



PHOTO: STAR

Heavy rain for the last few days coupled with onrush of water from upstream turned a small ditch at Kashimpur village in Panchagarh Sadar into a 1.5-kilometre-long river overnight, linking it with local Tangon river.

Heavy rain causes birth of a river

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Thakurgaon

Birth of a 'river' due to heavy rainfall and onrush of water from upstream in the last couple of days has damaged a vast tract of cropland at Kashimpur village in Panchagarh Sadar upazila.

Officials of Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) and local people said, there was a small ditch in a crop field at the village.

Due to heavy down-pour and onrush of water from the upstream, the ditch turned into a pond devouring several bighas of aman field. Later, it turned into a virtual river

due to heavy current in the water.

The newly emerged 1.5 km river which met up with the River Tangon in Maharanibad area damaged aman paddy and sugarcane on about 200 bighas of land, said Nazrul Islam, deputy director at DAE in Panchagarh.

Head of Department of Geography Department at Panchagarh Government Women's College, Touhidul Bari, said a river can emerge suddenly only when the water level increases in upstream abnormally.

Tangon and Pathraj rivers in the district in the similar way, he added.

Hostel for poor Khiyang students faces closure for want of funds

SHANTIMOY CHAKMA, back to Rangamati from Rajasthali

The lone hostel for the students of underprivileged Khiyang community near Rajasthali upazila headquarters under the district faces closure amid lack of government's assistance.

Chittagnong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB) constructed the 100-seat hostel in 2008-2009 fiscal year and Ragamati Hill District Council authority had been providing Tk 1 lakh each month for maintaining food cost. But the allocation stopped in 2012, said Mong Shoi Prue Khiyang, convenor of the hostel committee.

"As I could not arrange food for the students, many of them left the hostel and their schooling ended as well. Meantime, I borrowed from different shops in Rajasthali Bazar for the pur-

pose. Seeking financial assistance, I submitted applications to government offices including CHT affairs ministry and CHTDB but to response yet," he said.

At the beginning, 58 students stayed at the hostel but there are only ten boarders now.

"I started staying here from first January this year. Nothing is given from the hostel committee. My parents are poor and sometimes I stay half-fed or starved. Even I could not buy all the study materials," said Daniel Khiyang, a student of Class VIII.

A few other hostel boarders including Puja, Meli and Ong Ching Ma Khiyang also narrated the same.

Visiting the hostel recently, this correspondent found rain water dripping from the ceiling of the hostel building while dirty and broken toilets emitted stink.

"USAID donated Tk 57 lakh under a project for the hostel to ensure schooling for the poor children of the underprivileged community. CHTDB spent Tk 25 lakh for construction of the hostel and rest amount was spent for food and other costs for the students. As the project period ended, around Tk 3 lakh remained unspent. We are trying to get approval to spend the money," said Shahinul Islam, member (implementation) of CHTDB.

"We wrote letters three times to the CHT affairs ministry for approval to spend the money. But they asked our authority to return the money to the government exchequer," said Priti Kanti Tripura, senior planning officer of CHTDB.

Nikhil Kumar Chakma, chairman of RHDC, said, "We provide financial assistance depending on availability of fund."

PHOTO: STAR



This lone hostel built for the poor students of Khiyang community in Rajasthali upazila of Rangamati may be shut down anytime due to fund constraints.

Drastic fall in production of kagozi lebu in Jhalakathi

UNB, Jhalakathi

Production of kagozi lebu, a kind of lime, fell fifty percent short of the target in the district this season thanks to unfavourable weather and onslaught of an 'unknown' disease in the fruit's orchards.

Farmers and agriculture officials said, most flowers dropped from the lime plants during fruiting stage this year due to poor rainfall and prolonged dry spell.

Besides, at many places fruit bearing plants died following attack of an unknown disease.

Sources concerned said, the juicy and vitamin-C enriched fruit was cultivated on 10,000 hectares of land, including in homesteads and fish enclosures, in four upazilas of the district this season.

Farming of the lemon variety fruit has increased gradually in the district due to its high demand and good market prices, they said.

Local farmers usually plant 100 lime saplings on one bigha of land. Each of the trees yields 1,000-1,500 fruits after flowering.

One kind of lime tree, however, gives yield all the year round.

Local agriculture officials said farmers were now cultivating limes on commercial basis by setting up orchards, adding that the orchards cover area ranging from 30 decimals to eight bighas.

Prashanta Howlader of Shatadashkathi village in Sadar upazila, who cultivated the fruit on his four bighas of land, said he did not get the expected yield this year due to

prolonged dry spell and inadequate rainfall as well as spread of the disease.

"Production at my orchard was 50 percent less than the expected amount this year," said the frustrated grower.

Echoing Prashanta, another big lime grower, Atul Mondal, of the same village said, lime production fell this year as the trees were infected with disease.

Contacted, A Aziz Khalifa, deputy director of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Jhalakathi, said lime trees might have died being infected with one kind of disease named 'Diebak'.

The DAE official, however, said the disease can be checked if branches of the trees are cut off and sprayed with insecticides when the trees show symptoms of the disease.

Floods spread

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People from the flood-hit areas took shelter on the WDB dam and nearby roads. With no relief from any government or non-government organisations, they were faced with an acute crisis of food and drinking water.

In Jamalpur, two minor girls drowned in Jonail village under Madarganj upazila yesterday. Their bodies were recovered from the Bhurbhure beel (wetland).

Water level of the Jamuna river was flowing 37 centimetres above the danger mark at Bahadurabad Ghat point yesterday, increasing by 3 centimetres from the previous day, according to sources in the WDB.

Incessant rain and onrush of water from upstream also caused flood in many areas of the district, added the sources.

According to sources in the Agriculture Extension Department, a total of 9,208 hectares of cropland went under water in the district yesterday.

Islampur was the worst-hit upazila in the district where at least 3,000 families were marooned by floodwater, said Masumur Rahman, upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) of Islampur.

The Someshwari and the Dhanu rivers in Netrakona devoured over 200 houses and 500 acres of cropland, and rendered around 1,000 people homeless.

Deputy Commissioner of Netrakona Tarun Kanti Shikder visited some affected areas in the district yesterday and distributed Tk 40,000 and two metric tonnes of rice among the affected people.

However, the flood-hit people there said they needed more relief materials.

(Our correspondents from Madaripur, Jamalpur, Lalmonirhat and Netrakona contributed to this report)

EROSION BY DHAKI IN DAKOPE

200 families worried as dyke being devoured

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Khulna

More than 200 families in several villages under Dakope upazila in the district are passing their days amid fear and anxiety as erosion by the river Dhaki has devoured large portions of the flood control dyke at several points.

The villages include Khalisha, Ananda Nagar, Botbunia Bazar, Chalna Bazar, Baroikhal, Anchabhua and Sathgharia, said an official of Water Development Board (WDB) in the district.

Around eight kilometers at Chalna Bazar is now under threat of erosion by the river Dhaki, said Tildanga UP chairman Gazi Jalal Uddin.

Till the end of 1990, around 100 bighas cropland, more than 50 homesteads and several

business centres were devoured during three spates of erosion, he said.

Erosion by the river rendered around 500 families of Dakope upazila homeless in the last two years, he added.

He also expressed deep concern as the affected people took shelter on the embankment and the erosion was still going on.

More than 200 families of different villages are facing threat of erosion as the river was flowing just below its danger level near the embankment.

Depankar Mondol, 50, resident of Chalna Bazar area, said they were passing sleepless night fearing that erosion might begin any moment.

Shariful Islam of Botbunia Bazar area told this correspondent that he had lost his shop to the

river recently. "Now I am helpless," he lamented.

"We are living in fear round the clock as might devour our homesteads and even take our lives," said Ashraf Hossain of village Khalisha.

Some people of this area have already shifted their houses to safer places in fear of river erosion, local said.

Mayor of Chalna municipality Principal Achintya Kumar Mondol said, "We have already applied to the local government secretary asking for Tk 10 crore for protection of the town's dyke".

Deputy assistant engineer of WDB Md. Firoz Ahmed said, proposal for protection of the dyke was sent to the authorities concerned.

"Repair work would start after approval of the project, he added.

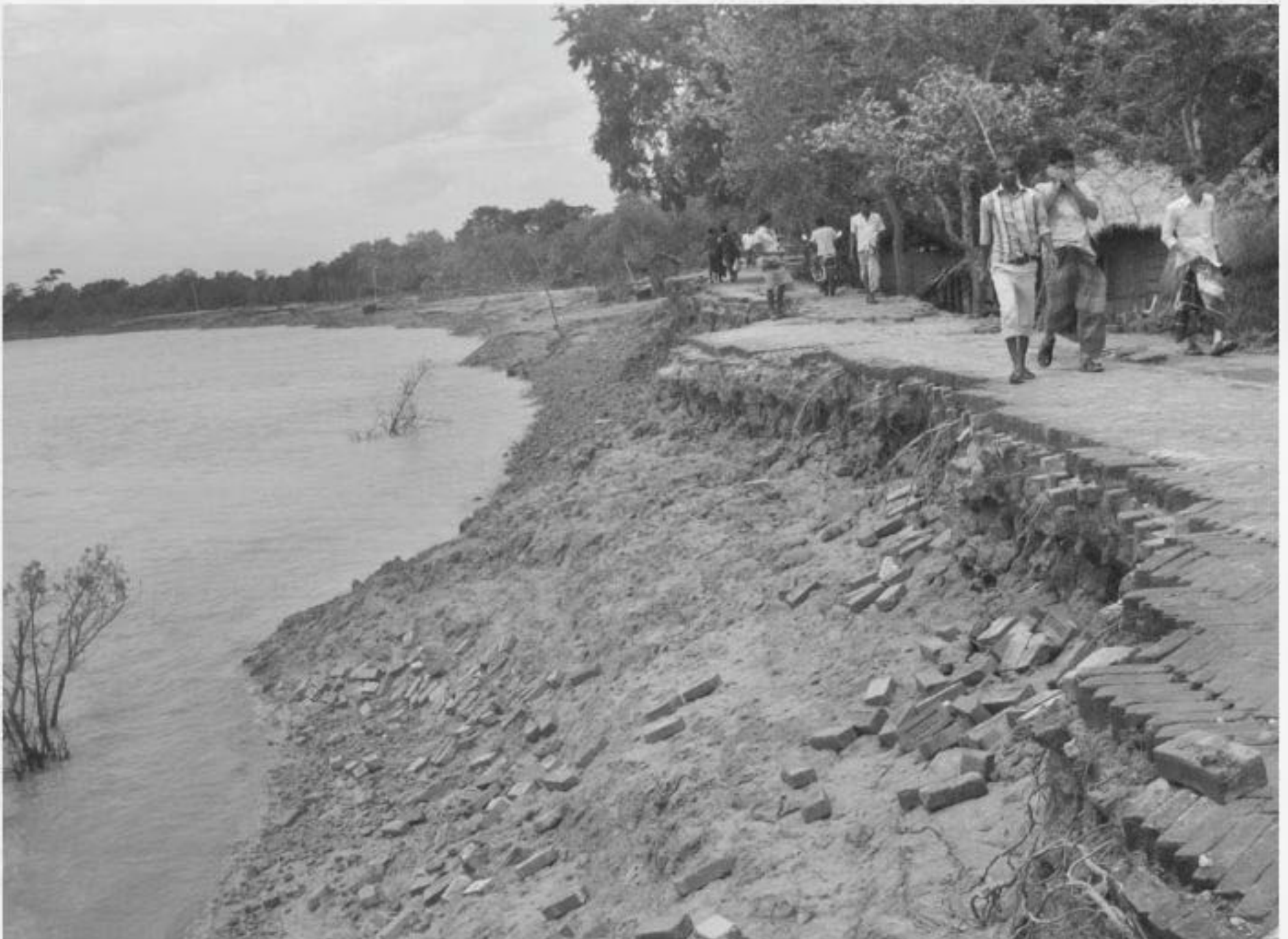


PHOTO: STAR

Erosion by Dhaki river in Dakope upazila in Khulna devouring the dyke, threatening thousands of people in several villages.

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