

Patuakhali town protection project uncertain as funds not allocated

WDB executive engineer says preparations were on to begin project work this year



A usual scene in Patuakhali town during high tide in the rainy season.

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Implementation of Patuakhali town protection project has become uncertain as finance ministry stopped funding it in the current financial year (2007-08).

The ministry on October 10 took the decision not to allocate funds for the project in the current financial year, sources in Patuakhali Water Development Board (WDB) told this correspondent yesterday. The project involves over Tk 22 crore.

The project, a long-drawn demand of people of the district, was approved by the planning commission on August 14 this year.

The ministry decision evoked a sharp reaction from different quarters as people of all classes had long been demanding a project to protect the town from flood and tidal surge.

Besides seasonal storms and calamities, the town is regularly inundated during almost every full moon and new moon.

Different professional bodies including the bar association, Patuakhali Chamber of Commerce

and Industry, journalists association and municipal employees faxed memorandums to the water resources ministry on Monday expressing their resentment and demanding steps for immediate implementation of the project.

A project titled Patuakhali Town Protection Embankment-cum-Drainage Project was taken up in 1996 to mitigate sufferings of the townspeople following a visit by the then agriculture Minister Majid-UI-Haque and WDB secretary to Patuakhali. The project gathered dust in the Water Resource Ministry for 12 years before approval.

The project was approved after Chief Advisor Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed during a visit to Barisal in March this year gave assurance when representatives of different professional bodies met. The Chief Advisor came to Barisal as part of his programme to visit divisional headquarters.

After this visit, the water resource ministry approved the project and sent it to the planning commission for approval.

The planning commission approved the project on August 14

this year following a survey report by team.

The project was designed to protect the town from flash flood, erosion and also to remove stagnant water.

It includes construction of 4.20 kilometers flood control embankment, one kilometre wall, eight sluice gates, 38 outlets and installation of four power pumps.

Talking to this correspondent, WDB executive engineer Jahir Uddin Ahmed said, "We had hoped to start the project work this year the ministry has stopped funding".

Abu Zafar Samsuddin, acting chairman of Patuakhali Pourasabha, said, "Inundation is a major problem for the townspeople. The government should take step to implement the project as soon as possible."

He urged to government to allocate funds for the project in the current fiscal year.

WDB (Water Development Board) sources said, a survey team from the planning commission visited Patuakhali on July 20 this year to examine the proposed project. The team led by Hamidur

Rahman, joint chief at 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 August.

Another team from the water resources ministry visited Patuakhali in January last year, which also suggested immediate implementation of the project.

Earlier a consulting firm completed a feasibility study on the proposed project in 2006 and submitted its report suggesting implementation of the project.

In 1960s, a project was undertaken to protect Patuakhali town and coastal upazilas of Bauphal, Dashmina, Galachipa, Kalapara and Mirzaganj 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 rise, inundating two-thirds area by 2 to 5 feet water.

Farmers beat dealer, assault officials for fertiliser

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Angry farmers beat a fertiliser dealer and four officials of Agriculture Extension Department as they did not get fertiliser on Krishnapur Union Parishad premises in Manikganj Sadar upazila yesterday.

The farmers went to the shop of fertiliser dealer Abdul Halim at Rajibpur Bazar for fertiliser. They lined up but the dealer refused to give them fertiliser.

The farmers got angry and started agitating. At one stage, they besieged the shop and beat dealer Abdul Halim and assaulted four AED officials who was also present there.

Injured Abdul Halim was taken to Manikganj Sadar Hospital. Hospital sources said he was given three stretches on the head for the injury.

When contacted, AED Deputy Director Mokbul Hossain Talukdar said there is sufficient fertiliser in the district. The trouble was created there as the farmers created problem in distribution.

He said the AED officials were distributing slip among farmers for smooth distribution but they went to the dealer's shop all at a time, some with slips and some without slips.

Fertiliser hungry farmers also agitated at Pukuria in Ghior upazila for fertiliser, reports said.

Police were deployed there to stave off violence, the sources said.

2 GRP officials suspended in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Bangladesh Railway Police yesterday suspended Officer-in-Charge of Mymensingh GRP Mustafizur Rahman and In-Charge of Gafarganj Railway Police outpost Assistant Sub-Inspector Praful Kumar for negligence to duty.

Two passengers were killed and two others were injured Friday night as they were tossed by robbers from the rooftop of a train bound for Bahadurabad Ghat from Dhaka.

A high level team led by Superintendent of Railway Police (Chittagong) Mahfuzul Haque Nuruzzaman visited Gafarganj railway station and the spots of occurrences at Rouha Kalirhat, Charipara and Maizhati.

Meanwhile, some 29 passengers were arrested from Gafarganj and Mymensingh railway stations Monday night for traveling on roof of trains. They were sent to jail hajjat yesterday.

In a raid at Gafarganj Railway Station Inspector of Railway Police Circle, Dhaka Range Abdus Sattar seized four levers used for riding on rooftop of trains.

When contacted, Superintendent of Mymensingh Railway Station Md. Nazrul Islam admitted suspension of the two officials.

Fugitive convict arrested in Moulvibazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A 10-year-old fugitive convict named Sumel Miah has been arrested from a village in Sadar upazila, police said.

Acting on a tip-off, Sub-Inspectors (SIs) Burhan, Nur-e-Alam and Zafar Iqbal jointly raided the village home of the convict at Gujari village and arrested him on Monday night.

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The arrestee was produced before a court here and sent him to jail yesterday.

Police said Sumel Miah is an accused in several cases like abduction, repression on women and children including arms and drug trade. A court sentenced him to 10 years rigorous imprisonment (RI) in arms case.

2 die under train in B'baria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Two persons died under the wheels of trains in separate incidents in the district Monday evening.

According to railway and police sources, an unidentified child aged about eight was run over by Dhaka bound Subarba Express near Brahmanbaria railway station. The boy was crossing the railway track.

On the same day, a 70-year-old unidentified man fell from a running local train and was crushed under the wheels near Ashuganj station. The local train was going to Bhalrab form Sayestaganj.

Autopsy of the bodies were done at Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital.

Two unnatural death (UD) cases were filed with Akhaura railway police (GRP) station, GRP sources said.

SC TEAM VISITS RAJSHAHI

Officials assure all cooperation in judiciary separation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A six-member committee for monitoring separation of judiciary, headed by Justice MM Ruhul Amin of Supreme Court appellate division visited Rajshahi yesterday.

They exchanged views with Rajshahi district administration, judicial officials and lawyers at the circuit house conference room.

Other members of the team were Justice M Hussain Haider, Justice Quamrul Islam Chowdhury of High Court division, Ikhtedar Ahmed, registrar of HC division, Anwarul Haque, joint secretary of law ministry and Farid Ahmed Shibli, additional registrar of Supreme Court.

The committee exchanged opinion and heard proposals from the officials and lawyers.

Earlier, the team held meetings at Sylhet. It will go to Khulna within a couple of days, sources in the team said.

After holding similar meetings at all divisional headquarters, the committee will visit

districts to help implementing 'effective separation of the judiciary', the sources said.

At the meeting, Additional Divisional Commissioner Hafiz Uddin read out a written speech assuring all cooperation in separation of judiciary.

Rajshahi Deputy Commissioner Khalilur Rahman, Rajshahi Police Superintendent Didar Hossain, president of Advocates' Bar Mujibor Rahman Talukdar, its secretary Nazmus Sadat, senior lawyers Ekramul Haque, Momen Uddin Ahmed spoke on the occasion.

They termed 'historic' the government decision to separate the judiciary and said it has fulfilled a long cherished desire of the people.

They said they would provide all support and cooperation to implementation of the decision.

They said, some problems may occur in the way of separation of the judiciary but those can be solved through cooperation.

Teachers demand removal of 'corrupt' principal

RU CORRESPONDENT

Teachers and staff of Godagari Women's Degree College in Rajshahi district yesterday demanded immediate removal of the college principal for his alleged irregularities and corruption.

When the college was established in 1994, Abdur Rashid got appointment as the principal with the help of former post and telecommunications minister Aminul Haque, they said at a press conference held at Rajshahi Metropolitan Press Club.

"At that time, he [Principal Rashid] simultaneously served as a mathematics teacher of Prentali College of the same upazila and drew salary from there."

"On 2005, an education ministry audit team that visited the college mentioned in their report that Abdur Rashid's appointment as principal was illegal. The ministry ordered him to return his drawn salary."

"The principal hid the audit report and instructed the teachers and staff to collect Tk 2 lakh to 'manage' the audit team."

But the principal's version was found false, the teachers said.

Principal Abdur Rashid harasses teachers and employees by issuing showcase notices for opposing his decision, they alleged.

Earlier, they submitted a written complaint to Godagari Upazila

Nirbahi Officer (UNO) about his irregularities and corruption.

Following the complaint, the UNO formed a three-member probe committee that found irregularities against the principal.

On July, 2007, the UNO temporarily suspended the principal at a governing body meeting, the teachers said. They also showed a copy of the document to journalists.

The principal suspended college vice-principal Enamul Haque and stopped payment of his salary as he protested his mismanagement, they said at the press conference.

The principal also appointed additional teachers, officials and employees against non-vacant posts in exchange of huge amount of bribe, they said.

The teachers and officials urged caretaker government and education ministry to immediately remove the 'corrupt' principal.

Zamirul Rahman, a lecturer of English department, read out the written statement while college teachers Ismail Haque, Abdul Zabbar, Abdur Malek, Md Kamruzzaman, Taslim Uddin, Durul Huda and Ali Azam were present at the press conference.

When contacted over telephone, the principal declined to make any comment about the allegations of corruption and irregularities.

Give interest-free loan in munga-hit areas

View exchange meet told

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Monga (a famine like situation) can be eradicated from the northern region once for all by creating self-employment and income generating activities at the grass roots level.

The General Officer Commanding (GOC) of 66, Infantry Division, Rangpur, Major General Syed Fayed Ahmed said this while exchanging views with the working journalists of nine northern districts at his conference room in Rangpur Cantonment yesterday.

Citing an example of Coach Shahar village in Gaibandha, the GOC said the villagers drove away munga effectively by producing sweaters and blankets at the initiatives of local entrepreneurs at the grass roots level. Workers produced the items by utilising the locally available knitting machines, he said.

General Fatemy said the severity of munga has reduced to a great extent this year following eradication of corruption during distribution of aid to the munga victims.

Terming journalists as companions of development, the general urged them to help identify corruption and publish development-oriented positive news to brighten the image of the country at home and abroad. He also asked them to follow the code of conduct of journalism while doing their professional duties.

Pointing out various aspects of the problem, the journalists stressed on distribution of food as well as allowance to the munga victims in a corruption-free man-

ner for alleviation of poverty and munga in the region.

They also suggested for providing interest-free loan to munga victims by NGO workers who are usually reluctant to give them loan.

Four brigade commanders were present at the meeting.

Working journalists of Rangpur, Dinajpur, Nilphamari, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Panchagarh, Thakurgaon and Joypurhat attended.

UP member held in Sirajganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Police yesterday arrested a member of Chhongachha Union Parishad (UP) while trying to draw Tk 1.35 lakh meant for rehabilitation of flood victims by preparing false documents, police and Sadar UNO office sources said.

Ruhul Amin, member of Ward No 9 of Chhongachha UP was arrested at noon from the Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer's (UNO) office for his bid to misappropriate the entire money, they said. At that time, he submitted a fake list of flood affected people.

On contact, Sirajganj Sadar UNO Mozaffar Ahmed said earlier he received complaints from local people about the UP member's corrupt practices. He asked police to arrest him after an investigation, the UNO said.

Satkhira Bar hails decision

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

The Satkhira Bar Association in a statement yesterday hailed the government decision for separation of the judiciary from the administration, to be effective from November 1.

They also vowed to foil any conspiracy against the more and assured all possible help and cooperation in implementation of the decision.

The lawyers' association also criticised the move by a section of administration officials to resist separation of judiciary. "It is a conspiracy to resist a historic move and its implementation", the statement said.

It said those who protest separation of the judiciary from the administration are violating the Constitution and their service rules.

Terming independence of judiciary a 'constitutional binding', the lawyers said separation of judiciary from administration will ensure justice and protect basic rights of the countrymen.

Obedience country's laws and the service conditions, all officials of the administrative cadres will play their contributory role in separating of the judiciary to establish good governance in the country, the long felt demand of the people, the statement added.

In another statement, Satkhira district Bangabandhu Ainjibi Parishad president and general secretary advocate Azharul Islam and advocate Prasad Kumar hailed the government decision.

13 clinics closed in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The district health department here yesterday closed 13 private clinics and hospitals for violating government rules, official sources said.

Of the clinics and hospitals, nine are situated in Pabna Sadar upazila, three in Ishwardi upazila and one in Chatmohar upazila, Health Department sources said.

They said the action was taken by a vigilance team of Pabna Health Department after a surprise visit to the private clinics and hospitals. The team found that the clinics and hospitals were run by temporary doctors and nurses.

The team was led by Pabna civil surgeon Md Abdul Wadud Miah while its other members were senior consultant Dr Iftekhar Mahmud and Dr Dipak Kumar Ghosh.

Six Galachipa AL leaders get death threat from outlaws

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Six Awami League (AL) leaders in Galachipa have received death threats from a gang of outlaws belonging to Charam Panthi.

Gajalia union AL president Eusuf Gazi, vice president Abdur Rab Miah, union leaders Abdur Razzak, Ismail Howlader, Chandu Dactor and Jalil Gazi got threats from the outlaws by "letters on Saturday."

The outlaws demanded Tk 1.5 lakh to Eusuf Gazi, Tk 1 lakh from Abdur Rob Miah and Tk 50,000 each from others within 15 days of receipt of the letter, otherwise they threatened them with the dire y.

On contact, the Officer-in-Charge of Galachipa police station said they would necessary action 'as soon as possible'.

Meanwhile, the family members of the AL leaders are now feeling insecure after the threat.

Bangladeshi's body retrieved from zero line in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Body of a Bangladeshi cattle trader who was gunned down allegedly by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) Monday morning, was retrieved from the zero point (Ghona border) in Satkhira Sadar upazila yesterday.

He was killed on Joynagar border in Swarnpnagar police station in North 24 Parganas district, opposite Ghona border.

Villagers near the border recovered the body as it was lying unclaimed, BDR said.

The victim, 20 year-old Zahangir Hossain, was son of Enam Hossain of Baikari village in Satkhira Sadar upazila.

On contact, Maj Kamrul Hasan, operations officer of 41 Rifles Battalion, confirmed the incident.

VIOLATION OF EMERGENCY 11 Jubo League men acquitted in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

A magistrate court here yesterday acquitted 11 Awami Jubo League leaders and activists of their charges of violating emergency rules.

They are: Jubo League city unit president Mostafizur Rahman, vice president of the party's district unit Lakmin Chandra, district Jubo League joint secretary Wasimul Bari Simu, activists Sirajul Islam, Touhidul Islam, Shaheen, Mamun and Babu.

Speedy Tribunal Court magistrate Mostain Billah acquitted them by pronouncing the verdict after examining the statement of 17 eyewitnesses.

A number of people brought out a procession in Rangpur town demanding release of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on July 18.

Police arrested three of the accused on charge of violating emergency rule on July 18.

Rangpur Kotwali police lodged a case under emergency rule and framed charges against them.

Boat with 140 urea bags sinks in Titas

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

A mechanised boat with 140 bags of urea fertiliser sank in Titas river when a sand laden boat dashed it near Mantala village under Nabiganj upazila in the district on Monday.

According to sources, the boat with fertiliser bags lifted from Ashuganj Zia Fertilizer Factory was going to Nabinagar.

The fertilisers worth about Tk 50 lakh is lost as the bags can not be recovered from the deep waters, the sources said.

Diarrhoea kills 8, affects over 500 in Moulvibazar, Pabna

STAR NATINAL DESK

Diarrhoea claimed eight lives and affected over five hundred in Moulvibazar tea gardens and different upazilas in Pabna in last one week.

At least seven tea garden labourers died and over 200 were attacked with diarrhoea in two tea gardens of Srimongal upazila during last six days, reports our Moulvibazar correspondent.

Six of the deceased failed to get any treatment, Makhani Lal Karmaker, Chairman of Rajghat union parishad (UP) of Srimongal upazila, said, adding that at least 200

labourers of Rajghat and Katim tea gardens have been infected with the disease and the number is on the rise.

The patients have been admitted to Srimongal Upazila Health Complex and tea garden dispensaries.

Negligence of tea garden authorities, scarcity of pure drinking water and lack of awareness among the labourers are responsible for the spread of diarrhoea, Moulvibazar Civil Surgeon Dr Afaz Uddin said.

Three thousand packets of oral saline and 13,000 water purification tablets have been distributed in the diarrhoea-prone Rajghat and Katim

tea gardens and three medical teams are working there, he added.

Our Pabna correspondent adds: An elderly woman died and at least 328 people have been affected by diarrhoea in a week in the district.

Sujanagar and Bera upazilas are the worst affected areas.

Khatun Jan, 68, wife of Abdul Latif of village Kuripara in Sujanagar upazila, died of the disease on October 19.

The district health department has sufficient medicines and saline for the diarrhoea patients, Pabna Civil Surgeon Dr Md Abdul Wadud Miah told this correspondent over phone on Monday.



An army medical team led by Col Shafiqul Islam attends a diarrhoea patient lying on the floor of Chapainawabganj Sadar Hospital yesterday.

PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA