

100 VILLAGES FLOODED IN SIRAJGANJ, 2 CHILDREN DROWN

Thousands marooned, hundreds of handloom factories shut

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

At least one lakh people are marooned in about 100 villages in the six upazilas of Sirajganj as Jamuna, Korota and Fulzorh rivers swelled in last few days.

Two children drowned in floodwater that inundated vast areas in Kazipur, Sirajganj Sadar, Belkuchi, Ullapara, Shahzadpur and Chowhali upazilas.

The victims are Rubel, 6, of Jalalpur village in Chowhali upazila and Moni of Polashpur village in Kazipur upazila, according to administration sources.

More areas are being flooded as waters are gushing through two breaches in Jamuna flood control embankments at Polashpur and Khokshabari.

The Jamuna swelled by 25 centimetres in last four days. Water Development Board sources said yesterday. Rise of the river is tapering off, recording a rise of two centimetres in last 24 hours, they said.

The worst affected villages are Kunkunia, Paikortoly, Boroitoly, Kobital, Alompur, Biara, Beripotol, Kamarpara, Mirapara, Borotola, Mathailchapor, Bhabanipur and Lakshmpur, Maizbari, Gandom, Chalitadanga and Sonamukhi in Kazipur upazila; Ratonkandi, Bahuksa, Khokshabari, Chhongachha, Shimla, Bohuli and Ranigram in Sirajganj Sadar; Kaizuri, Gudhibari, Porzona and Sontola in Shahzadpur; Randhunibari, Chala, Shahbazar

and Shohagpur in Belkuchi; and Betil, Enayetur, Chorzan, Jalalpur and Omarpur in Chowhali upazila.

Victims in the areas face crisis of drinking water.

Many families in the affected areas have shifted to safer places like highways, embankments and educational institutions.

Administration sources said hundreds of handloom factories

remained inoperative and at least 20 educational institutions have been closed in Kazipur upazila.

District Agriculture Extension Department sources said flood has damaged newly transplanted Aman crops, jute, vegetables and sugar-cane.

This correspondent during a visit to Kazipur upazila saw several hundred affected people taking

shelter on Sirajganj-Kazipur roadside. They said neither the government nor any NGO came to their aid.

Julekha Khatun, 38, wife of Moktar Hossain of Dublai village, said they took shelter on the roadside five days ago and face food crisis as her husband is without work.



PHOTO: STAR

A woman carries her goat to safety at flooded Paschim Dblai village in Kazipur upazila in Sirajganj district yesterday.

Kushtia BNP leader sues 7 journalists

A conspiracy to gag press, accused say

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A BNP leader has filed an extortion case with a magistrate court here against seven journalists including editors of two local dailies.

Kushtia district Jubo Dal president Mohsin Ali filed the case against Manzur Ehsan Chowdhury, editor of local Dainik Andoloner

Bazar and Kushtia correspondent of Channel-i, Rasedul Islam Biplob, editor of Daily Arshinagar, Munshi Toriqu Islam, Kushtia correspondent of Channel-1, Shamsul Alam Sawapan, Kushtia correspondent of Daily Amader Somoy, Samin Bin Sattar, Kushtia correspondent of Dainik Khabar, Zillur Rahman, news editor of Daily Arshinagar and

Sheikh Ahmed Ali, Kushtia correspondent of Dainik Andoloner Bazar.

The Jubo Dal leader also brought a charge of attempt to murder district Jubo Dal general secretary Sahidullah Shahid seven months ago.

Magistrate KM Azadur Rahman accepted the case on Monday. He ordered the Sadar Police Station officer-in-charge (OC) to investigate the case.

In his complaint, Mohsin Ali said Shahidullah Shahid was his business partner at a construction firm at Thanapara in the town. Some journalists led by Manzur Ehsan Chowdhury equipped with firearms stormed into their office at about 7:30pm on October 10 last year. The journalists demanded Tk. 5 lakh from them. As he refused, the journalists threatened to kill them by wielding firearms, the complainant said.

Shahid paid Tk.50,000 to them and agreed to pay the rest Tk.4.5 lakh within seven days.

The BNP leader further said the journalists attacked Shahid on the night of November 8 last year for non-payment of the rest amount. He said the journalists led by Manzur Ehsan Chowdhury attacked Shahid in front of his house at about 10:00pm at Girjanath Lane in Kamalpur in the town.

They stopped his motor bike and demanded the rest amount. At one stage, they fired several shots on Shahid and two bullets pierced his chest and abdomen, the BNP leader said. When the attackers left the spot, local people rushed to the

scene.

On information, a police team went to the spot and sent the BNP leader to Kushtia General Hospital. Later he was shifted to Dhaka orthopaedic hospital and returned home after two months of treatment, according to the complaint.

Soon after the incident, an outlawed party telephoned local journalists claiming responsibility for the incident. He said it was a revenge for tender manipulation by the BNP leader.

Police asked the BNP leader to file a case but he avoided it fearing reprisal. After some days, police filed a case and arrested two persons as suspects. They are Santo, 32, son of Jam Mohammad of the housing area and Jewel, 36, son of Hurun-or-Rashid of Thanapara area in the town.

Later, a Kushtia court granted their bail.

When contacted, the journalists said it is a conspiracy to prevent them from writing against corrupt practices and nepotism done by the BNP leaders during the last five years.

According to sources, BNP leaders and activists are filing cases against local journalists at random.

At least 30 journalists faced 'false' cases, five were tortured, three sentenced in 'fabricated' cases and four had to flee Kushtia in last five years.

Different journalist organisations here protested the false case and demanded its immediate withdrawal.

RECRUITMENT 'SCAM' IN TEXTILE MILLS

Trial of case against JP leader Ruhul Amin begins today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Trial of the case against Jatiya Party (Ershad) secretary general ABM Ruhul Amin Hawlader for his alleged involvement in irregularities in appointment of officials and workers in state-owned Barisal Textile Mills in 1990 will begin in Khulna Divisional Special Court today.

The court will record statements of prosecution witnesses on the day.

Eight then officials of the mill are also accused in the case.

The case was transferred to the Khulna Divisional Special Court in 1992 for trial. Trial could not be held as High Court issued a stay order following a petition by the accused.

The High Court in a recent letter to the Divisional Special Court vacated the stay order and asked it to begin trial.

Sources said the accused are likely to move bail petitions before the trial court.

According to court sources, the case was filed for appointing 22 officials and 354 workers in state-

owned Barisal Textile Mills between December 1989 and November 1990 by abusing power and violating rules, causing huge financial loss to the government. Besides, fuel worth Tk. 1,34,000 was misused during the period.

The Bureau of Anti Corruption, Barisal lodged an FIR with Barisal Sadar police station in this connection after investigation.

The charge sheet was submitted to court naming nine accused.

The chargesheeted accused are JP secretary general and former minister ABM Ruhul Amin Hawlader, former general manager (sales) of the mill Lutful Huq, former deputy general manager (sales) Abdul Hossain, former Manager Nurul Alam Chowdhury, former manager (commercial) AKM Mansur Ahmed, former labour officer Abdul Huq Mridha, former administrative officer Abdul Mannan Molla and head assistants Yakub Ali and SM Faruque.

UGC team detects corruption at RU

RU CORRESPONDENT

The University Grants Commission (UGC) body left Rajshahi Monday night after probing alleged irregularities in Rajshahi University in last five years.

The team carried photocopies of several hundred files, documents and written complaints by RU teachers and staff to Dhaka, sources said yesterday.

Before leaving, probe body convener Prof Muhammad Mahbub Ullah told newsmen that his team detected corruption, irregularities and mismanagement in the university.

"After examination, we will submit a neutral report to government soon", he said.

During the probe, the team interviewed deans of faculties, heads of departments, teachers, directors of institutes, hall provosts and leaders of officers' and employees' associations.

But the Progressive Teachers Society (PTS), a body of pro-Awami League teachers, alleged that the probe body members were appointed controversially during the tenure of BNP-Jamaat alliance government.

Many teachers, officials and employees alleged that they could not talk to the probe body members as they were surrounded by teachers aligned with BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, who also monitored interview seekers.

PTS convener Sayed Akter told this correspondent that the probe body did not contact any pro-Awami League (AL) teacher for interview.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

The task force of National Coordination Committee on Anti-corruption searched the residence of BNP chairperson and former prime minister Khaleda Zia's assignment officer Dr. Feroz at Maloti Nagar in Bogra town yesterday morning.

GRENADE ATTACK ON BRITISH HC

Case records, charge sheets sent to district judge's court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Sylhet Sadar magistrate court yesterday sent the case records and charge sheets of the case for grenade attack on British High Commissioner Anwar Chowdhury to District and Sessions Judge's court for trial.

Magistrate Sohrab Hossain ordered sending the records, court sources said.

Earlier, on June 9, Senior ASP Munshi Atiqur Rahman of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) submitted charge sheets to the magistrate court against four persons in the case.

They are outlawed Harkat-ul-Jihad (Huji) chief Mufti Abdul Hannan, his brother Mofizur Rahman and Huji activists Delwar Hossain Ripon and Sharif Shahedul Alam alias Bipul.

All the four are in jail.

Bangladesh-born British High Commissioner Anwar Chowdhury and 70 others were hurt in the grenade attack on him on May 21, 2004 on the premises of the shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal (RA) in

Sylhet city after Juma prayers. The grenade attack killed three people—Habibur Rahman Habib, Zobayer Ahmed Rubel and



Assistant Sub Inspector Kamal Uddin of Special Branch police.

The case, lodged with Sylhet kotwali police station, was transferred to CID later.

Investigation Officer Munshi Atiqur Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday that charge sheets were submitted by dropping the name of Abu Zandal alias Mufti Moin as he could not be traced.

"If we can arrest him, his name will be included in the charge sheet", the IO said.

Two charge sheets have been filed, one under the Explosives Act and the other for the murders.

4.5X2

TRAIN LINK THRU' AKHAURA RESTORED

10 train accidents in 10 weeks

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Railway communication between Dhaka and Chittagong through Brahmanbaria was restored at about 4pm yesterday after derailed four wagons of a goods train were put back on the track at Akhaura.

The railway link was disrupted when four wagons of a Chittagong bound goods train from Dhaka derailed at Bara Bazar railway gate at Akhaura at about 8pm Monday. About 50 feet of the track was damaged, which was also repaired, railway sources said yesterday.

A four-member body headed by Divisional Transport Officer (Dhaka) Sarder Shahadat Ali yesterday began probing the accident. It may submit its report today.

A probe body member seeking anonymity told this correspondent that the accident took place due to bad condition of the railway track.

Railway records showed that 10 major train accidents took place on the Dhaka-Chittagong track between Brahmanbaria and Comilla in since April this year.

The Jalalabad Express derailed at Kasba in Brahmanbaria at dead of

night on April 16, keeping hundreds of passengers stranded.

On April 29, another accident took place at Rasulpur in Comilla. The rest of the accidents took place on April 30 at Lalmai, on May 1 at Sashidal on May 2 at Akhaura.

On May 3, the Karnafuli Express met with accident at Akhaura, injuring at least 10 passengers.

All the accidents took place due to bad condition of tracks. Formation of probe body after each accident is a usual phenomenon, but remedial steps are still far away, the sources said.

On April 4, a relief train also derailed when it was returning after salvaging a container-carrier train that derailed between Kasba and Saldanadi railway stations.

The sources said most of the accidents occurred due to lack of adequate stones and weak wooden slippers on tracks.

Dog-spikes (joint nut) are often stolen from tracks, said Abdul Kalam Azad, station master of Akhaura station. These are re-installed wherever found missing, he added.

6X2

386 more terminated in 3 Khulna jute mills

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

More 386 permanent workers of three state-owned jute mills were terminated yesterday.

They include 180 workers of Crescent Jute Mills, 121 of Platinum Jubilee Jute Mills and 85 of Star Jute Mills. The termination notices were issued Monday night on orders from the chairman of Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC), sources in the mills said.

With the 386 workers, the number terminated employees of the four state-owned laid-off mills in Khulna industrial belt now stands at 1,445, they said.

The four jute mills were laid-off last month in the face of workers agitation for arrear salaries. Later,

sacking sections of the mills were reopened.

Issuance of termination notices began in the last week of last month when workers in sacking sections of the jute mills decided to stay away from work without receiving payment of their arrear wages and lay-off benefits.

General Manager of Platinum Jubilee Jute Mill Boni Israel Shelly and General Manager of Star Jute mill Jahangir Alam said that BJMC had no alternative to terminating 'excess' permanent workers to lessen production cost.

Convenor of Patkai Sangram Parishad Sarder Motaharuddin termed the BJMC move 'preparation to close down all jute mills on the plea of fund crisis'.

6X2

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