

# Jamuna devours hundreds of homesteads in 2 weeks



PHOTO: STAR  
Homeless in days... A family watches with great worries as the Jamuna erosion approaches their homestead (top) while another homeless family in Khoksabari in Sirajganj Sadar shifting their house to a safer place.

Five Sirajganj upazilas bear the brunt, embankment collapse threatens town

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Sudden swelling of the mighty Jamuna has triggered massive erosion along its western bank in five upazilas of Sirajganj district.

At least seven kilometers of the flood control embankment from Khokshabari to Bhatpiary has collapsed into the river in last two weeks. About 1200 metres of the embankment at Ranigram groin point collapsed on Saturday and the rest 4000 metres in the same area are vulnerable.

The embankment at Ranigram point is vital among five other points of the 52 KM Brammhaputra flood control embankment between Sirajganj and Kazipur. Sirajganj town will be threatened with erosion if the embankment collapses in more areas, locals said.

Water Development Board (WDB) official said they can not take any step to repair the embankment due to fund shortage.

WDB Executive Engineer Nizamul Huq Bhuian in Sirajganj said, erosion is a regular phenomenon but this it has taken a serious turn ahead of the season this year.

The WDB officials said they invited tender to build an embankment on the western bank of Jamuna covering the five vulnerable points, involving Tk 1.5 crore.

Water Resources Adviser Maj. Gen. (retd) ASM Motiur Rahman during a visit to Ranigram on April 9 assured of funds for reconstruction of the embankment but it is yet to be mobilised, WDB officials told this correspondent.

At least 3500 homesteads and about 1500 acres of croplands in 35 villages in the five upazilas have already been devoured by the Jamuna in last two weeks. The five affected upazilas Kazipur, Sirajganj Sadar, Belkuchi, Shahzadpur and Chowhali. Kazipur, Sirajganj Sadar and Chowhali upazila are now threatened.

The Daily Star correspondent during a visit to the areas saw people close to the river areas dismantling their houses and shifting to safer places. Thirty-five more villages in the five upazilas are now threatened.

Water level of Jamuna near Sirajganj town is also rising by two

to three feet everyday, WDB sources said.

Meanwhile, about 12000 people who lost their homesteads have taken shelter on highlands and on both sides of roads in the last seven days.

Banis Ali, 36, of Charpara village said he lost his homestead three times in last several tears. He has taken shelter on a road at Khokshabari Natunpara village.

The erosion-affected villages are Ranigram, Gunergati, Khokshabari, Panchil, Dwiarpanchil, Shimla, Bhatpiari, Simantobazar, Shuvogachha, Meghai, Natun Meghai, Natuarpara, Shoydabad, Randhuni Bari, Gachhabari, Shahpur, Rajapur, Shohagpur, Chala, Kajuri, Gudhibari, Beltail, Potazia, Sonatuni, Enayetpur, Betil, Jalalpur, Gala, Khaskawlia, Ghorjan, Chowhali, Umorepur and Sowdiachandpur.

More areas will go into the river within few days if the erosion is not checked, locals said.

Our Staff Correspondent reports from Bogra: A large number of families have become homeless and over 300 hectares of cropland by washed away due to erosion by Jamuna on its right bank in Takukderpara in Shariakandi upazila in Bogra district.

WDB officials in Bogra said the erosion turned serious in last few days and five WDB strictures constructed at a cost Tk 175 crore have been threatened at Maghai and Shimla areas in Sirajganj.

Chandanbaisa Union Parishad Chairman Mohammed Shahadat Hossain Dulal in Shariakandi told this correspondent that about 50,000 people in three unions in Shariakandi will be affected if the main embankment at Takukderpara collapses.

WDB is going to start renovation work at several points of the embankment on the right bank of Jamuna in Bogra, officials said.



PHOTO: STAR  
Programme for Echo Social Development, an NGO, organised a human chain at Madla of Shahjahanpur upazila in Bogra yesterday to create public opinion against acid violence.

## Simple steps reduce neonatal mortality rate by 33pc

Research project in 3 Sylhet upazilas reveals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Some 'simple interventions' can drastically reduce neonatal mortality in remote rural areas.

Simple care like monitoring expected mothers' health, counseling and taking them to health centers in time reduced the death rate by 33 per cent in three upazilas of Beanibazar, Kanaighat and Zakiganj in Sylhet, health officials said at a function at Parjaton Motel in the city yesterday. The function was held marking launching of a special programme--Projonma 3--in the three upazilas.

The special programme is being launched as a findings under a research project styled Projonma 1 in the same upazilas yielded encouraging results.

Under the special programme covering the same three upazilas, trained midwives and health workers will visit expected mothers regularly and ensure their proper care. The programme will be implemented under the supervision of government health centers in the three upazilas.

Speaking on the occasion, health officials said neonatal mortality rate in Bangladesh is 41 per thousand live births, which is too high compared to that in developed countries. The rate is 63 per thousand in Sylhet, which is highest in the country, they said.

They said maternal mortality ratio in Bangladesh is 320 per 100,000 live births. One woman dies in every 45 minutes in the country due to pregnancy complications for lack of proper care, they said.

Access to child birth facilities and is also poor in Sylhet division, they said.

The speakers said about 10,400 babies are born every day in Bangladesh. Out of every 1,000 babies born alive, 41 die in first 28 days. Direct causes of neonatal deaths worldwide are similar to those in Bangladesh.

The rates are high in Sylhet because of lack of good communication, they said.

## Nor'wester lashes two districts

STAR NATIONAL DESK

A nor'wester lashed Dinajpur and adjoining Thakurgaon yesterday morning injuring 20 people and damaging houses and crops and uprooting litchi and mango trees, according to officials in the department of agriculture extension (DAE).

Our Dinajpur Correspondent reports: At least 20 people were injured as houses collapsed in different upazilas during the hour-long nor'wester.

DAE sources said IRRI-Boro standing crops on several thousand acres of land were damaged in Biral, Kaharal, Chirirbandar and Birampur upazilas.

A Thakurgaon Correspondent reports: The nor'wester lashed Haripur upazila demolishing houses and damaging crops on a vast tract of land.

The nor'wester lasted for 40 minutes and demolished 100 houses, uprooted trees and disrupted electricity.

Upazila agriculture office and UNO office sources said IRRI-Boro paddy on about 100 hectares of field at Amgaon, Burabil, Kutnibil, Bhaturia, Gargoria villages and maize on 35 hectares were damaged in the storm.

## MPO of 13 schools in Nilphamari Sadar suspended

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Monthly pay order (MPO) of 13 secondary and junior high schools in Sadar upazila was suspended from the month of April following detection of misappropriation of stipend money in the schools.

The schools are Shahid Zia Girls' High School, Rabeya Balika Bidya Niketan, Ramganj B.L. High School, Nagar Darwani High School, Pancha Pukur Girls' High School, Darulhuda High School, Kokai Barogachha P.C. High School, Chowra Boragachha High School, Khoksabari M.U. High School, Dakshin Junior high School, Shalbari Junior High School, Gorgram High School, and Charia Khola School and College.

An amount of Tk 7,35,140 was misappropriated from the schools. The break-up is as follows: Shahid Zia Girls' High School- Tk 44,410; Rabeya Balika Bidya Niketan- Tk 1,17,600; Ramganj B.L. High School- Tk 26,900; Nagar Darwani High School- Tk 81,300; Pancha Pukur Girls' High School- Tk 83,790; Darulhuda High School- Tk 39,510; Kokai Barogachha P.C. High School- Tk 46,140; Chowra Boragachha High School- Tk 45,030; Khoksabari M.U. High School- Tk 55,750; Dakshin Junior high School- Tk

38,160; Shalbari Junior High School- Tk 37,280; Gorgram High School- Tk 61,170 and Charia Khola School and College- Tk 58,380.

When contacted with the Sadar Upazila Education Officer (UEO), he said the action was taken at the directive of Abdur Razzak, project director (PD) of Female Stipend Project (Second phase) of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board.

Earlier, a high level probe body was formed last year to investigate the anomaly in disbursement of female stipend money in the educational institutions.

As per investigation done in the month of December 2006, the team detected misappropriation of fund of female stipend in the 13 schools. An amount of Tk 7 lakh was misappropriated from the fund by showing fake and disqualified female students. Even, tuition fees collected from students were also misappropriated, he said.

After investigation, the director of Female Stipend Project (second phase) gave seven days ultimatum to the headmasters of those schools to return the embezzled money but they could not return the money within the stipulated time.

9X2

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4X2

4X2

6x4