

ANOTHER CYCLONE SEASON ON

Sidr-damaged embankment still remains unrepaired

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The cyclone season has appeared again, but over 5 lakh people in seven upazilas under Patuakhali district are still vulnerable to flooding with saline water as 566 kilometres of flood control embankment damaged by Sidr on November 15 in 2007 are yet to be repaired.

About 1.5 lakh hectares of agricultural land is also under risk due to the situation.

Of the 644 km embankment in the district that was damaged during the Sidr, Water Development Board (WDB) repaired only 78 km embankment last year.

"I had lost Aman paddy on three

acres of land during the Sidr in November 2007. I also failed to cultivate crops on the land later. It was flooded by saline water from the adjacent river as the damaged flood control embankment is yet to be repaired," said Nur Mohammad, a farmer of Charkhali village under Mirzaganj upazila in the district.

"We do not want relief. We demand steps to repair embankment so that we can cultivate our land in the upcoming rainy season," said another farmer Abdul Kader Howlader.

"Many dwelling houses like that of mine were washed away during the Sidr as there was no flood control embankment in our char [island]. About 5,000 people in this char are still

under risks as no flood control embankment has been built," said Ali Hossain, an inhabitant of Char Lata under Galachipa upazila.

Higher authorities allocated only Tk 7.25 crore while local authorities demanded Tk 110 crore for renovation of the damaged embankments.

"Shortly after Sidr, we submitted a Tk 110 crore emergency proposed plan to the higher authorities concerned for repair of the damaged embankments," said Patuakhali WDB Executive Engineer Md Jahir Uddin.

"With the allocation we could repair only 78 km out of 644 km damaged embankment and two sluice gates in last year. Higher authorities have given assurance that a new project will start

soon to repair the embankments," he said.

Before Sidr battered the southern region of the country on November 15 2007, there were 1,209-kilometre flood control embankments in seven upazilas of Patuakhali district, said sources at WDB office in Patuakhali.

"The cyclone destroyed 83 km embankment while 562 kilometre embankment was partly damaged. Three hundred fifty-five sluice gates, 612 inlets, 362 irrigation schemes and 24 closures were also damaged in seven upazilas of the district. Aman paddy on 1.70 lakh hectares of land was damaged due to the Sidr," they said.



Students of Khulna Nursing Training Institute continue their agitation demanding removal of Chief Instructor Marjina Khatun for her alleged 'dirty behaviour' with students.

Class boycott by Khulna NIT students continues
Removal of chief instructor demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The authorities of Khulna Nursing Training Institute (NTI) yesterday withdrew the chief instructor and sent her on leave in the face of students' agitation.

However, 170 students of the institute yesterday continued their indefinite class boycott programme and refrained from discharging their duties demanding 'permanent removal' of the chief instructor, Marjina Khatun, for her alleged torture on students.

"I have formed a five-member committee to probe students' allegations against the chief instructor of Khulna Nursing Training Institute. The chief instructor has been withdrawn from duty today [Mon-

day] and sent on leave until the investigation report is submitted," Khulna Civil Surgeon Dr Lutfor Rahman said.

The five-member committee headed by Deputy Civil Surgeon Dr Mir Daud Ali has been asked to submit report by next Sunday.

Students, who launched their movement on Sunday, said Chief Instructor Marjina Khatun forced three fourth year students to run around the institute ground with shoes hung from their necks as punishment for not wearing socks during their duty at Khulna General Hospital.

The three students told this correspondent yesterday that the chief instructor also threatened them with 'dire consequences' in case they go to media.

Alleging 'dirty behaviour, corruption and repressive measures' against the chief instructor, several students said they will not return to classes until their demand for removal of Marjina Khatun is met.

Marjina Khatun, who often mentally tortures students for minor faults, on occasions confined students under lock and key, said a student.

Denying the students' allegations against her, Marjina Khatun said, "I wanted them to be disciplined as their professional demands it. They should not be wayward."

Action will be taken if Marjina is proved guilty as per report on findings of probe, said Civil Surgeon Dr Lutfor Rahman.



Juicy mangoes likely to be pricey this year

RABIUL HASAN, Chapainawabganj

Mango production in Chapainawabganj, the largest mango producing district in the country, may fall short of target this year, the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) officials, mango scientists and growers said.

According to the DAE, about 22,300 hectares of lands are being used as mango orchard in five upazilas in the district.

But DAE fixed a target of 1.5 lakh tonnes of mangoes this year, which is less of 53,500 tonnes of the previous year, because of less favourable weather condition at the time of budding.

Growers and a number of mango scientists, however, disputed that a good production still might be possible as the weather condition throughout the year was not so bad.

DAE and producers said, every year mango cultivation and production in this region increased due to the fruit's demand throughout the country.

The production was 1,27,000 tonnes in 2006, 1,60,000 tonnes in 2007 and 1,53, 500

tonnes in 2008.

Chief Scientific Officer of Regional Horticulture Research Centre, Chapainawabganj, Abdur Rashid said, late budding followed by foggy weather and now erratic rainfall have dampened the prospect of a good harvest this year.

According to FAO statistics, the largest mango producing countries are India-- 10.8 million tonnes, China-- 3.6 million tonnes, Pakistan-- 1.6 million tonnes, Mexico-- 1.5 million tonnes and Indonesia-- 1.4 million tonnes. On the other hand, Bangladesh produces only around 0.24 million tonnes of mangoes.

DAE officials said, mango researchers evolved only four seasonal varieties of mangoes in the last 25 years. They are yet to evolve any early variety. So the importers bring mangoes from other countries at least two months before the arrival of local varieties.

They import immature and low standard mangoes from India just for higher profit, said Shahidul Islam, a mango orchard owner at Naya Lavanga village of Shibganj upazila.

BM COLLEGE TENSE
BCL rivals file cases

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A tense situation is prevailing on Brojo Mohon (BM) College campus as two factions of BCL college unit filed cases against each other following Saturday's clash over 'admission business'.

The two factions--one led by Moin Tushar and the other by Rafiq Serniabad--clashed on the college campus over 'admission business', leaving four BCL activists injured.

On Saturday night, Rafiq Serniabad filed a case with Kotwali Police Station against

Moin Tushar and seven others belonging to his faction.

In the case, Rafiq alleged that Moin Tushar group swooped on them as they protested their admission trade on the campus.

Moin Tushar, who was expelled on Sunday on charges of violating party discipline and creating chaos on the college campus, also filed a case with the same police station against Rafiq and his 24 men. In the case statement, Moin said the accused attacked them on the campus Saturday noon and took away money, gold chains and cellphones from him and his supporters.

Nightmare journey to Kuakata

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Tourists are turning away from Kuakata sea beach, one of the country's most attractive tourist spots, as awfully dilapidated 22-kilometre road from Kalapara to Kuakata has become a nuisance for travellers.

Marked with a number of large potholes and ditches, the road leading to Kuakata has become so risky that most of the direct bus services from capital Dhaka have been suspended and the number of tourists there has drastically fallen.

With its immensely beautiful landscape and seascape, Kuakata sea beach and its surrounding areas attract about half a million visitors from across the country annually. The picturesque spot also attracts a large number of tourists from abroad.

But the tedious and risky journey through the decrepit road would make one averse to

go there again.

Last year Roads and Highways Department repaired it at a cost of Tk 2.28 crore but within months huge potholes and ditches reappeared posing risks for passenger buses, goods carrying trucks and other vehicles.

Small vehicles including private cars and minibuses are exposed to greater risk as they often meet accidents and get stuck in deep ditches.

Traders, hoteliers, and people from all walks of life now openly talk about the rampant corruption regarding the funds for repair of Kalapara-Kuakata road that bears all the signs of negligence by the authorities concerned.

The tourism-dependent traders are passing a hard time in the current tourist season, which is now at the fag end.

Tourists have lost interest in the beautiful place due mainly to communication problem, said several traders.

"During the last two

months, we got only seven guests daily on an average. Earlier when condition of the road was better, some 200 guests visited our facility every day," said an official of Holiday Homes, a motel of Parjatan Corporation.

"Now we have to pay almost double the rate to hire a truck to carry fish from Kuakata," said Nimai Ahandra, secretary of Mohipur Fish Traders Association.

Earlier, the 50-km Patuakhali-Kalapara road was constructed with Tk 44 crore provided by Danida.

RHD repaired 22-km Kalapara-Kuakata road at a cost of Tk 2.28 crore just after the super cyclone Sidr in November 2007 but the road became unfit for use in a year as the quality of repair work was very low, sources said.

Road and Highways officials in Patuakhali said a project for reconstruction of Kalapara-Kuakata road has been approved by higher authorities but the work is yet to start.

Khalid-Bin-Majid, deputy manager of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC), said they sent several letters to higher authorities concerned to take immediate steps to reconstruct Kalapara-Kuakata road.

When contacted, RHD Executive Engineer Alamgir Shahidul Islam said the ministry concerned has already allocated Tk 130 crore to construct three bridges to replace ferry services at three places on

the road and a Tk 57 crore development project plan has been approved to reconstruct the road.

He said reconstruction of the road will start after floating tenders.

Authorities' indifference and lack of proper planning is a barrier to development of Kuakata, one of country's main tourist attractions, as a thriving tourist spot, said tourists, local people and traders.



With large potholes, awfully dilapidated 22 kilometre Kalapara-Kuakata road itself tells the tale of its decrepit state.

Border survey along Atrai

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

The surveyors of Bangladesh and India accompanied by Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) have started survey along Atrai River to construct 33 pillars to demarcate six kilometre border along the river in Dinajpur Sadar upazila.

Construction of the pillars on the bordering river is scheduled to complete within May 31 this year, sources at BDR Phulbari 40 Battalion said.

After signing of an MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) to construct 33 river pillars on no-man's land to demarcate India-Bangladesh border along the 6 km Atrai river in January this year, Bangladesh Land Survey Department invited bidders to construct the 33 border pillars and appointed a construction firm, said sources at the survey department.

A five-member survey team of Bangladesh Land Survey Department led by Abu Shahin arrived on Saturday. In absence of clear demar-

cation between the border areas of Bangladesh and India, BDR and BSF earlier got locked in armed clashes several times, said officials of Phulbari 40 Battalion of BDR.

The steps for survey to set up border pillars on the river followed several meetings between the joint river commissions of the two countries, BDR sources said.

When contacted, Lt Col Quamrul Islam, commanding officer of Phulbari 40 Battalion, admitted that about survey which started on Saturday.

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