



Erosion by the Dharla River has taken a serious turn, devouring areas in three villages of Kulaghat union under Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila. The photo was taken from Ghaterpar village yesterday.

## Dharla erosion renders 35 families homeless

Steps to halt Jamuna erosion demanded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

At least 35 families in three villages of Kulaghat union under Sadar upazila were rendered homeless in the last three days due to sudden erosion by the Dharla River.

The erosion-hit villages are Ghaterpar, Vatiyatari and Shimulbari. Affected people at Ghaterpar village told this correspondent that erosion took a devastating turn devouring several homesteads in the last three days.

Mofizul Islam, 48, of Ghaterpar said, "Erosion by the Dharla has made me a destitute. My homestead has been eroded for the third time on Tuesday evening. Now my five-member family has taken shelter in a relative's house at a neighbouring village."

Mozammel Haque, 50, of Shimulbari said that a dozen families in his village have been rendered homeless by the Dharla erosion in the last three days.

"Dharla erosion is continuing in these villages. The river has already devoured 35 homesteads till today (Wednesday noon).

Many villagers are now leaving their homesteads in fear of erosion. Many fields with standing crops especially maize have gone into the river," said Kulaghat UP chairman Shahjahan Miah.

Erosion-hit people of Vatiyatari village

told this correspondent that the river has devoured at least 50 acres of cultivable land, some orchards, bamboo clusters during the period.

Monsur Ali, 45, of the village said "I had only three decimals of my homestead. Dharla has eroded it away this morning. Now we have taken shelter on a government land."

Contacted, executive engineer of Lalmonirhat Water Development Board (WDB) Enayet Ullah said he visited the spot at noon.

"I will send a letter to the higher authorities concerned seeking fund for protection of those villages," he said.

Meanwhile in Gaibandha, speakers at a protest meeting yesterday demanded immediate steps to halt erosion by the Jamuna River and save Shaghata police station, health complex, banks, schools and colleges, reports our correspondent.

Organised by Shaghata Thana Rakha Committee, the meeting was held at a local girls' high school ground.

The speakers urged upon the Water Development Board (WDB) authorities to start flood protection embankment work immediately, as government recently approved a project.

## POOR SUPPLY OF IRRIGATION WATER IN DRY SEASON

# Teesta boro farmers opt for tobacco cultivation

E.A.M. ASADUZZAMAN,  
Nilphamari

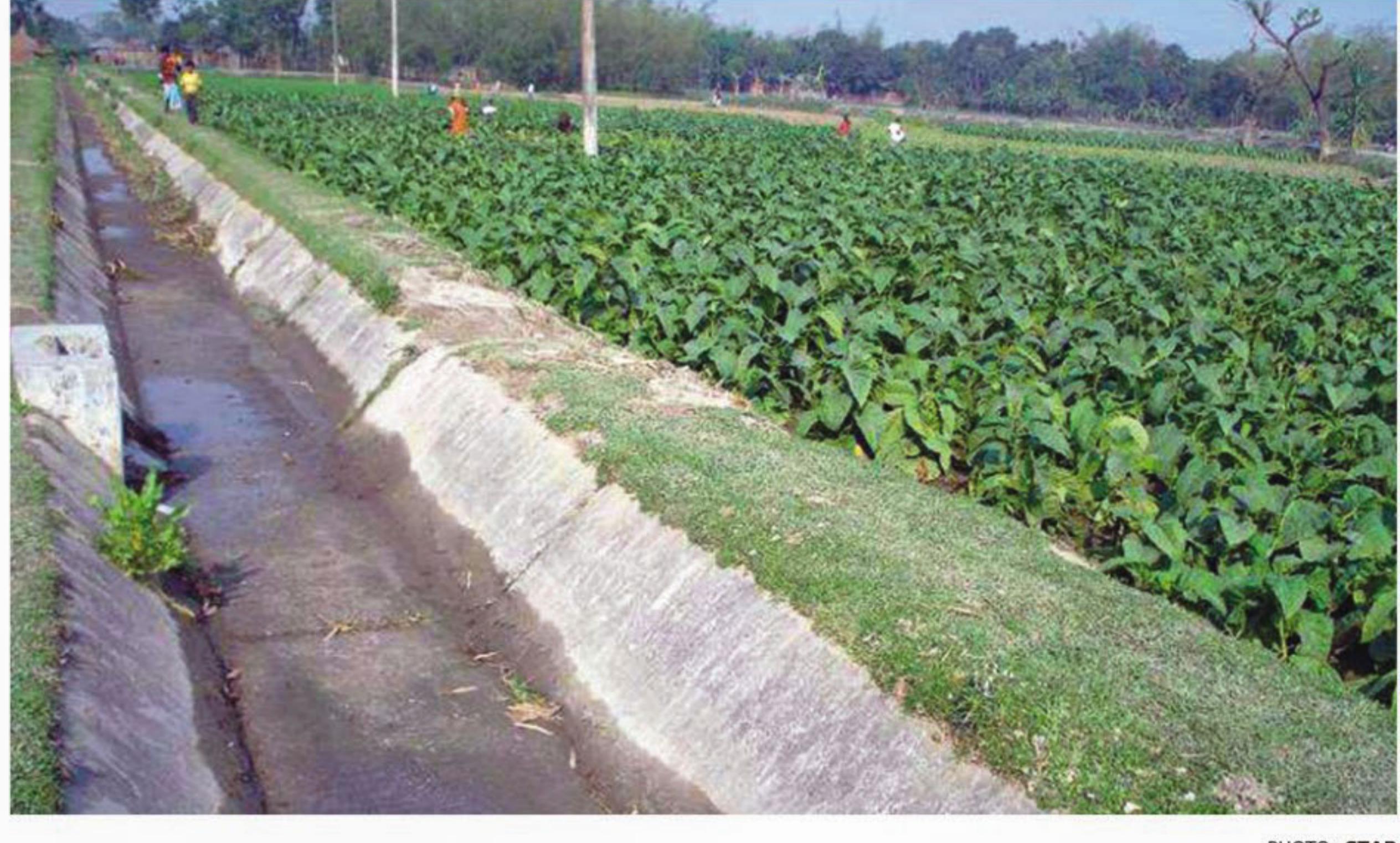
A section of boro farmers are inclining to tobacco cultivation in the command area of Teesta Irrigation Project, the largest of its kind in the country, as Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) has failed to provide adequate irrigational water in the dry season.

This problem has arisen due to scanty flow in the Teesta River as Indian authorities closed all gates of Gajaldoba barrage in the upstream to store river water for their own use, said agriculture officials.

Massive tobacco farming poses threat to human health and environment, in addition to affecting food production in the country, said agronomists, physicians and environmentalists.

During a recent visit to Kukhali Para, Singdoi, Ramnagar, Bahali Para of Sadar upazila, Kalkeut, Horish Chandra Path, Dakkhin Deshibai, Uttar Deshibai, Araji Kathali, Kathali villages of Jaldhaka upazila under the command area of Teesta Irrigation Project, this correspondent found that farmers have cultivated different varieties of tobacco on several thousand acres of land there.

"We do not get water from the project during boro plantation period which starts from mid November. Farmers have to buy water from pump owners at additional cost of Tk 2200-2000 for diesel-run pump and Tk 1000 for electricity-run pump for plantation in a bigha (30 decimal) of land as BWDB starts supplying irrigational water from last week of January," said



Tobacco plants cover a large field just beside a dry T1D2 tertiary canal under Teesta Irrigation Project at Sindoi village in Nilphamari Sadar upazila as many traditional boro farmers are now opting for tobacco cultivation due to lack of sufficient irrigational water in the dry season.

farmer Dabiruddin of Dakkhin Deshibai village in Jaldhaka upazila.

Another farmer Chitta Ranjan Roy of Ramnagar village of Sadar upazila said,

"Tender boro plants are often damaged in February and March as boro farmers get project's water on rationing basis after long interval as there is scanty water in the Teesta River. So, I cultivated tobacco on two bighas of land beside Dinajpur main branch canal as tobacco farming needs little irrigation."

"My land is situated at remote part of two kilometre long side canal at Sindoi village. Farmers in upstream divert water from this narrow canal to their fields depriving remote farmers. And so, I have cultivated tobacco that

has high market price," said farmer Zahidul Islam.

"Tobacco cultivation has almost doubled during the last couple of years in the command area of Teesta project as

farmers are not getting sufficient irrigational water for boro cultivation," said Mizanur Rahman, former chairman of Ramnagar union parishad of Sadarupazila.

Admitting that farmers are inclining to tobacco cultivation in some areas under Teesta Irrigation Project, Agriculture Extension Officer of BWDB in Teesta Irrigation project area Amalesh Chandra Roy said, "We usually face difficulty to provide irrigational water to boro farmers in February-March for scanty water in Teesta River as India closed all gates

of Gajaldoba barrage in the upstream to store water for irrigation in its territory."

"This year, the lowest flow was 400-500 cusec water in the river in March although it needs at least 3500-4000 cusec for smooth irrigation," he added.

He however said that tobacco cultivation does not hamper paddy as after harvesting tobacco, farmers cultivate 'aus' paddy which needs less irrigation.

BWDB sources said the first phase of giant Teesta Irrigation Project commenced in 1998, had an initial target to provide irrigation to 1,11,406 hectares of land in Rangpur, Nilphamari and Dinajpur districts.

But due to low flow of water in the Teesta river, BWDB has reset a target to provide irrigation to only 42,500 hectares of

land (1 hectare= 2.47 acres) in this year's boro season, said Executive Engineer of BWDB's Dalia Division Zohurul Islam.

"Massive tobacco farming hinders government's efforts to attain food security as it occupies paddy cultivation areas," said agriculturist Jahangir Alam, also retired deputy director (DD) of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Panchagarh district.

"Different deadly diseases are caused due to smoking and direct consumption of dried tobacco leaves like jarda. Smoke of cigarettes and powered tobacco locally known as 'gul' also pollute air," said Dr Abdul Mazid, acting civil surgeon of Nilphamari.



Earth lifting by an influential contractor from Alai River bank in Gaibandha municipality area for filling up a low land makes the bank vulnerable to collapse in the upcoming rainy season.

## Mindless lifting of soil makes Alai riverbank vulnerable to collapse

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Gaibandha

Labourers of a contractor are cutting soil from the bank of Alai river to fill up an adjacent low land in Gaibandha municipality, making the riverbank vulnerable to collapse in the coming rainy season.

The land has been earmarked for earth filling under Second Town Integrated Flood Protection STIFP-2 project of Gaibandha municipality. Though it was stated in the work order that the contractor concerned to fill up the land, taking soil from suitable places, he (contractor) is implementing the project work, ignoring the condition.

this regard.

We have already filed a complaint with the mayor and sought his intervention to stop illegal earth cutting. We will go for tougher agitation if our demand is not met immediately, they said.

Azher Ali, a councillor of Gaibandha municipality, said he has been assigned by the mayor to investigate allegation. Cutting soil from riverbank for any purpose is illegal, he added.

The contractor, Abdul Latif Hakkani, could not be contacted over cellphone despite several attempts. However, his manager Chandan Kumar Saha said they are cutting soil, taking permission from the competent authority.

On April 15, locals tried to prevent the labourers from illegal earth cutting and locked in a clash with them. They also filed a case with Gaibandha Police Station in

## Housewife murdered in Pabna for dowry

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Pabna

A housewife was murdered allegedly by her husband for dowry at Piarakhali-Pashchim Tengri village of Ishwardi upazila early Tuesday.

Police recovered the body from the spot and arrested three people including the victim's husband in this connection yesterday morning.

Victim Shumi Khatun, 22, was wife of Rustom Ali of the village.

Police, locals and the victim's family sources said Shumi, daughter of Abu Jahid Mridha was married to Rustom 6 years ago on condition of dowry.

Sumi's husband Rustom demanded a rickshaw and often tortured her for that.

On Tuesday, Rustom and

his drug peddler friends beat up Shumi mercilessly at about 10 pm leaving her dead on the spot.

Rustom also tried to show the murder as a case of suicide.

Being informed police rushed to the spot and recovered the body. They also found marks of injury on the body.

Later they arrested three people including Rustom and his two friends from the spot.

Sumi's family claimed although they gave a rickshaw to the accused he was pressuring Shumi for another rickshaw.

"Failing to get the rickshaw they killed Shumi," victim's father said.

Victim's father Abu Zahid Mia also filed a case with the Ishwardi police station accusing Rustom and his friends, police said.



Heartiest congratulations to Mr. Md. Saiful Islam, Managing Director of Picard Bangladesh Ltd. for being awarded National Export Trophy (Gold) by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina

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