

DRASTIC FALL IN WATER LEVEL

Ferry services on Teesta, Jamuna routes hampered

KM REZAUL HOQUE,
Gaibandha

Ferry service on different routes is badly disturbed as a large number of big shoals have emerged in the riverbeds due to drastic fall of water level in Teesta and Jamuna rivers in Gaibandha district during the dry season.

More than 30 river routes connecting different districts including Jamalpur, Kurigram, Pabna, Sirajganj and Narayanganj remain navigable during the rains. But the number of navigable routes has come down to only 17 during the dry season, said sources at Balashi Railway Ghat.

Closure of river routes hampers movement of people and transportation of different goods including food grains, jute, fertilisers and oil.

"We are counting additional costs for carrying fertiliser either by road or rail from Jamalpur," said Abdul Latif Hakkani, president of fertilizer traders' association in Gaibandha.

A floating oil depot set by Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) at Balashi Ghat area for supplying diesel and kerosene in remote areas of the district, had to be shut four years ago as big oil tankers from Fatulla in Narayanganj could not reach there due to the navigability problems.

"Oil transportation costs have increased following closure of the floating depot in the area. Now we have to carry diesel and kerosene with the help of tanker lorries from Baghabari oil



PHOTO: STAR

This floating pontoon at Balashi ferry terminal on the Brahmaputra River in Gaibandha district is lying idle on the dried up riverbed as the navigable portion of the river has moved away due to drastic fall in water level during the dry season.

depot," said Shajada Anwarul Kadir, president of Gaibandha Petrol Pump Owners Association.

Mostafa Zakir Hossain, marine superintendent at Balashi Railway Ghat, said the railway wagon ferry services between Balashi and Bahadurabad ghats have remained closed since November last year due to sharp decline in water level.

"A passenger ferry pontoon at Balashi ghat is now staying on sandy land on the dried up riverbed and so, people have to pass a long way on foot to catch ferryboats in the middle of the river. The services will resume in the rainy season

but it will continue only for four months," he added.

Students living in char areas are also facing problem to attend their classes boats cannot ply the dried up rivers during this period.

"I have to attend my classes at Rasulpur High School by walking about 10 kilometres," said Rafiqul Islam, a student living at Kunderpara Char in Gaibandha district.

Talking to this correspondent, several boatmen in the area said they are facing hardship during this season.

"As boats require travelling longer distances to reach destinations, more fuel is used, leading to

additional cost," said Nayeb Ali, a boatman at Balashi ghat.

Irrigation on vast areas of croplands, especially in Rangpur and Nilphamari districts, is also seriously hampered due to low water level in the rivers.

Navigability in the rivers begins to decrease early November every year as tributaries and branches almost dry up, said sources at Water Development Board in Gaibandha.

"There is no alternative to extensive dredging of the Jamuna and its tributaries to keep the river routes navigable round the year. It is also needed to save vast areas of

croplands and homesteads from flooding during the rainy season," Rezaul Mostafa Ashfuddowla, executive engineer of the WDB in Gaibandha, said.

However, the process would be too costly as the riverbeds see massive siltation with huge sand from the upstream every year, he added.

Locals are cultivating boro paddy, maize and chilly on the chars (sandy lands) emerged from the tributaries and branches of Teesta and Jamuna rivers while many fishing boats are staying idle in dried up riverbed, said Abu Sayeed Sarker, chairman of

'ATTACK' ON POLICEMEN

102 Jubo Dal, JCD men sued in Manikganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Manikganj

One hundred two Jubo Dal and Chhatra Dal men have been sued on charge of attack on policemen in the town on Tuesday noon.

Sub Inspector Ajar Ali of Manikganj Sadar Police Station filed the case in the afternoon. The accused include former secretary of Manikganj district Jubo Dal SMM Iqbal Hossain, Jubo Dal leaders Kazi Moshtaque Hossain Dipu and Abdul Motin Biswas, and JCD leaders Habu Bhuyan, Masud Parvez and Jinnah Khan.

According to the case statement, Jubo Dal and

Chhatra Dal jointly took out a procession in the town at noon and created traffic chaos on Shahid Rafique Road.

As police requested the processionists to leave the road, they attacked the cops with sticks and hurled brick chips at them, leaving Sub-Inspector Abdul Hamid and some policemen injured.

Contacted, SMM Iqbal Hossain, former secretary of Manikganj district Jubo Dal and also an accused in the case, said they brought out a procession in the town on Tuesday noon demanding withdraw of the cases filed against BNP central leaders including acting Secretary

General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, Jubo Dal President Moazzem Hossain Alal and General Secretary Saiful Islam Nirob.

"Though police intercepted our leaders and workers when they were marching towards the DC's office, we were not involved in any attack on the cops," Iqbal said.

He condemned the incident and demanded withdrawal of the case filed against them.

Md Liaqat Ali, officer-in-charge (OC) of Manikganj Sadar Police Station, said the Jubo dal and Chhatra Dal men were sued as they attacked the policemen.

ALLEGED BID TO GRAB LAND

Criminals hurt JU student

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Mymensingh

Criminals injured a student of Jahangirnagar University (JU) over a land dispute at Akua Chourangirmore in the district town yesterday morning.

The victim, Md Ibrahim Rakib, 21, son of late Abdus Sultan of Akua Chourangirmore area, and a first year student of journalism and media department of JU, is undergoing treatment at Mymensingh Medical College and Hospital (MMCH).

Some 20 people equipped with sticks and sharp weapons, allegedly led by Rakib's relative Anisur Rahman, started earth-filling a piece of disputed land at around 10:00am yesterday, said family sources and police.

When Rakib's mother Rokeya Begum went to the spot and asked the group to stop the work, an altercation began. At one stage, they started beating Rokeya.

Hearing her scream, Rakib rushed to the spot to save his mother but the furious gang hit Rakib with sharp weapons on the hand, leaving him injured.

He was rushed to MMCH. "My husband late Abdus Sultan bought a total of 18 decimals of land from late Yunus Ali, late Abdul Aziz and late Yusuf Ali in 1990. Abdul Aziz and Yusuf Ali handed

over 12.50 decimals of land to Abdus Sultan through registration. But after the death of Yunus Ali, his sons and daughters declined to register the remaining portion of the land in our name," said Rokeya.

"We paid the total money for the 18 decimals of land and the land has been under our possession since 1990. But breaching the earlier contract, sons and daughters of late Yunus Ali sold 4.25 decimal of the land to Anisur Rahman, one of their relatives, in 2008," alleged Rokeya.

"A case this connection was filed with a Mymensingh court and it is still pending. Anisur Rahman with the help of some hired goons took

several attempts to occupy the land but failed," she added.

"Earlier, the gang threatened us with dire consequences on various occasions and several general diaries were lodged with Kotwali police station," Rokeya said.

A complaint was lodged against six people including Anisur Rahman with Kotwali police station regarding yesterday's incident, said Rokeya Begum.

Despite repeated attempts, this correspondent failed to talk with Anisur Rahman for his version as he did not receive mobile calls.

Police visited the spot but none was arrested as of filing this report yesterday eve-

40 injured as BNP men clash with cops in Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

At least 40 people, including five policemen, were injured in a clash between the activists of BNP and the law enforcers in the district town yesterday.

Police also arrested five BNP men following the incident.

The clash ensued at around 1:00pm when police tried to foil a procession brought out by the district unit of BNP as part of its countrywide agitation programme.

During the clash, a chase and counter chase occurred between the men of BNP-led 18-party alliance and police. The law enforcers also used tear gas

shells to disperse the agitators.

"Police cordoned off the party office to foil the programme and charged baton on them. They also ransacked a few loud speakers during the demonstration", alleged Gusul Azam Doler, secretary of the unit.

Later, the party leaders at a press conference at Gaibandha Press Club condemned the police action and demanded removal of the police superintendent.

They also threatened to launch an agitation programme if the demand was not met by May 15.

Refuting the allegation, police said the demonstrators pelted brick chips at them first. In retaliation, they used teas

gas shells to disperse the agitators.

The BNP-led 18-party alliance held the programme to press home its demands including 'return' of its missing leader Miliias Ali.

In Patuakhali, four people were injured as police and the BNP men clashed in the district town yesterday noon, reports our correspondent.

The injured are Afroza Akhter Sima, 35, Abdul Mannan, 30, Bayezid, 35 and Arif Hossain, 28, activists of district unit BNP.

SM Abdur Rob, secretary of the unit, said police attacked their procession brought out as part of the party's countrywide demonstration, leaving the four injured.

Man jailed for hurling acid at mother-in-law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Rajshahi

A court here on Tuesday sentenced a man to seven years' imprisonment for throwing acid on his mother-in-law.

The convict is Omar Faruk of Hajrapukur Chalkpara in Poba upazila.

The court also fined him Tk 5000, in default, he is to suffer six months more in jail.

Rajshahi District and Sessions Judge Hossain Shaheed Ahmed pronounce the verdict.

According to the prosecution, Faruk threw acid on Mina Begum on October 30 last year as she filed a case with Rajshahi Women and Children Repression Prevention Court against Faruk on charge of torturing her daughter for dowry.

Transport strike called off

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
C'nawabganj

Transport workers withdrew their 72-hour strike in Chapainawabganj district after a meeting with the district administration at the DC's office on Tuesday night.

Sajjadur Rahman, superintendent of police, Shahidul Islam, president of Chapainawabganj Truck and Motor Workers' Union and its General Secretary Abdul Khalek joined the meeting with the deputy commissioner in the chair.

Transport workers enforced a 72-hour strike in the district from Tuesday morning protesting illegal toll collection by a section of people in the transport sector in the name of a workers union.



PHOTO: STAR

Carrying of garbage on open trucks during the daytime is a common scene in Mymensingh town, as authorities seem indifferent to public hygiene.



PHOTO: STAR

Injured Ibrahim Rakib at hospital bed.

10 S-W districts see bumper production of maize

PONUELS BOSE, back to
Narail from Jessore

Ten south-western districts under the jurisdiction of Jessore regional office of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) see bumper production of maize in the current season.

Favourable weather, use of standard HYV seeds, availability of bank loans, relief from pest attack and rainfall during October and November helped better growth of maize this season, said sources at Jessore regional office of DAE.

This season the department has set production target of 3,92,382 tonnes of maize in south-western districts of Narail, Jessore, Jhenidah, Magura, Bagerhat, Kushtia, Meherpur, Chuadanga, Satkhira and Khulna.

The target will exceed much as farmers are getting 75 to 80 maunds (one maund = 40 kg) of maize per acre (100 decimals) of land, DAE sources said.

This year farmers have cultivated maize on 60,401

hectares of land in the 10 districts while it was 41,898 hectares last year.

Chuadanga sees the highest 40,515 hectares of land under maize cultivation in this season.

It is followed by 10,649 hectares in Jhenidah, 7,395 hectares in Kushtia, and 1,655 hectares in Meherpur district.

Maize was also cultivated in small scales in six other districts of the region.

Maize cultivation is gaining popularity in Jessore region due to its increasing demand, high prices, easy cultivation process and

lower production cost, said farmers and DAE officials.

During visit to different areas in Monirampur upazila under Jessore district on Friday, this correspondent saw farmers busy in harvesting maize.

"Production cost of maize is Tk 7,000 per hectare and the profit being earned is Tk 11,000 to Tk 13,000. Last year's good production of boro paddy could not make us happy as the prices are low. This year we cultivated maize and got bumper production due to favourable weather," Babul Akter, a farmer of Monirampur upazila, said.

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