



PHOTO: STAR

An operator opening the regulator sluice gate of a secondary canal under Teesta Irrigation Project, and influential people set hollow pipes over (middle) and under (circled) the embankments to illegally draw water from a main canal of the project for supplying it to farmers for higher prices.

Cashing in on farmers' woes

Teesta canal lessees realise much higher service charges for irrigation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

While boro farmers in most areas under Teesta Irrigation Project are crying for water due to scanty flow in Teesta River, a section of canal lessees are compelling farmers in the upstream to pay much higher than the official rate as service charge for irrigation.

A section of local influential people other than lessees are also doing 'water trade' by illegally taking out water from different canals under the project but the authorities concerned are failing to take any action.

"I heard about realisation of additional service charges from farmers by lessees. We could not take any action against them as we are yet to get any written complain. Our men are going door to door to motivate farmers not to give higher service charge," The Executive Engineer of BWDB's Nilphamari Division Nazir Ahmed told this correspondent.

Besides making the farmers suffer, the illegal 'water trade' is causing the government huge revenue losses.

Under Teesta Irrigation Project, a farmer-friendly initiative of the government, farmers get Teesta water flowing through a number of canals for yearly service charge of Tk

144 for irrigation in a bigha (30 decimal) of land (Tk 480 for an acre equal to 100-decimal land).

Lessees maintain the canals and realise charges that is to be used for development of the canal system.

Many farmers in the project area said that referring to high cost of irrigation with diesel or electricity run shallow or deep pumps, a section of lessees realise double, triple or even more service charges although irrigation under Teesta Irrigation Project needs no diesel or power run pump as water is made to flow from canals to farmers' lands in a natural way.

"Some lessees even realise Tk 225-Tk 600 for irrigating a bigha of land but they do not give any receipt against the additional money. The farmers, other than influential ones, have to pay extra money as the lessees threaten to stop irrigation," Abdus Samad, 35, a farmer of Pashchim Balagram village of Jaldhaka upazila, said.

Many farmers fear losses due to higher irrigation cost.

Only 44,000 hectares (1 hectare = 2.47 acres) of land is targeted for irrigation under Teesta Irrigation Project in 12 upazilas of Nilphamari, Rangpur and Dinajpur districts

against overall project target of 1,11,406 hectares due to water shortage in Teesta in the ongoing boro season.

As the government fixed service charge for a hectare of land is Tk 1440, the amount of revenue from the target area is supposed to be about Tk 5.22 crore but the lease money to be deposited for this year would be only Tk 30-35 lakh, BWDB sources said.

Part of S5-D secondary canal in Sadar upazila having total length of 25.83 km with command area of 593 acres was leased out for only Tk 20 thousand although actual revenue supposed to be earned from it is Tk 3 lakh. Farmers alleged that command area of such a big canal has been shown as unusually small in order to favour the lessee, sources said.

Although lessees realise crores of taka as additional service charge, they take lease of the canals for unbelievably low prices allegedly with the connivance of a section of BWDB officials.

Lessees of S8-T secondary canal in Jaldhaka upazila Nabab Ali and Rashidul Islam Rubel, however, claimed that they incurred huge losses by leasing the canal.

They said they realise Tk 225 for a bigha (30 decimal) of land to 'make

up the loss' as they had to spend a lot of money for making a number of earthen drains to make canal water reach farmers' lands, engage men for frequent repair of drains and supervising the irrigation system in addition to depositing lease money to BWDB.

They also alleged that a good number of influential farmers do not pay service charge.

During visit to different areas of Teesta Irrigation project last week (30 March), this correspondent found that water from different canals was being taken out using curved hollow plastic pipes placed on the surface or through underground of the canal embankments.

A few influential people, who are doing illegal 'water trade' by making vast networks of earthen drains to supply illegally taken water to farmer's lands for high charges, on condition of anonymity said they regularly give money to a section of BWDB men to keep the business undisturbed.

However, Dalia Division Executive Engineer Dharendra Nath Roy told this correspondent that no BWDB official takes money from people who take unauthorised water from canals.

The Sub Divisional Engineer of Kishoreganj under BWDB's Rangpur Division Krishna Kamal Sarkar said that they had seized many unauthorised pipes from canal embankments and filed cases against their owners.

Meanwhile, some 'genuine farmers' who also take out water from canals using hollow pipes, said they have to do it as they have no opportunity to get irrigation water due to lack of adequate outlets at canal embankments although the Teesta project canals are beside their lands.

"The authority concerned directed us to deposit service charge with the account of a neighbouring lessee from whom we did not take water. In previous years, we deposited money with a lessee's account but later found that the lessee used that money to pay his undue lease money without showing that it was additional revenue. We want a realistic water management policy to deposit due money to proper authorities so that none can misappropriate it," Abdul Gaffar of Balagram village of Jaldhaka upazila, also president of a farmers' society, said.

The executive engineer of Dalia Division of BWDB said that case will be filed if service charge is not paid.

BARAPUKURIA COAL MINE Land subsidence victims attack survey team

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Dinajpur

A member of a land survey team was injured as the land subsidence victims around Barapukuria Coal Mine Company Ltd (BMCL) attacked the team at Kalupara village yesterday morning.

The victim, Md Abul Kashem, a kanunga of Dinajpur Deputy Commissioner's office, was taken to Phulbari Upazila Health Complex and later shifted to Dinajpur Medical College Hospital College, officials said.

A four-member land survey team of Dinajpur Deputy Commissioner's Office led by Additional Land Officer Md Moksed Ali yesterday started the land survey from Kalupara village, one of the areas worst affected areas due to land subsidence around the coal mine, BCMCL sources said.

As the survey team arrived at Kalupara village, the villagers carrying wooden and bamboo sticks attacked them. They beat up Abul Kashem,

leaving him injured.

Three other members of the team managed to escape and took shelter inside BCMCL compound.

When contacted, Md Abdul Jalil, GM (Administration) of BCMCL, admitted the incident.

On March 12, hundreds of people from land subsidence affected villages ended their 'fast unto death' programme after 53 hours as the BCMCL authorities pledged to compensate the land subsidence affected villagers within March this year.

But the authorities are yet to pay any compensation to the villagers, much to the grievance of people.

Affected people of 15 villages have been holding different programmes since January this year demanding compensation for subsidence of 646 acres of land in the area.

Villagers drove away the survey team, said Md Ibrahim Khalil, convener of Jibon O Sampad Rakkha Committee, a platform of land subsidence victims in Barapukuria.



PHOTO: STAR

Thousands of people join special prayers for rain at Eidgah Maidan in Jessore town yesterday as farmers are badly in need of water for boro cultivation in different areas of the country.

RCC FINALLY STARTS ROAD PROJECT AT HIGHER COST

Offenders go unpunished

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) has started the construction work of Fire Brigade-Nawdapara road without taking punitive measure against those involved in the irregularities that increased the project implementation cost by Tk 22.24 crore.

Following directives from the ministries of planning and the LGRD and cooperatives, the corporation last year investigated the issue of irregularity and found that the project was cancelled in 2006 after some Tk 6 crore of the project fund was illegally used for sectors other than the project during the tenure of former mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu.

The planning ministry in June 2009, however, approved the project again at a revised budget of Tk 47.84 crore against the previous Tk 25.60 crore on condition

that the corporation will investigate and take action against the people involved in the irregularities before implementing the project.

The LGRD and cooperatives ministry also sent similar directive to the corporation, said the RCC officials.

But incumbent RCC mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton formally inaugurated the road construction work on March 9 without taking any action against the people responsible for the irregularities. The corporation gave the work order to construction firm Mir Akhtar Hossain Limited on February 3.

According to the officials, the project for constructing 4.89 km link road from Fire Brigade crossing to Nawdapara bypass was first approved in October 2004 at an estimated cost of Tk 25.60 crore.

The corporation got a fund of Tk

19.05 crore from the government in 2004-05 fiscal year to implement the project. Of the sanctioned money, Tk 9.14 crore was given to the district administration for acquiring land for the road and Tk 6 crore was spent on other projects in 2005-06.

As the project did not progress due to spending of allocated money on other sectors, the remaining Tk 3.91 crore of the sanctioned money was returned to the government and the project was cancelled.

The project was revived in 2008 after Mayor Liton assumed office.

"Rajshahi City Corporation sent reports to the ministries concerned, identifying former mayor Minu as responsible for the irregularity. The ministries are to take action as the funds, which were later illegally used, had been sanctioned by the government," Mayor Liton told this correspondent.

ATTACK ON HALISHAHAR TRADER Shops keep shutters down for 3 hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Chittagong

About 200 shops in the city's Halishahar area remained closed for three hours yesterday in protest against attack on a local banik society (traders' association) leader by a gang of criminals on Friday night.

Traders alleged that a gang of local criminals beat up President of Halishahar Banik Samity Shakil Ahsan Mamun, also a director of Chittagong Multi Channel Limited (CMCL), in front of his office at Boropole area at around 10:30pm as he refused pay them Tk 2 lakh as illegal toll.

They (traders) kept shutters of their shops down for three hours from 11:00am and brought out a procession on Port connecting road demanding immediate arrest of the culprits.

Witnesses said local criminals Ripon, Hares, Suman, Rubel, Selim and Bachchu,

swooped on Shakil while he was about to return home.

As shop owners and employees rushed there, the criminals left the scene, they said, adding that the gang also tried to abduct him (Shakil).

Shakil told this correspondent that local criminals Ripon, Bachchu, Selim, Hares, Rubel and Suman had earlier demanded Tk 2 lakh from him, but he refused to oblige.

He filed a case with Halishahar Police Station, accusing the six of assaulting him. Officer-in-Charge (OC) Humayun Kabir said the incident was a sequel to a previous dispute between some traders and locals over establishing supremacy in the area.

The OC said they will investigate the extortion charge brought against the six by Halishahar Banik Samity President Shakil Ahsan Mamun.

Khulna power plant out of order again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Khulna

The 60 megawatt plant of the Khulna Power Station (KPS), which resumed power generation after four years on April 6, again went out of order at 10:30pm on Friday due to major technical faults.

The power plant was shut down on July 5 in 2006 because of major technical glitches. It resumed generation on December 16 last year on trial basis after necessary repair works. But the plant again went out of order on the same day as turbine temperature sensors did not function.

Though the plant was again put into operation on February 10 this year on trial basis, the authorities had to keep the plant closed as trial for generation of power did not also prove effective.

Contacted, Chief Engineer of Khulna Power Station (KPS) Harendra Nath Mondol said the plant has lost capability to generate power as its longevity

expired in 1974. It was last overhauled in August 1999, he added.

Meanwhile, power outage has turned severe in the southwestern region of the country with 400MW load shedding during peak hour and 200MW during off peak hour.

"We do not find any ray of hope to overcome this situation until and unless the 110 MW and 60 MW plants of Khulna Power Station (KPS) start functioning properly. Both are now inoperative," KPS chief engineer said.

Load shedding has broken all records of the past as it used to happen five to ten times a day in city and other districts of Khulna division.

Southwestern region got 390 MW supply of electricity against the total demand for 518MW during off peak hour and 430MW against the demand for 725 MW during peak hour on Friday, said superintending engineer SM Kamrul Islam of Khulna Power Station.



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Notice to the Investors for IPO Application

This has come to our notice that unauthorized application forms of the forthcoming IPO of RAK Ceramics (Bangladesh) Limited (The Company) has become available in the market which is not issued by the company. Honorable Investors are hereby advised to use the application forms available at the office of the company, issue managers, registrar to the issue, underwriters and bankers to the issue or the application form available in the website of the company i.e. 'www.rakceramdbd.com', issue managers i.e. 'www.idlc.com' & 'www.bracepl.com' and registrar to the issue i.e. 'www.primefinance.net' or the verbatim copy of said application form.

Also please be informed that the company shall only accept and be liable for applications submitted in the above mentioned application forms.

For RAK Ceramics (Bangladesh) Limited
sd/-
(Muhammad Shahidul Islam ACS)
Assistant Company Secretary