

Giant WDB irrigation project fails

IRRI-Boro on 29,000 acres affected as Buri Teesta canals in Nilphamari dry up due to wrong planning



Stagnant water in Buri Teesta Barrage (left) and a dry branch canal of the irrigation project in Jaldhaka.

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Nilphamari*

About 29,000 acres of IRRI-Boro lands in three upazilas in Nilphamari district are deprived of irrigation as the Buri Teesta Irrigation Project has become ineffective allegedly due to wrong planning.

Water Development Board (WDB) sources said 'planning error' has made the giant project 'virtually ineffective'. But there has not been any step to make it operative to irrigate lands under its command area, they said.

The Buri Teesta Irrigation Project was aimed at providing irrigation to 29,000 acres in Domar, Dimla and Jaldhaka upazilas. During current IRRI-Boro season, it provides irrigation to only 247

acres, the sources said.

In the last Amon season, about 3,000 acres were irrigated under its command area, they added.

The project built in 1963 by the then East Pakistan WAPDA includes a huge barrage on Buri Teesta river, a 36,696-feet 'main canal' and four branch canals.

The four branch canals are the 23,200-feet long canal-1, 64,300-feet canal-2, 64,300-feet canal-3 and 22,000-feet canal-3A.

Besides, there is a 1,270-acre water reservoir under the project.

During a visit to the project area on Saturday (February 24), this correspondent saw sufficient water in the reservoir but the canals were dry.

Farmers in the project area were irrigating their IRRI-Boro fields with their shallow tubewells.

It was also gathered that the WDB authorities leased the water reservoir while a section of WDB employees were allegedly misappropriating government money in the name of its maintenance and security.

Some sources in Nilphamari WDB said that leasing reservoir of any irrigation project is against WDB's rules.

When contacted, Abdur Razzak, Executive Engineer of WDB's Nilphamari Division, said desired results are not obtained from the project due to 'planning errors'.

He said the main irrigation canal is abnormally wide and the reservoir was also not properly planned. Water is supposed to flow to farmers' lands from the reservoir in a natural way, but it is just the

reverse. Water flows to the reservoir from lands, he said.

On leasing the reservoir, he said it was done before his joining.

Abed Ali, a farmer in Golna village near the Buri Teesta Barrage said his lands are near the main canal but he does not get water as it is completely dry.

Sources said WDB is now planning to bring the Buri Teesta project's area (29,000 acres) under Teesta Irrigation Project, which will need digging of a 8km link canal between Teesta Main Canal and Buri Teesta Main Canal.

But farmers said the idea can not be implemented because the area under Buri Teesta project is higher than the proposed spot at Chouradangi village in Jaldhaka where the link canal will meet the Teesta main canal.

PHOTO: STAR

ABSENTEE KCC COMMISSIONERS Mayor seeks action by ministry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Khulna city Mayor Shaikh Tayebur Rahman has asked the LGRD ministry for action against three absentee ward commissioners.

The ministry was informed as they did not attend the 12th general meeting of Khulna City Corporation (KCC) held yesterday with Mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman in the chair.

The three out of 41 (including 10 female ward commissioners) who remained absent from the general

meeting are Mohammad Hossain Mukta of Ward 31, Sabina Zaman Shampa of Ward 24 and Shaikh Mosaddek Hosain Babul of Ward 13.

Another ward commissioner--Golam Mawla Shanu of Ward 26--has been in Khulna district jail as he was given death penalty in Awami League leader SMA Rob murder case. Kazi Mohammad Rashed of Ward 25 is acting as commissioner of Ward 26.

Ward commissioners Mohammad Hossain Mukta and

Mosaddek Hossain Babul are wanted by joint forces as 'listed terrorists', police sources said.

Commissioner Sabina Zaman Shampa of Ward 24 remained absent from five previous general meetings of KCC and the one held yesterday on health ground. She is the wife of 'terrorist' Asaduzzaman Litu, killed in a crossfire in Khulna city in 2005. He was the prime chargesheeted accused in Dainik Janakantha journalist Shamsur Rahman murder case.

Gas cylinder blast kills one

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Patuakhali*

One person was killed and two others were injured as a gas cylinder blasted at an ice plant in Kuakata Sunday evening, witnesses said.

The dead is Farhad, 35, manager of Mridha Ice Plant, they said. He died on way to Kalapara Upazila Health complex. The injured are Mahbub, 34, and Amar Sen Barua, 45, two workers of the plant. The two were admitted to Kalapara Upazila Health Complex for treatment. Later, they sent to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital (BSMCH) as their condition deteriorated. They are now fighting for life at the hospital.

BDR, BSF trade fire on Satkhira border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) traded heavy gunshots across the border in two upazilas Sunday night, BDR sources said.

In an incident, BSF fired four gunshots targeting BDR at Kakkdanga camp on Keragachhi border in Kalaroa upazila at about 3-30 am. BDR retaliated by firing 22 gunshots, they said.

In another incident at about 4 am, BSF fired five gunshots aiming at BDR at Hijaldi camp on Hijaldi border under Sadar upazila. BDR retaliated by firing 20 gunshots, they said.

In the third incident, BSF fired five gunshots aiming at BDR at Ghona camp. Ultimately, BDR retaliated by firing 10 gunshots, the said further.

However, no casualty was reported in the incidents.

On contact, 41, Rifles Battalion Commanding Officer (CO) Lt Col Mohammad Asif Abdur Rouf con-

BHASANI UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Students demand VC's removal

Teachers seek proper academic atmosphere

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Tangail*

Students of Maolana Bhasani University of Science and Technology (MBUST) at Santosh yesterday locked the administrative building for two hours from 9am and staged demonstrations on the campus to press their 16-point demand including removal of Vice Chancellor Dr Mohammad Khalilur Rahman.

They also demolished all the five foundation stones on the campus, laid by the VC, alleged to be a pro-BNP man.

They are demanding the VC's resignation for his alleged "corruption and steps that spoiled the academic atmosphere on the campus", some demonstrators told The Daily Star on the campus.

Their demands also include recruitment of qualified and senior teachers, providing classrooms, laboratories, workshops and other facilities.

The VC is in Dhaka since Saturday, when students staged demonstrations and burnt his effigy.

Yesterday afternoon, the MBUST Teachers Association at a press conference on the campus demanded immediate steps by the authorities to fulfill their 6-point demand including promotion of deserving teachers.

They also expressed solidarity with the students' demand for proper academic facilities including recruitment of more teachers, sufficient classrooms, students' hostels, laboratories and workshop facilities.

"We want a proper academic atmosphere on the campus, a corruption-free administration and creation of academic facilities," teachers' association president Mohammad Mohiuddin told the press conference.

They said there are only 28 teachers on duty for all students in 22 batches in seven departments.

This is too inadequate and each teacher has to take around five courses in every semester, they said.

They said they reiterated the demands at a meeting with the VC on February 20 but there was no positive response from him.

The students threatened of tougher agitation if the demands are not met immediately.

Campus sources alleged that the VC appointed officials and employees instead of teachers, despite repeated demands by teachers and students.

Most of the recruitments were made on political consideration, the sources claimed.

A high-level investigation team from the University Grant Commission (UGC) came to the university in the first week of this month (February) and investigated the alleged irregularities over appointments but its findings are yet to be known.

Dr Mohammad Khalilur

Rahman joined the university as VC on September 22, 2004 when there were only 157 students, 8 teachers, 17 officials, 34 third class employees and 25 fourth class employees.

After his joining, the UGC gave approval for appointment of "required manpower" in five years (from 2004).

Sources claimed that the VC appointed officials and employees in excess but did not recruit teachers in proportion to students.

The UGC approved 256 posts but the VC recruited 446 people, 117 of them on adhoc basis.

When contacted over phone, VC Dr Mohammad Khalilur Rahman said the recruitments were made as per approval of the university's Regent Board and there was no irregularity in the process. "We will appoint more people in near future as some posts are still vacant," the VC added.



PHOTO: STAR

Students of Maolana Bhasani University of Science and Technology demonstrating on the campus yesterday for removal of its Vice-chancellor and creation of education facilities.

Outlaw killed in Pabna

A CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

An alleged activist of the outlawed Purba Banglar Sharbahara Party was killed by party rivals at Jagannathpur village under Failzana union in Chatmohor upazila Sunday night.

The dead is Shajahan Ali, son of Abdul Gofur of the same village.

Police and locals said a gang of the outlawed party rivals kidnapped Shajahan from his residence at about 10 pm and shot him dead near his house. Police later recovered the body.

4x3

8x3

6x3



PHOTO: STAR

Labourers engaged by authorities yesterday levelling embankments of illegal shrimp farms built on government lands in Sonadia, which were recovered recently.