

Surma-Kushiyara irrigation project uncertain after several revisions

Only 15pc work done in six years: Revised project now awaits Project Evaluation Committee nod

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Revised several times in last six years, the fate of Upper Surma-Kushiyara Irrigation and Flood Control Project has become uncertain again.

Having a bad start, only 15 per cent of the 132 crore taka project has been completed though it was scheduled to the commissioned by 2005-2006 financial year.

Revised for the fifth time, the project is now awaiting approval of the Project Evaluation Committee (PEC) of planning ministry, sources said yesterday.

The project was designed for flood control, improvement of drainage system and irrigation in over 49,000 hectares in the five upazilas of Sylhet. The upazilas are Zakiganj, Kanaighat, Beanibazar, Golapganj and Sylhet Sadar.

The project taken up by the Water development Board (WDB) in north-eastern Sylhet could not have a good start due to lack of proper attention by authorities, the sources claimed while talking to this correspondent.

Even it failed to achieve the minimum progress though six years have passed. It was to be completed in five years.

On the other hand, repeated

floods and massive erosion along the two riverbanks have caused huge damage to crops, homesteads and lands in the region in last few years while the WDB authorities failed to take protective steps in time.

After several revisions, yet another move is there to revise the project again, the sources said.

Asked by the planning ministry,

WDB made a revised project a week ago, axing some components to cut the cost.

As per the plan, the project area begins from the starting point of Surma and Kushiyara in Amolshid border area in Zakiganj upazila and covers areas in Golapganj and Sylhet Sadar along the riverbanks of Surma and Kushiyara.

The project cost was first estimated at Tk 111 crore. It includes construction of 181 kilometre embankments, 813 irrigation structures, two bridges, five drainage regulators, 163 kilometre irrigation canals, 56 kilometre drainage canals and installation of four irrigation pumps.

The project was started in FY 2001-2002 with an initial allocation of only Tk 50 lakh. Little has been done in the last six years due to alleged authorities' apathy and non-allocation of funds in time, the sources said.

Months ago, the project cost was raised by 58 per cent involving an expenditure of Tk 181 crore with a target to complete it by 2009-10.

Under the programme, 450 hectares of land would be acquired at a cost of Tk 32 crore while construction and reconstruction of 159 KM embankment would cost Tk 33 crore.

Besides, construction of 20 drainage cum flushing regulators would cost Tk 16 crore and one pump station would be constructed with Tk 36.15 crore, WDB officials said.

Other components of the revised project include 30 KM main irrigation canals (Tk 1.22 crore), 64 KM canal and 122 irrigation structures (Tk 9 crore).

But, the water resources ministry again asked for cutting down the expenditure. At the beginning this year, a four-member committee was formed for the revision.

The project was revised, cutting down the cost to Tk 135 crore five months ago. Again, it was revised to Tk 132 crore last month.

The officials said only Tk 15 crore has so far been sanctioned.

Only 77 hectares of land could be acquired so far at a cost of Tk 6.2 crore and 41 KM embankments built at a cost of Tk 7 crore in Zakiganj and Kanaighat upazilas.

the official said.

Without acquiring lands, no more project work is possible, they said.

On the other hand, only Tk 2.76 crore has been disbursed though Tk 5 Crore was sanctioned from ADP (annual development plan) allocation in fiscal 2007-08.

Most of the sanctioned amount would be spent for land acquisition for construction of embankments and digging canals. Construction of embankments is the major part of the project in Zakiganj, Kanaighat, Beanibazar and Golapganj upazila areas for flood control.

So far, only 77 hectares of land have been acquired there, the officials added.

Immediate steps are needed for construction of 25 kilometre embankments in the areas to check flooding. Otherwise, project implementation would be delayed further which would also escalate the cost further, they said.

The areas under the planned project experienced repeated and prolonged floods in the last wet season due to onrush of water from hills across the border. The floods left a colossal damage to the crops and washed away scores of dwelling houses.

Zainul's birth anniversary programmes conclude

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

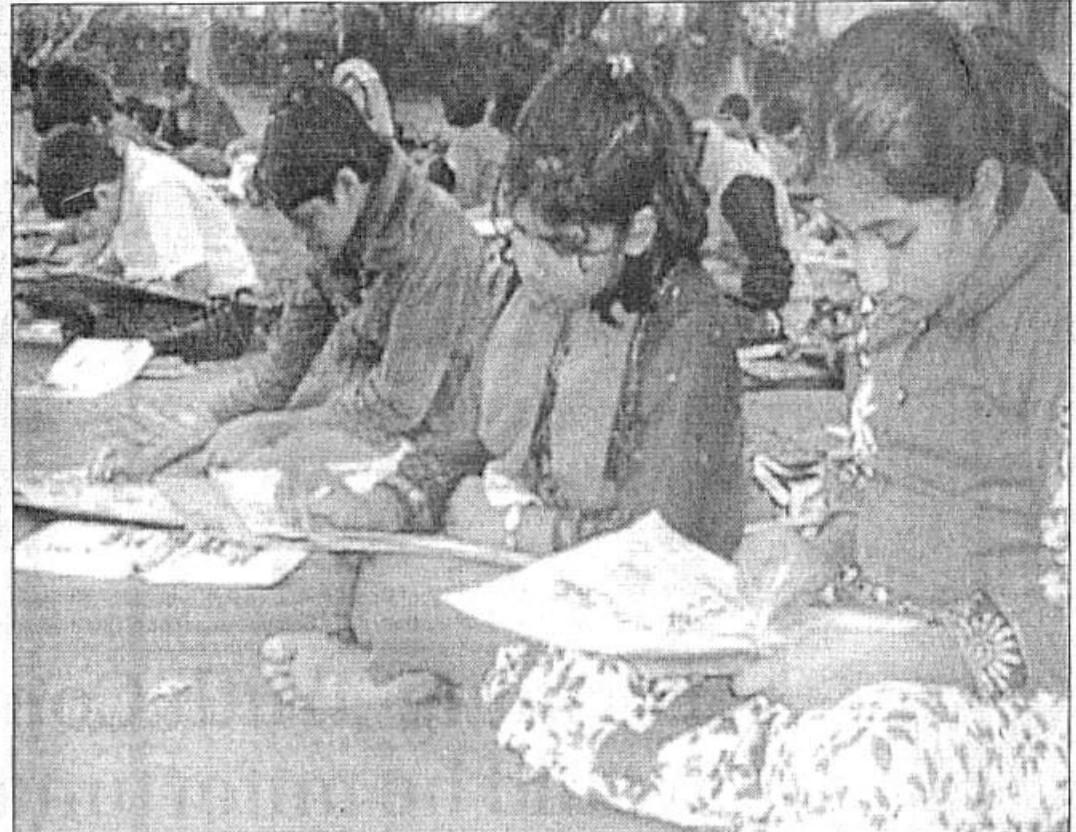
The three-day programmes marking the 93rd birth anniversary of Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin concluded on the premises of Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin Sangrahashala (art gallery) here yesterday.

Yesterday's programme included a discussion on the life and work of Zainul and distribution of prizes among winners of painting competition.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Begum Afsana Yesmin attended the discussion as chief guest with Shilpacharya's wife Jahana Abedin in the chair. Police Superintendent Md Rafiqul Islam was the special guest.

Among others, two sons of the great artist Kairul Abedin and Moinul Abedin, artist Amrinul Islam, poet Farid Ahmed Dulal and Assistant Keeper of the art gallery Dulal Chandra Gain joined the discussion.

Some 200 children of different ages from different educational institutions participated in the competition held on Thursday.



Children at a painting competition held in observance of Zainul's birth anniversary in Mymensingh.

PHOTO: STAR

Security stepped up in Khulna city

Intelligence report on presence of extremists

Death anniversary of Monajat Uddin observed

STAR NATION DESK

Journalists in Rangpur and Nilphamari yesterday observed the 12th death anniversary of Monajatuddin through various programmes.

Speakers at a discussion meeting in Rangpur urged journalists to be professional, creative and honest like Munajat Uddin to project life in rural Bangladesh.

They called upon all socio-cultural organisations in Rangpur to form Munajat Uddin Memorial Council, reports our Rangpur correspondent.

Rangpur Press Club organized the discussion, presided over by Rafiq Sarker. Earlier, journalists and cultural activists placed wreath at the grave of Munajat Uddin at Munishpara.

In Nilphamari, the local Press Club organised a milad mahfil and a discussion meeting.

Munajatuddin died in 1995 while on professional duty on a ferryboat on the Padma.

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