

Cheques for Barapukuria land subsidence victims from today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

Authorities will finally start paying the 'premium' compensation to the land subsidence affected people around Barapukuria Coal Mine Company Ltd (BCMCL) today, much to the happiness of the people concerned.

During opening of the programme in front of the administrative building of BCMCL in the afternoon, about 200 land subsidence affected people will receive cheques under the government's compensation package.

Sources of Dinajpur Deputy Commissioner's office, BCMCL, and Jibon O Shampad Rakkha Committee, an organisation of the affected people, confirmed the matter.

"Finally the process is going to start tomorrow [Thursday], and cheques under the premium compensation to the land subsidence affected

people will be disbursed in phases," said engineer Quamruzzaman, managing director of BCMCL.

A high level delegation including Mostafizur Rahman, state minister for land, Subid Ali Bhuiyan, president of the parliamentary standing committee on power, energy and mineral resources ministry, Abdus Shahid, chief whip in parliament, Mesbah Uddin, secretary of power, energy and mineral resources ministry, and Md Hossain Monsur, chairman of Petrobangla, will be present at the programme.

At least 627.73 acres of land around Barapukuria Coal Mine area will be acquired as the land subsidence caused due to the mining, said sources of Dinajpur deputy commissioner's office.

As per the package, authorities will acquire habitable land at Tk 25 lakh per acre and arable land at Tk 20 lakh per acre. The 318 landless people of the area will get Tk 2 lakh each and small

businessmen of the area will get Tk 50,000 each as compensation, sources said.

Besides, compensation including Tk 33 crore for infrastructure, Tk 8 crore for tree, Tk 1 crore for miscellaneous and Tk 2 crore for two season crop will be paid in phases.

After scrutinising the land documents, a team from Dinajpur district administration earlier finalised the documents of 1351 families in 10 affected villages in BCMCL area.

The finalist list will include around 2400 families of the affected area comprising Gopalpara, Bolorampur, Kalupara, Panchghatia, Boidyanathpur, Bashpukur, Patigram, Boigram, Jigagari and Barapukuria villages, sources said.

The land subsidence around Barapukuria Coal Mine was first detected in May 2006. Gradually land of 10 villages subsided and went under water, said the affected people.



PHOTO: STAR

A large portion of Dhaka-Singair-Balrtek ferry terminal road subsided in Lemubari Bazar area in Manikganj Sadar Upazila three months ago. Though vehicles ply the road amid risk of accident everyday, the authorities concerned are yet to take any steps to repair it.

Pest attack, stem rot disease in Rangpur worry aman farmers

A CORRESPONDENT, *Rangpur*

Massive pest attack and stem rot disease have affected ropa aman fields in Kaunia upzila under Rangpur district, much to the worry of farmers.

During visits to Rajib, Tepamadhupura, Kursa, Machhari, Madamadan, Sarai, Gadai, Haragachh, Najradaha areas of Kaunia upzila, this correspondent found that 20 to 25 percent of the aman plants have been seriously affected by the situation.

According to the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), aman is being cultivated on 10,845 hectares of land in the upzila this season.

Attack by stem borer, locally known as mazra poka, and stem rot disease, which dry the plants and turn them yellow, have affected especially BINA-7 and Swarna varieties of aman paddy, farmers said, adding that they will incur huge losses if the situation continues.

Several affected farmers said that they did not get any benefit even after spraying pesticide more than once in the same field.

"I have got lease of a five-bigha land to cultivate aman in the current season. Aman plants on two-bigha of land have already been damaged



PHOTO: STAR

Close view of aman plants attacked by stem rot disease at a field in Kaunia upzila of Rangpur district. Besides, pest attack in most areas of the upzila has added to the worry of the farmers.

although I sprayed pesticide thrice," Shahjahan, 45, a farmer of Machhari, said.

Like Shahjahan, many of the farmers of the affected areas have expressed their doubt about the quality of the pesticides.

DAE officials, however, denied massive attack of the pest and stem rot disease in aman plants at different places in Kaunia upzila.

"The aman plants might be affected due to climate change in the region as the days are extremely hot while there are dew drops at night. Besides, potash has become too costly for most of the farmers. The plant disease might also happen due to the shortage of the fertiliser in the land," said AKM Ruhul Ameen, Kaunia upzila agriculture officer.

He suggested spraying Score, Kantop, Nuin, Tila and Pholikor pesticides to overcome the situation.

Asked about the quality of the pesticides in the market, he said, "There are a number of pesticides in the market. It is not possible to determine their quality without laboratory test."

Honoured for rising above self

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Thakurgaon*

Panchagarh district administration yesterday rewarded Arzina Khatun, a nurse of City General Hospital in the town, in recognition to her selfless devotion to professional and human responsibility during the earthquake on Sunday evening.

At a simple ceremony at the Deputy Commissioner's (DC) office on the occasion, DC Md Tofazzal Hossain Mian handed over prize bonds worth Tk 2000 as reward to Arzina Khatun.

As the hospital building started violently shaking during the earthquake, doctors and other staffs left it for 'safe shelter' in the open. But Nurse Arzina Khatun remained at the operation theatre to give whatever support she could to a woman and her child, just born through a caesarean there.

"I did not leave the mother and the newborn as their lives might be at risk if they were left without any attendant," Arzina said after receiving the award.

District administration took the initiative to reward her after Bangla daily Prothom Alo published the story of her selfless act on Tuesday.

Rangamati-Bandarban road badly damaged, needs repair

SHANTIMOY CHAKMA, *Rangamati*

People's sufferings have mounted as the 52-kilometer Rangamati-Bandarban road became unfit for traffic movement allegedly due to lack of proper renovation work for years.

The hill road was handed over to Engineering Construction Battalion (ECB-17) of Bangladesh Army in 2000-2001, said sources at local offices of Roads & Highways Department in Rangamati and Bandarban.

ECB spent about Tk 32 crore till June this year but the inter-district hill road saw little change in 10 years,

they said.

Contacted, Major Mahmud, project director of ECB-17 at Bangalhalia army camp in Rangamati declined to comment about the condition of the road.

Ashrafuzzaman, warrant officer of ECB, said, "The road was repaired last year. But it got damaged soon due to plying of heavy weight trucks".

The road was constructed only for vehicles weighing 10 to 12 tonnes. But now at least 200 sand-laden trucks weighing over 30 tonnes each ply the road every day, damaging the road badly, he explained.

During a recent visit this correspondent found the road from Rikhali Bazar to Bandarban town full of large

potholes.

Komolmoy Tangchangya, a passenger, said "We have been suffering much due to bad condition of the road. I often use this road but it never ran down so much like this year."

It now takes around five hours to reach Rangamati from Bandarban whereas it took only two and a half hours in the past, he said.

The road may become totally unfit for vehicles within a year or so, if it is not repaired urgently, Komolmoy observed.

Though the authorities renovated the road several times in the past, the condition of the road deteriorate within a short period, he said.



PHOTO: STAR

Bandarban road has been badly damaged during the monsoon, much to the suffering of the inter-district passengers and locals.

RIVER EROSION IN GAIBANDHA, NARAIL

Hundreds of families shelterless

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Gaibandha*

Erosion by the Teesta took a serious turn in three unions of Sundarganj upazila rendering over 1500 families shelterless in the last two weeks.

The river has devoured at least two educational institutes, a large number of structures and homesteads and cropland on vast areas while it is now threatening the flood control dyke and a market at Lalchamar.

The worst hit villages are Lalchamar, Vati Buraill, Ujan Buraill and Purbo Lalchamar in Kapasia union, Charitabari and Kelnapara in Haripur union, Sheecha and Ujan Bochagari in Chandipur union. In those areas at least 400 families in Kapasia, 200 families in Haripur and 500 families in Chandipur unions have lost their all belongings due to the devastating erosion.

A large number of erosion victims took shelter on the nearby flood control dyke and living mostly without any help.

This is for third time that the river eroded my homesteads, devouring all my belongings, said Abdul Hamid

of Ujan Bochagari, who is now staying on the dyke.

The erosion has engulfed Paglerhat Government Primary School and Ujan Buraill Primary School buildings in the last few days and now threatening Lalchamar bazaar and the flood control dyke, locals said.

Gripped by fear, the people of erosion prone areas were seen shifting their movable properties to safer places in Sheecha village last week.

The situation is so grave that if the devastation continues at same pace, over 2000 families will be affected within the next one week, said Golam Mostafa Ahmed, chairman of Chandipur union.

Our correspondent from Narail adds: Erosion by Modhumoti river in Lohagara upazila in the district rendered around a thousand families homeless in the last several weeks.

With the recession of water level in the Modhumoti, erosion devoured huge cultivable lands, trees and structures in five unions of the upazila.

The affected families in Morlickpur, Etna, Kotakol, Lohagara and Shalnagor unions have shifted their houses in face of severe erosion.

While visiting the erosion hit areas of Lohagara

union recently, this correspondent saw people of Moshepara and Sagolcira villages hurriedly shifting their houses to safer places.

Zohora Fatema Bibi, 65, of Sagolcira village said, "I have lost all my belongings. As the erosion is going on unabated, I am now worried that the river would devour the rest of our village soon," she said expressing fear.

The most affected areas in the district are Sagolcira, Tetulia, Kamthana of Lohagara union, Moshepara, Mongol Hata, Korfa, Atospara of Morlickpur union, Degrichar, Lonkerchar and Pankharchar of Etna union, Gaga, Telkara and Botdia of Kotakol union, Kashiipur, Chaksi, Katlasur, Azampur, Shearebor, Rakantopur of Shalnagor union.

Bodor Khondokar, chairman, Lohagara union said that the erosion-hit people are passing their days amid anxiety and uncertainty.

Locals said about a thousand families have been displaced in the last several weeks and hundreds more will be affected in the next few weeks.



PHOTO: STAR

The Teesta devouring homesteads and croplands at Paglar Hat village under Chandipur union of Sundarganj upazila in Gaibandha, right, prompting the victims to shift their houses to safe shelter. The photos were taken a few days ago.

3 jailed in Bagerhat for killing UP chairman

UNB, *Bagerhat*

A court here on Tuesday convicted three people and sentenced them to jail for killing a UP chairman.

Among the convicts, Zahid Fakir, son of late Yunus Fakir of Mongla upazila was sentenced to life term while Ziaur Rahman, son of Shahidur Rahman of Mongla municipality and Raju Sikdar, son of Abdul Malek Sikdar of Dakope upazila of Khulna were given seven years each.

The court also fined Zahid Tk 10,000, in default, to suffer one year imprisonment more while the other duo Tk 5,000 each, in default, to suffer six months more in jail.

According to the prosecution, the aforesaid convicts hurled bombs at Burirdanga union parishad chairman in Mongla upazila Partho Protim Roy, on his way back home from a local bazaar, leaving him critically injured on January 14, 2004.

He was rushed to Khulna Medical College and Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries.

ATTACK ON PABNA STUDENTS Two transport workers held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

Police yesterday arrested two transport workers on charge of involvement in Tuesday's attack on the students of Pabna Edward College.

Meanwhile the road communications between the district headquarters and Chatmohar, Bhangura and Faridpur upazilas under the district have remained suspended as transport workers stopped vehicular movement on Pabna-Chatmohar road in protest against vandalising of five buses by students.

District transport workers' leaders said vehicular movement on the road will resume on Friday.

"Transport workers of Chatmohar are agitated as students vandalised at least five buses and assaulted transport workers on Tuesday. However, following our assurance to talk with the college administra-

tion to resolve the matter, workers have agreed to resume vehicular movement from Friday," said Md Firoz Khan, president of district transport workers association.

Chatmohar police arrested transport workers Md Anisur Rahman Annu and Keut Khandaker from Faridpur upazila bus stand area yesterday morning.

The arrestees were involved in Tuesday's attack on the students, said Chatmohar police station officer in charge Md Habibur Islam.

Tension among the students of Pabna Edward College subsided after arrest of the two accused transport workers yesterday.

"All the activities of the college are now running normally as the students have become calm after arrest of two accused transport workers," said Prof Noid Md Shamsul Huda, principal of the college.