

Once fertile crop land now looks like water body

Barapukuria victims go without Irri-boro farming

KONGKON KARMAKAR, Dinajpur

Around 500 acres of fertile agricultural lands of 15 villages around Barapukuria Coal Mine Company Ltd (BCMCL) could not be brought under Irri-boro farming this season due to prolonged water logging.

Although sources at local Department of Agriculture Extension gave the information, the BCMCL authorities officially confirmed that about 201.07 acres of arable land around the coalmine area subsided by two to three feet due to underground geological fault since May 2006, causing water logging in the area.

The land subsidence affected at least 2,600 families and 646 acres of arable and habitable lands, said a recent survey report of BCMCL.

The coalmine authorities first detected the land subsidence in May 2006.

Meanwhile, residents of the 15 villages affected by land subsidence have continued fast unto death near the gate of BCMCL office for the second day yesterday to realise their demands, including compensation and rehabilitation.

Earlier on several occasions, they staged demonstrations to press for their demands.

The affected areas remain under water round the year as the BCMCL pumped out water from underground every day, locals said, adding that the situation worsens during the rains.

The frequent land subsidence badly affected the arable land at different villages including Kalupara, Bolorampur, Gigagari, Bashudevpur, Moupukur, Patigram, Kashidanga and Palpara, they said.



Flooded farmlands at Bolorampur village near Barapukuria Coalmine in Phulbari upazila of Dinajpur district have turned into uncultivable area following land subsidence due to geographical faults caused by underground mining.

PHOTO: STAR

People of these villages mostly depend on agriculture to earn their livelihood. But the land subsidence has appeared as a major concern for the farmers and the landowners as crop production has fallen sharply. It has also affected eight to 10 husking mills in the area.

"My two and a half acres of land at Bolorampur village went under water after the land subsidence. Last year I cultivated the land but this year I could not do it as

waterlogging has worsened," said farmer Md Osman Goni. "The BCMCL authorities paid me about Tk 10,000 as compensation in 2009. Is this amount sufficient to maintain a seven-member family?" he said.

Farmer Mominul Islam of Boddyanathpur village said he could not bring his three and a half acres of land under boro cultivation this year due to waterlogging.

He incurred a huge loss during the last aman season as

the standing crops went under water.

The land subsidence this year forced about 750 farmers of the affected villages to switch to other professions for survival, said Ibrahim Khalil, convener of Jibon O Shampad Rakkha Committee.

The BCMCL officials said around Tk 3 crore has so far been distributed as compensation among the affected farmers.

Excessive water pumping by the BCMCL and 250MW

Barapukuria Power Plant lowered the underground water level at 30 villages, creating water crisis and hampering irrigation in boro fields.

The BCMCL and the power plant jointly pump out about 2,500 tonnes of water per hour.

The BCMCL has recently submitted a Tk 324 crore master plan to the government to compensate and rehabilitate the affected people.

ERRATIC SUPPLY DAMAGES SHALLOW PUMPS Farmers besiege power station in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Several hundred farmers besieged the sub-station of Rural Electrification Board-1 (Reb-1) at Handial Union under Chatmohar upazila on Wednesday night as erratic power supply damaged scores of shallow pumps used for irrigating agricultural land in the area in the last three days.

On information, upazila official and police rushed to the spot and pacified the agitating farmers. They assured the farmers of taking necessary steps to supply uninterrupted power at night so that they (farmers) can keep their pumps operational.

Sources in the agriculture department said over 200 hundred shallow pumps in Chatmohar, Vangura and

Faridpur upazilas of the district went out of order in a week due to erratic power supply.

Though 29,595 hectares of land have been brought under boro cultivation in the three upazila this year, farmers are worried about a good crop yield as they cannot supply required water to their land to help plants grow, sources added.

Reb-1 official said farmers in the upazilas are using at least 3,700 shallow pumps, but erratic power supply hampers proper irrigation of their boro fields.

"We often do not operate our pumps due to low voltage and power outage. So, we cannot expect good yield of boro this season," said a farmer of Chatmohar area.

Reb officials said they need 34 to 35 megawatt power in a day for the irriga-

tion pumps in Chatmohar, Vangura and Faridpur upazila. But they get only 10 to 12 megawatt.

Contacted, Reb-1 General Manager (GM) Md Omar Ali said they are bound to make to 8 hours loadshedding in a day due to inadequate power supply. "We have requested the authorities concerned to increase power supply to this region for proper irrigation of boro lands."

"We have requested Reb officials several times to ensure power supply for irrigation. Many pumps have been damaged in different areas of Chatmohar upazila due to erratic power supply. The situation will get worse if necessary steps are not taken immediately." Said Md Ajahar Ali, agriculture officer of Chatmohar upazila.

BNP leader's house looted in Noakhali

A CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Robbers injured Kabirhat upazila BNP finance secretary Abdul Hannan and his father and looted valuables worth about Tk five lakh from their house at Lemua Munshi Bari in Narottampur union of Kabirhat upazila under Noakhali district.

A gang of 15 to 16 armed robbers wearing masks entered Hannan's house by breaking the door at around 3:30am Wednesday and tied the hands and mouths of the inmates with clothes, said police and locals.

The robbers stabbed Abdul Hannan and hit his father Haji Abdul Mannan with a stick, leaving them seriously injured.

The robbers then broke the steel and wooden almirahs and looted Tk 36,000 in cash, 10 tolas of gold ornaments, six mobile phone sets, four wrist-watches, two charger lights and valuable clothes and furniture.

HUMAN CHAIN 'Punish killers of Jhenidah college girl'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Teachers and students of Birshreshtha Hamidur Rahman College joined by local people formed a human chain on Kaliganj-Jibon Nagar highway at Khalishpur Bazar in Moheshpur upazila yesterday demanding arrest and punishment of the killers of Nasima Khatun, a student of the college.

Nasima, 18, was daughter of Abul Kashem of Marufdaha village under Jibon Nagar upazila in Chuadanga district.

One of Nasima's classmates called her over mobile phone and abducted her on March 3. Gang-raped by the criminals in a nearby maize field at night, the girl died.

Jibon Nagar police could not nab the criminals in a week while SI Sazzad Hossain of Shahpur camp allegedly tried to pass the case as a suicide by taking bribe.

Contacted, Principal Rafi Uddin of Hamidur Rahman College said, "I came to know from the victim's family members that Hasan aided by his companions killed Nasima to avoid marrying the girl with whom he had a love affair for long."

11 Indians held for intrusion

UNB, Satkhira

BDR arrested eleven people for intruding into Bangladesh from India through the porous border of Satkhira on Wednesday.

They were identified as Shameem Ghorami, Sagor Roy, Bidhan Shah, Kalipada Shah, Ashutosh Samazder, Ashutosh Halder, Paban Ghorami, Poly Ghosh, Dipali Mandal, Rehana Begum, Chhabiran Bibi and Sarowar Hossain.

The arrestees claimed that they are Bangladeshi nationals and hail from Bagerhat, Pirojpur and Gopalganj districts. They went to India four months ago without valid document in search of better employment.

ALLEGED BID TO GRAB LAND

Thakurgaon Jubo League leader expelled from party

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Thakurgaon Jubo League General Secretary Abdul Majid alias Apel was temporarily expelled from the party on Wednesday on charge of occupying the house of Sadar Upazila Chairman Sultanul Ferdous on March 5.

Jubo League central committee took the decision following a preliminary investigation that found the allegation based on fact.

Jubo League central committee also issued a letter, asking Apel to explain by March 25 why he should not be permanently expelled from the party.

A group of Jubo League men led by district unit General Secretary Abdul Majid Apel occupied the house of the upazila chairman at College Para in the town on Friday last following a dispute over the ownership of the land.

The chairman and his family members alleged that the Jubo League men damaged three rooms of the house and took away valu-

ables. After occupying the land, they hung a signboard and build two bamboo-made structures on it. But these were later removed as per directives of the party high command.

UZ chairman Ferdous and Jubo League leader Apel filed cases against each other with Thakurgaon Police Station the following day. Ferdous in his case

accused 158 people, including Apel, of occupying his house while Apel sued Ferdous, his mother Sultana Rezwan, brother Sultanul Naim and wife Sabina Yasmin, for grabbing his land.

All the accused in both cases were granted bail by the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court, Thakurgaon on Monday. Advocate Momtazur Rahaman Bipul moved the case for the UZ chairman while advocate Mokbul Hossain Babu for the Jubo League leader.

When contacted, district Jubo League leader Apel said he will reply to the show cause letter by March 25.

SHIBIR ROOMS AT ANOTHER RU HALL RAIDED Knife, more iron rods, jihadi books seized

A RU CORRESPONDENT

Authorities of Shaheed Shamsuzzoha Hall of Rajshahi University (RU) along with law enforcers yesterday recovered a 28-inch long knife and scores of iron rods during a raid on Shibir-controlled rooms at the hall.

The authorities also seized around 1,000 books on jihad and Shibir leaflets.

Police said they recovered the knife and 50 iron rods from a locker of a Shibir controlled room. The room was occupied allegedly by the hall unit Shibir secretary Shariful Islam alias Tuhiin who is one of the sus-

pected killers of Chhatra League worker Faruque Hossain, Police said.

Hall authorities said they seized the jihadi books including 'Jihadur Hakikat', 'Allahor Pathe Jihad', 'Islamur Dawat-o-Karmaniti', 'Islami Biplober Pathe' by Sayeed Abul Ala Moududi from the room of Shibir cadre Mukul Hossain, a student of Islamic Studies department. Mukul went into hiding after the February 9 campus violence.

However, no rooms were sealed off and none was arrested during the two-hour raid till 12:00pm.

Dr Murtuza Khaled, pro-

vost of the hall said they raided the two Shibir controlled rooms on receiving allegation from the hall's resident students that Shibir men have kept weapons there during February 9 incident.

"We have requested the officer-in-charge of Motihar police station to file a case under arms case against the hall unit Shibir men," Dr Murtuza said.

Officer-in-charge of Motihar police station Tofazzel Hossain said police will take legal steps as per the decision of the university authorities.

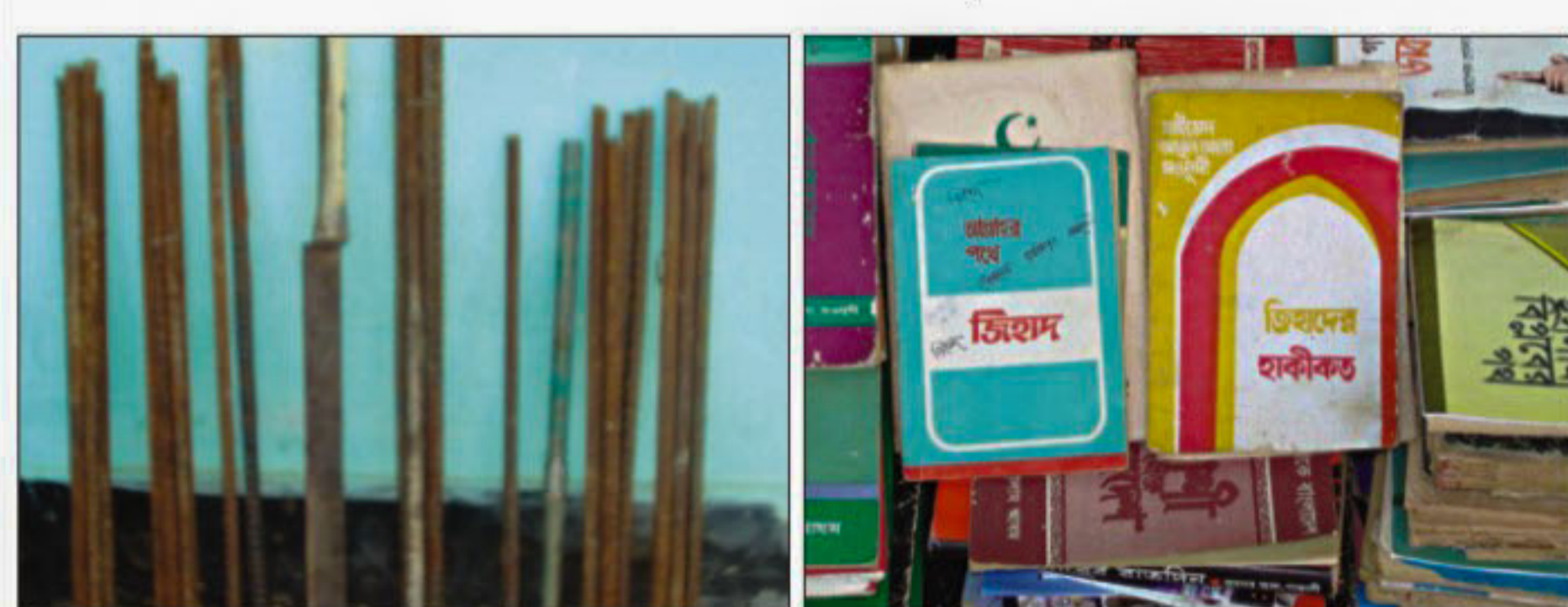


PHOTO: STAR

Authorities of Shaheed Shamsuzzoha Hall of Rajshahi University aided by police seize knife, iron rods, about 1,000 books on jihad and huge leaflets from Shibir-controlled rooms yesterday.

ALLEGATIONS OF CRIMINAL ACTS

Khagrachhari mayor suspended again

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Khagrachhari municipal mayor Mohammad Joynal Abedin was suspended for the second time yesterday on charges of misappropriation of government fund and criminal activities.

Senior joint secretary of LGRD ministry Md Harun-or-Rashid Biswas suspended him under Section 31 of Local Government (Municipality) Act, 2009.

Using Section 31(2) of the act, the secretary also ordered the mayor to hand over charge to the panel mayor-I within three days from the

date of issuance of the letter.

Earlier, a story was published on this newspaper on January 17, 2009 headlined 'Probe finds them true as 10 of 12 councillors file 'no confidence'.

In the letter, the secretary also mentioned most of the allegations made by 10 of the 12 councillors of Khagrachhari municipality against Mayor Mohammad Joynal Abedin.

On November 6, 2008, the mayor faced 'no confidence' from the 10 councillors, who demanded his removal from the post for his alleged corruption.

The letter further said that Joynal, once serving as the 'bodyguard' of former BNP

lawmaker Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan (now convicted in a case), was elected mayor on November 9, 2004 with the help of Bhuiyan.

Within a year he built at least two houses in Chittagong city and at Shantinagar in Khagrachhari town allegedly defalcating a huge amount of money of development organisations through abuse of power.

Joynal is still facing four criminal cases with Khagrachhari District and Sessions Judge's Court, police said.

Mayor Joynal was suspended earlier on September 2, 2007 on charges of criminal acts.

SNAPS AND SNIPPETS

Hartal passes off in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

The lash day of two-day dawn-to-dusk hartal called by Samo Odhikar Andolan (SOA), a platform of Bangalee settlers and its student front Parbatya Bangali Chhatra Parisahd (PBCP) yesterday passed off peacefully at Barkal upazila of the district. Waterway communication of Barkal with Rangamati district headquarters remained suspended during the shutdown. All kinds of business establishments, except for restaurants and medicine shops at Barkal upazila headquarters also were closed. Activists of both the organisations brought out processions in Suvalong and Bhusionchhara Bazaar areas. SOA and PBCP earlier called the hartal in protest of killing one of their activists by unknown criminals.

Farmer beaten to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A farmer of Birganj upazila has been beaten to death as he allegedly failed to pay the irrigation water bill. A case was filed with Birganj police station yesterday in this regard. Police said victim Dinesh Barman, 45, son of Meghnal Barman of village Ratinathpur bought water from neighbour Md Nuruzzaman for preparing seedbeds last month. Despite repeated request Dinesh did not pay the water bill. On Wednesday morning a gang led by Nuruzzaman beat up Dinesh. The villagers rescued and hospitalised Dinesh but he died at night.

Arms peddler arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Rab men arrested an alleged arms peddler and recovered two foreign made revolvers, four bullets and four magazines from his house at village Agardari in Sadar upazila yesterday. Arrestee Golam Mostafa, 45, is son of Mohor Ali of the village. Quoting locals police said Rab-1 men of Uttara in Dhaka in the guise of buyer contacted arms peddler Mostafa and wanted to buy the two firearms two months ago. Yesterday the Rab men came to Satkhira. As soon as Mostafa brought the firearms the law enforcers arrested him.



PHOTO: COURTESY

BAC arranges a seminar on 'Alternative to Traditional Education' at Hotel Naz Garden in Bogra town on Wednesday to discuss ways to achieve education and degrees from SSC to master's level, bar-at-law etc through an alternative way and at low cost.

Alliance Française de Dhaka
Session starts: 5th April '10

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