

Wheat under FWP finally going back from Nilphamari

Project proposal could not be submitted as ruling party men allegedly demanded 50pc of allocation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Three hundred and twenty-four tonnes of wheat allocated for rural infrastructure development programmes in Saidpur upazila of Nilphamari district in 2009-10 fiscal year (FY) is returning back as no project proposal was submitted within June 29 deadline.

Several union parishad chairmen in the upazila said the situation has arisen as union level ruling party men demanded almost half of the food grains allocated for each project as condition for approval of the project proposals.

Letters were sent to concerned UP chairmen several times to submit project proposals as early as possible but no proposal was submitted, said sources at the office of project implementation officer (PIO) in Saidpur.

Meantime, the deadline for implementation of the programme in FY 2009-10 expired on June 29.

"Food grains under food for work programme and test relief programme allocated for the upazila is returning back as the project committees have not submitted any development projects," PIO Anwar Hossain told this correspondent a couple of days ago.

In FY 2009-10, 324 tonnes of wheat was allocated in Saidpur upazila under food for work and test relief projects to implement various rural infrastructure development programmes, said sources.

Every year the government undertakes rural infrastructure development projects under food for work programme and test relief programme in lean period in different upazilas of the country, they said.

These programmes meant for repairing damaged roads, drains and culverts, clearing dirty and polluted water bodies, filling up of unnecessary ditches, renovating playgrounds, excavating rivers provide employment opportunities for the poor people in rural areas.

It comes a boon for a large number of ultra

poor people in the rural areas when there is no work in farmlands.

To implement development programmes, projects are sought from local people. People of different areas form project committees and frame project proposals to submit to upazila PIO office with recommendation of concerned union parishad (UP) chairman for approval of the higher authorities.

Several UP chairmen alleged that union-level ruling party leaders had demanded giving fifty percent of wheat allocated against each project for 'creating party fund' as condition for getting approval of the projects.

The UP chairmen did not accept the demand and so, they could not submit any project proposal, they said.

"If we meet the demand of giving fifty percent wheat to the ruling party men the project work would be of much lower quality. I do not want to go to jail on charge of misappropriating government wheat by doing low quality work or showing fake projects," said Kamarpukur union parishad Chairman Shafiqul Islam.

"By claiming major portion of food grains against the projects ruling party men are hindering the rural development works and depriving the ultra poor people from getting jobs," said Saidpur upazila Chairman SM Obaidur Rahman.

Asked about the matter, Saidpur upazila unit Awami League General Secretary Akhter Hossain Badal, also chairman of Saidpur Municipality, said, "The allegations of UP chairmen are false. Why did they (UP chairmen) not lodge any general diary if anybody in the name of ruling party illegally demanded fifty percent of the wheat allocated for projects?"

Holding the UP chairmen 'solely responsible' for lack of vital rural development works in the upazila, the AL leader said, "Due to non-cooperation of the UP chairmen, the ultra poor people are deprived of getting food grain in lean period."



PHOTO: STAR

Reconstructed by Water Development Board only two months ago, this embankment at Khajura in Kuakata sea beach area has developed breaches, making the area highly vulnerable to flooding by tidal surges from the Bay.

Kuakata dyke collapses within two months of construction

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Tidal surge from the Bay has washed away around 40 metres of the 320-metre-long Kuakata protection embankment only within two months of its construction, much to the worry of local people and tourists.

As the damage caused by cyclone Sidr and Aila left the area vulnerable, WDB constructed the embankment under a Tk 3.87 crore project in Khajura-Majhibari area about one kilometre west from the main point of Kuakata beach to protect the area from tidal surge.

The work was completed in the last week of April this year but tidal surge influenced by the last full moon in the first week of June washed the west portion of the newly built embankment.

The erosion has continued and now the whole of the protection embankment faces risk of extinction by tidal surges during stormy season till October.

WDB should take emergency measures to save the newly built embankment to save the beach from the tidal surge, said local UP Chairman Abdul Bareq Mollah.

If immediate step is not taken to save the embankment a large portion of west Kuakata will be under threat of flooding by the tidal surge from the Bay, said Md Shahjahan Akon, a local resident.

Engineer WDB Mainul Islam of Khepupara WDB office said, "We have already taken a Tk 20 crore project to rebuild 1,380-metre-long flood control embankment from Khajura to Gongamoti via key point of the beach. Work of the project will begin in next fiscal year. After completion the project Kuakata sea beach and its adjacent areas will be saved from tidal

surge and others natural disasters."

"We are taking a master plan to save lives and property in Kuakata from natural disaster. We have asked local officials to take emergency step to save the newly built protection embankment. After implementation of the master plan, Kuakata will be more attractive to tourists from home and abroad," said lawmaker from Patuakhali-4 (Kalapara) Mahbubur Rahman, also state minister for water resources.



PHOTO: STAR

Constructed around four years ago, Intensive Care Unit building of Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College and Hospital is yet to be opened for patients due to lack of doctors and other staff and equipment.

SYLHET MAG OSMANI HOSPITAL No move yet to start ICU

IQBAL SIDDIQUI, Sylhet

The Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and Casualty Ward at the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College and Hospital could not be put into operation more than three and a half years into their inauguration.

Sources said, construction of the building has been completed but no staff or consultant physician appointed while equipment necessary for those units are yet to reach the government run hospital.

Construction of the 4-storey building to house a 10-bed ICU and a 30-bed Casualty Ward for the critically injured and other serious patients was completed in 2006, they said.

Built behind the entrance of the emergency department at the main hospital building, it was formally opened by the then finance minister and lawmaker from Sylhet Sadar constituency M Saifur Rahman on 8 October, 2006.

Around Tk 10 crore were spent for the total project.

The hospital authorities have sent a number of letters to the health ministry asking for providing manpower. Separate letters were also sent to the Central Medical Stores Department (CMSD) for equipment but to no effect.

Sources, however, said that on the basis of proposals from the director of Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College and Hospital, the Director (administration), Health Directorate on May 16 this year requested the ministry to approve 11 posts including that of consultants and registrars for the ICU department and 7 for the casualty department.

Assistant Director of the hospital Dr. Ehtesham-Ul Haque Chowdhury told this correspondent that the building is ready for any time use.

"But without manpower, we cannot start operation of the new units. The hospital authorities are already facing much difficulty in managing services as the number of patients are going up every day", he said.

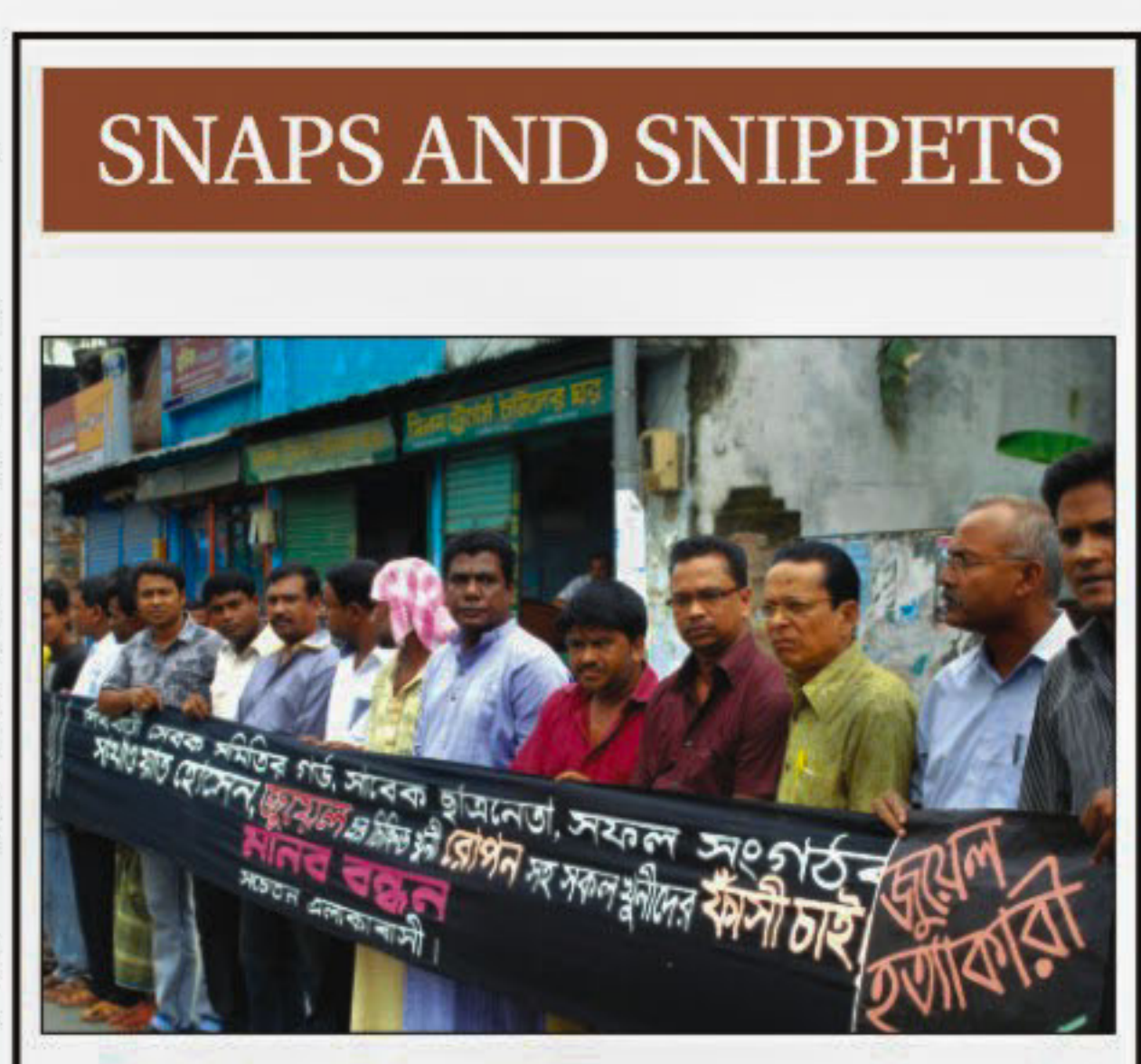


PHOTO: STAR

Activists of Jubo League and Swetchhasebok League form a human chain at Kalitala in Bogra town on Wednesday demanding arrest and punishment of the killers of Swetchhasebok League leader Sakhawat Hossain Jewel.

Trader murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A trader was killed by his rivals as a sequel to dispute over a piece of land in Karamdi village under Gangni upazila of Meherpur yesterday. Police said a gang of four to five led by Mohir Uddin and Mizan Uddin of the village attacked Sader Ali, 45, around 6:00am while returning home after saying Fajr prayers at a mosque. The gang took him to a roadside field and slit his throat. Officer-in-Charge (OC) Matia Rahman of Gangni police station said a gang led by Sader killed Safdar Ali, father of Mohir and Mizan, a year ago. "A rivalry between the two groups had been prevailing for long over a piece of land," the OC added.

Pvt power plant on test run

UNB, Thakurgaon

A 50 mw private rental power plant went into operation here on experimental basis on Wednesday. The plant generated 16 and a half MW of power for the national grid on the day. Project Director of the power plant Shahadat Hossain and project manager Imdadul Haque said 50 MW of power will be generated through 41 generators under the plant. It would be possible to put all 41 generators into operation by July 4 and 50 MW of power can be added to the national grid from that day, they said.

4 injured by robbers

UNB, Chuadanga

Fours people were injured, one by bomb, in an attack by robbers at Akundabaria village in Sadar upazila early yesterday. Villagers said, a gang of 10/15 armed robbers entered the house of Sabur Mondal of the village at about 2:45am. As the people in the house raised alarm, locals rushed to the scene and tried to besiege the robbers. At this they attacked the locals with sharp weapons, leaving three -- Riza, Liton and Rinta -- injured. The criminals also exploded two bombs injuring Hannu, 30, wounded critically. The injured were admitted to a local hospital.

Arms recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah.

Rab in a drive yesterday recovered four firearms from Indranipara at Gayeshpur village under Sadar upazila. Company commander of Jhenidah Rab Alvi Ferdous Khan said a gang of criminals was holding a secret meeting in a field of the village at 11:30pm. Rab cordoned off the area. Sensing the presence of the law enforcers, the gang fled the spot, leaving two shutter guns and two light guns (LGs) in a bag.

Ultimatum to coal mine authorities

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Bangladeshi miners at Barapukuria Coal Mine yesterday threatened to go for an indefinite strike if the lay-off notices served on 160 miners were not withdrawn by 4:00pm today.

They gave the ultimatum to Barapukuria Coal Mine Company Limited (BCMCL) from a rally held in front of a gate of the coalmine at 4:00 pm.

The miners also demanded that the authorities of BCMCL resume coal production, which has remained suspended since May 11. One miner was killed and 18 others were injured in a roof collapse inside the coalmine on the day.

CMC-XMC Consortium, the contracted company of Barapukuria Coal Mine, laid off 160 Bangladesh miners on June 29 for five days. Protesting the decision of CMC-XMC, Bangladeshi

miners staged a demonstration inside the BCMCL complex demanding withdrawal of the lay-off notices.

A meeting between Bangladeshi miners, BCMCL and CMC-XMC held on Wednesday over the issue but ended inconclusively. Since then the miners have been agitating inside the coal mine to press home their demands.

Apprehending deterioration of law and order inside the BCMCL complex, the authorities yesterday hung a notice at two entrances to the coalmine, directing the Bangladeshi miners not to enter the complex without further notice. Police have been deployed at the two gates.

Angered by the authorities' notice, prohibiting entry of the miners into the BCMCL complex, the miners staged sit-in and a rally in front of a gate of the coalmine. They gave a 24-hour ultimatum to BCMCL authorities to meet their demands.

Top outlaw arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A top cadre of an outlawed party was arrested along with firearms and ammunition at Boiragirchar in Daulatpur upazila on Wednesday.

Identified as Minhaz, 24, son of Suknal of Boiragirchar was recently leading the Panna Bahani in the area, police said. He took charge of the gang after Panna was killed in 2006,

they added. A Kushtia court sent Minhaz to jail yesterday.

Police raided a house at Boiragirchar around 7:00pm and arrested him. They recovered a Pakistan made rifle, eight bullets and a Chinese axe from his possession.

Minhaz is accused in at least eight cases including two for murder, police said.

His father Suknal was killed in a shootout with police last year.

MONDAY'S INCIDENT AT RU FINE ARTS DEPT Class boycott by teachers on

A RU CORRESPONDENT

Teachers of fine arts department at Rajshahi University (RU) continued their class boycott programme for the second day yesterday demanding exemplary punishment to the students who confined proctor, department chairman and three teachers to office and classroom on Monday.

In a meeting at fine arts department on Wednesday with department chairman Prof Abdul Matin Talukdar in the chair, the teachers decided to continue class boycott programme until their

demand was met.

They also submitted a memorandum to Vice-Chancellor Prof Abdus Sobhan on Wednesday, the first day of the programme, protesting the incident and demanding punishment to those involved.

The students of fine arts department on Monday confined Proctor Prof Chowdhury Zakaria, department Chairman Abdul Matin Talukdar and three teachers to office and classroom protesting abrupt increase in fees for filling up examination forms.

The university authorities recently

hiked the fees for filling up final year examination forms of the students of 2006-07 session from Tk 350 to Tk 3,030.

The agitating students also vandalised the department's windows, notice board and furniture and burnt an effigy of the department chairman.

Prof Abdul Matin Talukdar told this correspondent yesterday that they would continue their class boycott programme until the students involved in Monday's incident were punished.



PHOTO: STAR

Premises and the road in front of Hill Degree College in bordering Hill upazila of Dinajpur district gets flooded due to incessant rain yesterday.