canals will be dug to divert waters of international rivers and reservoirs built at different places to store water in India for use in dry season.

The people of Bangladesh are facing the consequences of Farakka barrage on the Ganges and two other barrages on the Teesta and Barak rivers.

If India implements the project, all the rivers will dry up. Every body can conceive what disastrous effect it will have in Bangladesh, they said. They also stressed the need for building public opinion in the country to raise a united voice against the project. Political parties should take the lead in this regard, they said.

PHOTO: STAR

A partial view of the discussion meeting on 'Indian Mega River Inter-linking and Bangladesh'.

4,000 in Godagari out of voters' list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

Nearly 4,000 voters were left out of the final voters' list ahead of Godagari Pourasabha (municipality) polls scheduled to be held on May 10 due to 'irregularities' in the Election Office.

After an Election Commission (EC) circular in January, about 5,500 voters applied for enlistment of their names in the voters' list. At least nine committees scrutinised the applicants and sent the voters' names to the Upazila Election Office for approval.

But names of only 1,500 applicants were sent to the District Election Office 'illegally deducting other names' for final approval, it is widely alleged.

Failing to find out their names in the final list, many applicants are visiting the EC offices in Godagari upazila and the district headquarters regularly to press for enlisting their names.

On contact, district election officer Sayed Ahmed Musa told this correspondent that the allegations are being investigated.

SYEDPUR MUNICIPAL POLLS

Two JP candidates expelled after clash

OUR CORESPONDENT, *Nilhpamari*

Two leaders of Syedpur Jatiya Party (JP- Ershad) have been temporarily expelled from the party for violating party discipline following Friday's brawl between rival groups over campaign for the upcoming Syedpur municipal polls.

The two expelled leaders -- Syedpur town JP President Abdul Hamid Master and Secretary Moklesur Rahman -- are candidates in the election.

Two former local lawmakers from the party and central leadersAsadur Rahman and N Alam Chowdhury were assaulted in the brawl.

The rival factions filed two cases with Syedpur thana accusing 10 people in this connection.

A public meeting was arrangement in the rail crossing area at Syedput town Friday evening in support of Joynal Abedin, JP candidate for the post of Syedpur municipality chairman.

Asadur Rahman and Alam Chowdhury and some other central leaders were going in a microbus to address the meeting.

As the microbus reached Rail Gate No 1, it was attacked and the leaders were assaulted by supporters of Abdul Hamid Master and Moklesur Rahman, party sources said.

The sources said the two candidates were expelled on instruction of central leaders.

They have been served with notices why they would not be permanently expelled, the party sources said.

The two expelled leaders told newsmen later that the microbus was attacked as it was about to ram into a party procession. They said the expulsion is illegal.

Agitation in Bhola for dam rebuilding

A CORRESPONDENT, *Bhola*

Several thousand erosion affected people of Ilisha and Kachia unions held a rally and brought out a procession in the town on Friday for protection of their areas from erosion by the Meghna.

They carried placards and chanted various slogans demanding reconstruction of five- kilometre river embankment there and dumping of cement blocks.

The portion of the embankment collapsed in the rainy season last year.

The rally held on Kharkia High School ground was presided over by Kachia Union Parishad Chairman Shahabuddin Ahamed.

The speakers said over one lakh people will be affected and crops on about 2000 acres in the two unions will go under water in the coming rainy season if the embankment is not reconstructed.

One killed in clash over paddy harvest in B'baria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *B'baria*

One person was Mojid Mia, 28, was killed and 20 others were injured in a clash over of paddy harvest from a khash land (government land) at Khaglia village in Nosirnagar upazila on Sunday.

Mojid Mia, 28, critically injured in the clash died while being taken to Brahmanbaria hospital. The rest were treated at the same hospital, police said.

The clash took place between rival groups led by Arafat Ali and Daulat Khan of the village.

Police visited the spot. None of the rival groups filed any case till yesterday, police said.

Bus strike in Bhola

30 hurt in transport workers' clash with JCD

A CORRESPONDENT, *Bhola*

Bus service in the district is stopped following Sunday's clashes between transport workers and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists at the Mostafa Kamal bus terminal in the town that left at least 30 people injured.

Transport workers declared an indefinite bus strike in all the seven routes in the district after the clashes in which 35 buses were also damaged and 25 shops ransacked.

When contacted, Bhola BNP Secretary Aminul Islam Khan, who is also secretary of the district bus owners association, said he is trying to settle the matter amicably.

The administration did not take any initiative till yesyeday to resolve the matter, sources said.

JCD sources said one of their leaders was beaten up by some transport workers at Bangla Bazar on the Bhola- Charfassion road Sunday morning during an altercation that took place as a bus driver did not give side to his motorcycle.

Soon after, a large number of JCD activists came to the bus terminal to hunt down the bus driver.

Transport workers said the clashes ensued at the terminal as the JCD men attacked them.

The injured include JCD activists Al Amin, Maksud, Pavel, and Abdur Rahman.

After the clashes, agitated transport workers declared the indefinite transport strike.

Brutal!

A CORRESPONDENT, *Noakhali*

Criminals threw acid on a three-year-old child at Krisnawpur village in Bargaon union of Sonaimuri thana on Saturday.

The ill-fated child is Riad Mahmud, son of Abul Basar who was admitted to the district general hospital in a critical condition.

Two criminals named Abdul Hye, 25, and Abul Kashem, 45, abducted him from his mother's lap in the morning on the fateful day and left the child at midnight with severe acid injuries on the courtyard of their house, police and relatives told this correspondent.

His mother Fatema Siddiqa disclosed that the incident occurred as a sequel to enmity. The child's uncle, Morshed Alam filed a case with Sonaimuri thana accusing eight persons including the two abductors on charge of demanding extortion from them. The alleged extortionists were threatening them for a long time to withdraw the case. As they did not withdraw the case the culprits took revenge in such an inhuman manner, she said.

SNAPS

Bus strike called off in Satkhira

OUR CORESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Bus strike in Satkhira was called off yesterday following talks between the administration and leaders of transport owners and workers.

Transport workers went on an indefinite strike in all the nine routes in the district on Sunday as a magistrate seized five buses from the town for violation of traffic rules and failure to produce proper documents.

But the transport workers claimed that the buses were detained as their drivers delayed to give side to the magistrate's jeep.

Hand grenade, bullet recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

A powerful hand grenade and a six inches long bullet were recovered from the bank of a pond belonging to one person named Jagannath Pal at Kapalipara in Daulatpur thana on Sunday.

.A KMP official told this correspondent that this type of grenade was used to attack city mayor Tayebur Rahman last month.

However, it did not burst.

Diarrhoea: One dies, 653 attacked in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barisal*

Diarrohea has claimed one life here during the first week of the current month, according to the Barisal Sadar Hospital resident medical officer (RMO).

A total of 653 patients have been attacked with the disease, it was officially learnt.

RMO Dr Mizanur Rahaman told this correspondent that every day about 20-25 diarrhoea patients are being admitted in the hospital. At present there are 173 patients here, most of them are children and elderly people.

The civil surgeon office sources disclosed that there had been 400 diarrohea patients in the entire district. Besides, 253 more patients are being treated in the Sadar Hospital and the Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMCH).

The doctor-in-charge at SBMCH informed that there is shortage of Electro-K medicine which essential for treatment of children.

In the SBMCH Oral Rehydration Therapy corner, about 80 children are being treated.

According to the Barisal Civil Surgeon Office, over 400 diarrhoea patients are under treatment in various health complexes in the district.

JCD 'terror' Suhad held again in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT,BARISAL

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal activist, Ziaul Hassan Suhad, an known to be one of the top terrors in the city and convinced for 108 years under PSA, was arrested by Barisal Kotwali police on Sunday.

He faces charges for extortion, drug peddling, rape and other crimes.

He was granted bail by High Court after filling an appeal against his conviction under PSA. After getting bail, he started criminal activities again, police said.

Suhad was an activist of Bangladesh Chhatra League earlier.

After the 2001 general election, he joined JCD and took shelter under Akbor Bahini led by a Jubo Dal leader, sources said.

Police arrested him two times earlier, but released him allegedly under political pressure from his godfathers in the ruling party.

On Sunday, Suhad snatched two mobile phones and demanded toll from two persons -- Badsha and Chan Mia-- who came from Dhaka to visit relatives in Barisal city.

Police yesterday said they are preparing a case against him under the Speedy Trial Act.

Eyes of 3 outlaws gouged out, mob lynches another

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Eyes of three outlaws were gouged out while another was lynched by mob in separate incidents in Khulna and, Bagerhat districts on Saturday

In the first incident, eyes of an outlaw were gouged out by mob on the Islampur Road here.

The outlaw is Mahbub Sarder,24, son of Arif Sarder of Sonadanga residential area and a cadre of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Janajuddho), according to police.

Police told this corespondent the incident happened when he went to a business firm to realise toll. Angry people caught him and gouged out his eyes.

But some eyewitnesses said plainclothes policemen arrested him and gouged out his eyes in a moving pick up van. He is undergoing treatment at Khulna Medical College College Hospital (KMCH).

No FIR was lodged.

In another incident, eyes of three other PBCP-Janajuddho outlaws were also gouged out by mob at Basupara in Sonadange thana on the same day. A bomb and bomb making materials were recovered from them. The injured outlaws were in deep coma at KMCH till filing of this report in the afternoon on the day.

In the third incident, another outlaw identified as Alamgir Hossain,24, was lynched by mob when he went to realise toll from school teacher Murshid Ali of Shingati village in Fakirhat upazila, Bagerhat on the same day. A case was lodged naming unidentified men as accused.

'Declare Rangpur a division'

4-hour token hunger strike observed

A CORRESPONDENT, *Rangpur*

Brihattaro Rangpur Unnyan Forum, a forum for development of greater Rangpur, observed a four-hour token hunger strike at Payera Square here on Saturday.

The forum was pressing for their demands to declare Rangpur a division comprising eight northern districts and establishment of a secondary and higher secondary education board here.

Jatiya Party (E) organising secretary Moshiur Rahman Ranga MP, 11-party Alliance leader

Anwar Hossen, ward commissioner Fatema Yasmeen, Jubo Dal leader Motiur Rahman, business leader Shaahidul Islam, freedom

fighter Mozaffer Hossein Chad, Journalist Rashid Babu, student leader Rahel Chowdhury, Sayem Chowdhury and Ashraf Khan joined the programme.

Former ward commissioner sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barisal*

Bazlul Huq Chistry Koyesh, a former ward commissioner in Barisal city , was sent to jail when he surrendered before the Speedy Trial Tribunal (STT) on Sunday.

STT Magistrate Iqbal Hassan refused his bail prayer as he surrendered to court as per a High Court order.

Koyes and six others were accused under the Speedy Trial Act in a case filed on March 10.

Two drown

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Gopalganj*

Two persons drowned in ferry capsize in the Madhumati at Basuria in Tungipara upazila on Sunday.

They are Asma of Basuria village in Tungipara upazila and Hafeza Begum of Baroguni village in Chitalmari upazila of Bagerhat district.

BNP-Jubo League clash in Rajshahi: five hurt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

Five Jubo League leaders and workers were severely injured in an armed attack by BNP hoodlums' in the city on Sunday.

The injured include the general secretary of the Ward No 26 unit of Jubo League Tawhidul Islam and workers named Ata, Khokon, Ripon and Anwar Hossain Manik. All were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH).

They were going to attend the city unit conference of Jubo League when the attack came.

Later, police reached the spot and dispersed the attackers.

Injured Jubo League leader Tawhidul Islam told reporters that BNP hoodlums led by Rabbani and Darul Huda attacked them.

Highway robbery at Dumuria

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Highwaymen looted belongings of passengers of transport vehicles at arms point for three and a half hours at Dumuria on Saturday night.

According to victims, the highwaymen looted money and gold ornaments from passengers of buses, auto-rickshaws and rickshaw-vans by erecting barricade on Gutudia bridge.

The highwaymen were led by Mahabbat Sarder, Mohsin and Zaman who were arrested by joint forces during the Operation Spider Web in November last year. At that time arms were also recovered from them. But mysteriously they were released on bail.

Local people complained that Dumuria thana officer-in-charge (OC) Abu Hena reached the spot after exit of the criminals from the spot.

A Union Parishad (UP) chairman on condition of anonymity told this correspondent that the ringleader of the gang is patronised by the controversial OC.

On contact, the OC refuted the allegation saying he was engaged in an special operation in another union during the highway robbery.