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The massive Teesta Barrage at Doani was built to supply water to lands in Teesta Irrigation Project area. But the river flow is declining, making the irrigation project ineffective.

2nd phase of Teesta Project in abeyance?

Fresh evaluation by IMED after ECNEC approval: Lukewarm response from donors

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Will the second phase work of Teesta Irrigation Project be left in abeyance after ECNEC approval?

This question is being posed by high officials of Water Development Board (WDB) and political circles here in view of a fresh feasibility study of the project by the government.

The ECNEC (Executive Committee of National Economic Council) approved the Tk 1,116 crore project on January 21 last year and Tk 10 lakh was spent from government's own resources for some preliminary work. Since then there has been no work.

Talking to this correspondent on Thursday, the WDB officials said they became confused as a high powered IMED (Implementation Monitoring Evaluation Department) team visited some project areas on Sunday and Monday for a "fresh

evaluation" of the project approve earlier.

The team was led by Roksana Begum, Director General of IMED under the Water Commission.

The team members were tightlipped during their visit. They only told local WDB officials that they came for a fresh evaluation and would submit their report to higher authorities. They declined to talk to newsmen.

"A fresh evaluation of an ECNEC-approved project is unprecedented", a high official of Dalia WDB told this correspondent seeking anonymity.

There may be a fresh thinking in certain government quarters because of declining flow of the Teesta and lukewarm response from donors to finance the project.

The Teesta flow can not cover even the command area of the first phase of the project, he said.

Only about one third of the command area under the first phase can be irrigated now because of unilateral withdrawal of Teesta waters by India through its Gojaldoba barrage in the upstream, he said. Bangladesh has no agreement with India on sharing Teesta water.

The first phase, completed in June 1999, was supposed to provide irrigation facilities to about 1.54 lakh hectares of land to produce additional 0.49 million tonnes of paddy but it can cover only about one third of it, other WDB sources said.

The first phase was completed with local technology and manpower.

The whole project (first and second phase) has been designed to provide irrigation to about 6.5 lakh hectares of land in 35 upazilas in Nilphamari, Rangpur, Dinajpur,

Gaibandha and Bogra districts after completion of the second phase.

The officials from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Japan Bank of International Cooperation (JBIC) and Saudi Fund for Development visited the project area but none of them committed any assistance. Some of them proposed lending technology and expertise.

The WDB then proposed to the government to allocate funds from its own resources, but there has not been any response to it, WDB sources said.

The first phase was completed with assistance from ADB, Abu Dhabi Fund for Development and some others donors.

Some sources also said that the World Bank earlier pressed the government to discontinue the project.

13 cops closed for snatching in Jessore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

Thirteen cops were closed to Jessore police lines yesterday on allegations of harassing Dhaka bound passenger transports from India.

They include a Sub Inspector, four Assistant Sub inspectors and eight constables of Sarsha thana. They were closed on orders from Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Khulna Range Police Nur Mohammad who visited Sarsha thana on Thursday in disguise.

They are SI Abul Kala, ASI Nazrul Islam, Hafizur Rahman, Humayun Kabir and Firoz Ahmed and eight constables of the same thana.

Departmental cases are going to be lodged against them on charge of snatching 700 US dollars from passengers who were going to Dhaka by bus from India, the police sources added.

With this, the number of policemen closed this year rose to 76, police sources said yesterday.

On May 25, 47 policemen including four traffic sergeants, habildars and traffic constables were closed.

Raise awareness to prevent HR violation Seminar at Satkhira told

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Speakers at a seminar here yesterday underscored the role of lawyers and journalists in protecting human rights by creating awareness among people, particularly at the grassroots level.

Journalists can serve the purpose best by objectively presenting news on human rights violation, they said at the seminar on "Role of Lawyers and Journalists in Protecting Human Rights", organised by a local NGO, Shushilan' with assistance from Danida.

Satkhira District and Sessions Judge AKM Zahir Ahmed was the chief guest at the seminar, held on the premises of Satkhira Lawyers Association office.

Additional Police Superintendent SM Fazlur Rahman, Advocate Shah Alam and journalists Anisur Rahim, Mizanur Rahman, Kalyan Banerjee and M Khamruzzaman spoke at the seminar presided over by Shushilan's Director Mostofa Nuruzzaman.

Expressing grave concern over rise in incidents of human rights violation in the region, the speakers urged all to come forward to play their due role to create awareness against it.

Judge AKM Zahir Ahmed said, participation of all walks of life is necessary to protect human rights as law alone can not ensure this.

4-day children's festival ends in Moulvibazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A four-day children's festival organised by the Bangladesh Shishu Academy concluded here on Thursday.

On conclusion of the festival, additional deputy commissioner (ADC-Revenue) Md Ayatullah Majumdar distributed prizes and certificates among the winners.

Earlier, the festival was inaugurated by Moulvibazar deputy commissioner (DC) Md Eunusur Rahman at a function held at Saifur Rahman Auditorium on Monday.

Poor children took part in general knowledge test, dance and music competition, recitation of poems, painting and acting contests were held during the festival.

A drama competition was also held where children's organisations staged dramas.

Presided over by child affairs officer Jasim Uddin, the concluding ceremony was also addressed by Md Abul Kashem Majumdar, deputy director of Islami Foundation.

An easy remedy for root rot disease of plants

BAU scientist evolves natural pesticide to treat seeds, soil

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A scientist at Mymensingh Bangladesh Agriculture University (BAU) has found a remedy to root rot disease of plants, an endemic phenomenon which greatly affects vegetable and crop production in the country.

Prof Dr Ismail Hossain of the Department of Plant Pathology has evolved a natural pesticide to treat seeds and soil, which will protect plants from root rot disease and increase production.

He has named it BAU Bio-fungicide. It can be easily produced from a fungus trichoderma which grows in soil and agri-waste naturally. He separates the fungus from soil and mixes it with bran of pulses. The mixture is then kept for a month. It is then ready to be mixed with all types of seed before sowing.

The treated seeds will remain unaffected with harmful fungus in soil and plants growing from those will not be attacked with root rot disease.

Dr Ismail Hossain says the bran, if sprayed on the field, will also treat soil of harmful fungus that causes root rot diseases in plants.

Talking to this correspondent, Dr Ismail said the technology is very easy and farmers will be able to

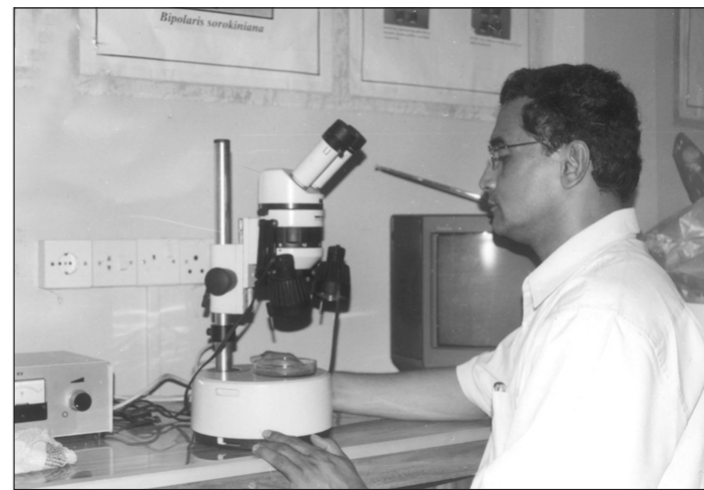


PHOTO: STAR

BAU scientist Dr Ismail Hossain working in laboratory at Department of Plant Pathology.

prepare the pesticide at virtually no cost. But they will need a short training on how to separate the trichoderma fungus from soil and agri-waste.

Once prepared, the pesticide can be kept at farmers' houses for about six months in natural conditions and normal temperature for use. It can be preserved for about a year in cool temperature.

It is environment friendly and easy to handle and pack.

One kilogram of bio-fungicide

can treat 40 kg seeds and it can also be used as an 'activator' for producing compost fertiliser, Dr. Ismail said.

There is no health hazard in production and use of the pesticide as it is purely natural.

Dr. Ismail said the formulae has been officially approved and farmers' training will soon start on the BAU compound. Private seed and pesticide companies can obtain the formula through official process, he said.

Mystery shrouds death of housewife in Moulvibazar

6 woman bodies demand trial of 'murder'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Leaders of six local woman's organisation have demanded proper investigation into the recent death of young housewife Syeda Fayzun Nahar Julie at her mother in law's house at Shantibagh in Moulvibazar town.

Syed Lutful Kabir Shelu, brother of Julie, at a press conference here on Wednesday, alleged that his sister was murdered by family members at her mother-in-law's house.

Maya Dhar, general secretary of Moulvibazar district unit of Bangladesh Mohila Parishad, Dr Dilshad of Jaitiyatabadi Mohila Dal, Johura Alauddin of Bangladesh Mohila Awami League, Nomita Das

of Mohila Parishad, Syeda Farah Sanu of Mohila Mahfil, Begum Nurjahan Suara of Mohila Samity and Maya Wahed of Nari Progoti also spoke at the press conference. All the women leaders said they would work unitedly to press for justice.

Maya Dhar said her organisation will submitted a memorandum to the administration and take other programmes for fair trial of the alleged murder. Kabir said Julie was married to Jusuf Ahmed, expatriate in the USA. After marriage, Jusuf kept Julie at the house of his mother in Moulvibazar town.

Kabir alleged that Julie was earlier tortured for dowry and giving birth to two female babies.

On June 13, Julie was taken to

Moulvibazar Sadar Hospital by Yusuf's sister Sufia Yasmin and her husband Md. Kamal Uddin. They told doctors that she (Julie) committed suicide. But the doctors declared her dead when she was taken there.

Kabir said he filed a general diary with police and later filed a murder case with a First Class Magistrate court in Moulvibazar. He said, he rejected the postmortem report.

Police arrested Sufia Yasmin and Md Kamal Uddin. Later they were shown arrested in murder case.

The women leaders claimed that Julie was murdered. Even if she committed suicide, her mother-in-law's family should be held responsible for this, they said.

'Rape, murder case refused by Dakop OC'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The officer-in-charge of Dakop thana in the district has refused to record a rape and murder case, the victim's father alleged at a press conference at Khulna Press Club yesterday.

Fish trader Lalmohon Mondol of Kailashganj village in Dakop upazila alleged that his 15-year-old daughter Nilima Rani Mondol was abducted from his house by Phani Bhusan of the same village at 9-30 pm on June 13. At about 11 pm on the day, the abductor came to his house along with five others and handed over her body. She was gangraped and killed by Phani Bhusan and his compatriots, Lalmohon alleged.

On June 18, he went to Dakop thana to lodge a case naming Phani Bhusan and five of his associates but the OC refused to record it, Lalmohon Mondol alleged.

Headmistress indeed!

Old school building demolished, materials taken home

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

No sooner had the school building been declared abandoned, its headmistress tore it down by her men and took the bricks, iron rods, old doors and windows to her house.

Angry local people complained to higher authorities but to no effect.

The Dimla Upazila Engineer recently declared the old building of Dimla Government Primary School at Dimla town as "risky" and decided to auction it.

The Upazila Education Officer also wrote a letter to the Upazila Engineer to fix a probable auction price for bidders.

As its headmistress Mousumi Akhter knew it, she rightaway engaged her men to demolish the building and bring home all bricks,

iron rods, wooden doors and windows. The materials are now being used to construct a new building at her house.

Local people informed the authorities but they did not take any action till Friday. The headmistress is the wife of an influential leader of Dimla teachers association. Some newsmen contacted with the headmistress but she refused to talk to them. They then contacted Dimla Upazila Education Officer Akbar Ali. He said, she can not take home the government property.

Dimla Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mezbahul Haque said damaging government property and shifting its materials is illegal and punishable.

Nilphamari District Primary Education Officer Abdur Sattar Sarkar said a case would be filed against the headmistress.

8x3

4x3



Sequence of a drama staged during the children's festival held in Moulvibazar.

PHOTO: STAR