

BRAHMAPUTRA-JAMUNA EROSION

'1385 hectares of land will be devoured in next one year'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 1385 hectares of land and 264 hectares of settlement on both sides of the mighty Brahmaputra-Jamuna river will be devoured in next one year.

This was predicted by the Centre for Environmental and Geographic Information Services (CEGIS), an independent analysis wing of the water resources ministry, at a seminar in the city yesterday.

The CEGIS also predicted that a total of 2970 metres area of five embankments at Goadaha in Kurigram, Kanchipara in Gaibandha, Kutubpur in Bogra, Shuvagacha and Changacha in Sirajganj districts might be eroded during the period.

Besides, a total of 21 educational institutions including 12 government primary schools, six non-

government primary schools, two high schools and two madrasas are also vulnerable to erosion within the next one year," said CEGIS Head Morphologist Mominul Haque Sarker while presenting the erosion prediction report on Brahmaputra-Jamuna river at the seminar.

The CEGIS organised the seminar titled 'Erosion Monitoring and Prediction 2006' at its Gulshan central office in the capital.

The prediction report was prepared using the time-series of satellite images.

Mominul Haque identified 29 vulnerable locations along the 240-kilometre-long river in his prediction report. Of them 16 are located on the right bank and 13 on the left bank of the river.

Of the vulnerable locations, eight are in Kurigram, five in Gaibandha,

two in Bogra, eight in Sirajganj, one in Pabna, two in Jamalpur and three in Tangail districts," he added.

Mominul also said about 780 metres of district road, 2490 metres of upazila road and 3490 metres of rural road are also vulnerable to erosion.

Three bazars- Sinria Bazar at Fulchhari upazila in Gaibandha, Khas Kawla Bazar at Chauhali upazila in Sirajganj and Ananda Bazar at Islampur upazila in Jamalpur districts, two health complexes- Khokshabari Health Complex in Sirajganj Sadar and Harindhara Community Clinic in Islampur upazila, and one government T&T board office at Chauhali upazila in Sirajganj are most vulnerable to devour in next one year," Mominul added.

Speaking as chief guest Syed Mohammad Zobaer, secretary to

water resources ministry, said this prediction will help the government and other related organisations to take necessary measures for maintaining existing bank protection structures, and reducing community sufferings.

Sharif Rafique Islam, director general of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), said it is very difficult to predict the bank erosion because main rivers including Jamuna, Ganges and Padma are highly dynamic.

Water Resources Planing Organisation (WARPO) Director General HS Mozadded Faruque presided over the seminar where CEGIS Director (Application) Mujibul Huq, WARPO Principal Scientific Officer Arzel Hossain Khan and representatives of different stakeholders were also present.

CTG GOVT COLLEGE

35 fall sick after having dinner at dormitory

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

At least 35 people fell sick after dining at a dormitory of Chittagong Government College on Monday night in Chittagong.

Among them, nine students and the cook of the dormitory were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) on Monday.

Sources said 35 students out of 90 of Abdus Sabur Chowdhury Hall fell sick. Many started vomiting and started suffering from dysentery since 9:00pm and the 10, including the cook, were rushed to CMCH at midnight.

Didar, an honours final year student of the sociology department, said he felt a bit discomfort since he ate the chickpea at breakfast and chicken at launch. "But during dinner many students could not even finish their meals they were having with Pangas fish, which tasted a bit bitter," Didar added. Siddique, the cook, said he also had stomachaches after having launch.

The on duty doctors in CMCH said they suspected it was a case of food poisoning. All the admitted students were now out danger, he said while talking to The Daily Star.

US condemns attack on journalists

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Condemning the "senseless act of violence" against journalists in Kushtia on Monday, the US Embassy in Dhaka has urged the police to bring the attackers to justice.

The embassy in a press statement yesterday also called on the senior leaders of all political parties to denounce this and any other attack on journalists.

"We have seen reports that on May 29 a large group of armed assailants attacked the participants in a journalists' convention in Kushtia, injuring several dozen, and that these assailants were associated with local officials of an important political party," the statement added.

The embassy said, "As the country enters the run-up to the next national election, it is essential that all political parties act to prevent and condemn acts of violence."

It further said the media have a vital role to play in promoting a free and fair electoral process. "Any attempts to undermine that role should be strongly resisted."

Meanwhile, leaders of different socio-political organisations and professional groups continued to express resentment and condemnation on the attack on journalists.

Shamillita Peshajibi Parishad at a meeting yesterday passed a resolution condemning the attack on journalists in Kushtia and demanded punishment to the people involved in the attack.

Bangabandhu Lekhok Parishad in a statement said that the attack is a manifestation of autocratic attitude of the government.

In a joint statement, Bangladesh Supreme Court Bar Association President Barrister Amir-ul Islam and General Secretary A M Amin Uddin demanded free and proper treatment of and compensation to the injured journalists.

Besides, Communist Party of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal, Gonoatantrik Ainjibi Samity, Swadhinata Chikitsok Parishad, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad and Bangladesh Jubo Maitri also condemned the heinous attack.



PHOTO: STAR

A nurse attends to a student at Chittagong Medical College Hospital. Thirty-five students of Chittagong Government College fell sick after having dinner at a dormitory on Monday night.

CRISIS OF POTATO SEEDS

High quality seeds to be imported from Holland

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Several varieties of high quality potato seeds will be imported from Holland to resolve the crisis of potato seeds in the country and these seeds have already been sent to the Seed Board of the Agriculture Ministry to ensure their quality.

On the basis of report of the Seed Board, the Seed Section has already certified the Asterix variety of potato seed and very soon the other varieties will be certified.

Concerned officials and traders said several varieties of potato seed are now imported from Holland. Of them, Diamond and Cardinal are 90 per cent. These seeds are less vulnerable to virus.

During the last potato season, a virus 'scrap' attacked the Diamond variety of potato seeds, hampering the potato production in various districts, including Munshiganj, Comilla,

Rangpur and Lalmonirhat.

The current season might be facing the crisis of potato seeds. That is why the initiative has been taken to import seeds from HZPC, the largest potato seeds producing company of Holland.

This time a new variety Felsina in place of Cardinal and Asterix in place of Diamond will be imported which are said to be more resistant against virus.

Besides, importers are awaiting approval of the Seed Board to import 10 new varieties, including Victoria, Baraka, Remarka, Courage, Innovation, Bintje and Ziralda.

Commercial Manager of the HZPC told BDNEWS: "Nobody can supply virus-free seeds. We will ensure supply of good and quality seeds."

Director general of the Seed Section of the Agriculture Ministry Anwar Faruq said the country is facing crisis of quality seed.

2 restaurants

fined

Tk 80,000 in

Chittagong

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A mobile court here yesterday fined the owners of two well-known restaurants and realised Tk 80,000 after sealing one of them off temporarily at Agrabad.

During the drive the court fined Sazna Restaurant Tk 50,000 and sealed it off. The court also fined Mohammadia Restaurant Tk 30,000.

The restaurants were fined for preserving and serving foods in unhygienic conditions that might cause serious health hazards to its customers. Chittagong Port Authority Magistrate Mohammad Munir Chowdhury led the anti-adulteration drive with the help of Bangladesh Standard Testing Institute and Chittagong Metropolitan Police.

Sources said during the drive the court found the refrigerator of Sazna Restaurant out of order. Besides, cooked fish, meat and vegetables were kept open on the dirty kitchen floor while used spices were being used in cooking, sources added.

At Mohammadia Hotel, mould of wheat-flour was kept uncovered beside the footpath.



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Awami Jubo League stages a demonstration at Muktangan in the city yesterday protesting the attack on journalists in Kushtia.



PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia distributes food among the destitute in the city yesterday on the occasion of the 25th death anniversary of President Ziaur Rahman.

NEW SWEDISH ENVOY MEETS AL CHIEF

No cooperation from govt in holding dialogue: Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina has alleged that her party did not get genuine cooperation from the government side in holding dialogue with the ruling party on electoral reforms.

The allegation came when newly appointed Swedish Ambassador F Dritt Hagstron met Sheikh Hasina, also leader of the opposition in parliament, at her Sudha Sadan residence in the city yesterday.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, AL presidium member Kazi Zafrullah said the opposition leader also informed the Swedish envoy of her party's interest and placing of proposal in parliament on dialogue and even sending names of five representatives to BNP secretary general for the dialogue.

The ambassador told the newsmen that during the one-hour meeting, they discussed matters relating to bilateral interest, current political

situation in Bangladesh, price hike of essentials, law and order, and reduction of poverty.

"Sweden as well as European Union want a free, fair and transparent general election in Bangladesh. The election should be fair and impartial from the beginning to the end," said Ambassador Hagstron.

AL Forest and Environment Affairs secretary Hasan Mahmud and former ambassador Ziauddin were present at the meeting.

President improves steadily

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed, who underwent bypass surgery on Friday at Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore, continued to improve steadily.

"The attending specialist doctors again expressed satisfaction in this regard and now decided to intermittently turn off and turn on the respirator to assess whether his lungs can function fully on their own," said an official statement from Singapore yesterday.

Once they are satisfied, they will finally stop and withdraw the respirator machine. "While they hope the respirator can be finally withdrawn over the next two days, they would proceed very carefully and cautiously in this regard," said the statement.

The president will be shifted to a cabin in the regular ward only after he has been taken off the respirator.

The renal function of the president has registered further improvements. Function of all other systems also continued to improve and remained "stable".

DU POLITICAL SCIENCE RESULTS

Probe body asks for information

DU CORRESPONDENT

The probe committee formed to investigate the masters' results of political science department of Dhaka University (DU) urged all to cooperate with the committee by providing information, a DU press release said on Monday.

The release signed by the examination controller and member secretary of the probe committee Abdul Latif asked the persons, who want to provide information on the issue to come up with proof at pro-vice chancellor office at 4:00pm on June 14.

It also said the identity of the information provider will be kept secret.

As many as 52 students of the department secured first class in the master of social science examinations, 2002 (held in 2004) that gave rise to a widespread controversy among the concerned.

DU Syndicate on February 28 formed the probe committee with Pro-VC Prof AFM Yusuf Haider as convener to investigate the matter.

The seven-member probe committee, later turned into ten-member, was asked to submit its report within next 10-working days but the committee is yet to submit its report though the date for that has expired at least two and a half months ago.

GRENADE ATTACKS

US envoy not happy with probe progress

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

US Ambassador Patricia A Butenis expressed her disappointment at no development in the investigations of grenade and bomb attacks on dignitaries like British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Anwar Chowdhury, Mayor Kamran, slain SAMS Kibria, and others.

She said, although the Bangladesh government recently apprehended the JMB kingpins, there is no significant development in the investigations of those sensitive cases.

The US government is unhappy, Butenis commented after learning from Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran that such attacks in the Sylhet region remain unsolved till date. She called on him at his office yesterday afternoon.

However, she hoped the authorities will be more attentive in solving the crimes. The ambassador was on a short visit to the north-eastern divisional headquarters of the country for the first time.

The US expects a peaceful atmosphere so that the nation can have a free and fair parliamentary election, she said.

When ruling BNP and opposition Awami League are in continuous feuds, the people of Bangladesh will decide how to handle critical issues and serious challenges like terrorism, obstacles to democracy, and who are to run the country, she added.

Referring to her meet with Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina, the ambassador said, "I told her it will be better to participate in the polls, since that is the only way to earn the people's mandate. I hope she will face the polls."

During a close door meet with the US ambassador, the Sylhet mayor informed her that the police could not make any headway in the sensitive

cases like the grenade attack on the British high commissioner.

The ambassador also wanted to know about the major problems the mayor and the city residents are facing. Kamran pointed out water stagnation, crisis of drinking water and power crisis as some of the major crises in the city.

Earlier, in the morning, the US ambassador formally inaugurated the first-ever workshop of the Bangladesh Association of American Studies (BAAS) for college teachers at a hotel in the city.

Addressing the workshop Butenis said Bangladesh should not take for granted its priceless quality of tolerance. She told the teachers, "You are responsible for teaching the importance of resolving differences peacefully."

"As the world shrinks, there is increasing pressure on close neighbours to find ways for getting along. The education you give your students should serve them well throughout their lives and teach them to avoid extremism and intolerance. That is an awe-inspiring responsibility, but I believe that teaching is a noble calling. Teaching American studies, will in ways big and small, promote tolerance and understanding," she said.

The US ambassador also visited the American Corner, set up at Sylhet International University in the city. Vice-chancellor Professor Sadruddin Ahmed Chowdhury welcomed her on the campus.

Butenis also visited a health clinic, Surjer Hashi, run by Sylhet Samaj Kalyan Sangstha (SSKS), an NGO financed by USAID. A US energy company, Chevron, engaged at Bibiyana gas field of Nabiganj upazila established the primary health care centre through SSKS in May last year. The ambassador formally inaugurated an ambulance service for the centre.

Trader, security guard shot in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A trader and a security guard were shot and injured in separate incidents at Pallabi in the city yesterday.

The trader, Mustak Hossain, 38, is the owner of a glass shop at Section 11, Block B, while the guard, Mohammad Shaheed, 35, works at an under-construction house at Section 11, Block D.

Mustak said a gang of three hoodlums came to his shop at about 3:30pm and introduced themselves as men of Shahadat group. They then gave him a mobile phone number and asked him to make a phone call.

As Mustak hesitated to make the call, one of the three shot him in the right leg and fled the spot.

In the same style, another gang of three criminals came to the under-construction house of Sheikh Daud at 3:00pm and inquired Shaheed about the owner of the house.

Shaheed said that as he failed to say anything about the owner, one of the three wrote down a mobile phone number on a sheet of paper and asked him to give it to the owner for making a call.

One of the three shot him in both of his legs when he hesitated to accept the sheet of the paper.

Both the injured were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

BBC World to encrypt signal from June 15

BBC World, the BBC's commercially funded international 24-hour news and information channel, will encrypt its digital broadcast TV signal to South Asia on June 15, says a press release.

BBC World is currently available in 270 million homes globally and this move is in response to the dynamic and rapidly expanding cable TV and DTH satellite market across the South Asian region.

"The South Asian region, in particular, is emerging as a substantial market for both domestic and international broadcasters," says Amit Upadhyay, head of distribution and business development, South Asia for BBC World.

"We have received a very encouraging response our distributors and hoteliers who are supportive of our decision. They feel the channel is a strong brand with longevity in the market as it serves an important and influential audience across the region."

Viewers are advised to contact their cable operator or DTH platform provider to ensure they will still be able to view the channel after June 15. To find out more, viewers can also go to the BBC World website at www.bbcworld.com, click on the 'How To Receive' section and select 'South Asia Middle East'.

BBC World offers viewers a truly international news agenda and a global perspective and its audiences in this region remain robust and loyal. BBC World is one of the world's most trusted news sources offering unmatched, impartial, in-depth analysis of breaking news and events from around the world.

World No Tobacco Day today

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The World No Tobacco Day 2006 will be observed in the country as elsewhere across the world today.

The purpose of the day is to encourage countries and governments to work towards strict regulations on tobacco products by raising awareness about the existence of wide variety of deadly tobacco products.

The day insists regulations to help people get accurate information, remove the disguise and unveil the truth behind tobacco products.

World Health Organisation's official website says: "Tobacco is the second major cause of death in the world. It is currently responsible for the death of one in ten adults worldwide (about 5 million deaths each year)."

"If current smoking patterns continue, it will cause some 10 million deaths each year by 2020. Half the people that smoke today -- that is about 650 million people -- will eventually be killed by tobacco."

Bangladesh, being a member state of World Health Organisation, enacted an anti-smoking law named, "Smoking and Tobacco Usage (Control) Act, 2005" on March 13, 2005, which prohibits publication of advertisements of tobacco products in newspapers, books, magazines, radio and television broadcasts, as well as in cinema.

The new law also bans smoking in public places and transports with a provision for penalty.

But the law did very little in changing the habit of the smokers as cigarette companies keep on inventing new types of propaganda favouring smoking.

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Roundtable
Bangladesh Cancer Foundation organises a roundtable on Role of the media to control tobacco and to prevent cancer to mark the World No Tobacco Day. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 4:00pm.

Workshop
Action on Disability and Development organises workshop on Rights of the Disabled People in the National Budget'. Venue: Biam seminar room. Time: 1:30pm.

Open discussion
Office of Iran Cultural Counsellor organises an open discussion on

'Review of the contemporary language and literature in Iran and Bangladesh'. Venue: Office of the Counsellor. Time: 4:00pm.

National dialogue
South Asia Partnership Bangladesh organises a national dialogue on 'Primary Education Status in the Coastal Region: Problems and Potentials'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 9:30am.

Workshop
A workshop on 'Three-year long road map to reform electricity sector' will be held. Venue: Radisson Water Garden Hotel. Time: 9:45am.