

United they stand

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Tahirpur

There is an old saying: "It takes a village to raise a child". Now another saying could be introduced, "It takes an upazila to save a levee".

Residents of near about 40 villages in Tahirpur upazila deserves the credit for this "new proverb" as they, without any government support, have almost completed a mammoth task of repairing a three-km-long portion of an embankment that was damaged in 11 spots.

The villagers -- yet to harvest the boro rice they cultivated on about 22 thousand acres of land inside the levee built to protect lowlands alongside the Shonir Haor -- have helplessly witnessed paddy fields getting inundated in low lying areas surrounding 21 other haors (type of a wetland). The Water Development Board (WDB) authorities did not do anything to save the flooding.

The WDB officials had visited the Shonir Haor embankment a few months ago and they assured the locals that the necessary steps would be taken to start repair work once they get adequate funds from the government.

Tahirpur residents could not just wait and watch the same devastation that occurred in the neighbouring areas. They decided to take charge



Villagers take matter into their hands after waiting for months for the authorities concerned to repair the three-kilometre damaged portion of an embankment in Sunamganj. The photo was taken from the Bagiani village portion of the levee recently.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

and do something about it.

Nearly five thousand residents of the 40 villages joined hands in the daunting task of repairing the levee on Monday. So far they have managed to patch up almost 75 percent of the most damaged portions of the embankment.

Ahmed Ali, a farmer and a volunteer from Bagiani village was seen eating only flattened rice with molasses for lunch when this corre-

spondent met him on Thursday on the embankment near the village.

Ahmed could have had a better meal at home, but he decided not to waste any time. He said if they waited any longer for government funds, his crops on five acres of land would go under water by now.

Harinakandi's Abdul Mannan Khan and Milon Talukder from Jalkhali also said they started the work on their own as their appeal to WDB for fixing the damaged levee went in vain.

"The WDB officials gave us hope, but they did not keep their promise," said Burhan Uddin, general secretary of Shonir Haor Unnayan Committee and chairman of Tahirpur Sadar union.

"We have been pursuing the matter with the WDB officials and contractors, but they did not follow through their commitment," said Kamruzzaman, upazila chairman of Tahirpur upazila.

Under the circumstances, five thousand people from 40 villages took up the repair work on their own, he added.

Contacted, Afsor Uddin, executive engineer of WDB in Sunamganj, claimed that even though contractors had already been assigned for the repair work, they failed to execute the work in time.

FOR CHARGING EXTRA FEES 6 Ctg schools to lose academic status

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The education ministry has directed Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Chittagong to cancel academic registration of six educational institutions in Chittagong for charging additional fees from the students defying rules.

It served a notice to the chairman of the board to this end, according to a circular of the ministry issued on Thursday.

The institutions are Maroon Sun School and College, Merit Bangladesh School and College, Chittagong Ideal High School, National English School, Bangladesh Elementary School, and Mirza Ahmed Ispahani High School.

Authorities of these institutions have breached the section 11 of admission policy for non-government schools and colleges-2016 and charged students additional fees, the circular read.

This action seems to be the first case against schools on the grounds of charging extra amounts. Although parents have long been alleging against schools in Dhaka and other metropolitan cities of taking fees higher than the government-fixed amount for several years, the visible action of the government was limited to issuing warning only.

The education minister also warned of taking actions against the institutions time and again and asked them to return the extra money or adjust it with the monthly fees, but to no avail.

"Finally, the government takes this bold step. It's very encouraging," said a parent.

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Fresh areas flooded in Netrakona, Kishoreganj BNP demands aid for affected people

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Flood situation in Netrakona and Kishoreganj districts continues to deteriorate as fresh areas of farmland were inundated yesterday, causing immense sufferings to thousands of farmers.

Boro crops on some 8,600 hectares of land in eight upazilas of Netrakona were inundated afresh, said Bilash Chandra Pal, deputy director (DD) of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in the district.

Earlier on Thursday, flashflood triggered by heavy rainfall submerged around 29,440 out of 184,320 hectares of land targeted for boro cultivation, said the deputy director.

The situation deteriorated further as Kirtankhola embankment in Khaliyari and Dingapota Haizda embankment in Mohanganj upazila were washed away at some points, said the DD. Though there was no rain in the last two days, the flood situation did not show any sign of improvement, he said. They are listing the affected farmers to assess their losses, he said, adding that the

affected ones would be provided with support.

In Kishoreganj, about 350 hectares of fresh land in seven upazilas were flooded till yesterday afternoon.

On Thursday, 23,270 out of 165,515 hectares of land targeted for boro farming had gone under water, said Md Shafiqul Islam, deputy director of DAE in Kishoreganj.

Some 30,000 farmers have been affected in the flashflood triggered due to overflow of water from the Kushiara, Kalani and Khawai rivers, he said. The affected farmers will be provided with assistance until the next boro season, said the official.

UNB adds, BNP yesterday urged the government to immediately stand beside the flashflood victims in different areas with proper support and emergency supplies.

In a statement, party secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir voiced concern as the people of Sunamganj, Kishoreganj, Netrakona, and haor regions are passing hard days due to the flashflood caused by the onrush of water from Indian hills.



Preparations are on at the Faculty of Fine Arts of Dhaka University, also known as Charukala Anushad, for hailing the first day of Bangla New Year, Pahela Baishakh. Charukala remains abuzz with activity as students are passing busy days working on watercolour paintings, pottery, traditional dolls, masks and decorated pots on the faculty premises for their colourful procession Mangal Shobhajatra.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

TANGENTS BY IHTISHAM KABIR



A murmuration of (chestnut-tailed) starlings.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

A Murder of Crows

English can be a funny language. Consider for example the terms for groups of birds, animals, fish and other living beings, or even groups of people. The collective nouns used to describe these groups are often startling. For example, being an avid birder, terms such as "a kettle of hawks" catch my attention.

Researching this topic, I learned that many of these terms were invented in 15th century England. They come from outdoor life, in particular, activities of interest to aristocrats: hunting, hawking (hunting with a hawk), and heraldry. Called terms of venery (venery is an old word for hunting) they also encapsulate a code that the genuine aristocrat would be able to speak, whereas aspiring ones would be frustrated by. This would separate the poser from the blue-blood and cause embarrassment to the wannabe at the dinner table. Because of their social value, these words were also called "company terms."

Terms of venery were formalised in several books from that period: *The Book of St. Albans* (1486), *The Egerton Manuscript* (1450), and *The Craft of Venery* (1450.) At one time they were taught to young gentry for the above mentioned purpose, but over the subsequent centuries the usage of some of these words declined.

Revival came in the 20th century. In a book called *An Exaltation of Larks* (1968), James Lipton lists over 1000 such words in English. With infectious admiration he states that much imagination, wit and semantic ingenuity went into the invention of each term. He also spells out reasons behind the choice of certain words.

Here are some interesting terms for groups:

Flocks of geese have two names. A group of geese in the ground is a *gaggle*, but in flight it is a *skein*. Similarly ducks in water form a *paddling* while flying ducks are a *team*.

A group of crows is called a *murder* of crows. No one seems to know the exact reason for this appellation, but it is thought that crows were seen around dead people during the plagues, and so were associated with death. Perhaps more appropriately, a group of crows is also called a *congress* of crows.

An *unkindness* of ravens came about because of the legend that ravens push their young from the nest.

A flock of starlings is called a *murmuration*. This old and honourable term appeared as "a murmuration of stares" in the old books.

Hérons often stand at water's edge waiting for fish. Apparently comparing this to enemies laying siege to a castle, a group of herons is called a *siege* of herons. A *deceit* of lapwings alludes to trickery used by the bird to draw predators away from its nest.

Why is a group of lions called a *pride*? Some groups were named according to real or perceived qualities, and since lions look regal, pride was what they got. Similarly: a *leap* of leopards, a *mob* of kangaroos, a *sloth* of bears, and a *crash* of rhinoceros.

Sometimes mistakes were made. A *shoal* of fish became a *school* of fish thanks to an error-prone ancient scribe.

Some of our common terms for groups of people also have similar roots: a *den* of thieves, a *bevy* of beauties. And Americans have a *college* of electors to choose their president.

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BCL groups clash at DU hall

FROM PAGE 3

Tushar's group were taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said DMCH police.

Some activists led by Rashed Rajon, Raju Ahmed, Saddam, Sazu, Rakib Hasan, Monzur Ahmed Rana and Harun attacked them with iron rods and sticks, said the injured yesterday.

Rajon, however, denied the allegations.

Hafizur Rahman said, "I was outside the dormitory at that time. Organisational steps will be taken who involved in the beating, looting and vandalism."

"Rowdy activists of Hafizur beat up my followers in my absence," said Tushar.

The hall Provost Aftab Uddin did not respond to repeated phone calls made by this correspondent.

Rampant hill cutting

FROM PAGE 4

Muhaimin Milton, general secretary of Moulvibazar Environmental Journalists' Forum, also emphasised the need for a stringent law and its implementation.

Contacted, Mostafizur Rahman, assistant director of DoE, said cutting of hills is illegal and it creates a bad impact on the environ-

ment. "But, we are struggling to tackle the menace due to a manpower shortage. We have written to the authorities regarding the issue."

"People should be made aware of the consequences of razing hills," said Tofail Islam, deputy commissioner of Moulvibazar. "If they inform us about illegal hill cutting, we will take action right away."

Death anniversary CITY DESK



Today is the 23rd death anniversary of MA Mohaimen, former lawmaker and founder of Pioneer Printing Press Ltd.

He was also a writer, social worker and industrialist. All his relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to pay for the peace of the departed soul.

Poet Sazzad Qadir buried in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Poet-journalist Sazzad Qadir was buried beside the graves of his parents in this village Moulovipara under Delduar upazila of Tangail after Juma prayers yesterday.

He died of old-age complications in a hospital in Dhaka on Thursday afternoon. He was 70.

IGP hands over Tk 10 lakh to Azad's widow

UNB, Dhaka

Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Hoque yesterday handed over Tk 10 lakh to Suraiya Sultana, widow of late Lt Col Abul Kalam Azad, ex-intelligence wing chief of Rapid Action Battalion, at the latter's residence in the capital.

Rab Director General Benazir Ahmed, Additional IGP (HRM) of police headquarters Md Moinur Rahman Chowdhury, AIG (Confidential) Md Moniruzzaman, AIG (Welfare) Md Abdullah Hel Baki, AIG (Media) Soheli Ferdouse were also present.

Savar school owner

FROM PAGE 3

of Ashulia Police Station.

Amir also sexually abused six other students of the school at different times, said the OC, adding a case was filed against Amir yesterday in this regard.

In Faridpur, a class-VIII female student was allegedly raped on Thursday night by a youth in Dop Atok village under Sadarpur upazila for refusing his love proposal.

Victim's father filed a case yesterday against the youth, Babu Kazi, 23, of the village.

Babu along with Faruk Munshi, 18, and Shakhao Kazi, 22, of the village swooped on the girl after she came outside home to respond to nature's call around 9:00pm. Later, Babu raped her after taking her to a nearby house, said victim's family members.

Office-in-Charge of Sadarpur Police Station Harun-ar-Roshid said the three went into hiding following the incident.

69 students get Duke of Edinburgh's Award

CITY DESK

A total of 69 students of DPS STS School Dhaka on Thursday received The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award under bronze and silver levels for successfully completing various self-development activities, said a press release.

Rizwan Bin Farouq, chairman of the executive committee of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Foundation Bangladesh, as the chief guest, and Prof KM Shariful Huda, national director of the foundation, as a special guest, were present at the ceremony.

Among others, Principal Harsh Wall and Vice Principal Madhu Wall of the school and award coordinator Imran Wahidduzaman were present.

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