



PHOTO: STAR

A flooded village in Domar upazila in Nilphamari district.

Fresh areas flooded in 4 northern districts

Lakhs marooned, erosion takes serious turn in Sirajganj

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Several lakh people are now marooned as more areas have gone under water in Nilphamari, Gaibandha, Sirajganj and Sherpur districts due to rains and onrush of water from across the border.

The Teesta, which rose on Sunday and crossed the danger mark by five centimetres at night at Dalia, recorded a fall by 23 centimetres yesterday. Water Development Board (WDB) sources said.

In Sirajganj, the Jamuna is rising, inundating more areas in five upazilas, our correspondents reported.

In Sherpur, the Bhogai river embankment collapsed at Hatipagar yesterday, inundating eight unions in Nalitabari upazila in the district and vast areas Haluaghat and Fulpur upazilas in Mymensingh.

Our Nilphamari Correspondent reports: The Teesta flow was recorded at 51.80 metres at 2 pm yesterday. The danger mark is 52.25 metres.

WDB sources at Dalia said the Teesta level came down possibly because of closure of sluice gates of Gojal Doba Barrage on the river by Indian authorities.

But the danger is not over as they will open all the gates when the river will cross the danger mark again in the Indian territory, they said.

More areas in Domar and Dimla upazilas have been inundated as all the rein-fed tributaries of the Teesta

are now swelling, administration sources said.

At least 15,000 people are marooned in Jharsingwar, Chhatunama, Vendamar, Tapur Char, Bhasanir Char, Soli Ghat, Fakroler Char, East Khari Bari, Char Khari Bari and the villages of Baishpukur, Pagal Para, Dohol Para, Chhoto Khata and Holdi Bari.

WDB sources said the Teesta embankment in Holdi Bari in Jaldhaka upazila is threatened due to pressure of water. WDB authorities are dumping sand bags to protect it. They said spar nos. 2 and 3 in the river at Jharsingwar have become vulnerable due to strong current.

The Deputy Commissioner along with the District Relief Officer (DRO) visited inundated Baishpukur village on Monday. The DRO, when contacted yesterday, said relief is yet to sent anywhere. Relief would be sent when necessary, he said.

Our Gaibandha Correspondent reports: Downpour in the last three days, coupled with onrush of water from across the border through the Teesta and Brahmaputra, have inundated vast areas in four upazilas in the district.

Water level of all the Brahmaputra rose by up to 35 centimetres at different points in the last two days but the river is still flowing below the danger level, WDB sources said.

The inundated areas are in Sayedpur, Bhaserpara, Kanchipara and Balashi udner Fulchari upazila; Chithilia, Mesbari, Nutan Bander and Gidari in Gaibandha Sadar

upazila; Beragram, Gobindi and Nalsia in Shaghata Upazila; Kapasia, Tarapur and Haripur in Sunderganj Upzila.

Over 1,500 families became homeless in the areas by river erosion in last one week. They have taken shelter on the Brahmaputra flood control embankment, sources in the areas said.

A Correspondent reports from Sirajganj: The Jamuna and its tributaries in Sirajganj marked further rise due to rains in the last two days and onrush of waters from the upstream.

Erosion by the Jamuna has taken a serious turn in Sirajganj Sadar, Belkuchi, Chowhaly, Kazirpur and Shahzadpur upazilas of the district.

According to sources in WDB and in the district administration, at least 30,000 of people have been affected by flood in shoal areas in the five upazilas. The worst affected areas are Natuarpara, Alampur, Gandail and Meghai Bazar area in Kazipur; Shailabari, Khokshabari, Simla, Vatripi and Shialkhol in Sirajganj Sadar; Randhumbari, Shohapur, Chala, Betil, Suborno Sara, Mukundagati in Belkuchi and Kaizuri and Suntola in Shahzadpur. Most of the people in the areas have moved to safer places as their homesteads are under knee-deep water.

About one kilometre area of the Jamuna embankment in Kazipur has been affected, inundating at least 10,000 acres of cropland, sources in the agriculture depart-

ment said.

Our Netrakona Correspondent reports: The temporary protection erected on the vulnerable embankment of Bhogai river at Hatipagar collapsed due to pressure of water rolling down the river from hilld across the border, according to Nalitabari Upazila Engineer Ashraf Haque.

The eight unions flooded in Nalitabari are are Nalitabari Sadar, Morichpur, Rajnagar, Jugania, Kalaspar, Nayabil, Nakugao and Gobinda Nagar. Rains in the last two days in the area aggravated the situation.

Nayabil Union Parishad (UP) chairman Yunush Ali told this correspondent most of the houses have gone under three to four feet water. Floodwaters washed away about 500 thatched houses and damaged thousands of acres of newly planted 'Aman' saplings, he said.

The embankment breached at Hatipagar in last year's flood. Following publication of several stories in The Daily Star, the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), Sherpur in December last year, submitted a Tk 4.34 crore project for repair of the embankment but it was not approved, according to LGED official sources.

Sherpur LGED repaired the dam temporarily with bamboo and sandbags at a cost of Tk 4.75 lakh recently, but it collapsed.

100 mini garment units in Saidpur cry for support

They earn forex but neither recognised not get bank loan

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

They earn foreign exchange for the country and employ over 8000 workers including about 200 women. But they are neither recognised by the organised business bodies nor given any facility by the government.

Garments including beautiful and high quality jackets, trousers, shirts and three-quarter pants produced in about 100 mini factories in Saidpur are in good demand in West Bengal and seven-sister states in India, Nepal and Bhutan.

These are produced with cut-piece of imported fabrics, collected from big garments factories in Dhaka, Chittagong and other big cities. Transportation cost is also lesser because of close proximity to the border.

These garments are acclaimed by buyers in those countries for their better quality because in India, garments are produced mostly from locally made fabrics, some of the owners of the factories told this correspondent.

In the last financial year, these factories earned about Tk 15 crore in foreign exchange by exporting through official procedures.

"Trained manpower is our greatest asset", said Reaz Ahmed Babu, owner of Aman Garments in Saidpur town.

"We have nominal establishment cost compared to garments factories in Dhaka. With ordinary and old sewing machines we produce almost the same quality goods as is done with modern machinery in big factories in Dhaka", he said.

But we do not get any facility and support including bank loan from the government, he said.

He said they approached the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters association (BGMEA) for its membership, but was denied.

BGMEA membership would have helped us a lot in development of a garments factories here with cheap labour, he said.

The garments produced in Saidpur drew the attention of Indian buyers in 1995. Export started in 1999.

Indian buyers import the garments mainly through Siliguri, from where these are dispatched to different areas in West Bengal, Assam, Tripura and other states in India and to Nepal and Bhutan. Nepal and Bhutan have free trade with India.

Reaz said, failing to get a job, he started a small garment factory with four old sewing machines and a capital of Tk 5000. He collected some bundles of cut-piece fabrics and produced 300 jackets in one

month and sold those in the wholesale market. He earned a small profit.

He now owns 40 sewing machines and employs about 100 workers including 10 women. He produces around 10,000 pieces of jacket and 30,000 three-quarter pants a month.

Production cost of a jacket is around Tk 70 and it is sold to an Indian importer at Tk 120. A trouser costs Tk 50 and a three-quarter pant Tk 20, which are sold at Tk 60 and Tk 40 respectively, he said.

Dil Newaz, another small gar-

jacket, 20,000 trousers and 40,000 three-quarter pants, worth 18,000 to 20,000 US dollars.

From Saidpur, the goods are exported through Burimari land port in Lalmonirhat district and Chengrabandha in India.

They also cited another problem. The garments thus imported by Indian buyers do not enjoy tariff facility under SAFTA agreement among the SAARC member countries.

They said if patronised by the government and funded by banks, this could be a flourishing sector to

create more employment and earn foreign exchange. The export can be increased manifold as there is very good markets just across the border, they said.

Talking to this correspondent, Nilphamari Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Sohel Parvez said the government and the BGMEA should come to the aid of the small but flourishing business here because the cheap and trained labour may open up a new window for the country in the highly competitive garments market in the world.



PHOTO: STAR

Amini factory at Saidpur producing exportable garments.

ments factory owner and exporter said garments of Saidpur are very popular, particularly among the middle class in West Bengal, Assam, Tripura in India and in Nepal and Bhutan.

"Even big and fashionable garments shops in Kolkata and Gwahati also buy our products", he said.

Though about 100 factories are engaged in production, only nine owners export the items. Because of lack of capital, they have formed a syndicate. The members are Reaz Ahmed Babu, Md Selim, Dil Newaz, Saidur Rahman, Arshad Ameer Pappu, Khorshed Alam, Md Masud and Motiar Rahman Dulu.

They said, on an average, 10 truckloads of garments are exported to India a month now. Reaz said a truck can carry 10,000 pieces of



PHOTO: STAR

Members of The Daily Star Readers Club pose for a snap after formation of the club at a meeting, held at Gurudayal College in Kishoreganj on Tuesday.

MANNAN BHUIYAN TELLS RALLIES IN SUNAMGANJ-3

Vote for four-party man to ensure development

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

BNP Secretary General and LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan has said people of South Sunamganj and Jagannathpur should vote for the ruling alliance candidate in the July 20 by-polls in Sunamganj-3 constituency to ensure development of the area 'neglected by the previous government'.

The area seriously lacks a good communication network, which the BNP government is trying to improve, he said at a big rally on the Noakhali Saptagaon High School ground near Noakhali Bazar in South Sunamganj yesterday afternoon.

Mannan said the area lacks good road network and other facilities though it produced two national

level leaders.

The rally was organised to campaign for alliance candidate Moulana Shahinur Pasha Chowdhury, a leader of Islami Oikya Jute (IOJ).

Chaired by Moulana Abdul Bosir, the rally was also addressed by, among others, ruling party Whip Fazlul Haque Aspia, former minister Mufti Wakkas MP, Sunamganj district BNP president Nozir Hossain MP, its general secretary Kolim Uddin Ahmed Milon MP, Sylhet district BNP convener M Ilyas Ali MP and former lawmaker Nasir Uddin Chowdhury. Alliance candidate Shahinur Pasha Chowdhury also addressed the rally.

Mannan Bhuiyan said, after the by-elections he would visit the area thoroughly to prepare a programme for its overall development.

He also listed by his government's successes in different fields. He claimed that law and order has improved as criminals are being punished irrespective of their political affiliations.

"BNP did not produce any new godfathers anywhere in the country", he asserted.

He said the people voted the four-party-alliance to power for peace and development and the government is doing its best to live up to its commitments.

Other speakers said, though Awami League leaders were elected from the area for consecutive terms, they could not do any development work because of their internal feud.

The minister also addressed another big rally at Jagannathpur upazila headquarters.

Jubo League leader murdered after abduction

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Police on Tuesday recovered the body of Jubo league leader Babul Ahmed from a jute field in Lakmipur village in Daulatpur upazila in the district.

Police said a gang led by Lalchad, chief of notorious local Lalchad Bahini, stormed into the house of Babul Ahmed at Philipnagar village Sunday night and kidnapped him. Babul's father Hasan complained to

Daulatpur police on Monday morning, but police could not rescue him.

In the morning on Tuesday, Lalchad phoned to Babul's family and said that Babul has been killed. Local people found Babul's body on the bank of Padma river.

Family sources said criminal Lalchad on December 12, 2001 had attempted to kill Babul.

Police sent the body to Kushtia General Hospital for autopsy. A case has been filed with Daulatpur police station.

Govt staff buys freedom

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Government employee Enamul Haq Thandu of Chuadanga abducted on Friday, has bought freedom after paying Tk 60,000 toll.

According to family sources, Enamul, a health assistant at Dhankhola union health complex was abducted by a gang when he was returning home at Gangni from Mohishkhol at about 10:pm.

The gang latter demanded Tk 2 lakh for his release.

"We sought police help but they failed to rescue him," Enamul's son told local newsmen yesterday. The family negotiated with the abductors. After a payment of Tk 60,000, the gang left Enamul at Roipura in Meherpur Monday night.

Human chain demanding more funds for Khulna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Satkhira chapter of Greater Khulna Development Action Co-ordination Committee yesterday formed a human chain here demanding more funds in the national budget for implementing development projects in greater Khulna including Satkhira.

Ignoring heavy rain, people from all walks of life took part in the human chain from the New Market area to Pucca bridge intersection in Satkhira town.

It was followed by a meeting held

at Shahid Alauddin square. The Committee convenor Anisur Rahim presided over the meeting.

The speakers demanded of the government to fulfil their 12-point demand. The demands include setting up of an agriculture college, turning Bhomra into a full fledged land port construction of a road from Bhomra to Mongla Port, supply of arsenic-free water, formulation of a pragmatic shrimp policy, gas supply to the district through pipe line, conservation of bio-diversity of the Sundarbans and establishment of a tourist spot there.

They also said Satkhira is being deprived of its due share of development funds although it earns huge foreign currency for the country by producing shrimps and exporting frozen foods.

The meeting was addressed by Advocate Abul Kalam Azad, Saifullah Laskar, Obaidus Sultan Bablu, Mahmud Ali Suman, Mofizul Haq Jahangir, Sharifullah Kaiser Suman and Mir Abul Kalam.

The speakers threatened a tougher agitation in near future if their demands are not met immediately.