



PHOTO: STAR

Dried up bed of Jamuna River at Palshia in Bhuapur upazila of Tangail district is being used for paddy cultivation. Most of the rivers in the district show similar pictures during the dry season as silting and pollution are leading them to gradual death.

Most Tangail rivers remain dry for six months

Riverbeds being used for farming

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Most of the rivers in Tangail district are heading towards virtual death as the riverbeds remain waterless for nearly half of the year.

While the country is observing World Water Day today farmers are using the dried up river beds for cultivating different crops including boro paddy, arranging irrigation by setting up shallow engine pumps there.

In some places there are some flow but it is so polluted that it cannot be used for any purposes including irrigation to crop fields.

Vehicles including sand-laden ones are seen plying the dried up riverbeds. The main rivers in Tangail district

are Jamuna, Dhaleswari, Jhinal, Bonshai, Louhajang and Elengjani.

The rivers were full of a variety of fishes while ships, launches, big merchant boats plied the rivers that had huge flow throughout the year only about three decades ago, said several senior citizens.

River ways were used as means of easy and cheap transportation of goods from and to the district, they said.

Big merchandizing boats laden with thousands of maunds of jute from different districts came to the ghats of different rivers in the district including Elasin ghat on the Dhaleswari River in Delduar upazila and Nolin ghat in Gopalpur upazila as

many governmental and non-governmental jute purchase centres were set up there.

But all these are past stories and now only some small engine boats can ply the same rivers during the dry season. As only a little water is available during about half of the year, the river transportation system in the district is in a disorder.

Water expert engineer SI Khan, also a resident of Basail upazila in the district, told The Daily Star that the amount of water flow in Jamuna River has reduced a lot due to withdrawal of water from the upstream.

The situation affects other rivers in the district including the Dhaleswari that has also silted up and as a result,

their water containing capacity has greatly reduced, he added.

Riverside fishermen and boatmen communities, who are mainly dependent on the rivers for their livelihood, are the direct victims of drying up of the rivers during the ongoing dry season.

The rivers now see very little fish resources as their sanctuaries have been destroyed.

"Although most of the rivers in Tangail district are drying no step is yet to be seen to save them. Besides losing navigability, the rivers are victims of mindless pollution and grabbing by influential quarters," said environmental activist Masum Ferdous in Tangail.

Hapless freedom fighter lives at cremation ground

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

Valiant freedom fighter Abul Khair lives in a shabby hut on a cremation ground at Shyamkur village under Moheshpur upazila of Jhenidah, working as a day labourer to survive with his five-member family.

"A neighbour grabbed our land during the Liberation War. My family members including mother, wife and two grandsons are passing days half-fed or unfed. We are living in the cremation ground. Often we have to bear with the bad smell coming out from the dead bodies," said the freedom fighter.

Khair, who had to discontinue study after primary education due to poverty, joined the Liberation War when he was 22 years old, he said.

On completion of training in India, he joined Sector No 8 and took part in several fights against the occupation forces in Chowgacha of Jessore, Moheshpur of Jhenidah and Jibonnagar of Chuadanga.

"Our unit defeated Pakistani troops in an eight-day fight at Husherkhali field in Moheshpur upazila and killed around 200 Pakistani soldiers.

"After my joining the Liberation War, local collaborators of the occupation forces tortured my father. When I returned to my village after the final victory, I found that neighbour Jalil occupied our land and



PHOTO: STAR

Freedom fighter Abul Khair sitting in front of his hut erected on the corner of a cremation ground at Shyamkur village in Moheshpur upazila of Jhenidah district.

house. My father had sold a small piece of land to Jalil during the war but the man deceitfully grabbed all our landed property including the house," he said.

With the meagre Tk 30/35 a day that he earns as a day labourer, Abul Khair finds it difficult to meet both ends meet for the family. Sometimes he has to stay at home due to respiratory problem and then they have to pass days unfed or half-fed, said the freedom fighter, now 61.

11 hurt as AL groups clash

A CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

At least 10 people were injured as rival AL groups clashed in front of the house Noakhali district AL General Secretary Ekramul Karim Chowdhury on Saturday night.

Of the injured, former general secretary of Noannai union AL Abdur Rashid Masud and Dildar Hossain Juaied were admitted to Noakhali General Hospital.

SNAPS AND SNIPPETS

Clash over land dispute, 1 killed

UNB, Naogaon

One person was killed and three others were injured in a clash over land dispute at Samashpur village under Mohadebpur upazila of the district on Saturday. The dead was identified as Sayef Uddin, 40, son of late Asgar Ali. Locals said there had been a longstanding dispute over a piece of land between Sayef and Nasir of the village. The clash erupted in the morning as Nasir along with his supporters attacked Sayef Uddin and his brother Saidur Rahman when they were working on the disputed land. At one stage, both the groups equipped with lethal weapons attacked each other, leaving four people, including Sayef and Saidur, injured. Sayef succumbed to his injuries on way to Rajshahi Medical College hospital. The others injured were admitted to local health complex. Police, however, arrested two people on the spot.

Arms, ammo recovered

A CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel yesterday recovered a pistol, three shooter guns and 11 bullets from Mankia village in Benapole. Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-6 went to the bordering village in the morning and recovered the abandoned firearms and ammunition from a garden near Mankia Primary School. No one was arrested in this connection as of filing of this report at 6:00pm yesterday.

Man held for killing wife

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

Police arrested a man at Atharokhada village in Magura municipality area yesterday on charge of killing his wife. The arrestee is Zahidul Islam, 35, son of Shukur Molla of the village. Police said Zahid, an auto-tempo driver, strangled his wife Sathi Begum following a quarrel over family affairs at around 9:30pm on Saturday.

Jute mill workers block road

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Workers of Zem Jute Mills Limited barricaded Panchagarh-Dinajpur highway at Moidandighi village under Boda upazila of Panchagarh district yesterday protesting against an official of the mills. Police and locals said Production Manager Ali Azam beat up workers leader Delwar Hossain and Hira on a trivial matter. Protesting the attack on their colleagues, workers abstained from work on Saturday and filed a complaint with the authorities against the production manager and also demanded his removal. When the workers came to the mills yesterday morning they saw the authorities closed the main gate instead of taking any action against the production manager. Later, the workers put up barricade on the highway in front of mills at around 8:00am. The road blockade continued as of filing of this report at 5:45pm.



PHOTO: STAR

Workers of Zem Jute Mills at Moidandighi village in Boda upazila of Panchagarh district put a blockade on Panchagarh-Dhaka highway yesterday demanding removal of an official who allegedly beat up two workers.



PHOTO: STAR

Transport workers vandalise several makeshift stalls near Seroil bus terminal in Rajshahi city yesterday as they went on a wildcat strike demanding punishment to the extortionists who beat up and injured the driver, helper and supervisor of a coach from Dhaka yesterday morning.

Attack on Rajshahi bus workers sparks protest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rajshahi bus workers went on a wildcat strike yesterday demanding punishment to the criminals who allegedly beat up three transport workers in the morning.

The angry bus workers also vandalised several roadside shops controlled by the gang during the strike.

The trouble began at around 10:00am

when a group of local goons, led by Jubo League worker Saju, beat up three workers of a bus on Chapainawabganj-Rajshahi route as they refused to pay them toll at Seroil bus terminal area.

The injured are Shahidul Islam, driver of NP Safari coach, its supervisor Nazrul Islam and helper Hafijur Rahman.

Rajshahi Bus Workers Union President Kamal Hossain Robi said bus

workers enforced the strike, putting barricades on roads immediately after the incident.

He alleged Saju's gang often beat up bus workers if they refuse to pay them toll.

However, the strike was withdrawn at around 1:00pm after senior police officials and Jubo League leaders assured the bus workers of taking steps against the attackers.

4 indigenous children drown

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Four indigenous children met their tragic death as three of them jumped into a ditch to rescue their playmate who had fallen there while playing in a nearby land at Adivasi Belwa village in Ghoraghat upazila under Dinajpur district yesterday noon.

The victims are Mitu Tudu,

6, daughter of Dilip Tudu, Windisk Kisku, 6, son of Robin Kisku, Shushanta Baskey, 7, son of Dinesh Baskey, and Preesila Hasda, 6, daughter of Bablu Hasda, of Adivasi Belwa village under Ghoraghat upazila of Dinajpur.

A group of children were playing football on a piece of land when the ball fell in a nearby pool, villagers said. As Shushanta Baskey went

near the ditch to take the ball, he slipped and fell into the water. He shouted for help and three other children jumped into the ditch to save him. All the four children drowned.

Others ran to the village to call the seniors but by the time several villagers reached the spot, the muddy water had consumed the four children.

A few people had to search and strive for about two hours

to take bodies of the ill-fated children out of the ditch.

As the news spread, a pall of gloom descended the village. Almost the entire village reached the spot and followed the inconsolable parents as they carried the bodies to their houses.

The four children were cremated in the village yesterday afternoon, family sources said.

Schoolgirl raped in Baufal: 2 held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Criminals gang-raped a schoolgirl at a remote village in Baufal upazila of Patuakhali district on Friday night.

Police arrested Basir, 25, and Hanif, 30, of Kaina village in the upazila for their alleged involvement in the crime.

A Class Nine student of Dharandi village under Patuakhali Sadar upazila went her brother Shyamol Chandra to his father-in-law's house at Rajnagar village under Baufal upazila, police and locals said.

After passing several days there, the two siblings started

for their house by a hired motorbike on Friday night. When they reached Dhauravanga area a gang of 8/10 criminals allegedly led by Forkan and Masum waylaid them. They assaulted Shyamol, tied his hands and legs, forcibly took the girl to a nearby field and raped her.

Hearing her scream, locals informed police who recovered her and to Baufal Upazila Police Complex.

Police arrested two of the alleged rapists while others managed to flee.

A case was filed with Baufal Police Station in this regard on Saturday.

MAR 17 INCIDENT

BAU students agitate demanding arrest of attackers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Hundreds of students of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) yesterday evening brought out a big procession on the campus protesting what they said release of Jasim Uddin, main accused of a case filed in connection with an untoward incident created by outsiders on Wednesday night over holding of a programme marking birth anniversary of Bangabandhu. At least 50 people including assistant proctor, students and police were injured in the attack.

Jasim, son of Amjad Ali of Bhabakhali area was arrested from Shikari Kanda area in Mymensingh Sadar upazila on Saturday afternoon. Police produced him before a court here but the court granted bail for him yesterday afternoon within 24 hours of his arrest by Kotwali police.

After the protest procession, the students held a meeting on the TSC premises of the university. The students said release of the main accused on bail has created panic among the general students. They demanded immediate arrest of

all the accused involved in the attack for establishing a congenial academic atmosphere on the campus. They also demanded adequate security measures in and around the campus to prevent movement of outsiders on the campus.

Meanwhile, teachers under banner of 'BAU Shikkhak Parishad' also announced their fresh agitation programme as an emergency yesterday evening. Earlier, they submitted a memorandum to the vice chancellor demanding arrest of the attackers by March 21.

While talking to The Daily Star, Shikkhak Parishad secretary Prof Dr Emdadul Haque Chowdhury expressed his dismay and astonishment over release of the main culprit on bail. 'We can not accept his release and we shall go for tougher action,' he said.

Meanwhile, a five-member probe body was formed to investigate into the incident. The committee is scheduled to submit its report today. Earlier, a case was lodged with Kotwali police station in connection with the incident accusing 29 people including Jasim, Azam and Sohel.