

Patuakhali town protection project approved finally

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The Planning Commission has finally approved the Patuakhali town protection project, 12 years after it was submitted.

The Tk 17 crore project was approved on August 14 following submission of a survey report. Documents on the decision reached

Patuakhali yesterday, sources said.

Approval of the project by the government was a talk of the town. The project titled Patuakhali Town Protection Embankment-cum-Drainage Project was taken up in 1996 to redress sufferings of townspeople from inundation during almost every full moon and mild tidal surge.

The new project is designed to

protect the town from flash flood, erosion and remove stagnant water. It includes construction of 4.20 kilometers flood control embankment, eight drains to remove water, eight sluice gates, 38 outlets, one kilometre wall and installation of four power pumps.

Water Development Board (WDB) sources said, a survey team from Planning Commission visited

Patuakhali on July 20 this year to make a survey. The team led by Hamidur Rahman, joint chief of Planning Commission, visited different points of the proposed project and exchanged views with local people including journalist and district officials.

Hamidur Rahman submitted his report to the Commission in the first week of this month.

Another team from water resources ministry visited Patuakhali in January last year to verify importance of the project. It also submitted a report recommending immediate step to implement a flood control project.

WDB executive engineer Zahir Uddin Ahmed told this correspondent that work on the project would start from the current 2007-2008 fiscal year, considering its impotence.

Earlier, a consulting firm completed a feasibility study of the project last year and submitted its report, saying such a project is vital for the coastal town.

In 1960s, a project was undertaken to protect Patuakhali town and coastal upazilas of Baufal, Dashmina, Galachipa, Kalapara and Mirzagonj from flood and saline water. Later the town was excluded from the project.

Patuakhali town is surrounded by Lawkathi river in the north and Lohalia river in the east. Water from the rivers roll into the town whenever they swell, inundating two-thirds area by 2 to 5 feet water.



Inundation is a routine phenomenon for Tatuakhali townspeople during full moon or in a mild tidal surge as there is no protection embankment. The photo was taken on Monday.

Villagers join hands as appeals to govt ignored

Remove silt from Kobadak riverbed in Tala to resolve water-logging

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Villagers from 12 unions in Tala upazila are doing a great job voluntarily. They are removing silt from Kobadak riverbed to free the area from persistent water-logging as repeated appeals to dredge the river to remove the problem were ignored by authorities.

It was a different scene at Gopalpur in the area yesterday. People of all classesstudents, teachers, farmers and poor day labourers --were removing silt from the riverbed.

Over 75,000 people in Sarulia, Kumira, Nagarghata,

Tentulia, Magura, Khalishkhali, Kheshra, Jalalpur, Khaliinagar, Islamkati and Tala Sadar unions remained marooned and crops on thousand of acres damaged due to water-logging during the rainy season every year.

As repeated appeals failed, all Union Parishad leaders in the area held a meeting with Satkhira Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Kefayetullah on August 15 at his office to find a way to resolve the problem.

The meeting decided to prepare programmes locally to remove the silt.

The DC asked Tala Upazila Nirbahi officer UNO to convene a meeting of all concerned.

On August 16, Tala UNO Md.Waliullah convened a meeting of UP chairmen and leaders of local NGOs. The meeting decided to do the job voluntarily, Magura UP chairman ProfSabbir Hossain said.

As per a decision of the meeting, silt from 15 kilometres of Kobadak riverbed from Tala to Dhandia will be removed.

The villagers have been divided into several groups and they are working alternately, Tala UNO Md.Waliullah told this correspondent.

"Villagers have removed silt

from about eight kilometers of the riverbed from Tala to Gopalpur till today", the UNO said yesterday.

"Over 6000 people are taking part in the work on self-help basis", Satkhira DC Md. Kefayetullah said.

The work is expected to be completed by August 24, said Abu Musa, aofficial of local NGO Uttaran.

People of the area, along with scores of others in 28 unions in Kobadak river basin in Satkhira and Jessore are suffering from water-logging problem as the river has become silted, preventing flood and rain water to be drained out.

Earlier, several appeals by the Union Parishad (UP) Forum leaders, Kabodak Bachao Andolon and local people were made to Water Development Board (WDB) for re-excavation of silted Kabodak.

Water-logging is a persistent problem in the area. Like in the previous years, about two lakh people in Kobadak basin area are marooned for about two months since onset of monsoon this year as outlets are clogged.

Over the years, Kobadak has become silted and lost its water retention capacity. It has made life of the people miserable, affecting agriculture.

Some local people talking to this correspondent alleged that before elections, political leaders promised to take steps to re-excavate silted Kabodak. Once the election was over, they were never seen, they claimed.



Villagers removing silt from Kobadak riverbed in Gopalpur village in Tala upazila to increase flow of the river.

'No alternative to Hasina's leadership for AL'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

There is no alternative to Sheikh Hasina's leadership to materialise the dream of Bangabadhu Shiekh Mujibar Rahman and Awami League leaders and workers will have to work together for that, said former lawmaker Ashiqur Rahman.

He was talking to newsmen at Gaibandha Press Club prior to visiting flood affected areas yesterday.

Bengalis are revolutionary by nature, so they will survive the present crisis, he said.

"We recollect the dastardly events August 21 while the target of the grenade attack is in jail. It is shocking", he said.

Turning to politics, he said people are confused as some (parties) are getting favour and some are being deprived", the former minister said.

Awami League does not do politics with the flood victims. Party leaders are helping them inwhatever way they can, he said.

He distributed relief materials among flood victims in Taltola in Gaibandha Sader upazila on behalf of his party.

Former party whip Motaheer Hossain, acting president of AL Sayed Shamsul Alam Hiru and secretary Abu Bakker Siddique were also present.

Relief CI sheets recovered in Chandpur

A CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

Police yesterday recovered a bundle of government CI sheets meant for relief and arrested a young man named Mohammad Selim from Bodarpur village in Faridganj upazila, police said.

Police said Selin was arrested along with the CI sheets which were sold to him at Tk 7,000 by upazila Mohila Dol leader Fatema Begum with the help of BNP leader Md Ibrahim Khan.

However, Fatema and Ibrahim managed to flee.

Police, in another raid, recovered two bundles of government CI sheets meant for relief from the sister's house of absconding BNP leader Md Ibrahim at Kownia village in the same upazila in the afternoon, Faridganj OC Belal Chowdhury said.

FERTILISER CRISIS 5 sued in Pabna for blocking highway

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Pabna Sadar Police yesterday filed a case against five farmers here for barricading the Pabna-Rajshahi highway on Monday demanding fertiliser.

The accused are Babul Khan of Monidaha village, Mahammad Ali of Ranigram village, Mithu of Monohorpur village, Israil of Gaspara village and Helal of Mozdipur village.

Assistant sub-inspector (ASI) of police Md Humayun Kabir filed the case with Pabna police station.

The complainant claimed that the five accused and about 400 unidentified people gathered at a fertiliser dealer's shop at Tebunia market in Pabna Sadar Upazila on Monday.

Later, they blocked the highway in Tebunia. They ransacked materials and furniture of fertiliser dealer's shop, he alleged.



Students of Shah Jalal University of Science and Technology brought out a procession on the campus wearing black badges yesterday protesting police attack on Dhaka University students on Monday.

ACC detects anomaly in wealth statement of ex-AL MP Rafiquel

Seizes Nissan Patrol, furniture from Panchlaish residence in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

An Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) task force yesterday detected anomaly in wealth statement of detained former Awami League (AL) lawmaker Rafiquel Anwar.

The task force team detected the anomaly while physically checking assets of his Anni Villa residence at Panchlaish here.

ACC deputy director (DD) Abu Md Arif Siddique led the team while Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) and Public Works Department (PWD) officials accompanied the team.

The team went to the former lawmaker's residence at about 9:30am and stayed there till 3:00pm.

During their stay, the team members seized two vehicles including a Nissan Patrol and a private car and all the furniture from there as they found some documents of the vehicles to be not proper. The team also found the value of the furniture much more higher than the value stated in the wealth statement submitted to the commission on July 2.

The team took measurement of the entire building and checked its assets, ACC sources said.

They said the former lawmaker bought a Nissan Patrol in 1997 but he did not make its registration with the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA). He also did not submit necessary documents in this regard.

ACC official Abu Md Arif Siddique said they found the furniture much more costly than the actual statement.

In his statement, Rafiquel Anwar mentioned that his three brothers owned furniture worth Tk 9,000 only which is far from reality, task force sources said.

Rafiquel Anwar and his two brothers Faridul Anwar and Fakrul Anwar jointly owned six buildings including two-storied Anni Villa, three three-storied buildings, Fahad Mansion at Panchlaish, a four-storied building, Sony Villa and a three-storied building, Laila Villa in Dewanbazar area here, they said.

ACC DD Arif said they would check the wealth of other buildings.

PISTOL MISSING ACC to probe case against Sarail cops

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'Baria

The police authorities yesterday shifted the pistol missing case of Sarail Police Station to the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) here.

ACC will now investigate the allegations against two policemen of the police station, Commission sources said.

The policemen are Sarail Police Station second officer sub-inspector (SI) Abu Bakar and constable Prodip Sutradhar, the then 'Munshi' of the police station wh was transferred to Jhenidah Friday night.

In a primary investigation, the police authorities found the two guilty of missing a deposited pistol, ammunition and related things.

Sarail upazila Awami League (AL) vice-president Md Iqbal Azad deposited his licensed 32 bore pistol, 30 rounds of bullets and two magazines at the police station on December 26, 2006. But those were missing later.

The IGP ordered the superintendent of police (SP) of Brahmanbaria to take action.

The additional superintendent of police (ASP) of Brahmanbaria, Md Altaf Hossain investigated the incident and found the two guilty.

The ASP filed a case against the two, arrested them and sent them to jail custody, he said.

4X3

Jessore Jute Industries awaits the final whistle

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The state-owned Jessore Jute Industries (JJI) is also on verge of closure as authorities have started issuing termination notices.

According to JJI CBA leader Md Golam Kibria, 1100 casual workers have so far been retrenched on different pretexts.

Besides, 233 permanent workers, 30 employees and three officials of the country's second biggest jute mills have already gone on voluntary retirement apprehending its closure any time.

But they are yet to get their arrear wages and salaries.

General secretary of JJI Workers Union Mahumd Hossain told this correspondent that retrenched casual workers demonstrated inside the mill yesterday in protest against retrenchment.

He termed the retrenchment violation of labour law. Workers can

not be sacked without payment of arrear wages, he said.

Project Director of JJI Abdur Razzak said the retrenchment is part of a reform measure. The mill is not in a position to run with such heavy burden of losses and liabilities, he said.

Razzak said the mill was yet to pay Tk 54.78 crore loans, Tk 4.21 crore outstanding bills for raw jute supply, Tk 3.25 crore arrear wages for 19 weeks, Tk 16.96 crore against gratuity of workers and employees, Tk 24.68 crore against provident fund and Tk 9.94 crore 94 taken as subsidy from Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC).

The project director further said that there are only 10,000 maunds of raw jute in stock to run the mills only for ten days.

"I am yet to get any hint from the government about allocation of fund to buy raw materials", he said.

8X3