

Poor navigability turns Mawa route risky

A CORRESPONDENT,
Madaripur

The Mawa-Magurkanda-Nauduba channel, an important river channel on Mawa-Kawrakandi route in the southwestern region, may close anytime as the waterway has lost its navigability due to continuous deposition of silt.

Now all kinds of vessels, including ferries, are plying the 16km long channel with a great risk. Ferry and launch drivers, officers and others concerned have been worried over the channel closing any moment during Ramandan.

Only six feet water now exists instead of normal nine feet on three spots of the channel, including Magurkanda crossing. As a result vessels, including launches, are plying with a high risk of uncertainty as their bottom get stuck in the channel.

The ferries and launches are being stuck in the hidden chars for hours together even in the season when the deep-water is found in the channel, sources said.

The Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) has installed beacon lights and signal lights at 31km long Jajira-Palerchar-

Louhajang channel to use it alternative route if the present waterway closes.

If the present channel is closed, the Jajira-Palerchar-Louhajang channel would take about two hours more to take a detour. It would increase the sufferings of the homebound people of southwestern region on the eve of Eid and Puja.

The officials fear the route may turn into a non-profit route as the government would have to count huge loss on fuel.

Idris Hossain Siraji, Master in charge of Ferry Shah Moqsud said the Ro-Ro ferry Shah Moqsud carrying 25 vehicles was stuck for 16 hours on a hidden char last week.

Water in the river is increasing every day due to the flood keeping the cross channel functional, he said.

B I W T A M a n a g e r Shahnewaz Chowdhury said, if the channel is closed anytime, the suffering of the homebound passengers of southwestern region would mount.

After the present Awami League-led government came to power, it reopened the channel by dredging it at a cost of Tk 4.86 crore in February.

India faces 'severe' drought: PM

AFP, New Delhi

India faces a "severe" drought but the country's ample food grain stock will ensure no one goes hungry, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said yesterday.

Monsoon rains, the lifeline for farms that support more than half of India's 1.1 billion population, have been scant and about 40 percent of India's districts have declared a drought.

"No one has control over drought. It's a severe drought," said Singh during a trip to the arid western state of Rajasthan to inaugurate a giant new oilfield, the Press Trust of India news agency

reported.

India's Meteorological Department (IMD) said Saturday the country faced a 24-percent annual rainfall deficiency, but patchy rains are expected during the end of the monsoon season.

The last few sporadic showers could help the winter crop that is sown around October-November," director of the IMD, B.P.Yadav, told AFP.

Singh said there were sufficient food grain stocks to support the Public Distribution System, a government network that manages food distribution and the supply of grains to poor households at subsidised levels.

FROM PAGE 16
government officials in
Patuakhali.

The indifference of the authorities is already taking its toll on the beauty of the area that, despite dilapidated roads, is visited by about half a million tourists annually.

The grabbing of the beach started with the phenomenal rise in land prices in the area. Within the last four years, the value of a katha of land rose from Tk 3,000 to a staggering Tk 200,000, according to local journalists.

Sources in the local administration said the new settlers on the beach somehow bypassed the Diara Settlement Office in Barisal where 96 cases, involving acres of beach area, are now pending.

"We don't know how these people could have obtained valid papers when these cases are pending," said an official of the district administration in Patuakhali wishing anonymity.

Most occupiers of the Kuakata beach have already set up hotels, restaurants and

shops.

This correspondent found a large signboard near the beach claiming a project to construct 'Hotel Kings'. A solid boundary and a building bore the mark of its presence. ABM Sahidul Islam Swapna claimed ownership of the land and the hotel project and said that he had bought the plot 'several years ago'.

Another individual, Shah Alam Sheikh, occupied 1.60 acres of land nearby and demarcated it with pillar and barbed wire. Sheikh said that he inherited the land from his father. Both of these so-called owners of the Kuakata beach area however admitted that cases against their plots are still pending with the settlement office in Barisal.

"Building huts and installing demarcation pillars in such a way on the beach look ugly and unacceptable. Authorities must act as soon as possible to stop this nuisance and make Kuakata enjoyable," Khan said.

Abdul Jabbar Akon, local land officer, said that the area near the beach belongs to the state. "Our records clearly show that it is khas land and we have already filed 96 objection petitions with Diara settlement office in Barisal that remain pending for years," Akon said.

In 1996, the government rehabilitated 50 landless fishermen families with land and homes near the beach. But super cyclone Sidr in November 2007 totally destroyed it. Interestingly the landless families' village is now a project area for an unknown

group of people from outside Kuakata. Local people said the landless families were allegedly forced to sell their small allocations of land and move out of the area.

Tourists visiting Kuakata openly express their dismay at the unplanned growth of the area. Ashraf Uddin Khan, a tourist from Dhaka, said that he felt sad about the destruction of the beach.

"Building huts and installing demarcation pillars in such a way on the beach look ugly and unacceptable. Authorities must act as soon as possible to stop this nuisance and make Kuakata enjoyable," Khan said.

Frustrated by the indifference of the government towards development of Kuakata, members of Kuakata Hotel Resorts Owners Association formed a human chain in front of Kuakata press club and the sea beach on March 10, urging all to save Kuakata from land grabbers.

Wahiduzzaman Khan Sohel, secretary of the association, said that Kuakata is fast losing its natural beauty due to unplanned growth.

"The government must take immediate measures to make Kuakata more enjoyable rather than encouraging unplanned development," Sohel said.

Some locals occupied most parts of khas land by showing settlement case in 1955. We have already filed objections with the divisional settlement office in Barisal," Liakat Ali said.

Md Reaz Ahmed, DC of Patuakhali, said that they would soon conduct drives to remove illegal structures from the land in Kuakata beach.

According to a military source, Sudanese forces as well as Nur supporters are present in the region.

Both the SLA and JEM

condemned the abduction in telephone interviews with AFP.

"We do not know who did that... but we deplore such acts," JEM spokesman Tahir al-Faki said.

Nur, who lives in exile in Paris, echoed him.

"This is a terrorist act and we strongly condemn it," he said.

"This is not the behaviour of the SLA to kidnap humanitarian workers or UNAMID people."

Earlier in the week

UNAMID's outgoing military commander, Martin Luther Agwai, and departing head

Rodolphe Adada said the war

in Darfur was in abeyance -- angering both the SLA and the JEM.

"As of today, I would not say there is a war going on in Darfur," Agwai said.

But he added: "Since May until today, what have we had on the ground? The only thing now: carjackings, breaking into people's homes to look for electronics and mobile telephones."

Adada told AFP his soldiers

have put an end to the massacres that long plagued Darfur.

"I have achieved results. The main result is the end of massacres in Darfur," he said.

JEM spokesman Faki said:

"I don't know how they can

consider that war is over in

Darfur. The war is not over.

The war is over when there is a comprehensive peace agreement."

On Saturday he told AFP:

"Agwai said that the war in

Darfur is over and that there

are only a few incidents. If

Agwai is right and that the

government controls all

Darfur then the government

should answer why such an

incident happens."

Nur meanwhile said:

"UNAMID is not active in

Darfur. They are not able to

protect the civilians and to

move from place to place on

the ground. They become like

(Sudanese President Omar) al-

Beshir."

There have been three

abductions in Darfur since the

International Criminal Court

issued an arrest warrant in

March against Beshir for

alleged war crimes in Darfur.

Two cases had peaceful

outcomes with foreign

human rights workers freed

by their captors, but two

women aid workers from

Ireland and Uganda seized on

July 3 are still being held by

gunmen demanding a ran-

son.

Sharon Commins and

Hilda Kawuki were seized

from the offices of the Irish aid

group Goal in the North

Darfur city of Kutum.



Unscrupulous land grabbers use barbwire fences to occupy khas land near the Kuakata beach in Patuakhali.

Gunmen kidnap 2 UNAMID workers in Darfur

AFP, Khartoum

Two civilians working for UNAMID, the joint UN-African Union peacekeeping mission, were kidnapped at gunpoint in Darfur at dawn on Saturday in the first abduction targeting the force.

The unidentified man and woman were seized only days after the commanders of the joint force made controversial remarks about the security situation in Darfur that triggered the ire of the region's main rebel groups.

"This morning at 4:30 (0130 GMT), armed men attacked the UNAMID staff residence in Zalingei, Darfur, and abducted two civilian members of the staff, a man and a woman," force spokesman Noureddin Mezni told AFP.

The kidnappers mark the first abductions of UNAMID staff members, Mezni said, adding that contact had been made with the abductors to determine their demands.

Zalingei, where the kidnappings took place, is the home town of Abdelwahid Mohammed Nur, head of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), the main Darfur rebel group along with the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM).

According to a military source, Sudanese forces as well as Nur supporters are present in the region.

Both the SLA and JEM

condemned the abduction in

telephone interviews with AFP.

"We do not know who did that... but we deplore such acts," JEM spokesman Tahir al-Faki said.

Nur, who lives in exile in Paris, echoed him.

"This is a terrorist act and we strongly condemn it," he said.

"This is not the behaviour of the SLA to kidnap humanitarian workers or UNAMID people."

The government must take immediate measures to make Kuakata more enjoyable rather than encouraging unplanned development," Sohel said.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development & Cooperatives (MoLGRD&C)
Local Government Division
Advance Action on Recruitment of Consultants
Urban Public and Environmental Health Sector Development Program
Request for Expression of Interest (EOI)
for

Shortlisting of Consultants for Package A: Program Support Consultancy

EOI Ref. No.: UPEHSDP/PMU/2009/7/1655 Date: 25.08.2009

1. The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has applied for a sector development loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for the Urban Public and Environmental Health Sector Development Program (UPEHSDP). It intends to utilize part of the program funds for the Program Support Consultancy (PSC) services (Package A). The Local Government Division (LGD), Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives will be the executing agency of UPEHSDP. The six city corporations (Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, Barisal, Sylhet) will be the implementing agencies.

2. The PSC will assist the UPEHU and CCPUs in policy and capacity development support, assisting in pro-poor surveys, training and capacity development, behaviour change communication, legal reform support, human resource development, gender mainstreaming, citizen's participation, resettlement and rehabilitations, and others. The PSC package will consist of 12 person-months of international and 114 person-months of national experts. The firm will be selected through international competition using quality and cost-based selection procedures and in accordance with ADB's Guidelines on the Use of Consultants (February 2007 or as amended from time to time). Project implementation is scheduled to commence on 1 July 2010 for a period of 78 months until 31 December 2016. Further details are in the attached terms of reference. The EOs will be evaluated based on the attached evaluation criteria.

3. The Program Director (officiating) of UPEHSDP invites eligible consulting firms to submit Expression of Interests (EOI) from for required services. Interested parties may download the EOI template from <http://www.adb.org/Consulting/toolkit-template.asp> and submit all required information not later than 4.00pm on 18 October 2009 to:

Program Director (officiating), UPEHSDP & Project Director, UPHCP-II
Program Management Unit (PMU), UPHCP-II
Room No-620, Nagar Bhaban, 5 Phoenix Road, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.

Phone: 880-2-955917; Fax: 9569124;
E-mail: pd.uphcp@gmail.com; www.adb.org

The broad scope of services to be provided by PSC include the following:

The firm will be responsible for assisting the UPEHU and CCPUs in program and project monitoring and evaluation, policy reform support, assisting in pro-poor surveys, training and capacity development, behaviour change communication, legal support, human resource development, gender mainstreaming, citizen's participation, resettlement and rehabilitations, and others. Under this package, provision for capacity building activities will be required. This will entail overseas and local training related to the proposed program reforms. The consulting firm will oversee the conduct of related studies and advocacy to be outsourced.