



Erosion by the Teesta river has taken a serious turn at five villages in Rajarhat upazila of Kurigram during recession of floodwater. The picture was taken from Tayab Kha village on July 28.

PHOTO: STAR

Roaring Teesta

Erosion takes serious turn in five villages of Rajarhat upazila

ABDUL WAHED, Kurigram

Erosion by the Teesta river after recession of floodwater has taken a serious turn in five villages under Rajarhat upazila of the district.

"I am shifting my house to a neighbour's land due to the erosion by the Teesta river. Another erosion victim is also shifting his house to the same land. Now we are facing shortage of food," said Chandi Charan Barmon, 42, an erosion victim of Tayab Kha village of Bidyananda union.

Chandi's daughter Sohagi Rani Roy, an HSC student of Najimkhan School and College, said, "I have not been able to study for about one week, even though my test examination will be held in two months. Now my father cannot bear the expenditure of my education. I am afraid that I might have to suffer break of study without financial support."

Bishnu Chandra Das, 45, a fisherman of Somnarayan village in Najimkhan union, said, "I have become landless as the river Teesta had eroded my land and house. I maintain my family through fishing. I recently bought 13 decimals of land, which is facing threat of erosion."

Abdul Latif, 65, of Tayab Kha village said, "Erosion by the Teesta river washed away my three acres of land this month. Now I have shifted my house to another land. Most parts of Tayab Kha village went into the river this month."

The erosion has already rendered over 200 families homeless this month and eroded hundreds of acres of land in Chatura, Paramaula, Ratee and Tayab Kha villages of Bidyananda union and Somnarayan village of Najimkhan union.

At least 68 families of Somnarayan village were made homeless this month, while over one hundred families are under threat, said Bishnu Chandra Das, 45, a fisherman and erosion victim.

The upazila administration helped each of the 136 erosion-hit families with cash Tk 2,000 and 30 kg of rice or one maund of wheat in Bidyananda union recently, Bidyananda Union Parishad Chairman Tajul Islam said.

Executive Engineer of Water Development Board in Kurigram Shafiqul Islam, said, "I visited the erosion spot on July 28. I sent a proposal for preventing erosion of a 700-metre area in Tayab Kha village, but I received only Tk 33 lakh in two instalments this year. Work is going on in a 400-metre area in Tayab Kha village with the allocated money. Bamboo pilings and sand-filled bags are washed away by the river due to strong current, making it difficult to protect the place."

"I have sent a request for Tk 83 lakh more on emergency basis. If I get the allocation, I can start the rest of the work. But the protection will be on a temporary basis due to rainy season," Shafiqul said.

Headmaster indeed!

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

A case has been filed against the headmaster of Uttar Singergari Nekbas Government Primary School in Kishoreganj upazila of the district as a female teacher of the school was badly injured due to beating allegedly by the headmaster.

The victim, Johura Akhtar filed the case with Kishoreganj Police Station under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act yesterday.

According to the case, on July 20, the female teacher came to school half an hour later than the scheduled time due to communication problem as her house is situated five kilometres away from the institution.

"After I came to school, headmaster Babul Khan started hurling abuses at me for being late and an altercation followed. At one stage, he started beating me and his wife and daughter also joined," she said in the complaint.

"The three beat and kicked me, leaving me seriously injured. Other teachers and locals took me to Kishoreganj Upazila Health Complex where I took treatment for three days. The doctors then referred me to Rangpur Medical College Hospital," she said.

After returning from the hospital, Johura filed the case yesterday accusing headmaster Babul Khan, 50, his wife Lipi Begum, and daughter Bithi Akhtar.

Abdul Mazid, president of the school managing committee (SMC), said, "The beating of the female teacher by the headmaster is regrettable. He is an ill-tempered man and earlier misbehaved with other teachers and even me several times."

The SMC earlier filed a written complaint to the upazila education officer, demanding departmental action against the headmaster, Mazid added.

Contacted, accused headmaster Babul Khan refuted the allegation of beating the female teacher and said, "The female teacher regularly comes to school late and I just suggested her to change the bad habit."

Bazlur Rashid, officer in charge of Kishoreganj Police Station, said police is trying to arrest the accused headmaster.

Upazila Education Officer Masudul Hasan said an enquiry committee has been formed to investigate the matter and action will be taken after getting the report.

Challenged Sabiha rescued from river, back to parents

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

It was an awfully happy occasion for a couple as they got back their 10-year-old physically and mentally challenged girl, 18 days after she went missing in the Kaliganga river in Ghior upazila under the district.

Manikganj Superintendent of Police (SP) Mahfuzur Rahman handed over the girl, Sabiha, to her parents - rickshaw-puller Milon Khan and garment worker Hajaera Khatun yesterday noon.

On July 11, Milon with his only daughter got on a bus to go to his native home at Babugram village under Pangsha upazila of Rajbari from his rented home at Gazirchat under Savar upazila of Dhaka. They got down from the bus around 7:30pm to respond to the call of nature on the bank of the Kaliganga river near the Tora Bridge in Ghior.

"There the girl fell into water. Milon jumped into the river and made a failed search to rescue her. Thinking that she had drowned, Milon returned to Gazirchat, said Habibullah Sarker, OC of Manikganj Police Station.

"Mafe Biswas, a local fisherman, rescued Sabiha one and a half kilometres downstream around 8:00pm. As the girl could not say anything about her identity, the fishermen took her to Manikganj SP Mahfuzur Rahman. As per his suggestion, Mafe took the girl to his house at Khagrakuri village under Dighi union of Manikganj Sadar upazila.

"The SP uploaded the information and picture of the girl in social media and arranged broadcasting a video clip on satellite TV channels in Manikganj. Hearing about the girl's rescue, her parents came to Manikganj Police Station on Friday and the SP handed over the girl to them on Saturday," the OC said.

The SP gave Tk 5,000 to rescuer Mafe Biswas and the same amount to Sabiha's parents, he said.

Protect us from river erosion Manikganj people appeal to PM

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Local people urged the prime minister to save them from the erosion by the river Kaliganga in Sadar upazila.

The demand was made at a human chain in Pachhbarail Bottala area beside the river yesterday. The programme was organised by the villagers of Ward No 4 in Nabagram union.

They also demanded a permanent dam in Pachhbarail area to check erosion by the river.

More than 200 homesteads, Kaniz Fatema School and College, a playground and a mosque in Pachhbarail area are now under threat of erosion by Kaliganga, said the speakers.

Already 20 villages and vast tracts of cropland have gone under water. If a permanent dam is not built in the area immediately, more village of the area will be affected badly by the river erosion, they said.

Executive Engineer of Manikganj Water Development Board Hassan Mahmud said there is no plan to construct a permanent dam in the area. However, they will take temporary steps to check the erosion, he said.

DU Senate names VC panel

FROM PAGE 1

Rahmat Ullah, said senate member Prof AJM Shaiful Alam Bhuiyan.

"Out of 55 senate members, 48 attended the senate session and the panel was finalised as there was no other panel proposal," he told reporters following the hour-long senate session, held at the DU Senate Building.

The tenure of the incumbent VC, Prof Arefin, will expire on August 24.

As per the Dhaka University Order, 1973, the VC shall be appointed by the chancellor for a period of four years from a panel of three teachers. He shall be nominated by the university senate, and be eligible for a re-appointment for a second term.

About half an hour before the session began at 4:00pm, around 40 students belonging to left-leaning organisations took position in front of the Senate Building.

The students demonstrated till about 5:00pm, demanding the long-pending

election to Dhaka University Central Students Union (Ducusu). They also alleged that students are being deprived of their rights because of the absence of student representatives in the senate.

As the students attempted to enter the Senate Building, a group of teachers allegedly pushed them, causing a brief scuffle.

Masud Mahdi, one of the demonstrators, said as per the relevant law, there should have been elected student representatives in the senate. "That's why we are demanding Ducusu election and our demand is logical."

He added that some teachers attacked the demonstrators without any provocation.

Denying it, DU Proctor Prof AM Amzad Ali said the students were trying to enter the building forcibly while teachers tried to calm them.

The pro-BNP-Jamaat White Panel boycotted the meeting.

Woman gang-raped

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A 19-year-old woman was gang-raped by a computer shop owner and his cohorts at Balaatta village in Gaibandha Sadar upazila on Friday.

Police arrested Ahmed Ali, 35, Mojnu Mia, 24, and Montu Mia, 45, of Balaatta village after the victim, wife of a garment worker in the capital, filed a case accusing five identified people yesterday, said Officer-in-Charge Khan Mohammed Shahriar of Sadar Police Station.

Police, however, could not arrest the main accused -- computer shop owner Ashraful Islam.

Police said the young woman went to a computer shop owned by Ashraful at Balaatta Bazar to get some songs downloaded in her mobile phone on Friday afternoon.

Saying his computer is out of order, Ashraful tactfully took the woman to a nearby house of one Ahmed Ali.



Local people form a human chain yesterday demanding a permanent embankment in Pachhbarail area of Manikganj Sadar to check erosion by the river Kaliganga.

PHOTO: STAR

Fish traps lifeline for haor people

MINTU DESHWARA with ANDREW EAGLE

After the devastating April floods caused the extensive destruction of rice crops across the Sunamganj haor-lands, many village families were left without a livelihood. Now, the innovative residents of five villages of the Khorchar and Angaruli haors in Bishwamvarpur upazila have found an alternative means of survival. They are making fishing equipment and fish traps.

Four kilometres by boat from the upazila town is Brojonathpur village. Where the boat stops is a small shop, in front of which sits Fulmoti Biswas busy with bamboo and plastic yarn, making a fish trap designed to catch small fish like tengra, and also shrimp. "I am not alone," she says when asked what she is doing. "All the villagers are making traps like these. It's a matter of life and death. If we didn't we could hardly afford food."

"I've never seen a crisis like now," adds a neighbour, Bimala Biswas. "If we didn't know how to make the traps there would be no way to survive."

Brojonathpur alone up to 200 fami-

lies are now reliant on selling the variety of traps, locally known as 'chai', 'gui' and 'runga'. Not everybody is new to the activity. Subol Biswas has been making traps for three decades. "I can earn up to Tk 500 per day selling the traps I make," he says. "It's an income that supports our eight-member family."

His neighbour Narendra Biswas also has a history of fish trap manufacture. But like many in the village what used to be a sideline has become a main income source, he says.

"We use bamboo and plastic string," says another trap-maker, Sufia Khatun. "Our traps are sold across the country, including in other areas that are flooded like ours. Each trap attracts a wholesale rate of anything from Tk 60 to Tk 300 depending on its design and quality."

Meanwhile in adjacent Laxmipur village the house of Birendra Biswas is a hive of similar activity. His wife, daughter-in-law and son are among the eight individuals making traps. "I'm actually a farmer," Birendra explains. "I have five acres of land but the floods ruined my crop. We survive by selling the traps now."

"I'm really glad I learnt how to make

fish traps from my father and my grandfather," says Mizan Mia, 45, from another fish-trap making village, Gopalpur. "My five sons and my young daughter also make traps; and the income we get is sufficient for our family to lead a happy life."

Others like Razzak Mia who didn't make the traps before have been keen to acquire the skill. "I went to my in-law's house in Rajnagar to learn how to make the traps," he says. "Earlier I was a farmer. Now I employ labourers to make even more traps."

"In many areas affected by April's floods people are leaving," says the chairman of Bishwamvarpur Upazila Parishad, Md Harun-ur-Rashid. "They are looking for work. But we have these five villages where fish trap making is flourishing. In those villages people stay home. And because they have this cottage industry, unlike many others they are not reliant on public relief."

According to the district administration the April floods destroyed around 1.67 lakh hectares of Boro paddy across Sunamganj district, affecting around 325,000 farmers.



Men, women and even children of a family at Brajanathpur village in Sunamganj's Bishwamvarpur upazila are seen engaged in making bamboo-made fish traps.

PHOTO: STAR