

Tk 262 cr project starts this month to rid 3 dists of waterlogging

QUAZI AMANULLAH, *Khulna*

Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) is expected to begin work for implementation of a Tk 261.53 crore project on the Kobadak River by this month for resolving the persistent waterlogging problem in large areas of Khulna, Jessore and Satkhira districts.

The five-year project includes re-excavation of the Kobadak River and its adjoining creeks and canals, excavation of link canals and demolition of all unauthorised structures, dams, dykes and shrimp enclosures along the river, said BWDB sources.

"The project aims at controlling flash floods, improving irrigation system and develop fisheries and agriculture sectors by removing silt deposits from the banks and beds of the Kobadak River," Dipak Sarker, superintending engineer of Jessore Circle of BWDB told this correspondent on Sunday.

"Water Development Board will take full responsibility to implement the five-

year project after receiving the fund allocated by the government. We hope to start the work by this month," he said.

The Executive Committee of National Economic Council approved the project at a meeting held in Dhaka last month.

Flash floods and persistent waterlogging resulting from heavy siltation of Kobadak River rendered lakhs of people of Khulna, Satkhira and Jessore districts homeless during the last several years.

The 240-kilometre-long river flowing mainly through Khulna, Jessore and Satkhira districts has now become synonymous with sorrow for lakhs of people due to man-made problems.

Mindless construction of dykes, dams, shrimp enclosures and unauthorised structures on the banks of the Kobadak resulted in its heavy siltation, affecting beauty and normal course of the river and eventually causing serious waterlogging in the area, the superintending engineer said.

The perennial waterlogging problem has created an adverse impact on agriculture, fishery and biodiversity in the three districts, said Md Giasuddin, chief engineer of Khulna divisional office of BWDB.

Under the Tk 261.53 crore project, Tk 28.27 crore will be spent during the current (2011-2012) financial year, Tk 114.65 crore during 2012-2013, Tk 102.63 crore during 2013-2014 and Tk 15.88 crore during 2014-2015 financial year, he said.

Following locals' demand for saving the Kobadak, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina directed the authorities concerned to take necessary steps in this regard.

Consequently, a research work was carried out on 75,000 hectares of land last year to explore possibility of a sustainable drainage and flood control system and the project has been taken as per findings of the work, said the chief engineer of Khulna WDB.

The project was included in the Annual Development Programme during 2010-2011 financial year, he added.

Jute growers frustrated as prices dip in Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Gaibandha*

Jute growers of Gaibandha district are frustrated as prices of the cash crop see continued decline in the area.

There are 28 big and small jute markets in the district but farmers going there to sell the produce often return with the unsold item due to the situation.

At present raw jute is selling for Tk 800 to 1,300 per maund although the price was Tk 1,800 to 2,100 per maund at the beginning of the harvesting period, said lease holders of a few markets.

Amid sharp fall in the price of raw jute, purchasers of different agencies as well as local traders have lost interest in procuring the item, fearing losses due to probable price fall further.

The district produced 5.05 lakh maunds of raw jute in the current season, said sources of the chief jute inspector's office in Gaibandha.

Five purchase centres under Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation have so far procured 1 lakh 8 thousand maunds of raw jute.

Jatiya Jute Mills Ltd at Gaibandha Sadar centre procured 17,000 maunds of jute, Alim Jute Mills Ltd at Palashbari centre 17,000 maunds, UMC Jute Mills Ltd



PHOTO: STAR

Failing to get fair price of jute, farmers taking the item back home from a sales centre at Saghata High School field in Gaibandha district.

at Kamarpara centre 42,000 maunds, Khalishpur Jute Mills Ltd at Bamondanga centre 16,000 maunds and Star Jute Mills Ltd at Naldanga centre procured 16,000 maunds of jute.

Despite government instructions to procure jute directly from growers, Jatiya Jute Mills Ltd, UMC Jute Mills Ltd and Khalishpur Jute Mills Ltd procured jute from brokers and middlemen, depriving local farmers of fair prices, said several jute growers.

Besides, the five jute mills owe Tk 7 crore 65 lakh as

outstanding bills to middlemen and brokers. Consequently, they cannot procure enough jute due to fund constraint.

This season Jatiya Jute Mills Ltd started procurement with outstanding liabilities of Tk 1 crore 30 lakh, Alim Jute Mills Ltd Tk 1 crore 10 lakh, UMC Jute Mills Ltd Tk 1 crore 75 lakh, Khalishpur Jute Mills Ltd Tk 1 crore 75 lakh and Star Jute Mills Ltd Tk 1 crore 75 lakh.

Middlemen are physically approaching farmers in the char (landmass emerged

from riverbed) areas and collecting jute from them for Tk 700 to Tk 1,100 per maund.

The mill authorities fixed the prices of C grade jute from Tk 1,350 to Tk 1,500 per maund, but it sees unexpected fall -- Tk 800 to 1,300, due to lack of purchasers.

This year only 450 traders have taken license for procurement of raw jute against last year's 681 people and it is a reason for decrease in jute purchase in the market, said Mokbul Hossain, chief jute inspector in Gaibandha.

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More hilsa, current net seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Patuakhali*

A coast guard team in a drive seized 50 maunds of hilsa from the Andharmanik River, near the Bay of Bengal yesterday.

The team also arrested 38 fishermen on charge of hilsa fishing defying the 11-day ban imposed by the government.

The team also seized three fishing trawlers FB Nil Sagor, FB Maria Akhter and FB Jyotsna from the river at about 8:00 am.

The UNO of Kalapara later released all 38 fishermen held by the coast guard on the ground of humanity.

In Bagerhat KB Bazar, one Montu Ghosh was arrested while putting salt on hilsa at a house locking it from inside.

Being informed, a mobile team caught him red-handed, fined Tk1,000 and jailed him for seven days, reports our correspondent.

The team also seized around 15 maunds hilsa from the room.

Earlier on Wednesday night, law enforcers confis-

cated 13 maunds hilsa from a trawler on the Dartana River near Bagerhat town.

In the afternoon, another team seized 15 maunds hilsa from a wholesale shed at KB Bazar.

In Chandpur, law enforcers in a drive early yesterday seized 2.5 lakh metres current nets and 50 kg hilsa from the Meghna River, reports our correspondent.

Eight fishermen were

arrested and fined for fishing hilsa defying the 11-day ban, coastguard sources said.

The drive took at Alurbazar, Harina, Baharia and other points of the river under Sadar upazila, they said.



PHOTO: STAR

A task force of Chandpur district administration seizes 2.5 lakh metres of current net and arrest eight fishermen from Meghna River yesterday in a drive to prevent hilsa catching during the ongoing ban period.



PHOTO: STAR

Maasthan Haat vegetable market in Bogra district gets abundant supply of gourd as the area sees good yield of early variety of the popular winter vegetable.

10 injured as AL, BNP rivals clash in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

At least 10 people were injured in a clash between rival groups belonging to Awami League (AL) and BNP on Alipur union parishad (UP) office premises at Alipur village in Sadar upazila yesterday.

Of the injured, Alipur union AL president Mashur Rahman alias Mayur was admitted to Satkhira Sadar Hospital in a critical condition while Alamgir Hossain, Shajaddi, Babu and others were admitted to a local clinic.

Police rushed to the spot and arrested 21 people from both the groups.

Quoting local people police said, there was a long-standing dispute over a piece of land between Ebadul Dhali and Siddique Dhali of Alipur Dhalipara.

Local people sat at the UP office to resolve the feud through an arbitration chaired by Alipur UP chairman Mostafizur Rahman yesterday.

At one stage, local BNP activists belonging to district BNP vice president Abdur Rouf threatened to boycott the meeting. They also warned the chairman of dire consequences if he did not stop the arbitration.

The clash ensued when the local AL activists opposed the BNP men's views and proposal at the arbitration.

Contacted, BNP leader Abdur Rouf denied his involvement in the incident. Alipur UP chairman Mostafizur Rahman, however, blamed the local BNP activists for the untoward incident.

Outbreak of kala-azar in Pabna

UNB, *Pabna*

The outbreak of kala-azar is taking an epidemic form as a good number of people have been attacked by the deadly disease in Chatmohor upazila of the district.

Lack of awareness and indifference of the authorities concerned are blamed for the outbreak of the disease.

A total of 25 people were affected from January to August this year while non-government estimate put the figure at more than 50. Women and children are the worst victims.

Local sources said virus of the disease spread from one person to another through the biting of one kind of fly, locally known as 'Bele Machhi'.

Those facing malnutrition and anemia are mostly affected.

Move to drive away hill people still on: Larma

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rangamati*

Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma, chairman of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Regional Council, has said the government, like its predecessors, is trying to drive away the hill people from CHT by acquiring their land in the name of what he said expansion of security camps and development of tourism industry.

Popularly known as Santu Larma, he was speaking at a seminar on "Compilation of laws and custom relating to Chakmas' Land Management System" in the conference room of CHT Regional Council here yesterday.

Mongal Kumar Chakma read out the keynote paper while Gautam Kumar Chakma, member of CHTRC, and Prakriti Ranjan Chakma, president of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, CHT chapter, were the main speakers at the seminar organised by CHT Regional Council in association with Manusher Jonno



Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma

Foundation (MJF).

Larma said around five lakh people from plain land were settled on the ancestral land of Jumma people during the regimes of late president Ziaur Rahman and Ershad. It was part of a conspiracy hatched by the two governments to annihilate the Jumma people, he alleged.

The conspiracy is still on to grab the ancestral land and homesteads of Jumma people, said Larma, also the chief of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS).

He said CHT Regional Council has become a dysfunctional institution due to

non-implementation of peace accord and other laws relating to its (CHTRC) smooth functioning. He demanded full implementation of the accord as soon as possible.

"We are facing serious problems in land management in hills as many authorities like Raja, headmen, karbaries and deputy commissioners (DCs) are dealing with the issue," Larma said, stressing the need for a proper land management system so that the hill people can establish their right to land.

He said since the chairmen and members of three hill district councils are politically nominated they always work in favour of the government. They can't do any task without instructions of the party's high command, he added.

Dr Shamim Inam, director of MJF, and Brishaketu Chakma, councillor of Rangamati Hill District Council, were the special guests at the seminar.

FOUR CASES IN BRAHMANBARIA

Six Huji men jailed

UNB, *B'baria*

A special tribunal here yesterday sentenced six activists of banned Islamist outfit Harkatul Jihad (Huji) to prison in four separate cases.

The convicts are Shamsul Islam Mollah, 48, of Narsingdi district, Musa Miah, 28, of B'baria town, Maulana Hedayetullah, 30, and Saiful Islam Sajib alias Saifullah of Sarail upazila, Jamal Miah, 24, of Nasirnagar upazila and Mizanur Rahman, 21, of Ashuganj upazila.

Of them, Shamsul Islam Mollah and Hedayetullah

were awarded 14 years rigorous imprisonment in an arms case filed with Brahmanbaria Sadar Police station on April 15, 2008.

Shamsul Islam Mollah, Hedayetullah and Saiful Islam were sentenced to seven years rigorous imprisonment while Musa Miah was jailed for three years in a separate arms case filed with the police station on the same day after recovery of nine bombs from a cropland.

Besides, Mizanur Rahman was awarded five years jail term in another case filed under Explosive Substances Act. He was arrested at his

house at Bogir village in Ashuganj upazila on April 25, 2008, along with bombs and bomb-making materials.

Moreover, Hedayetullah was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment, Shamsul Islam Mollah and Saiful Islam were jailed for seven years each while Jaml Uddin was jailed for five years in another case under Explosive Substances Act.

They were arrested on April 13, 2008 in the district town along with cocktails and bomb-making materials. Judge of Md Abu Sufian handed down the verdict in the afternoon.



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