



The swelling Jamuna river devours croplands and dwellings in Arjuna area under Bhuapur upazila of Tangail.

PHOTO: STAR

Erosion by Jamuna turns serious

The yearly menace in Tangail's Bhuapur started before the monsoon this year

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

The Jamuna devoured a number dwelling houses and vast tracts of croplands in Arjuna area of Bhuapur upazila under the district in the last three weeks.

This year erosion by the mighty river started before the rainy season, threatening hundreds of families, a traditional market, an important road cum flood control embankment and vast areas of croplands, much to the panic among the local people.

"The erosion started just after the increase of water level of the river, devouring dwelling houses of around 40 families as well as croplands in Arjuna," said Ayub Ali Mollah, chairman of Arjuna Union Parishad.

"If the erosion continues, the century-old traditional Kuthi Boira market will go into the riverbed and Bhuapur-Tarakandi road cum flood control embankment can collapse. At least

three more upazilas -- Gopalpur, Ghatal, Madhupur -- will be flooded if the embankment is broken," he said.

Although the Water Development Board (WDB) is conducting emergency works to check the erosion by dumping sandbags, it cannot prevent the erosion after increase in the water level of the river, he added.

"The area has been facing erosion for the last few years, and this year it has started before the rainy season. The local public representatives, however, seem to have no headache over the matter while the government officials performed their duty just by visiting the area," Babar Ali of Arjuna said.

The WDB repairs the flood control embankment in Arjuna every year but benefit of the work remains questionable, he added.

Erosion victims Nuru Miah, Abdul Baset, Anwar Hossain and Anguri Begum said they have become shelterless after losing dwelling

houses to the river.

Such disaster would not happen if there was a flood control embankment from Arjuna to Govindasi, they said.

"Now where will we go? Will the government do anything for us?" said Nuru Miah, one of the victims.

Rights activist Ovijit Ghosh, a resident of Govindasi village in Bhuapur, said although the local riverside people have been demanding for long to bring back the navigability of the river and construction of an embankment from Pingna of Jamalpur to Jokarchar in Tangail to prevent the erosion permanently, nothing has been done in this regard so far.

Contacted, Shahjahan Siraj, executive engineer of WDB in Tangail, said now they are dumping geo bags on an emergency basis to prevent erosion in Arjuna.

"We are also preparing a project to construct an embankment in the area," he added.

50 injured in Habiganj clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

At least 50 people were injured in a clash between two rival groups in Muradpur area of Habiganj's Baniachang upazila yesterday.

Of the injured, 20 were admitted to Habiganj Sadar Hospital and 15 to the upazila health complex and private clinics while the rest given first aid.

Police and locals said an altercation took place between the supporters of Bozendra Sarkar and Hemendra Sarkar over occupying a paddy land in the area.

At one stage, the rival groups, equipped with lethal weapons, attacked each, leaving at least 50 people from both sides injured.

On information, police rushed to the spot and fired rubber bullets and tear gas shells to bring the situation under control, said Md Mozammel Haque, officer-in-charge of Baniachang Police Station.

They arrested 10 people in this connection, said the OC.

Riot police have been deployed in the area to avert any further trouble, said the police official.

Outbreak of diarrhoea

Pirojpur Sadar Hospital crowded with patients

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

The outbreak of diarrhoea in Sadar upazila of the district pushed the Pirojpur Sadar Hospital to face difficulties accommodating the unexpected number of patients.

Harun Ur Rashid of Koibortokhali village said he rushed one of his cousins to the hospital after she was affected by diarrhoea three days ago.

Jakir Hossain said his wife was attacked by diarrhoea two days ago. "As the situation did not change after consulting the village doctor, I have brought her to the hospital," he said.

Due to lack of enough beds, two to three patients are to share each bed. Some patients even sleep on the floor.

Shipra Rani of Koibortokhali village said her aunt was given a seat on the floor as there was no empty bed.

Because of overflow of patients in the hospital, the authorities are facing trouble coping with the situation with only 14 seats.

"On an average, 40 patients are admitted to the hospital every day, which is three times more than the number of beds," said nurse Mira Boral



Rush of diarrhoea patients at Pirojpur Sadar Hospital has forced the authorities to allot one seat to more than one patient.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

of the diarrhoea ward.

Civil Surgeon Fakhrul Alam said impure drinking water is the main cause of diarrhoea.

"Most diarrhoea patients admitted to the hospital are from riverside villages," he said, adding that the situation

is very bad in Mathbaria, Bhandaria, Indurkani and Nesarabad upazilas.

Dr Fakhrul said there is enough supply of medicine for diarrhoea patients. An expert team from Dhaka visited the district to investigate the situation, he added.

BNP to keep close watch

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The elections to Khulna City Corporation (KCC) was allegedly marred by irregularities such as heavy showdown by the AL men in and around polling stations, stuffing of ballot boxes and driving out polling agents of rival parties.

AL mayoral candidate Talukder Abdul Khaleque defeated Nazrul Islam Monju of BNP by around 64,000 votes in the May 15 polls in Khulna city, considered a bastion of BNP.

During covering the elections, reporters of The Daily Star found that the AL men, wearing badges of "boat", the electoral symbol of Khaleque, were apparently in control of the entrances, outside and even inside areas of many polling stations; barred voters from going to polling centres and publicly asked voters to vote for the party's mayoral candidate.

FOCUS SHIFTS TO GAZIPUR

The Gazipur city polls have already attracted the attention of people as the AL wants to regain its popularity in the industrial district while BNP wants to continue its dominance.

In 2013, the BNP-backed mayoral candidate had won the city polls defeating the AL-backed candidate by more than one lakh votes.

Party sources said senior BNP leaders were holding a series of meetings with Gazipur district BNP

leaders.

A few days ago, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir had a meeting with the senior party leaders from Gazipur, including party mayoral candidate Hasan Uddin Sarker, at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office.

The BNP leaders will start electioneering in full swing in all the 57 wards of Gazipur city from June 18.

Fazlul Huq Milon, member secretary of GCC polls coordination committee of BNP, said, "In Khulna, Awami League and law enforcers jointly got involved in vote rigging. Our strength lies among common people as we do not have arms. We will resist any attempt of rigging the polls by using people's power. We will form a special committee in Gazipur to stop voting irregularities."

He also said local and central BNP leaders were taking all out preparations to foil any attempt to rig the polls and commit irregularities.

"People from all the 64 districts live in Gazipur and many voters are not local people. So things here are different from Khulna," Milon, also the president of Gazipur BNP, said.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission will sit today to finalise the schedules of the upcoming Sylhet, Rajshahi and Barisal city polls. Election officials said polls to those city corporations could be held in late July.

75 held in capital

FROM PAGE 2

persons. Locals in both areas also alleged that actual drug traders were already tipped off by law enforcers or their sources before the raid.

Dadon, 28, a private car driver, who has been living in the slum for the last two months, was picked up from a rented room.

"Dadon came for lunch in the afternoon and police took him away forcefully," a neighbour, wishing not to be named, told The Daily Star. Several others said the same.

The nationwide anti-drug drive was launched by Rab on May 4 on the prime minister's instructions. Police have been carrying out their own drive since May 18.

Two Rohingyas also held.

Detectives arrested six persons, including two Rohingyas, on charges of supplying yaba pills. They apparently ingested the drugs after wrapping them in scotch-tape.

A team of DB of police (DBB) arrested them from Dakkhin Khan in the capital area on Sunday, Devdas Bhattacharya, additional commissioner of DB, said at a press

briefing at the DMP Media Centre yesterday.

Of the detainees, Mamun Sheikh, Shariful, Fahim Sarker and Razib Hossain were Bangladeshis while Selim Molla and Afser alias Babul, a minor, were Rohingyas, the DB official said quoting Mamun.

The Rohingya detainees-- Selim and Afser-- told police that Rezwan lured them into carrying yaba tablets in exchange for money, the official said.

They ingested the scotch tape wrapped yaba provided by Rezwan and came to Dhaka by train or bus three to four times every month to deliver them, he added.



This 50-year-old date tree, bearing seven heads, on Monikotha Government Primary School premises in Faridpur's Sadarpur upazila has become centre of attraction for many visitors.

Date tree with seven heads

The strange tree now centre of attraction for many

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A date tree, with its unusual seven heads, in Monikotha area under Sadarpur upazila of the district has become centre of attraction for locals as well as for the visitors from the neighbouring areas.

While visiting the area, one can easily spot the 50-year-old awesome tree at the north corner of Monikotha Government Primary School near Monikotha Bazar.

"I do not know the exact age of the tree but I have been noticing it since my childhood," Sheikh Yousuf, 55, a resident of Monikotha village said.

Tragur Das of the village said although most of the date trees in the upazila have been chopped down to use those as firewood in local brick kilns, this awesome creation of God still stands still.

Prof Motiar Rahman of Botany Department at Faridpur Government Rajendra College said such plants may grow up due to excessive phytohormones (chemicals that regulate plant growth).

Aus farming on rise

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kurigram

Cultivation of Aus paddy is gaining popularity among farmers in the district as it ripens quickly and production cost is low, although plantation has been delayed due to rain during Boro harvesting period.

District Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) has fixed 1,669 hectares

of land for cultivation of Aus this year, while production target is 3,738 tonnes, said Sub-Assistant Agriculture Officer Bimal Kumar De.

"Farmers have already cultivated Aus on 4,049 hectares of land and we are expecting that the cultivated area will be over 5,000 hectares this year. Aus was cultivated on 1,830 hectares last year," he said.

"I have cultivated Aus on 75 decimals of land this year. I cultivated it on 40 decimals last year and got a good yield of 13 maunds per bigha. I am expecting good yield this year too," said Shafiqul Islam, 30, of Giraypar village in Nageswari upazila.

"I planted Aus on 20 decimals of land on May 25 as I could not harvest ripe Aman paddy some days ago due to rain," said Abdul Khaleq, 80, of Kaley village in Sadar upazila.

"Aus is a short duration crop between Boro and T-Aman cultivation. Farmers

can get profit at low cost as there is no need for extra-irrigation and excessive fertilizer in Aus cultivation. We are motivating farmers to cultivate Aus paddy to recover the loss of crops damaged by flood," said Sadar Upazila Agriculture Officer

Sasty Chandra Roy.

"We have given Aus seeds and chemical fertilizers for one bigha of land to each of 1,500 farmers in the district this year for increasing production of rice and motivating them," said DAE Deputy Director Mostafizur Rahman Prodhan.