

BLOCKADE, NAVIGABILITY PROBLEM

Activities at Baghabari river port badly hampered

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPI, back from Baghabari, Sirajganj

The countrywide non-stop blockade enforced by BNP-led 20-party alliance adds to poor functioning of Baghabari river port, already affected by decreased navigability of the Jamuna River in the ongoing dry season.

Only 38 vessels were unloaded at the river port till the first week of March this year while over 100 vessels were unloaded there during the time last year, said Md Abdus Salam, lease holder of Baghabari port.

"Most of over 2,000 workers here fail to get regular work as port activities has decreased during the last couple of weeks," said Md Monsur Ali, a port worker.

"The situation has arisen as only a poor number of vessels can come to the port due to navigability problem while the non-stop blockade and frequent hartals hamper arrival of goods carrying trucks here," said Al Mahamud, a leader of port workers' association.

"Movement of vessels is disturbed due to the fall of water level in the Jamuna. At least 50-kilometre river route from Aricha to Baghabari is badly affected with navigability problem as big shoals have emerged



PHOTO: STAR

Empty vessels lie idle at Baghabari river port in Sirajganj district as navigability problem in the Jamuna River coupled with much less arrival of trucks for carrying goods unloaded from the watercrafts leaves most of the vessels virtually unused. Many truck drivers now tend to avoid plying roads and highways due to fear of arson attacks amid the non-stop countrywide blockade enforced by BNP-led 20-party alliance.

at Mollar Char, Kalyanpur Char, Baterir Char, Rajnarayanpur and Notakhola points of the route," said Md Azmal Huda, port officer of Baghabari.

Md Ariful Hasan Tarek, executive engineer of BIWTA, said a survey is

going on to start dredging in the Jamuna to solve the problem.

"As per the government rule, we have cautioned the cargo vessel owners to take up to 6.5 feet draft loads during the dry season as navigability problem grips the area every year. But most

of them are carrying 9 to 10 feet draft loads, causing problem during movement in shallow portions of the river," he added.

Movement of trucks to the port is also badly disturbed due to blockade and hartals.

"Around 100 to 150

trucks usually carry goods from the port in the normal time daily but now only 50 to 80 trucks loaded with goods from the port move to other districts every day due to the ongoing political turmoil," said Azmal Huda, the port officer.

Tk 226cr project work starts to save 50 villages from Padma erosion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Authorities yesterday started work under a Tk 226 crore project to protect 50 villages on the west bank of the Padma River in Ishwardi upazila under Pabna district and Lalpur upazila under Natore district.

The protection work under the supervision of water resources ministry will cover Komorpur to Shara-Jhaudia point of the Padma in Ishwardi upazila and Tilakpur to Gouripur point of Lalpur upazila, sources said.

After inaugurating the

work yesterday, Land Minister Shamsur Rahman Sharif Dilu said the protection work will save erosion hit Shara union and the adjoining areas on the west bank of the river.

The mighty river devoured more than 500 dwelling houses and thousands of acres of cultivable land in Arambaria village within two years, said sources at Shara union parishad.

A primary school, a high school, mosques, temples, and markets in the area also went into the riverbed in last

few years. On several occasions, locals demonstrated demanding measures to protect them from continuous erosion by the Padma.

Earlier the Executive Committee for National Economic Council approved a Tk 865.29 crore mega project comprising works under 20 groups for protection of dwellings farmlands and institutions on the Padma in different districts, said sources of Water Development Board.

Works of seven groups are going on now, they said.

Rape, murder of schoolgirl sparks protest in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Local people, relatives and fellow students formed a human chain in front of the deputy commissioner's office in the city yesterday, demanding punishment to the culprits who killed a schoolgirl after rape in Deodoba area on March 20.

Addressing a rally at the venue, the speakers also threatened to go for a tougher agitation if the killers were not arrested in

the next three days.

An unidentified gang entered the house of Abed Ali in the city's Deodoba area when he and his wife went to attend a Waj Mahfil (religious function) in the area, leaving their daughter Ayesha Siddiqua Sumaiya, 13, a class VII student of Jaheda Khatun Girls School and College, alone at their house on March 20.

They entered the house around 8:00pm, raped Sumaiya and later strangled her.

After returning home around 11:00pm, family members found her lying on the floor and took her to the hospital where the doctors declared her dead, police said.

Victim's father Abed Ali filed a case against some unidentified people with Kotwali Police Station the following morning.

Contacted, Abdul Qader Jilani, officer-in-charge of the police station, said they are trying to arrest the culprits involved.



PHOTO: STAR

Coastguard in Chandpur distributes among the poor 500 kg of jatka (hilsa less than ten inches long) that they seized from two launches in the Meghna River yesterday. Despite frequent drives by law enforcers, a section of fishermen have continued illegally catching of jatka, causing disturbance to breeding and development of the popular fish.

Three get life for murder in Sirajganj, Netrakona

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Three people were awarded life imprisonment for killing a man and a woman in Sirajganj and Netrakona districts yesterday and the day before.

A Sirajganj court on Tuesday sentenced two people to life imprisonment for killing a woman Tarash upazila in 2009, reports UNB.

The lifers are Rabiul Islam, son of Julmat Ali, and Saidul Islam, son of Monnaf Ali of Kaural village in the

upazila. Additional District and Sessions Judge Dr Eman Ali Sheikh also fined them Tk 10,000 each. In default, they are to suffer another six months in jail.

Of the convicts, Saidul was tried in absentia.

According to the prosecution, the two killed Shilpi Khatun, daughter of Solaiman Hossain of the village, over previous enmity on June 12, 2009.

Away in Netrakona, a court here yesterday sentenced a man to life impris-

onment for killing a villager at Chandpur village in Mohonganj upazila in 1991.

The convict is Ratan Mia, 35, son of Abdul Jahid of the village, reports our correspondent.

The court also fined him Tk 3000, in default, he is to suffer another three months in prison. He was tried in absentia.

According to the prosecution, Ratan killed Abdul Mutaleb, 65, of the village over previous enmity on September 18, 1991.

Man killed over land dispute

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

A man was killed and four others were injured over a land dispute at Madhyapur village in Morrelganj upazila yesterday.

The deceased, Anwar Hossain, 55, son of Ashwas Ali, was a resident of the village.

Police quoted victim's wife Farida Begum as saying

that Anwar sold a piece of land to their neighbour Kashem Sheikh about 7/8 years ago.

A gang led by Kashem and Jahidur of the village attacked Anwar while he was returning home after handing over the land to Kashem.

They stabbed him with sharp weapons, leaving him critically injured.

Four others, Abdur Rashid, 47, Omar Khan, 60,

Mojibor, 55, and Sohag, 22, also sustained injuries as they tried to save Anwar from the attackers.

Hearing screams, locals rescued Anwar and rushed him to Bagerhat Sadar Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

The injured were admitted to Khulna Medical College Hospital and Morelganj Upazila Health Complex.

Hill dist bodies

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Tripura community. Monkyaching Chowdhury, M o n g s u i p r u e Chowdhury, Remrachai Chowdhury were selected from Marma community as members of the council.

Earlier, a four-member body of the KHDC led by Chai Tow Aung Marma was formed on December 2, 2013.

Meanwhile, Kyaw Shwe Hla remains the chairman of Bandarban Hill District Council (BHDC) again and the persons selected as members of the council are Kazi Mujibur Rahman, Jewel Bawm, Sing Yang Mro, Philip Tripura, Ting Ting Mya Marma, Thoi Hla Marma, Fathema Parul, Jahirul Islam, Mra Cha Kyang, Lakshmi Das, Kanchon Joy Tanchangya, Kyo Ching Chak, Ka Cha Prue Marma, and Thoi Hla Marma.

The 15-member council consists of a chairman (indigenous) and fourteen members, four of them being Bengali, BHDC sources said.

The last HDCs elections in three hill districts were held on June 25, 1989, sources said.

dents of the hill districts are supposed to elect a chairman, (indigenous) and 30 members (indigenous and Bengali) for each HDCs.

On December 2, 1997, the Local Government Councils (LGCs) of the hill districts were renamed as Hill District Councils (HDCs) after signing of the historical peace accord between the Awami League government and Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS).

The present government only followed the footprints of past political governments by installing new interim HDCs, the HDC sources added.

Earlier, a five-member council, consisting of a chairman (indigenous) and four members, one of them being Bengali, was formed, HDC sources said. The BNP-led four-party alliance government had also selected their own interim HDCs after the 2001 general elections.



PHOTO: STAR

Local activists of ruling Awami League (AL) get locked in an internecine clash over sitting arrangement of the adherents of two party leaders at the conference venue of the district AL on Uzir Ali High School ground in Jhenidah town yesterday. A good number of chairs were damaged during the clash that also left five people injured.

26 fishermen jailed for catching jatka

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

A mobile court yesterday jailed 26 fishermen for catching jatka (hilsa less than 10 inches long) in the Meghna River, defying ban.

Around 200 kg of jatka, 2,000 metres of current net and four engine-driven boats were seized during the drive.

Haimchar Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Md

Saiful Islam led the mobile court that sentenced the fishermen to one and a six months imprisonment. The court also fined the fishermen Tk 1,000 each.

In another drive, Coastguards seized around 500 kilograms of jatka from two launches in the river early yesterday.

Acting on secret information, a team of coastguard, led by its Commander Lieutenant M Habibur

Rahman, conducted a drive in Dhaka-bound launches 'MV Rajhansa-8' and 'MV Samrat-2' at around 1:00am.

The law enforcers seized jatka worth about Tk 1.5 lakh from the launches, said coastguard sources. None was arrested in this connection.

The seized fish were later distributed among poor people, madrasas and orphanages.

DEMAND FOR VC'S RESIGNATION 48 BAU teachers resign from administrative posts

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Forty eight teachers of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) on Tuesday resigned from administrative posts to press their one-point demand for resignation of the vice chancellor.

A faction of pro-Awami League teachers under the banner of Ganotantrik Shikkhak Forum started agitation on March 19, demanding resignation of BAU Vice Chancellor Prof Dr

Md Rafiqul Hoque for his alleged irregularities and corruption in recent job recruitment and 'immoral acts'.

However, the academic activities are running properly, said BAU sources.

"The 48 teachers have resigned from the administrative posts that include hall provosts and house tutors and directors of different institutions of BAU. We will continue our agitation until the demand is met," said Forum presi-

dent Prof Dr AKM Shamsuddin.

BAU register Md Abdul Khaleque confirmed filing of resignation by 48 BAU teachers.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Chhatra League BAU unit formed a human chain on the campus the same day demanding intervention by the authorities concerned to maintain congenial atmosphere at BAU.

Contacted, the BAU vice chancellor said, "It is very unfortunate that a section of