

Teesta at low watermark

Irrigation, navigation face setback, fishermen jobless

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

The river Teesta in Lalmonirhat and adjacent districts has reached its low water mark, posing serious threat to irrigation and livelihood of the fishermen.

A huge landmass and a number of shoals have emerged turning the river into tapered, petty lanes. Miles after miles on the riverbed are facing threats of desertification and other environmental catastrophe.

People living on the bank of the river said they saw abnormal fall in the water level in the last four months although it was thought that the situation would improve due to sufficient rain last year. They now apprehend that within a month or two the water flow would be at its lowest ebb.

Attributing to the unilateral withdrawal of water by India through the Farakka Barrage in the upstream of Teesta Irrigation Barrage at Daliya of Hatibandha upazila for the abnormal fall of water level, the environmentalists in Lalmonirhat, observe that the sharp fall would be catastrophic for navigation, fisheries and agriculture.

According to sources in Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) in Lalmonirhat, the water level of the river started to fall from mid-September last year.

Many tube-wells in Lalmonirhat town and areas adjacent to the river have gone dry due to sharp fall in



PHOTO: STAR

The shrinking Teesta at Char Gobardhon point in Lalmonirhat. Abnormal fall in the river's water level is posing a serious threat to navigation, fisheries and agriculture in the region.

water level. Hundreds of shallow tube-wells meant for irrigating croplands have also become useless due to the same reason.

The drastic fall in water level has resulted in total suspension of plying of vessels causing untold sufferings to two lakh people living in char villages under Sadar, Aditmari, Kaligonj and Hatibandha upazilas.

At least 200 boatmen in 50 routes in the river in four upazilas are now in search of alternative sources of livelihood.

Fishes are also not available in Teesta like before. Scores of fishermen have become jobless, while some are still clinging to their profession and many have already shifted to other profession.

Sobahan Miah, 48, a fisherman of Char Gobardhon under Aditmari upazila said, "I earn only around Tk 50 to 70 a day this year although I had earned around Tk 150 to 200 during the same period last year."

"Everyday I go out for fishing but I return without sufficient catches at the end of the day", he lamented.

Sub-divisional engineer

of Lalmonirhat Water Development Board Shafiqul Islam said, "As all the gates of Farakka in India are kept open during rainy season in the upstream of Teesta Barrage, the river floods the region".

"But during the dry season, India closes all the gates of the barrage causing serious fall in water level in the river", Shafiqul added.

4,821 file nominations for 1,040 posts in 80 Barisal union parisads

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Four thousand eight hundred and twenty-one candidates submitted nomination papers for 1,040 posts under 80 union parishads (UPs) till Sunday, the last date for filing nominations.

Among them, 560 want to vie for 80 chairman posts, 3245 for 720 general member and 931 for 240 reserved female member posts, according to district election office sources.

Sources said, 571 candidates including 50 for 10 chairman posts, 395 for 90 general member and 113 for 30 reserved female member posts submitted their nomination papers in 10 union parishads under Sadar upazila of the district, 539 candidates including 67 for 7 chairman posts, 389 for 63 general member and 83 for 21 reserved female member posts submitted nomination papers in seven UPs under Gournadi upazila, 757 candidates including 90 for 13 chairman posts, 511 for 117 general member and 156 for 39 reserved female member posts submitted their nominations in 13 UPs under Mehendiganj upazila, 213 candidates including 21 for 4 chairman posts, 148 for 36 general member and 44 for 12 reserved female member posts submitted their nominations in 6 UPs under Babuganj upazila, 475 candidates including 53 for 8 chairman posts, 329 for 72 general member and 93 for 24 reserved female member posts submitted their nomination papers in 8 UPs under Banaripara upazila, 344 candidates including 32 for 5 chairman posts, 260 for 45 general member and 52 for 15 reserved female member posts submitted their nominations in 4 UPs under Agoiljhara upazila, 474 candidates including 57 for 7 chairman posts, 328 for 63 general member and 89 for 21 reserved female member posts submitted nominations in 4 UPs under Wazirpur upazila, 397 candidates including 63 for 7 chairman posts, 248 for 63 general member and 86 for 21 reserved female member posts submitted

nominations in 4 UPs under Muladi upazila and 699 candidates including 79 for 13 chairman posts, 497 for 117 general member and 123 for 39 reserved female member posts submitted their nomination papers in 4 UPs under Muladi upazila of the district.

A large number educated youths submitted nomination papers this year. Many of them are linked to local unit political parties mainly ruling Awami League and main opposition BNP.

There are 85 union parishads in 10 upazilas of the district. The Election Commission so far announced poll date and schedule for 80 UPs and withheld five UPs due to legal issues.

Those five UPs are Dhulkhola and Gaubrabdi UP in Hizla upazila, Shikarpur-Wazirpur and Guthia UP in Wazirpur upazila and Durgapasha UP in Bakerganj upazila.

District Election Commission office sources said that 10, 88,154 voters are expected to cast their vote in the district.

The date for withdrawal of candidature is March 13, while voting will take place on 29, 31 March and April 3, 2011.

Meanwhile, Election commissioner M Sakhawat Hossain yesterday warned that political interference in the coming election will not be tolerated and administration and election officials would be blamed for any irregularities during polls.

The EC was reviewing law and order situation with officials of administration, law and order agencies and election offices in Barisal division at the conference room of the deputy commissioner.

The EC vowed to check any repetition of previous irregularities and disturbances in local government election at any cost. Local government election would be non-political and non-partisan.

"So any pressure to withdraw candidature or any formal announcement of party-nomination would be considered as violation of election code of conduct and action would be taken as per law if any such allegation is filed in this regard", the EC said.

He asked the administration and law enforcing agencies to play an unbiased, legal, neutral and impartial role for a free, fair, transparent and acceptable election.

SNAPS AND SNIPPETS

Poultry culled in Sirajganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

At least 1,500 poultry were culled due to avian influenza at 'Hatem Ali and Brothers' farm at Soyadhangora village under the municipality area on Sunday night. Executive magistrate Suraya Jahan and district livestock officer Shafiqul Islam were present. District livestock department sources said, on March 4, at least 160 poultry out of 1,660 died. On the same day, samples of the dead poultry were sent to Dhaka for test. As the avian influenza was detected and 1,500 poultry were culled.

Youth jailed for stalking

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A mobile court yesterday sentenced a youth to three months simple imprisonment for stalking a school student in Munshipara area in the town. Executive magistrate Abu Nasar Uddin delivered the judgment after hearing both sides. Convict Parvez Hossain, 20, is son of Monjur Ali of Palashpole area in the town. Mobile court sources said Parvez used to stalk, Mitu, 13, daughter of Akbar Ali of Palashpole area in Satkhira town, on her way to school off and on.

Stolen idols, gold recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

All the five idols stolen on Sunday early morning from Radha Madhab Mandir at Gallamari were recovered by police yesterday morning from the house of a drug peddler at old Gallamari Road under Sonadanga police station of Khulna city. The arrestee was identified as Kabir Khalifa, 40, said AC TM Mosharrar Hossain of Detective Branch of Khulna Metropolitan Police. Police also recovered from him two gold chains and a sum of Tk 1,800 stolen from the same temple.



COURTESY: PADATK

Mitali Bharat-Bangladesh Sanskriti Sangsad and Padatik of Bangladesh jointly organise a commemorative meeting to pay tribute to late Jyoti Basu, former chief minister of West Bengal in India, at the iconic communist leader's paternal house at Barodi village in Sonargaon upazila of Narayanganj district recently, marking his first death anniversary. Participants (from left): Sonargaon upazila parishad Chairman Mosharrar Hossain, Mitali President TK Sengupta, local Awami League leader Zahir Hossain, Sammilita Sanskritik Jote Vice President Golam Quddus, Sarbabharatiya Sangeet O Sanskriti Parishad General Secretary Kajal Sengupta and Mitali Joint Secretary Alok Datta.

Profile of an woman warrior

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Today is International Women's Day. Dedicating decades of her life in selfless service, Protibha Mutsuddi, director of Kumudini Welfare Trust, can be regarded as an icon in the field of women's enlightenment and empowerment.

A lifelong educationist, she has also taken part in different progressive movements including the Language Movement in 1952.

Protibha was born at Mahamuni Pahartoly village in Raojan upazila of Chittagong district on December 16, 1935.

After getting masters' degree in economics from Dhaka University in 1959 she did her BED from Mymensingh Women Teachers' Training College in 1960.

The same year, Protibha joined Cox's Bazar Girls High School as its headmistress. In 1963, she joined Bharateswari Homes at Mirzapur of Tangail as lecturer of economics and in 1965, took its charge as principal following request from philanthropist Ranada Prosad Saha (RP Saha),

Int'l Women's Day today



Protibha Mutsuddi

founder of Kumudini Welfare Trust.

Bharateswari Homes was given the award of the country's best school in 1987 and the best college in 1995.

After Pakistani occupation army with the help of their local collaborators killed RP Saha and his son Bhabani

Prosad Saha Roby during the Liberation War in 1971, Protibha got responsibility as its director.

"It was a hard time as I had to remain worried about the security of over 1000 women in Kumudini Complex including students of the Homes and the nurses of Kumudini Hospital.

Even after her retirement from the post of principal of Bharateswari Homes in 1998, she has continued serving the institution.

Thousands of students of Protibha Mutsuddi have established themselves as worthy and enlightened citizens and helping others to get enlightened, speeding up the process of women's empowerment and ensuring their equal rights in family and society.

"I am proud of my students of Bharateswari Homes as the institute has been selected for this year's Independence Award," said Protibha, who has remained single during her whole life.

For her contribution to the field of humanitarian service, especially education, Protibha got different awards including 2002 'Ekushe Padak'.

Four to die, six get life for killing Bogra Jubo League man

UNB, Bogra

A court here yesterday sentenced four people to death and six others to life term imprisonment for killing a Jubo League leader in 2003.

The four people who were awarded death penalty are Majed Miah, 39, and his brother Abdul Matin, 31, sons of Reza Mia of Bri-Kushtia village of Shahjahanpur upazila, Anwar Hossain, 32, son of Azizar Rahman of the same village and Hamidur Rahman alias Abdul, 38, son of Habibur Rahman of Demajani village of Shahjahanpur upazila.

The six lifers are Ranju, 35, of Aria Uttarpara village, Majnu, 27 and Ripon Saha, 35, of Demajani village, Shafikul Islam, 39, of Chakchupinagar village, Jewel, 32, and Bakul, 32, of Bri

village of the upazila.

The court also fined them Tk 20,000 each, in default, to suffer two months more RI.

Among the convicts, Matin, Anwar, Ripon, Majnu and Shafiqul were tried in absentia.

According to prosecution, Jubo League convenor of Shahjahanpur upazila unit Ramananda Das was chopped to death by a few assailants at a tea stall at Demanji bazar on November 9, 2003.

Victim's brother Nitai Chandra Das filed a case with Shahjahanpur PS after two days.

Police submitted charge sheet against 20 people on November 11, 2007.

After examining the records and witnesses Nitai Chandra Saha, additional district and sessions judge, handed down the verdict acquitting 10 others of the charge.

Trader murder triggers protest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The business and social leaders held a protest rally at Golapganj upazila headquarters in Sylhet yesterday demanding arrest of the criminals who killed businessman Abdul Awal Khan and seriously injured his nephew Sufian Ahmed Khan.

Protesting the heinous crime, the businessmen also formed a human chain and kept their shutters down for an hour.

On Saturday night, alleged activists of ruling Awami League-backed Chhatra League (BCL) hacked Abdul Awal Khan, 60, and his nephew Sufian Ahmed Khan, 28, at their business firm at Golapganj Choumohani, leaving them seriously injured.

They were rushed to Golapganj upazila health complex, wherefrom Awal was shifted to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College

Follow-up

Hospital. He succumbed to his injuries there on Sunday.

At yesterday's protest rally, the speakers urged the administration to take stern action against drug trade that is leading a section of youths astray and instigating them to commit serious crimes.

The drug peddlers and

their godfathers must be resisted to save the young generation, they said.

AL leader Mizanur Rahman Rinku, businessman Saiful Islam, Golapganj municipality councillor Ruhin Ahmed Khan, also former general secretary of the upazila BCL, and Abdul



PHOTO: STAR

Businessmen and locals of Golapganj upazila in Sylhet form a human chain yesterday demanding arrest of killers of local trader Awal Khan on Saturday

Ahad, president of local press club spoke, among others.

Earlier on Friday, Sufian and his family men and neighbours asked some drug peddlers to immediately stop supply of the harmful items in the area, said several locals, adding that the attack on Awal and Sufian might be a sequel to it.

Five gunshots were also fired during the attack, they said.

"A group of BCL men made the attack. Action will be taken against the attackers," Sylhet Superintendent of Police Shakhawat Hossain said.

"A case has been filed against Jamil, Jamal, Maruf, Opu, Jibon, Salim and Matir Rahman -- all BCL activists. None of them however could be arrested yet. There had been a long standing rivalry between the groups over establishing supremacy in the municipal headquarters," said Golapganj police station officer in charge Inspector Abdur Razaque Khan.

Rival's hired goons kill UP candidate

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A union parishad (UP) member candidate, also former member of Amragachia UP under Mirzagonj upazila in the district was brutally murdered yesterday.

Victim Mojibur Rahman, 40, was a resident of south Amragachia village under the upazila.

At about 9:30 in the morning, when Mojibur was going to upazila election office to be present at scrutiny meeting of nomination paper, a gang allegedly belonging to his rival attacked him.

Police and locals sent him to Mirzagonj upazila health complex where he died at 12 noon. Police arrested two people for their alleged involvement in the killing.

During the attack Sohrab, 45, Sahin, 30, Sobahan, 30 and

Habib, 30, all relatives of Mojibur Rahman, were injured.

Police and locals said, Mojibur submitted his nomination paper to upazila election office on March 5 for UP member post. Yesterday was the day for scrutiny and he started from his house for upazila headquarters. When he reached near Baker Mia's house, a gang of 20/25 attacked him with sharp weapons.

The gang also attacked his relatives as they tried to save Mojibur.

On getting information, police rushed to the spot, rescued Mojibur and others and admitted them to upazila health complex.

All the attackers were hired goons of Altaf Hossain, an UP member also a candidate for the same ward, said Akhter Morshed, OC of Mirzagonj police station.