

UPPER SURMA-KUSHIYARA PROJECT

# 60pc work done in 10 yrs

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

The much talked flood control and irrigation scheme titled "Upper Surma-Kushiyara Project" in Sylhet sees only about 60 per cent of work done in 10 years, although it was scheduled to complete by 2005-2006 fiscal year (FY).

The Water Development Board (WDB) began work for the five-year project along the north-eastern border of the district in 2001-2002 FY with an estimated cost of Tk 111 crore, said sources at WDB in Sylhet.

But lack of timely allocation for the project, its repeated revisions and delay in land acquisition delayed its implementation while repeated floods, water stag-

nation and large-scale erosion caused huge damage to households and croplands along the banks of Surma and Kushiyara rivers during the last one decade.

As per revision for the fifth time in 2009-2010 FY, which also included trimming of different features of the project, it was set to complete by June this year with an estimated cost of Tk 132 crore, Shailem Chandra Paul, executive engineer WDB in Sylhet, told this correspondent a few days ago.

"About 60 per cent of the project work has been done and Tk 74 crore spent so far. At least two more years will be needed to complete the remaining 40 per cent

work," he said.

Successful implementation of the project would protect 54,000 hectares of land from recurrent flooding while 10,000 hectares would get irrigation facilities, he said.

"Tk 15 crore was sanctioned for the 2010-2011 fiscal for construction of a pump house in Zakiganj, excavation of 26 km irrigation canal and construction of 14 regulators in addition to repair of 26 km embankment. We hope to complete the works in next two months," he added.

The 'Upper Surma-Kushiyara Project' was designed for flood control, improvement of drainage system and introducing

better irrigation facilities in vast areas of Zakiganj, Kanaighat, Beanibazar, Golapganj and Sylhet Sadar upazilas.

It begins from the starting point of Surma and Kushiyara at Amolshid border in Zakiganj upazila and runs up to Golapganj and Sylhet Sadar along the banks of the two rivers.

Originated in Assam of India, the Barak River bifurcates and enters Bangladesh as Surma and Kushiyara at Amolshid.

Water rolling down through these rivers from the upstream causes flood in huge areas of Sylhet region during the period from April to October almost every year.



PHOTO: STAR

Work for construction of a market on this leased railway land in front of Chatmohar railway station in Pabna district continues although lease rules strictly prohibit any concrete construction there. The photo was taken a few days ago.

## Outlaw killed in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A leader of outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) was murdered in Chatmohar upazila early yesterday.

Police recovered the body of Md. Abu Hanif, 32, son of Sekendar Ali of village Hadal in Faridpur upazila from Chaprar Beel area at noon.

He was identified as the regional leader of outlawed PBCP Red Flag faction, police said.

Officer in-charge of Chatmohar police station Md. Habibul Islam said locals found his body in Chaprar Beel area in the morning and informed the police. Rivals hacked him to death and dumped the body there, the OC said.

Hanif went missing from his residence four days ago, he added.

# Market on railway land

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

An alleged land grabber belonging to the ruling party has continued illegal construction of a market on a disputed railway land in front of Chatmohar rail station in the district although there is a legal battle concerning the lease of the land.

Around one and a half months ago, Md Azizul Haque, a fish trader of Chatmohar Railbazar area, started constructing a market building and digging a pond on a 38-decimal land in front of Chatmohar station in Railbazar area of Mulgram union under Chatmohar upazila, said locals.

To occupy the land worth about Tk 2 crore, the influential fish trader started construction of a market in defiance of government rule but there is nobody to protest it as the grabber belongs to the ruling party, said Md Gias Uddin, chairman of Mulgram union parishad.

"Illegal occupiers are grabbing valuable government lands specially those belonging to the railway through preparing false documents but there is hardly any legal action against the offenders," he said.

Talking with this correspondent, Md Azizul Haque said, "I bought the 38 decimal railway land from Modina Khatun, a 99-year-lease holder of the land, and transferred the lease document to my name in 2003. I am paying revenue of the land to keep the lease updated. As the real owner of the land I have started construction of a market and digging a pond here for fish cultivation."

On March 21, two days after the start of the construction by Azizul Haque, a Md Mizanur Rahman of the same area filed a case with Pabna Judicial Magistrate's Court-1, seeking Section 144 on the land.

In the case Mizanur Rahman claimed that their family is occupying the land for long by taking lease from Railway but Azizul Haque and his gang forced them to leave the land.

The court ordered the police to maintain law and order regarding the land and asked for an investigation report on the matter. The court also ordered the accused to appear before the court with legal documents on May 8, court sources said.

Following the court order, Chatmohar

police went to the spot and stopped the construction but the influential grabber later started the illegal construction again on the land, Mizan said.

"Railway estate department issued the yearly lease of the 38 decimal lands beside Chatmohar food godown in front of the rail station in the upazila to the name of my father Md Shomsher Ali on April 13, 2008. We have already paid the revenue of the land for 2009, 2010 and 2011 to renew lease of the land. But Aziz started occupying the land illegally," he said.

Divisional Estate Officer (DEO) of Railway Pakshey Division Kiron Chandra said, "When we lease a piece of land to anybody, we strictly ask them to refrain from concrete construction on railway land. Any such construction by the lease holder is illegal. They are constructing the market without our notice. Our department will investigate the matter."

"Bangladesh railway stopped the process of 99-year-lease across the country since 80s. We usually lease abandoned railway lands on yearly basis. There is no legal way to transfer such lease because we are the real authority of the land," he added.

## THE HAPPY COUPLE



PHOTO: STAR

This pair of owls, one of them sitting on a branch of this jackfruit tree at a house on TB Hospital Road in Moulvibazar town around two weeks ago and the other joining there on Monday last, are seen sunbathing and playing mischievous tricks with each other. Neither of the happy couple flies off the branch even for a moment, said house owner MA Khaleque, a professor of Moulvibazar Government College.

## Teacher gets life for rape of college girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chawabganj

A Chapainawabganj court yesterday sentenced a college teacher to life imprisonment for raping a girl of the college and recording the scene on his mobile phone.

The convict is Abdul Latif, 40, an assistant professor of Binodpur Degree College in Shibganj upazila.

Judge Kobita Khanam of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-1 also fined the convict Tk 1 lakh, in default he is to suffer another year in jail.

According to the prosecution, the victim, a second year student of the college, went to Prof Latif's house at Ghonetola village under Binodpur union to receive private tuition in 2007.

The teacher raped the girl and recorded the scene on his mobile. Later, the teacher blackmailed the girl by threatening to circulate the obscene video footage on mobile phone and raped her again.

The girl then stopped going to the teacher's house and married a schoolteacher of the same upazila.

When Latif's mobile phone went out of order in September 2010, he took it to a service centre at Binodpur Bazar. Technicians of the centre copied the obscene video and circulated it to a number of mobile phones. Seeing the video footage, the girl's husband sent her to her parents' house at Kaliganj village in the same upazila on October 1 in 2010.

As the news spread in the area the following day, the students of Binodpur Degree College and local people staged a demonstration on the college campus. The college authorities suspended the teacher.

The girl filed a rape case with Shibganj police station against Abdul Latif under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act on October 2, 2010. After investigation, police pressed charges against Latif on December 7 the same year.

Latif went into hiding and surrendered to the court on January 30, 2011. After examining 13 witnesses and relevant documents, the judge pronounced the verdict in a packed courtroom.

## Warrant for arrest of Khulna MP

UNB, Khulna

A court here yesterday issued an order to arrest Khulna-1 MP Nani Gopal Mandal and five other local Awami League leaders on charge of sexual harassment of a woman and attempt to kill her in Dakope upazila last month.

The Judge of the Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court (Zone 'Ga') passed the order directing the officer concerned of the PS to arrest the accused.

According to the prosecution Nani Gopal Mandal, AL MP from Dakope-Batiaghata constituency and also Dakop upazila chairman, along with his five associates sexually harassed upazila unit AL vice-chairman Jayanti Rani Sardar during a Hindu religious festival and attacked her with an ulterior motive to kill her as she tried to resist them late last month.

The victim further alleged that she filed the case with the Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court (Zone 'Ga') on April 26 as local PS refused to register her complaint under the influence of party highups.

The other accused in the case are upazila AL joint secretary Sanat Kumar Hui Bachchu, local AL leader and UP member Achinta Saha, Jubo League leaders M a k h a n C h a n d r a Chakraborty, Shyam Sundar Mandal and Devdas Mandal.

Asked to comment about the case filed by the local female AL leader and the subsequent arrest order issued by the court, Nani Gopal said, obtaining prior permission from the Speaker of parliament is needed to issue warrant of arrest against a MP by any agency.

He also denied the allegations made by the complainant against him.



PHOTO: STAR

Nagorik Committee forms a human chain on Panchagarh-Banglabandha road yesterday demanding upgradation of Banglabandha land port to a full-fledged one and introduction of immigration service through Banglabandha-Fulbari land ports to facilitate journey to and from neighbouring India.

## MASS WORK ABSTENTION IN PANCHAGARH

# 'Turn Banglabandha into a full-fledged port'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Normal life in Panchagarh town came to a virtual standstill for an hour yesterday as locals stopped work, demanding Banglabandha Land Port as a full-fledged port.

Calling for introduction of immigration service through Banglabandha-Fulbari land ports, thousands of people from all walks of life including leaders and activists of different political parties, professionals, teachers-students, cultural activists, farmers and workers also formed a 60-kilometre-long human chain on Panchagarh to Banglabandha highway for an hour from 11:00am.

They also observed 'mass work abstention' programme during the period.

All shops and business establishments from Panchagarh to Banglabandha kept their shutters down and all modes of vehicles including passenger buses remained off the roads while classes at all academic institutions were not held during the programme.

Financial transactions in state-owned and private banks and insurance companies, works in government offices and autonomous bodies and mills and factories also remained suspended.

Haque Prodhan, former lawmaker and district unit president of BNP Md. Mozahar Hossain, Panchagarh Municipality Chairman Touhidul Islam, President of Panchagarh Exporters and Importers Association Mehedi Hasan Babla, general secretary of Panchagarh Nagorik Committee Harun or Rashid Babu, spoke.

The speakers demanded immediate steps to upgrade Banglabandha land port to help flourish mills and factories which will create employment in the region.

They urged the government to discuss the issue 'seriously' with Indian Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee during his upcoming visit to Bangladesh.

Bangladesh agriculture minister Begum Matia Chowdhury inaugurated the trading through Banglabandha border on 22 January in 2011, while Pranab Mukherjee through Phulbari border in Jalpaiguri, on the same day.

The main inaugural function of the land port was held at Phulbari in India where both Matia Chowdhury and Pranab Mukherjee spoke.

Speaking on the occasion, both the ministers vowed to boost bilateral trade. Pranab Mukharjee said that Phulbari-Banglabandha land port was more potential than Benapole-Petrapole as it is very close to Shiliguri, the gateway to India's northeast region.

He also hoped that the immigration through the port will start 'very soon'.

## SNIPPETS

### AL man beaten to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A local Awami League leader was beaten to death allegedly by his neighbour in Modhukhali upazila yesterday morning. The victim is Sheikh Abdur Rashid, 52, secretary of Gazna union AL unit, said police. There was a longstanding conflict between Rashid and his neighbour Mokter Hossain over a piece of disputed land at Ashapur village. Mozharul Islam, sub inspector of Modhukhali police station, said the rivals locked in a clash over the issue at around 6:00am. At one stage, Mokter beat the victim with a stick mercilessly, leaving him injured seriously. He was rushed to Faridpur Medical College and Hospital where doctors declared him dead at around 9:00am, the SI added.

### Housewife murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole, Jessore

A woman was killed allegedly by her husband at Dopadi village in Abhoynagar upazila yesterday morning. The victim is Aklima Begum, 26, wife of Halim Mollah, of the village. Police said Halim locked in a quarrel with his wife over a trivial matter. At one stage, he hit her with a brick, leaving her dead on the spot. On information, police recovered the body and sent it to hospital morgue for autopsy. Halim went into hiding after the incident.

### Newsman assaulted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A gang of drug peddlers assaulted a journalist in Mission Crossing area of the district town on Wednesday night. Jahangir Alam Shaheen, a district correspondent of the daily Janakantho, is now undergoing treatment at Lalmonirhat Sadar Hospital. Shaheen said the gang attacked him in the area at about 10:30pm as he was collecting information about drug peddling in the town. Journalist leaders of Lalmonirhat press club condemned the attack and demanded immediate arrest of the culprits. Gokul Roy, president of the local press club, said they would go for tougher programme if the attackers were not arrested by today. Jamir Uddin, officer in-charge of Lalmonirhat Sadar police station, said they would take necessary steps against those responsible for the offence if any case filed by the victim.

### 4 brick kilns fined

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A mobile court fined four brick kiln owners Tk 5000 each at Moutala village in Kaliganj upazila yesterday for polluting environment. The convicts are Mir Gousul Azam, Mostafizur Rahman, Abu Taleb and Syed Amir Hamza of the village, said locals. On secret information, executive magistrate Mashruba Ferdousi raided the area and punished the four for burning firewoods at the kilns.



PHOTO: STAR

Culprit college teacher Abdul Latif being taken to Chapainawabganj jail after a court verdict yesterday.