



PHOTO: STAR
Agitated students demonstrating for smooth power supply in Haragachh took their wrath on the Janata Bank, pelting stones at it during a procession on Saturday.

Erosion: 3000 made homeless in a week in Netrakona

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Netrakona*

Erosion by Mogra and Kongsa rivers has taken a serious turn in Netrakona Sadar, Barhatta, Atpara and Modan upazilas.

At least 800 houses and about 2000 acres of land have been devoured by the river in last seven days, rendering over 3000 people homeless. The victims have taken shelter in high lands, flood shelters or neighbouring villages.

During a visit to the areas this correspondent found that about 400 families have shifted their houses to

safer places.

Local people dumped sandbags and tried to protest the areas by erecting structures made of bamboo and timber, but all their attempts went in vain due to strong current of the rivers.

Najirgonj Bazar was once a big market in Atpara upazila. But the river has devoured two thirds of it.

Over 400 families used to live in Mirzapur village in Atpara upazila four years ago. But the river Mogra devoured 500 acres of land, leaving 250 families homeless.

Local people claimed that they

urged the authorities several times to build a four kilometre Mogra river protection dam from Najirgonj to Sunajur Bazar in Atpara upazila and a five kilometre dam from Fakirar Bazar to Dashder in Barhatta upazila to protect areas from erosion by Kongsha river. But nothing has been done, they said.

Water Development Board (WDB) Executive Engineer in Netrakona Mohammad Alauddin, when contacted said WDB has no dam construction project in the areas.

TRIPLE MURDER Hartal observed in B'baria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *B'baria*

A half-day hartal was observed in the district tow yesterday demanding arrest and punishment of the persons responsible for the sensational triple murder.

The hartal was observed at the call of local unit of Jatiya Party as part of its three-day programme to protest the murder of its leader Akter Hossain, 37, his wife Sabrina Akter Joly, 26, and their two year daughter Arna in Medda area in the town on August 11. They were hacked and killed by unidentified assailants at their house at night.

The hartal was observed peacefully. All vehicles kept off the roads and most of the markets and shopping centres remained closed.

Create awareness against AIDS

Workshop in Satkhira told

OUR CORESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Speakers at a workshop held here on Friday underscored the need for creating awareness among people to combat HIV/AIDS.

The workshop titled, 'Prevention of HIV/AIDS' was organised by Satkhira Area Development Programme (ADP) of World Vision Bangladesh.

Held at its office, the meeting was presided over by The Satkhira Chitra editor Anisur Rahim.

They also urged for a united effort of government and NGOs to combat the deadly disease.

Among others, Principal Asit Kumar Majumdar, Dr Mohammad Ali, Satkhira Rover Scouts secretary

Prof Manirul Islam Sardar, The Daily Star district correspondent Prof Abu Ahmed, Altaf Hossain, Satkhira ADP manager of World Vision Bangladesh Peter Costa, its supervisor Rehena Haque, poura commissioner Shafiq Uddowla, Prof Mohammad Ali, Advocate Dilip Kumar Dev, transport workers' union leader Sheikh Moksed Ali and rickshaw-pullers' union leader Majibar Rahman addressed.

Teachers, journalists, NGO activists, lawyers, labour leaders, local government representatives, physicians, civil society members attended the meeting.

Rly ferry on Brahmaputra yet to be restored

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Gaibandha*

The railway ferry service between Balashi and Bahadurabad terminals is yet to be restored after a fortnight of its suspension.

Bangladesh Railway suspended the service after a flash flood on July 13 damaged a portion of the railway track and a bridge between Dewanganj and Bahadurabad terminals.

Following suspension of the ferry service, Teesta Inter-city Express, the lone train connecting Dinajpur with Dhaka via Balashi and Bahadurabad ghats across

the Brahmaputra stopped plying on the route.

However, trans-shipment of goods wagons via Balashi and Bahadurabad ghats started again after repair of flood-damaged railway track at Balashi cargo yard.

Railway sources said trans-shipment of railway passenger carriers between the ghats will be restored soon. But resumption of ferry service is uncertain.

Three trains including two inter-city trains and a mail train used to avail the services in the two ghats since 1992. Ekota Inter-

city train now runs through the Gaumuna Bridge.

Students of Mymensingh Agriculture University (BAU) coming from northern districts are suffering due to suspension of the ferry service. They staged protests against closure of the service and demanded its restoration.

Meanwhile, the Balashi Protection Committee, a civic body, has submitted a memorandum to higher authorities of Railway through Gaibandha Deputy Commissioner for restoration of the ferry service.

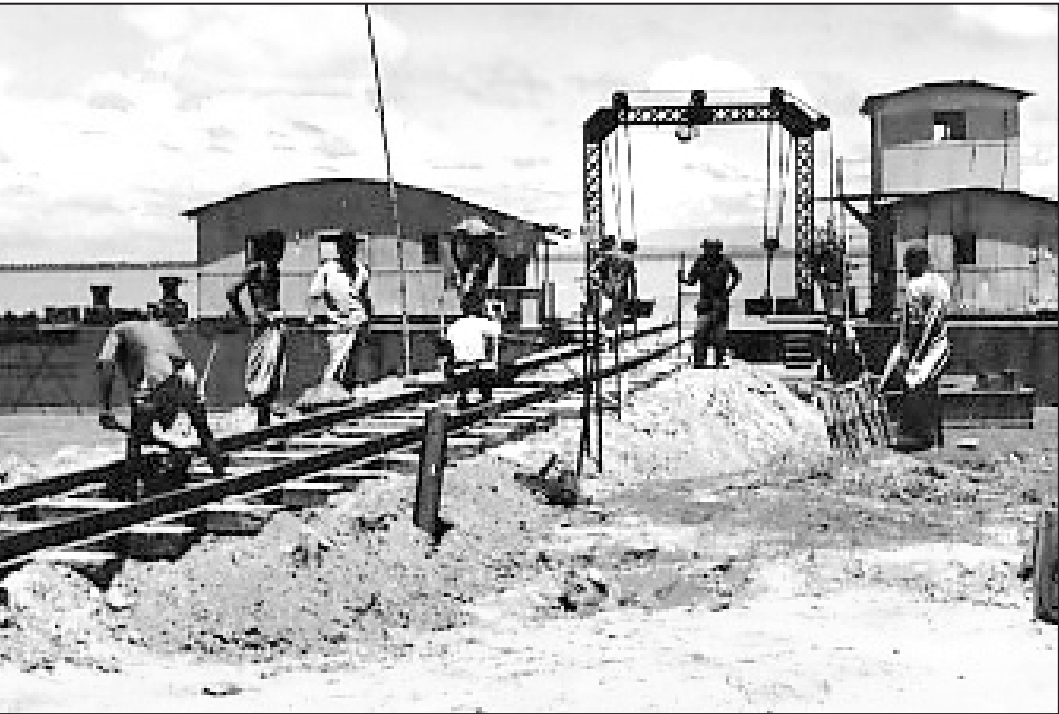


PHOTO: STAR
Workers at Balashi ghat repairing the flood-damaged railway track.

Students demonstrate for power

40,000 Bidi workers jobless in Haragachh as factories closed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rangpur*

Students, joined by unemployed Bidi factory workers, staged a demonstration in Haragachh and laid a siege to the municipal office for smooth power supply.

The agitated processionists pelted stones at a bank branch on the way.

Police came and dispersed the demonstrators.

Later they held a rally at the municipal ground.

In the last fortnight, people in Haragachh industrial area staged several demonstration for smooth

power supply. About 40,000 Bidi workers in Haragachh have become unemployed in a fortnight as their factories remained inoperative due to frequent power outage. Most of the unemployed Bidi workers are passing days in hardship.

Led by the Haragachh Biddut Grahak Sangram Parishad (HBGSP), they staged several demonstrations in the last few days demanding smooth power supply in the area to ensure uninterrupted production in factories.

Meanwhile police in Kaunia

arrested several Bidi workers and their leaders of Haragachh Biddut Grahak Sangram Parishad (HBGSP) for attacking an official of the Rural Electrification Board (REB) and damaged his vehicle. Many of their leaders are now fleeing homes. activists of flee from their houses for ten days.

The trouble began when Power Development Board (PDB) decided to transfer power distribution authority to the REB. The local people including factory owners protested this, saying PDB's power supply is more irregular and costlier than

that of REB.

They demanded that PDB should supply power to the areas.

Commenting on the ongoing crisis, BNP leader Rahim Uddin Varsa, also an industrialist in Haragachh told The Daily Star that leaders of HBGSP violated the decision of a recent meeting with its leaders, REB and administration. "I would not take any initiative for any negotiation", Varsa added.

Loadshedding is Rangpur and other northern districts have made life miserable and affected business and trade.

When contacted, PDB sources said they have to go for frequent loadshedding in the areas alternately as the National Grid supplies only about half of the power they need.

The power crisis is more acute in rural areas, which are under the jurisdiction of REB.

REB sources said they get power from PDB, which is too inadequate to the needs. In many rural areas, farmers staged demonstrations and besieged REB offices in the last two months, but to no improvement in the situation.