

People from different professions join a boat procession on the Brahmaputra yesterday with a call to save the river from encroachers and polluters. Organised by Mymensingh District Nagork Andolok, the processionists also urged the authorities concerned to recover the land grabbed by vested quarters at different points on both sides of the river.

TWO YEARS AFTER THE SEVERE CYCLONE Thousands of Sidr-hit families still homeless

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Most of the Sidr victims who lost their dwelling houses in Patuakhali are still passing days in miseries even after two years of the severe cyclone.

A large number are living in makeshift huts, as they have no ability to build new houses.

According to district administration, 2.25 lakh people of 54,006 families became shelterless due to cyclone Sidr that hit the district on this day in 2007.

Of the victims, only 14,110 families got houses under the assistance programme taken by the government and different donor countries and agencies.

Sources said, 2,490 more new houses are under construction in the district while 37,406 families are still shelterless in seven upazilas.

"I got Tk 5,000 as financial help from army personnel to rebuild my house just after Sidr. But it was too small an amount. So, I'm still living at a hut with my six family members," Sahina Begum of Mandiabab village in Mirzaganj upazila told this correspondent.

During Sidr, Sonabar, 50, mother of Sahina, was killed while Sahina saved her five-year-old child Hridoy and others by climbing a tree.

"We heard that the government is giving house to Sidr victims but we are yet to get one. We face more difficulties when water enters our makeshift houses in rainy season," said Ponu Munshi of the same village.

Fifteen people were killed in Mandiabab village out of a total of 115 in Mirzaganj upazila, according to the upazila administration. Only Tk 5,000 were given to those whose houses were damaged fully and Tk 2,000 to Tk 3,000 to the



PHOTO: STAR

Sidr victim Marium Begum with her child in lap stands in front of her makeshift house on Mandiabab embankment under Mirzaganj upazila of Patuakhali district. Most of the victims who lost their dwelling houses are still passing days in miseries even after two years of the severe cyclone.

partially affected families.

About 1,200 dwelling houses were damaged in Dewlee Subidkhali union under Mirzaganj upazila while 650 families got houses from different international organisations including Muslim Aid.

"I got a house from Muslim Aid. But many others still live under open sky," said Kalam Mridha of Charkhali village.

Contacted, Md Reaz Ahmed, deputy commissioner (DC) of Patuakhali said, they are trying their best to mitigate the miseries of the victims. "Every shelterless family will

get house in phases," he said.

Of the donor agencies, Saudi Arabian government has already built 4,740 houses in Galachipa, Kalapara and Mirzaganj upazilas of the district. The country also assured the authorities concerned of building a total of 8,500 houses. Speed Trust, a local NGO, built 3,000 houses, Islamic Relief Bangladesh built 1,278 houses and British Red Cross built 925 houses.

Sources said, 1,770 more houses are now being built under Japanese government aid while 720 more houses

under the grant of Bangladesh government.

District administration also distributed Tk 40.50 crore and 2,262 bundles of CI sheets among Sidr victims to repair their damaged houses. But all the victims were not lucky enough to get financial assistance and CI sheets, as the allocation was too meagre against huge demand, sources said.

According to local sources, Sidr damaged 54,006 houses fully, 1,34,687 houses partially, 1,161 educational institutions and 847 km roads in the district.

They further said the BIWTA used to rent dredgers from Water Development Board (WDB) in the past as per requirement. They have also rented five dredgers from WDB this year. But the WDB could not supply them in time, the sources added.

As a result, they are being compelled to carry lighter cargo vessels and barges and use alternative ways to reach there.

Sources in the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) office said they are yet to start dredging

cargo vessels and barges told this correspondent that they cannot reach Baghabari with large cargo vessels and barges on schedule, as a number of shoals have emerged at different points of Nakalia, Berakhola, Latifpur, Pechakholia, Char Saifullah and Mohongan, disrupting movement of water transports.

They said they have sent several letters to the authorities concerned for taking necessary actions but to no effect. They urged the authorities concerned to start dredging in the main channel for smooth movement of water transport.

Besides, the officials of Padma, Meghna and Jamuna fuel depots at Baghabari river port told The Daily Star the farmers of northern districts will face shortage of fuel this season if fuel transportation on the route remains suspended for two or three days.

They also demanded immediate steps to start dredging in the route.

POOR NAVIGABILITY HITS BAGHABARI-PATURIA CHANNEL

Fertiliser, fuel supply to 16 dists hampered

GOLAM MOSTAFA JIBON, from Baghabari Ghat

Movement of water transport, especially cargo vessels and barges loaded with fertiliser and fuel, is being hampered in Baghabari-Paturia channel due to poor navigability of the Jamuna.

Water level of the river and its tributaries has fallen drastically and dredging in the main channel has now become urgent to keep it navigable for big oil tankers and vessels, sources in the Baghabari River Port authorities said.

They said at least 9-11 feet depth

of water is needed in the channel for smooth movement of fertiliser and fuel loaded cargo vessels and barges. But the water level now goes seven feet below normal at different points of the main channel.

Meanwhile, the farmers of 16 northern districts are apprehending shortage of fertiliser and diesel during the Irri-Boro season.

Due to drastic fall in water level, fertiliser and fuel loaded transports are reaching Baghabari by using alternative route, which takes more time.

During a recent visit to Baghabari river port, masters (drivers) of some

cargo vessels and barges told this correspondent that they cannot reach Baghabari with large cargo vessels and barges on schedule, as a number of shoals have emerged at different points of Nakalia, Berakhola, Latifpur, Pechakholia, Char Saifullah and Mohongan, disrupting movement of water transports.

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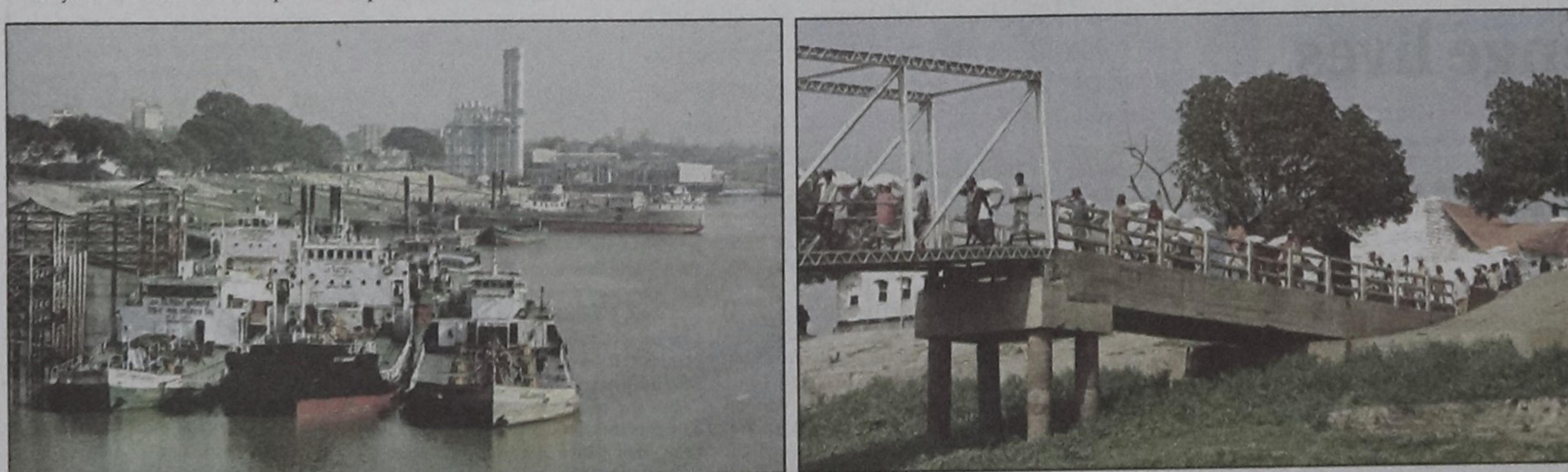
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Abdur Razzaq, in charge of Baghabari river port, and Mostafizur Rahman, assistant director of the port, said the farmers of northern region will face acute fertiliser and fuel crises in the peak Irri-Boro season if the channel is not dredged on emergency basis.

They also demanded immediate steps to start dredging in the route.



As big vessels and barges cannot reach Baghabari river port due to poor navigability in the main channel of the Jamuna, lighter vessels carry goods from the big ones to shore. Right, labourers carry fertiliser to godowns after they were unloaded from lighter vessels.



Right, labourers carry fertiliser to godowns after they were unloaded from lighter vessels.

BNP factions clash, take rivals to court Section 144 at places

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Fourteen BNP leaders and activists, including Sathkhira district BNP Convener Habibul Islam Habib, have been sued on charge of assaulting five party men during Tala upazila BNP conference on November 13.

The other accused include Mrinal Kanti Roy and Sufiul Islam, newly elected president and general secretary of Tala upazila BNP, local BNP leaders Yasin Ali, Kamrul Islam, Ashraful Islam and Nurul Islam and activists Kamrul Islam and Ashraful Islam.

Local BNP leader Sirajul Islam Bablu filed the case with Tala Police Station on Friday night. Police arrested Kamrul Islam and Ashraful Islam at their houses at Tala upazila headquarters, according to our Sathkhira correspondent.

Sirajul Islam Bablu, who was also a candidate for upazila unit secretary, alleged that the accused swooped on him and his supporters at the conference venue at Tala Government College ground at around 1:00pm on November 13.

Contacted, Officer-in-Charge (OC) Matiur Rahman of Tala Police Station said Bablu and four others were injured during a clash between two groups of local BNP over formation of the party's upazila committee. He said police have launched a drive to arrest the remaining accused including district BNP convener and former lawmaker Habibul Islam Habib.

In Munshiganj, two factions of BNP could not hold upazila BNP conference at Sreenagar Pilot High School ground yesterday as the local administration imposed Section 144 at the venue apprehending untoward incident, says a correspondent.

Earlier both the groups

vowed to hold the conference at the venue at 11:00am to elect the upazila unit's new committee.

A faction led by upazila Convener Md Momin Ali called the conference at Sreenagar High School ground. Another faction led by upazila convening committee member Abdul Rahim Mridha Faruque also called their conference at the same venue at the same time prompting the administration to impose Section 144.

Our correspondent in Chapainawabganj reports: The upazila administration of Patnitola imposed Section 144 at Puratola Madrasa ground under Patnitola upazila in Naogaon yesterday as two factions of BNP upazila unit declared programmes at the same venue.

Sources said a faction led by convener of BNP upazila unit for former lawmaker Shamsuzzoha arranged council meeting at Puratola madrasa ground in the morning.

The rival group led by former president Masud Karim called a protest meeting against the council at the same place.

At this, the local administration imposed Section 144 from 7:00am to 10:00pm at the madrasa ground to avoid any untoward incident, said, Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Abdul Malek.

Meanwhile, at least 20 BNP activists were injured in a factional clash at Majibari Union under Kazipara upazila yesterday over holding of the union level conference, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the clash ensued between Toba group and Mobarak group at noon when Toba group ransacked the union BNP office, leaving 20 from both sides injured.

The feuding groups also damaged three shops at the nearby bazaar. Seven of the injured were admitted to local health complex.

SNAPS AND SNIPPETS

Robbers loot 8 houses

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtha

Armed robbers looted eight houses at Chadpur village in Damurhuda in Chuadanga on Friday night. According to police, around 20/25 robbers in eight groups entered into eight houses at a time at about 1:00 am. The owners of the houses are Nurul Islam, Amjad Hossain, Sourav Hossain, Ajimuddin, Ayub Ali, Liakat Ali, Abul Kashem and Swakat Ali. The robbers looted Tk 50, 000, ornaments, clothes and other valuable things worth about more Tk 2 lakh. The robbers hit Saidur Rahman, 18, son of Sourav Hossain with an iron rod when he tried to resist the robbers. Saidur is undergoing treatment at Damurhuda Upazila Health Complex.

Girl killed after rape

UNB, Sirajganj

Criminals killed an 8-year-old girl after rape at Alokdia village in Salanga upazila on Thursday. The victim was identified as Achhia, daughter of Abul Hossain of the village. Police said, locals found the body of the victim in Balurchar area of the village. Achhia was missing since Wednesday evening. On information, police recovered the body of Achhia that bore injury marks. Police suspect that the criminals might have killed her after rape. The body was sent to hospital morgue for autopsy.

Snatchers loot Tk 7.2 lakh

UNB, Narayanganj

Snatchers looted Tk 7.2 lakh injuring a cattle trader near Nayabazar in Sonargaon upazila on Friday night. The victim was identified as Lokman, 40, of Koltapara village. Locals said, a gang of snatchers waylaid Lokman at about 9:00pm while he was returning home with the amount after selling his cows in the bazar. At one stage, they stabbed him and took away the money. Lokman was rushed to local Khanpur hospital where his condition was stated to be critical.



Sylhet chapter of Bangladesh College Teachers' Association forms a human chain in front of Sylhet Central Shaheed Minar on Friday demanding full implementation of the education policy.

'Hundi' money recovered

UNB, Lalmonirhat

Members of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) recovered 'hundi' money amounting to Tk 4 lakh from Burirhat border in Kaliganj upazila early Friday. Acting on a tip-off, a team of BDR chased a gang of 'hundi' traders late at night when they were trying to smuggle the money out to India. Sensing presence of the border guards, the gang fled the scene leaving behind the bag containing the amount.

AL leader stabbed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

A ward level Awami League (AL) leader was stabbed allegedly by a upazila BNP member on Wednesday at Chhantila village under Ramgarh upazila. He was identified as Mohammad Fazlul Haque, 37, the Chhantila ward AL president under Ramgarh Union Parishad. Police said, Ramgarh BNP member Mohammad Yunus Mia, 35, attacked Fazlul with sharp knives over a trivial matter at their village at about 6 pm. Locals rescued Fazlul and admitted him to Ramgarh Upazila Health Complex. His condition was stated to be critical.

Seven houses gutted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Seven houses were gutted in a fire at Uzani Para of the town early Thursday. Fire service sources said, two firefighting units from Bandarban with the help of locals doused the fire in an hour-long effort. Witnesses said the fire originated from a house around 1:30am and engulfed the adjacent houses including a three-storied building. Landlord Aoung Sa Ching said, the fire originated from an electric short circuit and damaged goods worth around Tk 40 lakh.

Two boys drown

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Two boys drowned in a pond on Thursday morning at Khasirkona village under Durgapur upazila. The dead were identified as Anisur Rahman Russel, 6, son of Shamsul Haque and Imran Khan, 7, son of Inamul Haque of village Khasirkona. Family members of the boys and police said, Imran and Russel went to the pond in front of Inamul's house for bathing in the morning and drowned in the pond. The family members called local divers who recovered their bodies from the pond.